

PERCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY IN THE PERIOD 1945-1960:
AN ANALYSIS OF LETTERS SENT TO AHMET EMİN YALMAN BY URBAN
MIDDLE-CLASS READERS

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URBAN MIDDLE-CLASS READERS**

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ABSTRACT

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This study analyzes the democracy perceptions of the individuals belonging to the urban middle-classes in Turkey in the period between 1945 and 1960. Such a scrutiny makes it necessary to focus on individuals' subjective experiences and witnesses to the period. In this context, this study analyzes the reader letters sent to Ahmet Emin Yalman, one of the most eminent intellectual journalists of the period between 1945-1960. It is hard to believe that the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals were not fed by the hegemonic struggles and political developments of the period, and the democracy debates brought to the newspaper columns. In this respect, in this study, on the one hand the debates on democracy that took place at the intellectual and political levels of the period were examined, and on the other hand the class characters of Yalman's readers were analyzed in order to reveal to what extent Yalman's readers were fed by these discussions and influenced by the hegemonic struggles. Then, the contents of the reader letters were analyzed within the framework of a dual narrative. It was revealed that the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-

class individuals were shaped under the influence of two factors during the period: the populist discourse that ‘the manifestation of the national will’, and the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances that limiting the executive power. As a result, this study reveals that the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals were shaped under the influence of the hegemonic struggle between elite factions, and the liberal ideology.

Keywords: Reader Letters, Democracy Perception, Urban Middle-Classes, Populism, Liberal-Democratic Principles.

ÖZ

1945-1960 ARASI DÖNEMDE TÜRKİYE'DEKİ DEMOKRASİ ALGILARI: KENTLİ ORTA SINIF OKUYUCULARIN AHMET EMİN YALMAN'A YOLLADIKLARI MEKTUPLARIN ANALİZİ

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Bu çalışma 1945-1960 yılları arası dönemde Türkiye'deki kentli orta sınıflara mensup bireylerin demokrasi algılarını incelemektedir. Böyle bir inceleme, bireylerin öznel deneyimlerine ve döneme tanıklıklarına odaklanmayı zorunlu hale getirmektedir. Bu çerçevede, bu çalışma, dönemin tanınmış entelektüel gazetecilerinden olan Ahmet Emin Yalman'a 1945-1960 yılları arasında yollanmış olan okuyucu mektuplarını analiz etmektedir. Kentli orta sınıflara mensup bireylerin demokrasi algılarının, dönemin hegemonya mücadelelerinden, politik gelişmelerinden ve gazete sütunlarına taşınan demokrasi tartışmalarından beslenmemiş olması düşünülemez. Bu açıdan, çalışma içerisinde bir yandan dönemin entelektüel ve politik seviyede cereyan eden demokrasi tartışmaları incelenmiş, öte yandan Yalman'ın okuyucularının bu tartışmalardan ne derecede beslendiklerinin ve hegemonya mücadelelerinden ne derece etkilendiklerinin ortaya çıkartılması adına okuyucuların sınıf karakterleri analiz edilmiştir. Ardından, okuyucu mektuplarının içerikleri ikili anlatı çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Dönemin kentli orta sınıflarına mensup bireylerinin demokrasi algılarının,

dönem içerisinde iki faktörün etkisinde şekillendiđi ortaya ıkartılmıřtır: popülist ‘milli iradenin tecellisi’ söylemi ve yürütme gücünü denetleyen ve dengeleyen liberal-demokratik mekanizmalar. Sonuç olarak bu alıřma, dönemin kentli orta sınıflarına mensup bireylerinin demokrasi algılarının, elit gruplar arasındaki hegemonya mücadelesinin ve liberal ideolojinin etkisi altında şekillendiđini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okuyucu Mektupları, Demokrasi Algısı, Kentli Orta Sınıflar, Popülizm, Liberal-Demokratik Prensipler.

*To My Dear Family who always supported my education,
and To My Beloved İlknur.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Anatolian News Agency (<i>Anadolu Ajansı</i>)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi
DP	Democratic Party (<i>Demokrat Parti</i>)
FP	Freedom Party (<i>Hürriyet Partisi</i>)
JDP	Justice and Development Party (<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i>)
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NP	Nation Party (<i>Millet Partisi</i>)
PP	People's Party (<i>Halk Fırkası/Partisi</i>)
RNP	Republican Nation Party (<i>Cumhuriyetçi Millet Partisi</i>)
RPP	Republican People's Party (<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i>)
TÜİK	Turkish Statistical Institute (<i>Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu</i>)
US (USA)	United States of America

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study explores democracy perceptions in Turkey in the period between 1945 and 1960. In order to do this, it takes the reader letters sent to Ahmet Emin Yalman, one of the most eminent journalists of the period, as its subject of inquiry, and examines democracy perceptions of these readers through a dual narrative. This dual narrative consists of the answers provided by the readers to the hypothetical¹ questions of ‘*what is not democracy?*’ and ‘*what is democracy?*’. The former focuses on the criticisms directed to the ruling elite of the period that point to the policies and practices deemed incompatible with democracy by the readers. Hence, this study will reveal the common point of these criticisms which was briefly in the form that the RPP rule tried to prevent the manifestation of the national will by not allowing free and fair elections. Additionally, this study will dwell upon the main issues criticized by the readers after 1950, which were clustered around the populist and anti-democratic practices of the DP rule that polarized the society. The latter, on the other hand, focuses on the suggestions these readers offered, in line with their perceptions of democracy. Thus, this study will argue that the readers had tried to make normative, conceptual descriptions of the notion of democracy, and in their letters, where they mostly described how they imagined democracy, the readers adopted a populist definition of democracy at first with references to the manifestation of the national will, and then they tried to frame democracy with liberal democratic principles.

We know that what people think about democracy matters. There is a large literature, going back to the 1950s, that measures support for democracy through survey

¹ These questions are hypothetical because the readers did not answer them by directly mentioning these questions, rather, the thoughts written in their letters were clustered around these two questions in this study.

questions (Easton, 1957, see Matters, 2018 for a review). Most recent research in this literature demonstrates that mass support for democracy ensures the survival of “democratic regimes” (Claassen, 2020). Yet, our knowledge on *what people understand from democracy* is much more limited, with the empirical literature nearly exclusively focusing on the period we currently live in.

Exploring popular notions of democracy is especially important given the current retreat of liberal democratic regimes all around the world. During the last decade, elected incumbents in various countries weakened or dismantled democratic institutions, relying on the popular support that they enjoy. Mass support for leaders like Erdoğan or Orban raises the question what people understand from democracy and how these popular notions of democracy are shaped. Yet, proper answers to these questions require that we broaden our perspective, going beyond the time period we live in.

One central goal of this study is to historicize our understanding of popular perceptions for democracy. Popular perceptions of democracy vary based on the specificity of historical processes and political regime experiences that societies go through. Therefore, “democracy” is a term that can carry different meanings across time and space. Such that, different notions of democracy contain a number of different struggles. It is the product of these struggles that shows the framework of the notion of democracy. Therefore, while the concept of democracy becomes ambiguous, it becomes impossible to foreground a single notion of democracy. This situation causes the term “democracy” to turn into an empty signifier over time (Erdoğan & Üstüner, 2002, p. 195). Recognizing this fact, it is incumbent upon researchers to discuss “democracy” within the historical and societal features of the period in which it is debated. Additionally, it is important in order to avoid crude generalizations about the masses.

As the literature puts it forward that democracy debates which dominated the first ten years of the period between 1945 and 1960, were largely shaped around the references to the procedures of the democracy understanding in the West (Üstüner, 2000, p. 185). Those discussions which have been limited to procedural processes such as free and fair elections and democratization of the anti-democratic laws, failed to serve a liberal-

democratic society structure that would take shape around some specific values to be built. On the contrary, those discussions led the society to be dominated by the populist discourse and practices, and the regime took a form that based on an integral, homogeneous understanding of ‘the people’ and ‘the nation’, which makes its agents invisible. While this integral approach homogenizes individuals and the social classes, and squeezes them into a single understanding of ‘the people’ (*halk*), it also reduces various ethnic, social and cultural identities to a single nationality: ‘the Turkish Nation’ (*Türk Milleti*). Therefore, it can be said that, the period between 1945-1954 was a period when populist discourse in the form of ‘the manifestation of the national will’ came to the fore and reached its peak with the DP’s 1954 election victory. When the populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will, of which the DP was a strong advocate, was combined with the approaches of the DP rule that made certain classifications and differentiations among the political and social spheres, caused the society to become more polarized and to be divided into two opposing camps.

When the literature is examined, it is also revealed that the democracy debates that dominated the 1945-1960 period underwent a transformation after 1954. After the DP’s practices revealed its illiberal and anti-democratic identity, it can be said that the populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will began to lose its power and influence over the middle and upper segments of the society, and instead, individual rights and freedoms shaped within the framework of the need for the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances within a “democratic regime” began to dominate the debates on democracy as of 1954. In short, the debates on democracy in the 1945-1960 period began around the procedures such as free and fair elections, continued with the emergence and domination of the populist discourse in the form of the manifestation of the national will, and finally as the influence of the populist discourse began to weaken, they have evolved into the necessity of the liberal-democratic principles with references to the individual rights and freedoms.

Important actors of the above-mentioned democracy debates and political developments, were belonging to different segments of the society, as well as the important intellectual figures, journalists, party leaders, etc. of the period. It can be said that during this period, the efforts to make sense of democracy and to imagine it were no longer limited to the intellectuals. Those efforts spread to the base of the

society, including the lower-classes and the middle-classes. However, this kind of a discussion can only be made in a certain context. In other words, it is impossible to have a discussion that will include the all members of the society as a whole, and also it is beyond the limits of this study. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on a specific segment of the society.

In this context, this study will examine the reader letters obtained from “Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers” in the Hoover Institution Archives. In this sense, this study is a discourse analysis has been done based on archival research. Before going into the details of the study, detailing the content of Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers will give information about the variety and reliability of the reader letters used in this study. In other words, the quality of the content in which the reader letters used in this study were extracted will be revealed. Above all, Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers are essentially a personal archive in terms of their content. Considering that Yalman completed his doctorate at Columbia University in the USA, it can be said that throughout his life he maintained his ties with institutions and academic circles in the USA. At this point, it is known that he had a relationship with the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, especially since the 1940s. As an indicator of this relationship, it can be shown that Yalman had been at the Hoover Institute for a certain period after 1961. After Yalman died, his wife Mrs. Rezzan collected all the documents, letters, files, etc. that left from Yalman and sent Yalman's personal archive to the Hoover Institute in 1982. Although we do not know exactly, it can be thought that Mrs. Rezzan did this because Yalman had bequeathed it while he was alive.

Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers consists of 28 boxes² of documents, with varying numbers of folders in each box. In Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers, there are many materials that Yalman has accumulated throughout his life. These materials can be detailed as follows: greeting cards, get well/condolence cards and telegrams sent to Yalman; letters sent by his readers; Yalman’s reply letters he sent to some of his readers; Yalman's two books (*Gerçekleşen Rüya*, *Berraklığa Doğru*); columns he wrote after 1961 some of which were published in various newspapers; files of lawsuits filed against him, his family and *Vatan* newspaper; letters Yalman sent to the

² 25 manuscript boxes, 3 oversize box, 1 oversize folder (10 linear feet).

rulers of the period such as Mustafa Kemal, İnönü and Bayar; personal letters to his son Tunç Yalman; letters with Nazım Hikmet and Hüseyin Üzmez; letters with foreign people with whom he communicates on various occasions; documents regarding the re-establishment of *Vatan* newspaper in 1940; Yalman's personal photographs; his personal notebook; and most recently, newspaper articles written about Yalman after his death. Among these, almost all of his personal notebook and some of the reader letters are in Ottoman.

Considering the content of Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers, it can be said that approximately 900 materials related to Yalman's readers are in the archive, when the reader letters in Ottoman, and greeting/get well/condolence cards and telegrams are also taken into account. In this sense, it can be claimed that the archive was almost completely preserved. However, there certainly were materials that Yalman did not keep or were lost during the collection and transportation process of the archive. Nevertheless, it is difficult to argue that there were too many of them. In this respect, it is evident that the examination of reader letters in this study contains a wealth of material.

Throughout the study, each mentioned letter will be referenced with respect to its box and folder number (in the form of “Bxfx”) to facilitate traceability. Also, the original versions of the quotations made from the reader letters will be added as footnotes under each quotation. Additionally, a table will be added to the Appendices section of the study, which collectively shows some of the characteristics of the readers whose letters were included in this study. For this reason, next to each referenced letter, it will be added by which reader the letter was sent according to this table (in the form of “Reader Number x”). Thus, the contents of the letters and certain characteristics of the readers can be examined together.

In the study, only the reader letters sent to Yalman during the period between 1945 and 1960 were examined. During this examination, no letters coinciding within the scope of the subjects on which this study focuses were excluded. However, three groups of letters in Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers were left out of the study. These groups are i) the letters sent by intellectuals, journalists and the politicians of the period, ii) the greeting, get well, condolences cards and letters that are not relevant in

terms of this study, and iii) the letters that contain contents beyond the scope of this study.³ In the table below, the number of letters in the archive and the number of letters included in this study are given.

Table 1.1 – Number of Letters in Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers, Hoover Institution Archives

The Letters	Numbers
Examined Reader Letters	483
Yalman’s Reply Letters	44
The Letters Included into the Study	187

The reader letters examined in this study were subjected to discourse analysis. First of all, the letters were divided into two parts, critical or normative, depending on their contents. Afterwards, these letters were subjected to separate discourse analyses, and the points of criticisms were categorized separately according to the positions of these criticisms in terms of the periods of the political regime and democracy discussions. Likewise, letters with normative contents were categorized according to the concepts that the study focuses on. As a result of these stages of discourse analysis, it was observed in the first place that there were 14 different themes that were discussed in the reader letters. Some of these themes were excluded from the study, and some were combined. As a result, it was decided to conduct this study on 5 themes which are actually sub sections in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Simultaneously with these discourse analyses, the places where the readers were living and their occupational groups were determined, and the letters were separated according to the class characters of the readers. Finally, the discourses in the letters were positioned within the framework of determining those readers’ perceptions of democracy.

From this point forth, the fact that this study will focus on the letters in which the “ordinary” individuals expressed themselves has made it necessary to exclude the letters that constitute the first group, that is, sent by the intellectual, journalist, and the politicians of the period. There are already many studies on the figures mentioned in

³ At this point, the letters sent outside of the timeframe of this study can be added as the fourth group.

this first group. The reason why the letters in the second group were excluded from the study is that these letters have no relation to the problematic and the argument of this study. Materials such as greeting cards and telegrams of the get-well wishes are habits related to the routine of daily life within the framework of the traditions and customs of the society. Therefore, they were excluded from the study, as well.

The letters in the third group excluded from the study are the letters related to many different social and political developments of the period, apart from the subjects focused in this study. In this regard, there are two reasons why the letters in this group were not included in the study. First, many of the topics described in these letters have been covered in very few letters that involve insufficient examples to conduct a study on their own. For example, only a few of the letters sent during the period of 1945-1960 are related to the bribery issue. As it is the case, the topics that are far from wholeness and in scattered forms were not included into this study. Secondly, for example, the letters sent about the economic conditions of the period, which contain topics comprehensive enough to allow to conduct a separate study alone and can be analyzed at different depths, were also excluded from this study. This is because the inclusion of these letters into the study would both move the study away from its focus, and these letters would not be thoroughly examined.

The word ‘intellectual’ is an ambiguous word that is hard to be fully defined. According to Bauman, the reason for this is that all definitions on the word intellectual are “self-definitions” (Bauman, 1989, p. 8), because defining attitude depends on “the methodological priorities and paradigms adopted by those who attempt to “define” it” (Akdeniz, 2011, p. 12). The question of why Ahmet Emin Yalman was chosen for this study is another question to be answered. It is possible to answer this question in three ways. First of all, Yalman was one of the three best-known and experienced journalists of the period between 1945 and 1960. This feature of him widens the range of the reader letters sent to him. The underlying reason of this was that the editorials written by Yalman were reaching a wide audience, and when the letters were examined, it was understood that the masses were closely following the editorials of Yalman. For example, it was seen that among the letters examined in the archive, 98 letters were written with references to an editorial of Yalman. This provides the opportunity to

follow the influence of Yalman's writings especially on the concept of democracy, on his readers.

Secondly, Yalman was a very experienced intellectual figure of that period due to the fact that he was a living witness of the processes of change that Turkish society had undergone starting from the 1908 Revolution. In addition to this feature of him, he was an adherent of liberal thought, and he had written editorials mostly about liberalism and democracy. In this respect, he was a figure who took part in the debates on democracy of the period, which took place at the intellectual level. Therefore, through the reader letters sent to Yalman, it is possible to follow the reflections of the democracy debates of the period on individuals belonging to different segments of the society, who were the followers of those debates. From this point forth, it also makes possible to compare the political positionings of Yalman and his readers.

Third, there was an organic link between Yalman and the DP, as Yalman claims he was the fifth of the founders and named the party himself. However, at this point, what distinguishes Yalman from the other pro-DP journalists was that Yalman had cut his ties with the DP after 1954, started the anti-DP opposition and was eventually imprisoned by the DP rule. When that was the case, these features of Yalman, on the one hand, ensure that the letters of the readers have a divergence in terms of the contents due to the different positionings of the individuals who send those letters, on the other hand, makes it possible to follow the effects of Yalman's political positions on those individuals. Moreover, Yalman's political positioning parallels the course of the democracy debates of the whole period. Therefore, it is possible to come across democracy debates in the reader letters sent to Yalman from every political position. Thus, in the light of all, it can be said that in order to reach the democracy perceptions of the individuals of the period, the reader letters sent to Yalman provide the opportunity to reach wider beliefs and democracy discussions of his readers.

It is something different for the subaltern to speak, to explain her/himself, and someone else tell the story of the subaltern (Erdoğan, 2016, p. 23). A subjective experience, a personal definition of democracy, or transferring one's witnessing to a period from her own window, makes the reality of the narrative and its meanings come to the fore. Only in this way the subjectivity of that story, that vision of democracy or the content

of that period can emerge, and the agents of the homogenized masses can be revealed. Although, the readers of Yalman, who are the subjects of this study, cannot be described as ‘the subaltern’, this approach is also valid for them. At this point, it can be said that the democracy perceptions of the lower-classes in the period between 1945 and 1960 were very limited compared to the other segments of the society. In fact, they could not even pronounce the word ‘democrat’ and used the word ‘*demirkırat*’ instead. On the contrary, individuals belonging to other segments of the society had followed the democracy debates closely and had been able to develop perceptions of democracy in various ways.

While the goal of this study is to explore popular notions of democracy, the empirical method of this research limits us to a certain group within the society. Since I use letters from newspaper readers around the 1950s, the sample is necessarily limited to more educated portions of the society, which correspond to *urban middle-classes*. Hence, besides a journey to the mental worlds of the individuals who were fed by those debates, and had experienced these processes in different subjective conditions, it is not possible to discuss a period in a proper manner. In this sense, the main purpose of this study is to reveal the democracy perceptions of the individuals who were living in towns and cities. Therefore, it can be said that this study will focus on the perceptions of democracy in the period of 1945-1960 by making a detailed review of the readers of Yalman consisting of the individuals belonging to the urban middle-classes.

The main question of this study is how did the urban middle-class individuals of the 1945-1960 period in Turkey, envision democracy. This question, whose answers will be sought through the ideas that were put forward by the readers who sent letters to Yalman, will only be satisfactorily answered by seeking answers to a number of secondary questions. What were the main factors affecting the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals of the period? What changes have occurred in the democracy perceptions of those individuals between 1945-1960? What parallels can be found between the narrative of the period, made by focusing on the party politics, party leaders and the speeches of those leaders, and the contents of the reader letters, sent by the urban middle-class individuals who were the members of the other segments of the society?

The main argument of this study is that the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals of the period were initially shaped around the procedures of the Western-type liberal democracies, and then evolved into a form focusing more on the necessity of the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances. It can be said that their democracy perceptions were shaped under the influences of two successive processes. In the first place, the populist discourse that the manifestation of the national will which dominated the period between 1945 and 1954 enabled the framework of democracy to be drawn by the individuals in the form of procedures such as free and fair elections. So, it will be argued in this sense that during the period between 1945 and 1954, the discourse had determined the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals, and democracy was envisioned by them in the procedural form. Afterwards, in the second place, as the influence of the populist discourse on society weakened, the illiberal and anti-democratic structure of the DP rule became more visible, so that the democracy imaginations of the individuals evolved into a point that the manifestation of the national will was not enough by itself for defining democracy, and that democracy had to contain some checks and balances that guarantee the individual rights and freedoms. Thus, again it will be argued in this sense that, during the period between 1954 and 1960, efforts to put democracy on concrete bases as an outcome of the political developments, had determined the discourse, and hence, democracy was envisioned by the urban middle-class individuals within the liberal-democratic values.

At this point, however, it is necessary to mention some limitations of this study. In this context, it can be said that the limitations of the study clusters around three issues. First of all, although Yalman was a figure followed by various segments of the society, it is not possible to reach general conclusions about the urban middle-class individuals of the period only through the reader letters sent to Yalman. In this sense, although the study is capable of revealing various issues about the readers of Yalman -in addition to their democracy perceptions, their class characters and political affiliations were also revealed-, those readers only represent a limited part within the Turkish society in that period, thus, this constitutes the first limitation of this study.

Second, although Yalman's political positioning has changed within the period, his liberal, secular and anti-communist ideological positions always remained constant.

This indicates that the readers who sent letters to Yalman belonged to a limited group of people affiliated to certain ideological approaches and members of certain social classes. For example, there were only 20 readers that can be excluded from the scope of the middle-classes that most of the readers belonged, and they were factory workers, tailors, villagers and small retailers, i.e. coffeehouse owner, butcher, and grocer. This indicates the second limitation of the study in terms of the social classes among the society during that period. Moreover, the third limitation of this study can be summarized as the uncertainty about the issues, such as how sincere the contents written in the letters were, whether the stories told in the letters were exaggerated, whether they were correct, whether the personal information given by the readers was correct or not.

Finally, despite these limitations, this study is intended to contribute to the literature. First of all, unlike many studies that approach society and the period from the generalizing perspectives, this study aims to contribute to the few studies in the literature as a study that evaluates the individuals as the separate figures who make up the society -or the majority, in a sense. Second, this study on understanding the period through the individuals, aims to contribute to the literature by presenting a new perspective to the forms of the democracy perceptions in the period through the compatibilities and incompatibilities it will show with the studies made from more general and macro focuses. Finally, this study aims to open new channels or perspectives to the other studies that may be conducted upon the period, especially by focusing on the daily life and the ordinary people of the period, and thus to contribute to the literature in this way.

The rest of this study will be formed of four main chapters. In the following chapter, which is named as Chapter 2, the conceptual framework on which the study was built will be detailed. In this context, the first part of this chapter will dwell on the issues such as the individuals' act of letter writing, and hence, in this part a theoretical scheme will be emphasized with respect to the questions of who writes a reader letter, why do readers write letters, how the contents of letters differ, etc. The reason for this discussion is to establish a theoretical link between the reader letters as the subject of inquiry of this study and the debates on democracy. Also, in this part, the relation between the other studies that were conducted about the Turkish political history with

the similar focuses and this study will be revealed. In the second part of the second chapter, the debates on democracy in the period between 1945 and 1960 in Turkey will be reviewed. This part will be a kind of literature review, and will aim to depict the process and evolution of the democracy debates in between 1945 and 1960, from the intellectual and political levels in Turkey. This whole chapter aims to show how the debates on democracy of the period were reflected in the reader letters, thereby establishing a link between the letters and the concept of democracy.

In Chapter 3, first, Yalman's ideological position will be revealed as well as a brief mention to his intellectual biography, then the class character of Yalman's readers will be analyzed, and finally the relationship between Yalman and his readers will be mapped. Considering that Yalman's intellectual background and journalist position allowed this work to be done through letters sent to Yalman, Yalman's ideological position gains importance in order to have an idea about the dynamic structure of the period. Additionally, determining the class character of the individuals who sent the reader letters on which this study is built is very important in terms of showing the point of view from which the study covers the period. Finally, mapping the relationship between Yalman and his readers will be informative about the reliability of the contents of the reader letters sent to Yalman and the intellectual accumulation of his readers. Thus, this chapter aims to reveal the democracy understanding of Yalman, the class character of the readers of Yalman, and to provide an analysis on the relationship between Yalman and his readers with respect to their class character and their approaches to democracy in the letters.

Chapter 4 is the first step of the above-mentioned dual narrative, which analyzes the alleged answers of the readers to the question of '*what is not democracy?*'. In this chapter, the criticisms of the readers towards the RPP rule and the DP rule will be analyzed separately. In this sense, in the first part of this chapter, it will be analyzed that the readers criticized the RPP rule from the perspective of the free and fair elections, and the reluctance of the RPP rule to allow the elections to be held in this democratic manner. This part is important to show that democracy was discussed in the 1945-1950 period within the framework of practical procedures, under the influence of the populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will. In the second part, the criticisms of the readers towards the DP rule will be analyzed. The

focus of these criticisms was that the DP rule had caused the society to become increasingly polarized and divided it into two opposing camps through the power and influence of its populist discourse. Therefore, this chapter aims to reveal how the democracy perceptions of the readers evolved between 1945 and 1960, and the underlying reasons of this transformation.

Chapter 5 is the second step of the above-mentioned dual narrative, and dwells on the alleged answers of the readers to the question of '*what is democracy?*'. In this sense, in the first part of this chapter, a journey will be made on how the readers had imagined democracy in that period. Afterwards, based on the argument of determination between the discourse and the democracy perceptions, firstly, the readers envisioned democracy as the manifestation of the national will, and then the democracy perceptions in the form of the necessity of liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances with respect to the individual rights and freedoms will be examined. At the end, the main goal of this chapter is to reveal the democracy imaginations of the readers, which was manifested in different forms and approaches in between 1945 and 1960.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPT OF LETTER CORRESPONDENCE AND THE DEBATES ON THE NOTION OF DEMOCRACY IN THE PERIOD 1945-1960

2.1. Introduction

As previously stated, the purpose of this study is to reveal the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals in the period between 1945 and 1960. However, at the beginning of a study within this purpose, it makes it necessary to examine the debates on democracy by which Yalman's readers were influenced. Actually, the debates on democracy in the 1945s and later periods are quite a subject in the literature. In addition, examining the method of a study that places reader letters as a subject of inquiry is as important as the debates on democracy in the period. Thus, this chapter aims to reveal the theoretical approaches to the act of letter writing by giving some examples from the studies conducted with this way, and also to depict the course of the democracy debates that took place in the intellectual and political levels in the period between 1945 and 1960.

It is obvious that the desire to be involved in the ongoing discussions, be a side of those discussions and even to intervene in politics for instance, is behind the act of writing and sending a reader letter. In this sense, the conceptual framework will be presented by reviewing the relevant literature in the first part of this chapter. First of all, the answers to the questions such as who writes a reader letter, why it is written, and what factors influence the contents of the reader letters will be searched in the literature. Secondly, studies carried out within this framework will be revealed. Finally, in light of this conceptual framework, the positions of the readers within a historicity, and the parts of this conceptual framework that coincide with Yalman's readers will be presented.

It is clear that there were many factors affecting the democracy perceptions of Yalman's readers. The most prominent among these factors such as the political developments and ideological approaches of the period, was the debates on democracy in the period between 1945 and 1960. In this sense, in the second part of this chapter, the relevant literature will be reviewed, and the debates on democracy that took place especially in the intellectual and political circles will be foregrounded. A study to be conducted without examining the factors affecting the democracy perceptions of Yalman's readers is doomed to consist of estimates far from depth.

2.2. Theoretical Framework of Letter Correspondence

The aim of this part is to review the relevant literature about the act of letter writing and foreground the theoretical framework of this study. In fact, this method is a method mostly used in examinations on the subaltern, which is generally expressed as '*silent masses*'. However, even in the issue of democratization, which is the main agenda of the country, we may encounter a much more crowded mass whose voice is not heard in the society. Of course, this mass includes the subaltern, but all the silent masses do not only consist of them. This study is an application of a method generally used in subaltern studies to the study of individuals whose voices are not heard even if they belong to the urban middle classes. Hence, it will be seen that to reveal the thoughts of these individuals upon the most important agenda of the period, i.e. the notion of democracy, is a determinant tool on the historicity of democracy notions in Turkey.

Although letter correspondence, the methodological framework on which this study is based, is exactly in the middle of the two approaches that history from above and social history/history from below, it is closer to the study of history from below in terms of contents and subject of inquiry. In this sense, in order to reveal the theoretical framework of letter correspondence, there are a number of questions that need to be answered. The first of these questions is '*who writes letters?*'. Arguing that people who write letters are generally ordinary individuals, Hart (2018) states that in some occasions, people with surprising characters also write reader letters (Hart, 2018, p. 76). According to Hart, people who send letters can be divided into four categories. The first of these is writers as sceptics (Ibid., p. 78). This group of writers who are less interested in politics, but they do not hesitate to question the source of a political article

or information in a sceptic way, per se (Ibid., p. 80). These writers who often refrain from adopting a political side, are usually urban and educated people who follow the media closely. The language they use is generally polite (Ibid., p. 82).

The second group of writers consists of writers as auditors (Hart, 2018, p. 87). The writers in this group who follow the media closely as in the previous group, approach the accuracy of a piece of information in the form of mistrust. For some, it is never possible to have enough information (Ibid., p. 87). The writers in this group who think that having information is wisdom, want to correct the claims they think are wrong as the auditors (Ibid., p. 90). The third group consists of writers as residents (Ibid., p. 91). Given the fact that the writers are real people, they must live somewhere. Hence, they are usually local people who write about the regions or cities they live in. According to Hart, the writers in this group have some specific features: “They subscribe the local newspapers, vote often, identify themselves with their community, volunteer more frequently, are better informed about local issues, and are politically more active” (Ibid., pp. 92-93).

The last group of writers consists of writers as advocates. The writers in this group are most concerned with politics (Hart, 2018, pp. 94-95). In addition to having a political side, they follow politics from many different sources and conduct discussions with those around them. It is also the writers of this group who are most in contact with the public sphere (Ibid., p. 95). In short, the primary issue that needs to be highlighted about the concept of sending a reader letter as a part of civic engagement (Ibid., p. 76) is that the people who sent letters to any journalist, are those who generally read daily newspapers, weekly or monthly thought magazines, etc. With this in mind, journalism historian Bill Reader (2005) describes the people who write reader letters as: “Letters columns are not the egalitarian, democratic forums many of us want them to be, but rather forums for the educated middle-classes” (Reader, 2005, as cited in Hart, 2018, p. 134).

The second question needs to be answered about the theoretical framework is ‘*why do readers write letters?*’. Although there are various reasons for writing reader letters, the main reason is individuals’ efforts to make themselves visible. It can be said that this effort to be visible is about dignity. That is to say, given that the writers are mostly

educated individuals belonging to the middle-classes, it can be seen that they do not like being under a rule in which they don't have a say. From this very point on, they try to get involved in politics and even intervene with the criticisms and/or thoughts they put forward in their reader letters. Sennett & Cobb (1977) evaluate this situation in terms of the lower classes of society as follows: "In a class society, laborers are confronted with the fact that they are treated as a mass, as "nobody special"" (Sennett & Cobb, 1977, p. 213). This evaluation is mostly valid for the urban middle-classes. In fact, challenging to this perception is more evident for the urban middle-class individuals who are literate and follow the debates on various issues closely. The readers of those debates challenge this perception with the letters they write and send. In other words, they write reader letters based on the motto '*I have something to say*'. This situation can be considered as an indicator of the authenticity of the letters⁴ (Hart, 2018, p. 123).

The final question needs to be answered about the theoretical framework is '*how the contents of letters differ?*'. The most important factor determining the contents of reader letters is local issues. As Hart puts forward, the editors list the letter contents starting from the most common issues as follows: "local and national politics, healthcare, religion, corporate spending, etc." (Hart, 2018, pp. 129-130). As the letters can be written on many different issues, the contents of these main issues also vary. Political issues can often be summarized as political parties, polemics, and election races. Election periods in particular are times when the masses are more politicized. In such periods, some of the readers write letters in line with their political positions, while others talk about the distinctive and meaningless polemics of the election race and the unreliability of politicians. These letters are largely the products of efforts to get involved in the political sphere (Hart, 2018, p. 227). Another factor that makes the content of the letters differs is the region where the reader lives. This factor not only enables the differentiation of the subject contexts of the letters, but also determines the strength of the letter according to the characteristics of the place of residence. In this

⁴ However, this situation is not enough to eliminate the limitations put forward in Introduction. The uncertainty of the conditions under which the letters were written and sent seventy years ago is the reason for the question marks on the reliability of the reader letters.

context, it can be said that letters sent from cities, where political activities are most intense, have stronger contents (Hart, 2018, pp. 238-241).

There are many studies about reader letters in the literature. Studies examining the subject from different contexts have both made examinations from a historical perspective and have focused on the changing habit of letter correspondence today. For example, Stephenson & Bromley (1998) examine the relationship between readers and journalists through reader letters, and focus on the development of *correspondence columns* in newspapers within a historical perspective. There are also studies on reader letters sent to a single editor. For example, Nord (1995) examines reader letters sent to Chicago Tribune and Chicago Herald editor James Keeley in his study. In this study, Nord reveals that readers mostly highlight their community belongings and that these communities were influenced by political organizations. Similarly, Lenoë (1999) examines the relationship between the state and the ordinary people by doing a study on early Soviet history through reader letters sent to newspapers in Soviet archives. Fitzpatrick (1996), on the other hand, examines the early Soviet history through petitions sent to the state. The importance of this and similar studies is that they reveal the relationships between the individuals of the period and political developments from a historical perspective.

Within the framework of Turkish (political) history, these studies generally focused on the early republican period and petitions sent to official authorities, rather than reader letters sent to journalists/editors. For example, Yiğit Akın (2003, 2007) foregrounds the rhetorical elements that the petitions sent to the RPP Secretary General in the early Republican period have. Those rhetorical elements are obedient language, theatrical expression, and implicit criticisms (Akın, 2003, pp. 118-121). According to Bakhtin (1981), the subaltern uses a secondary language to protect her/himself from a number of dangers when writing petitions to the official authorities (Bakhtin, 1981, as cited in Akın, 2007, p. 443). From this point forth, Akın states that the stories contained in the petitions he examined in his study were unlikely to be true (Akın, 2007, p. 443). A hierarchical pre-acceptance created by the readers emerges in the form of obedient language used in the petitions sent to the RPP Secretary General, as Akın stated (Akın, 2003, p. 118; Akın, 2007, p. 443). The motivation behind this obedient language was that individuals who sent petitions accepted the sovereignty of the RPP Secretary

General in the form of State. According to Akin, the obedient tone used in the petitions was used to avoid taking an attitude to question the established power position of the authority to which the petition was written. (Akin, 2003, p. 118).

Lamprou (2007) conducted a similar study within the framework of the complaint petitions about the People's Houses sent to the RPP Secretary General during the period between 1932 and 1951. In this context, he examined over two hundred letters. He touched upon the practice of writing complaints, the functions of this practice, and the importance of these letters as sources for the history of the period. Moreover, from a comparative perspective, Afacan (2011) conducted a comparative study on the petition writing practices in the Turkish and Iranian histories. In this context, he reached some conclusions on how the reforms in Turkey and Iran that carried out in the 1920s and 1930s were perceived or to what extent they were adopted by the people. Both studies touch upon important points in terms of social historiography. However, as far as we know, there are hardly any studies that take reader letters as a subject of inquiry in the Turkish (political) history literature. Most of the research on historical periods in the literature are macro-focused studies and they have been done on general political developments instead of micro perspectives such as the individuals.

In fact, it can be said that examinations made through letters and/or petitions have roughly two approaches. The first of these is to examine the letters sent by historical figures regarding certain periods and historical events/processes. For example, Cutler (1988) made a review of a letter that Bakunin sent to Solger and revealed Bakunin's activities after fleeing from Siberia to the United States (Cutler, 1988). Similarly, Kloosterman (1988) examines the Dutch repercussions of the 1830 riots through a letter sent by Filippo Buonarroti to Charles Teste (Kloosterman, 1988). However, this approach is not a study of social history and/or history from below in an exact manner. Hence, in this study, a similar approach is deliberately avoided. The second approach is that studies on letters and petitions generally focus on subaltern parts of the society. According to Lyons (2010), "two great traditions stand out for the influence they have exerted world-wide over cultural history domain: first, the tradition of the French Annales school, and second the British neo-Marxist school" (Lyons, 2010, p. 59.1). Although this approach is literally a history from below, it has mostly focuses such as

ordinary people, subaltern, working class and deals with issues such as daily life practices, coercive mechanisms of economic/class struggles.

Ironically, studies on the segments that researchers describe as silent masses are based on documents collected by the elite. However, what these silent masses write about the daily problems and the important agendas of their times are more important than the elites who have accumulated their letters, petitions, etc. But, as a result of this ironic situation, “the masses’ interests mostly seen as related with the socioeconomic conditions. Ordinary people thus appeared rather as objects of economic structures than as subjects of historical processes” (Würgler, 2001, p. 11). Besides, Braudel (2009) underlines the necessity of social science disciplines to understand and examine the historical events collectively, rather than examining them separately, that is, only the parts that fall within their research fields (Braudel, 2009, p. 172). According to him, history consists of the accumulation of new knowledge (Ibid., p. 171), and in order to understand a period, the history should be divided into longer, much longer durations, i.e. *longue durée*, than slices of 10, 20, 50 years (Ibid., p. 174). Only in this way will it be possible to prevent an “*history-less*” reading of history by means of individuals who are the main bearers of historical periods, even though they belong to ‘*silent masses*’ of “anonymous people who, in their collective acts, their work, daily lives, and fellowship have forged our society through the centuries” (Bhattacharya, 1983, p. 3).

In this part, the theoretical framework of letter correspondence was revealed by reviewing the related literature on both conceptual frames of the readers and their letters, and examples from the literature. Based on the literature reviewed in this part, the factors affecting the contents of reader letters were foregrounded. When the letter correspondence literature is reviewed, it is seen that two issues come to the fore. First, the individuals who wrote and sent reader letters are largely belonging to the middle and upper classes. Second, those who write letters are both interested in the political developments and daily politics of the period they live in, and also followed and were fed from the theoretical discussions taking place at the intellectual level and in the newspaper columns. It is possible to say that both issues coincide with the readers who sent letters to Yalman. Yalman’s readers were the individuals belonging to the urban middle-classes. Moreover, the contents of the letters show that the readers closely

followed the political developments and democracy debates of the period. In fact, their purposes of letter writing were largely a product of their relevance to daily politics and their efforts to get involved in the political sphere. In this sense, both the class characters of the readers and the theoretical channels they were fed on will be examined in detail later in this study.

2.3. Framing the Democracy Debates in the 1945-1960 Period

In this part, the debates on democracy in the period between 1945 and 1960 that took place within the intellectual and political circles will be analyzed. Although the debates took place within intellectual and political circles, the urban middle-class individuals and some other segments of the society cannot be considered as unaware of the debates of democracy conducted by a handful of intellectuals. On the contrary, an individual who could send a reader letter to a journalist had to have followed those debates very closely. Hence, it is obvious that those individuals wrote their reader letters by distilling their ideas about democracy from the debates the intellectuals put forward. Thus, considering that these debates were closely followed by Yalman's readers, it is apparent that those debates are important in revealing the democracy perception of the period.

Democracy is a term about which discussions have been going on for a long time both as a concept and as a political practice. However, especially after the second half of the 20th century, the term democracy appears to have been idealized (Üstüner, 2000, p. 183). For example, Rawls (1995) is one of those who idealize democracy. According to him, democracy is a system that "the citizens affirm it as the good and the moral" and that they see it as the provider of the understanding of justice (Rawls, 1995, pp. 32-33). There is no doubt that the term has been idealized so much that it has become an empty signifier over time. This is exactly the situation that occurred in the Turkish context (Erdoğan & Üstüner, 2002, p. 195). The reason for this idealization, and thus, semantic erosion is that democracy was perceived as if there is only one agreed democracy definition and practice (Üstüner, 2000, p. 184). Therefore, it can be asserted that the democracy debates in the 1945-1960 period in Turkey was an attempt to articulate Turkey within the Western political system and the democratic theory

(Üstüner, 2000, p. 185) that was shaped around this single definition and practice of it.

Nevertheless, as a result of a number of specific conditions in Turkey, the definition of democracy and the expectations from democracy has changed (Atılgan, 2008, p. 446). However, those changes did not indicate a break with the Western-type liberal democracy. In this sense, there were two types of tendencies to conceptualize democracy in the West. The first was a form of government that operates democracy only as a form of government, according to procedures. The second was to create a democratic society model based on some idealized values (Üstüner, 2000, p. 185). Hence, the above-mentioned change essentially consisted of a shift from an understanding similar to the former model into an interpretation of democracy that resembled the latter. However, it should be noted that although certain changes occurred, the political camp in the newspaper corners had two ideological feet in the period between 1945-1960: the first was debates on how democracy should be understood, and the second was the concerns and reactions upon secularism and the protection of the Kemalist reforms (Bora & Cantek, 2009, pp. 887-888). Needless to say, the latter stems from the specific conditions of Turkey.

In this context, we can divide the period between 1945-1960 into three sections in terms of the course of democracy debates. The first section was roughly the period between 1945-1950.⁵ It can be said that the spirit of the debates on democracy within this first period was shaped by the issue of '*freedom of debate*' which was used as an umbrella term on those days. However, one should not be tempted by the depth of the term. Actually, the debates on democracy in this period were clustered around the first of the two above-mentioned tendencies which Üstüner (2000) said were in the West.⁶ In this context, the principles of free and fair elections and the democratization of the anti-democratic laws were the main grounds for discussion as a requirement of

⁵ Of course, there should not be a false perception that the debates on democracy emerged suddenly in 1945. The year 1945 has been chosen because it represents the end of the Second World War, and in this context as a year of increased debates on democracy in Turkey within the transition to the multiparty system.

⁶ For example, according to Nadir Nadi, Western civilization is equivalent to true democracy (Nadi, 1979, p. 61).

democracy, which was considered as a form of government based on procedures (Üstüner, 2000, p. 190).

The most widely expressed definition of democracy in this period was: “democracy is the rule of the people by the people for the people” (Üstüner, 2000, p. 190; Özgün-Çakar, 2009, p. 261). It is noteworthy that both the socialist and the liberal thinkers of the period adopted the same definition. For example, Behice Boran defines democracy as follows: “What the democratic systems have in common, and also what distinguishes them from the rest, is that they are clearly, at the very least, regimes ‘by the people and for the people’”⁷ (Boran, 1945, as cited in Üstüner, 2000, pp. 190-191). By the same token, Mehmet Ali Aybar draws the boundaries of democracy as follows:

We look at these when we want to know if a regime is democratic or not: whether those in power obtained their position with the free votes of the people and preserve their seats with the free votes of the people; whether people can express their opinions about this at any time, [...] if all these are satisfied, we can say that we stand before a democratic regime without any doubt⁸ (Aybar, 1945, as cited in Üstüner, 2000, p. 191).

Similarly, Zekeriya Sertel uses freedom of debate as the main framework and defines democracy as follows: “In a place where there is no freedom of speech, [...] national unity cannot be established. [...] Critique and disagreement are elements that strengthen the national unity in democracies”⁹ (Sertel, 1945, as cited in Üstüner, 2000, p. 191).

Not surprisingly, the liberal intellectuals have preferred to define democracy with the same words. For example, while Ali Fuat Başgil says that the liberal democracy is the absolute goal, on the other hand he defines democracy as “a joint government and administrative regime of the people” (Başgil, 1961, as cited in Demirci, 2005, p. 290).

⁷ “Demokratik sistemlerin müşterek, ayırıcı vasfı, hiç değilse muayyen bir şekil ve derecede ‘halk tarafından halk için idare’ rejimleri oluşundadır”

⁸ “Bir rejimin demokrasi olup olmadığını anlamak için bakarız: iktidar mevkiine gelenler halkın serbest reyile buraya gelmişler ve halkın serbest reyile burada kalıyorlarsa; halk bu husustaki kanaati her zaman açıkça beyan ediyorsa, [...] tereddüt etmeden demokratça bir rejim karşısında olduğumuza hükmederiz”

⁹ “Söz ve fikir hürriyeti olmayan yerde, [...] milli birlik de teessüs edemez. [...] Tenkid ve münakaşa, demokrasilerde milli birliği perçinleyen birer unsurdur”

Similarly, Ahmet Emin Yalman summarizes the conditions necessary for democracy to function as follows:

Whenever there is any form of discussion within a group and all the possible discussions upon it are exhausted, the group puts the issue up for vote. All the members who defended their ideas fiercely, will have to, at the end, comply with the result of the vote and defend the idea voted by the many as if it's their own¹⁰ (Yalman, 1948, as cited in Üstüner, 2000, p. 195).¹¹

Considering the above-mentioned definitions of democracy which include many common elements such as an order where popular will is reflected on the people's freedom of speech, thought, conscience and assembly (Üstüner, 2000, p. 192), two important points stand out in terms of democracy debates of the period between 1945-1950. The first was that the populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will was brought to the forefront based on the principle of self-government of the people. The second was that, contrary to the Western understanding of liberal democracy, the word "the people" (*halk*) was preferred as a homogeneous term (Üstüner, 2000, p. 196), rather than considering the society as the sum of the rights and freedoms of the individuals as a heterogeneous structure.

The summary of the first point is the act of voting in general, which is a sine qua non attitude that was used to address democracy as a form of government that operates within the framework of procedures.¹² Hence, when the democracy debates of the period are analyzed, it is seen that populist discourse that prioritizes the free and fair elections, the right to vote, the election results, the election of the representatives of the people and the representation of the people in the parliament, had dominated the whole period. However, the problem that arises at this point is that most of the intellectuals, thinkers, academics, journalists, and the politicians adopted the principle

¹⁰ "Herhangi bir zümre içindeki içtihat farkları, serbest bir münakaşa mevzuu olur, neticede reye başvurulur, son hadde kadar fikrini müdafaa eden azlar, bundan sonra derhal ekseriyetin reyine uyarlar, kabul edilen fikri, güya kendi öz fikirleriymiş gibi müdafaa ederler, yürütmeye çalışırlar"

¹¹ As a liberal politician Turan Güneş also defined democracy from the "populist democrat" line in the 1950s, within the framework of the demands and values of the people (Fedayi, 2009, pp. 528-529).

¹² Indeed, the traces of reducing democracy to these "democratic procedures" can be followed in a number of steps taken after the 1980 military coup (Taştekin, 2019, p. 21).

of “*representative democracy*”¹³, instead of the model of “*direct participation*” (Üstüner, 2000, pp. 195-196). For example, Ali Fuat Başgil frames democracy within those principles as follows: “Democracy relies on majority and in a practical sense it means the rule of the majority. Government and administration function via the approval of a clear majority and what steers the ship is always the majority”¹⁴ (Başgil, 1946, as cited in Üstüner, 2000, p. 195). During the 1950s, for instance, these procedures, especially those that the liberal intellectuals framed, have become the principles especially adopted by the DP politicians and turned out to be the tools of the populist discourse. From this point forth, it can be said that the clearest expression of what democracy meant for the DP politicians who predicated on this frame and embraced the populist discourse of the national will that could only be manifested as a result of the free and fair elections, reveals itself in the words of Samet Ağaoğlu: “Democracy is a regime of numbers. In this regime, whatever the masses want will be done. We, as those in charge of power, must comply with the demands expressed by the masses, not the criticisms of a handful of intellectuals”¹⁵ (Yalman, 1971, p. 238).

The model of representative democracy, which manifests itself with the act of voting in general terms, contains an essential problem, though. The procedures that enable the people to participate in the administration by electing their own representatives and thereby indirectly control their rulers, is nothing more than the fact that the people who have become an abstract concept in contrast with the individual have an abstract administration right through concrete mechanisms. It can be said that especially the politicians did not see this essential problem as an obstacle, rather they have supported such an inconvenient model that does not go beyond a symbolic participation for their own interests. For example, as of 1947, the free elections -as a procedure- were deemed

¹³ Whose subjects were abstract at the point where it essentially points to the public sphere of irrelevant social groups (Güven, 2012, p. 138). Also, criticisms against the representative democracy or the general will principle has been proposed by Tocqueville with concerns that the system tends to evolve into “a tyranny of majority” with those principles (Yetiş, 2006, p. 296).

¹⁴ “Demokrasi ekseriyete dayanır ve fiiliyatta ekseriyetin hükümeti demek olur. Hükümet ve idare hep açık bir ekseriyetin rey ve kararıyla işlemekte, devlet gemisinin dümeni, bir ekseriyetin elinde bulunmaktadır”

¹⁵ “Demokrasi bir sayı rejimidir. Bu rejimde yığınlar ne isterse o olur. Biz, iktidar mesulleri sıfatıyla bir avuç aydının tenkidine ve gürültüsüne değil, halk yığınlarının belirttiği isteklere uymak zorundayız”

sufficient for the principle of public participation to the administration by the RPP executives and the pro-RPP intellectuals. Nihat Erim expresses this situation as follows:

People's administrations, or in other words, democracies, had to adopt the representation system called 'regency'. [...] Because the execution of the national will could not be done by millions of people every day, this duty was delegated to the representatives of the nation, i.e. the congress people. [...] As a country develops and thus, hosts a wider population, the feasibility of applying to the people in each occasion fades away. In a representative system, the reflection of the national will is the parliament, and the means to make up the parliament is the free and safe elections¹⁶ (Erim, 1947, as cited in Üstüner, 2000, p. 196).

The issue that the DP opposition has risen in the most harsh and stubborn manner during this period was again on the matter of free and fair elections. Throughout the four-year opposition period, the issue that the DP politicians mostly focused on and boycotted the government from time to time, was the issue of amending the election law into a more democratic one. Free and fair elections, citizens' right to vote, election results and the manifestation of the national will, about which the DP produced discourses under the name of representative democracy, have turned into populist discourses in time, resulting in the fetishization of the model that is called representative democracy. Thus, a number of conditions achieved as a result of long struggles, such as having equal rights of individuals, using their free wills, directly participating in administration, and living under a fair system, were turned out to be reduced to just voting on the election day. Thus, this reductionist approach caused the term democracy, which contains much deeper meanings and solid struggles, to be futile, and gradually turned it into an empty signifier made up of populist discourse (Erdoğan, 1998, pp. 22-23). After the fact that the populist discourse that reduced democracy to the act of voting and deified the manifestation of the national will was understood to have a role in strengthening partisanship and mobilizing the masses

¹⁶ "Halk idareleri, yani demokrasiler, 'niyabet usulü' adı verilen temsil sistemini benimsemek zorunda kalmışlardır. [...] Milletın iradesini belirtmek işi, milyonlarca insan tarafından her gün görülemeyeceğinden, bu vazife, milletin temsilcilerine, başka deyimle milletvekillerine verilmiştir. [...] Devlet ülkesi genişleyince, her meselede doğrudan doğruya halka müracaat imkânı kalmadığından, temsili usulde, milli iradenin tecelli yeri meclis, vasıtası da hür ve emin seçimlerdir"

(Laebens & Öztürk, 2020, p. 17), the struggle for democracy turned away from its identity as a concrete search for the rights and freedoms, and turned into procedures.¹⁷

The second point that is remarkable in terms of democracy debates in the period between 1945-1950 was that the word “the people” was preferred as a homogeneous term, rather than considering the society as the sum of the freedoms of individuals as a heterogeneous structure. It is obvious why the intellectuals or the politicians of the period have preferred to use the term “the people” that treats society as a homogeneous subject, or the term of “the citizen” that treats society as a community of classless individuals. This was not a coincidence. There were two underlying reasons for this. First, the Kemalist principle of populism (*Halkçılık*) which sees the whole society as a single mass of people and that every practice involves the well-being of the all that was inherited to the post-war period. This principle which basically has the ideal of creating a classless society does not tolerate any contradiction among the people, and it treats “the people” as a homogeneous mass. Hence, most of the liberal and anti-communist intellectuals, especially Ahmet Emin Yalman, paid particular attention to use these terms to avoid words that could indicate class distinctions among the society. Yalman states at every opportunity that class distinctions among the society should be avoided: “The spin doctors of RPP ruthlessly wrote with the aim of creating a ‘class contradiction and hostility’ among society and thus tried to conceal the totalitarian conduct of their party. [...] Socialism and class struggle leads to a dead end”¹⁸ (Yalman, 1947). Thus, he avoids terms that would bring this distinction to mind, and hence he tries to use the words that point to a homogeneous society.

¹⁷ Populist discourse today is stronger than ever both in Turkey and in many other parts of the world. Especially after the establishment of the JDP rule in Turkey, as a result of the discourse of the manifestation of the national will that was polished more than ever, Turkish citizens went to the ballot boxes with various reasons almost every year in the period between 2010-2020 (in 2015, two elections were held five months apart), and thus the populist discourse of the national will has never dropped from the agenda in this way. Regarding the effects of this situation on voters’ partisanship and mobilization behavior, see: Laebens, M. G., & Öztürk, A. (2020). Partisanship and Autocratization: Polarization, Power Asymmetry, and Partisan Social Identities in Turkey. Comparative Political Studies. Advanced Online Publication.

¹⁸ Vatan, 18.09.1947, ‘Uçurumlu Yol’: “CHP kalemleri, partinin totaliter gidişini perdelemek için, yurdun içinde bir “sınıf ziddiyeti ve kini” yaratmak gayretiyle, insafsızca kaleme sarıldılar. [...] Sosyalizm ve sınıf mücadelesi, sonu uçurumlara varan çıkmaz bir yoldur”

The second underlying reason of the usage of the concept of “the people” was the elitist point of view that some intellectuals, politicians, and administrators had taken against the people itself, and thus democracy. To summarize briefly, the elitist approach taken here was that in order for democracy to exist, “the people” needed to be “mature” enough, and had to have “a nurture of democracy” (Üstüner, 2000, p. 194); however, the majority of the people in Turkey did not have these features, and therefore, some “competent representatives” were needed to establish democracy in the country (Üstüner, 2000, p. 197). This elitist approach belongs largely to the RPP executives, and the intellectuals and journalists who supported the RPP rule in that period.

However, this approach was not limited to the pro-RPP intellectuals. For example, Peyami Safa represents this elitist approach by saying, “It’s not correct to look for the center of the collective conscience, which is the focus of people’s choice, in the majority. [...] The tendencies of the majority are devoid of both knowledge and sense, and those tendencies are always ambiguous”¹⁹ (Safa, 1949, as cited in Üstüner, 2000, p. 197). Moreover, according to Başgil, transitioning to democracy in countries that do not have the above-mentioned qualities will be a disaster. In such an environment, either oligarchy or demagogy will emerge as one of the two evils (Üstüner, 2000, p. 195). Hence, Başgil’s main goal was the construction of an “orderly” democracy (Demirci, 2005, pp. 290-293) that could only come into life in a society that consists of “the people” with a “disciplined spirit and will” (Önder, 2006, p. 291). It can be said that Yalman also adopted this elitist perspective. He admits that for democracy, the people must have a certain maturity; however, unlike the other intellectuals, he argues that the Turkish nation has this maturity as of that period. Besides, according to Yalman, the reason for this elitist attitude was the RPP administrators’ unwillingness to bring democracy to the country: “The single-party officials whom

¹⁹ “Halkın tercihine mihrak olan kollektif vicdanın merkezini çoğunlukta aramak doğru değildir. [...] Çoğunluğun temayülleri bilgiden de, şurdan da mahrumdur ve belirsiz temayüller halinde kalır”

we've seen in indecent positions in the past have changed their criteria and aims, and began to believe in the maturity of the people"²⁰ (Yalman, 1948).

In the debates on democracy that took place in the period between 1945-1950, it is seen that many intellectuals, journalists, and politicians use the term "the people" to avoid class distinctions, and as a result of their elitist approaches towards the masses. In this regard, the intellectuals and politicians who approach "the people" as a homogeneous subject, lord over the masses and try to establish democracy by leaning back on the assumption that the same "people" will not insist on the wrong path in the long term (Tunçay, 2009, p. 96). These intellectuals and politicians have essentially emptied the idea of democracy and supported the system of a kind of "soft despotism" (Köker, 2009, p. 111).²¹

Another point where the debates on democracy in the 1945-1950 period were clustered was the democratization of the anti-democratic laws which sought to expand the freedoms of the people. It is evident that during this period, both the government and the opposition politicians²² made some promises about amending the anti-democratic laws. The discourse behind these promises was that the rights and freedoms of the people would be provided through the democratized laws. This discourse created an environment in which individuals in the society quickly adopted those promises and began to make demands in this regard. Thus, democracy started to be identified with the rule of law over time (Üstüner, 2000, p. 198). This relationship between freedom, justice, democracy and the rule of law, which started to be institutionalized in the

²⁰ Vatan, 22.06.1948, 'Ölçülerimizi İyi Ayarlamak Zamanıdır': "Dün iyi sayılamayacak rollerde gördüğümüz tek parti yöneticileri, ölçülerini ve gayelerini değiştirdiler ve milletin olgunluğuna inanmaya başladılar"

²¹ The interesting thing is that there are still texts in the literature that define democracy within the framework of similar elitist misconceptions, and that see the "awake" and "enlightened" citizens as the necessities of democracy (İnan, 2014, p. 280). However, among the reader letters that constitute the main skeleton of this study, there are a lot of letters that were sent by the people who did not meet the awake and enlightened criteria claimed by İnan, for instance. Although attributing features to individuals in this way is an elitist approach itself, it causes the debates on democracy of the period to be perceived in acontextual ways.

²² 'The memorandum of the four' (*Dörtlü Takrir*) which is described as the beginning of the establishment phase of the DP, includes these demands for democratization: "[...] it is essential to ensure a genuine opposition, to make amendments to certain laws which restrict the popular spirit of the constitution that prevents democratic institutions to be born and live freely..." (Timur, 1991, p.14).

minds of the people before 1950, would become the main agenda of the democracy debates of the post-1950 period -in the late 1950s, these debates will turn into solid struggles.

It can be said that as a result of references about the specific conditions of Turkey, the relationship that was established between democracy and the rule of law has been subjected a number of problematic interpretations. In the pre-1950 period, when the opposition started to rise with timid steps, the idea revolving around the abandonment of some principles of democracy which could damage the republic, like the freedom of thought and conscience, opened up a debate on which both the government and the opposition had a consensus (Üstüner, 2000, pp. 198-199). In fact, it was the spirit of the whole period that the issues mentioned at this point and agreed upon to be challenged were the thoughts/practices contrary to the Kemalist principles²³ - especially the principle of laicism-, and left/socialist ideas as a result of the anti-communist reflexes of that period. For example, Yalman wrote about this situation without any hesitation:

Only a few of versions of freedom of debate does not, and cannot, exist in Turkey. These are the freedoms that want to drag the country back to centuries prior, disrupt the stability and security, those that want to bring to the country some foreign trends that were born due to the conditions of foreign countries. Beside these, there is a perfect freedom of debate in Turkey²⁴ (Yalman, 1938).

These and similar approaches of Yalman and many other intellectuals of the period reveal a problematic understanding of freedom. Consequently, the limits of individual

²³ Kemalist principles were the biggest taboo in Turkey during that period. However, during the DP rule, even those principles were to be discussed, and certain distinctions were to be made among them. It is apparent how slippery of a ground the rule of law represents, which is a system that should not be open to interpretation on the individual rights and freedoms. Also, for the examination of the “Protection Law on Atatürk” within the framework of the ‘totem and taboo’, see: Kaynar, 2009, pp. 1104-1107.

²⁴ Tan, 23.01.1938, ‘Çok Yanlış Bir Görüş’: “Türkiye’de münakaşa hürriyetinin bir, iki şekli yoktur ve olamaz. Bunlar da eski idareler yüzünden kaybettiği asırlarca zamanı telafi etmek ihtiyacında olan bu memleketi gerilere doğru sürüklemek, istikrar ve emniyeti bozmak, başka memleketlerin ihtiyaç veya şartlarından doğan bir takım bize yabancı cereyanları memlekete sokmak ve yapmak hürriyetleridir. Bunların dışında Türkiye’de tam münakaşa hürriyeti vardır”

freedoms were drawn by subjective evaluations²⁵ of the decision-makers, i.e. the elected politicians of that period. Additionally, the anti-communist spirit of the period caused many intellectuals such as Yalman to distinguish between the concepts of freedom and equality. The concepts of freedom and equality are already two concepts with different meanings. However, the distinction mentioned here is about defining the concept of freedom as the common interests of the society, and the concept of equality in the sense of equality of citizens before the law (Üstüner, 2000, p. 199). For example, according to Yalman, the concept freedom is the economic freedom of the individual, and the usage of the concept of equality instead of freedom in liberal issues such as free competition, was a sign of mentioning the “Moscow type democracy” (Üstüner, 2000, p. 200).

The democracy debates in the 1945-1950 period were clustered around the understanding of Western-type liberal democracy that a form of government operates democratically only within the procedures. Therefore, the understanding of democracy of this period was limited to the framework of free and fair elections, and democratization of the anti-democratic laws. Both understandings were containing some problems. The definition of democracy which was reduced to free and fair elections includes important problems such as the issue of the manifestation of national will becoming a populist discourse over time, the elitist approach revealing as to whether the people were mature enough to choose their own administrators, and ultimately the fetishization of the act of voting. In this sense, the reconciliation of both the government and the opposition, for instance, with regards to the Kemalist principles, shows that since 1945, democracy has been revealed as a transition from the authoritarian regime to the competitive politics. However, according to Özbudun (2000), this transformation was in the form of “*reforma*”, rather than a “*ruptura*” (Özbudun, 2000, p. 14). Likewise, Sunar says that the DP was born out of a political and social structure suitable for “plebiscitary-populist democracy” (Sunar, 1985, p.

²⁵ One of the important reasons why it was depending on the subjective evaluations in the period before 1960 is that, the Constitutional Court, an institution that supervises the government’s legal regulations, has not been established yet (Beriş, 2005, p. 535).

2084), and then used it in its favor by changing the laws that were expected to open new areas of freedom, by using the mechanisms of rule of law in its own interests.

It was stated at the beginning that the debates on democracy during the 1945-1960 period can be divided into three sections. Hence, the second section was roughly the period between 1950-1955. This distinction sits on two breaking points, one historical and one periodical: the 27 year-long single-party rule ended in 1950, and after the general elections of 1954 the DP shifted to an authoritarian and arbitrary rule that consists of illiberal and anti-democratic practices. The change in power that took place in 1950 was described by many as the success of democracy. The first reason behind this depiction is that it was seen as the result of free and fair elections that were tackled discursively and sometimes with concrete practices during the period between 1945-1950. Another reason is that the debates on democracy which were carried out both on a popular scale and at an intellectual level during the period between 1945-1950 had shaped the society, and had prepared it to the democratic regime. Thus, the official Kemalist ideology, which paradoxically legitimizes the barriers to the institutionalization of democratic politics, especially with its restrictions on freedom of expression and association, has been democratically defeated (Köker, 2009, p. 99). When it was the case, the definition that best characterizes the DP period is perhaps “the era of populist democracy” (Smith, 2015, p. 2).²⁶ Indeed, these three concepts point to the economic, cultural and political basis of the understanding of democracy in the 1950s.²⁷

The expected result of the free and fair elections is that since everyone in society has equal voting rights, the rule would be taken over by the crowded masses. But contrary to what was expected, people stubbornly gave up their rights and interests on behalf of someone or something (Mert, 1999, p.36). The political equivalent of this understanding is, in short, right-wing politics. Democratic party was the first

²⁶ Based on this definition, Smith (2015) defines the 1950s as the era of “justice, equality, and cheap cigarettes” (Smith, 2015, p. 2).

²⁷ The fact that these three pillars were in line with the bases defined by the official Kemalist ideology within the framework of “modernization” (Köker, 2009, p. 99) and its efforts to reconcile modernization with democracy (Tunçay, 2009, p. 96) confirms the above-mentioned “*reforma*” claims.

representative of the center-right politics in Turkey with references to its populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will. Actually, this means “the nation” renounced its ruling rights on behalf of the DP rule, and hence the DP became the representative of “the nation”²⁸. In this sense, it can be said that the three-headed center-right composition of economic liberalism, i.e. free market economy, religious sensitivities and nationalism came into existence with the DP rule (Mert, 2006, p. 314). On the basis of it, it cannot be said that the ten-year long DP rule had taken any other democratic steps outside of these areas.

At the beginning, DP’s definition of democracy in terms of the period of 1950-1955 was clearly stated in Menderes’ words: “Democracy is the system of continuous debate and discussion, the system of voting”²⁹ (Bora, 2005, p. 499). As it is seen, this definition made by Menderes in 1950 reflects the democracy notion of the period between 1945-1950. Two issues that Menderes focused on in defining democracy were freedom of debate and citizen’s act of voting. This is exactly what the populist discourse which was the determinant of the democracy perceptions of the period pointed out. From this point forth, the first indication of the above-mentioned composition and the populist discourse was actualized as the Kemalist reforms began to be opened for discussion (Sarıbay, 1991, p. 123). The DP executives made a distinction among the Kemalist reforms³⁰ by saying, “Our reforms that were accepted by the people will be preserved”³¹ (Toker, 1991, p. 37; Kaya-Özçelik, 2010, p. 175). By this distinction, the DP put the RPP in an elitist position that was hostile to the

²⁸ Şerif Mardin, who approaches the DP’s coming to power from a sociological perspective, “identifies the DP with the interests and culture of the periphery” (Tombuş, 2009, p. 139). On the contrary, Galip Yalman (2002) says that it would be wrong to think of the DP power as the “victory of the periphery” (Yalman, 2002, p. 32).

²⁹ “Demokrasi mütemadi ve mütevali müzakere ve münakaşa usulüdür, reyler usulüdür”

³⁰ The debates that started on the Kemalist principles brought many discussions about the DP’s position in the Turkish political history. For example, neo-Kemalists, who envisioned themselves as “*Kalpaksız Kuvvacılar*” (The Capless Forces), claimed that the State was being undermined by some various political attitudes from the 1950s onwards (Erdoğan, 2009, p. 587). Similarly, according to Metin Heper (2005), the contrast between the DP and the military as of 1950 actually represents the contrast of liberal democracy and “rationalist” approach (Heper, 2005, p. 35).

³¹ “Millete mâl olmuş inkılaplarımız mahfuz tutulacaktır”

national will, while placing the vast majority of the society directly against it, within the framework of populism which points to the antagonisms between the ruling elites and the people.³² The DP's distinctive and hostile attitudes eventually resulted in the polarization among the society.

Second, the freedom conception of the DP, which emerged after 1950, contains certain contradictions from the beginning. On the one hand, while the DP underlined that the freedom of conscience should be defended within the framework of the freedom of debate, and thus, did not hesitate to support the Islamic reaction, but on the other hand it did not refrain from taking an anti-communist attitude by not recognizing the same freedom to the leftist thoughts (Demirel, 2005, p. 499).³³ The underlying reason for this situation was the political understanding that the DP blended with religious sensitivities and the nationalist-conservative approaches. The shortest explanation to this rapprochement is that the DP -as a center-right wing party- was seeking support from all segments of the society through its populist rhetoric. Eroğul (1990) summarizes the societal base of the DP as the ruling class, which uses the grassroots movements in order to gain the all power in Turkey (Eroğul, 1990, p. 51).³⁴

One of the pillars of the above-mentioned composition was the discourse and practices of economic liberalism embodied by the DP rule. In fact, it can be said that the DP did not take democratic steps other than economic liberalism which includes areas such as free enterprise and free market economy. The most important DP practices that support these claims were the legal arrangements made regarding to individuals' free enterprise rights in accordance with economic liberalism. Turkey's development and

³² This effort of the DP can also be considered as an effort to make an alternative definition of "the nation" (Mert, 2006, pp. 314-315). The underlining drive of this attitude of the DP was the effort to increase its support from the society by interpreting the concept of "*Atatürkçülük*" (Atatürkism), which it had produced in the framework of its efforts to show itself as an unobjectionable opposition during the pre-1950 period (Köker, 2009, p. 97; Mert, 2006, p. 315) within its own interests after 1950 by trying to break down some Kemalist taboos.

³³ For anti-communist reflexes and communist withholdings of the DP era, see: Yaşlı, 2019, pp. 82-129.

³⁴ But still, it is a fact that ordinary person could feel her/himself as a "value" in the DP years (Demirel, 2005, p. 498).

defeating poverty as soon as possible (Demirel, 2005, p. 518) was a target for the DP, which adopted liberal views in the economic field.³⁵

Besides, democracy notion of the DP rule underwent certain changes during the ten-year rule period. This varying understanding of democracy was essentially derived from the DP's arbitrary interpretation of democracy. For Turkish liberals, it is not common to turn their faces to the West completely. They definitely have features that are unique to the East. For Samet Ağaoğlu, these Eastern features were identified with the concept of "spiritual ties" (Aslan, 2005, p. 511). It is this understanding that he advocates to reduce the pressure of the ruling power in the political arena, rather than a concept specific to Western-type liberal democracy such as the individual freedom (Aslan, 2005, p. 516). On the contrary, Ali Fuat Başgil, who supported the DP during its opposition years, was uncomfortable with the practices of the DP that were not suitable for liberal democracy, and he began to criticize the DP. Başgil, who accused the DP of following the path of the RPP and ruling the country with a different type of chiefdom system, says the following about the DP: "Our government has made so many mistakes that there seems no hope for the future of our democracy. I am not sure about what lies ahead for us"³⁶ (Demirci, 2005, p. 296). A similar position was valid for Yalman. According to Yalman, the DP was "cutting the branch it was atop"³⁷ (Yalman, 1952) by confiscating the RPP's properties. Afterwards, Yalman makes a second warning by saying, "The country may face dark possibilities if some desires are not done away with"³⁸ (Yalman, 1952), and finally he calls for the President to be a mediator between the two sides (Yalman, 1971, p. 269).

When the DP's populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will merged with the economic recovery that took place between 1950-1954 which was the result

³⁵ In this context, the DP enacted Foreign Capital Investments Incentive Law in 1951 (Eroğul, 1990, p. 62), and Foreign Capital Incentive Law and Oil Law in 1954 (Eroğul, 1990, pp. 82-83).

³⁶ "Hükümetin işlediği hatalar o derece olmuştur ki, demokrasimizin geleceği için hiçbir ümit bırakmamaktadır. Ben yarınımızdan emin değilim"

³⁷ Vatan, 05.06.1952, 'Bindiğimiz Dalı Kesmiyelim!': "Bindiğimiz dalı kesmeyelim"

³⁸ Vatan, 10.06.1952, 'Demokrat Parti Oyuna Gelecek Mi?': "Mevcut birtakım arzuların önüne geçilmezse, memleket karanlık ihtimaller karşısında kalabilir"

of Turkey's articulation to the security system of the Western block (Özer & Sarıkaya, 2005, p. 462), and the DP's implementation of economic liberalization steps that were appropriate for a free market economy, the DP regained power in 1954 with a greater percentage of votes than the previous elections. This dazzling result caused the DP to redesign 'the definition of democracy' in the interests of itself. The DP which had taken democratic steps in very few areas until 1954 -as a result, it is hard to call the DP democratic-, underwent an arbitrary trend that consists of illiberal practices as of 1954. Populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will which was built on a procedural democratic practice such as free and fair elections, began to lose its power to determine the notion of democracy as of 1954. It can be said that there were two reasons for this. First, these procedural demands of the masses were fulfilled with the elections of 1950 and 1954, and the DP -as the representative of the national will- became the sole power-holder in the country. Second, as the economic indicators started to go down in 1954, DP's illiberal practices and deficiencies in ruling the country became more visible. In other words, the masses, especially the individuals belonging the urban middle-classes, realized that the empty political polemics and the polarizing discourse and the policies were not sufficient to have a democratic order. In this sense, the debates on democracy after 1954 turned out to take place in the field of seeking liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances.

It was stated at the beginning that the debates on democracy during the 1945-1960 period can be divided into three sections. Hence, the third section was roughly the period between 1955-1960. The reason why 1955 was chosen was described above; 1960 was chosen due to the end of the DP rule as a result of the military coup on May 27. There were two approaches characterizing the debates on democracy from 1955 to 1960. First, the concept of 'the people' which was intentionally preferred to be used by the intellectuals, journalists, academics, and politicians, to avoid pointing to social classes in Turkey, was started to be replaced with the concept of 'the individual'. The concept of 'the people', especially used by the anti-communist and/or liberal circles, has become ambiguous over time. This way of usage was essentially the product of an ideological positioning. This positioning indicated by the Kemalist populism principle denies the existence of social classes and class antagonisms in Turkey. Instead, the concept of 'the people' was preferred in order to claim that Turkish society consists of a homogeneous, a monolithic mass does not contain class contradictions. Hence, the

concept had turned into an empty signifier under the influence of the populist discourse (Erdoğan, 1998, p. 23). That is why this focus forms one leg of the post-1955 debates on democracy.

Second, the top executives of the DP -especially Bayar and Menderes-, who were in a position where all the devices sufficient to control the society were possessed, adopted a path that could be summarized with Bayar's words as "benevolent understanding of democracy is over"³⁹ (Toker, 1992a, p. 26) after the 1954 election victory. Hence, the idea that "unlimited freedoms can lead the society to anarchy and therefore should be limited by laws" (Üstüner, 2000, p. 194), which Üstüner (2000) dedicates to the RPP rule for the period before 1950, was adopted by the DP rule (Kaya-Özçelik, 2010, p. 178). Thus, the second approach that shaped the debates on democracy in the post-1955 period was the DP practices⁴⁰ that constituted illiberal and anti-democratic practices, and the societal opposition and struggles have begun to be crystalized against those practices.

Considering the ways in which the debates on democracy as of 1955 were shaped around a position that opposing to the DP's illiberal and anti-democratic practices, it would be important to mention DP's approach to the notion of democracy. Shortly after the DP came to power, Prime Minister Menderes began to put into words the following discourse about democracy: "Administration within the limits of democratic order and freedom is as hard as being a captain in the open seas"⁴¹ (Bora, 2005, p. 500). In this framework, he makes it a habit to answer as "This much democracy can

³⁹ "İnce demokrasiye paydos"

⁴⁰ The DP rapidly moved away from the principles of liberal democracy after the 1954 election victory, and some of the following anti-democratic practices were implemented and laws were enacted within a short period of one year: the degradation of the province of *Kırşehir* to a district (Eroğul, 1990, pp. 101-102), denial of 'the right to prove' (Yalman, 1971, p. 327; Toker, 1992a, p. 104), encouraging newspapers close to the DP and punishing others by various methods, protecting the oppressive press law, amending the election law to restrict the opposition, placing academics who criticize the views of the government under the ministry order, and changing the positions of judges and other high officials, or retiring them regardless of duration of service (Demirel, 2005, p. 500; Eroğul, 1990, pp. 102-104).

⁴¹ "Demokratik nizam ve hürriyet içinde idare, açık denizde kaptanlık etmek kadar güçtür"

lead to dangers that would destroy democracy itself”⁴² (Bora, 2005, p. 500) to ‘arbitrary rule’ criticisms directed to him and the DP in some occasions. After the 1954 election victory, Menderes came to the position of “It is not possible for judicial bodies to prevent, control and even limit the national will” (Demirel, 2005, p. 504) by combining his attitudes towards democracy with the populist discourses of the national will that he had expressed at every opportunity. Underlining that the principle of judicial independence is a privilege given by the bourgeoisie to the proletariat in the West, Menderes opposes the definition of democracy within the framework of concrete subjects such as “the individual”, rather than an ambiguous and populist concept like “the people”, by saying “The classless society of Turkey does not need to make such a concession”⁴³ (Demirel, 2005, p. 505).⁴⁴

It can be said that there were three moments through which the democracy debates of the period were carried out, and were critical for shaping and directing the societal struggles for the search for “democracy”. The first of these was *Forum*, a journal which started its publication life a month before the 1954 general elections (Beriş, 2005, p. 530), and the second was Freedom Party, which was founded in December 1955. Despite the fact that the universities can be counted as the places where debates on democracy and struggles of freedom took place most vividly (Bora, 2005, p. 487), the universities can be added to those moments, however, both *Forum* and the FP had close and organic relationships -via the academics that were affiliated with both of them- with the universities. Additionally, the RPP’s notion of democracy in this period is also worth considering as a third moment. Thus, it can be said that the notion of democracy of that period began to be framed with references to the guarantee of the individual rights and freedoms in line with the liberal-democratic principles.

⁴² “Bu kadar fazla demokratlık, bizzat demokrasiyi ortadan kaldıracak tehlikeler iras edebilir”

⁴³ “Türkiye’nin sınıfsız toplumunun böyle bir tavize ihtiyacı yoktur”

⁴⁴ So indeed, the institutionalization of the concepts of judicial independence and scrutiny will be provided with the 1961 constitution in Turkey. It can be said that the 1961 constitution, which had democratic principles in many respects, was the fruit of the debates on democracy of the 1955-1960 period that accepting the existence of social classes in Turkey and prioritizing the individual rights and freedoms (Günay, 2005, p. 526).

In this context, the journal of *Forum* was the first moment that influenced the understanding of democracy of the period. The main problematic of *Forum* was “drawing the limits of state power” (Özçetin, 2004, pp. 98-99). *Forum* which started its publication life on April 1, 1954, was a platform where the concepts of freedom and democracy could be discussed by the intellectuals of the 1950s (Beriş, 2005, p. 530). The purpose of the intellectuals who published the journal of *Forum* was to discuss the country’s problems on a free and leveled platform, in order to institutionalize a democratic society and a libertarian order in Turkey (Dede, 2019, p. 459). In this context, *Forum* writers claimed that they have a neutral line (Smith, 2015, p. 69) which was free from partisanship (just as the Society for the Spreading of Free Ideas), as a typical liberal approach.

However, it is a fact that the intellectuals in *Forum* initially stood close to the DP. In this respect, they contradicted to the liberal democratic principles they upheld, and supported the electoral majority system at the expense of rapid decision-making (Beriş, 2005, p. 531). Nevertheless, they also emphasized that the -electoral- minority should not be silenced, saying that the existence of true democracy constitutes a government that comes to power through free elections and an opposition that conducts free political activity (Dede, 2019, p. 455). Therefore, although *Forum* initially had an attitude that reduced democracy to procedural processes such as elections; however, its definition of democracy was freed from this vicious circle by 1955, when the intimacy with the DP began to break.

Forum defines democracy in the form of a decent order that beseems to the human dignity, and includes diversity and polyphony. Within this order, which was defined as democracy, there was an imagination of a rule of law where individual freedoms are guaranteed and the political power is limited (Beriş, 2005, p. 534). Thus, it was thought that both the rights of the electoral minority against the majority, and the rights of the individual against the public authority, i.e. the State, should be protected. In this context, besides the emphasis on the free public opinion, i.e. the civil society, that would scrutinize the government within the framework of the principle of separation of powers, such as the independent judiciary and constitutional control, has been frequently suggested by *Forum*. In a system where the mechanisms of checks and balances had not yet institutionalized, this meant to protect the individuals against the

public authority by the laws to be enacted by the public authority itself, hence, this type of a projection malfunctioned in Turkey at the time.⁴⁵

This malfunctioning had two causes originating from the DP rule. First, the “free” civil society, which was expected to scrutinize and -when necessary- punish the government via not voting for the current government in the elections, for instance, was under the intense populist bombardment of the DP rule at that time. A discourse of national will that was reduced to numbers (Kaynar, 2019, p. 673) had been particularly influential on the masses that have become audible with the DP power, and hence, those masses were mobilized against the “enemies” that were trying to destroy the DP, and advocated the DP practices even if they were completely contradicting with the liberal-democratic principles. Secondly, the DP rule, by taking advantage of the absence of democratic checks and balances, had ventured to redefine democracy in line with its own interests, and in this framework, the DP government enacted laws that were restricting the rights and freedoms and suppressing the social opposition. With the combination of these two, the State was tried to be deified and placed in a position beyond all democratic individual rights and freedoms. Thus, as the opposite of the liberal understanding of democracy, first the construction of the party-state system, in which the Democratic Party was claimed to be the State was initiated, and then, this effort showed signs of shifting to the one-man regime under the charismatic leadership of Prime Minister Menderes.

Freedom Party as the second moment in terms of the debates on democracy between 1955-1960, was a liberal political party founded on December 20, 1955, by a group of liberal politicians who broke their ties with the DP (Özçetin, 2004, p. 75). Although, the politicians -i.e. the 19s as they were called at that time being-, who were the founders of the FP, left -resigned or were expelled from the DP- the DP after the issuing of ‘the right to proof’, the underlying drive of this break was the DP’s adoption of an authoritarian and arbitrary tone after the 1954 general elections (Özçetin & Demirci, 2005, pp. 542-544). Considering the conditions under which the party emerged, it is seen that it had a homogeneous executive team and had a structure

⁴⁵ The DP rule was the best proof that the threat towards the individual rights and freedoms could also come from the political power elected by the general vote (Demirel, 2005, pp. 519-520).

different from the RPP and the DP with a horizontal relations network within the party. With its approaches to economic, political and social issues, the first liberal party in Turkey in the Western sense was the FP. In this context, against the authoritarian rule approach of the DP, the two main arguments that they emphasized were “honesty and freedom” (Günay, 2005, p. 523). Consequently, the issues that FP focuses on as liberal democratic principles can be summarized as fundamental rights and freedoms, judicial independence, legislative control, relative representation system, bicameral legislative system, autonomy of universities and neutrality of the president (Özçetin, 2004, pp. 98-108; Dede, 2019, p. 464). Therefore, we can say that the FP emerged as a candidate party to be the practitioner of theoretically shaped thoughts around the *Forum* circle.

The debates of democracy discussed in the intellectual and political channels of the period between 1955-1960, have emerged in universities with the struggles of democratic rights and freedoms against the authoritarian, oppressive and arbitrary rule of the DP. The RPP politicians were involved in these struggles in the late 1950s. The underlying drive of those struggles that appeared in the universities was the DP’s legal arrangements on universities, especially academics, who were under pressure (Özçetin & Demirci, 2005, p. 544). It can be said that the DP rule, which was not very good with the universities, did not like this group, who constantly talked about freedom and democracy (Beriş, 2005, pp. 531-532). In December 1956, the dismissal of Turhan Feyzioğlu who was the Dean of the Faculty of Political Science in Ankara University at that time, on charges of engaging in politics in the university (Toprak, 2013, p. 53), was the first and symbolic implementation of these legal arrangements (Eroğul, 1990, p. 121; Toker, 1992a, p. 224).

As the DP’s illiberal and anti-democratic identity became more visible as of 1955, the RPP’s approach to the notion of democracy and the way the RPP positioned itself in relation to the DP rule had changed. The weakening of the populist rhetoric of the DP, claiming to be the representative of the national will, and its gradual shift towards an authoritarian and arbitrary rule had led to the RPP’s transition towards a different understanding of opposition, one in which the DP was touted as a party that lied to people and deceived them, meanwhile the RPP was shown as the protector of the true interests of the nation (Varel, 2019, pp. 227-228). Nadir Nadi writes about the

exchange of roles between the RPP and the DP, the latter of which he says was increasingly shifting to the Chiefdom dictatorship:

The war between the rulers and the opposition here is somewhat reminiscent of the children's game of tag. The ruling parties assume the spirit of their former opponents as soon as they are toppled, just like how in a game of tag a child assumes the role of the previous "it" immediately after he/she is tagged⁴⁶ (Nadi, 1956, as cited in Varel, 2019, p. 228).

Indeed, the bases of the RPP's criticisms towards the DP after 1955 were quite similar to those of the DP before 1950. However, both periods differ from each other within the framework of debates on the notion of democracy.

The fact that the DP's repression regime includes a mass that spreads to the whole society has brought the RPP's democracy notion within the framework of guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms. In this respect, a wide spectrum from workers' trade union rights to the issue of the autonomy of academics had been included in the notion of democracy. In short, the democratic demands made by the RPP during this period can be summarized as follows: guaranteeing freedom of assembly and press, tenure of judges, ending partisan practices in the state apparatus, autonomy of universities, establishment of the Constitutional Court, adoption of proportional-representation principle in elections, adoption of a bicameral parliamentary structure, the recognition and guarantee of strike and trade union rights, etc. (Varel, 2019, p. 230).

As can be seen, the demands expressed by the RPP after 1955 and the notion of democracy adopted in line with them exactly coincide with the democracy debates of the period. These demands, which can be summarized as the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances as a general framework, were announced to the popular opinion collectively in the election program prepared by the RPP before the 1957 elections (İnan, 2019, p. 262). During the ongoing process, the RPP politicians made trips and meetings throughout the country and made efforts for this notion of democracy to be adopted by the society. As a result, the notion of democracy adopted

⁴⁶ Cumhuriyet, 15.02.1956: "Bizdeki iktidar-muhalefet savaşı, bir bakıma çocukların köşe kapmaca oyununu andırıyor. Yerini elden geçirip da ebe olan küçük, nasıl kendinden önceki ebenin rolünü aynen benimserse, bizde de muhalefete geçen siyasi partiler eski muhaliflerinin ruh halini olduğu gibi kabulleniyorlar"

by the RPP since the mid-1950s was embodied in the Initial Objectives Declaration (*İlk Hedefler Beyannamesi*) as a serious step in the 1959 RPP congress (Toker, 1992b, pp. 203-204).⁴⁷

In this part, the debates on democracy during the 1945-1960 era were examined in three periods. In general, it can be said that the development of liberal democracy theories in the West and its administrative mechanisms were the focal points of those discussions. Democracy debates of the 1945-1950 period were clustered around the procedures of the order of democracy, which implies one aspect of the Western-type liberal democracies. Democracy debates of that period were made within the framework of Kemalist modernization goals⁴⁸, by using ambiguous terms such as “the people” in order to avoid to accept the existence of the social classes in the society. Furthermore, there were two main issues around which democracy debates had continued during this period: free and fair elections, and democratization of anti-democratic laws.

Democracy debates between 1950-1955 were influenced by the populist discourse. The rhetoric that the DP -as a center-right wing party- offered the triple combination of economic liberalism, religious sensitivities and nationalism was very effective in determining the democracy perception of the period. The DP’s populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will, which polishes the DP as the true representative of the nation, paved the way for an environment that polarized the society and divided it into two opposing camps. On the other side, it can be said that the democratic steps of the DP rule during this period were limited to the fields of free enterprise and free market economy. Therefore, the 1945-1955 period was a period in which the populist discourse in general determined the debates and perceptions of democracy.

⁴⁷ In fact, after the merger of the FP with the RPP, ‘Initial Objectives Declaration’ prepared with the contributions of the former FP politicians of Turan Güneş and Fevzi Lütfü Karaosmanoğlu, contained all the liberal-democratic demands that the FP and Forum had advocated. It is a known reality that this declaration constitutes the foundations of the 1961 Constitution adopted after the 1960 military coup (Güneş-Ayata, 2002, p. 103). As another footnote, young generation politicians (Turan Güneş, İbrahim Öktem, Muammer Aksoy) who joined the RPP from the FP, became the pioneers of the RPP’s ‘left of the middle’ movement in the 1970s (Günay, 2005, p. 526).

⁴⁸ According to Nadir Nadi, “The steps on which Turkish democracy will rise are Atatürk’s principles” (Nadi, 1993, p. 47).

Democracy debates of the 1955-1960 period constitute a paradigm shift within the definition and understanding of democracy especially among the liberal intelligentsia, as a result of the DP's illiberal and anti-democratic practices. The concept of "the people" has been replaced by the conceptualization of "the individual". This period was also a period in which the concept of the rule of law was included in the notion of democracy in the form of the individual rights and freedoms that could be achieved through mechanisms such as independent judiciary, legislative control, and the civil society scrutiny over the governments. Following the rise of authoritarian and arbitrary trend of the DP rule, the democracy perception of the period began to take shape around the liberal-democratic principles. Thus, it can be said that, the political developments have replaced the position of the populist discourse determining the debates and the perceptions of democracy.

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, the theoretical framework of letter correspondence and the debates on democracy in the period between 1945 and 1960 were analyzed through reviewing the relevant literature. The answers to be given to the questions such as who writes letters, why readers write letters, and how the contents of letters differ are important in terms of revealing in which historical processes the letters of the readers were shaped. First of all, the answers to the first two questions will help to frame the historicity that this study, which is also a research on a historical period, focuses on. In addition to this general framework, the letters, which are windows opening to the subjective experiences of the readers, enable a detailed analysis from micro to macro perspectives. Secondly, the reader letters sent to Yalman have a wide range of contents and contexts. It is important to determine the factors by which those reader letters were influenced and hence shaped, in order to frame the scope of this study.

Additionally, a detailed review of the debates on democracy in the period between 1945 and 1960 was conducted in this chapter. Three main trends stand out in the democracy debates of the period. The first of these is the attempt to define democracy with the procedures of the Western-type liberal democracies, which prevailed in the pre-1950 period. While this effort was shaped around the free and fair conduct of elections, it also includes the tendency to define the masses as 'the people' which is a

homogeneous and holistic concept. Thus, while the existence of social classes and class contrasts were denied, the way was paved for the embodiment of populist discourse under the name of '*millet*' (the nation). Therefore, populist discourse embodied as the manifestation of the national will emerges as the second trend in the democracy debates of the period. The concrete consequence of this trend was the DP's election victory in 1950, and then turning towards policies that deepen the polarizations in the society via feeding the antagonisms between the elite and the people.

The democracy perceptions, however, changed in the post-1954 era when the DP's illiberal and anti-democratic identity became more apparent. As a result, the intellectual and some political circles realized that the populist rhetoric was insufficient to define the notion of democracy as the last trend of the debates on democracy in the period. Thus, the need for some liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances became the determinant of the democracy perceptions in the period after 1954. At this point, it can be said that the demands for the institutionalization of liberal-democratic mechanisms started to be discussed by the intellectual and political circles as of 1948. Demands that developed within this framework can only be seen in the reader letters as of 1954. In this respect, it is a very interesting detail that the discussions that started in 1948 at the higher levels were absorbed by the society and raised as new demands by 1954.

In short, it can be said that those debates that took place in the intellectual and political circles mostly influenced the contents of the letters and thus shaped the democracy perceptions of Yalman's readers. However, the analysis of the letters in these contexts will be done in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3

AHMET EMİN YALMAN'S IDEOLOGICAL POSITION AND THE CLASS CHARACTERS OF HIS READERS

3.1. Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to examine the relationship between Yalman -as an intellectual- and his readers, in detail. The fact that the reader letters sent to journalist Yalman that constitute the main skeleton of this study necessitates this type of analysis. Because without analyzing the relationship between Yalman and his readers, it is not possible to put the analysis of the ideas contained in the historical contextual perspective of the reader letters to be examined throughout the study on a solid basis. Therefore, it is essential to conduct examinations that shed light on the ideological positioning of Yalman and the class characters of his readers within a specific historical context. By revealing the class character and educational/intellectual levels of the readers that have been chosen as the subjects of this study, it will be avoided the error of generalizing a historical period. A similar situation is valid for avoiding the error of placing intellectual figures in a single drawer, i.e. categorization of them, through a review of Yalman's intellectual background and the political and social thought fields that he has adopted as a goal to teach the masses. Thus, on the one hand a new contribution has been made about the positions and mental worlds of the readers with certain class characters, while on the other hand the position of Yalman as an intellectual figure will be exactly clarified. Consequently, the purpose of this chapter is to specifically reveal which class character and intellectual level the readers examined throughout the study by avoiding generalizations over the chosen historical period.

In this context, this chapter will have three sub-parts. In the first part, Yalman's ideological position will be presented along with his short biography. The importance of this part, some of which is in the form of encyclopedic knowledge, is that it presents the development of Yalman's world of thought. Thus, Yalman's ideological position will be revealed and the relationship he had established with his readers will be evaluated within this framework. In the second part, mainly the class character of Yalman's readers will be tried to be determined. Within the scope of this revealing process, some clues left by the readers in their letters will be followed. Initially, the rhetorical elements used in the letters will be examined. Thus, on the one hand while the narration skills of Yalman's readers will be analyzed, on the other hand a door on their educational and intellectual levels will be opened. In this context, first, one aspect of the class characters of the readers will be examined by analyzing the cities where the readers were living and/or sent their letters from. In addition, the educational levels of the readers will be determined with references to their occupational groups, and their educational levels will be discussed within the framework of the educational conditions and possibilities of the period. This examination will be the most important stage for determining the class character of the readers. Finally, the contents of the letters will be subjected to some kind of discourse analysis, and hence, the intellectual level differentiations among the readers will be revealed. As a result of all these examinations and analyses, the class character of the readers will be exposed.

The aim of the last part is to gather the results of the examinations in the first two parts and to map the relationship between Yalman and his readers. In this part, the reply letters sent by Yalman to his readers will also be examined, the words that the readers have chosen to address Yalman, the roles they have attributed to Yalman as an intellectual figure, and the discussions between Yalman and his readers will be analyzed. As a result of all these analyses, the relationship map of Yalman and his readers will be created. This mapping effort is important in terms of showing the ideological positionings between intellectuals and the individuals, in general. In this sense, the analysis made through Yalman and his readers constitutes an idiosyncratic example among many generalized samples.

3.2. Ahmet Emin Yalman's Ideological Position

Ahmet Emin Yalman was born in Thessaloniki (*Selanik*) on May 14, 1888. Yalman, who was from the same generation as the cadres who established the Republic, grew up in Thessaloniki during the period when the Committee of Union and Progress was established and flourished. To put it in Yalman's words, "Back then, Thessaloniki was the major window of the country opening to the West. The fluctuations of the Macedonian movement were mostly responded there" (Yalman, 1997, p. 10). His father, Osman Tevfik Bey, taught writing lessons at the high school (*idadi mektebi*) and the industrial school, and writing and history lessons at the Military Junior High School (*Askeri Rüştiye*) (Ibid., p. 11).⁴⁹ In that respect, the fact that he had personally witnessed what went in the 20th century Ottoman and Turkish soil, and the fact that he had been involved in many events at the time to a certain extent, was highly valuable for his intellectual development.

In the intellectual and dynamic environment of Thessaloniki, Yalman, who was interested in journalism like his father, starts publishing a weekly newspaper named *Niyet* when he was nine years old (Ibid., p. 16). Also, the Journal named *Mütalaa* which his father started to publish with a few friends of his, was the first place where Yalman got some real experience on journalism. Additionally, the highest quality schools in the country were in Thessaloniki at that time. After studying at several schools, including the Military Junior High School, Yalman finally finishes the German School. In the meantime, as a result of his father's appointment to İstanbul, he moves to İstanbul with his family and finishes Beyoğlu German High School there. Having learned French in the Military Junior High School and German in the Thessaloniki German School, Yalman adds English to these two foreign languages in Beyoğlu German High School (Ibid., p. 41). Yalman graduates from Beyoğlu German High School in 1907 and starts working as an English interpreter for *Sabah* newspaper, and thus, he takes his first step towards journalism (Ibid., p. 51).

⁴⁹ Yalman's father was also the writing teacher of Mustafa Kemal in the military junior high school. This situation was also known by Mustafa Kemal. During the removal of Yalman's ban on journalism in 1936 by Mustafa Kemal, he expresses this fact himself (Yalman, 1970, p. 217).

After working in *Sabah* newspaper for a while, he was appointed as an interpreter to the Bâb-ı Âli Translation Office. Thus, as a young member of the first generation of the twentieth century, Yalman experienced the (Young Turk) Revolution of 1908⁵⁰ in Bâb-ı Âli (Ibid., p. 68). After the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, Yalman joins the writing team of *Yeni Gazete* and begins to write editorials for a year before he starts working there (Ibid., p. 73). Meanwhile, Yalman, who started his undergraduate education at the Faculty of Law, continues his work in the Bâb-ı Âli Translation Office. Afterwards, he was appointed as the translator of Said Paşa in the Assembly of Notables (*Meclis-i Âyan*). Thus, the fact that Yalman had witnessed democratization movements with the Revolution of 1908, he had the chance to observe the parliamentary mechanisms by working in the Assembly of Notables (Ibid., p. 75). Shortly after Yalman got acquainted with the idea of liberal democracy in the Ottoman Empire, the University of Columbia in New York declared that it would accept three Ottoman youths free of charge, and therefore, a test was made to determine who to be chosen (Ibid., pp. 128-130). Yalman passes the test and goes to the US with four⁵¹ other young people. After studying sociology at the Faculty of Political Sciences, he completes his doctorate in journalism in the University of Columbia (Ibid., p. 234).

This period was the period when the US started to enter the world politics as the shining star of liberalism, and hence, Yalman would be confronted with these trends at their source. Yalman returns to the country at the beginning of the First World War and becomes the sociology assistant of Ziya Gökalp (Ibid., p. 248). After the Ottoman Empire got involved in the war, he becomes a war correspondent on behalf of *Tanin* newspaper in Germany (Ibid., pp. 260-261). Thus, he gains the opportunity to enrich his experiences that he had obtained in America, with his travels to Europe. Yalman returns to the country in the years of armistice and continues journalism in *Vakit* newspaper. After a while, he was first exiled to *Kütahya* due to his articles criticizing

⁵⁰ Whether the events that took place in 1908 was a revolution is still an ongoing debate. Here, I chose to use it as it is widely known. For further reading, see: Kansu, Aykut, 1997. *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, Leiden: Brill; Savran, Sungur, 2016. *Türkiye’de Sınıf Mücadeleleri Cilt 1: 1908-1980*, İstanbul: Yordam.

⁵¹ Yalman describes how the quota which was originally announced as three, went up to five in his memoirs (Yalman, 1997, pp. 128-131).

the İstanbul government (Gök, 2003, p. 9), later on, after he ebulliently applauded the national movement in Anatolia, he was exiled to Malta by the British occupation forces (Yalman, 1997, p. 497). After returning from the exile in 1921, he travels to the War of Independence fronts as a war correspondent on behalf of *Tanin* newspaper. He founds his own newspaper on March 26, 1923, under the name of *Vatan* (Yalman, 1970, p. 38) and, with some interruptions⁵², he publishes his newspaper until 1961.⁵³

According to Yalman, the problem of the red tape/bureaucracy, that has not been solved for many years, would be resolved as a result of Turkey's heading towards the path of democracy (Yalman, 1970, p. 243). Yalman believes that this result can only be achieved by making idealism which the single-party bureaucrats did not possess, dominant over the bureaucracy (Kalkan, 2018, pp. 69-70). In the light of this and other expectations, Yalman was among those who most strongly applauded Turkey's transition to the multiparty system as a democratization process. In this sense, the editorials of Yalman in *Vatan* newspaper had a great influence on Democratic Party's becoming the shining star of the era of '*freedom of debate*'. Moreover, according to his own memoirs, he also was the eponym of Democratic Party (Yalman, 1971, p. 43).⁵⁴ By the same token, as an interesting coincidence, May 14, the day of the 1950

⁵² *Vatan* newspaper was closed indefinitely on August 12, 1925, because instead of writing an article supporting the government upon the closure of the Progressive Republican Party, the newspaper remained silent (Yalman, 1970, pp. 170-171). This meant also for Yalman that the path to the journalism would be closed indefinitely. This situation changed after Yalman and Mustafa Kemal met at the Karpıç restaurant in 1936, and Mustafa Kemal allowed him to return to journalism (Ibid., pp. 215-220).

⁵³ Yalman could not publish *Vatan* immediately after returning to the journalism in 1936. It took him about four years to solve some financial problems. *Vatan* could only be republished on August 19, 1940, after it was closed on August 12, 1925 (Yalman, 1970, pp. 268-269). Hence, in the meantime, Yalman worked for *Tan* newspaper. The fact that he made a news about the health condition of Mustafa Kemal in *Tan* newspaper in 1938, caused the newspaper to be closed for three months (Kaynar, 2019, p. 35; İnuğur, 1992, p. 258), and hence, Yalman was sent to the US on one occasion (Yalman, 1970, p. 244).

⁵⁴ The closeness between the DP and Yalman had started before the party was established. After the memorandum of the four, Menderes and Köprülü have started to write daily articles in Yalman's newspaper, *Vatan*. Afterwards, these articles were shown as the primary reasons for their dismissal from the RPP. In this way, an intimacy emerged between the signers of the memorandum and Yalman (Yalman, 1971, p. 38). In the light of these events, signers of the memorandum began to come together many times, and they prepared their party programs along with the party bylaw. Yalman was also attending those meetings as the fifth of the four founders.

general elections, is also Yalman's birthday. Consequently, Yalman pens an editorial titled 'A Birthday Gift' on May 8, and he writes,

If these elections allow the Turkish nation to demonstrate its will in complete honesty and thus, lay the foundation of a stable rule, I will have received a very valuable birthday gift; so, I will have the great reward I have been waiting for as a result of my entire life of struggle⁵⁵ (Yalman, 1971, pp. 216-217).

Yalman's support to the DP via various tools had continued until the mid-1950s.

Behind Yalman's support as one of the leading liberals of the period there was his passion for Turkey's transition to democracy (Dipple, 2019, pp. 32-33). According to Yalman, the liberal way is the one that "always will be the highest and the future ahead of the ways to keep" (Yalman, 1970, p. 388). In fact, Yalman invites the world liberals in 1945 to create a *Liberal Manifesto* that would be prepared in response to *Communist Manifesto* (Yalman, 1970, pp. 388-389). After his call, Yalman was invited to the convention of the *World Liberals Union* as a liberal journalist⁵⁶, and he was elected to the first administrative committee of the newly established *Liberal International* at that time (Yalman, 1971, pp. 109-112). Following *Liberal International*, together with Ali Fuat Başgil and other liberal democratic intellectuals of the time, Yalman sets up the Society for the Diffusion of Ideas of Liberty (*Hür Fikirleri Yayma Cemiyeti*)⁵⁷ in 1947 (Yalman, 1957, p. 236), in order "to oppose all kinds of totalitarian trends and bigotry, without interfering in politics"⁵⁸ (Birinci, 2018, p. 47). The fact that the

⁵⁵ Vatan, 08.05.1950, 'Bir Doğum Günü Hediyesi'.

⁵⁶ Buğra Kalkan states in his book titled "Ahmet Emin Yalman: An Intellectual Biography" that Yalman had an understanding of liberalism full of contradictions, and hence it is hard to rate Yalman among the "liberal intellectual category" as outlined today (Kalkan, 2018, pp. 70-71). For another article that refers to similar contradictions, see also: Özgün-Çakar, 2009, p. 268.

⁵⁷ For the bylaw of the Society for the Diffusion of Ideas of Liberty, see: Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers, Box 10, Folder 5, Hoover Institution Archives.

⁵⁸ The Society entered a separation process as of 1951. While the wing headed by Yalman expressed its discomfort with the government's support to the Islamic reactionary activities, the conservative wing, led by Ali Fuat Başgil, remained in a position to value the freedom of religion as the basic human rights doctrine (Bora & Ünüvar, 2019, p. 173). Regarding this separation, Yalman says, "Professor Başgil, who had been at the head of the Society with an enthusiastic sense of liberality for years, changed his path suddenly in 1952 and became the head of a backward movement for incomprehensible reasons" (Yalman, 1971, p. 121).

Society was invited to the *Liberal International's* convention in Paris on July 8, 1949 shows that there was an organic link of the kind between them that Yalman was talking about (Yalman, 1971, p. 120; Sadođlu, 2005, p. 307; Kaya & Yücer, 2019, p. 624). Additionally, another international initiative of Yalman was *International Press Institute* the establishment of which he contributed to in 1950, and later he was included into its administrative committee (Yalman, 1971, pp. 234-238).

We can say that especially in the world conjuncture, which started to be bipolar after 1947, Yalman firmly defended liberalism and democracy from his own column via adopting an anti-communist path that was independent of economic approaches.⁵⁹ With his well-known hostility to communism (Şenol-Cantek, 2019, p. 429), Yalman was a figure invited to the annual meetings of even *Anti-Communist Union of Asian Nations* (Yalman, 1971, p. 331). What makes his commitment to liberalism and anti-communist path specific for Turkey in particular was that his blend of these two main approaches with the relentless struggle against the Islamic reaction movement and his unyielding commitment to secularism.⁶⁰ As a matter of fact, it can be said that the Korean War that broke out in the first months of the DP rule was a litmus test in terms of Yalman's anti-communism approach. Menderes' remarks stating that the decision to send troops to the Korean war was a move that would make Turkey a member of the NATO (Kaynar, 2019, p. 22), and his insistence that a united front had to be established by the press against the criticisms towards the government's decision (Özcan, 2019, p. 105) excited Yalman and caused him to publish editorials supporting the government's decision to send troops to the Korean War (Yaşlı, 2019, pp. 90-91).

In the post-1950 period, as the DP rule strengthened its power, it began to deviate from the liberal principles which were previously its founding philosophy. The DP's gradual departure from the liberal path that it followed during it was in the opposition (Nadi,

⁵⁹ Yalman's praisal of the doctrine of statism and economic planning that Turkey had taken as an example from the Soviet Union was one of the reasons why he had adopted the anti-communist path independently of economic approaches (Kalkan, 2018, pp. 36-38).

⁶⁰ Given the fact that the anti-communism campaign left its mark on the nationalist-conservative populism in the 1950s (Bora & Erdoğan, 2006, p. 643), Yalman's anti-communist imagination stands at a very different point. Moreover, this separation had gone beyond the anti-communism that was the common denominator of both sides, and thus, Yalman has become a figure demonized by the nationalist-conservative circles.

1961, pp. 78-80) and abandonment of Menderes of the democratic rhetoric led the intellectuals who had taken liberalism seriously to disappointment (Bora & Ünüvar, 2019, p. 173). One of them was Yalman. After the 1950 elections, the DP had not engaged in democratic reforms that Yalman was expecting in a short period of time (Yalman, 1971, p. 239). Instead, the DP rule supported the Islamist and nationalist circles that had begun to gain visibility among the society again (Koca, 2019, p. 307), and turned its face towards the way of establishing a new type of arbitrary rule, contrary to Yalman's expectations. Hence, such political developments caused tensions from time to time between Yalman and the DP founders -especially Prime Minister Adnan Menderes. In this respect, Yalman did not hesitate to criticize the DP rule in matters that he thought were problematic for himself, hence, Yalman and Menderes got cross and made peace occasionally.⁶¹

As a consequence, Yalman begins to criticize the DP practices occasionally, and in this sense, he makes very harsh criticisms against the reactionary movements and warns the government sternly. Thus, Yalman gains the hostility of Islamist-nationalist Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and the circles of his monthly magazine *Büyük Doğu*⁶², and thus, Hüseyin Üzmez, who was influenced by those radical Islamic circles, attempted to assassinate Yalman in Malatya on November 22, 1952.⁶³ However, he manages to

⁶¹ According to Yalman, the reason for these rupture-reconciliation tides was not himself, but the ever-shifting policies of the DP founders. Stating that he had never given up his claim of impartiality (Kalkan, 2018, p. 24), and in this respect, he had given himself a mediating and pacifying role (Yalman, 1971, p. 179), Yalman did not hesitate to criticize the practices of the DP rule that did not comply with the liberal understanding. In this context, one day Menderes reproached him by saying, "May God protect me from the friendship of Ahmet Emin" (Yalman, 1971, p. 149).

⁶² It is also possible to find a similar approach in Serdengeçti. Serdengeçti puts Westernized bureaucrats and Kemalist elites against the suffering People (Bora & Erdoğan, 2006, p. 642). Yalman gets his share of this contrast. According to Serdengeçti, "apostate (*dönme*)" Ahmet Emin Yalman is the epitome of a moral degeneration contrary to the national spirit (Bora & Ünüvar, 2019, p. 169). Regarding the "*dönme*" issue, see also: Baer, Marc David, 2010. *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁶³ While Yalman was staying in the hospital, he wants to meet and then meets with his assassin Üzmez face-to-face. For some details on their talk, see: Yalman, 1971, pp. 290-294. Yalman thinks that, only just a high school student Üzmez was a captive and victim of the Islamic circles. For this reason, Yalman continues to correspond with Üzmez while he was in prison, and he tries to heal him like a doctor heals her/his patient (Yalman, 1971, pp. 292-293). As a matter of fact, Yalman writes an editorial titled 'Hüseyin Üzmez Affa Layık Olmuştur' in Vatan newspaper on July 2, 1960, and says that Üzmez is now "healed" (Vatan, 02.07.1960). For a reader letter that criticizes this editorial, and Yalman's

clutch onto life even though six bullets hit his body (Çetinkaya, 2016, p. 44). After the assassination attempt, it was understood that Üzmez and his friends involved in the attempt were members of the Great East Association (*Büyük Doğu Derneği*) and the Turkish Nationalists Association (*Türk Milliyetçiler Derneği*) (Yalman, 1971, p. 298). Hence, along with the other suspects, Necip Fazıl was also tried under the crime of instigation, but was acquitted (Koca, 2019, p. 308). However, the associations were closed after the trial (Alkan, 2019, p. 615; Yaşlı, 2019, p. 126). While the repercussions of the assassination attempt continued, Yalman and the intellectual circles established the National Solidarity Union (*Milli Tesevüt Birliği*)⁶⁴ as an enlightening act against the rise of fundamentalist movements in Turkey (Koca, 2019, pp. 309-310; Yalman, 1971, pp. 305-306).

After the 1954 elections victory of the DP, Yalman begins to gradually pull the intellectual support he gave to the party back, by considering that the DP was getting too far away from its founding philosophy (Kalkan, 2018, p. 151). Nevertheless, despite this unstable relationship between Yalman and the founders of the party, he remains behind the DP rule until mid-1955. In addition to his occasional supportive editorials, the most important indicator of the continuing intimacy was that Yalman had participated in the US visits together with Bayar and then Menderes in 1954 (Erdem, 2019, p. 146). However, after Menderes said

What newspapers are you talking about? *Vatan*? As soon as I eat breakfast with the *Yeni Sabah* owner Safa in Ankara Palas, Ahmet Emin will drop his critical attitude. [...] There will always be people who are going to sell their columns for 20 or 30 thousand liras⁶⁵ (Yalman, 1971, p. 322)

in 1955, the close ties between Yalman and Menderes were totally broken. At the end, Yalman began to ceaselessly introduce severe criticisms against the DP's increasingly

response letter in a way similar to the thoughts that he put in his editorial, and also for the letters between Üzmez and Yalman, see: Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers, Box 19, Folder 5, Hoover Institution Archives.

⁶⁴ For the bylaw of the National Solidarity Union, see: Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers, Box 10, Folder 5, Hoover Institution Archives.

⁶⁵ “Hangi gazetelerden bahsediyorsunuz? Vatan mı? Ben yarın, Yeni Sabah sahibi Safa ile Ankara Palas'ta bir yemek yiyeyim, Ahmet Emin eleştirel yazılarından derhal vazgeçer. [...] İçlerinde 20, 30 bin liralık paralara karşı kalemlerini satanlar da eksik olmaz”

anti-democratic practices that have gradually been reaching their peak. These criticisms had a lot of focuses, but one of the critical ones for Yalman was that the DP rule had gradually built the one-man regime that stood on the party-state structure, reminiscent of the former single-party regime (Nadi, 1961, p. 220). The other arrows of criticism that were directed to the DP rule during this period were the DP's adoption of intimidating, harassing and unlawful practices that damaged the understanding of justice, its unsuccessful economic policies that accelerated the impoverishment process of the masses, and finally the DP's approach to the populist policies that rapidly polarized the society (Göka et al., 2006, pp. 306-308; Yalman, 1957, p. 274; Somel, 2009, p. 323; Mert, 2006, p. 318).

Following the breaking of the ropes with Yalman, a series of law suits were filed against *Vatan* newspaper and its writers (Yalman, 1971, p. 340), and on some occasions the newspaper was closed temporarily. One of these cases was the Pulliam Case filed in 1958. The critical article, written by American journalist Pulliam after he was not accepted after 3 days of waiting by Adnan Menderes, was translated by Yalman and published in *Vatan* (Babaoğlu, 2019, pp. 354-355).⁶⁶ As a result of this case, Yalman was sent to prison in 1960, just like the many other intellectuals, journalists and academics of the period.⁶⁷ The period after the 1960 coup d'état turned out to be a new period in which Yalman was partially retired to pasture.⁶⁸ After the coup, Yalman closely followed the *Yassıada* trials, however, he was obliged to leave his precious *Vatan* newspaper in January 1961 (Yalman, 1971, p. 399).

The rise of the demands that started to spread especially after 1955 and prioritized individual rights and freedoms, and the fact that many segments of the society began to realize that these demands could be achieved not by elected governments but as a

⁶⁶ The whole process will be discussed in detail in the relevant part of Chapter 5.

⁶⁷ Abdi İpekçi says that along with many other events, the imprisonment of Ahmet Emin Yalman as a 72-year-old journalist was one of the reasons that prepared the 1960 military coup (İpekçi & Coşar, 2012, p. 102).

⁶⁸ What Yalman has written in his memoirs about the 1960 coup d'état shows that he was among those applauding the military coup. Even within this aspect, it is seen that the above-mentioned criticism of Buğra Kalkan is not unfair. For what Yalman has written and criticisms of Kalkan, see: Yalman, 1971, pp. 354-362; Kalkan, 2018, p.31.

result of certain collective struggles, constitute the basic characteristics of the post-1960 period. So, after 1960 in Turkey it has begun a much more dynamic and social process is not affected by a single ideological position. Like many approaches of the old generation, Yalman's strict liberal and anti-communist approaches were seen by the masses as insufficient resources. Thus, after his leave from *Vatan* newspaper, he publishes *Hür Vatan* newspaper for one and a half years; however, the favorite journalist of the 1940s and 50s could not keep up with the new changes that the Turkish society was experiencing, and hence, he closes *Hür Vatan* newspaper in the Autumn of 1962 (Yalman, 1971, pp. 399-400). In essence, this process can be expressed as the masses abandoning Yalman by shifting to multivocal and more dynamic social and political fields, rather than Yalman's abandonment of journalism.

3.3. Urban Middle-Classes: How Did Yalman's Readers Introduce/Define Themselves?

In this part, the class character of the readers will be revealed by examining the ways in which they express/define/introduce themselves -in all respects- in their letters. Hence, social and economic presence, i.e. the social fabric, of the actors that constituted the popular opinion (Akin, 2003, p. 99) in the historical section that is the subject of this study, will be provided. Thus, the main purpose of this part is to provide the comprehension of the class character of the readers of Yalman. In this context, analysis of what the readers have written in their letters will be done in the light of three parameters. These three parameters used in the examination of the discourses of the letters are cities where the readers were living and/or sent their letters from, their occupational groups, and their intellectual/educational levels. As a reminder, some numeric information about the letters used in this study such as the number of letters sent to Yalman, the number of letters included and excluded from this study were detailed in the 'Introduction' chapter of this study. Hence, the parameters to be examined in this part will include some references to this information.

The first parameter is the examination conducted on the cities where the readers were living and/or sent their letters from. I believe that this parameter is important in order to determine the formation of class character of the readers. The impact of this parameter on the other parameters affecting the class character of the readers should

not be overlooked. Besides, the address information of the readers is available in nearly all letters, and hence, this analysis will be done through this information. The second parameter, the occupations of the readers, are often indicated by readers in many letters. However, approximately one third of the letters do not include information about the readers' occupations. Even so, the class character of Yalman's readers can be understood through the combination of the first parameter with the discourse analysis conducted on the contents of the letters as the second parameter. Finally, the third parameter which is the intellectual/educational levels of the readers, causes a small number of readers to differ from the others in terms of the discursual contents of the letters. However, this divergence does not indicate a significant class differentiation among the readers of Yalman. Instead, it refers that their class positions were close to each other.

As a starting point, it would be appropriate to touch on how the readers expressed themselves in their letters. Before proceeding to the examination of the above-mentioned parameters, it would be useful to look at the language and rhetorical elements used in the letters. When the reader letters sent to Yalman are examined, it is seen that four kinds of rhetorical elements come to the fore. The first of these is, in short, story-telling.⁶⁹ In the letters sent to Yalman, readers tell stories about specific issues in order to describe the effects of the implementations they criticized, to be felt stronger. Whether those stories were true or not is the subject of another detailed research, these alleged "real" stories were used as tools to show that the readers were not alone in the issues they complained about. For example, in a reader letter sent on July 9, 1946, a ministry officer (Reader Number 1) tells a story, that during the radio speech of Prime Minister Saraçoğlu before the elections, a dissident citizen puts his cap on the table and says: "O, my hat! Until now it's always been them who spoke and us who listened. From now on, it's you, my hat, who is to listen, not us!"⁷⁰ (B8f4). Stating that the People were fed up with the RPP government, the ministry officer tries to support his thoughts with a story he told. Similar story-telling elements are present

⁶⁹ Yiğit Akin mentions in his article, in which he examined the petitions sent to the RPP Secretary General in the early Republican period, that similar rhetorical elements were also found in those petitions (Akin, 2003, pp. 118-121).

⁷⁰ "Ey şapka! Şimdiye kadar hep onlar söyledi biz dinledik, bundan sonra biz değil sen dinleyeceksin"

in the story of a police captain (Reader Number 2) in the letter of March 1, 1948 about the villagers (B5f3-1), in the story about the children of the headman told by a lawyer (Reader Number 3) in his letter dated November 25, 1951 (B7f2-2), and in many other examples.⁷¹

The second of these rhetorical elements is the theatrical/poetic language used by the readers. Since the letters were generally related to the daily and political problems of the period that Yalman already knew, the readers have applied to such a rhetorical element to increase the intensity of the content in their letters. In this context, it can be said that they try to describe the problems they wrote about by using certain idioms. For example, in a reader letter sent in August 1949, a reader (Reader Number 4) criticizes the RPP's unwillingness to take democratic steps with the following words:

It is apparent that the dictators who go only by their rules try to resolve the conflicts and contradictions within their nations by coercion, and frustrate the whole nation, just like how the Great Alexander cut the rope presented to him as a challenge to prove his worth, instead of untying it⁷² (B1f3).

From this point forth, another reason that can be said deemed as the purpose of using this rhetorical element was the readers' attempts to use words appropriate to Yalman's intellectual level. Some examples of these words used in different contexts are as follows: "*sui-idare*" [mismanagement] (Reader Number 5) (B5f3-2), "*idefix*" [idée fixe] used as to mean ignorant (Reader Number 6) (B8f10-3), "*megoloman*" [megalomaniac] (Reader Number 7) (B7f3), "*süperlatif*" [superlative] (Reader Number 8) (B7f3), "*observateur*" [observer] (Reader Number 9) (B20f1), "*economie politique*" [political economy] (Reader Number 10) (B13f4), etc.⁷³ Another

⁷¹ There are two prominent topics among the stories told in the letters. The first is to show that the implementations complained of have been voiced by many others. The second is examples of clientelist relationships that took place between the ruling-elite and the influential people/families. Some of these stories will be told in the next chapters.

⁷² "İşte görüldü ki, yalnız kendi dar görüşüne sapan diktatörler, milletlerinin karşısında bulunduğu bu çok karışık ziddiyetleri, Büyük İskender'in kendisine cihangirlik için çözmesini teklif ettikleri düğümü akilane çözmeyerek kılıçla ikiye böldüğü gibi zorla bir yüzden halle kakmışlar ve milletlerini hüsrana boğmuşlardır"

⁷³ Yalman writes in his reply to a reader's letter dated 8 August 1960 (Reader Number 11) as follows: "Your language is rather tough to understand. Only one person in the whole editorial office could

analysis of the words used will be mentioned later in this part. However, it can be said that the words used in the letters also give clues about the educational/intellectual levels of the readers. The last point that can be mentioned about this rhetorical element is the poetic style used in certain parts of the letters. It can be said that this style was generally applied to make the problems experienced by the readers more sensible. For example, in a letter dated July 8, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 12) criticizes the corruption of the RPP executive elites, and finishes his letter with the following poetic words:

O' brother, should I not write despair will be mine, but should I write it is a crime; how is one at comfort without speaking, and how can a criminal be fit for acquitting? (sic.)⁷⁴ (B18f5-2).

It is clearly seen that a poetic style attached to the end of the letter increases the effect of the letter of corruption complaint.

The third of these rhetorical elements is a style that dominates the vast majority of the letters, accepts both the statutory and intellectual superiority of Yalman, and is expressed in some respectable -and even a kind of reverential- manner. This element generally arises as the form to praise Yalman's "contribution" to the democratization process of Turkey. For example, a reader (Reader Number 13) concludes his letter dated February 25, 1946 with the following words: "You have made great contributions to the foundation of this building. As a member of the nation who appreciates your contribution, I request from you [...]"⁷⁵ (B8f4). This polite style, which the readers have resorted to, is so dominant in the letters that even the readers who criticize Yalman, have put praise and respect sentences at the beginning and the end of their letters. For example, while a retired colonel (Reader Number 14) criticizes Yalman by saying, "While trying to understand what you thought about today's events

understand the word 'quality'" ["Diliniz çok ağır. Kullandığımız 'nitelik' kelimesini koca yazı işlerinde bir kişi anlayabildi"] (B13f1).

⁷⁴ "Ah ağabey yazmasam içim dertli yazsam olur kabahat, dert dökmeyince olunur mu hiç rahat, hüküm gürek cezası verilir mi hiç berat (sic.)"

⁷⁵ "Temeli atılan binanın harcında sizin büyük bir payınız vardır. Bunu takdir eden milletin sıfatsız bir uzvu olmak hasebile sizden ricam odur ki [...]"

by reading your last three pieces, it saddened me the extent to which you were cursed at by people that you would seek the advice of a harem master”⁷⁶ (B8f10-1) at the first pages of his letter dated June 6, 1952, at the end he praises Yalman by saying, “The compassion and reverence I feel for you is quite deep. This letter represents similar intentions with that of a confused student seeking help from his teacher”⁷⁷ (Ibid.).

Although it appears to be a reverential style that actually dominates the vast majority of the reader letters, in many letters that Yalman has been criticized, an attitude that has a soft start and an ever-increasing tone stands out.⁷⁸ Hence, the content of the last rhetorical element comprises the letters dominated by such an attitude. Leaving aside the letters of insult and threat sent by the circles that were hostile to Yalman, the reasons for this hardening attitude of the readers were that the problems of the period were not solved by the politicians and Yalman’s clear support on some occasions, for the politicians that could not solve those problems. This style sometimes emerges as sending a calendar sheet describing the Revolution of 1908 as a criticism towards Yalman (Reader Number 15) (B9f6-1), and sometimes it emerges as ending the letter with a critical poem from Bediuzzaman or Mehmet Akif (Reader Number 16) (B12f9). However, the attitude of the readers usually emerges in the flow of the letter with a suddenly changing style. For example, throughout the first page of his letter dated July 30, 1957, a lawyer (Reader Number 17) praises Yalman to the skies with such words: “You know my heart is filled with tremendous sympathy towards you. [...] the name Ahmet Emin Yalman is a proof of sincerity in the history of journalism”⁷⁹ (B17f10). But from the second page of his letter, the tone of the lawyer begins to toughen, and during the continuation of the letter, he makes strong criticisms towards Yalman:

⁷⁶ “Bugün cereyan eden işler karşısında neler düşündüğünüzü son üç yazınızdan anlamaya çalışırken nihayet harem ağasının aklını isteyecek kadar inkisara uğramanız cidden hazindir”

⁷⁷ “Size hissettiğim sevgi ve hürmet, pek derin ve kadimdir. Bu mektup, biraz da müşküllerini halledemeyen bir talebenin hocasına müracaatı gibidir”

⁷⁸ Akın underlines that a similar attitude was also noticeable in demand petitions sent to the RPP Secretary General (Akın, 2003, p. 121).

⁷⁹ “Kalbimin, size karşı taşan bir sevgi ile dolu olduğunu bilirsiniz. [...] Ahmet Emin Yalman imzası, gazetecilik tarihinde adeta samimiyet patentidir”

The language of your pieces makes it seem like what lies in the future is nothing but trouble. No one has the right to lead the citizens towards pessimism. [...] I would like to remind the esteemed Yalman that the job of a newspaper is not only criticizing the government, but also illuminating the citizens with a positive mentality⁸⁰ (Ibid.).

Those attitudes of the readers, who did not hesitate to criticize Yalman when necessary, contain some clues about the class character of them that will be foregrounded later in this part.

As stated at the beginning, there are three parameters to be examined in the analysis of the class character of Yalman's readers. The first parameter is a kind of a discourse analysis that aims to reveal the places of residence of the readers. As mentioned in the Introduction, 187 reader letters in total were included to be examined in this study. However, 11 people have sent more than one letter to Yalman, and the number of the letters from these same people is 15. Therefore, the number of persons to be examined is 172. Thus, at this point, according to the density of the provinces, the cities where those 172 readers were living and/or sent their letters from will be analyzed. Although it is obvious that the density of the provinces alone is not sufficient in determining the class character, it is still important for the examination of the class character of Yalman's readers. The cities where the readers were living and sent their letters to Yalman from are given in the table below.

Table 3.1 – Cities Where the Readers were Living and/or Sent Their Letters From

City	Letter(s)	City	Letter(s)	City	Letter(s)
İstanbul	39	Sivas	3	Uşak	1
Ankara	13	Aydın	2	Erzurum	2
İzmir	12	Çanakkale	2	Kars	2
Konya	7	Çankırı	2	Diyarbakır	1
Adana	5	Çorum	2	Elâzığ	1
Balıkesir	5	Edirne	2	Erzincan	1
Bursa	5	Manisa	2	Gaziantep	1
Antalya	4	Sinop	2	Rize	1
Isparta	4	Bilecik	1	Van	1
Kayseri	4	Denizli	1	Bordeaux	1

⁸⁰ “Yazılarınızda ufukları tamamiyle karanlık gösteren bir hava var. Vatandaş bedbinliğe sürüklemeye kimsenin hakkı yoktur. [...] Gazetelerin vazifesinin yalnız iktidarı tenkit olmayıp, vatandaş müsbet bir zihniyetle tenvir etmek olduğu hususunu değerli Yalman’a müsaadeleri ile hatırlatırım”

Table 3.1 (cont'd)

Zonguldak	4	Eskişehir	1	Frankfurt	1
Hatay	3	Giresun	1	London	1
Kütahya	3	Kırklareli	1	Tel-Aviv	1
Mersin	3	Kocaeli	1	No Info	19
Sakarya	3	Samsun	1		

Considering the provinces given in the Table 3.1, it is seen that two important points stand out. First, a considerable amount of the letters was sent from the largest provinces in the Western part of Turkey. Although the provinces where 19 of the readers sent their letters is unknown, 39 of the remaining 153 people have sent letters from İstanbul, 13 from Ankara and 12 from Izmir. Even the number of the readers sent their letters only from these three provinces is more than one third of the total number of the readers. Besides that, only 10 readers sent their letters from the provinces in the Eastern part of Turkey.⁸¹ Hence, it can be said that, more than 90% of the readers sent their letters from the provinces in the Western part of Turkey. Second, when the addresses written by the readers in their letters are examined, it is seen that the vast majority of the letters were sent from the city centers, the major districts of the provinces, and towns.⁸² This means that the vast majority of the readers who sent letters to Yalman were urban dwellers.

The modernization policy that began in agriculture in the early 1950s through Marshall Aid resulted in a considerable surplus population in the rural areas. However, ironically, more dramatic consequences than the impact of agriculture-based policies on rural areas have been experienced, especially in large cities. While modernization in the agricultural sector caused the emergence of surplus labor in this sector, especially large cities have been the target of this excess population in an accelerating

⁸¹ These provinces are Kars, Erzurum, Erzincan, Rize, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, and Van.

⁸² It is possible to make a similar comparison through the DP's MPs in the 1950 elections. According to Hayrettin Erken, one of those deputies was what, many of those elected were urban people such as lawyers, doctors, engineers, etc. Also, according to Metin Toker, most of the DP's deputies were provincial lawyers (Birand, Dündar, & Çaplı, 1991, p. 70). Considering the candidacy processes of the DP, which will be described in the next chapter, it can be said that the profiles of the readers in terms of their urbanite characters, were similar to those of the DP members who became deputies in 1950.

manner since the early 1950s (Şengül, 2009, p. 122). In this respect, this rapid transformation supports the analysis done above as a data that explains the urban character of Yalman's readers.

The fact that Yalman's readers were made up of people will be more meaningful considering the statistics of rural and urban population densities of the period. In 1940, the proportion of the population living in urban areas in Turkey was 24.4%, and the proportion of the population living in rural areas was 75.6%. These proportions were 31.9% and 68.1% in 1960 (Aykaç, 2018, p. 211). In a period when the urban population was so small, information that the majority of the readers was made up of urban people is very important in terms of determining the class character of Yalman's readers. Consequently, it can be said that there was an intertwined cycle between being an urbanite and a member of the middle classes. This is because the urbanite individuals were mostly the members of an intermittent class that neither belonged to the upper, i.e. the bourgeoisie, nor belonged to the lower, i.e. the subaltern, layers of the society. However, being urbanite alone does not indicate belonging to the middle-classes. Therefore, other parameters must be examined to determine the class character of Yalman's readers.

The second parameter is the occupational groups stated by the readers in their letters. Although, more than one third of the readers have not stated their occupations in the letters they sent, the gap created by this deficiency will be filled with the frame of the information to be obtained through the discourse analysis. As stated in the letters, the readers belong to 22 different occupations. Three occupation groups to which the readers most frequently belonged to were military personnel, teachers, and self-employed persons. Other occupational groups, such as civil servants, lawyers, doctors, local journalists, etc. can be added to those groups. It should be noted that each of these groups is comprised of occupations that make up the middle-classes. There were only 20 readers that can be excluded from this scope of the middle-classes, and they were factory workers, tailors, villagers and small retailers (coffee house owner, butcher, and grocer). The occupational groups of Yalman's readers are given in the table below.

Table 3.2 – Occupational Groups of the Readers

Occupation	Number of Readers	Occupation	Number of Readers
Self-Employment	12	Pharmacist	1
Military Officer	11	Petition-Writer	1
Teacher	9	Sanitary Officer	1
Lawyer	7	Poet	1
Civil Servant	7	Worker	8
University Student	6	Villager	6
Doctor	5	Tailor	3
Local Correspondent	4	Grocer	1
Engineer	2	Butcher	1
Police Officer	2	Coffeehouse Owner	1
Bank Manager	2	No Info	80
Library Manager	1		

Although the number of the readers whose occupations are unknown is more than one third of the total, the proportion of the readers who were not included in the middle-classes is about 15%. In other words, it can be said that most of the readers who sent letters to Yalman belonged to the civil-military bureaucratic elite that refers to the middle and upper-middle classes. Hence, Yalman's readers consisted of people belonging to the middle-classes, in general. Considering that the areas where the activities of the party politics of the period mostly took place were the urban spaces, i.e. the cities and/or towns, and the class sections that participated in those political activities were the middle-classes, the class character of Yalman's readers can be asserted as the urban middle-classes.

While describing the middle-classes, Weberian thinkers in particular began by taking concepts such as exploitation of labor, domination, and ownership of private property from Marx. They drew the framework of the middle-classes by adding them some other concepts such as occupational and social status and/or prestige from a Weberian perspective (Arslan, 2011, p. 43). Based on this approach, Scase (1992) frames the middle-classes as follows:

- 1.Owner-managers of large enterprises and individuals with substantial property assets and shareholdings;
- 2.Directors, managers and higher grade professional and technical employees;
- 3.Lower grade professional, managerial and technical employees, and owner-managers of medium and small enterprises;

4. Skilled and semi-skilled manual, clerical, secretarial and routine non-manual employees;
5. Unskilled manual employees and those who participate ‘part-time’ in the labor market (Scase, 1992, pp. 27-28, as cited in Arslan, 2011, p. 47).

In this regard, it can be said that the examination has done upon the occupational groups of Yalman’s readers enables the class character of the readers to be determined as middle-classes.

It is important for a study on the perception of democracy of the period to focus on urban middle-class individuals. These individuals represent the segment where Kemalist modernization ideal of the early republican period was embodied: urban and educated people. The fact that one-third of the letters were sent from the three major cities of Turkey represents the success of this modernization ideal. By the same token, these individuals were already willing to be involved with the daily politics. It was not surprising that the notion of democracy was embraced by the urban middle-class individuals, and a strong demand for democracy appeared among the society. As it was the case, the most appropriate segment to look at the reflections of the democracy debates that dominated the period onto the rest of the society was the urban middle-class individuals. In order to strengthen this claim, it will be useful to dwell on the third parameter.

Thinkers such as Baudrillard (2020)⁸³ and Jameson have added new concepts such as lifestyle and consumption habits, to the Weberian concepts used in framing the middle-classes⁸⁴ (Arslan, 2011, p. 43). However, one of the most important contributors to this field was Bourdieu (1984)⁸⁵ who relates the middle-classes framework to the cultural field (Ibid., pp. 43-44). One of the most important parameters regarding this cultural field is the education level of individuals. According to Bourdieu (1966), “in the middle-classes, the ambition for social mobility necessitates educational investments relatively disproportionate to their resources” (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1966,

⁸³ Baudrillard, J. (2020). *Tüketim Toplumunu: Söylenceleri/Yapıları* (13th Ed.). İstanbul: Ayrıntı. (Original work published 1970)

⁸⁴ For a detailed conceptual framework for the New Middle-Classes, see: Vidich, A. J. (Ed.) (1995). *The New Middle Classes: Life-Styles, Status Claims and Political Orientations*. London: Macmillan.

⁸⁵ Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). London: Routledge. (Original work published 1979)

pp. 136-154.). Similarly, Bourdieu has argued for the cultural sphere distinction between the middle-classes and the working class with reference to educational levels. According to him,

The probability of access to the managerial class (or which comes down to the same, to the instruments capable of ensuring it, such as the system of Higher Education institutions) attains a certain threshold with foremen and office workers, the fraction in transition between the working class and the middle-class (Christoforou & Lainé (Eds.), 2014, p. 243).

As can be seen, education levels emerge as an important parameter in determining the framework of the middle-classes.

From this point forth, the last but not least parameter is a kind of discourse analysis that aims to reveal the educational/intellectual levels of the readers of Yalman. When the letters were examined, it is seen that there is very little information about the educational levels of the readers. In other words, only a small number of the readers have said the name of the school they graduated from, or stated their educational level. However, it is possible to make an analysis over the occupation groups of the readers in order to understand the levels of education that are not specified in the letters. Therefore, this parameter will be examined from two separate but related ways. In the first place, the educational levels of the readers will be tried to be determined based on their own expressions and occupational groups. In the second place, a discourse analysis of the thoughts expressed by the readers in their letters will be made, and an idea will be formed about their intellectual levels. Finally, in the light of these analyses, the class character of the readers will be foregrounded.

In order to understand the educational levels of the readers, we can start with the information they have given about themselves. There are very few readers who have directly written about their educational levels in their letters. For example, a civil servant (Reader Number 18) has written in his letter dated 1954 that he has graduated from Law School of Rome in Italy (B13f12). Similarly, a young poet (Reader Number 19) states in his letter dated March 9, 1960 that he graduated from the İstanbul Sultanahmet Institute of Arts, Department of Machinery in 1956 (B13f11-2). On the other hand, it is not always possible to find such clear explanations in the letters. For example, a reader (Reader Number 20) states in his letter dated 1958 that he is a citizen

that has not attended higher education (B7f3). Contrary to what is expected, this kind of information may play a helpful role in determining the educational levels of the readers.

Another type of information we can use to reveal the educational levels of the readers is their occupational groups. For example, a reader (Reader Number 21) states in his letter dated 1942 that he was not able to become a teacher as he was unable to finish Kuleli Military High School, hence he had to work as an assistant teacher for years (B11f5). Based on this information, it turns out that at least a high school degree was required to become teachers. As understood from this example, 9 readers who stated that they are teachers were at least high school graduates. Additionally, occupational groups, such as doctor, lawyer, bank manager, pharmacist, engineer and army officer, which the readers have stated as their occupations, were the occupations that required a higher education degree. Along with 6 readers who stated that they were university students, the number of readers who belonged to these occupations is 35. On the other hand, the number of readers who were likely to have not attended higher education according to the occupations they have specified is just 20.⁸⁶

Furthermore, another information that should be considered along with those numbers is the literacy rates of the period and the number of schools and students. According to the statistics, literacy rate in Turkey was 32.5% in 1950, and 39.5% in 1960 (Aykaç, 2018, pp. 211-212). Moreover, while the number of secondary schools in 1950 was 440, and the number of students was 68.765, these numbers were 776 and 318.138 in 1960 (Karakök, 2011, p. 94). In a period when the literacy rates were so low, discussing daily political issues with a journalist by writing a letter, points to an important degree in terms of the educational level of the readers. Additionally, having the opportunity to study in high school and university-level schools at a time when the number of schools and students were so low -these numbers were for the secondary school level, and should be considered lower for higher education-, is a very important clue for the class character of the readers. Although this information largely reveals

⁸⁶ Although there is no such statement of the readers, the mentioned occupational groups, i.e. factory worker, tailor, farmer and small retailer, did not require to attend higher education. Besides, while these few readers were not belonging to the urban middle-classes, they are still in an exceptional position in determining the class character of the readers.

that Yalman's readers belonged to the urban middle-classes, there is also a need for a discourse analysis based on the content of the letters.

Meanwhile, the characteristics of belonging to the middle-classes can sometimes be understood from the elitist perspectives adopted by the readers in the letters written on the relationship between the educational levels and democracy. In a reader letter sent in 1955 which refers to the relationship between culture and democracy, a reader (Reader Number 22) brings an elitist perspective to the idea of democracy by saying,

Democracy is a quite delicate regime. It cannot survive among ignorant and dull people. Our young generations need a solid democracy education. Democracy cannot function as desired in ignorant nations. Our main objective needs to be raising a youth equipped with democracy even in the remotest villages⁸⁷ (B7f3).

There is no doubt that this approach was written by a reader belonging to the upper-middle class.

The intensification of migration from the rural to the urban has caused tension between the urban middle-classes and the lower classes newly arrived in the city. It is a result of these tensions that the middle-classes call the State to act against these lower classes from time to time (Şengül, 2009, pp. 125-126). The traces of this tension can be traced through this elitist approach, which from time to time emerges implicitly as in the example above. Thus, one could argue that the only foster of this elitist position among Yalman's readers was not the debates that took place in intellectual and political circles that were largely the legacy of the single-party era.

After making an inference about the educational levels of the readers, an analysis of the intellectual levels of them is also important in order to comment on the class characters of the readers. According to the discourse analysis regarding the contents of the reader letters, it can be said that, among the readers of Yalman, there was a group of people who differed from the majority, in terms of their intellectual level.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ "Demokrasi, çok nazlı bir idaredir. Cahil ve nadan kimselerin arasında barınamaz. Gençlerimize çok esaslı demokrasi terbiyesi verilmesi lazım. Cahil milletlerde demokrasi idaresi arzu edildiği şekilde yürümez. En ücra köylere varıncaya kadar demokratik bilgilerle mücehhez gençler yetiştirmek emel ve arzumuz olmalıdır"

⁸⁸ In the framework of the analysis on the cities where the readers were living and the analyses made on occupational groups and educational levels, it was stated above that, 19 readers cannot be included in

The point that distinguishes the 17 readers who had intellectually rich discussions with Yalman is that their intellectual levels seem to close to that of a well-equipped journalist, such as Yalman.

Within the frame of the discourse analysis on the letters, some of the readers thought to be in the above-mentioned group show that they stand at a different place from others in terms of their intellectual accumulation with the concept sets they used in their letters. The difference of these concept sets comes from the fact that these concepts are unknown to many segments of the society even now. For example, in a reader letter dated June 2, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 23) uses the phrase “They fired those who did not think like themselves with Machiavellian methods”⁸⁹ (B8f4) to criticize the oppressive practices of the single-party rule. By the same token, another reader (Reader Number 4), in his letter dated August 1949, uses the same phrase as an adjective “*Makyavel oligarşist demagog*” [Machiavellian oligarchist demagogue] (B1f3), while making a critical analysis of the Chiefdom system. The word “Machiavellian” is so profound that its underlying references cannot be acquired by only hearing the name of the Italian thinker Machiavelli. The subtext of the word contains harsh meanings such as oppressive, repressive, authoritarian, etc. Similarly, in another reader letter sent in May 1946, a reader (Reader Number 24) from the provincial enterprise committee of the DP criticizes the elitist approaches of the RPP officials, by giving references to Ancient Greece:

Literacy rate cannot be shown as an indicator of the political maturity of a nation. Percentage of literate people in the Greek Poleis, where democracy was ideally exercised thousands of years ago, was probably lesser than the percentage of literate people in today’s Turkey. Was the percentage of literate people during the establishment of English and American democracies higher? Why Germans, the most progressed nation with the highest percentage of literate people in the world, did not embrace democracy? What all that demonstrates is that percentage of literacy does not constitute an excuse for not establishing democracy⁹⁰ (B8f4).

the urban middle-classes. Therefore, it can be said that, the readers of Yalman were divided into three groups together with the group that differs from others in terms of their intellectual accumulations.

⁸⁹ “Kendileri gibi düşünmeyenleri Makyavelvari usullerle ekmeklerinden, işlerinden ettiler”

⁹⁰ “Vatandaşların büyük bir çoğunluğunun okuyup yazma bilmemesi, bir milletin siyasi olgunluğunun ölçüsü diye gösterilemez. Binlerce yıl önce demokrasiyi ideal bir şekilde tatbik eden Yunan sitesinde

It would be very difficult to hear these kinds of references from someone who does not have a certain intellectual background.

Moreover, there were some readers who had democracy debates with Yalman from a highly intellectual perspective. For example, a reader (Reader Number 25), who was an Assistant Inspector of *Ziraat Bank*, asks “Is democracy an end, or a means?”⁹¹ (B5f3) to Yalman in his letter dated February 26, 1947. The reader did not confine himself with asking this question, hence, he discusses for over a page the possible answers to his own question by comparing Turkey with the West from the perspectives such as party struggles, power, authority, etc., and finally he gives his own answer to the question he previously asked: “I’ve reached this conclusion in the face of the said facts: Democracy has been a means for the West in their progress towards future. However, democracy, for now, is an end for us”⁹² (Ibid.). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on February 26, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 26) says “Most of them do not even know what ‘democracy’ means”⁹³ (B8f4) to criticize that the cadres of the newly formed DP were unqualified, and he addresses them as incapable of illuminating the masses about democracy. Additionally, in another reader letter sent on February 14, 1950, a reader (Reader Number 27) criticizes the fundamental problems of the current election system, from the representation perspective. However, what was interesting is that the reader did not only criticize the current election system, but also made a new electoral system suggestion from a very progressive perspective. He called this system ‘Single-Member District System’ (*Münferit Bölge Sistemi*) (B8f10-1), in which the representation rate in the parliament was much higher and he suggested localization to a large extent. Considering the writings of all three readers, it can be

okuyup yazma bilenlerin nispeti bugünkü Türkiye’den herhalde daha azdı. İngiliz ve Amerikan demokrasilerinin kuruluşu sıralarında okuyup yazma bilenlerin nispeti daha mı çoktu? Dünyanın en ileri ve okuyup yazma bilenlerinin nispeti en çok olan Almanlar neden demokrasiye kavuşamadılar? Bütün bunlar gösteriyor ki okuyup yazma nispeti memlekette demokrasiyi kurmamak için bir sebep teşkil etmez”

⁹¹ “Demokrasi gaye midir, vasıta mıdır?”

⁹² “Bu vakıalar karşısında, şöyle bir neticeye vardım: demokrasi, garp için bugün daha iyi olmanın vasıtası olabilmıştır. Fakat bizim için henüz gayedir”

⁹³ “Bunların birçoğu, ‘demokrasi’ kelimesinin henüz manayı evvelinden bile gafil bulunmaktadır”

said that it is not possible for somebody who does not have a certain knowledge and intellectual level to carry out such discussions. Besides, in the remaining letters, there is no such discussions with such high intellectual level.

Furthermore, there were also some readers who had liberalism debates with Yalman. As it is known, Yalman was one of the leading liberals of that period, and competing with such a famous liberal requires a significant intellectual capital for an “ordinary” reader. For example, in a reader letter sent on January 24, 1938, a reader (Reader Number 9) criticizes what Yalman wrote in his editorial on the limits of freedom of debate.⁹⁴ He then asks, “In a country where there is party dominance, is it lawful to leave up to a person or a clique the authority to decide what is of public interest?”⁹⁵ (B20f1) to Yalman. Along with this question, the reader makes a controversial debate in which the responses brought by the liberal democracy understanding to the tensions between individuals and executive elites are insufficient. Finally, he questions the guarantee over the protection of individual rights. By the same token, in another reader letter sent on September 23, 1947, a reader (Reader Number 28) engages in a discussion of representation through individuals and classes. In this regard, he asks Yalman the following question:

In all the parts that make up the nation, according to the classical standpoint that does not accept the possibility of another agent but the individual, we may approve to some extent the capability of the present parliaments to represent all the individuals. However, when we accept this hypothesis as such, wouldn't we be accepting the current status of the individual within the society as abstract?⁹⁶ (B5f3-1).

With this question, and the discussion he made during a page afterwards, the reader criticizes the liberal thought that ignores social classes and abstracts the individual, which was also artificially advocated by Yalman. As can be seen, conducting such

⁹⁴ Tan, 23.01.1938, ‘Çok YanlıŞ Bir Görüş’.

⁹⁵ “Parti hakimiyeti cari olan bir memlekette amme menfaatinin taktirini bir ferde veya bir zümreye (partiye) bırakmak caiz midir?”

⁹⁶ “Milli bütünü terkip eden ecza içinde, fertten başka unsurun vücut ve ihtimalini kabul etmeyen klasik nazariyat telakkisine göre, bugünkü meclislerin ferdi tamamıyeti temsil edebilmek ehliyetlerini bir dereceye kadar makbul addedebiliriz. Fakat kazıyeyi böyle kabul ettiğimiz takdirde, fertlerin cemiyet içindeki durumunu bir mücerrediyet olarak tarif ve kabul etmiş olmaz mıyız?”

high-level discussions with an intellectually well-equipped journalist like Yalman puts these readers apart from other readers in terms of their intellectual levels.

Finally, it would be appropriate to look at a number of historical references that some readers made. These references have been used in different contexts, and were sometimes references to historical events. For example, in a letter he sent in 1954, a civil servant (Reader Number 18) says the following to criticize the ineffectiveness of the current opposition: “Even when fascists ruled Italy there were many parties there. In times of elections, despite all the strict measures, even in times when people were violently beheaded, these parties would attack Mussolini at full speed”⁹⁷ (B13f12). In order to give such references in this way, it is at least necessary to have read history and to have intellectuality to reconcile certain historical events and the events of the period experienced. Additionally, readers sometimes referred to some historical figures. For example, a reader (Reader Number 29) cited Gaston Jéze on an administrative law issue (B6f7), while another reader (Reader Number 30) compared Yalman’s democracy struggle with that of Victor Hugo (B7f3). Similarly, while a female reader (Reader Number 31) spoke about the plays of Cyrano de Bergerac⁹⁸ (B8f10-2), another reader (Reader Number 20) quoted words from Confucius⁹⁹ (B7f3). As can be seen, the references made by the readers, whether historical events or historical figures, point to a distinctive intellectual level for them.

The educational and intellectual levels examined within the framework of the third parameter indicate a complementary point in terms of determining the class character of the readers. The educational/intellectual levels of the readers, together with those explained in the first two parameters, confirm the assertion that they are from urban

⁹⁷ “İtalya’da faşistlerin ferman eyledikleri zamanlarda dahi orada birçok parti vardı. Kafaların hunharca kesildiği devirlerde bile partiler, sinyor Mussolini’ye alabildiğine hücum ederlerdi”

⁹⁸ The reader tells that the first time Yalman left mark on her mind, by saying, “The first trace you left on me is the article you wrote after watching ‘Cyrano de Bergerac’, which still comes alive in my mind from time to time. I always regret not having kept that article” [“Bende ilk iz bıraktığınız, hala zaman zaman kafamda bazı yerleri canlanan ‘Cyrano de Bergerac’ı seyrettikten sonra yazmış olduğunuz makaledir. O makaleyi muhafaza etmemiş olmama her zaman yanarım”] (B8f10-2).

⁹⁹ “I’d like to remind you of what Confucius said: “Justice stays in place like a polar star and everything else turns around it” [“Konfüçyüs’ün bir sözünü hatırlatırım: “Adalet, bir kutup yıldızıdır; her şey onun etrafında döner” demiştir”] (B7f3).

middle-classes. Especially the signs presented in the last parameter are important in terms of showing that the readers go through educational and intellectual processes that were accessible only to individuals belonging to the middle-classes. Additionally, the occupational groups of the readers, which have clues about those educational processes, also strengthen their belonging to the middle-classes. Finally, an analysis put forward within the framework of the places where the letters were sent showed that the vast majority of the readers had an urban character. Thus, it can be said that, the class characters of Yalman's readers were the urban middle-classes.

3.4. Mapping the Relationship Between Yalman and His Readers

In this part, the relationship between Yalman and his readers will be examined. What to do in this context is to expose the unilateral and mutual relation networks established between Yalman and his readers, and then, through those relations what is to be done is mapping the relationship between the intellectual and his "followers". In this regard, the relation networks between Yalman and his readers will be examined in three steps. In the first place, the words used by the readers at the beginning and/or end of their letters to address Yalman will be discussed. Secondly, the contents of the letters will be analyzed, and some specific features attributed by the readers to Yalman will be examined. As the final step, Yalman's responses to some letters will be examined and his discussions with the readers will be scrutinized. In the light of this three-step investigation, the mapping of the relationship between Yalman and his readers will be completed.

In terms of examining the relationship between Yalman and his readers, the first step is to analyze the forms of addressing words used at the beginning and/or end of the letters. In order to demonstrate the diversity of the letters, it would be useful to examine this step within three varying categories: respectful expressions (mostly in a reverential tone), disrespectful expressions (sometimes in an offensive and insulting way), and neutral ones.¹⁰⁰ Of all the letters included in this study, it is possible to say that the vast majority starts and/or ends with the respectful expressions. In this context, it can be

¹⁰⁰ Readers who used neutral words were generally people who refrain from giving their names, and hence preferred broader expressions.

said that the other two categories are in an exceptional position vis-à-vis to this category. In fact, even the letters that include harsh criticisms towards Yalman begin and end with the respectful expressions. For example, in a letter dated April 25, 1950, a sanatorium employee (Reader Number 32) makes great accusations against Yalman, such as blaming him for writing articles for money. This letter, which also has different criticisms towards Yalman, begins with a respectful expression of “Reverend Sir”¹⁰¹ (B5f3-2) and ends with a respectful sentence as follows: “I kiss your hands with respect”¹⁰² (Ibid.).¹⁰³

As part of the analysis, it is useful to look at the examples of above-mentioned categories of expressions. There are many letters that start with respectful expressions, such as “Master Yalman”¹⁰⁴ (B11f14), “Dear master”¹⁰⁵ (B18f5-2; B7f2-1), “Dear and beloved Yalman”¹⁰⁶ (B18f5-1)¹⁰⁷, continue with the self-presenting phrases, which the readers introduced themselves to Yalman, such as “A reader of yours”¹⁰⁸ (B20f1; B8f10-1), “One of your readers”¹⁰⁹ (B8f4; B12f8), “Yours truly has been a reader of

¹⁰¹ “Muhterem Efendim”

¹⁰² “Ellerinizi hürmetle öperim”

¹⁰³ Such letters are important to show that the first step alone is not sufficient for mapping the relationship between Yalman and his readers. Therefore, it is obvious that there is a need for examinations in the other two steps that will be covered below.

¹⁰⁴ “Üstadım Yalman”

¹⁰⁵ “Sayın/Değerli Üstat”

¹⁰⁶ “Aziz ve Kıymetli Yalman”

¹⁰⁷ Although it is possible to augment those examples, there are also letters starting with the expressions in which Yalman was too internalized by the readers compared to the others, such as “Sayın ağabeyim” (B18f5-2; B8f4), “Kıymetli ve kudretli babacığım” (Reader Number 107) (B13f7-2), “Zamanımızın cesur ve temiz evladı” (B8f4), and “Kahraman Emin Yalman” (B6f9).

¹⁰⁸ “Karilerinizden”

¹⁰⁹ “Okuyucularınızdan”

yours for the past eight/ten/forty/since 1944/many years [...]”¹¹⁰ (B8f10-3; B13f11-1; B1f3; B17f10; B17f9; B5f3-2), and end with again respectful expressions, such as “I kiss your hands”¹¹¹ (B5f3-2; B13f9; B1f3), “Cordially”¹¹² (B17f9), and “Yours respectfully”¹¹³ (B11f5).¹¹⁴ However, there are also a few letters that begin and/or end with disrespectful expressions. Although most of these are letters that insult and humiliate Yalman, there are also examples that are not included in this hostile scope. For example, in a reader letter sent on January 28, 1961, a university student (Reader Number 33) describes Yalman as an enemy to the religion, and ends his letter by saying, “Yours disrespectfully”¹¹⁵ (B6f11). In addition to these categories, there were also some readers used neutral expressions at the beginning and/or end of their letters, such as “Young villagers”¹¹⁶ (Reader Number 34) (B13f7-2), “A Nation Party member”¹¹⁷ (Reader Number 4) (B1f3), “the People”¹¹⁸ (Reader Number 35) (B13f11-1), “A citizen”¹¹⁹ (Reader Number 36) (B17f10), and “A youngster from Anatolia”¹²⁰ (Reader Number 37) (B8f10-1).¹²¹

¹¹⁰ “Bendeniz, sekiz senelik/on senelik/kırk senelik/1944’ten beri/çok eski bir okuyucunuz [...]”

¹¹¹ “Ellerinizi öperim”

¹¹² “Hürmetlerimle”

¹¹³ “Derin sevgi ve saygı ile”

¹¹⁴ It is possible to find many expressions that have similar meanings in the letters. However, only the most used ones were written at this point.

¹¹⁵ “Hürmet etmem”

¹¹⁶ “Genç köylüler”

¹¹⁷ “Bir Millet Partili”

¹¹⁸ “Halk”

¹¹⁹ “Bir vatandaş”

¹²⁰ “Anadolulu bir genç”

¹²¹ Along with a few letters stating that the reader did not sign it intentionally, the number of letters signed/ended with such anonymous expressions is very low. Similarly, in his study of petitions sent to

Besides those categories, two situations which are independent of the above-mentioned categories but related to the beginning parts of the letters should be specified. First, there are some letters that start with the expression of “An Open Letter to Mr. Yalman”¹²² (B5f3-2; B17f10). The letters that start in this way are usually letters written to criticize Yalman, to warn him, or to give him some advices about various specific/historical contexts. Second, there are some letters starting with the date and title of some of Yalman’s editorials. Stating that the letters were written with references to the relevant editorials, the readers also briefly mention the sections they want to ask, or to criticize, at the beginning of their letters. There are 98 letters in Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers that start in this way, and there were also a few readers who cited articles from other journalists or newspapers. It can be said that the letters with these two starting styles are very important in terms of mapping the relationship between Yalman and his readers.

This and many more examples demonstrate that an intellectual hierarchy had been established between his readers and Yalman. The reason why such a hierarchical relationship was established between Yalman and his readers is that, Yalman was envisioned by his readers as an intellectual who is not blindly subjected to a strong economic group but to a political one. The relationship Yalman established with the political sphere caused him to absolute the state from time to time, as a result of his belonging to the generation that founded the republic.¹²³ As a result, he was put in a superior position by his readers. Thus, in the intellectual hierarchy established between Yalman and his readers, the readers mostly reduced themselves to lower positions by default.

In this context, it can be said that there were two main motivations behind the intellectual hierarchy established especially in the pre-1950 period within similar

the RPP Secretary General in the 1930s, Akın states that, similar anonymous statements were time to time used in those petitions, but again the number of them was very low (Akın, 2003, p. 106).

¹²² “Sayın Yalman’a Açık Mektup”

¹²³ The most important of the contradictory behaviors which cannot belong to liberalism that Buğra Kalkan suggests regarding Yalman, is the transcendence that Yalman attributes to the State, especially after the establishment of the Republic (Kalkan, 2018, pp. 47-48, 53).

positionings between Yalman and his readers. The first motivation of this similarity which was largely based on the manifestation of the national will and the realization of the elections in a free and fair manner, was to try to prevent the DP which was established within the framework of the transition to the multi-party period, from being closed like the other opposition parties established during the single-party era. In this context, it can be said that most of his readers closely followed Yalman's guidance regarding democratic norms. The second motivation was to prevent the frauds that were happened in the 1946 elections from repeating in the next elections. In this respect, it is clear that the readers were fed by Yalman's references to the procedural aspect of democracy, which they saw him as a wise intellectual figure.

The second step is about making an analysis over the contents of the letters, and putting forward some specific features attributed by the readers to Yalman. It should be noted that this step is very important for the above-mentioned mapping efforts. The one-word expressions examined in the first step can be misleading about the whole content of the letters. Thus, in this step, in order to delve further into the relationship between Yalman and his readers, a kind of discourse analysis on the essence of the letters will be carried out. Actually, the three categories proposed for the first step also fit into this one. In this context, first, the letters that praise Yalman by giving him a pioneering role and address him as an intellectual who guides and enlightens his readers will be examined. Afterwards, letters that establish a more distant relationship with Yalman, criticize him and open up a series of topics to be discussed will be examined. As the last category, letters written in neutral format for certain reasons will be mentioned, similar to the previous step.

In the discourse analysis made within the framework of the first category, it is revealed that Yalman was praised by his readers from various perspectives. The readers' praise to Yalman mostly focuses on his contribution to both social and political issues, such as his efforts about bringing democracy to the country or ensuring freedom of debate, etc. The vast majority of the letters examined in this study have such contents. Therefore, it is meaningless to state all of these letters separately. Instead, it would be more appropriate to reveal more exceptional contents, other than issues of democracy, freedom, etc. For example, some letters contain poems written by readers for Yalman (B13f7-1; B13f7-2; B13f11-2). Similarly, some readers congratulate Yalman's

editorials in the role of an impartial referee, as expected from an intellectual (B12f9; B8f10-2). In fact, in a reader letter sent on January 4, 1956, a reader (Reader Number 38) declares that he left the DP and joined the ranks of the RPP as a consequence of Yalman's editorials that were written with his motto of "Call a spade a spade"¹²⁴ (B7f2-1).

Moreover, it is possible to read the letters from some readers, one of whom stated that he wanted to be Yalman's lawyer (Reader Number 39) (B11f13), or some other asked Yalman for permission to name his newborn son "Ahmet Emin" (Reader Number 40) (B6f9), or said he wants to see Yalman as a minister or a deputy (Reader Number 18; 41) (B13f12; B8f4), or sent his passport photo to Yalman (Reader Number 42) (B13f12), or even says that he was ready to die for Yalman and that he could kill Menderes if Yalman gives an order (Reader Number 43) (B18f5-1). In addition, there were readers who asked Yalman for help on certain topics. These requests for help were sometimes expressed to take advantage of Yalman's intellectual accumulation, and were sometimes asking of Yalman's involvement for the solution of the problem as an intellectual figure.¹²⁵ It can be said that the letters examined within the framework of this first category strengthen the above-mentioned claim that the relationship between Yalman and his readers was formed within an intellectual hierarchy. The discourse analysis of the contents of the letters reveals that his readers attributed a leading role that enlightens its sphere to Yalman. However, the other categories need to be examined in order to provide an accurate mapping of the relations.

¹²⁴ "Eğriye eğri, doğruya doğru"

¹²⁵ For example, in a reader letter sent in 1951, a tailor (Reader Number 44) tells that he bought a Quran written in Latin letters, but the mufti of the district in which he lived said that a Quran not written in Arabic letters should not be read. The tailor who said that he wrote a letter to Yalman, thinking that he would enlighten him on this subject, asks Yalman to guide him by asking three questions within this issue (B9f6-1). Additionally, while an elderly woman (Reader Number 45) asked for help from Yalman for her sick child (B6f7), a group of teachers (Reader Number 46; 47) asked Yalman to send the missing numbers of the Vatan newspaper for the library collections (B8f10-3; B6f7). Also, the Director of Konya Public Library (Reader Number 48) asks Yalman for help for a book donation campaign (B12f4). Finally, a group of prisoners (Reader Number 49; 50) asked Yalman for help with Yalman's involvement in amnesty law processes (B13f2; B13f3).

The second category, although fewer than the first, covers the content analysis of the critical letters addressed by his readers to Yalman. An important detail that stands out in terms of these letters is that there were requests in the form of “I am waiting for you to write your comments about my ideas and/or answers to my criticisms in your newspaper, or by sending me reply letters” (B17f9), in the letters that Yalman has been criticized and/or the letters intended to discuss intellectual or political issues with Yalman. Although the criticisms directed to Yalman were generally related to his ideas that he has put forward in his daily editorials, they also included more general issues. For example, in a reader letter sent on February 5, 1950, a lieutenant colonel (Reader Number 51) criticizes Yalman on the grounds that he has written on the same topics too much, and on the grounds that he brought himself to the forefront, instead of the statesman that he interviewed (B8f10-1). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on June 14, 1947, a reader (Reader Number 52) criticizes Yalman for saying that only the liberal people are on the true path, and calling everyone who is not liberal, communists (B9f13). Finally, after the Intellectual Workers Law enacted in January 1961, many harsh criticisms were made for Yalman’s decision to boycott with other İstanbul newspapers (B12f7; B12f9).

It can be said that after 1953, when Yalman personally started to break with the DP ranks, Yalman got the reaction of his readers according to attitudes he assumed. These reactions varied according to the position Yalman advocated. For example, when Yalman defended the DP, pro-RPP readers accused Yalman of continuing to cooperate with the DP despite the undemocratic processes. From a similar point, pro-DP readers criticized Yalman when he criticized the DP after 1955, as not being impartial and losing the referee role he attributed to him.

Even such critical letters appear to be sent in the frame of intellectual tensions between his readers and Yalman. When these are considered together with a series of other letters that involve discussions on the daily political developments, or broader theoretical perspectives, it seems that the intellectual hierarchy between his readers

and Yalman was accepted by the readers in a default form.¹²⁶ In addition to the two steps analyzed so far, the examination of the letters sent by Yalman to his readers will make an important contribution to the mapping of the relationship between Yalman and his readers. In this sense, it can be said that the reply letters written by Yalman can be divided into two basic categories. The first category consists of the letters that Yalman has written in order to thank to his readers, or to tell them if he can or cannot attend the invitation, meeting, etc., and hence, does not mean anything in terms of their contents.¹²⁷

The category that makes this step important is the discussions that Yalman had with his readers in the reply letters. But above all, Yalman also had the kind of reflex that can be seen in many other intellectuals of the era, that was the reflex of extraordinary uneasiness from criticisms (Bora & Cantek, 2009, p. 881), and hence, he did not hesitate to argue with his readers. Thus, the scope of those discussions varies according to the historical contexts when the letters were sent. For example, in the letters sent before 1950, the discussions between Yalman and his readers were mostly within the framework of the democracy cause and freedom of debate. The main reason of this was that in a period where the first steps towards democratization being taken in Turkey, Yalman was one of the people who applauded the process from the highest pitch and attempted to teach democracy to the masses with the intellectual role that he attributed to himself. For example, in his letter dated July 7, 1948, which Yalman sent in response to a reader (Reader Number 53) who said there were dissidences between him and Yalman and criticized him of constantly going abroad and not spending time on domestic issues, Yalman expresses his thoughts on democracy after responding to the criticisms as follows:

We need to believe that an opinion contrary to ours can be the product of a favorable and accurate approach, in order for democracy to take root.

¹²⁶ This default intellectual hierarchy is more clearly manifested when the letters sent to Yalman in a neutral category, such as the letters/cards with festive congratulations (B5f3-1), get well wishes (B13f7; B13f9; B13f11), and condolence messages (B18f6), etc.

¹²⁷ Yalman briefly uses “*Mektubunuzu memnuniyetle/büyük bir alaka ile okudum*” (B5f3-2; B7f2-1), “*Mektubunuza/Gazetemize alakanıza teşekkür ederim*” (B6f7; B13f11-1), “*Ankara’ya ilk gelişimde yanınıza uğrayacağım*” (B17f10), “*Mart veya Nisan’dan evvel Erzincan’a gitmeğe imkan bulacağımı zannetmiyorum*” (B5f3-1), and similar expressions in these reply letters.

Difference of opinion is the prime engine of democracy. The symphony created by both harsh and gentle sounds is necessary for a cause to be pursued efficiently¹²⁸ (B5f3-1).¹²⁹

As you can see, Yalman has an intellectual objective¹³⁰ that aims to teach his readers “a democracy lesson” even when he was responding to a letter in which he was criticized.

In the letters sent between 1950-1955, the most prominent topic of discussion was a kind of unconditional- support that Yalman gave to the DP rule, and the readers’ criticisms towards him. Those criticisms were shaped around Yalman turning a blind eye to the mistakes and anti-democratic implementations of the DP rule, and his editorials contrary to his claims to be impartial. Yalman entered into a series of discussions with his readers making such criticisms. For example, he responds to his reader (Reader Number 54) who directed criticisms towards the mistakes made in the early years of the DP rule as

The problems that are usually seen in all transition periods are present everywhere. However, the indicators suggesting that this transitional period is coming to an end are becoming more and more evident. [...] I would like to assure you that I don’t make judgments based on what Mr. Menderes tells me, I make my judgments based on the truths I see and the articles I read on foreign newspapers¹³¹ (B7f2-2).

¹²⁸ “Demokrasinin kök tutmasının yolu, kendi fikrimize aykırı bir kanaatin de iyi niyetli ve isabetli bir görüşün mahsulü olabileceğine inanmaktır. Fikir ihtilafı, demokrasinin en esaslı muharrek kuvvetidir. Sert ve mutedil seslerin yarattığı senfoni bir davayı yürütmenin verimli bir yoludur”

¹²⁹ Yalman also gave similar answers to other letters sent within the frame of events on an individual basis, such as Nâzım Hikmet campaign (B1f3), Islamist reaction movements (B5f3-1), etc., during the same period.

¹³⁰ There is a salient reply letter in this context. A reader (Reader Number 56) invites Yalman to come to the DP’s Erzincan congress, and asks him to deal with the problems of the Eastern Provinces. Yalman sends a reply letter in the form of “Eğer ızdırıp uyandıran meseleler hakkında eski yazı ile not şeklinde beni tenvir ederseniz, neşir vazifemi yapmakta kusur etmem” (B5f3-1).

¹³¹ “İntikal devrine mahsus sıkıntılar her tarafta devam ediyor. Fakat bu devrin kapanmağa başladığına dair işaretler ondan daha ağır basmaya başlıyor. [...] Şuna emin olmanızı rica ederim ki, ben hükümlerimi Adnan beyden işittiğim birkaç sözden değil, gözümle gördüğüm hakikatler ve yabancı gazetelerde okuduğum yazılar üzerine veriyorum”

Similarly, he sends a reply letter and gives the following answer to his reader's (Reader Number 55) criticism that he writes editorials against his claim of impartiality:

The criteria and principles of the motherland are always constant. There were times we supported İnönü's actions, for example after the July 12 declaration, at the expense of offending the democrats and losing our readers. We objected to the conduct of DP between 1950-1952 with great fury. Today, we see the leader of RPP to be on the wrong track. We share out thoughts explicitly¹³² (B7f3).

The discussions carried out in the letters sent after the mid-1954 were in the form of a critique to Yalman's criticisms directed towards the anti-democratic implementations of the DP rule. In this context, Yalman sends the following answer on December 17, 1954 to a reader (Reader Number 57) who accuses him of applauding the anti-DP publication:

The fact of the matter is that we need to preserve our reputation in the world as a democratic and free country, and give our own citizens the idea that democracy is not in danger. All our foreigner friends think that the government that came to power in May 2 with the support of the majority was in a place to take initiative and defuse the tensions. Regardless of all the provocations, the government needed to refrain from actions like the *Kırşehir* law, the opposition not being able to speak on the radio, the restructuring of the election law, the retiring of the judges who served for 25 years, turning the secret courts into a more and more widely used mechanism, the disallowance of the right of proof, and should have introduced concrete reforms in fields like Justice and Finance Departments. [...] We need to seek a solution to re-establish our reputation in the world and we must to find one¹³³ (B7f2-2).

This reply letter of Yalman is a brief summary of the post-1954 DP rule period that has destroyed the legislative, executive and judicial powers by following the anti-

¹³² "Vatan'ın ölçüleri ve prensipleri daima sabittir. Zaman oldu ki, İnönü'nün 12 Temmuz beyannamesinden sonraki hareketlerini, demokratları gücendirmek ve okuyucularımızı kaybetmek pahasına, bütün kuvvetimizle destekledik. 1950-1952 arasında Demokrat Parti'nin gidişine şiddetle hücum ettik. Bugün de CHP liderini çok yanlış yolda görüyoruz. Kanaatlerimizi açıkça ifade ediyoruz"

¹³³ "Bütün mesele, harice karşı demokrat ve hür bir memleket sıfatıyla itibarımızı muhafaza etmekte ve kendi vatandaşlarımıza demokrasinin tehlikede olmadığı kanaatini vermektir. Bütün harici dostlarımızın kanaati şu şekildedir ki, 2 Mayıs'ta büyük bir ekseriyetle iktidara gelen hükümet, teşebbüsü elinde tutup, gerginliği yatıştırarak bir mevkiide idi. Ne kadar haksız tahrikler karşısında olursa olsun, Kırşehir kanunu, muhaliflerin radyoda konuşmaması, seçim kanununun tadili, 25 yılı dolduran hakimlerin idari surette emekliye sevk edilmesi, gizli mahkemelerin itiyad halini alması, ispat hakkının reddi gibi hareketlerden geri durulması ve Adliye, Maliye gibi işlerde esaslı ıslahata girişilmesi lazımdı. [...] Harici itibarımızın eski halini bulmasına çare aramak ve bulmak lazımdır"

democratic paths of oppression and suppression. But the striking point is that while Yalman exhibits an intellectual image that is enthusiastic to give democracy lessons to his readers belong to different segments of the society, he actually took Turkey's international reputation as the primary goal. Additionally, we can say that old generations of intellectual journalists, such as Yalman, have set up a discourse universe in which the traditional reverence has been shown to their wisdom of narration (Bora & Cantek, 2009, p. 883). Hence, along with this above-mentioned reply letter, when we look at Yalman's discussions with his readers, it is clear that there was an intellectual hierarchy between his readers and Yalman, as also foregrounded in the previous steps. Thus, mapping the relationship between Yalman and his readers should be considered within this frame.

3.5. Conclusion

The primary focuses of this chapter were first to put forward the ideological positioning of Ahmet Emin Yalman, and second to reveal the class characters of Yalman's readers. Yalman's ideological positioning contains many clues about the ideological axis that influenced the period. The period after 1945 was also a period when the world began to become bipolar. Yalman was a journalist famous for his devotion to liberalism and his anti-communist position. In other words, he was one of the representatives of the Western bloc in a bipolar world. Additionally, debates on democracy in Turkey began to be shaped around the Western-type liberal democracy notion. Therefore, it was not possible that the readers who followed Yalman were not influenced by the liberal ideology. In any case, there were almost no content in the reader letters contrary to the liberal ideology and anti-communist norm represented by Yalman. Thus, these ideological influences had been very effective in shaping readers' perceptions of democracy around similar norms. The analysis of the letters in this framework will be done in the following chapters.

Yalman's ideological position was also a determinant of the readers' having certain class characters. Almost all of Yalman's readers were urban and educated individuals of a certain intellectual level. The rhetorical elements and the way in which the readers use them provided a perspective on the class character and intellectual levels of the readers. In other words, Yalman's readers were made up of the individuals belonging

to *urban middle-classes*, and mostly they were embracing liberal norms. The ideas put forward in the letters of Yalman's readers show that those individuals closely followed the debates on democracy and the political developments of the period. The letters have various moments related to the political debates of that period. This situation is an expression of the efforts of the urban middle-class individuals to be involved in the political sphere. In fact, many of them took a step further and became a party to political issues and tried to put them in certain lines by intervening. As those individuals were representing the segment where Kemalist modernization ideal of the early republican period was embodied, it was not surprising that the liberal notion of democracy was mostly embraced by them and strong demands for democratic principles blended with Kemalist legacy were raised by them.

About the relationship established between Yalman and his readers, it can be clearly said that an intellectual hierarchy prevails between Yalman and his readers. Besides, Yalman had positioned himself in terms of the periods he has gone through, and his readers were also aware of his "dynamic" positionings. The supercilious attitude that Yalman adopts in his discussions with his readers, caused his readers to be self-positioned at the lower levels of Yalman's intellectual hierarchy by default. This was apparent to such an extent that, Yalman has not neglected to give some democracy, liberalism, etc. lessons even in the discussions he has with his readers close to his intellectual level. In this sense, after mapping the relationship established between Yalman and his readers, it was revealed that his readers were close to Yalman's ideological and political positions. Yalman's relationship with liberalism and democracy is one of the factors that enabled the democracy perceptions of his readers to be shaped around liberal-democratic procedures and mechanisms. Actually, it can be asserted that this liberal-democratic tendency was the outcome of the influence of the ideological axis that dominated the period and became hegemonic over time.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMAGE OF DEMOCRACY FROM THE READERS' CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, efforts of Yalman's readers to get involved in the debates on democracy that took place in the period of 1945-1960 will be studied. More specifically, this chapter aims to reveal what the readers expected from the political authorities within the frame of the democratization process. It is clear that these expectations were stemming from the debates on democracy, Hence, these expectations will be handled vis-à-vis the political developments of the period. In this sense, this whole chapter will dwell upon the criticisms directed by the readers towards the practices of the political authorities, which contradicted democracy. In other words, this chapter covers the analysis of criticisms directed by the readers of Yalman to the practices of both the RPP and the DP rules that were contrary to the democracy definitions/understandings that emerged within the framework of the democracy debates of that period. Considering these points of criticisms, the efforts of the readers to determine the framework of democracy will be revealed through their answers to the question of '*What is not democracy?*'. Thus, the main purpose of this chapter is to provide an analysis on the ideas contained in the historical contextual perspective of the reader letters sent to Yalman.

Democracy debates of the 1945-1960 period show some differentiations within a certain historicity. In other words, definitions attributed to democracy and expectations from a democratic system before 1950 have evolved into various forms as of 1950, and hence, some changes have occurred in the content of democracy, as a result of the dialectical interaction between the discourse and the social reality, i.e. the political

developments. In this context, the reader letters that contain criticisms towards the ruling elites of the period will be analyzed in two parts. In the first part, the criticisms of the readers to the RPP rule within the framework of the democracy understandings of the period will be examined. In this sense, it is seen that the readers who sent letters to Yalman believed that, if democracy arrived to the country, problems arising from the absence of some procedures, would be solved. Thus, in the first part, criticisms of the readers to the practices of the RPP rule that did not allow -or show reluctance to- the free and fair elections and therefore prevent the realization of the national will is to be manifested.

In the second part, the criticisms of the readers to the practices of the DP rule of the period that polarized the society into two adverse camps and fed the contradictions among the society will be examined from seeking the liberal notion of democracy perspectives of the readers. The DP's election victory in 1950 followed by the demonization of the single-party era and with it the RPP, and the polarization of the society by placing the RPP supporters in elitist positions through depicting them as a limited group of people who do not respect the manifestation of the national will. The fact that expectations regarding liberal-democratic rights and freedoms faded as a result of the national will populism¹³⁴ had facilitated the DP's implementation of its polarizing policies. As a result, these expectations were met in the first period of the DP government within a polarizing populist frame, and as of 1953, the DP policies and practices turned out to be the exact same with the former anti-democratic approach about the rights and freedoms. After the 1954 election victory, the DP completely broke with the liberal-democratic principles and gained an oppressive and authoritarian appearance which deepens the polarization among the society massively. The society was dragged into a process of polarization, as the DP blended its oppressive and suppressive, i.e. anti-democratic practices. Thus, the readers tried to draw the boundaries of the notion of democracy by means of the criticisms they directed to the DP rule within this framework in the letters they sent.

¹³⁴ The most important reason behind this fading was that the pretended sense of satisfaction aroused in the society that the 1950 elections were held in a free and fair manner.

4.2. From Single-Party to Multi-Party: Demand for Free and Fair Elections

In this part, the issue of free and fair elections will be discussed which was the most prominent debate on democracy before 1950, which was the expectation of the masses in this respect and which was at the center of the criticisms the readers have directed to the RPP rule in this context. As of the second half of 1947, a general consensus was reached which stipulated that the current system in which more than one party could take part in the elections was a democracy (Üstüner, 2000, p. 198). In other words, the issue of elections and manifestation of the national will was more prominent in that period. Thus, in this part, the letters of criticisms directed by the readers to the RPP rule on the issue of free and fair elections will be examined, and how they determined the limits of democracy will be analyzed.

After the Second World War ended on May 8, 1945, the whole world was entering a new era.¹³⁵ Turkey had also received its share from this changing trend. Actually, the idea of transition to the multi-party system was in the mind of İnönü in 1939. At the beginning of 1939, the national chief made his opinion clear by saying, “Public oversight, in the real sense, is mandatory in the country” (Birand, Dündar & Çaplı, 1991, p. 22). However, with the onset of the Second World War, these thoughts were suspended. Finally, as a result, the war crushed fascist regimes and polished the liberal democracies in the West, and Turkey again became eager to get on the train of democracy. Thus, these democratization discourses came to the agenda only after the war ended. In this context, İnönü intended to complete the transition period, which was collapsed before it began in 1939 due to the world conjuncture. Hence, he expressed his will in the speech of May 19, 1945, by saying,

Our motherland’s political order will advance further with the progress, in all directions, and the promises of people’s rule which was established by the Republic. As the scarcity of wartime, which leads to stricter measures, withers away, the principles of democracy shall reign in a more and broader sense in the political and conceptual life of our motherland¹³⁶ (Timur, 1991, pp. 13-14).

¹³⁵ For example, the European Coal and Steel Community (later the European Union) was established in 1950 with the aim of rebuilding Europe after the war (Doğan, 2019, pp. 35-36).

¹³⁶ “Memleketimizin siyasi idaresi Cumhuriyetle kurulan halk idaresinin her istikamette ilerlemeleri ve şartlarıyla gelişmeye devam edecektir. Harp zamanlarının ihtiyatlı tedbirlere lüzum gösteren darlıkları

The reasons behind İnönü's request for the establishment of opposition parties so openly, and thus, his aim to start the transition period to the multiparty system were important. According to Eroğul (1987), there were briefly four underlying reasons: the economic and social problems felt heavily during the war period, which had reached the climax of the societal and political dissatisfaction among the masses; the demands of the propertied classes; the international conjuncture that emerged after the war; the legacy of the Reformation (*Tanzimat*) period of Westernization movements in Turkey, which was still very strong as of that period (Eroğul, 1987, p. 102-103).¹³⁷

Immediately after İnönü's speech on May 19, the first steps were taken within the frame of the democratization discourses. The first step was that, contrary to the previously applied form, the candidates were not determined by the RPP rule in the by-elections held on June 17, 1945, hence, the right to be a candidate had been granted to everyone who wanted to be one¹³⁸ (Karpas, 1959, p. 144). In this period of democratization, the next step was the establishment of opposition parties, which gradually opened the door to the transition to the multiparty system. The main event that marked this transition that started in 1945¹³⁹ was the establishment of the Democratic Party in January 1946, and its emergence as a new and important political actor in Turkish political history. In this sense, it can be said that the DP has successfully defended the three issues, i.e. the free and fair elections, the elimination of anti-democratic provisions in laws, and allowing parliament to really oversee the government (Eroğul, 1990, p. 11), all of which stand within the framework of the definitions of democracy based on the understanding of liberal-democratic procedures,

kalktıkça memleketin siyaset ve fikir hayatında demokrasi prensipleri daha geniş ölçüde hüküm sürecektir”

¹³⁷ The main premise of the Westernization movement was the adoption of Western-type liberal democracy, and ‘to go beyond the level of the contemporary civilizations’, as Mustafa Kemal has suggested (Tunçay, 2009, p. 96). This reason also caused the debates on democracy of the 1945-1950 period to take place within the framework of Kemalist modernization approach (Köker, 2009, p. 99).

¹³⁸ Thereupon, the number of candidates increased to ninety-three in İstanbul (Yalman, 1971, p. 28).

¹³⁹ The first opposition party, i.e. the National Development Party (*Milli Kalkınma Partisi*), was established on September 22, 1945 (Koçak, 2010, p. 674).

and the DP made sure that they have been discussed by the society, during its opposition years.

After these political developments, it can be said that the demands for the ‘*freedom of debate*’ and democratic participation of masses started to be more apparent. The most obvious way for the masses to make their demands more visible was to direct some criticisms to the rulers of the period, and thus make their own ideas audible. In a reader letter sent on October 30, 1945, a sanitary officer (Reader Number 58) in a construction company, who says that he is the son of a peasant, criticizes the ruling elites who did not allow peasants to raise their voices, by saying,

The government should stop hurling sugar-coated lies from their stands, step away from their luxurious lives for a couple of days and take a look at the Turkish peasants. I’ve witnessed the Gendarmerie go from a village to another to collect money and recruit labour from the peasants almost every day [...] Wherever the peasant goes and to whomever he tells his troubles, he is hurled out like a piece of trash and not paid attention to by anyone¹⁴⁰ (B5f3-2).

Similarly, in another reader letter titled ‘The inner face of Ankara Faculty of Law’ and sent on November 2, 1945, a law school senior year student (Reader Number 59) makes two critical suggestions in his letter that can be read within the framework of the democracy debates of the period:

1. The professors who are to raise the youth of our country must be of a character and quality to which the youth can aspire; 2. There needs to be a control field from where the students can inspect the fair work of the administration, through the establishment of Student Fraternities. They are talking about the autonomy of universities and the faculties, what a dream! Please talk about the autonomy of the students, for the remedy lies in that¹⁴¹ (B13f9).

¹⁴⁰ “Bugünkü hükümet, kürsüden parlak palavralar savurmayı bırakıp, lüks hayatlarından 2-3 gün uzaklaşıp Türk köylüsüne baksın. Köylüden amele ve para toplamak için Jandarmaların hemen her gün köy köy dolaştıklarına şahit oldum. [...] Köylü nereye gitsin, derdini ve halini kime anlatsın; gittiği yerden paçavra gibi geri atılmakta ve şikâyeti dinlenmemektedir”

¹⁴¹ “1. Memleket gençliğini yetiştirecek profesörler bilgili, gençlere numune olabilecek seciye ve karakterde olmalı; 2. Talebe Cemiyetleri kurularak, talebelere idarenin dürüst çalışmasını kontrol sahası tanınmalıdır. Üniversitelerin ve fakültelerin muhtariyetinden bahsediliyor, ne büyük hayal. Bize talebelerin muhtariyetinden bahsediniz, şifa oradan gelecektir”

As of the first months of 1946, a wave of criticism towards the RPP began in the country in general. For example, in a reader letter sent on May 21, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 60) who describes the current period as “The current regime that makes the whole generation yearn for the unbearable despotic tyranny days of the Abdulhamid era”¹⁴² (B7f2-2), complains from the anti-democratic efforts of the rulers, by saying, “We appreciate the intellectuals who are trying hard to bring democracy into the country; but unfortunately, we are unable to persuade the rulers to accept the rule of democracy”¹⁴³ (Ibid.).

The fact that the masses began to criticize the RPP rule more loudly, and voiced their expectations about democracy, brought to the fore the fear that power was slipping through the hands of the RPP executives. Thereupon, the RPP executives decided to hold the general elections one year early, i.e. on July 21, 1946, as well as to use a single-level election principle in the general elections to be held (Koçak, 2012, p. 346). However, the decision to hold the elections one year earlier created a disappointment among the masses, who were expecting sincere steps for the democratization process. The readers also understood what the meaning of this decision was, and how an election to be held in such an environment would be. In a reader letter sent on June 2, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 23) depicts this disappointment and what the RPP was planning in the up-coming elections, by saying,

For years, those who think only of their own interests stripped people who do not think like themselves of their jobs with Machiavellian methods. [...] The party [RPP] has understood that it is going to lose the power. Therefore, even if Democratic Party takes part in the elections, it cannot win more than 10 or 15 seats. In other words, Democratic Party will only obtain what has been reserved for it by the RPP [...] If the nation votes freely, these gentlemen will face such difficult circumstances that they take for granted the loss of the ones even the names of whom we abstain from articulating. All of these precautions are due to this fear¹⁴⁴ (B8f4).

¹⁴² “Tahammül edilemez dediğimiz Abdülhamid devrinin istibdat ve tahakküm günlerini büyük bir nimet olarak bütün nesle arattırmakta olan bugünkü rejim”

¹⁴³ “Demokrasiyi ülkeye getirmek maksadıyla neleri göze alıp çabalayan kıymetli aydınlarımızı takdir ediyoruz; fakat ne çare ki, baştakileri buna ikna etmek kabil olamıyor”

¹⁴⁴ “Senelerden beri yalnız nefislerini düşünenler, kendileri gibi düşünmeyenleri Makyavelvari usullerle, ekmeklerinden, işlerinden ettiler. [...] Parti, iktidarı kaybedeceğini anlamıştır. Bu yüzdendir ki, Demokrat Parti intihabata girerse de kazanacağı 10-15 mebusluktan fazla olmayacaktır. Yani

Similarly, in another reader letter sent on July 9, 1946, a ministry officer (Reader Number 1) requesting that his address and name be kept confidential, tells a story that occurred while the Prime Minister Saraçoğlu was speaking to the public from the radio:

I decided to listen to the speech in the garden of a coffeehouse located in the crowded *İtfaiye* Square in Ankara. A person among the crowd listening to the speech, all of a sudden, put his hat on the table and began shouting, ‘O, my hat! Until now it’s always been them who spoke and us who listened. From now on, it’s you, my hat, who is to listen, not us!’¹⁴⁵ (B8f4).

Prepone the general elections was a defeat in the full sense of a novice political party, i.e. for the DP, that had not yet completed its preparations. On the one side, there was a well-established party, i.e. the RPP, with all the state facilities and political experience, and on the opposing side, there was a party that was established six months ago and had no means or facilities, etc. Along with the DP founders¹⁴⁶, supporters of DP were also aware of this reality. In a reader letter sent in May 1946, a reader from the provincial enterprise committee of DP (Reader Number 24) talks about the differences in opportunities between the parties that will compete in the elections, by saying, “We, unfortunately, have not entered this battle under equal conditions with the party you represent. Despite all the advantages you have, Democratic Party relies on nothing but the trust and support of the nation”¹⁴⁷ (B8f4). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on June 24, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 61) shows that he was

şimdiden bu parti için ne miktar yer ayrılmış ise o kadarını alacaktır. [...] Millet reyini serbest verirse, bu efendiler o kadar müşkül vaziyetlere düşecekler ki, şimdi isimlerini telaffuzdan dahi çekindiklerimizin açıkta kalmaları, onlarca varid görülüyor. Bütün bu tedbirler bu korkudandır”

¹⁴⁵ “Ankara’nın kalabalık bir mahalli olan İtfaiye Meydanı’ndaki kahvelerden birinin bahçesinde konuşmayı dinlemeye karar verdim. Nutku dinleyen kalabalık arasından birisi, masanın üstüne şapkasını koyup, yüksek sesle, yanında bulunanlara hitaben, “Ey şapka! Şimdiye kadar hep onlar söyledi biz dinledik, bundan sonra biz değil sen dinleyeceksin” diye söyledi”

¹⁴⁶ Meanwhile, along with the general elections, local elections were also taken to an earlier date. The DP decided not to participate in local elections as a reaction.

¹⁴⁷ “Bu mücadeleye, maalesef temsil ettiğiniz parti ile müsavi şartlar altında atılmış değiliz. Elinizde bulunan birçok avantajlara karşılık, Demokrat Parti yalnız ve yalnız milletin güven ve müzaheretine dayanmaktadır”

aware of this unequal competition, by saying, “The supporters of a party with six months of history are inexperienced in terms of democracy”¹⁴⁸ (B8f4).

After the election date was announced and the election race started, the readers began to criticize some practices in the election process that contradicted democratic principles. In this sense, the situation towards which these criticisms were directed was in such a shape that the civilian authorities, who should be impartial and tasked to serve every person living in their area of responsibility within the framework of the democratic principles, were attempting to make election propaganda for the benefit of the RPP. In a reader letter sent on June 23, 1946, a contractor (Reader Number 62) complains about the partisan governors who work in favor of the RPP in the election race. He tells an incident he encountered, by saying,

The Neighborhood Headman organized a meeting, supposedly, to run through the election works. Our governor Burhanettin Teker attended the meeting after it began. He sat over the table, and said ‘I am not here for an intervention, nor am I here unofficially. I am here to inspect you’. After a while, he intervened in the discussion and briefly said: ‘My friends, let us cooperate to help our party win the elections. For a new party to come to power and grasp the internal and international political conditions, there needs time. However, the global status quo does not have any toleration for such a time. Our current statesmen are comprised of experienced people; thus, we must put all our efforts to make them win’. He openly propagated for the People’s Party¹⁴⁹ (B18f5-1).

This situation was not overlooked by the DP founders, and certain criticisms were directed to the RPP rule within the framework of democratic opposition.

Another focus of the criticisms directed to the RPP in the pre-election period was on the state agencies, such as radio and official press agencies, which should be free from partisan influences and that should broadcast respectfully in accordance with the rights

¹⁴⁸ “Altı aylık bir mazisi olan bir partinin taraftarları, demokraside acemidirler”

¹⁴⁹ “Seçim işlerini güya bir gözden geçirelim diye Mahalle Muhtarları bir toplantı yaptılar. Toplantı başladıktan biraz sonra Valimiz Burhanettin Teker de iştirak ettiler. “Ben gayri resmi ve bir müdahale maksadıyla gelmiyorum, sizinizi yoklamaya geldim” mukaddemesile masanın başına geçti. Bir müddet sonra bazı sebeplerle söze karışarak hulasatan şunları söyledi: “Arkadaşlar, elbirliğiyle partimizin kazanmasını sağlayalım. Yeni iktidarı alacak bir parti devletin iç ve dış siyasetindeki durumu kavraması için zamana muhtaç. Halbuki dünya durumunun böyle beklemlere hiç de müsamahası yoktur. Şimdiki devlet adamlarımız tecrübeli zevattan mürekkep, onun için onların kazanması için elimizden gelen gayreti sarf edelim” diyerek Halk Partisi’nin propagandasını hiç çekinmeden yaptı”

of every individual to receive news. These state agencies were of course under the control of the RPP rule, which had been ruling the country as a single-party for 23 years, and they were broadcasting in a partisan manner for the benefit of the RPP in the election race. In a reader letter sent on June 1, 1946, a literature teacher (Reader Number 63) criticizes Anatolian News Agency (*Anadolu Ajansı - AA*) for not publishing any of the ugly expressions that İnönü said during his visit to Kars, by saying,

I've read in the newspapers what the AA reported of İnönü's speech and, sadly, I have not found among these lines the things İnönü truly said. Among these lines, there was not the statement that 'Kars is a border city, and even if freedom of speech could be allowed to a certain extent in some places, in Kars freedom of speech is out of the question'. Among these lines there were not the statements like 'the scholars don't know much about the current state of the people and the country, but I am well aware how ignorant the people are' that contained huge slanders to both the people and the scholars [...] Here, let alone the existence of more than one parties, even the difference of opinion is not allowed¹⁵⁰ (B8f4).

As the election day approached, the dose of criticisms directed by the readers to the RPP had increased. Now, issues such as ambition and propaganda types of the RPP executives had begun to come to the fore. In a reader letter sent on July 3, 1946, a military doctor (Reader Number 64) criticizes the propaganda methods of the RPP partisans, by saying,

There is nothing more natural than the parties doing propaganda work for the upcoming elections. Nevertheless, we are witnessing certain inconveniences with regards to such work. I shall talk about two kinds of dishonorable propaganda. First, wives of some representatives are going from door to door in *Yenişehir* to recruit candidates for CHP and are begging for votes. Second, Tezer Taşkıran, one of our lady representatives, is again daring to going from door to door to propagate for her party. They go on with their actions without any shame, despite the scenes they face¹⁵¹ (B8f4).

¹⁵⁰ "Gazetede AA'nın verdiği İnönü'nün sözlerini okudum ve ne yazık ki bu satırlar arasında İnönü'nün esas söylediklerini bulamadım. Bu satırlar arasında, "Kars'ın bir hudut vilayeti olduğu, başka yerlerde az çok müsaade edilse bile, burada fikir ayrılığına katıyen müsaade edilmeyeceği" yoktu. Bu satırların arasında, "hocaların memleket ve milletin vaziyetini bilmedikleri, halkın ne kadar cahil ve tefrik kabiliyetinden mahrum olduğunu kendilerinin pek iyi bildiği" yolunda, hem halk hem de hocalar için ağır iftiralar yoktu. [...] Burada, müteaddit partilere değil, fikir ayrılığına bile müsaade edilmemektedir"

¹⁵¹ "Başlayan seçim mücadelesinde partilerin propaganda yapmaları pek tabiidir. Fakat çerçevesi altında çeşitli uygunsuz olaylara da şahit olmaktadır. Ben size bunlardan iki çeşit propaganda müsveddesini yazmakla iktifa edeceğim. Birincisi, Yenişehir'de birtakım mebus bayanları (eşleri), kapı kapı dolaşarak

Within days before the elections, some of the readers were believing that the RPP would lose its power eventually. In this regard, the readers have criticized the anti-democratic spirit of the RPP rule in general, by depicting the rising opposition against the party among the society. In a reader letter sent on July 9, 1946, a ministry officer (Reader Number 1) shares his predictions about the country in the last part of his letter, by saying,

Times of dictatorships are over, the worthless people who lick boots to keep their seats are now having dreary thoughts. These people are bound to get what's coming to them someday. Such mentality has rooted in especially the semi-official organizations. All the people in power have a disease, a disease that makes them want to have a taste of what it's like to order people around. This disease is in all of them¹⁵² (B8f4).

Similarly, in another reader letter sent on July 17, 1946, a senior captain (Reader Number 65) states that a newspaper other than Ulus was prohibited to enter the reserve officer school, explains his travels and impressions throughout the country as follows: "I have not seen even one person in my travels who is content with the PP. In all my stops I've witnessed that both the simple and the mature citizens¹⁵³ are opposed to this party"¹⁵⁴ (B18f5-2).

The first multiparty elections were held on July 21, 1946, in a social and political environment where such criticisms were loudly directed to the RPP rule. In the elections, the RPP got the majority with 397 deputies; the DP was able to enter the parliament with 61 deputies, and independents with 7 deputies (TÜİK, 2012, p. 8).

CHP için aday toplamakta ve rey dilenmektedirler. İkincisi, bayan mebuslarımızdan Tezer Taşkıran, Cebeci bölgesinde yine kapı kapı dolaşarak bulunduğu partinin ayaklı propagandasını yapmak gafletini göstermektedir. Karşılaştıkları manzaralar önünde hiç de yüzleri kızarmadan faaliyetlerine devam etmektedirler"

¹⁵² "Diktatörlük zamanı geçmiştir, yerinde tutunabilmek için dalkavukluk yapmakta devam eden seciyesizleri, kara kara düşünce almıştır. Bunlar günün birinde nasıl olsa belalarını bulacaklardır. Bu zihniyet, yarı resmi müesseselerde daha fazla kökleşmiştir. Bila istisna, baştakilerin hepsinde buyurma zevkini tatma hastalığı vardır. Hastalık umumdur"

¹⁵³ Here, the distinction made in the form of "simple and mature citizens" reflects the discussions took place at the intellectual level of that period as were examined in the second chapter.

¹⁵⁴ "Seyahat ettiğim bu ana güzergahta tek şahsa tesadüf etmedim ki HP'den memnun bulunsun. Hemen ekseri istasyonlarda gerek basit ve gerekse olgun vatandaşların hepsinin bu partiye cephe almış olduklarını gördüm"

However, the 1946 elections did not go beyond the pyrrhic victory for the RPP. It is a well-known fact that, the RPP officials frauded¹⁵⁵ in many ballot boxes as a result of the confidential vote counting principle (Birand, Dündar & Çaplı, 1991, p. 46).¹⁵⁶ As it was the case, the RPP organizations that dominated the polls applied many irregularities and election frauds during the counting processes. Additionally, according to an incident that Yalman personally witnessed, Lütfü Kırdar, who was the Governor of İstanbul at that time, told Yalman that, although the DP clearly won the elections in İstanbul (this means the DP should have gotten the 23 seats as a whole), the RPP headquarters sent instructions to him to make an adjustment to give only 18 deputies (including the independent nominees from the DP lists) to the DP (Yalman, 1971, pp. 80-81).

The fraudulent elections of 1946 were so engraved in the social memory that even in a letter sent before the 1957 elections, frauds in the 1946 elections continued to be criticized. In a reader letter sent on July 30, 1957, a lawyer (Reader Number 17) compares the up-coming 1957 elections with the 1946 elections by criticizing the latter as follows:

In the views suggesting that the upcoming elections are to be conducted under government oppression, and thus, views which harm the legitimacy of the next parliament, a likening of this election to the 1946 election is underlying. In the 1946 elections, there was an obvious election fraud. Election reports were torn down and manipulated, and votes were stolen. What allowed this was not the laws and regulations of the day, but the personal characters of those in power and their oppressive behavior towards citizens. Even if the laws of 1946 were

¹⁵⁵ These election frauds were also estimated by some readers. For example, in a reader letter sent on June 2, 1946, namely approximately two months before the elections, a reader (Reader Number 23) warns Yalman about the election frauds that, the RPP officials may apply in the up-coming elections, by saying, “It’s crystal clear [...] the intentional distribution of the ballot boxes and the additional complications in the voting system, alongside other secret precautions we don’t know of are coming” [“Kör gözüne parmak [...] sandıkların kasten dağıtılıp adetlerinin lüzumsuz yere fazlalaştırılması ve bilmediğimiz kim bilir daha ne gizli tedbirler yoldadır”] (B8f4).

¹⁵⁶ This principle, which was the legacy of the single-party era, became the method that the DP founders struggled most to be changed in the ongoing process. Not surprisingly, both the pressure and violence applied to the society through the RPP officials in the pre-election period, and the fraud techniques applied at the ballot boxes after the elections paved the way for the debacle of the RPP and revealed as the result of the DP’s rise to power in 1950 with an overwhelming vote rate and public support.

perfect, wouldn't the same result be achieved after the political honor was cast away?¹⁵⁷ (B17f10).

The main reason for the occurrence of the debates on democracy in Turkey within a procedural (Üstüner, 2000, p. 190) ground, such as the demand for free and fair elections, was the blatant electoral frauds in the 1946 general elections. Hence, what happened before and during the 1946 elections corresponds to a historical mistake in terms of the RPP. Besides, the DP did not even have enough preparations for the elections that it could not even show a sufficient number of deputy candidates (Eroğul, 1990, p. 16). Bayar, in a statement in mid-June 1946, stated that, their party organizations were established in 34 provinces and 160 districts. But some of them were only entrepreneur committees and could not find the possibility to spread their influence to the neighboring areas (Koçak, 2012, p. 157). People who want to take part in the entrepreneurial delegations of the DP faced tacit impacts, oppression, intervention, threats and coercions. Hence, many of them were daunted at the beginning and gave up (Ibid, p. 514). Hence, as a result of the 1946 elections with an atmosphere of oppression and repression, the four-year long RPP governments could not escape being a spectator of the rise of the DP and the fall of the RPP itself.

The intimidation policies of the RPP against the opposition continued after the elections. The DP deputies, especially Bayar, were constantly monitored and were not allowed to hold rallies around the country (Eroğul, 1990, p. 29). As it can be seen, this tense atmosphere, which gradually reached its climax was about to drag the country's politics to a tangling situation. These repressive efforts of the RPP rule were constantly criticized by the DP founders. In the context of this type of a democratic struggle, the first big congress of the DP was held on January 7, 1947, in a real democratic atmosphere with participants from the all segments of the society. Delegates from all over the country spoke until morning without any intervention (Birand, Dündar & Çaplı, 1991, pp. 52-53). The most important output of this congress was the 'Oath of

¹⁵⁷ "Önümüzdeki seçimlerin baskı altında cereyan edeceğini ve teşekkül edecek meclisin meşruiyetini muallal kılıcı bir görüşü ile 1946 seçimlerine benzer bir intihap telmih ediliyor. 1946 seçimlerinde fiili bir seçim sahtekarlığı yapılmıştır. Zabıtlar yırtılmış, tahrif edilmiş ve reyler çalınmıştır. Bunu yaptıran, o günkü mevzuat olmaktan ziyade, idare edenlerin şahsi karakterleri ve vatandaş hukukuna karşı olan cebir anlayışlarıydı. 1946 senesindeki kanunlar istenilen mükemmellikte olsaydı, siyasi namuskarlık bir kenara atıldıktan sonra aynı netice yine meydana gelmeyecek miydi?"

Freedom' (*Hürriyet Misakı*). In this sense, the DP stepped up a gear in the opposition and started to address its criticism directly to the RPP rule and its ruling spirit. Thus, the discourse in the form of the manifestation of the national will has become a populist discourse, which has been unceasingly propagated by the DP -and has turned into an empty signifier over time.

In this sense, it can be said that the populist discourses were rapidly adopted by the masses, and the RPP's reluctant ruling approach to the manifestation of the national will, became the focus of criticisms of the urban middle-class individuals. A reader (Reader Number 66), implying that democracy is the path for the future, says in his March 28, 1947 dated letter that, "the new RPP government and its executives and officials, are in an effort to forbid the nation from marching to a democratic future"¹⁵⁸ (B7f2-1), hence he criticizes the authoritarian structure of the RPP rule. At last, President İnönü decided to become an intervener at a time when things got so messy, and then he declared the famous 'July 12 Declaration' after some mediation talks with the both sides (Yalman, 1971, pp. 114-115).

Although, the tension between the RPP and the DP had been reduced, nearly nothing changed in the daily life in terms of the country in general, i.e. for the masses of the people.¹⁵⁹ The masses continued to make connections between democracy and their understanding of the will of the nation, hence they continued to criticize the RPP practices contrary to this understanding. In a reader letter sent on January 13, 1948, a laborer from *Nazilli* Fabric Factory (Reader Number 67), complains of coterie dominance influencing the factory where he worked. The laborer explains the reason for writing the letter by saying,

I thought of providing a small service, shaking off myself the old disease called 'indifference' [...] After the establishment of the second party in our motherland, a 'People's House', which clearly relied on the same mentality and exhibited an even more extreme form of dominance, replaced the old 'Ranch Stewardship' which had been renowned to have belonged to the People's party. Please excuse me for explicating upon this organization that demonstrated the

¹⁵⁸ "Yeni hükümet ve azasının mühim bir kısmı, halkı istikbale gitmekten mene uğraşmaktadırlar"

¹⁵⁹ Perhaps, the only thing that changed at this point was that the martial law, which has been going on since the time of the Second World War, was terminated on December 23, 1947 (Yalman, 1971, p. 125).

exact opposite ideals with the very respectable name it carried. Because a populist organization is one that takes its power, will and especially its freedom from the people. However, this organization is an improper one, rather than a populist one. Thus, I find it humiliating to explicate upon this subject, for my national creed and the pure blood in my veins does not allow me to talk about an organization that's not concerned with me and seeks every opportunity to kick me behind my back, rather than lending me a hand¹⁶⁰ (B5f3-2).

Amendments to the election law was already an issue the DP demanded from the very beginning. In this respect, it can be said that the DP had closely followed the debates on democracy during the pre-1950 period, and increased its demands in this regard. The urban middle-class individuals have also closely followed the debates about the election law. In this context, in a reader letter sent on June 25, 1948, a doctor (Reader Number 53) emphasizes the need for a judicial guarantee for the fairness of the elections, by saying,

We see that the voices rising from the four sides of the country and from the nation-wide masses, unite in one wish: protecting the vote, which is a part of citizen's honor, from all kinds of rape. In order for this to be realized, elections based on the judicial guarantee are needed, apart from the previously experienced procedures¹⁶¹ (B5f3-1).¹⁶²

As of this period, there were now three political parties in the parliament. In the middle of the summer in 1948, one of the amendments that was requested by the DP was made

¹⁶⁰ "Eski bir hastalığımız olan 'neme lazımcılık'tan kendime ait ciheti silmek suretiyle, ufak bir hizmette bulunmayı düşündüm. [...] İkinci partinin yurdumuzda teessüsünden sonra, fabrikadaki Halk Partisi namını taşıyan bir nevi 'Çiftlik Kahyalığı' ismi kaldırılarak, aynı zihniyet ve hatta daha müfrit bir tahakküm esasına dayandığı bariz olan bir Halk Evi tesis ettirildi. Taşdıkları çok temiz bir isimle taban tabana zıt mefkureyi ihtiva eden bu teşkilat hakkında izahat vermekten beni mazur görmeyi rica edeceğim. Zira, halkçı bir teşkilat, kuvvetini, iradesini ve bilhassa hürriyetini, halka dayanmak suretile yapan demektir. Halbuki bu teşkilat, halkçılıktan ziyade, affedersiniz haltçı bir teşkilattir. Onun için bu hususta izahat vermeyi bir zül addederim, çünkü benimle alakadar olmayan ve bana elini uzatacak yerde arkamdan tekme atmak için bin türlü desise ve fırsat kollayan bir teşkilata ait izahat vermeyi, ne milli akidem ve ne de damarlarımdaki çok temiz kanım buna müsaade etmemektedir"

¹⁶¹ "Yurdun dört bucağından ve millet çapında bir kitleden yükselen bu seslerin tek bir temennide birleştiğini görüyoruz: vatandaş namusunun bir parçası olan reyin her türlü tecavüzden masuniyeti. Bunun da imkân dahiline girebilmesi için tecrübe edilmiş usuller haricinde adli teminata müstenit bir seçim"

¹⁶² Yalman tells the story of 'Mother of Democracy' as an example on a similar subject. In short, the story is that, the RPP sabotaged the headman elections in favor of its candidate in *Akdere* village in Thrace. Then the peasants object to this intervention and the case is brought to the court. However, after the manipulation of the RPP officials, the opposite happens and the peasants were arrested. Afterwards, 'Mother of Democracy', one of those wanted as a defendant, begins to visit all villages of Thrace and struggle for democracy (Yalman, 1971, pp. 156-157).

on the election law, and thus, all party representatives who participate in the elections, gained the right to be named in the ballot box committees (Erođul, 1990, p. 37). However, the change that provides the legal audit to the elections was not accepted in the parliament. Upon this, the DP and the NP decided not to participate in the midterm elections that would take place in November 1948 (Yalman, 1971, p. 145). After the very low number of participations at the midterm elections on November 17, 1948, and subsequent discussions on electoral fraud, the Saka Government, which no longer stood, had fallen. The RPP government no longer had the power to stand up for the demands of free and fair elections raised by society and voiced by the opposition. The coming-out of the fraud rumors about the midterm elections of 1948 had increased the societal reaction to the RPP once more. In a reader letter titled ‘Remedy for Salvation’, and sent on December 15, 1948, a lawyer (Reader Number 68) questions whether the RPP was ready to leave the ruling office, by saying, “How could the influential people of the People’s Party, who lived with a mentality of total domination, sultanate and tutelage and comprised of a couple of thousands in a mass of eighteen million be content with leaving power?”¹⁶³ (B5f3-2).

The year 1949 started with Gñnaltay Government, and the belief that some kind of softening would have increased due to the influence of the liberal wing of the RPP. However, as can be seen, the problems -subject to complaints- spread all over the country that have been rooted so much that they cannot be resolved by changing a few ministers. As a matter of fact, the criticism arrows of the readers were not against the government’s formation, but rather against the RPP’s ruling mentality. In a reader letter sent on February 5, 1949, a female reader (Reader Number 69) who did not write her name by putting forward a reason of “I have to hide my identity” (B7f2-1), underlines the demands of the free and fair elections and the manifestation of the national will in her letter, where she criticizes the words of Cevdet Kerim İncedayı, by saying, “In a normal election conducted in accordance with the requirements of

¹⁶³ “Yirmi beş sene tam bir tahakküm, saltanat ve vesayet zihniyetiyle yaşamış ve on sekiz milyon kitle içinde birkaç bin kişiden ibaret bulunmuş olan Halk Partisi nüfuzluları, iktidarı nasıl terke razı olabilirler?”

democracy, calling the representatives from Eastern cities Hasso or Memo¹⁶⁴ is, excuse my language, purely arrogant”¹⁶⁵ (B7f2-1).

It was then clear to everyone that a fundamental reform was essentially needed not only on the procedural grounds, but also on the manner of rule. The key to this fundamental change on the procedural grounds was the general elections to be held under a democratic electoral law. This was what the DP wanted in 1949 -as an outcome of its populist discourses, when the DP trusted itself more than ever to win the elections. Hence, nearly the whole of 1949 has been spent with debates around amending the electoral law and shaping it into more democratic form. Despite the opposition’s persistent demands, the RPP insisted to hold the 1949 midterm elections without making any changes in the law, and hence, it faced with the boycott of the opposition in the elections, and thus, again participated in the elections alone (Eroğul, 1990, p. 43; Yalman, 1971, p. 184).

After the increasing complaints that were clustered around the populist discourses of the national will, and the uninspired 1949 midterm elections, the RPP could not resist any more to the pressures about aligning the election law with the principles of democracy that were coming from the bottom of the society. For example, in a reader letter sent on February 14, 1950, a reader (Reader Number 27) tries to depict the political environment in the country as follows:

None of our parties so far has understood the nation. Their codes of practice are as if they are made just so that there is a political or literary code, and their

¹⁶⁴ Briefly, the event mentioned here is as follows: “İncedayı, who talks of democracy and the maturity of people said concerning the Eastern people being ignorant, them not knowing how to read or write: “If we do not take measures here in the election days with Gendarmerie, that ignorant people will vote for Haso or Memo. Will you have a clear conscience regarding this?”” [“Demokrasiden ve halkın olgunluğundan bahseden İncedayı, şark vilayetlerinde halkın cahil olduğundan, okuyup yazma bilmediklerinden bahisle dedi ki: “Seçim günlerinde buralarda Jandarma vasıtasıyla tedbir almazsak, o cahil halk reylerini Hasoya veya Memoya verirler. Buna sizlerin vicdanınız razı olur mu?””] (Vatan, ‘İncedayı’nın Demokrasi Anlayışı’, 02.02.1949).

¹⁶⁵ “Demokrasinin icaplarına göre yapılacak normal seçim neticesinde, Şark vilayetlerinde intihap edilecek milletvekillerini, Hasso veya Memo diye adlandırmak, tam manasıyla, affedersiniz, küstahlıktır”

executive aspects could not follow the administrative thoughts of the leader or the Central administration council¹⁶⁶ (B8f10-1).

Then, he conveys his thoughts about the mechanisms of the RPP rule, by saying, “The RPP halfheartedly took democracy from the Anglo-Saxons, but it did not even try to implement it”¹⁶⁷ (Ibid.)

As a result, in December 1949, the RPP Parliamentary Group has agreed to establish judiciary guarantee for elections (Eroğul, 1990, p. 43). This was the first real step taken by the RPP to democratize the election law. However, this step was not sufficient for the DP executives. Thus, on February 7, 1950, negotiations for comprehensive amendments to the election law began in the Assembly. After elusive discussions, the new election law was adopted by the vote held on February 16, 1950. Thus, fundamental changes in the election law, such as secret ballot, open counting, double candidacy and judicial review principles, were adopted through negotiations. In this context, judges were appointed to the chairmanship of the election boards, and the Supreme Election Council (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*), which was composed of members of the Court of Appeals and the Council of State, was established (Eroğul, 1990, pp. 43-44; Yalman, 1971, pp. 172-173). Thus, a democratic election law emerged as the most important democratic achievement of the 1945-1950 period from a procedural perspective.

In this sense, two reader letters from the same person are conspicuous in terms of showing the importance of democracy in the eyes of the people and how the masses raised their democratic demands in the form of act of voting. In his first reader letter sent on May 9, 1950, i.e. five days before the 1950 elections, a customs broker (Reader Number 70) who states he is very happy that he will participate as ballot box observer in the elections, starts his letter, by saying, “By using my first vote in 1946, I got the

¹⁶⁶ “Bizde partilerin hiçbiri, tam bir görüşle millet anlayamamışlardır. Nizamnameleri, adeta siyasi ve edebi bir nizamname bulunsun kabilinden hazırlanmış veya tatbiki ciheti, lider veya Merkez idare kurulunun sevk ve idare düşünceleri arkasında kalmıştır”

¹⁶⁷ “CHP demokrasiyi Anglosaksonlardan istemeye istemeye satın almış, fakat uygulamaya yeltenmemiştir”

right to be a human”¹⁶⁸ (B8f10-2), then he adds: “I have wished God that this day, which has been in my dream for years and longed for it, to be auspicious, and fell into a sweet thought. I thought that the day when the results of the elections will be announced, will be the most precious day of my life”¹⁶⁹ (Ibid.). In the May 15, 1950 dated second reader letter, he writes what he experienced and witnessed on the election day as follows:

I saw citizens using their votes in great peace and tranquility throughout the day. With their little children in their arms, some of them were sick and disabled, coming in the cars and casting their votes. [...] When a citizen who came here [*İskenderun*] from Central Anatolia to work and somehow did not register on the electoral roll and did not receive his voter card and thus could not vote, he bowed his neck and said “Will I be deprived of this now?”. My eyes were tearing up for this lofty scene¹⁷⁰ (B8f10-1).

At the end, in the form of the new and democratic election law, the 1950 general elections were held in a “*free and fair*” manner, just as the debates on democracy had clustered around it. The DP won the general elections held on May 14, 1950 with an overwhelming vote rate, and became the sole power in the country. Thus, the twenty-seven-year single-party rule was defeated by an opposition party which born out of the RPP. The main reason behind this defeat, however, was the strong demand for democracy had been rising from the society. It was not possible for the people to remain silent about this shocking political development. In a reader letter sent on May 26, 1950, a senior captain (Reader Number 71) defines the situation that occurred at that time, by saying, “We have now passed to democracy. However, we have not made

¹⁶⁸ “İlk reyimi 1946 yılında kullanarak bir insan olmak hakkına sahip olmuşum”

¹⁶⁹ “Senelerden beri rüyama giren ve hasretini çektiğim bugünün hayırlı olmasını Allahtan diledim ve tatlı düşünceye daldım. Seçimlerin neticesinin belli olacağı günün, hayatımın belki en kıymetli günü olacağını düşündüm”

¹⁷⁰ “Gün boyu büyük bir huzur ve sükûn içinde oylarını kullanan vatandaşları gördüm. Kucağında küçük çocukları ile, bazıları hasta ve sakat halleriyle arabalarda gelerek oylarını kullanıyorlardı. [...] İç Anadolu’dan buraya (İskenderun) çalışmak için gelmiş ve her nasılsa seçmen kütüğüne kaydolunmamış ve seçmen kartını almamış bir vatandaş oyunu kullanamayınca, “Şimdi ben bundan mahrum mu kalacağım?” diye boynunu bükmişti. Bu ulvi manzara karşısında gözlerim yaşardı”

a usual change of government in a democratic country. We have transitioned to democracy from a centuries-long totalitarian rule”¹⁷¹ (B8f10-1).

In this part, the historical panorama of the period of transition from single-party rule to the multi-party system was discussed with references to the readers’ criticisms towards the RPP rule from the perspective of its reluctance to allow the free and fair elections. Studies related to the period mostly describe the transition to the multi-party system in Turkey, which began with the establishment of the opposition parties and allowing them to participate in the elections, in the form of the four-year long political struggles that occurred between the RPP and the DP. However, as can be seen from the reader letters examined here, the debates that took place at the political level generally reflected on to the popular opinion, and have been largely followed by the urban middle-class individuals. It is apparent in such a degree that the extent to which the two rising demands were owned by the different segments of the society during the period also emerges within this part. In this respect, it can be said that the populist discourse of the national will, the rise of which among the society is clearly seen in this part, will become a very important subject of analysis as of the post-1950 period.

The criticisms of the readers to the RPP rule over its reluctance to allow the free and fair elections were largely shaped around this populist discourse. As such, democracy definitions between 1945 and 1950 were reduced to the issue of free and fair elections, in other words, the manifestation of the national will. Hence, the readers had a misleading perception that democracy will come to the country with the realization of the free and fair elections, and that other secondary problems will also be solved in this way. Thus, from the readers’ perspectives, the period between 1945 and 1950, has led to the erosion of the repressive and elitist RPP rule and to the rise of the DP as the defender and representative of the populist democracy.

4.3. Readers’ Critique of the Polarizing Spirit of the DP Rule

In such an active period of freedom of debate, the rise of populist discourse and eventually the DP’s becoming the sole power-holder in the country, which claims to

¹⁷¹ “Artık demokrasiye geçtik. Ancak, biz demokrat bir memlekette, normal bir iktidar değişmesi yapmadık. Asırlarca sürmüş totaliter bir idareden demokrasiye geçtik”

be the representative of the silent masses that pointed out by the discourse, paved the way for the urban middle-class individuals to become more politicized, and the society to be separated into opposing camps. However, this inevitable result cannot be explained by the populist discourse of the pre-1950 period alone. On the contrary, the most important fact that had nourished the polarization process of the society was the hostile and exclusionary rhetoric and practices of the DP rule. Hence, in this part, the criticisms of the readers towards the policies and practices of the DP rule that had polarized the society and deepened the antagonisms among the different segments will be analyzed.

Undoubtedly, the democratic changes of which Bayar and Menderes made the propaganda during the pre-election period were the most important factor that brought victory to the DP in the 1950 elections. In this context, it is important that Bayar emphasized on all occasions for four years that they want the elections to be held in an environment that is free and fair as in accordance with the principles of democracy (Yalman, 1971, pp. 212-213). Consequently, in the 1950 elections, on the one side, there was the DP which was impatient and eager to put its brand-new ideas, that were fed with populist discourse, into practice, and on the other side, there was the RPP, whose 27 years of power had corroded a lot, as the two valid options for the voters. As a result, the DP won the general elections held on May 14, 1950 with an overwhelming vote rate (55,2%), and became the sole power in the country. Although it is not possible to underestimate the support behind the DP, which was provided by the masses of people, one of the most important things that ensured the DP's rise to power alone was the Majority System -which the RPP had never been willing to change-, used in the elections. In the elections with a record level of participation (89,3%), the DP received around 4 million 400 thousand votes, while the RPP received around 3 million 150 thousand votes. Despite these relatively close number of votes, while the DP won 416 deputies, only 69 deputies of the RPP were entitled to represent their voters in the parliament (TÜİK, 2012, p. 25).¹⁷²

¹⁷² Actually, this situation alone was a proof that “democracy”, albeit procedural, had not yet been fully implemented in the country as of 1950. This situation did not change for the next decade, on the contrary, the move away from “democracy” accelerated.

The DP was representative of an era with populist discourse. Briefly, the DP populism categorizes the single-party rule and its supporters as elitists on the one hand, and it defines itself as the representative of the silent masses on the other. This approach which gradually demonized the RPP, and the DP's implementation of a number of harsh practices against the RPP and the Kemalist legacy caused the society to be polarized and decomposed into two opposing camps, starting from the early 1950s. This picture, which emerged as a product of the DP's populist discourse was an issue that the readers had frequently emphasized and criticized the DP for. For example, in a reader letter sent on June 3, 1950, a reader (Reader Number 72) complains about the radio broadcast that does not allow opposition to speak as follows:

As we listened to the speech of the prime minister from the radio, we would like to listen to the opinions and critiques of the opposition parties and independent MPs on the government program. After proving to the world that we are a fully democratic country, our opposition parties are now given the right to use the radio for at least 15 minutes a week, so how would the nation listen to their ideas?¹⁷³ (B8f10-1).

The DP government's first polarizing practice, in which it brought up many more for a decade, was to abolish the Turkish Azan and return to Arabic (Yalman, 1971, p. 222). In fact, with this and a number of other changes, including changing the name of the 1924 Constitution with the "*Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu*" in 1952 (Eroğul, 1990, p. 80), the DP made great efforts to re-use Arabic words that were no longer used in daily life.¹⁷⁴ In short, this populist approach has been embodied in the DP's first government program as "Kemalist reforms that have been willingly adopted by the nation, will not

¹⁷³ "Başbakanın nutkunu dinlediğimiz gibi muhalif partilerle tarafsız milletvekillerimizin de hükümet programı üzerindeki fikir ve düşüncelerini dinlemeyi arzu ediyorduk. Tam olarak demokrat bir memleket olduğumuzu dünyaya ispat ettikten sonra artık muhalif partilerimize hiç olmazsa haftada 15'er dakikalık radyodan istifade hakkı tanınsa da bu suretle millet, onların da fikirlerini dinlese nasıl olur?"

¹⁷⁴ In this context, a pharmacist (Reader Number 73) who sent a letter dated May 27, 1950 -before the abolishment of the Turkish Azan-, criticizes the hanging of the Arabic "*Hakimiyet Milletindir*" words, instead of the Turkish "*Egemenlik Ulusundur*" (English equivalent of both sentences is "Domination belongs to the nation") into the Assembly hall. According to the pharmacist, "We need not to adopt the Arabic words old folks like us easily understand, but we need to adopt the Turkish words the children are bound to learn quicker" ["Biz yaşındaki halkın rahatça anladığı Arapça kelimeleri kullanmayı değil, doğacak çocukların daha çabuk öğrenecekleri Türkçe yapıda kelimeleri kullanmayı amaç edinmeliyiz"] (B13f1).

be touched”¹⁷⁵ (Toker, 1991, p. 37; Kaya-Özçelik, 2010, p. 175). Thus, a distinction was made in the form of reforms which have been adopted and have not been adopted by the nation, and this played an important role -as a yardstick- in polarizing the society and settling the masses into opposing camps, during the ten-year long DP rule era.

Some other examples came to light after the establishment of the first DP government, as a part of the discussions of ‘asking for an account from the former RPP governments’. In this period, which was called “*Devr-i Sabık*”¹⁷⁶, senior managers such as governors, district governors, ministry counselors, etc. that were appointed during the RPP period, were replaced with some other officials by the DP rule (Yalman, 1971, pp. 222-223). Even the top commanders of the army, including the chief of staff, were replaced (Toker, 1991, p. 42). In a reader letter sent in June 1950, a reader (Reader Number 74) expresses his disappointment about the executive changes made by the new government, by saying,

These changes were absolutely necessary. Hence, we thought that in place of those who were dismissed, professionally trained and qualified people would be appointed. However, we found out that the newly appointed people had nothing to do with the assigned tasks. The worm has turned, we do not want the same old story (sic.)¹⁷⁷ (B1f3).

Unfortunately, this ‘call an account from the past’ attitudes of the DP rule, had gradually been turned into an effort to take revenge from the RPP.

The polarization in society began to be visible as of 1951. In a reader letter sent on November 25, 1951, a lawyer (Reader Number 54) complains of the disturbing attitudes of the DP partisans, which feed the political dissidences and social polarization among his region, by saying,

Every village, town and district, about 90% of the dwellers of which are RPP supporters and nonpartisans, have been living a life of slavery at the hands of

¹⁷⁵ “Millete mâl olmuş inkılaplarımız mahfuz tutulacaktır”

¹⁷⁶ The word used in the Turkish political jargon to see the politicians of the past period as potential criminals and to go over the mistakes they had made.

¹⁷⁷ “Elbetki bu değışiklikler muhakkak lazımdı. Bu gidenlerin yerine meslekten yetişmeler gelecek diye seviniyorduk; yani işe adam. Fakat havadis odur ki yeni atananların aldıkları vazifelerle bir alakaları yok. Ve hani meslekten yetişme zihniyeti? Maymun gözünü açtı üstad”

the Democratic Party directors and looters who make up only the 10% of the village. Almost all of the nation, in villages, towns and districts, are nothing but a dairy cattle at the hands of a bully who is the provincial head of the party. Desperate people of all those villages are absolutely deprived of all of their rights, all of the rights and blessings a country promises its citizens, under the pressure of the arbitrary rule of the party heads and provincial chiefs. The nation and the country have been separated into two. On the one hand, there is the Democratic Party rulers and the looters around them, who possess every kind of privilege and blessing but don't even make up 10% of the population; while on the other hand there is the nonpartisans and the RPP-supporting producers, in other words, the pariah¹⁷⁸ (B7f2-2).

Later on, the lawyer tells a story about a headman in a village, who belongs to the DP tells his children to throw stones at his pro-RPP neighbors' children. In this sense, this letter is a very proper example of how dangerous the polarizing seeds planted in the country by DP rulers can have.

As of 1951, one of the polarization signs that started to be visible in the society was the Islamic reaction supporters taking part in some activities against the laicism principle of Kemalism with the support they received from the DP. At this point, the characteristic that sharply distinguishes the DP from the RPP was that it had supported the Islamic reaction and conservatism with all its strength. It is not surprising that the Islamic reaction and conservative-nationalist masses that feel the support of the ruling power behind them began to act more daring way. These daring demands and activities disturbed not only the pro-RPP citizens, but also the secular segments of the society in general. Menderes, on the other hand, saw the Islamic reaction as something whose danger could be kept under control¹⁷⁹ (Toker, 1991, p. 199). In a reader letter sent on March 20, 1951, a middle-school Turkish language teacher (Reader Number 75) uses harsh words against the Islamic reaction: "The disgusting clots coming out of the boil

¹⁷⁸ "Her köy, her nahiye, her kaza, %90'ı teşkil eden Halkçılar ve bitaraflar, %10'u bile bulmayan Demokrat Partili parti idareci ve yağmagerlerinin elinde bir esaret hayatı yaşamaktadır. Millet'in külliyyetine yakın kısmı, köyde, nahiyede, kazada, parti başkanlığını yapan bir mütegalipin elinde basitçe bir sağmal inektir. İdari amirler ve mahiyetleriyle birlikte, bütün köylerin biçare halkları, o yerlerdeki parti başkanlarının, keyfi ve kanun fevkindeki kudreti altında her türlü haklardan, vatanın bütün vatandaşlara şamil her türlü hak ve nimetlerinden, bilakayduşart mahrumdur. Vatan ve millet ikiye ayrılmıştır. Birisi her türlü imtiyaz ve nimetlere mazhar olan, %10'u bile bulmayan Demokrat Parti idarecileri ve etraflarındaki yağmagerler; diğeri geçen bitaraf ve Halkçı müstahsiller yani paryalar"

¹⁷⁹ It can be said that Menderes regards Islamic reaction supporters more harmless and controllable than communists, and supports them with anti-communist motives (Kaya-Özçelik, 2010, p. 175).

of reactionism (*irtica*) which is a gangrene in our social body have nauseated the people who, to the best of their abilities, provide efforts for the reform movement”¹⁸⁰ (B19f7). As can be seen, antagonisms in the society have started to become evident as of 1951 and the masses have been separated into opposing camps.

Of course, these events were instrumental in the separation of Islamic and conservative masses and secular segments in the form of settling in opposing camps. For example, a retired colonel (Reader Number 76) says the following about the Islamic reaction, in his June 6, 1952 dated letter: “The Turkish nation I know and its army that is of great vigilance, tranquility and patience, will not allow any form of reactionism in the name of religion or regeneration”¹⁸¹ (B8f10-1). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on April 5, 1953, a retired civil servant (Reader Number 77), addressing a journalist known to be in an Islamist magazine¹⁸², says:

The real enemy of religion, even more than the communists, are the clergymen like you [...] Didn't a Muslim person kill another Muslim eating during fasting last year? People like you act as if the sharia is such a vulnerable structure that it is going to fall unless the opponents are immediately silenced with violence [...] Do you expect from Mr. Menderes to bring back the rule of sharia?¹⁸³ (B19f7).

The same reader writes another letter on June 30, 1953, to the same person and asks: “Do you act against the laws of the revolution, which are the products of national will,

¹⁸⁰ “İçtimai bünyemizde bir kangren istadı taşıyan irtica çıbanından sızan iğrenç pıhtılar, inkılap hareketlerine karınca kararınca emek verenleri de tiksindirmiştir”

¹⁸¹ “Benim tanıdığım Türk millet ve onun uyanık, sakin ve sabırlı ruhu olan ordusu, ne din, ne de tecceddüt yolunda bir irticaa asla müsaade etmez”

¹⁸² This person was Eşref Edip (Fergan, 1882-1971), the owner of Sabilürreşat magazine.

¹⁸³ “Esas din düşmanı, hem de komünistlerden çok, sizin gibi hocalardır. [...] Geçen yıl orucunu yiyen bir Müslümanı, diğer bir Müslüman öldürmedi mi? Sizin gibiler, sanki şeriat, muterizler hemen susturulmazsa çöküverecek çürük bir yapıymış gibi hemen işi ceberruta döküyorsunuz. [...] Sayın Menderes'ten şeriatçılığın geri getirilmesini mi istiyorsunuz?”

with sentiments of loyalty? Do you think people are blind, do you think the people are idiots?”¹⁸⁴ (B9f6-2).

Satisfied with this trend, the only thing that the DP was dealing with as of 1951 was trying to weaken the RPP, both financially and politically. The basic populist motivation behind this effort was that the DP wanted to be appreciated by its supporters via eliminating the reputation of the RPP that has put pressure on them for twenty-seven years at the hands of the single-party rule.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, as the first move, ‘People’s Houses’ (*Halkevleri*) owned by the RPP, were taken from the party with the decision of the parliament dated August 8, 1951, and it was decided that the People’s Houses to continue its existence as an independent institution. The next step was the abolition of parliamentary immunity of the journalist and RPP deputy Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın. Yalçın was constantly criticizing the DP via his newspaper articles. His editorials and articles had been irritating the DP, and hence, his April 18, 1952 dated article was shown as a reason, and then, his parliamentary immunity was abolished on May 2, 1952 (İlyas, 2018, pp. 357-358).¹⁸⁶

However, unlike the DP executives, who were not bothered by the polarization of the society with the populist discourse and practices, the readers, who had been opposed to the *arbitrary rule* of the single party for years and had struggled to overthrow it, were concerned about this new tendency. In a reader letter sent on March 28, 1951, a retired colonel (Reader Number 78) states that everybody should work to ensure that the new arbitrary rule, which was tried to be established, does not take root in the country, and he continues as follows: “The wise man does not need a recipe. The mistakes of the DP, towards which we had tremendous hopes, are even making long-time nonpartisans like me, who is doing his share of work in serving for his country,

¹⁸⁴ “Milli iradenin mahsulü olan devrim kanunlarına, uhuvvet hissi ile mi hareket buyuruyorsunuz? Herkesi kör, alemi sersem mi sanıyorsunuz?”

¹⁸⁵ This was the fundamental populist discourse of the DP used against the RPP.

¹⁸⁶ After the 1954 elections, the DP rule sent Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın to prison at the age of 80 (İlyas, 2018, p. 358).

speak up”¹⁸⁷ (B17f10). Similarly, in another reader letter of an electrician in *Kayseri* cloth factory (Reader Number 43) sent on August 9, 1952, contains severe criticism of the DP rule. The electrician claims that, vagabonds, gamblers, racketeers, etc., briefly useless, immoral people before the DP rule, now, became virtuous, revered people of the country. Afterwards, he describes this circumstance as follows: “This is not the true democracy that we cannot reach like a mirage, but the bitter coquetries and rotten fruits of the democracy of Samet Ağaoğlu and Menderes”¹⁸⁸ (B18f5-1). Moreover, in another reader letter sent on April 25, 1951, a female reader (Reader Number 31) complains of the government’s non-wise practices, and describes his disappointment, by saying,

People are really strange. They don’t want to lose their acquired power and strength no matter what. As I’m reminiscing about the past years, I find myself thinking that we have put all our efforts to persuade people to believe in our cause during our five-year long struggle as autonomous citizens. That’s how much we believed in our cause, that’s how much we trusted the ones leading it. Today, one cannot but ask, were all our efforts for nothing?¹⁸⁹ (B7f3).

The usage of the discourse of ‘*us vs. them*’, which the DP rulers -especially Prime Minister Menderes- did not hesitate to apply incompetently and without thinking about the consequences, has sown the seeds of a bilateral opposing, occasionally pernicious, social and political polarization in the country. All this dangerous and vengeful course of events were also seen by the readers. In a reader letter sent on June 6, 1952, a retired colonel (Reader Number 76) who states he became a member of the DP after his retirement, says he is concerned about the change the party has undergone in the past

¹⁸⁷ “Arife tarif gerekmez. Çok ümitler beslediğimiz Demokrat Parti’nin iktidarda düştüğü hatalar, benim gibi yıllardan beri bitaraf köşesinde sessiz sedasız kendine düşen memleket hizmetini ifaya çalışanları bile dile getiriyor”

¹⁸⁸ “İşte bunlar, bir serap gibi ulaşamadığımız hakiki demokrasinin değil, Samet Ağaoğlu ve Menderes demokrasininin acı cilveleri ve çürük, illetli meyvalarıdır”

¹⁸⁹ “İnsanlar ne tuhaf; ellerine geçen kuvveti ve kudreti ne pahasına olursa olsun kaybetmek istemiyorlar. Geçen seneleri düşünüyorum da, müstakil bir vatandaş olarak, beş senelik mücadele devrinde, davaya etrafımızdakileri inandırmak için bütün gayretimizi verdik. Davaya öyle inanmıştık, davayı yürütenlere öyle bağlanmıştık. Bugüne baktığımızda insan soruyor, acaba emekler boşa mı gitti?”

six months. He says that there were mindless people in the party daring to call İnönü a communist, and then he conveys his intra-impressions as follows:

As far as the things I've seen and heard goes, the DP has turned into a flock of 'yes men' and their hunger for power has separated the country into two groups, breeding bad blood between them [...] The claim that Democratic Party is driving the country into a disaster is true. If both sides keep on with this behavior, we will end up in a civil war, local conflicts and finally in a new authoritarian rule through a military intervention¹⁹⁰¹⁹¹ (B8f10-1).

The criticisms made by a person who worked for the DP in the elections with the belief that democracy will be actualized in the country, and later became a member of the party, provide very important clues about the structure and course of the DP rule.

This atmosphere of mutual tensions, which has created a hostile polarization among the country, continued to increase until the assassination attempt against Ahmet Emin Yalman that took place in November 1952. Only after this unfortunate event did the DP rule see what kind of dangers could occur as a result of its polarizing populist discourses, and thus, it started to take some "ephemeral" measures. In this way, a period of '*the sunny days*' (Toker, 1991, pp. 209-210) had begun, which would continue between the government and the opposition until December 1953. In this sense, the round character and novice attitudes of Menderes did not escape the readers' attention. In a reader letter sent on April 20, 1953, a reader (Reader Number 79) states that three types of Menderes portraits emerged from Yalman's articles about the Prime Minister:

In opposition, a promising, idealist statesman Menderes; when he was the prime minister and the DP leader, oriented towards an overwhelming dominance with a totalitarian mindset Menderes; after the latest developments,

¹⁹⁰ These predictions of the colonel would come true in the future. Both sides continued their tension-increasing behavior as social turbulences began to emerge from 1955 onwards. Eventually, the army seized the power in 1960 with a coup d'état.

¹⁹¹ "Benim görebildiğim, duyabildiğim şeylere bakılırsa, DP bir 'evet efendimciler' kalabalığına dönmüş ve iktidar hırsı, memleketi iki hasım zümreye ayırıp, araya müthiş nefret ve kin ekmeğe başlamıştır. [...] Demokrat Parti'nin memleketi bir felakete sürüklemek istidadında olduğu bir gerçektir. Her iki taraf bu gidişi devam ettirdiği takdirde, sonu dahili bir savaşa, yer yer kargaşalıklara ve nihayet askeri bir müdahale ile yeni bir dikta idaresine girecektir"

a brand-new Menderes, who has treated himself from painful experiences, old denouncements, and Islamist reaction¹⁹² (B17f10).

Then, the reader ends his comments about Menderes, by saying, “It is not nice for a person to have such a dynamic character in such a short time. [...] Well done is better than well said. However, we cannot see any improvement, on the contrary, we encounter new varieties of partisan rule every day”¹⁹³ (Ibid.).

However, “*the sunny days*” were short-lived, and as of December 1953, the tension between the government and the opposition rose to a higher level. The most obvious indicator of this was that the DP decided to continue the work that it started in 1951 and brought the draft law to the parliamentary agenda, which briefly envisaged the seizure of the RPP’s properties. Menderes’ main argument was that the RPP had unfairly acquired all of its property when it had been ruling the country as a single-party. That’s why they named this bill as ‘Unfair Acquisition’ (*Haksız İktisap*). This draft law was an ‘attempt against the properties’ of the main opposition party. The draft law was discussed in the parliament on 14 December 1953¹⁹⁴, and the law was adopted. Afterwards, the RPP party centers were locked up and sealed, and buildings confiscated. *Ulus* newspaper was also among the confiscated properties (Arcayürek, 1985, pp. 134-139).¹⁹⁵

In a reader letter sent on March 20, 1954, a customs broker (Reader Number 70) describes the polarized atmosphere of the pre-election period in İskenderun as follows: “One motorcycle under each youth, pointed flags with the DP or the RPP signs in front

¹⁹² “Muhalefette: iyi gelecekler vadeden idealist bir devlet adamı Menderes; DP genel başkanı ve başbakan: ezici bir tahakküme yönelmiş totaliter bir haletiruhiyeye sahip Menderes; son gelişmelerden sonra: etrafını saran acı tecrübelerden, gerilik ve jurnalcilik hastalıklarında kendini tedavi eden, yepyeni bir hüviyetle Menderes”

¹⁹³ “Bir insanın, çok kısa bir zamanda bu kadar çabuk kanaat ve karakter değiştirmesi iyi değildir. [...] Lafa değil işlere bakmak zorundayız. Hiçbir ilerleme görmediğimiz gibi, partizan idarenin yeni yeni şekillerine her gün rastlamaktayız”

¹⁹⁴ İnönü made his well-known speech that, “I am watching your aspect from the chair of history. You are in a hurry of the criminals. You are afraid of the light”, during these discussions (Toker, 1991, p. 256).

¹⁹⁵ When *Ulus* newspaper was confiscated, Nihat Erim founded *Yeni Ulus* newspaper and ensured that the newspaper continued its publication life (Toker, 1991, p. 257).

of them; they run right and left in the city at 100 km speed and with a loud noise, as if Hitler's assault troops entering a newly occupied enemy city"¹⁹⁶ (B7f3). As it can be seen, the general elections took place on May 2, 1954 in such an environment that the society starts to be polarized with the populist discourse and practices of the DP rule. The DP increased the number of votes it received by one million, compared to 1950 elections, and continued its power by increasing its voting rate from 55.2% to 58.4%. The RPP, on the other hand, increased the number of votes it received by forty-five thousand -which means that the number of the RPP's votes decreased given the fact that the population increase in four years-, and its vote rate fell from 39.6% to 35.1% (TÜİK, 2012, p. 25). The fact that Majority System was used in the 1954 elections, as it happened in the 1950 elections, has provided an incredibly different number of deputies entering the parliament. The number of the DP deputies increased from 416 to 503, while the number of the RPP deputies decreased from 69 to 31. Republican Nation Party (the RNP)¹⁹⁷ and the independents also had 7 seats in total, in the parliament (TÜİK, 2012, p. 10). Although there were several reasons behind the election victory of the DP, it can be said that the polarization that started to be created in the society was not at the level that would disturb the masses as of 1954.

This huge electoral victory of the DP immediately strengthened the ties of circles gathered around it¹⁹⁸ that were weakening before the elections. Also, self-confidence

¹⁹⁶ "Gençlerin altında birer motosiklet, önlerinde DP veya CHP işaretlerini taşıyan sivri bayraklar, şehrin içinde 100 km süratle, sanki Hitler'in hücum kıtalarının yeni işgal ettikleri bir düşman şehrine girmeleri gibi büyük gürültü ile sağa sola koşup durmalar"

¹⁹⁷ The Nation Party was closed on January 27, 1954, with the accusation that it involved religion into politics. Osman Bölükbaşı, one of the founders of the NP, founded the Republican Nation Party (the RNP) (*Cumhuriyetçi Millet Partisi*) on February 10, 1954 and became its leader (Zürcher, 2003, p. 223).

¹⁹⁸ One of those who strengthened their ties with the DP rule was Yalman. There was also Yalman next to Prime Minister Menderes, who went to the US immediately after the elections. Yalman praised Menderes by writing sentences such as "The Americans, in a private chat, have said these about Menderes: "What a strong statesman he is... If we had vigilant guys like him we wouldn't be in such a bad shape and we would have taken solid steps in the right directions"" ["Amerikalılar, Menderes hakkında, kendi aralarında şöyle konuştular: "Ne yaman bir devlet adamı... Bizim bu kadar uyanık adamlarımız olsa, işlerimiz böyle berbat bir hale düşmezdi ve doğru yollarda iyi adımlar atardık.""] (Yalman, 1971, p. 318) in the editorial he wrote after this trip, which has attracted reactions from his readers. In a reader letter sent on August 5, 1960, a doctor (Reader Number 80) asks an explanation from Yalman about his praise of Menderes: "When the crooked Adnan Menderes went to America, you had seen the despair Americans were in, crying "Oh Lord, why didn't you bless us with a statesman like Adnan Menderes", and you had written about it in the paper. I cordially request that you give more information on this subject. We are quite curious about it, what kind of a cry was it exactly?" ["Düşük Adnan Menderes Amerika'ya gittiği zaman Amerikalıların "Allah'ım, bize niye Adnan Menderes gibi

of the DP executives was at an incredible level. In this sense, in contrast to this celebration of democracy at the base, the top DP executives -especially Bayar and Menderes- misinterpreted the 1954 election results. The clearest example of this was Celal Bayar's "*benevolent understanding of democracy is over*" words, which he said at the congratulatory dinner he gave to the DP executives on the evening of the election victory (Toker, 1992a, p. 26). Unfortunately, the DP did not realize that the anti-democratic -in a sense- understanding would be fed the opposing camps that had already been created in the society. But the readers were aware of this dangerous trend and started to feel uncomfortable. A reader letter sent in 1954 regarding this, is a precursor of what will happen in the future. A civil servant (Reader Number 18) depicts with a striking analogy how the DP government silenced the opposition:

I'm not a partisan man. However, I've been to the Italian seas ruled by the fascists. Even then, there were many parties there. In times of elections, despite all the strict measures, even in times when people were violently beheaded, these parties would attack Mussolini at full speed. But here, even the smallest critique results in imprisonment¹⁹⁹ (B13f12).

The anti-democratic repression regime, which the DP started to implement after the 1954 elections, had become the subject criticized the most, by the readers. In a reader letter sent on December 14, 1954, a retired army officer (Reader Number 57) underlines that there had been no change in the ruling mechanism despite all these years, by saying, "Our nation has suffered too much due to decayed rules"²⁰⁰ (B7f2-2). In his letter, the retired army officer, who complains about the ugly atmosphere of the party struggles in Turkey, writes that swearing and blasphemy, which dominates the current politics at that period, had nothing to do with democracy, but the polarization of the society. At this point, a reply letter dated December 17, 1954 sent by Yalman to this retired army officer is important in terms of summarizing the anti-

bir devlet adamı vermedin" diye ağladığını görmüş ve bunu gazetenizde yazmıştınız. Bu hususta malumat vermenizi saygılarımla rica ederim. Çok merak ediyoruz, bu nasıl ağlayıştır"] (B17f10).

¹⁹⁹ "Bir parti adamı değilim. Ancak, İtalya'da faşistlerin ferman eyledikleri denizlerde bulundum. Orada, o zaman dahi birçok parti vardı. Seçim zamanlarında, o kadar sıkı tedbirlere rağmen, kafaların hunharca kesildiği devirlerde bile partiler, sinyor Mussolini'ye alabildiğine hücum ederlerdi. Burada ise en ufak tenkitin karşılığı hapsedilmektir"

²⁰⁰ "Milletimiz, sakat idareler yüzünden çok cefa çekmiştir"

democratic practices implemented by the DP rule within a short period of time after the 1954 elections:

The government, in May the 2nd when it came to power, was in a position to take matters into its own hands and soften the tensions. Regardless of all the provocations, the government should not have enacted the *Kırşehir* law²⁰¹, caused the opposition to not be able to speak on the radio, implemented the restructuring of the election law, the retiring of the judges who served for 25 years, the secret courts becoming a more and more widely used mechanism, and the disallowance of the right of proof. The government should have, instead, made serious reforms on the Justice and Finance Departments²⁰² (B7f2-2).

From this point forth, it can be said that 1955 was the most critical year for the top-down trend of the DP rule. In this year, the economic problems crystallized clearly²⁰³, the Cyprus crisis and the pogrom of September 6-7, 1955, has been experienced, the DP faced an irreversible rupture from the inside, and in response, the DP tried to overcome all these problems by increasing its hardness and pressure policies that had deepened the polarization among the society. In this regard, it can be said that the pogrom of September 6-7 was the first serious event in which the increasing deepening of polarization among the society was materialized.²⁰⁴ Thus, it was observed how the populist discourses raised with political ambitions were effective on an important part of the society and how they were able to mobilize the masses.

During the period after September 6-7, the DP government had increased its pressure on the opposition by using the pogrom as an excuse. Martial law was first declared in

²⁰¹ The leader of the RNP Osman Bölükbaşı was elected from *Kırşehir* as one of the five deputies of his party in the 1954 elections. Then, the DP government could not tolerate this situation and reduced *Kırşehir* to district status as a punishment (İnan, 2014, p. 283).

²⁰² “2 Mayıs’ta büyük bir ekseriyetle iktidara gelen hükümet, teşebbüsü elinde tutup, gerginliği yatıştırarak bir mevkiide idi. Ne kadar haksız tahrikler karşısında olursa olsun, Kırşehir kanunu, muhaliflerin radyoda konuşmaması, seçim kanununun tadili, 25 yılı dolduran hakimlerin idari surette emekliye sevk edilmesi, gizli mahkemelerin itiyad halini alması, ispat hakkının reddi gibi hareketlerden geri durulması ve Adliye, Maliye gibi işlerde esaslı ıslahata girişilmesi lazımdı”

²⁰³ As of 1955, it was understood that the economic development of the country, which was one of the main focuses of the DP program, had gradually turned out to be a dream.

²⁰⁴ Akpınar (2016) states that the words “İstanbul against Beyoğlu” uttered by Menderes in the celebrations held with the motto of the “re-conquest of İstanbul” in 1953 were one of the polarizing rhetoric that fed the pogrom (Akpınar, 2016, p. 65).

İstanbul and *İzmir*. Then, in the mid-September, *Ulus*, *Hürriyet* and *Her Gün* newspapers were closed with the orders of the martial law commanders. Hundreds of dissidents were arrested and detained for months on suspicion of the events. Finally, the DP government extended the martial law for six months, and then put the parliament on holiday (Eroğul, 1990, pp. 111-112). These and many similar events caused the voices rising from the base of the society to gradually increase. Thus, as expressed in a reader letter sent on December 9, 1955 (Reader Number 81), “While we were hoping that the high rulers would put their thinking caps on and ameliorated, we saw with astonishment and sadness that a large padlock is attached to the mouths”²⁰⁵ (B7f3). It was now clear to the readers that this course of events was the harbinger of the tumbling-down trend in Turkey. In a reader letter sent in 1955, a reader (Reader Number 22) summarizes this trend as follows:

The people of this country have witnessed the governments of the Union and Progress, the Republican People’s Party and the Democratic Party. All of them forgot their commitments and manners of action from the time they were the opposition parties and became (let’s not call it a dictatorship) totalitarian rules [...] We toppled the People’s Party with a joint effort and brought Democratic Party to the power. What did we achieve in terms of democracy? Nothing, I suppose... It’s the same old story²⁰⁶ (B7f3).

Of course, while the DP was dealing with its own internal troubles²⁰⁷, it was trying to respond to the harsh criticisms of the opposition. After the new government was

²⁰⁵ “Yüksek sevk idarecilerin şapkalarını önlerine alarak düşünceye varıp, toparlanacaklarını ümit ederken, bilakis, ağızlara da büyük bir asma kilidin takıldığını hayret ve esfle gördük”

²⁰⁶ “İttihat ve Terakki, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi ve Demokrat Parti idarelerini bu millet gördü geçirdi. Hepsi de, muhalefetteki vaat ve hareket tarzlarını unutarak (diktatörlük demeyelim de) totaliter bir idareye doğru kaydı gittiler. [...] Elbirliği ile Halk Partisi’ni yıktık, Demokrat Parti’yi iktidara getirdik. Demokrasi yönünden ne kazandık? Bence hiçbir şey... Eski tas, eski hamam”

²⁰⁷ Intra-party decomposition process known as the 19s movement eventually led to the establishment of Freedom Party (the FP) (*Hürriyet Partisi*) on December 20, 1955 (Yalman, 1971, p. 328). There is an interesting reader letter on this topic. In this reader letter sent on October 14, 1955, a doctor (Reader Number 82) sarcastically criticizes the top-DP executives for their lack of tolerance as follows: “It seems like the shortest way is to form a group that has no personal opinion, views and thoughts, and everything that is said and desired is done, so that the party discipline is not offended. So, what does the value and power of this chosen group mean? Thus, an MP will not be able to hear the voice of her conscience” [“Parti disiplini rencide olmasın diye şahsi fikir, görüş ve düşünceleri olmayan, söylenen ve arzu edilen her şey yaptırılan bir grup teşkil etmek en kestirme yol gibi görülüyor. O halde, bu seçilen zümrenin kıymet ve kudreti ne ifade ediyor? Demek ki bir mebus, vicdanının sesini de duyamayacak”] (B17f3).

formed²⁰⁸, Menderes overcame the shock on him and started to crack down on the opposing voices harsher than before. The hardening policy of the fourth Menderes government had shown itself in the fields of justice, the press, universities, unions and the oppression of the opposition. In this sense, the opposing camps that were previously created in the country, were thus deepened further. Actually, this hardening policy has been one of the most important factors for the upside-down trend of the DP. In a reader letter signed as “the people”, sent on February 24, 1956 (Reader Number 35), there is a warning about this polarization among the country as follows: “It is a treason to engender an illusion of duality in the country by seemingly rebuilding the already-existing national solidarity”²⁰⁹ (B13f11-1). The hardening practices of the DP have become so anti-democratic that it was understood that there was no longer any hope for the DP to re-establish democracy, rather, it had become closely tied to concepts like single-party/one-man rule and arbitrary rule, which the DP criticized during its opposition period.

There is no doubt that all of these political developments were seen from different perspectives among the readers. The seeds of polarization, which started to be sown to the society at the beginning of the DP rule had then started to bear its fruits. In this context, there were those who defended the DP’s practices that constituted the pressure regime against the destructive attitudes of the opposition. In a reader letter sent on July 30, 1957, a lawyer (Reader Number 17) defends the DP’s harsh implementations, by saying, “Let us not forget to talk about the level of responsibility the opposition has on certain mistakes of the government while we’re criticizing it”²¹⁰ (B17f10). Until the 1957 elections, many components and powerful individuals had left the DP in one way or another. The gap that opened in the DP as a result of these breaks was horrible. Hence, this situation revealed how weak and incompetent the remaining DP cadres were. There were the readers who were aware of this situation, though. In a reader

²⁰⁸ After the 19s movement, the third Menderes government fell, and the fourth government was formed with great changes in the cabinet.

²⁰⁹ “Esasen mevcut olan milli tesanüdü, yeniden kurmaya çalışır görünmekle memlekette ikilik tevehhüm edilmesi dahi vatana ihanettir”

²¹⁰ “İktidarı tenkit ederken, bu hatalardaki muhalefetin mesuliyet derecesini göstermeyi de unutmayalım”

letter sent on September 12, 1957, a doctor (Reader Number 83) makes a desperate call to those who had left the DP, by saying,

Let us address the former Democratic Party members, the old idealists, both those who now make up the Nation Party and the Freedom party and those nonpartisans: there is no reason for you to remain separate from your party and no reason to not resolve the national problems hand in hand with the party members. Stop running after greedy ambitions and accept this silent invitation²¹¹ (B17f9).

As a result of oppression and repression practices of the government, only “the parliament” remained in the hands of the opposition against the entire regime of pressure. However, İnönü sensed early from the attitudes of the DP that they would prepone the elections (Toker, 1992a, p. 232). Hence, the opposition parties (the RPP, the FP, and the RNP), which have been in contact for some time, have accelerated their negotiations to enter the elections in an alliance. So indeed, Prime Minister Menderes made public in his speech in *Sivas* on May 25, 1957, that the elections would be held before the official date (Eroğul, 1990, p. 123). In other words, this meant an early election would be held in 1957. Henceforth, he initiated a series of practices contradicting with democratic principles, in order to prevent the opposition from forming alliances in the elections. In this sense, on September 13, 1957, the DP made amendments on the election law to prevent the opposition from uniting. With these changes, the parties were obliged to make a full candidate lists in all electoral circles, and a member of a party was prohibited from being nominated by another party in the elections. Also, with the amendment, a person who left her/his party was prevented to be a candidate from another party before six months had passed²¹² (Eroğul, 1990, p. 125). Such oppressions applied on the opposition served no other purpose than to further tensions within the society and deepen the polarization among it.

As a result, the 1957 elections were held on October 27, in such a turbulent political environment. Despite all the oppressive practices of the DP rule and the election frauds

²¹¹ “Bugün Millet ve Hürriyet partilerini teşkil eden veya etmeyen, eski Demokrat Partili idealistlere şöyle hitap edelim: partinize dönmeniz ve memleket meselelerini el ele vererek halletmemeniz için hiçbir sebep kalmadı. Hasis ihtiras peşinde koşmayın ve bu sessiz davete icabet edin”

²¹² This change was essentially made in order to prevent Fuat Köprülü who left the DP, from joining the opposition ranks.

it applied, the DP's vote rate decreased to 48.6% in the elections (TÜİK, 2012, p. 25). On the contrary, it was remarkable that the opposition parties exceeded the DP in terms of the voting rate in total. As evidenced by the societal and political developments after 1957, the election results indicate that the DP had drifted into a kind of ruling power legitimacy crisis. According to the results of the 1957 elections, the DP gathered 48.6% of the votes, with around 4.5 million votes, and won 424 seats in the parliament (TÜİK, 2012, p. 25). Compared to the 1954 elections, it is seen that the DP lost approximately one million votes, and that the losses corresponded to a 10% decrease in the votes. In the opposition, the situation was the opposite; the RPP, which had 3.1 million votes with a vote rate of 35.1% in the 1954 elections, had 3.8 million votes with a vote rate of 41.4% in the 1957 elections. In parallel with the voting rate, the RPP increased the number of its parliamentary seats from 31 to 178 in 1957. Moreover, other opposition parties, i.e. the RNP and the FP, also won eight parliamentary seats in total²¹³ (TÜİK, 2012, p. 25).

Elections were left behind, but nothing had changed. On the contrary, the DP remained as the sole power-holder again, and continued its practices of polarizing and suppressing the society from where it left off. In fact, the DP, which fell behind the opposition as the vote rates, continued to ignore messages of discontent that were coming from the bottom. However, the criticism arrows had continued to come from the readers. In a reader letter sent on July 3, 1958, a reader (Reader Number 84) makes an overview of the period with references to DP's promises and actions between 1946-1958, by saying, "The desire of the people, which brought the current power to the fore on May 14, 1950, was more freedom, prosperity and development. In that period, it was believed that these also were the desire of the DP executives"²¹⁴ (B17f9). Then he discloses his current thoughts about the DP as follows: "Those who initially came to power in order to actualize freedom, brought to this country the mechanisms of

²¹³ This result was a major disappointment for the FP, despite the enormous increase in the RPP's number of MPs.

²¹⁴ "14 Mayıs 1950'de bugünkü iktidarı başa getiren halkın arzusu, daha fazla hürriyet, refah ve kalkınmaydı. Bu devrede, DP'nin de arzusunun bunlar olduğu sanılıyordu"

oppression that cannot be explained by the concepts of law in other states today”²¹⁵ (Ibid.).

In a reader letter sent in 1958, a reader (Reader Number 20) who says he is not highly educated, shares his impressions as follows: “How could this be? What will the outcome be if everything is thought unilaterally and if the laws are executed in a one-sided manner? Those who say the opposite are called traitors”²¹⁶ (B7f3). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on July 3, 1958, a reader (Reader Number 84) makes an overview of the whole DP rule period and criticizes the current situation, by saying,

When the whining and the complaining increased, the freedoms, which were thought to be insufficient, began to be removed. And finally, it was claimed that the reason for the drift towards a totalitarian rule was the opposition’s destructive allegations towards the government [...] We are sick of listening to you for the past eight years, to the same stories of how bad the things were in the RPP era. We did not put you into power just so that you could quarrel about the governing periods of both parties. Stop with these nonsenses and find solutions for the problems²¹⁷ (B17f9).

As can be seen, readers were then tired of mutual empty political quarrels, polarization, oppression and repression. The readers almost gave up the discourses of freedom, and the main problem for which they had been seeking a solution was the aggravating life conditions that were tried to be covered with populist enmity discourse and practices.

As can be seen, the DP rule was disfavored by both the intellectuals and the masses who mostly belonged to the urban middle classes. Therefore, the main issue that worried the people was the reflections of the ill blood bred in the society from the beginning of the DP rule. In a reader letter sent on September 20, 1958, a lawyer (Reader Number 39) states that the DP rule filed lawsuits against Yalman and other

²¹⁵ “Bugün hürriyeti gerçekleştirmek vaadiyle iktidara gelenler, diğer devletlerde hukuk kavramıyla izah edilemeyen baskı mekanizmalarını bu memlekete getirmişlerdir”

²¹⁶ “Böyle şey olur mu? Her iş tek taraflı düşünülür ve kanunlar tek taraflı tatbik edilirse akıbet ne olacaktır? Aksini söyleyenlere ise vatansız denmektedir”

²¹⁷ “Sızlanmalar, şikayetler yükselmeye başlayınca, yavaş yavaş evvelce az görülen hürriyetlerin kaldırılmasına başlandı. Nihayet totaliter idareye yönelişin sebebi olarak muhalefetin yıkıcı isnat teraneleri ileri sürüldü. [...] Yeter artık sekiz senedir dinlediğimiz, CHP döneminde böyleydi, şöyledi şeklindeki aynı masallar. Biz sizi, iki parti döneminin münakaşasını yapın diye başımıza getirmedi. Bırakın bu teraneleri de sorunlara cevap bulun”

intellectuals, and that these cases could be dealt with in some way. However, the point he wanted to draw attention to was the following: “The conditions we are in today are not good at all. There are many who forget that we, as the whole society, need brotherly intimacy and cooperation”²¹⁸ (B11f13). The course of events that a lot of people in the society were so aware of, was unfortunately not even in the minds of the DP rulers. They continued to polarize the society as quickly as possible without paying attention to objections and complaints from the different segments of the society.

In this sense, during the DP rule period, the most dangerous practice that caused the polarizations among the society to reach its peak, was the establishment of the Homeland Front (*Vatan Cephesi*) by Prime Minister Menderes himself. The DP, which lost power as the results of the 1957 elections and entered into a kind of legitimacy crisis, when the opposition’s vote rates taken into consideration, had acted against the opposition’s liaising called “the unity of power”. In this context, Prime Minister Menderes asks in a speech he made in *Manisa* on October 12, 1958, that “citizens who are far from politics and ambition, to establish a Homeland Front against the hatred and hostility front of the opposition” (Dođaner, 2019, p. 178). After Menderes’ speech, the Homeland Front process which lasted about a year and a half, begins. Homeland Front Organizations (*Vatan Cephesi Ocakları*) started to be established throughout the country, the Prime Minister began to give speeches that compare the opposition to the Crusader armies, and he provokes the public against the opposition. This process became so polarizing that Menderes was also prosecuted after the May 27 coup d’état for establishing the Homeland Front and dividing the society in two hostile camps.

The most dangerous aspect of the Homeland Front process was that the DP rule - especially Menderes-, had established the Homeland Front Organizations separately from the DP Organizations. The underlying drive of this situation, where the objections were risen against even within the DP, was that Menderes aimed to bring the non-political citizens into his own ranks through the Homeland Front Organizations. The propaganda of the front began to be made from newspapers and radio broadcasts which were under the control of the DP rule. While *Zafer* newspaper

²¹⁸ “Bugün içinde bulunduđumuz şartlar hiç de iyi deđildir. Tesanüte ve kardeşçe yakınlaşmaya muhtaç olduğumuzu unutanlar pek çoktur”

published lists of hundreds of people every day as those who left from the ranks of the opposition and participated in the Homeland Front, these names were also read from the radio throughout the evenings (Birand, Dündar, & Çaplı, 1991, p. 151). Additionally, the DP was making propaganda all over the country that participations into the Homeland Front were reported by telegrams sent to Menderes or the party center.

Actually, after some time, such an overdosed propaganda began to be ignored by the masses, because no one believed that so many people would leave the opposition and join the Homeland Front, every day. On the contrary, there were many readers who saw the underlying cause behind this polarizing practice of the DP rule. In a reader letter sent with the title “Mr. Adnan! What about the citizens’ suffering telegrams?”, on October 10, 1958²¹⁹, a young reader (Reader Number 85) harshly criticizes Prime Minister Menderes for the disastrous situation he dragged the country in, as follows:

When we turn on our radios each afternoon and evening, we hear that, allegedly, flocks of people are leaving the ranks of the opposition, joining the DP and are sending telegrams of loyalty to you [...] Are you aware, Mr. Adnan, that those telegrams are the last blows to you which are taking you down? Did you ever think that it was these telegrams that would be the fatal blows that are going to end you? [...] I shall tell you the truth, as best as I can, as a mild critic of you. I was among the 20 thousand people, at most, in the rally you portrayed in the papers with the headline ‘200 thousand people welcomed the Prime Minister in İzmir’. When you were throwing angry insults at the RPP, a woman beside me was crying, and saying ‘I came here to listen to the good news, that the rent prices were going to be reduced, that we would finally come out of this scarcity, that we were going to be paid what we deserved for our work, and that our kids were going to receive proper education, beginning with schools and teachers, and the supplying of the much needed equipment such as pencils and books. I thought we were going to hear those because that’s what the people who invited me here told me’. [...] Today, the people are living in terrible conditions. Take a look at the telegrams of suffering sent by the press, by the voters, by the universities and take into consideration what they’re saying²²⁰ (B17f10).

²¹⁹ In fact, this letter was written to Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and a copy was sent to Yalman.

²²⁰ “Her öğlen ve akşam radyolarımızı açtığımızda, sözüme ona insanların kütle halinde muhalefetten istifâ edip, çoluğuyla çocuğuyla, dört başı mamur DP’ye taşındıklarını ve bu vesile ile size bağlılık telgrafları çektiklerini işitiyoruz. [...] O telgrafların Adnan Bey, sizi yıkan son darbeler olduğunun farkında mısınız acaba? Sizi öldüren yumrukların bu telgraflar olacağını düşündünüz mü hiç? [...] Ben size hakikati dilim döndüğünce, tamamen müfrit olmayan bir muhalif olarak anlatayım. Ben, sizin gazetelere ‘Başvekilî İzmir’de 200 bin kişi karşıladı’ başlığıyla verdiğiniz mitingde bulunan, taş çatlasa

In the late-1958, the most crowded group among those who supported Menderes were the Islamic extremists. More precisely, only that group remained in the hands of Menderes, per se. In a reader letter sent on October 23, 1958²²¹, about the remaining supporters of Menderes, a reader (Reader Number 36) warns Menderes by saying,

Recently, it has been seen that the people who have been openly speaking out against the Atatürk reforms are going a step further and greeting you with green flags in your rallies. The sole reason for the unprecedented chants shouted in your recent nationwide tour are due to the fact that these people hate the ‘freemason, missionary and heathen’ RPP. If you want me to prove my claim, please just tell that crowd ‘Anyone who dares to attack the Atatürk reforms will be punished with the utmost severity’ in one of your rallies. You’ll see that you will never hear for the rest of your life those standing ovations, those shouts of ‘hooray’, ‘long live Menderes’, ‘thank you’ which brew the greatest of joy in you, and those most sincere and heartfelt cheers²²² (B17f10).

The DP rule’s Homeland Front move and the opposition’s nonabstainer attitude against the DP, had sharply increased the tensions among the society. In the spring of 1959, İnönü took 46 MPs with him and went on an Aegean tour. This was the date that the polarizations created among the society had spilled onto the streets. The DP partisans attacked to the RPP delegation, and İnönü even ended up with a head injury. In another city, İnönü’s car was stoned by the pro-DP citizens. Unfortunately, neither President Bayar and Prime Minister Menderes, nor the other DP executives have paid heed to the signs that polarizations among the society had reached the climax. In a reader letter sent on February 24, 1959, a reader (Reader Number 86) criticizes the

20 bin kişiyi geçmeyecek kişilerden birisiyim. Siz kürsüden CHP’ye ateş püskürürken, yanımda bir kadın ağlayarak, “Ben de buraya ev kiralarının ucuzlatılacağını, gıdasızlıktan kurtulacağımızı, çalışmalarımızın tam karşılığını alacağımızı ve çocuklarımızın önce okul, öğretmen, sonra kalem, defter, kitaplarının ucuzlatılıp temin edileceğinin müjdesini verecek başvekilin nutkunu dinlemeye gelmişim. Çünkü beni buraya davet edenler böyle söylemişti” şeklinde mırıldanıyordu. [...] Bugün vatandaş sıkıntı içindedir. Gözlerinizi, adaletin, basın, seçmenlerin, üniversitenin ızdırap telgraflarına çevirin, onları nazarı itibara alın”

²²¹ In fact, this letter was written to Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and a copy was sent to Yalman.

²²² “Son zamanlarda Atatürk inkılaplarının açıkça aleyhinde bulunan bu kişilerin, daha da ileri giderek sizi yeşil bayraklarla karşılamak cüretini gösterdikleri öğrenilmiştir. Bu defaki yurt gezilerinizdeki emsalsiz tezahüratların biricik sebebi, ‘mason, misyon ve dinsiz’ CHP’den nefret etmeleridir. Tahminimin doğruluğunu anlamak isterseniz, lütfen bir meydan konuşmanızda, ‘Atatürk inkılaplarına el ve dil uzatanların elini kırar, dilini koparırım’ diye hitap ediniz. Göreceksiniz ki o muazzam, içten gelen, samimi ve candan tezahürattan, size zevkten havalara uçuran yaşa, varol, sağol nidalarıyla tutulan alkış trakalarını ömrünüz boyunca işitemezsiniz”

impassive attitudes of the DP politicians as follows: “Even in the hopeless days of the armistice era, we were able to seek remedies for the salvation of the homeland. Today, neither you, the intellectuals, nor we, as the great majority of the nation, are able to relent the politicians blinded by passion and pride”²²³ (B18f2).

Such turmoil had continued until the spring of 1960. Readers who were no longer hopeful from the government, have started to make their fearless criticisms against it. In a reader letter sent on March 11, 1960, a villager (Reader Number 87) expresses his thoughts about the DP rule as follows:

The government, which is about to perish due to your material and moral ideas about which we read in your precious newspaper, is going to get the punishment it deserves for its controversial remedies such as silencing the truth. You can be sure of it²²⁴ (B13f7-1).

As it is seen, there was not much to do in terms of the DP, which was also deprived of its mass support. Being aware of this reality, the DP executives have no other remedy than deepening the polarization that had been sowed and grown in the society for many years. The process started by the DP rule for this purpose was the implementation that literally brought its own end with many other practices that span the decade-long power process.

The DP rule’s final practice of demonizing the RPP and separating the society into two opposing camps on this occasion, was ‘the Investigation Commission’ (*Tahkikat Komisyonu*), which it decided to establish in the parliament on April 18, 1960. The reason for the establishment of the Investigation Commission was to examine the assertions that the RPP had encouraged the masses to oppose the government, its officials and the laws, and the RPP’s efforts to make the army to intervene into the politics (Özdemir, 2019, p. 239). The Investigation Commission which had more power than the parliament and the courts, such as stopping all political activities such

²²³ “Mütareke devrinde dahi, vatanın selameti için ümitsiz günlerde çare arayabilmıştık. Bugün ne siz münevverler ne de biz milletin büyük ekseriyeti, ihtiras ve gururdan idraki kör olmuş politikacıları insafa getiremiyor”

²²⁴ “Kıymetli gazetenizde okuduğumuz, maddi ve manevi fikirlerinizin tesiri altında can veren iktidar, hakikatleri susturmak kaydıyla, sakat yollardan aradığı çarelerin yerine layık olduğu cezayı, eminsinizdir ki, en kısa zamanda görecektir”

as meetings and congresses of the opposition parties, and banning the media from reporting news about the commission's investigations, was totally an anti-democratic pressure device. This move of the DP rule faced opposing demonstrations.

The masses, especially the university students in various cities, such as in İstanbul and Ankara, acted against the DP rule's commission decision. The government tries to suppress demonstrations by force, while a university student was killed. Just as İnönü warned the DP that they were acting incorrectly and playing a dangerous game, Yalman wrote an editorial that warned the DP regarding the Investigation Commission. In a reader letter sent on April 19, 1960, after Yalman's editorial, a retired army officer (Reader Number 88) says that from now on, Yalman must give up his efforts to put the DP into the right path, and he adds:

Because DP has never refrained from insincere actions since it came to power. Especially today, it is meaningless to set hopes for a government who dares to shut down Atatürk's party RPP, the party that aroused out of the spirit of the "National Forces" (*Kuvay-i Milliye*)²²⁵ (B13f2).

At last, the ten-year long DP rule, during which it did not refrain from polarizing the society in line with its political ambitions, and hence became the target of criticisms directed from the all segments of the society, ended with a military coup on May 27, 1960.

In this part, the historical panorama of the DP era was discussed with references to the readers' criticisms towards the DP rule from the perspective of polarizing the society and decomposing it into two opposite camps by its populist discourse and oppressive practices. It can be said that populist discourse continued to dominate the period between 1950 and 1954, which was described as the first ruling period of the DP. The antagonisms that started to appear at the beginning of this period, and even during this period, there were some readers who saw the separations in the society and wanted to intervene, by criticizing the certain polarizing policies of the DP rule. However, senior DP executives misjudged the 1954 election results. As a result, with the effect of the economic bottleneck that started to be felt in the country, they had activated the

²²⁵ "Çünkü DP iktidara geldiğinden beri her gün samimi olmadığını belirten hareketler yapmaktan asla kaçınmamıştır. Hele bugün, Kuvay-i Milliye'nin ruhundan kopup gelen, Atatürk'ün partisi olan CHP'yi kapatmak gafletini göstermekten çekinmeyen bir iktidardan ümit beklemek anlamsızdır"

pressure mechanisms that concern many fields, such as the press, justice and the universities, within a short period of one year. The fact that these developments have been harshly criticized by the readers, appears as an indicator of the deepening polarizations among the society.

When the reactions of the readers to these developments are analyzed, it is seen that the masses did not have any expectations from the DP rule in terms of democracy, but rather, they directed their criticisms towards the DP with references of the fundamental needs, such as the reduction of the pressure regime. Consequently, the readers' perceptions of democracy which were shaped under the influence of populist discourse at first, began to take shape around liberal-democratic principles since the mid-1950s.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, the criticisms directed to both the RPP rule and the DP rule were analyzed in the reader letters sent to Yalman. In this sense, the ultimate aim of this chapter was to reveal how the readers determined the frame of democracy of the period with a negative approach that focuses on the answers they gave to the question of '*what is not democracy?*' through the criticism they directed to the rulers of that period. Looking at all the letters in Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers, it is seen that these criticisms were related to various issues. However, in this chapter, two parts that are thought to reflect the spirit of the RPP and the DP periods are selected as the contents of the criticisms, and examined. In this respect, free and fair elections for the RPP rule period, and the polarizing policies and practices for the DP rule period were chosen as the parts that were criticized by the readers.

The phenomenon that best defines the spirit of the RPP era is the rising social demand for free and fair elections within the framework of populist discourse that was formulated as the manifestation of the national will. However, the RPP was reluctant to actualize these democratic demands and expectations. In this manner, it can be said that the debates on democracy during the 1945-1950 period were clustered around an essential democratic demand for free and fair elections. However, it can be said that those demands were limited to the procedural mechanisms. Even so, democracy debates between 1945 and 1950 have turned out to be in such a populist manner that after all, a large part of the society -it is necessary to include the intellectuals here- has

started to think that the manifestation of the national will, as a result of free and fair elections, is the key to transition to democracy. Thus, a misleading perception that all other secondary problems could be solved by this way was settled in the society.

However, this procedural approach prevailing between 1945-1954 has two interconnected problematic sides. First, election-oriented demands of the readers include an illusionary framing effort with regards to how democratic participation should be. The meaning of free and fair elections within the period did not actually involve any democratic participation practices other than voting at the time of elections. Although, there have been some individuals among the readers of Yalman who were trying to intervene in the political sphere with the mind-opening letters they sent and the various criticisms they directed to the RPP rule, the number of them was very few. On the contrary, when the reader letters are examined, it is seen that most of the readers had the perception that democracy consists of voting in free and fair elections, electing the representatives of the masses, and hence all the other problems would be solved with this way. When this was the case, the vast majority of the society turned into voting machines, and no problem was solved that was dreamed to be solved with the arrival of “democracy”. The understanding that democracy involves certain struggles about rights and freedoms would gain prevalence in the society only after 1954 elections.

Second problematic that actually had dominated the whole period between 1945 and 1954, was the populist approaches that polished the manifestation of the national will. This approach, which can be defined as the populism of DP was a different form of populism from Kemalist principle of populism which sees the whole society as a single mass of people and that every practice involves the well-being of all. As such, the populist discourse the DP had raised since its opposition years was that the RPP’s elitist ruling mentality had marginalized a very large part of the society, and only a limited ruling elite could benefit from the practices launched for the benefit of the whole society. Therefore, the national will had to manifest and the DP, the representative of these silent masses, had come to the power, in order to stop the elitist ruling understanding of the RPP. Only in this way could the democratic power of the people be realized. However, this approach, which prevailed between 1945 and 1954, has led the masses to turn into abstract perpetrators of voting over time, and thus

positioned the masses in a way that does not participate in democratic practices. Hence, the terms of ‘the people’ and ‘the nation’ turned out to be empty signifiers under the influence of those populist discourse.

As a result of this populist understanding, which also dominated the first period, the top DP executives entered into a reckoning with the past by making some distinctions between the Kemalist principles via depicting some of them as the principles that were not embraced by the nation. Along with this distinction, the DP established some pressure mechanisms upon the opposition, i.e. the RPP, which demonized it, and hence created polarizations among the supporters of the two sides. Thus, the second part mostly focuses on the criticisms that the readers had directed against the polarizing policies and practices of the DP rule. In this sense, the fact that more than one political party had competed in the elections after 1946 caused the political struggles to spread to the remotest corners of the country, the politicians to go to the villages to make political propaganda, and thus the urban middle-class individuals to become more politicized in time. Actually, the readers’ efforts to intervene in politics by sending critical letters to an intellectual of that period was the result of this politicization of the masses. However, one of the negative consequences of this politicization process was the separation of the society into two opposing, hostile camps. As a result, the DP rule, which tightened its policies of oppression against the rising opposition in the late-1950s, moved to a harder political line than the RPP rule it criticized while in opposition, and caused the polarization in the society to reach a depth that would be felt even in the coming decades.

When the criticisms in the reader letters are examined, it is seen that individual events were mostly addressed in the letters sent before 1954, but as of 1955 the criticisms shifted to the framework of democratic rights and freedoms. The DP’s restriction of democratic rights and freedoms after 1955, and the constant accusation of the opposition and its supporters for making secret plans to take the DP out of power, caused the deepening of polarizations among the society. Thus, the readers sent letters criticizing these polarizing discourse and practices of the DP, and attempted to reveal what is not democracy.

CHAPTER 5

FROM POPULISM TO LIBERALISM: THE PURSUIT OF DEMOCRACY

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the prevalent notions of democracy among the readers will be explored by discussing issues such as the national will, and the individual rights and freedoms. It is clear that their democracy perceptions were stemming from the debates on democracy in the period between 1945 and 1960. Hence, these ideas that the readers distill from such various stages and spill them into letters, describe *how democracy was imagined by the readers*. In this way, the readers draw the frames of democracy by setting forth their ideas via reader letters they sent to Ahmet Emin Yalman. In other words, foregrounding the answers of the readers to the question of ‘*what is democracy?*’ has an important place in reaching the capillaries of the mindset of the readers.

It can be said that two main processes that shaped democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals. The first of these was the populist discourse that dominated the period between 1945 and 1954. This populist discourse which the DP expressed it in the form of the manifestation of the national will, was quickly adopted by the masses who were overwhelmed by the ruling elites of the single-party rule. Polishing free and fair elections as the only way to actualize this manifestation caused the pre-1950 democracy perceptions to be shaped in a procedural form. The populist discourse reached its peak with the 1950 elections, it began to lose its influence among the society as a result of the polarizing practices of the DP rule, and finally replaced with the liberal-democratic principles after 1955. Therefore, in the period between 1945 and 1954, the populist discourse of the national will was the main determinant of the democracy perceptions the urban middle-class individuals.

After the 1954 electoral victory, the DP's illiberal and anti-democratic identity became apparent with regards to the polarizing seeds planted by the DP rule bore fruits. In this sense, the perceptions of democracy started to be freed from the influence of the populist discourse and had transformed into the necessity of the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances. It is noteworthy that especially in letters sent after 1955, readers tend to use the concepts of democracy and freedom interchangeably. Thus, the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals evolved after 1955 to the guarantee of the individual rights and freedoms. In other words, during the period between 1954 and 1960, efforts to put democracy on concrete bases as an outcome of the political developments, had determined the discourse, and hence, democracy was envisioned by the individuals within the liberal-democratic values.

5.2. The Idea of Democracy in the Era of Freedom of Debate

Analysis on the reader letters reveals that the readers of the period envisioned democracy at several levels. The most striking depiction of these different levels is the meanings that the readers attributed to democracy. These meanings show the efforts to understand the notion of democracy that the readers did not yet know how to envisage. Therefore, they argued that the notion of democracy should be freely discussed. For this reason, they preferred to call the period after 1945 '*the era of freedom of debate*'. In a reader letter sent on February 10, 1950, a journalist in prison (Reader Number 89) articulates this term as follows: "The period between 1945 to 1950 as the era of freedom of debate, which was a transition period from old and bad to new and better with respect to democratic reforms"²²⁶ (B9f7). It is important to take a glance at how the readers of Yalman underlined the concept of *freedom of debate*, in other words, what meanings they attributed to democracy, in terms of the formation stages of the democracy perceptions in their minds.

In a reader letter sent on October 30, 1945, a sanitary officer (Reader Number 58) describes his own relationship with democracy by saying, "I am a 25-year-old peasant

²²⁶ "1945'ten beri içine girdiğimiz çok partili serbest münakaşa devri, demokratik inkılabı doğru bir intikal devridir"

boy whose heart is burning like a fire to fight for democracy day and night”²²⁷ (B5f3-2). Likewise, in another reader letter titled “The inner face of Ankara Faculty of Law”²²⁸ (B13f9) sent on November 2, 1945, a law school senior year student (Reader Number 59) foregrounds his expectations from the notion of democracy as follows:

We want the strict implementation of the principle of democracy, as keeping pace with the rest of the world, and we ask an account for our backwardness. We want the administrators to rule the state not like their farms, but as the property of the nation²²⁹ (B13f9).

Similar expectations can be found in other letters. In a reader letter sent on February 26, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 26) brings forwards his democracy perception as follows: “As citizens, we believe in democracy for the development of our country”²³⁰ (B8f4). Also, in another reader letter sent on June 24, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 61) describes his embracement of democracy by saying, “Democracy that we have long missed”²³¹ (B8f4).

As the general elections of 1946 approached, it seems more visible from the letters that there was a noticeable increase in the mass support for democracy. For example, in a reader letter sent on July 2, 1946, a civil servant (Reader Number 90) says the following: “The homeland has achieved the love of freedom and democracy. To raise the nation to the level of contemporary civilizations is now the primary duty of the citizens”²³² (B8f4). It is possible to see this positive mood in another reader letter. A

²²⁷ “337 doğumlu, henüz 25 yaşında, demokrasi adına gece gündüz mücadele etmek için kalbi ateş gibi yanan bir köylü çocuğuyum”

²²⁸ “Ankara Hukuk Fakültesinin İçyüzü”

²²⁹ “Dünyanın gidişine ayak uydurarak demokrasi prensiplerinin harfîyen tatbikini istiyor ve geri kalmamızın hesabını soruyoruz. İktidar mevkiinde olanların memleketi çiftlikleri gibi değil, milletin malı gibi idare etmelerini istiyoruz”

²³⁰ “Memleketin kalkınmasına mütedair bila fasıla mücadele devamızın feragati nefis sahibi vatandaşlar arasında, demokrasi mücadelesi minnet ve şükranla karşılanmaktadır”

²³¹ “Çoktandır özlediğimiz demokrasi”

²³² “Memleketimiz bugün hürriyet ve demokrasi aşkına kavuşmuş bulunmaktadır. Milletimizi dünya ölçüsünde yükseltmek her vatandaşın vazifesidir”

military doctor (Reader Number 64) who wrote to Yalman on July 3, 1946, says: “I believe in the spirit of democracy, and its future solid development. One day, perhaps soon, we will meet under the free lights of the democracy sun, we pour out our troubles, and we will find remedies for them”²³³ (B8f4). Similarly, in a reader letter sent on February 26, 1947, an assistant bank inspector (Reader Number 25) expresses his belief in democracy by saying:

Is democracy necessary for our country and nation, or not? I do not see the need to seek answers for this question. Claiming for a nation, which has given the best examples of democracy of its era, which] has a democratic consideration, and which has a democratic way of life, that a path other than democracy would be good and progressive is the largest of the malignity²³⁴ (B5f3-2).

Besides, it can be said that, in this period, democracy was began to be localized and spread towards the capillaries of the popular masses. In a reader letter sent on June 25, 1948, a doctor (Reader Number 53) says, “The cause of democracy is the voice rising from the enormous and magnificent citizen communities in the four corners of the country. You would witness that these voices rise from each village in the country”²³⁵ (B5f3-1). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on December 3, 1947, a group of readers (Reader Number 91) try to call Yalman’s attention to the local level by saying that, “In order to see how the cause of democracy is developing in the local level, how

²³³ “Demokrasi ruhuna ve onun gelecekteki sağlam gelişmesine inanıyorum. Elbet bir gün, belki pek yakında demokrasi güneşinin hür ışıkları altında buluşup, dertlerimizi döküp, onlara hal çaresi bulacağız”

²³⁴ “Memleketimiz ve milletimiz için demokrasi gerek midir, değil midir? Bu suale cevap bile aramaya lüzum görmüyorum. Tarihi boyunca devrin en iyi demokrasi örneklerini vermiş, telakkisi demokrat, yaşayışı demokrat bir millet için bundan başka bir yolun iyi ve ilerletici olacağını iddia etmek, yapılabilecek fenalıkların en büyüğüdür”

²³⁵ “Girişilen demokrasi davası, yurdun dört köşesindeki muazzam ve muhteşem vatandaş topluluklarından yükselen sestir. Bu seslerin tek tek her köyden yükseldiğine şahit olacaksınız”

it is adopted by the people with a Raider Spirit (*Akıncı Ruh*)²³⁶, and to sound the people out, come out of big cities to Anatolia”²³⁷ (B5f3-2).

However, there are readers who were familiar with the notion of democracy. Their letters are important to show that the cause of democracy was envisioned as a set of struggles that spanned many years. In a reader letter sent on March 30, 1949, a reader (Reader Number 92) writes about the bond between the masses and democracy as follows: “They are faithful and philanthropic citizens, who have made the first moves of liberty and independence, and who are internally committed to the cause of democracy”²³⁸ (B5f3-1). By the same token, in another reader letter sent on May 27, 1950, a pharmacist (Reader Number 73) writes by giving a share of the success to Yalman, as follows: “From the shores of the Mediterranean to the climax of the Taurus, you have taught democracy to the readers, and I have taught democracy to illiterates”²³⁹ (B13f1). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on June 6, 1952, a retired colonel (Reader Number 76) underlines the historical background of the democracy struggles as follows: “Today’s freedom regime, which is the product of one hundred and fifty-years of struggle”²⁴⁰ (B8f10-1). Similarly, in a reader letter sent on March 20, 1954, a customs broker (Reader Number 70) ends his letter, by saying, “Democracy is a regime and a national cause. So, it should be considered superior to party politics”²⁴¹ (B7f3). Additionally, in another reader letter sent in 1954, a civil

²³⁶ ‘Raider Spirit’ is not the literal translation of the word ‘*Akıncı Ruh*’, which is used figuratively in Turkish. What is meant by this word in Turkish is to fight unceasingly. Moreover, Yalman uses this word in his editorials frequently, so it is understood that his readers who sent this letter, were strict followers of Yalman’s writings.

²³⁷ “Demokrasi davasının mahalli seviyede nasıl gelişmekte olduğunu, davanın akıncı bir ruhla, milletçe nasıl benimsenmekte olduğunu görmek ve halkın sesi olmak istiyorsanız, büyük şehirlerden çıkın ve Anadolu’ya gelin”

²³⁸ “Onlar ki, her zaman hürriyet ve istiklalin ilk hamlelerini yapmış, vefakâr ve fedakâr vatandaşlardır ve demokrasi davasına içten bağlı bulunmaktadırlar”

²³⁹ “Siz demokrasiyi okurlara, ben de Akdeniz’in kıyısından Toroslar’ın doruğuna kadar, okumazlara öğrettik”

²⁴⁰ “Yüz elli senelik bir emek mahsulü olan bugünkü hürriyet rejimi”

²⁴¹ “Demokrasi, rejim ve memleket davasıdır. Bu yüzden de parti siyasetinden üstün tutulmalıdır”

servant (Reader Number 18) presents his own democracy definition by saying, “True freedom is multivocality; democracy in the country takes root only with this way”²⁴² (B13f12).

After 1954, democracy perceptions of the readers started to be shaped around more concrete issues. Their attributions to freedom started to evolve from the abstract issues to the concrete individual freedoms. In a reader letter sent in 1958, a reader (Reader Number 20) who says he is not highly educated, makes a comparison between the periods of the DP rule era and asks: “When will we have the freedom that we have long missed?”²⁴³ (B7f3). As of 1958, it can be said that the understanding of democracy had evolved into the necessity of creating a democratic social structure. The way of this had been imagined as institutionalizing the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances that will protect the individual rights and freedoms. In a reader letter sent on March 20, 1958, a reader (Reader Number 7) underlines that democracy can only be established through the checks and balances. For the system in which the reader calls “the longed democracy”²⁴⁴, he interprets the following: “No ideal can be realized without the blaze of public consciousness”²⁴⁵ (B7f3). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on November 30, 1959, provincial director of national education of *Kayseri* (Reader Number 93) concludes his letter by saying,

The vitality of a nation depends not only on a handful of ruling-intellectuals, on the contrary, it depends on the well-being, material and spiritual development of the fundamental majority. Therefore, we must be people who fulfill their duties properly and thoughtfully, not partisans²⁴⁶ (B6f9).

²⁴² “Hakiki hürriyet çok seslilik, demokrasi bir memlekette ancak böyle kökleşir”

²⁴³ “Acaba özlediğimiz hürriyete ne zaman kavuşacağız?”

²⁴⁴ “Özlediğimiz demokrasi”

²⁴⁵ “Maşeri şuurla alevlenmemiş bir ideal, hiçbir zaman muvaffak olamaz”

²⁴⁶ “Bir milletin hayatıyeti, yalnız bir avuç idare eden münevvere bağlı değil, esas çoğunluğun refahına, maddi ve manevi kalkınmasına bağlıdır. Bu yüzden, partici insanlar değil, vazifelerinde örnek ve düşünür kişiler olmalıyız”

A letter sent in 1960, when the illiberal and anti-democratic identity of the DP government became most prominent, is important to show that the readers were beginning to imagine democracy by romanticizing it. In this reader letter sent on March 9, 1960, a young poet (Reader Number 19) who indicates that since 1956 he had traveled many cities in Anatolia and met thousands of people, conveys his observations to Yalman, by saying, “I saw many sorrows and misery in the eyes of these people. Deep yearnings of living, freedom and happiness that filled my eyes as I saw them were flashing as far away as a sailor’s lantern”²⁴⁷ (B13f11-2). Later, the young poet expresses his appetite for democracy and freedom with these poetic words:

Someday our good thoughts and good intentions will come true. A cluster of lights will illuminate all sides; a summer rain will wet the cracked soil. For us as young people, the joy of living out of our eyes, the happiness we missed, will begin. Everyone will learn that we are human, and that we have the right to live. Nobody will be able to step on us anymore. The glitters of freedom, happiness, and joy in the eyes of people who are happy to live will flow from the streets²⁴⁸ (Ibid.).

As can be seen the readers of Yalman, i.e. the urban middle-class individuals of that period, defined democracy with references to various contexts by attributing different meanings and expectations to the notion of democracy. Although some of them do not go beyond romanticizing the notion of democracy, when all of the reader letters are examined, it can be said that there are actually two processes that shaped the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals of that period: the populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will, and the liberal-democratic principles.

²⁴⁷ “Bu insanların gözlerinde ne acılar ne sefillikler gördüm. Gözlerimden dolup dolup taşan yaşamının, hürriyetin, mutlulukların derin özlemleri, bir gemici feneri gibi çok uzaklarda sanki yanıp sönüyor”

²⁴⁸ “Bir gün, bizim iyi düşüncelerimiz ve iyi niyetlerimiz gerçek olacak. Bir ışık kümesi her yanı aydınlatacak; bir yaz yağmuru çatlamış toprakları ıslatacak. Biz gençler için de o zaman gözlerimizden yaşamının sevinci dökülen, özlediğimiz mutluluk başlayacak. Bizim de insan olduğumuzu, yaşama hakkımız olduğunu herkes öğrenecek. Artık kimse üstümüze basıp geçemeyecek. Sokaklardan gürül gürül hürriyet, mutluluk, yaşamaktan memnun insanların gözlerindeki sevinç parıltıları akacak”

5.3. Populist Democracy: The Manifestation of the National Will

In the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that there was a popular demand for the establishment of democratic institutions, starting from the 1940s. In this part, the discursive structures of democratic demand will be studied. More specifically, it can be argued that democratic demand in Turkey, especially before 1950, was tied to a populist reading of the Turkish politics.

“Populism” as a political science concept, refers to certain policies, political strategies, or discourses. In this study, I rely on ideational and discursive approaches when I refer to populism (Laclau, 2005; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Populism is the idea that society is divided between elites and the people. However, in Laclau’s terms, these are “empty signifiers” (Laclau, 2005, p. 96). “People” is a discursive construct, occurring through the establishment of a chain of equivalence between disparate units. More specifically, a populist discourse may lump together peasants, clerics, and workers as “people,” denying the arguments that each of these groups have conflicting interests. “Elite” is the “constitutive Other” of people. “People” is the group that is exploited by the elite although they actually own the country. The antagonism between the elite and people necessarily relies on moralistic foundations. Elites are corrupt, and they look down upon the people. People, on the other hand, are the real producers of wealth. They are intrinsically moral and good.²⁴⁹

It is also possible to read the antagonisms put forward by the populist discourse in reverse. The antagonism between the elite and people is based on the idea that the elites despise the people and places them in an inferior position. It is possible to read these antagonisms from the reader letters. In a reader letter sent on January 26, 1949, a customs broker (Reader Number 70) starts his letter by saying that, the nation has been ignored for years, and adds:

The damage done by the People’s Party to this nation is many times greater than its services. Many writers view and consider the facts from top to bottom. The articles they wrote in this manner are very faint and ridiculous in the face of the people’s awakening today. When we consider the People’s Party from

²⁴⁹ For an examination of the populist discourse of the Church of Greece with Laclau’s trajectory, see: Stavrakakis, Yannis, 2004. Antinomies of formalism: Laclau’s theory of populism and the lessons from religious populism in Greece.

below, from the towns and villages, we directly observe that the remnants of the old evil gentry are always kept by this party and that the contradictory backwardness that is manifested below is strongly held by such backward members of this party alone. The source of all evil comes from below, the foundation of the work and the building. The party (sic.) creates this foundation, though²⁵⁰ (B7f2-2).

Additionally, the populist idea causes reactions against the humiliation of the national will. In other words, the elites claim that ‘the people’ is emotional and therefore cannot make the right decisions. In the face of those claims, the people react and defend the discourse of the national will. This defense clusters around that the people decides not out of emotions but consciously. In a reader letter sent on July 3, 1950, an import-export broker (Reader Number 6) talks about true source of the national will, by saying,

Let us travel together anywhere in Anatolia. Let us speak with the peasant, the townsman, the farmer, the shepard, the shopkeeper and the tradesman. Let us observe whether the national will is the rough sentiments, or the determinedness and motivation that comes from its noble and much-suffered spirit. You will be amazed when you see it. Just like you’re always in touch with the elite and the institutions, we’re always in touch with the nation itself²⁵¹ (B8f10-3).

As can be seen, the populist discourse places the moral superiority of the people against the claims of the elites.

Scholars have already argued that Democratic Party has used a populist discourse in his election campaigns (Erdoğan & Üstüner, 2005, p. 658; Çınar, 2009, p. 515). This

²⁵⁰ “Halk Partisi’nin bu millet yaptığı zarar, hizmetinden kat kat büyüktür. Birçok muharrir, vakıaları yukarıdan aşağıya doğru görüp mütalaa ediyorlar. Bu minvalde yazdıkları yazılar, bugün uyanan milletin izanı karşısında çok silik ve gülünç oluyor. Halk Partisi’ni aşağıdan, kasabalardan ve köylerden mütalaa ettiğimiz zaman, doğrudan doğruya eski mütegalibe bakiyelerinin daima bu partice tutulduğunu ve aşağıda vukua getirilen tezatlı geriliğin, sırf bu partinin bu gibi geri elemanları tarafından kuvvetle tutulduğunu müşahede ederiz. Bütün fenalığın membaı, işin ve binanın temeli olan aşağıdan geliyor. Bu temeli de yukarıyı yaratıyor”

²⁵¹ “Anadolu’nun herhangi bir köşesine beraberce bir seyahat yapalım. Orada köylüsüyle, şehirlisiyle, çiftçisiyle, çobanıyla, esnafıyla, tüccarıyla konuşalım. Bakalım milletin iradesi kabaran hisler midir, yoksa asil ve mustarip ruhundan gelen şuurlu ve azimli istek midir? Bunları görüp işitince hayretler içinde kalacaksınız. Siz, ekâbir ve devairle temasta iseniz, biz de işimizin icabı milletin ta kendisiyle temastayız”

is most clearly manifested in the slogan “Enough! Now the People have their say”²⁵² (Zürcher, 2003, p. 217), which DP used for the 1950 election campaign. The letters demonstrate that this discursive reading was prevalent among the individuals belonging to the urban middle-classes. The letters written between 1945 and 1954 extensively use the concept “*millet*” [the people] as a homogenous, organic category. “*Millet*” is contrasted to RPP leaders. In some of the letters, this dichotomy even has a moral element to itself. For example, in a reader letter titled ‘Democracy Means Showing Greatness, Citizen Rights and Justice’ (B7f3) and sent on June 13, 1952, a reader (Reader Number 94) introduces himself as a member of the country, who is a democracy idealist and a vote holder. The reader criticizes the practices of the RPP rule, and foregrounds how the national will manifests, by saying,

When the RPP was in power, [...] it forgot to show love and respect towards its citizens. Faced with such an attitude, the people, who were mistreated, waited for the election day and showed the RPP their discontent by electing the DP. [...] If the RPP misused its sacred duty, calling the people childish and immature, the public would give the proper answer to the RPP government. And indeed it did²⁵³ (Ibid.).

Bringing these together, we can clearly argue that populist discourse prevailed among the individuals belonging to the urban middle-classes during the 1945-1954 period, although we see several examples of rival notions of democracy too, such as representational or corporatist notions. Populist notion of democracy vanishes from the letters after the election victory of the DP. This is probably because the urban middle-class individuals who penned these letters, grew increasingly disillusioned with the authoritarian steps of the DP, and they were not convinced by the DP’s efforts to reproduce the populist rhetoric. In this respect, it can be said that after the DP’s illiberal and anti-democratic identity became more apparent, the populist discourse of

²⁵² “Yeter! Söz Milletin”

²⁵³ “CHP iktidarda iken, [...] yurttaşlarına saygı ve sevgi göstermeyi ihmal etmiştir. Buna karşı, mağdur olan millet, rey gününü beklemiş ve değeri olan numarayı kesmiş ve Demokrat Parti’ye teveccüh etmiş, CHP’ye de halk lisanı ile açıkça teessüf ve teessürünü beyan etmiştir. [...] Milleti, sübyan ve mürahik addederek, vesayetiyle bu mukaddes vazifesini sui-istimal etmiş ise efkarı umumiye ne isim takmak lazım ise o payeyi CHP idarecilerine verir. Ve nitekim de vermiş bulunuyor”

the manifestation of the national will lost its influence on the determining the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals.

Instead of the phenomenon of representation, the center-right wing politics in Turkey preferred to use the concept of ‘*the manifestation of the national will*’ which is a more populist expression filled with concepts such as elections, the right to vote, voter behavior, the proportional or majority systems, etc. This populist rhetoric combined with the procedural debates on democracy that prevailed the pre-1950 period, and hence the populist discourse of the manifestation of the national will was adopted by the many. In a reader letter sent in May 1946, a reader (Reader Number 24) from the provincial enterprise committee of the DP foregrounds that the DP relies only on the trust and assistance of the nation, and he continues as follows: “We trust the political maturity of the people and believe that only their vote can bring wealth to our country”²⁵⁴ (B8f4). Afterwards, he asks a question to an RPP deputy with reference to the power of the people to entitle its representation: “This people has elected you as deputies, given the authority to conduct the state affairs and trusted you. How come you do not trust them, saying that they are not eligible for democracy, meaning they lack the capacity to govern themselves?”²⁵⁵ (Ibid.). He concludes his letter by making a reference to the issue regarding border provinces -the details of which were described in the previous chapter- as follows:

According to your logic, it is not necessary to establish Democratic Party in any of these border towns and people are not to exercise their right to vote freely. [...] Your attempt to deprive intelligent, hardworking and dynamic people of *Hatay* from their most natural and sainted right with the pretext that it is a border town hurts their feelings²⁵⁶ (Ibid.).

²⁵⁴ “Bizler, halkın siyasi olgunluğuna güveniyor ve ancak onun vereceği reyin memleketi selamete götüreceğine inanıyoruz”

²⁵⁵ “Bu halk sizi milletvekili seçmiş, devlet işlerini sevk ve idare etmek için size vekalet vermiş, size güvenmiştir. Siz nasıl oluyor da ona güvenmiyor, demokrasiye mütehammil olmadığını, yani kendi kendini idare edemeyeceğini söylüyorsunuz?”

²⁵⁶ “Sizin mantığınızla hareket etmek icap etse, bu sınır vilayetlerinin hiçbirinde Demokrat Parti’nin kurulmaması ve halkın reyini serbestçe izhar etmemesi icap ediyor. [...] Buranın hudut mıntıkası olduğunu bahane ederek, Hatay’ın zeki, çalışkan ve dinamik halkını, en tabii ve mukaddes haklarından mahrum etmeye çalışmanız hepsini incitmiştir”

As the 1946 general elections approached, it was seen that the emphasis on the national will began to be felt more in the letters of the readers. In a reader letter sent on June 2, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 23) complains of the RPP rule's understanding that disregards the nation, and he makes a challenge with reference to free elections:

If people give their vote in a free manner, these masters will fall. [...] Yes, if people give their vote in a free manner. For years, they applauded people saying they are mature when it served their purpose, and put them off saying they are nonage when it did not. They have ruled the country not with the idea of whom the nation wants, but with the thought that those appointed should comply with our desires. [...] It is said that "You are free, write and say whatever you want... I'll still take my way." The practice appears in that way. Who is saying "I take my way"? Nation is the owner of this property. It should be as whatever they want, and it will!²⁵⁷ (B8f4).

Similarly, in another reader letter sent on July 9, 1946, based on his own observations, a ministry officer (Reader Number 1) makes a claim about the upcoming elections and refers to the will of the nation by saying,

There is no place for hesitation in the elections. Nation has already casted their votes in their minds. If the free manner we dwell on comes true and the imperative method is abolished, the result will be what the nation desires in any case²⁵⁸ (B8f4).

Furthermore, in another reader letter sent on June 27, 1946, with the title of 'It shouldn't be a surprise that the DP is spreading', a reader from the provincial enterprise committee of the DP (Reader Number 95) criticizes the apathy of the RPP deputies to the polling circles they were elected, by saying,

If some, especially those representatives who were elected without even properly knowing their electoral districts, only being able to identify it on a map, had paid a visit to their provincial organizations for even once in a year, they might have left some impressions on their voters whom they talked to,

²⁵⁷ "Millet reyini serbest verirse bu efendiler düşecekler. [...] Evet millet reyini serbest verirse... Senelerden beri milleti, işine geldiği zaman reşit diye alkışlayıp, sırası gelince "Dur bakalım daha sabi sübyansın" diyerek oyaladılar. Memleketi, millet kimi istiyor düşüncesiyle değil, kimleri tayin edelim ki bize yar, emrimize münkad olsunlar düşüncesiyle yönettiler. [...] "Serbestsiniz, istediğinizi yazıp söyleyiniz... Ben yine bildiğimi işlerim" deniyor. Fiiliyat böyle mütecelli. Bütün bu işlerde "Ben bildiğimi işlerim" diyen kimdir? Bu mülkün sahibi millettir. Ne isterse o olmalıdır, olacaktır da!"

²⁵⁸ "Seçimlerde tereddüte mahal yoktur. Millet esasen dimağında şimdiden reyini vermiştir. Üzerinde durduğumuz serbest şekil tahakkuk eder, tahakküm usulü bertaraf edilirse, netice her halde milletin arzu ettiği şekilde olacaktır"

they would have established respect and sympathy for themselves. We've witnessed lots of things and lots of times. Once in a while, when a representative was heard to have coming to the city, all of the villages, towns and districts nearby would send delegates in their traditional Efe and Zeybek dresses alongside a band, and would welcome the representative with a big ceremony, hold feasts with music and dance through days and nights in honor of the representative. In each conversation many great fortunes would be wished for the country in exchange for big, glittery promises. However, don't ask whether the promises would be kept or not²⁵⁹ (B8f4).

Just before the elections, the emphasis on "the people" in the letters is very noticeable. In a reader letter sent on June 28, 1946, a reader (Reader Number 41) underlines the will of the nation by saying, "Our grievance is big, deep and pathetic. Yet its cure is as much easy to provide. A fair amount of goodwill, a little sanity, a piece of "My duty is to carry out what my nation wishes and asks, and to serve them" mentality would suffice"²⁶⁰ (B8f4). Likewise, in another reader letter sent on July 19, 1946, a thirty-year-old middle-educated civil servant (Reader Number 96) who could not write his name out of fear, refers to the antagonisms between the elites and the people as follows:

One of the silent millions shout out that we no longer buy the contrary claims, someone shout out that our ability of comprehension functions with a sensitivity peculiar to Turkness, and that we wish to see the rise of the word of Turk, by means of the faith and effort of the masses, upon our precious history and among the community of humanity. Not the ruses of the elite!²⁶¹ (B6f9).

²⁵⁹ "Bazıları, birçok zamanlar, hatta seçim bölgelerini bilmeden, tanımadan, sırf haritada görmek suretiyle Milletvekili olan zatlar, hiç olmazsa yılda bir kere olsun topluca seçim dairelerine uğramış olsalardı, belki oralarda görüşüp konuştukları müvekkilleri üzerinde birer iz, birer sevgi ve saygı bırakmış olurlardı. Biz öyle zaman ve olayların şahitleri olduk ki, bazen ve arada sırada olsun, bir Milletvekilinin il merkezine, lütfen, teşrif edeceğini duyan ile bağlı ilçe, bucak ve köylerin, ile gönderdikleri delegelerle birlikte davullu, zurnalı, milli kıyafetli, Efe ve Zeybek elbiseleriyle ve bir hayli önemli bir törenle karşılama yapar ve şereflerine geceli, gündüzlü, sazlı, sözlü ziyafetler verilirdi. Her oturuluş ve görüşmelerde memleket için faydalı birçok dileklerde bulunulur ve karşılığında parlak ve yaldızlı vaatler alınırdı. Ama vaatler yerine getirilir veya getirilmezmiş, orasını sormayın"

²⁶⁰ "Derdimiz büyüktür, derindir, içler acısıdır. Ama devası o kadar ucuz, o kadar kolaylıkla kabili temindir ki... Bir miktar hüsnüniyet, biraz akliselim, biraz "Vazifem, milletin dediğini, istediğini yapmaktır, ona hizmettir" düşüncesi, kâfi ve vafidir"

²⁶¹ "Susan milyonlardan biri, iddiaların hilafına uyanık olduğumuzu, temyiz kabiliyetimizin Türklüğe has bir hassasiyetle çalıştığını, kıymetli tarihimizin üstünde ve insanlık camiası arasında Türk kelimesinin kitle iman ve gayretiyle yükseldiğini görmek istediğimizi haykırınsın. Zümre hokkabazlığının değil!"

Finally, the first multi-party elections were held on July 21, 1946. However, what happened during the voting and counting processes, and the results of the elections were enough to create disappointment and dissatisfaction throughout the whole society, especially among the DP supporters. As it was covered in depth in the previous chapter, the RPP officials made many frauds during the vote counting process, and as previously explained, had manipulated the election results in favor of the RPP majority, even though they did not need it at all. As these committed frauds stigmatized on the 1946 elections, the DP used them as the polemic material in order to feed its populist discourse, and as a result, the RPP lost its reputation through the eyes of the masses. However, the main contribution of the 1946 elections to Turkish political history is that the elections were started to be seen as the only mechanism for gaining the power to rule. It was seen to such an extent that any method that could affect the election results was considered as permissible by the political parties, at the point of going through the victory. In other words, the phenomenon of democracy became detached from concepts such as freedom, equality, human rights, rule of law, justice, etc., and was launched by the politicians and perceived by the society only as a number regime that oversimplified democracy into the number of votes received by the political parties. So much so that elections in general were fetishized by the both politicians and the voters.

In a political atmosphere where the elections were the only legitimate mechanism of obtaining power, it is highly anticipated that the DP which suffered from fraudulent elections, wanted to have changes to be done in the election law pursuant to democratic principles. When similar frauds were encountered in the Provincial General Assembly elections at the end of 1946, DP made its demands for changes in the electoral law clear with its ‘Oath of Freedom’ declaration, which was announced at the end of its first big congress in January 1947 (Eroğul, 1990, p. 24). Under these circumstances, elections became the focus of the masses and became the determining factor of daily politics.²⁶² A reader letter is the clearest example of this public interest, along with a

²⁶² In the circular sent to the Provincial Administrative Boards by RPP’s Trabzon deputy Faik Ahmet Barutçu prior to the headman elections, warnings were made to show maximum effort for RPP candidates to win. This circular is important in terms of the existence of a political environment in which even headman elections were considered as much as general elections (Özkan, 2013, p. 252).

populist democracy imagination. In the reader letter sent on February 26, 1947, an assistant bank inspector (Reader Number 25) begins his letter by saying, “In the period of the agenda of democracy and elections which got heated, I was in *Samsun* during the municipality elections, in *İstanbul* during the general elections and in *Van* during the provincial assembly elections”²⁶³ (B5f3-2). After underlining that democracy is absolutely necessary for Turkey, he continues as follows:

As I mentioned before, I was in *Samsun* during the municipality elections. I’ve seen in there as well that there are also points which might validate the complaints. The situation I’ve observed in *İstanbul* during the general elections was neither divine nor sincere! I believed I was witnessing the manifestation of the national will, I was happy, I really thought for a second we could have gotten this job done. However, in the provincial assembly elections, things suddenly turned sour. The provincial elections had begun to be called a drudgery. The turnout was low, and the worst of all, people did not know what they were voting for. I was baffled by what I was seeing, but then I understood that what we lack, or rather what we lost over time, is the representation and the manifestation of national will²⁶⁴ (Ibid.).

1948, which was a turbulent year in terms of the DP, also witnessed one of the biggest steps the DP had taken in order to win the elections. The DP, which has been demanding changes to the election law in accordance with the principles of democracy since the day it emerged as an opposition party, enabled the first major change to be made in the law, in the middle of 1948. The fact that the opposition started to fulfill its demands regarding the election law gradually increased the readers’ belief in the elections. Hence, their democracy perception started to be shaped around the procedural practices. In a reader letter titled ‘Remedy for Salvation’ and sent on December 15, 1948, a lawyer (Reader Number 68) foregrounds the remedy for salvation he believes in as follows:

²⁶³ “Hepimizin konuştuğu demokrasi ve seçim davalarının hararetlendiği zamanlarda, Belediye seçimleri sırasında Samsun’da, Milletvekili seçimleri sırasında İstanbul’da ve İl Genel Meclis seçimleri sırasında Van civarındaydım”

²⁶⁴ “Belediye seçimleri sırasında Samsun civarındaydım dedim. Orada gördüm ki bu davada şikayetçi olanları haklı gösterecek noktalar da vardır. Milletvekili seçimlerinde İstanbul’da müşahede ettiğim durum ne ulvi ve ne samimi idi! Hakiki irade tecellisine şahit oluyordum, seviniyordum, bu işi becereceğimize aklım yatıyordu. Fakat İl Genel Meclisleri seçimlerinde iş aksine döndü; seçim angarya addediliyordu. Nispetler düşüktü ve daha kötüsü neyin seçildiği bilinmiyordu. Korktum ve anladım ki, bizde noksan olan veya daha doğrusu zamanla kaybettiğimiz, iradenin temsili ve tecellisi mefhumudur”

As has been explained many times, national consciousness did not fit into the tendencies. There is no one to be blindly tied to anyone. This nation has freed to be ruled by the thoughts of a few people. [...] In our political life, an unarmed, bloodless and calm reform is needed. So that, any clique, either individually, or as a political community, can make a nuisance of the Turkish nation. [...] In short, people have a good consciousness and a good mind. We shall believe in one thing and one thing only, the will of the nation. The character of a free nation could only be that. [...] Why do you need an arbiter? Isn't the greatest arbiter the nation? [...] Just as what the honorable Professor Ali Fuat Başgil, rightfully, said, although not having yet established a political party according to the scientific definitions, the manifestation of the national will should not be subjected to the grace and benevolence of any party²⁶⁵ (B5f3-2).

Within this scope, in another reader letter sent on December 25, 1948, a female reader (Reader Number 31) states the same thing: “It is the majority of this nation who thinks the best, and who knows what's right”²⁶⁶ (B8f10-2).

The race for the 1950 elections started in March within an environment dominated by a populist approach. However, this populist approach was heavily embodied in party leaders and/or leading figures. Actually, the centrality of the leader is one of the founding elements of populism (Laclau, 2005, p. 99). In other words, populism is the bringing together of many different demands and expressing them under an empty signifier like “the people”. The discursive focal point that can keep such distinct elements together can only be a leader (Laclau, 2005, pp. 99-100). The leader who derives his power of representation from his charisma, “thus becomes a symbol-maker” (Laclau, 2005, p. 160). A reader letter dated April 28, 1950, clearly demonstrates the tendency of the masses towards this type of populist approach. A senior captain (Reader Number 71) states that he is sad because of Rauf Orbay's decision to not participate in the elections, despite being the President of the people's

²⁶⁵ “Pek çok defalar açıklandığı gibi, milli şuur temamlı uymamıştır. Hiçbir başa kör körüne bağlanacak kimse kalmamıştır. Bu millet artık birkaç şahsın düşüncesiyle idare olunmaktan çıkmış bulunmaktadır. [...] Siyasi hayatımızda silahsız, kansız ve sakin bir inkılabı ihtiyaç vardır. Böylece hiçbir zümre gerek münferiden gerekse siyasi bir cemiyet halinde başımızda bir bela haline gelmesin [...] Hulasa milletin şuru ve aklı selimdir. Her şeyde bir tek şeye inanacağız, o da milletin iradesidir. Hür milletin vasfı ancak budur. [...] Niçin bir hakeme ihtiyaç duyuyorsunuz? En büyük hakem millet değil midir? [...] Sayın Profesör Ali Fuat Başgil'in haklı olarak söyledikleri gibi, henüz ilmi manasıyla bir siyasi parti vücuda getirmemiş olmakla beraber, milli iradenin tahakkuku şu veya bu partinin lütuf ve ihsanına vabeste olmamalıdır”

²⁶⁶ “En iyi şekli düşünen, en iyi yolu gören, bu milletin ekseriyetidir”

desire, and then he continues as follows: “Nevertheless, maybe that was of some benefit. Some independents understood what is going to happen to them unless they run within a party list”²⁶⁷ (B1f3).²⁶⁸

One of the reasons behind the centrality of the leader perception in the readers’ minds and the fetishization of the elections, had been originated from the statements made by the party leaders in the election race, and their populist attitudes that provoke the masses. Along with the belief that the multiparty system will bring progress after the election victory of the DP, populist discourse that the manifestation of the national will has been increasingly adopted and voiced by the readers. In a reader letter sent on May 22, 1950, saying that he had a discussion with the regional director two days before the elections, a laborer in the Turkish State Railways (Reader Number 97) writes what he said to him in this discussion as follows:

I told him that this country needed more than one parties in order to progress, that America and England had progressed due to such a fact, and that everything belonged to the people without any exceptions, Atatürk said that one of us is working for all of us, and now we are all working for one, the DP will sink these moldy mentalities to the ground, everyone will work in peace and security, and everyone has the same right²⁶⁹ (B8f10-1).

²⁶⁷ “Mamafih, bunun bir faydası oldu belki, bu seçime bazı müstakiller parti listeleriyle girmezlerse başlarına gelecek olanı anladılar”

²⁶⁸ As another example of the centrality of the leader, approximately one month before the election race, Yalman published an election survey in the Vatan Newspaper (Yalman, 1971, pp. 208-209). Nine questions of this survey as follows: “1. Will you be voting in the upcoming elections?, 2. Do you have trust in the claim that the honor of the ballot box is going to be respected this time?, 3. Which party list are you going to vote for?, 4. Do you think independent MPs should be in the parliament?, 5. Do you think a secondary parliament is needed?, 6. What should the proportionality in the parliament, that is, the balance between the government, the opposition and the independents should be, in order for the parliament to function effectively?, 7. Do you think there would be a benefit in people electing the governor and the district governor themselves, rather than appointments? 8. Who would you make the Prime Minister, if you had the power to do so?, 9. Who would you vote for, were the President to be voted by the public, Write down the name of your city and your occupation” [“1. Önümüzdeki seçimlerde reyinizi kullanacak mısınız?, 2. Rey sandığının namusuna bu defa saygı gösterileceğine emniyetiniz var mı?, 3. Hangi parti listesine rey vereceksiniz?, 4. Mecliste Müstakil milletvekillerinin bulunmasını ister misiniz?²⁶⁸, 5. Sizce ikinci bir Meclise ihtiyaç var mı?, 6. Meclisin vazifesini tam yapabilmesi için sizce muvafık, müstakil ve muhalif nispeti nasıl olmalı?, 7. Valinizin yahut kaymakamınızın halk tarafından seçilmesinde bir fayda ve isabet görür müsünüz?, 8. Elinizde olsa kimi Başvekil yaparsınız?, 9. Cumhurreisi de halktan rey toplayarak seçilse kime rey verirsiniz?, Vilayetinizin adını ve Mesleğinizi yazınız”] (Vatan, 11.02.1950).

²⁶⁹ “Kendisine, bu memleketin ilerlemesi için çok partiye ihtiyaç olduğunu, Amerika ve İngiltere’nin bunu için ilerleyip bu hale geldiklerini ve her şeyin kayıtsız şartsız milletin olduğunu, Atatürk’ün bizim hepimiz için çalışıyor dediğini, şimdi ise hepimizin bizim için çalıştığımızı, DP’nin bu

As can be seen, the election victory of the DP made the readers, who belong to a variety of different segments of the society, happy that the will of the nation was manifested itself as the “real” representatives of the people -not the puppets of the single-party period- started to serve for the nation. Their beliefs were that this change of power would create a more democratic and more participatory system vis-à-vis the single-party rule in the country.

However, there were some counter examples of the populist notion. In other words, there were other definitions of democracy besides the populist definitions. By the way, this kind of alternative understanding of democracy was not very common. One of them was an understanding of democracy related to a corporatist mentality that will be built on occupational differences. In a reader letter sent on September 23, 1947, a reader (Reader Number 28) asks some questions about the relationship between individual representation and social classes as follows:

It can be accepted that organizing classes within the political cadres of the parties on the issue of the satisfaction of rights will be harmful to the point of violating the society’s peace, mercy and solidarity. How is the recent election, in which we all voted only as individuals, going to provide us with a solution the to the issues of representation and protection of the rights that belong to classes and certain occupations? Our current election and parliamentary systems are surely not enough for us to come up with a satisfactory answer. This is due to the fact that the representation of a parliament for which we voted only as separate individuals cannot contain within its limits all of those rights that have an occupational quality. Today, we might suggest that we can only do this, within the limits of the current system and established methods, with belief and faith. However, how can we explain with belief and faith the solutions provided for the legal conflicts related to classes and occupations? How will we be able to find the adequacy that concerns our occupational rights within the limits of a parliament for which we voted solely as individuals?²⁷⁰ (B5f3-1).

küflenmiş zihniyetleri yerin dibine batıracağını, herkesin huzur ve emniyetle çalışacağını, herkesin aynı hakka sahip olduğunu söyledim”

²⁷⁰ “Hakların tatmini meselesinde sınıfları, partilerin siyasi kadroları içinde organize etmek, cemiyetin sulh, müsalemet ve tesanüt muvazenesini ihlal noktasından zararlı olacağı kabul edilebilir. Münhasıran ve sadece ferdi sıfatımızla katıldığımız intihabatın neticeleriyle, sınıf ve mesleklere ait hakların temsil ve tekeffülü meselesini nasıl halletmek kabil olacaktır? İşte bir sual ki bugün cari ve muteber olan intihabat ve parlamento teşkili usullerimizle ona vereceğimiz cevap endişeleri tatminden pek uzaktır. Çünkü sadece ferdi sıfatımızı kullanarak teşkil ettiğimiz bir meclisin temsil hududu, aynı zamanda mesleki sıfatı olan ferdi hakların tamamıyetine şamil ve tamamıyetini muhil olabilmesi mümkün değildir. Bugün, muteber ve muteamel usuller içinde ve sadece iman ve itikat yoluyla bunu yapabileceğimize belki kani bulunuyoruz. Ama sınıf ve mesleklere tealluk eden hukuki ihtilafların

This letter has a different point of view²⁷¹ from the populist rhetoric of the period, with the notion of democracy it put forward that was shaped around the corporatist political representation mentality. Afterwards, the reader underlines that the fetishization of the relations between the elections and the representation turned individuals into abstract forms:

In all the parts that make up the nation, according to the classical standpoint that does not accept the possibility of another agent but the individual, we may approve to some extent the capability of the present parliaments to represent all the individuals. However, when we accept this hypothesis as such, wouldn't we be accepting the current status of the individual within the society as absolute? [...] If none of the parliaments created by the current election system in question possess a capability of representing our entirety, then where should the place be for our vocational rights to be voiced within that parliament made up by an election we could only vote with only one of the personalities we have?²⁷² (Ibid.).

Essentially, this letter presents a counter example of the populist notion, in terms of demonstrating how groundless the concept of representation detached from the context of the social classes is, and contains only references to the abstract individuals. In the ongoing process in Turkey, the reduction of the democracy debates, which intensified with the transition to the multi-party system, into a populist notion that abstracts the individuals via turning the concept of "*millet*" into an empty signifier.

Another counter example of the populist notion was about the electoral system. Although the electoral law was given a democratic form in 1950, the principle of

halledilme çarelerini, mücerret bir iman ve itikatla nasıl izah edebiliriz? Yalnız sıfatı ferdiyemizle iştirak ederek teşkil edeceğimiz meclisin temsil vüs'atı ve hududu içinde, mesleki haklarımıza tealluk eden kifayeti nasıl bulacağız?"

²⁷¹ It is understood that the reader who sent this letter had read and interiorized Ziya Gökalp's model of representation. It can be said that the reader has shaped a notion of democracy based on Gökalp's solidarized-corporatist approach to political representation, which can be summed up by Gökalp's own words: "*Sınıf yok, meslek var*" (Parla, 2009, p. 75).

²⁷² "Milli bütünü terkip eden ecza içinde, fertten başka unsurun vücut ve ihtimalini kabul etmeyen klasik nazariyat telakkisine göre, bugünkü meclislerin ferdi tamamıyeti temsil edebilmek ehliyetlerini bir dereceye kadar makbul addedebiliriz. Fakat kaziyeyi böyle kabul ettiğimiz takdirde, fertlerin cemiyet içindeki durumunu bir mücerrediyet olarak tarif ve kabul etmiş olmaz mıyız? [...] Mevzubahsolan usuli intihabat sebebiyle teşekkül edecek meclislerin, ferdi bütünlüğümüzü temsile kifayet ve ehliyeti yoksa, bu takdirde haiz olduğumuz şahsiyetin yalnız tekini kullanarak katıldığımız intihabatın doğurduğu bir meclis içinde mesleki temsil bakımından muallakta kalan haklarımızın iltica edeceği mahal neresi olmalıdır?"

representation, i.e. the Majority System, remained unchanged. At this point, a reader letter, which was sent to Yalman two days before the changes in the election law were accepted in the parliament, contains a suggestion of an alternative election system. In fact, this letter is one of the rare examples of the demand for representative democracy. The notion of representative democracy is actually an antithesis of the notion of populist democracy. Unlike populist democracy where the identity of “the people” represented is ambiguous, in representative democracy, the mechanism of representation is defined over concrete individuals whose identities known.

In this letter, which sent on February 14, 1950, a reader (Reader Number 27)” criticizes the current election system, by saying,

Let me explain. There are 200 thousand voters in *Kocaeli*. Although we have only one vote to cast, through chain proxyship we cast five votes and the final count adds up to one million votes. Wasn't I of age? I don't want four proxyships, nor do I need four proxies. A member of the parliament can claim that he 'represents 40 thousand voters' all he wants. It's a lie. I dare him to show me the so-called 40 thousand people he represents. He cannot. Because nowhere can any 40 thousand voters claim that they are represented by this or that MP. I myself, as a member of the public, want to elect only one representative by casting only a single vote. It would be much easier for me to get to know that person with their qualities, history and their actions. The bulk of the MPs elected by our city are claimed to take trips around the whole city, with its districts and towns -not by waving from a car as they pass by, of course- and still find time to go to the villages. No kidding! By the love of God, don't believe them, this won't happen and it's absolutely impossible²⁷³ (B8f10-1).

At this point, it can be said that in the populist notion, the nation is a whole, as the mass to be represented. Representation of the individuals is out of the question. This shows that the subject of populist democracy is ambiguously the nation which turns out to be an empty signifier in time. On the other hand, the subjects of the notion of democracy pointed out in the letter are the individuals, as much as possible.

²⁷³ “İzah edeyim, Kocaeli’de 200 bin seçmen var. Birer rey hakkımız varken hepimiz vekaleti müteselsile ile beşer rey veriyor ve tam bir milyon rey toplanıyor. Hani ben reşittim? Dört vekalet istemiyorum, dört vekile de ihtiyacım yok. Sonra mecliste bir saylav “Ben 40 bin seçmeni temsil ediyorum” desin dursun. Yalan. Göstersin bana ki işte şu 40 bin seçmeni temsil ediyorum diye; gösteremez. Çünkü hiçbir yerde 40 bin seçmen bizi şu saylav temsil ediyor diyemiyor ki. Mesela halktan biri olarak ben, bir reyimi kullanarak bir vekil seçmek istiyorum. Onu bütün hususiyetleriyle, mazisi, icraatlarıyla öğrenmem çok daha kolay olacaktır. İlimizin toplu seçilmiş saylavları toplu veya münferiden ilin bütün kaza, bucak merkezlerini dolaşacaklar da köylere uğramaya sıra bulabilecekler -tabi otomobille, nihayet merhaba deyip geçmek değil-, vallahi inanmayın bu asla vaki değil ve imkân ihtimali de yok”

Representation is tries to approach to the citizen as much as possible, and the citizens, i.e. the individuals, are not classified under a homogeneous “*millet*” category.

Afterwards, the reader proposes a system called ‘Single-Member District System’ (*Münferit Bölge Sistemi*) as a more democratic electoral system, by saying,

Just imagine for a second, that there are 465 voting districts in our beloved Turkey. Should this be established, generally, all around the country without exceptions, I would be able to elect the one who would represent me and I would finally know that person without any doubts as to who he is. Even if he does not ask me about my problems, I will find him and tell him. Furthermore, I could decide if he should be a representative once again in the next election, according to the success he shows. Just as I elect the headman in our towns and cities not for everyone, but only for my neighborhood, and thus expect from him to work only for my neighborhood, in the general elections only the person is important, no matter what party he is from. Only whom ‘the people’ likes, only whom ‘the people’ wants wins. [...] The nation wants to elect all of his MPs administrative figures, from the headmen to the President, after getting to know them²⁷⁴ (Ibid.).

The system suggested by the reader still depends on the winner-take-all principle. However, the system he proposed is different from the Majority System used in 1950, combining the single-member-district principle with the winner-take-all principle. The reader actually wants representation to be localized. In this respect, he has highlighted the notion of representative democracy as an antithesis to populist democracy.

In this part, the populist discourse that determined the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals in the period between 1945 and 1954 was examined. The essence of the populist discourse that dominated this period was the rhetoric of the manifestation of the national will. The DP’s claim to be the true representative of the nation by positioning it against the elitist spirit of the RPP rule brought the DP to the election victory in 1950. As examined in the previous chapter, the common point of the readers’ criticisms towards the RPP rule was that the RPP displayed an attitude

²⁷⁴ “Bir de tasavvur ediniz ki, Türkiye’imizde 465 adet intihap bölgesi kurulsun. Bu nihayet büyük şehirlerimiz ve Garbi Anadolu’da bucak merkezlerine tesadüf ederse de umumiyetle ilçe merkezinden aşağıya inmez, işte o zaman beni temsil edeni seçer, bilir, inanırım. O bana sormasa da ben ona dertlerimi dinletir, göstereceği başarıya göre de müstakbel sicilini yine ben hazırlarım. Nasıl kasaba ve şehirlerimizde muhtarımı toptan değil yalnız mahallem için seçiyor ve ondan yalnız mahallem için ödevini bekliyorum, bu şekilde adaylıkta da müstakil veya partili ne olursa olsun ancak şahsın kıymeti vardır ve halkın sevdiği, halkın istediği ancak kazanır. [...] Millet, muhtarından Reisi Cumhuriyete kadar bütün idare adamlarını ve saylavını, bilerek, tanıyarak seçmek istiyor”

against the national will by not allowing free and fair elections. Considering the reader letters examined in this framework, it is seen that there was a strong demand for democracy rising from the society with the transition to the multi-party system. However, these demands for democracy came under the influence of the populist discourse in a short period of time. The definition of democracy equated with the elections, and with the rhetoric of the manifestation of the national will, an imagination of democracy in which what is represented was ambiguous had emerged. As a result, the party leaders took up a symbol-maker position, while the “*millet*” turned into an empty signifier.

Of the 1950 elections have taken place in free and fair manner in line with the rising demand from the society represents the era of populist democracy in Turkey. Although this populist notion did not take long in terms of the DP era, its influences upon the democracy perceptions are felt even today. The understanding of democracy shaped within the framework of populist discourse has been reduced to concepts such as elections, voting performance, party leaders, and the number of deputies. This reduction, which does not provide real political participation and representation, has enabled the populist notion to repeatedly produce antagonisms between the elite and the people and to maintain its influence even today. As a result, the elections were fetishized and ceased to be the democratic procedures and turned into battlefields where these antagonisms were clinched. Therefore, it became apparent that the populist discourse that reduces democracy to the act of voting with the rhetoric of the manifestation of the national will, have a role in strengthening partisanship and mobilizing the masses (Laebens & Öztürk, 2020, p. 17)

5.4. Seeking for the Liberal-Democratic Mechanisms of Checks and Balances

This part focuses on the period between 1954 and 1960 by analyzing the reader letters sent to Yalman in this time being. After 1950, the DP continued to keep on the agenda the antagonisms between the elites and the people produced by the populist notion. Such that, comments have been made that the DP government which was the only decision-maker in the country, could not find time to seek solutions to the country’s problems, rather idled around the populist polemics (B7f2-2). Ultimately, the DP’s rhetoric that placed the RPP in an elitist position and demonized it, which soon turned

into a way of reckoning with the past, had caused the society to enter a rapid polarization process.

In the 1954 elections when the polarization in the society did not reach a point of danger yet, populist rhetoric once again made the DP as the sole power in the country. The 1954 elections which were a kind of *Pyrrhic victory* for the DP rule, also caused the populist notion to lose its determinate position in the society. The main reason for this situation is that the populist discourse in the form of the manifestation of the national will which started to rise in parallel with the demand for free and fair elections as of 1945, has started to lose its influence as a result of this demand being fulfilled by the fact that the elections of 1950 and 1954 were held in a free and fair manner. But at the same time, the 1954 elections also made the DP's illiberal and anti-democratic ruling spirit more apparent. The restriction of many individual rights and freedoms by anti-democratic practices changed the urban middle-class individuals' expectations from democracy and caused the evolution of their democracy perceptions. In this sense, after it was understood that the elections alone would not enable the transition to a "democratic regime", the definition of democracy started to be made with references to the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances that would guarantee certain fundamental rights and freedoms. Thus, the main goal of this part is to reveal this transformation occurred among the mindset of the urban middle-class individuals by analyzing their reader letters within the frame of their expectations from the notion of democracy.

As of 1953, the influence of populist discourse began to diminish in the readers' perceptions of democracy, while the need for the liberal-democratic principles started to be visible. Hence, the institutionalization of democracy in the country and thus guaranteeing the individual rights and freedoms had started to come to the fore more frequently. In a reader letter sent in 1953 with a postscript of "deliberately sent as unsigned"²⁷⁵, the reader (Reader Number 98) criticizes the DP's shift towards an arbitrary rule by saying, "We, young people, are in pain to live in a climate of democracy as much disgraced as today. [...] You accustomed the children of this

²⁷⁵ It writes exactly like this: "If we couldn't sign under this paper, you have your share in the shame of it" ["Eğer bu kağıdın altına imza koyamadıksa bunun hicabında da sizin payınız var"] (B9f7).

country to hunger, but you will not be able to accustom them to deprive of liberty. We want freedom before prosperity”²⁷⁶ (B9f7). It is noteworthy that with the weakening of the populist discourse, the readers tend to use the concepts of democracy and freedom interchangeably.

Another issue that falls within the scope of this concept is the proper functioning of the law-making mechanisms, i.e. the legislative function of the parliament. In a reader letter sent on April 20, 1953, a reader (Reader Number 79) criticizes the unfulfillment of his expectation that the elected government should find solutions to the problems of the country with enacting the proper laws in the parliament:

There are some immediate measures this country needs to take in order to progress in the economic and administrative fields. The exercise of such measures is of utmost necessity. What bills did the government submit to the parliament with regards to these issues? [...] A huge period is coming to an end, if we are to study the laws enacted in the parliament, we see that none of them are about the primarily important issues of this country²⁷⁷ (B17f10).

At a point where the need for liberal-democratic principles became more visible, the readers’ emphasis on checks and balances such as the nature of the constitution to supervise/restrict the government, and the issue of compliance with the constitution had begun to increase. In this sense, the readers have seen the constitution as a mechanism that guarantees the individual rights and freedoms. Hence, obligation to comply with the constitution was seen as an indispensable rule for many of them. In a reader letter sent on January 10, 1955, a reader from London (Reader Number 99) puts forward that the DP administrators have taken the steps of a new arbitrary rule in the country, through “claiming that they can even suspend the constitution” (B7f3). In the continuation of the letter, the reader criticizes the words that the DP deputies told him: “A DP representative I met summarized the mentality of the present government very explicitly, in his words: ‘the country wants to advance today, thus, we need to put aside

²⁷⁶ “Biz gençler, bugünkü kadar kepazeleştirilen bir demokrasi iklimi içinde yaşamaktan acı duyuyoruz. Bu memleketin çocuklarını açlığa alıştırsınız, hürriyetsizliğe asla... Biz refahtan evvel hürriyet istiyoruz”

²⁷⁷ “Bu memleketin iktisadi ve idari sahada ilerlemesi için alınacak acil tedbirler vardır. Alınması zaruridir. Hükümet bu konularda hangi kanun teklifiyle meclise geldi? [...] Koskoca bir devre bitmektedir, meclisten çıkan kanunları etüt edecek olursak, hiçbiri memleketin birinci derecede işlerine ait değildir”

the constitution for now”²⁷⁸ (Ibid.). Apparently, readers have seen the constitution as a safety valve, a norm that should not be touched and should be respected in a “democratic regime”.

The promises of the DP founders to the masses during their opposition years were the establishment of democracy by making democratic laws. This was why the masses bolstered the DP, in order to get rid of the elitist ruling approach of the single-party regime that ignores the masses. As a result, the line of authority of the rulers became one of the concepts which came to the fore in the debate on democracy and guarantee of the individual rights and freedoms. In a reader letter sent on June 15, 1954, a reader (Reader Number 100) underlines the importance of this concept at a time when DP was beginning to shift into an authoritarian and arbitrary rule trend, by saying, “It should not be forgotten that laws are not made according to the wishes of the government at work”²⁷⁹ (B13f4). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on January 4, 1956, a legal advisor in Bursa Municipality (Reader Number 101) says that the DP’s party bylaw has a totalitarian nature and prohibits even the slightest criticism under the name of party discipline. He explains that he was also removed from the party by saying:

I was sent to the court of honor due to noncompliance with party discipline, something which they de facto established above the party bylaws. I was dismissed from the party on the grounds of criticizing and protesting DP’s acts against both the regime and the party bylaws in my defense in the court of honor²⁸⁰ (B7f3).

As it is seen, while the illiberal and anti-democratic identity of the DP became more and more visible, the DP rulers had also undermined the ways to apply democratic principles within the party. This situation was one of the important indicators of the DP’s shift towards an authoritarian and arbitrary rule trend. In a reader letter sent on

²⁷⁸ “Tanıştığım Demokrat Parti mebuslarından birisi bana, “bugün memleket kalkınmak istiyor, anayasayı falan bir kenara bırakmak zorundayız” diyerek, bugünkü iktidarın zihniyetini gayet sarih ifade etmiştir”

²⁷⁹ “Unutulmamalı ki, kanunlar, iş başında bulunan hükümetin arzularına göre yapılmaz”

²⁸⁰ “Parti tüzüğü üstünde fiilen tesis ettikleri parti disiplinine riayetsizlik sebebiyle haysiyet divanına verildim. Haysiyet divanına karşı yaptığım savunmada DP’nin rejime ve parti tüzüğüne aykırı icraatını uzun boylu tenkit ettiğim, isyan ettiğim cihetle partiden ihraç edildim”

September 12, 1957, a doctor (Reader Number 83) criticizes the arbitrariness of the top DP executives by telling what happened at the DP congress as follows:

When some delegates were dismissed from duty on the basis that they had violated the party bylaws, they defended themselves saying things like ‘What bylaws? It is us who created the bylaws, nay, we are the bylaws’²⁸¹ (B17f9).

In line with the arbitrary trend of the DP rule, there were readers who were not comfortable with the DP’s increasingly authoritarian spirit, and were frustrated about not reaching the imagined guarantees upon the fundamental rights and freedoms. Those readers were expressing their discontent about the DP rule’s authoritarian practices such as ‘*the right to prove*’²⁸², while criticizing the DP’s “*benevolent understanding of democracy is over*” approach and the failure to fulfill their promises of democratization in the past. In a reader letter sent on July 30, 1955, a retired prison director criticizes the hypocrisy of the DP executives, by saying,

Our President Mr. Celal Bayar, at the early times of his opposition period, called these laws vicious cycles: the press law (the right to prove was amended later by the DP), the university law, the law on the reduction of compulsory retirement to five years, and the law on the welfare of the nation (*Selameti Milliye Kanunu*). Moreover, he added that if we were not to save these laws from being vicious cycles, we would have no right to expect services in accordance with the universal declaration of human rights, which we have signed. Unfortunately, those party elite who obtained the rule, the speech and, overall, the administration, despite calling themselves agents of freedom, have just sentenced experience and knowledge with death by not inspecting and exercising the laws I’ve listed above²⁸³ (B17f10).

²⁸¹ “Kongrede arzu etmedikleri birtakım delegelerin, tüzüğü ihlal ederek delegeliklerinin iptal edilmesi sonrasında, kendilerine tüzüğü ihlal ettikleri hatırlatılınca, “Tüzük de ne demek, tüzüğü biz yaptık, binaenaleyh tüzük biziz” mealinde konuşmalar yaptılar”

²⁸² The right to prove was a matter of ensuring that, the news on issues such as corruption, bribery, etc. remain unproven, by adding an article to the press law that the DP changed in 1954, which aims to remove the rights of the journalists to prove their alleged news about the high officials, or the party executives.

²⁸³ “Sayın Cumhuriyet Reisimiz Celal Bayar, ilk muhalefete geçerken, mecliste, basın kanununu (ispat hakkı tanımayan hükmü sonradan DP eklemiştir), üniversiteler kanununu, mecburi emekliliğin beş seneye indirilmesi kanununu ve selameti milliye kanununu, birer fasid daire olarak vasıflandırmış ve bu fasid daireden bunları kurtaramazsak, bunlardan altına imza koyduğumuz insan hakları beyannamesine göre hizmet beklemeye hakkımız yoktur buyurdıkları meclis zabtına sabit ve cümlemizce malumdur. Ne yazık ki, hakimiyet, söz ve idare yetkisini ellerine alan bizlerin mürşidi

Similarly, in another reader letter sent on January 10, 1955, a reader from London (Reader Number 99) criticizes the enforcement of the authoritarian laws of the DP rule and emphasizes on the doctrine of universal human rights by saying,

The oppression towards the judiciary and the universities and the legalization of this by the laws enacted in the parliament does not excuse the present government in its failure in the democracy test. [...] It is utterly weird how a country, where only a few journalists left who aren't imprisoned, is perceived as a signatory state in the Universal Declaration of Human rights. Turkey is currently failing the test on human rights²⁸⁴ (B7f3).

Additionally, in another reader letter sent on October 10, 1958, a young reader (Reader Number 85) underlines the authoritarian spirit of the DP rule by saying,

You always call Western countries modern civilizations. Do you think you can come across any country in the West a law resembling the 'Assembly and Protest Law'? I'm talking about a place where there's infinite freedom, where the papers can write about anything, where the opposition can shout at the top of his lungs. In what Western country can you find laws that create this much oppression, this much violence, and imprison hundreds of journalists, intellectuals etc.?²⁸⁵ (B17f10).

As can be seen, the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals came out of the influence of the populist notion. Instead, the need for liberal-democratic principles that emerged within the framework of political developments started to take a determining position on the notion of democracy.

By the same token, in a reader letter sent in 1958, a reader (Reader Number 20) depicts the process of the democratic debacle under the DP rule with emphasis to the need for

particiler, kendilerini hürriyet havarisi yerine koymayı tabi bir hak saymalarına rağmen, yukarıdaki kanunları tetkik ve tatbik etmeyerek, tecrübe ve bilgiye idam kararı vermiş oldular”

²⁸⁴ “Adaletin ve üniversitelerin baskıda tutulup, hür bırakılmaması ve bunların meclisten geçirilen kanunlarla hukukileştirilmesi, bu günkü iktidarı, demokrasi imtihanında hiç de mazur gösteremez. [...] Hapis olmayan birkaç muhalif gazetecinin kaldığı memleketin, İnsan Hakları Beyannamesi'ni imzalayanlardan biri olarak görülmesi ne tuhaf karşılanmaktadır. İnsan Hakları imtihanı, Türkiye'de, başarısızlıkla devam etmektedir”

²⁸⁵ “Muasır medeniyet olarak addettiğiniz Batı'da, sonsuz hürriyetin alabildiğine at koşturduğu, gazetelerin alabildiğine yazıp çizip, muhaliflerin bar bar bağırabildiği memleketlerden hangisinde bir 'Toplantı ve Gösteri Yürüyüşü Kanunu'na rastlayabilirsiniz? Hangisinde bu derece şiddete, baskıya ve yazanı, çizeni hapishaneye gönderen yahut yüzlerce gazeteyi birden hapishanelere, mahkemelere göndermeye mütemayil kanunlara rastlayabilirsiniz?”

the liberal-democratic checks and balances that protect the individual rights and freedoms as follows:

Where are those speeches now which claimed that the DP was to abolish certain laws which it regarded anti-democratic, that our press was going to act in a perfectly free sense, that the justice and administration was going to be impartial, that the vast abundance of cars and in general the extravagance in government was going to be dispensed with? Where are those glorified speeches now, which claimed that the cost of life was going to be cheaper? Let alone doing all these, harsher and harsher laws, which weren't even seen in the period of autocracy (*İstibdat Devri*), are being implemented and the laws on meeting and protesting, which are the rights of every Turk, are being changed²⁸⁶ (B7f3).

Similarly, in another reader letter sent on March 10, 1960, the head of the RPP's neighborhood youth branches from Adana (Reader Number 103) adds the necessity to guarantee workers' rights to the framework of democracy by saying, "Those who want so badly to keep the power forever are going to lose it with this election. Because unless the Turkish worker is given the right to strike, unless the human rights are recognized they are bound to fall"²⁸⁷ (B13f12).

Up to this point, the liberal-democratic approach that started to determine the notion of democracy was examined. This approach was briefly related with the guarantee of the individual rights and freedoms via the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances. However, although the readers thought that these individual rights would be applied in all circumstances, a regime where the democratic social structure has not been established and the liberal-democratic mechanisms were not institutionalized yet, reveals the distorted dynamics of the DP rule. In this regard, the case study, which crystallizes the authoritarian and arbitrary spirit of the DP rule that was risen from the

²⁸⁶ "DP'nin anti-demokratik diye vasıflandırdığı kanunların kaldırılacağından, matbuatımızın tam bir hürriyet içinde fikirlerini yayacaklarından, adaletin ve idare amirlerinin tarafsızlığından, otomobil saltanatına ve israfata son verileceğinden ve hayatın ucuzlatılacağından ve sairden bahisle çekilen parlak nutuklar nerede? Bilakis, İstibdat devrinde yürürlüğe konulan kanunlar bile kâfi görülmemiş, her Türk'ün sarıh hakkı olan toplanma ve tecemmuat kanunları bile değiştirilmiştir"

²⁸⁷ "İktidar koltuğunda kendilerinin daima kalmasını isteyenler, mutlaka bu seçimde düşeceklerdir. Çünkü, Türk işçisine grev hakkı verilmedikçe, insan hakları tanınmadıkça, elbette düşeceklerdir"

lack of liberal-democratic checks and balances in the most dramatic way, is the imprisonment of Ahmet Emin Yalman by the DP rule.²⁸⁸

The incident that caused Yalman's imprisonment in 1960 took place in 1958. The events known as the '*Pulliam Case*' are briefly as follows. Journalist Eugen Pulliam, the publisher of Indianapolis and Arizona Republic newspapers in the USA, decides to come to Turkey in September 1958, in order to make an interview with Prime Minister Menderes. After coming to Turkey, Pulliam waits for an invitation from the Prime Minister for three days. At the end of the three days, he gets the news that Menderes will go to İzmir the next day by ferry and that he was also invited to the ferry. However, when he meets Menderes on the ferry, Menderes does not accept the journalist by saying that he was not aware of his meeting requests (Yalman, 1958).²⁸⁹ As it was the case, Pulliam returns to America and writes two newspaper articles in which he harshly criticized the human rights violations and the oppression on the press in Turkey.

Afterwards, Yalman translates Pulliam's articles into Turkish²⁹⁰ and publishes it in *Vatan* newspaper. Then, many other newspapers and monthly magazines take the translation of Pulliam's article from *Vatan* and publish it. After the articles spread all over, the DP rule sues all related newspapers including *Vatan*. As a result, Yalman receives a six-month prison sentence for the Pulliam case he was being tried in (Yalman, 1971, p. 346).²⁹¹ *Vatan* newspaper was also banned for a period of one-

²⁸⁸ DP's Minister of Justice Esat Budakoğlu stated in response to a question proposal by the RPP in 1958 that journalists -in total- were sentenced to 57 years in prison in the past four years, and the number of journalists imprisoned during the eight-year long DP rule period was 811 (Toker, 1992b, p. 194). It should be noted that these figures do not include the last two years of the DP rule.

²⁸⁹ *Vatan*, 28.09.1958, 'Bir Dost Kaybettik'.

²⁹⁰ *Vatan* publishes those articles with the following titles: "The American journalists are bowling the government out for not being able to speak with the Prime Minister" ----- "It's not too late, but for A. Menderes, Turkey and America, the time is 11.30" ["Başbakan ile görüşemeyen Amerikalı gazeteciler iktidar aleyhine ateş püskürüyor" ----- "İş işten geçmemiştir, fakat A. Menderes için de Türkiye için de Amerika için de saat 11:30'a gelmiştir"] (*Vatan*, 17.10.1958).

²⁹¹ *Vatan*, 16.01.1960, 'Yalman 34 Gün Sonra Hapse Giriyor'

month period (Yalman, 1960).²⁹² Courts, which were entirely under control of the DP rule had turned into arbitrary punishment mechanisms by then. It was a consequence of the lack of liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances at that period. From this aspect, it becomes meaningful that the debates on democracy in the late 1950s were clustered around these lacking mechanisms.

After the news about Yalman's prison sentence, letters began to come from his readers.²⁹³ In a reader letter regarding Yalman's prison sentence, sent on January 16, 1960, a reader (Reader Number 104) foregrounds his thoughts, by saying, "As a result of your struggle for freedom, you put a certain clique in power. In return, they put you in dungeons. This will be your legacy for the next generations"²⁹⁴ (B13f11-1). Similarly, in another reader letter sent on March 7, 1960, a teacher (Reader Number 105) talks about defending their material rights, by saying, "Our future is bright Mr. Ahmet Emin. We are determined to not let anyone take our rights away. Only God can stop us"²⁹⁵ (B13f12). After four days in prison, Yalman was transferred to the hospital because of the health issues due to his age. About a month later, on April 15, 1960, he was released for health reasons and returned home (Yalman, 1971, pp. 345-346). A reader letter sent after Yalman's release is perhaps the best letter to describe the process that started with Pulliam's article at the end of 1958 and ended with Yalman's return home on April 15, 1960. In this reader letter sent on April 21, 1960, a local correspondent (Reader Number 106) says the following: "We are glad that you are

²⁹² Vatan, 16.01.1960, 'Menderes'e Veda Mektubu'

²⁹³ His readers also did not leave him alone. While Yalman in the prison, they literally bombard him with a support letters and telegrams. In the Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers, Box 13, Hoover Institution Archives, there are more than 150 support letters sent to Yalman, while he was in prison. There were his readers who even have written poems for Yalman. Additionally, for news that appeared in foreign media after Yalman's imprisonment, see: Ahmet Emin Yalman Papers, Box 8, Folder 3, Hoover Institution Archives.

²⁹⁴ "Hürriyet mücadeleniz neticesinde iktidara getirdiğiniz bir zümrenin, size reva gördüğü zindan bahşı, gelecek nesillere mirasımız olacaktır"

²⁹⁵ "İstikbalimiz parlaktır Ahmet Emin Bey. Haklarımızı kimseye kaptırmamaya kararlıyız. Bizi ancak Allah döndürebilir"

freed of this misfortune not with the justice of the Turkish democracy and the DP, but with the justice of medicine”²⁹⁶ (B13f12).

As can be seen, this case study is a proper and a dramatic example for the crystallization of the lack of liberal-democratic mechanisms guaranteeing individual rights and freedoms within the DP era. When just the numbers of the imprisoned journalists during the DP era, especially the last five years of it, have taken into consideration, it becomes absolutely clear that the enforcement power that lack of the liberal-democratic checks and balances, tend to be used in an authoritarian and arbitrary manner.

The government, which gained legitimacy through elections, retains the power to make and amend the laws, has the power to stretch and enforce those laws in a regime lacking of checks and balances. Besides, actually what matters is the democratic social structure that the notion of democracy is institutionalized. Although in the pre-1960 period there was no such a societal structure yet, the transformation that occurred after 1954 upon the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals is important in terms of it shows the institutionalization of democracy had begun in Turkey. Thus, in this part, this transformation that occurred amongst the minds of the urban middle-class individuals. In other words, in this part, I revealed in which direction the urban middle-class individuals’ perceptions of democracy evolved and how they envisioned democracy in the post-1954 period.

The gradual weakening of the populist notion which was the determinant of the democracy perceptions, made the anti-democratic and illiberal identity of the DP rule more apparent. In fact, one reason for this situation was the anti-democratic and arbitrary implementations that the DP rule put into practice one after another in a short period of one year after the 1954 elections. The gradual restrictions on the fundamental individual rights and freedoms had increased the need for some mechanisms that would hinder the understanding of an authoritarian rule in a “democratic regime”. Therefore, the notion of democracy which was reduced to elections by the influence

²⁹⁶ “Türkiye’deki demokrasinin ve Demokrat Parti’nin adaleti ile değil de tıbbın adaletiyle bu badireden kurtuluşunuza seviniyoruz”

of the populist discourse that the manifestation of the national will, began to be defined within the liberal-democratic principles. These principles involve the liberal-democratic mechanisms checks and balances that guarantee the individual rights and freedoms -especially those individuals who did not support the current government in elections and were therefore a political minority. It is quite clear that this change in the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals was fed by the debates on democracy that took place in the intellectual and political circles. Thus, it can be said that the notion of democracy had started to be institutionalized in Turkish society as a result of this transformation that occurred in the mindset of the urban middle-class individuals.

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the prevalent notions of democracy among the readers were explored by discussing issues such as the national will, and the individual rights and freedoms. It is clear that their democracy perceptions were stemming from the debates on democracy in the period between 1945 and 1960. Therefore, figuring out the approaches that had the power to determine the democracy debates of the period is important in order to reveal *how democracy was imagined by the readers*. In this way, the readers draw the frames of democracy by setting forth their ideas via reader letters they sent to Ahmet Emin Yalman. In other words, foregrounding the answers of the readers to the question of ‘*what is democracy?*’ has an important place in reaching the capillaries of the mindset of the readers. In this sense, it is apparent that there was a strong demand for democracy among the urban middle-class individuals. They raised their demands with various sets of meanings ascribed to the notion of democracy.

It was previously demonstrated that there were two processes that directed and determined the debates on democracy in the period between 1945 and 1960. While populism is the idea that society is divided between elites and the people, it relies on to generate antagonisms between these two groups. Hence, the first of these processes was the period of populist discourse that placed “the people”, i.e. *millet*, against the “ruling elites” of the RPP era. In this sense, in the period between 1945 and 1954, the defining forms of democracy were under the influence of the populist discourse and the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals were shaped in a way

that discourse directed. Hence, through populist antagonisms, democracy started to be defined as the manifestation of the national will. This rhetoric culminated in the 1950 election race and eventually populist democracy came to power after the DP won the elections.

When the reader letters sent to Yalman are examined, it is clearly seen that the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals in the period before 1950 was shaped within the framework of the populist discourse. The most voiced issue in this period was the free and fair elections. The antagonisms produced by the populist rhetoric were manifested in the letters in the form of anger at the RPP rule's reluctance to allow free and fair elections. Thus, on the one hand the readers criticized the RPP's elitist ruling spirit which despises "the people", on the other hand they underlined that it was "the people" who should have a say. Although during this period, there were letters with contents that points out the notion of corporatist and representative democracy as the antithesis of populism, their number was very few.

The shaping of the perception of democracy under the influence of populism has brought three main problems. First, as an inherent problem in populism, is the ambiguity of who the mass is pointed out as "the people". From this point on, it was unclear who the nation whose will was manifested consists of. Consequently, the term nation has turned into an empty signifier as a result of the populist discourse. Second, to say it from the point of the populist discourse, as a result of the national will was manifested in the 1950 elections, the notion of democracy turned out to be seen as the equivalent of the elections. This means that to hold the elections in a free and fair manner is enough to establish a "democratic order". This approach of the notion of populist democracy ensured that elections, act of voting, party leaders, number of deputies and vote rates became fetishized over time. Consequently, this fetishization process creates polarizations among the society in the form of the majority supporting the government and the minority not supporting the government. Additionally, it led the elected government to undergo a gradual shift to an arbitrary ruling spirit. In fact, this points to the third problem posed by populist democracy. Lack of checks and balances to delimitate the rulers to restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individuals would cause the regime to become authoritarian.

These problems caused by populist democracy began to be seen more clearly by the urban middle-class individuals as of 1954, with the transformation that was occurred upon the perceptions of democracy. In other words, with the weakening of the populist notion, the illiberal and anti-democratic identity of the DP rule became more apparent. Therefore, it has begun to be understood that holding elections freely and fairly, that is, the free manifestation of the national will, alone cannot be sufficient for a “democratic regime”. Thus, in order to ensure the guarantee of the individual rights and freedoms, the urban middle-class individuals started to rise their demands on necessity of the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances. In this context, the readers wrote letters about the DP rule’s observance of democratic rights and freedoms, ranging from the strike and trade union rights of the workers, and the right to assembly and demonstration, to the autonomy of universities.

The democracy perceptions of the readers were shaped within the framework of liberal-democratic principles such as compliance with the constitution, democratization of the anti-democratic laws, and determination of the authority limits of the rulers. After all, in this period, although the notion of democracy was not socially institutionalized, it can be said that the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals started to evolve through this direction. The liberal-democratic principles contain mechanisms to guarantee fundamental individual rights and freedoms to some extent. At this point, all these mechanisms proposed for the democratic order were no more than procedural. In the final analysis, all of these procedural practices refer to the rule of law which is an indispensable norm for the notion of democracy. However, the rule of law is not a timeless, placeless, universal good, but rather, it consists of the historical organization of the current order (Poulantzas, as cited in Martin, 2008, pp. 117-118; Kelsen, 1949, pp. 181-182). Thus, what is essentially necessary for democratic order is to build a social structure in which the notion of democracy is institutionalized. Otherwise, there is no hindrance to the degeneration, corruption of the democratic mechanisms.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Transition to the multi-party system in Turkey that started as of 1945 was generally examined within the framework of the international conjuncture and its reflections on Turkey's internal dynamics, political parties and election results. However, evaluating the period with a macro-level focus ignores the ideological influences, hegemonic struggles and continuities behind the political debates. Democracy, by definition, relies on the notion that people play a decisive role in the politics. Therefore, for a healthy examination of this period of transition to multi-party politics, it is necessary to reveal the impacts of the democracy debates in Turkey on the individuals. This study has aimed to reveal democracy perceptions of the individuals belonging to the urban middle-classes in the period between 1945 and 1960 in Turkey. Following "first steps for democratization" in 1945, which created the ground for the establishment and electoral participation of new political parties, the concept of democracy became popular among people from all segments of the society. Hence, in this study, this process has been analyzed through the consideration of ideological positions and hegemony struggles that dominated the period.

In this concluding chapter, my goal is to evaluate findings from this study through a broader perspective. This study has revealed what "democracy" meant for urban middle-classes, and how these notions changed over time, from 1945 to 1960. I have argued that, following these changes at the popular level reveals various layers of hegemonic struggles and continuities in Turkey during the period. At one level, the letters have influences from the hegemonic struggle between elite factions to shape the dominant discourse. In this sense, the letters clearly demonstrate that "democracy" gained the status of an empty signifier among urban middle-classes (Laclau, 2005, p. 96) during this period. Starting from 1945, readers frequently referred to democracy

as the ultimate good, and they linked their own grievances to the demand for democracy. Reader letters also demonstrate that the populist discourse of the DP was successful in influencing how urban middle-classes understood democracy, especially until the 1950s.

On a deeper level, however, these reader letters reveal the extent of the hegemony of liberal understandings of democracy. Reader letters predominantly focus on procedures of democracy, and they rarely go beyond this framework. We do not see, for example, notions of democracy that are built on social rights or participatory mechanisms. The unquestioned hegemony of liberal notions of democracy, despite the deep political polarization ongoing among the political actors, reflect the ideological similarities between the political parties of the period. The liberal hegemony in these letters, I believe, is also reflective of the international conditions and Yalman's own political position. In the rest of this chapter, I elaborate on these points.

The political opening, following the end of the second world war, started a struggle for political hegemony among dominant political elites. In this sense, the opposition gained concrete representatives with the establishment of Democratic Party in January 1946. It can be said that, the establishment of the DP in 1946 started a hegemonic struggle against the Kemalist ideology. In this struggle, the DP placed 'the people' against the ruling elites of the single-party and raised the rhetoric that the people should have their say. The elites were corrupted and for the country's salvation, the national will must had been manifested and the DP as the representative and spokespersons of the nation must had come to power. Needless to say, the populist rhetoric of the DP aimed to hide the elite origins of its leaders. In fact, both the government and the opposition actors were coming from similar ideological and class backgrounds.²⁹⁷ They also had similar notions of democracy in their minds. Just as İnönü, who had promised democratization steps on May 19, 1945, had the notion of Western-type liberal democracy in his mind, Menderes, who said "Democracy is the order of votes" after 1950, also had liberal principles in his mind. Hence, the dominant ideology of the 1945-1960 period was liberalism. Therefore, it can be said that the

²⁹⁷ As a matter of fact, what happened in 1950 was more of a transfer of power between elites than the establishment of the liberal-democratic order.

democracy debates that dominated the 1945-1960 period were primarily a product of this hegemonic struggle.

The populist discourse that the manifestation of the national will that emerged within this framework and the polarizations created in the society after 1950 became the main determinants of the democracy perception of the period. At this point, it can be said that, with the criticisms they put forward in the reader letters they sent, the urban middle-class individuals mostly tried to get involved in the political sphere and tried to draw the frame of democracy with this sense. In the period between 1945 and 1950, the readers' criticisms towards the RPP rule were clustered around the perspectives of demand for free and fair elections and the RPP's reluctance about implementing it. Hence, the urban middle-class individuals responded very positively to the establishment of political parties other than the existing single-party, and their participation in the elections. The establishment of more than one political party was considered to be the indication that the daily issues could be freely debated and that those who did not support the single-party rule could obtain the right to be represented. Actually, this is one of the main promises of the liberal democracies.

Moreover, under the influence of the populist discourse within the period, democracy was imagined as the manifestation of the national will. It can be said that while the demand for the free and fair elections were mostly exhausted after the 1950 elections, the populist discourse on the manifestation of the national will -the rise of which among the society was clear- became a very important subject of analysis in the post-1950 period. The DP, which came to power with the 1950 elections, started to act with populist discourse within the hegemonic struggle against the RPP, and entered into a reckoning with the past. In this sense, while populist separations were created around Kemalist principles as it was put forward by Menderes as "*Millete mâl olmuş inkılaplarımız mahfuz tutulacaktır*", the RPP, as the legacy -and the representative- of the past, was placed in an elitist position as an enemy of the national will, and it was demonized in this sense. These selective policies which were initiated from the beginning have caused antagonisms to deepen within the society and the masses to be polarized and settled in opposite camps. The fact that these developments have been harshly criticized by the readers appears as an indicator of the deepening polarizations among the society.

How this struggle for hegemony and its two kinds of consequences were reflected in the letters is important in terms of seeing the effects of the ideological approaches of the period on the urban middle-classes. When we look at the contents of readers' letters, first of all, it can be said that there was almost no position other than the liberal notion. In other words, there were neither notions of socialism nor the direct participation in the letters.²⁹⁸ Democracy, as an empty signifier, was framed essentially along the notions of Western-type liberal democracy. Most importantly, especially in the pre-1950 period, a procedural understanding of democracy prevailed in the reader letters. Before 1950, readers exclusively focused on electoral institutions, while after 1950 readers demanded institutions that limited the executive power. In each case, the debates on democracy rarely went beyond the institutional framework. Thus, it is possible to argue that, these letters also reflect the hegemony of liberal notions of democracy among urban middle-classes.

This framework can be linked to ideologies of anti-communism and nationalism as the outcome of the bipolar world. These factors have had impacts on the members of the society. In this context, while communist tendencies were criticized in the letters, liberal principles such as free enterprise and free market economy were brought to the fore. Furthermore, the adoption of democracy, and economic and industrial advances, were always regarded in the reader letters as the evidence of the power of the Turkish nation. However, in the reader letters, the image of nation appears as an empty signifier. While this imagination points to a homogeneous and classless mass of people that feeds on Kemalist ideology, it also refers to the will of the nation nourished by populist discourse whose agents were ambiguous. Rather, the concept of nation has been imagined from an anti-communist framework around nationalist ideology. Issues such as national values and national morality mentioned in many letters and defended as to be protected show that the urban middle-class individuals were fed through these channels.

On the other hand, the ideological position of Ahmet Emin Yalman is an issue that should be handled with the ideological spirit of the period. Yalman was in a position to advocate anti-communism that strongly committed to liberal values. As such, he

²⁹⁸ Although there are a few exceptions to this, it does not make up a meaningful total.

was one of the leading representatives of the liberal ideology. However, for Yalman, an issue that emerged after 1950 caused him to conflict with the DP rule over time. This was the politics of the DP rule which was fighting for being hegemonic against the Kemalist ideology, far from secularism and based on populist and religious references. Thus, the fact that the obvious appearance of the DP's anti-democratic and illiberal identity caused Yalman to break away from the ranks of the DP's hegemonic position.

This dynamic positionings of Yalman were also reflected in the contents of the letters sent by his readers. So much so, if Yalman had not experienced this rupture, perhaps we would have encountered far fewer criticisms of the DP's polarizing policies traced in the reader letters. At this point, it is necessary to look at the effects of Yalman's ideological positions on the reader profile and the contents of their letters. First of all, it can be said that Yalman was not ideological representative of the lower-classes, but on the contrary, he was representing the middle, upper-middle and even upper-classes. When the profiles of Yalman's readers are examined in this context, it is seen that it is not possible to talk about a homogeneous mass of readers. Although the majority of the readers were belonging to the urban middle-classes, there were also readers from the upper-middle and upper classes. Most of them were urban and educated individuals that have the means to follow the discussions of the period (literacy, intellectuality and access to tools such as newspapers and radio), and belonging to the military and civilian coteries. Therefore, to the extent that Yalman was not the guide of the 'silent masses', that is, the lower-classes, rather, his own reader profile was in the form of individuals from the urban middle and upper-classes.

Hence, these individuals represent the segment where Kemalist modernization ideal of the early republican period was embodied: urban and educated people. There was an intertwined cycle between being an urbanite and a member of the middle classes, and these individuals were already willing to be involved into the daily politics. At this point, it can be said that a small group of readers with a high level of intellectuality differ from others within the framework of certain references. The first of these references are rhetorical elements used by readers belonging to this group. Contrary to the majority, these readers used certain concepts in their letters that can be considered as an indicator of intellectuality even today. For example, some of them used words

such as “*süperlatif*”, and “*idefix*” in correct meanings, while others used concepts such as “Machiavellian methods”, “Machiavellian oligarchist demagogue”, or “...and became (let’s not call it a dictatorship) totalitarian rules...” in appropriate contexts. These readers were people who had an intellectual level at Yalman’s and should be evaluated on the same ground as him. When the intellectual quality of the language they use is examined, it is seen that these readers were mature, educated and wise people. As such, it is insufficient to describe them as only the individuals belonging to the urban middle-classes.

Moreover, these readers were also distinguished from the larger group by their way of being fed from the democracy debates of the period within the framework of their acquaintance with the idea of democracy, their reflections on the notion of democracy, and their enthusiasm on discussing the certain contexts. For example, one reader led the discussion of democracy with reference to democracy and literacy rates in the Ancient Greek Poleis. Similarly, a reader revealed to what extent he was nourished by the debates on democracy in that period by asking the question of “Is democracy an end, or a means?”, and the discussion he carried out afterwards. This problematic was one of the primary issues of the democracy debates that took place at the intellectual level during that period. In addition, another reader showed how he had mastered the historical background and development processes of the notion of democracy by giving examples from political parties in Mussolini era Italy.

The second reference point is the way in which readers positioned themselves according to the ideological positions that Yalman was standing. At this point, it can be said that a great majority of the readers positioned themselves at the lower levels by default against Yalman. These readers took care to use reverential expressions in the letters they sent to Yalman, for example: “I kiss your hands with respect”, “Master Yalman”, “Cordially”, etc. The readers in this group were a large group of people who admire Yalman and believe in his guidance. They begin and/or end their letters with statements like: “You know my heart is filled with tremendous sympathy towards you. [...] the name Ahmet Emin Yalman is a proof of sincerity in the history of journalism”, or “You have made great contributions to the foundation of this building”. There was an intellectual hierarchy established by default between these readers and Yalman.

On the other hand, there was an opposite relationship between a small number of readers and Yalman. The readers in this group were those who tried to have theoretical discussions with Yalman on concepts such as democracy and liberalism. The fact that they did not hesitate to criticize Yalman with such ways by saying, “While trying to understand what you thought about today’s events by reading your last three pieces, it saddened me the extent to which you were cursed at by people that you would seek the advice of a harem master”, or a reader criticizes Yalman for saying that only the liberal people are on the true path, and calling everyone who is not liberal, communists, indicates a self-confidence and language skills that to be difficultly found in the lower-classes. It can be said that there were two reasons behind their course of action. The first is that likewise the above-mentioned group, these readers, who followed the ongoing debates on democracy closely and were fed through these channels, were at similar intellectual levels with Yalman. At this point, one cannot speak of a default intellectual hierarchy as mentioned above between these few readers and Yalman.

The second reason is much more layered. The positions that Yalman was ideologically positioned in and the hegemonic struggles he was a party to within a period of 15 years had been effective in positioning these readers against Yalman. Yalman’s dynamic positioning was one of the factors that paved the way for him to receive reader letters from all sides of the hegemonic struggle. At this point, the quality and variety of the points of criticisms and the discussions on the notion of democracy may differ according to the dates of the letters sent. For example, while the letters sent before 1955 generally criticized Yalman’s support for the DP, some letters after 1955 include criticisms towards Yalman in order to defend the DP rule. This point also shows that the hegemonic struggles of the period were decisive on the content of the letters.

The liberal, anti-communist and secular tendencies in which Yalman was ideologically located were also included in the letters of his readers. It can be said that Yalman has changed his position in terms of the struggle for hegemony caused that there were many letters defending secularism and Kemalist principles among the letters sent to him. In other words, reader letters with both hegemonic positions could be sent to Yalman. Hence, there were letters with religious references, referring to moral norms, and envisioning society with these norms, along with letters specifically advocating secularism. This diversity, along with the positioning of Yalman, was also a result of

the hegemonic struggle that dominated the period. Thus, it can be said that the power of determining the contents of the letters of the hegemonic struggles and the ideological influences that dominated the period were not limited to the positioning between Yalman and his readers.

The contexts in which readers discussed the notion of democracy, especially the contents presented within the framework of the narrative of “*what is not democracy?*” and summarized in the form of criticisms against the RPP and the DP rules, were largely fed and influenced by these hegemonic struggles and democracy debates of the period. For example, the criticisms directed to the single-party period and the RPP rule in the pre-1950 period were largely influenced by the populist rhetoric of the DP. Concepts such as “the majority of this nation...”, etc., which had been put forward in the framework of the manifestation of the national will, were the reflections of the populist discourse on the letters, which the DP had raised within the framework of its hegemonic struggle. Similarly, the reader, who described the spirit of the RPP rule as “ruses of the elite”, pointed to the antagonisms between “the elite” and “the people” (*millet*) deepened by the same populist discourse.

A similar situation was also presented in the criticisms directed to the DP rule. In the period when the DP polarized the society with its populist rhetoric, the criticisms against the DP rule were mostly close to the language of the RPP executives. For example, a reader criticizes the DP rule for attacking the political party founded by Atatürk, during the unfair acquisition debates. This approach was exactly parallel to the discourse expressed by the RPP executives at that time. The reflections of the hegemonic struggle among the political elites on the contents of the letters were felt more clearly in the period after 1955, when the FP emerged as a new opposition party. In this context, it is possible to read similar criticisms of the FP directed to the DP rule about the country’s deteriorating economy in the reader letters sent to Yalman. Similarly, the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances introduced by the RPP with the 1957 election program had also been subjected in the reader letters in different contexts.

Another context in which the hegemonic struggle and democracy debates of the period, and Yalman’s ideological positions were reflected in the letters, shows itself in the

elitist positions that some readers had taken in the letters they sent. There are also examples in which this elitist position which was often implicitly encountered, was sometimes explicitly displayed. For example, a pharmacist wrote the following in his letter: “From the shores of the Mediterranean to the climax of the Taurus, you have taught democracy to the readers, and I have taught democracy to illiterates”. Teaching democracy to the masses was a “duty” that Yalman had already admitted, as an intellectual. Similarly, an army officer, in the letter he sent before the 1946 elections, said that the citizens were used to the notion of democracy by making a distinction between them as simple and mature citizens. It is clear that the reader’s elitist position was directly influenced by the RPP’s “the people” (*halk*) and democracy approaches in the pre-1950 period. Moreover, a reader criticizes Yalman for interpreting events from an elitist position, and on the other hand, by saying “we’re always in touch with the nation itself”, he essentially places himself somewhere above the nation. This approach was a copy of the DP’s insincere populist rhetoric that implicitly exposes itself in the reader’s language. Finally, a reader who writes in a 1955 letter, “Democracy is a quite delicate regime. It cannot survive among ignorant and dull people”, appeals to a similar elitism.

Based on those examples, it is difficult to assert that the democracy perceptions of Yalman’s readers had been formed by themselves. On the contrary, it can be argued that the readers adapted to the positions of the parties of the ongoing hegemonic struggle during the period, adopted their points of criticisms, and they were also fed by the debates on democracy that took place at the intellectual level. Thus, it can be said that the perceptions of democracy that were put forward in this study were shaped by the blending of all these processes.

As a result of the political developments of the period, the hegemonic position defended by the DP began to dissolve after 1954. One of the most important indicators of this was that in the reader letters sent after 1954, almost no reference was made to the national will and populist discourse in general. The other reason for this situation was that the anti-democratic and illiberal identity of the DP rule became more visible after 1954, and the anti-democratic practices reached a point in the lives of the urban middle-class individuals. The shift of the DP rule to the authoritarian trend, especially after the mid-1950s, had been criticized by the readers and evaluated as the political

ambitions and the hunger for power of the rulers. In other words, even the realization that populist discourse that the manifestation of the national will was not sufficient itself for a liberal-democratic order had been realized after the illiberal practices of the DP rule gained momentum. Thus, in fact, the polarization processes that put the society under the influence of the populist discourse caused a break in the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals, which was envisioned as the manifestation of the national will.

However, it seems difficult to say that the same applied to the lower-classes. It can be said that although a reaction from the middle-classes started to rise after 1954, the DP's hegemonic populist discourse continued to affect the lower-classes in a sense. One of the indicators of this was that the 1957 general elections again ended in favor of the DP. Populist domination over the lower-classes were continued to be fed by the nationalist, anti-communist, and Islamic references. At this point, it is not surprising that in a letter sent in 1958 by an urban middle-class individual to Menderes with a content that the last remaining support group of the DP was the radical Islamists. We do not know, but the lower-classes may have continued to cling to the populist discourse of national will that renders class differences invisible as a result of their disadvantaged positions. Thus, they may have believed that they had become visible in the political sphere with this way.

After 1954, it started to be understood by the urban middle-class individuals that democracy is not just about elections, and the manifestation of the national will alone could not solve the problems and meet the expectations of the masses. Thus, the perception of democracy of the period began to shift a bit from populist approaches and evolved into a new form that prioritizes the liberal-democratic principles. However, this point should not be considered as a break from liberalism that dominated the entire period between 1945 and 1960. Rather, the shift here points to a disengagement from the populist discourse and rapprochement to the liberal-democratic principles. In other words, a definition of democracy that guarantees the individual rights and freedoms had been placed against the understanding of a rule the arbitrariness of which was due to the approval of the majority. In this sense, the notion of democracy filled with the liberal-democratic mechanisms of checks and balances such as separation of powers, the rule of law, independent judiciary, freedom of

thought and expression, freedom of assembly and association, etc. From this point on, it can be said that populist discourse that the manifestation of the national will had lost its determining position on the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals, and this was replaced by the liberal-democratic principles aimed at protecting individual rights and freedoms against the rulers. The most important indicator of this was the content of the reader letters sent after 1954. In these letters, there were references to certain mechanisms of checks and balances, the anti-democratic nature of the laws, and the readers' criticisms towards the DP rule that was gradually shifting towards an arbitrary rule.

As a result, the perception that democracy could be achieved by demanding some "democratic" procedures began to change. Thus, the urban middle-class individuals started to define democracy within the institutionalization of certain liberal-democratic principles. This has led to a situation in which freedom and democracy began to be seen as interchangeable notions by the individuals. That's why it can be argued that after 1954, the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals were shaped under the efforts to put democracy on concrete bases as an outcome of the political developments had determined the discourse.

As an important reflection of the period before 1960, the 1961 Constitution and the democratic notion that encompasses fundamental rights and freedoms can be shown. In fact, it is possible to say that the populist understanding of democracy that prevailed in the 1950s has been replaced by the understanding of social democracy, leaving aside the political practices of the post-1960s and considering only the content of the Constitution. Hence, it can be said that the period of feeding through a uniform channel of liberal ideology came to an end, and instead, much more diverse struggle practices and a multivocal fractionation began to spread to the society. Besides, with the 1961 Constitution, it is certain that a serious freedom of association and different forms of organization such as unionization had been emerged. However, this does not mean that the masses have abandoned the practice of sending letters in an effort to make their voices heard. On the contrary, many more letters continued to be sent to different individuals, journalists, groups, etc. with much more diverse ideological positions than in the 1940s and 50s. Thus, demands for democracy which began in the 1940s to a great extent, diversified and continued to be raised in the 1960s.

In conclusion, under the influence of the liberal ideology and the hegemonic struggles between the RPP and the DP, the democracy perceptions of the urban middle-class individuals were initially shaped around the procedures that belong to the Western-type liberal democracy notions such as free and fair elections, and their democracy perceptions were later influenced by the populist discourse that the manifestation of the national will, and eventually evolved into the form that the necessity of the institutionalization of the liberal-democratic principles within the society. Considering that this hegemonic struggle continues even today, it is not possible to talk about it as a finished story.

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APPENDICES

A. DETAILED INFORMATION OF YALMAN'S READERS

In this part, the information of the readers who sent the letters examined in the study is presented collectively. The purpose of this is to make it easier for the people who will read this study to evaluate the letter contents together with the characteristics of their writers such as their class characters and educational levels. For this reason, as explained in the Introduction Chapter of this study, "Reader Numbers" in the table below were attached to the letters referenced during the whole study.

As careful readers do not miss, the number of readers examined in the study -it was mentioned at the beginning of this study- and the number of readers presented in the table below do not match. This is because some of the readers, many of whom were analyzed in Chapter 3, were not included in the table below. Hence, in the table below, some of the information of the readers who have sent letters to Yalman are given.

Table A.1 – Detailed Information of Yalman's Readers

Reader Number	Page Number	Date of the Letter	Reader's Occupation	District-Province	Level of Education
1	57, 92, 95,141	July 9, 1946	Ministry Officer	Ankara	High School
2	58	March 1, 1948	Police Captain	Uzunköprü - Edirne	High School
3	58	November 25, 1951	Lawyer	Edremit - Balıkesir	Faculty of Law
4	58, 69, 75	August, 1949	No Info ²⁹⁹	No Info	No Info
5	58	February 7, 1949	Villager	Diyarbakır	No Info

²⁹⁹ He signed his letter as "*Bir Millet Partili*".

Table A.1 (cont'd)

6	58, 138	July 3, 1950	Import-Export Broker	İstanbul	No Info
7	58, 135	March 20, 1958	No Info	No Info	No Info
8	58	August 20, 1955	Retired Lt. Colonel	Kandilli - İstanbul	Military Academy
9	58, 71	January 24, 1938	No Info ³⁰⁰	Teşvikiye - İstanbul	No Info
10	58	December 7, 1951	Retired Adm. Chief	Kadıköy - İstanbul	Higher Education
11	58	August 8, 1960	High School Lit. Teacher	Akşehir - Konya	Higher Education
12	59	July 8, 1946	No Info ³⁰¹	Ankara	No Info
13	59	February 25, 1946	No Info	Beyazıt - İstanbul	No Info
14	59	June 6, 1952	Retired Colonel	Teşvikiye - İstanbul	Naval Academy
15	60	July 23, 1952	No Info	Mersin	No Info
16	60	January 19, 1960	No Info	İzmir	No Info
17	60, 96, 118	July 30, 1957	Lawyer	Sirkeci - İstanbul	Faculty of Law
18	66, 72, 78, 115, 135	1954	Civil Servant	Ankara	Faculty of Law ³⁰²
19	66, 136	March 9, 1960	Poet	Ankara	Institute of Arts ³⁰³
20	66, 72, 121, 135, 156	1958	No Info	Yeniköy - İstanbul	Middle School
21	67	1942	Deputy Teacher ³⁰⁴	Bursa	High School Dropout ³⁰⁵
22	68, 117	1955	Educationist	No Info	Higher Education
23	69, 91, 96, 141	June 2, 1946	No Info	İstanbul	No Info

³⁰⁰ He signed his letter as “*Karilerinizden*”.

³⁰¹ He signed his letter as “*Bir Vatandaş*”.

³⁰² Law School of Rome in Italy.

³⁰³ İstanbul Sultanahmet Institute of Arts, Department of Machinery.

³⁰⁴ “*Muallim Vekili*”.

³⁰⁵ He was unable to finish Kuleli Military High School.

Table A.1 (cont'd)

24	69, 92, 140	May, 1946	Entrepreneur ³⁰⁶	Hatay	No Info
25	70, 133, 144	February 26, 1947	Assistant Inspector ³⁰⁷	İzmir	Higher Education ³⁰⁸
26	70, 132	February 26, 1946	No Info ³⁰⁹	İstanbul	No Info
27	70, 101, 149	February 14, 1950	No Info ³¹⁰	Adapazarı	No Info
28	71, 147	September 23, 1947	No Info	Urla - İzmir	No Info
29	72	August 6, 1952	No Info	Sinop	No Info
30	72	October 26, 1955	No Info	İzmir	No Info
31	72, 145; 111	December 25, 1948; April 25, 1951	No Info ³¹¹	Menemen - İzmir	No Info
32	74	April 25, 1950	Sanatorium Employee	Heybeliada - İstanbul	No Info
33	75	January 28, 1961	University Student	No Info	Higher Education
34	75	April 8, 1960	Villager	Zeytinköy - Antalya	Primary School
35	75, 118	February 24, 1956	No Info	Gemlik - Bursa	No Info
36	76, 124	October 23, 1958	No Info	Adana	No Info
37	76	March 22, 1951	No Info	İstanbul	No Info
38	78	January 4, 1956	No Info	Fener - İstanbul	No Info
39	78, 121	September 20, 1958	Lawyer	Bursa	Faculty of Law

³⁰⁶ He was a member of provincial enterprise committee of the DP.

³⁰⁷ He was an Assistant Inspector in the *Ziraat Bank* Inspection Board.

³⁰⁸ School of Social Studies.

³⁰⁹ He was a member of provincial organization of the DP in İstanbul, and he signed his letter as “*Hürmetkârınız*”.

³¹⁰ He signed his letter as “*Karilerinizden*”.

³¹¹ A female Reader.

Table A.1 (cont'd)

40	78	November 5, 1951	Laborer ³¹²	Sivas	Primary School
41	78, 142	June 28, 1946	No Info	Aksaray - İstanbul	No Info
42	78	March 10, 1960	No Info ³¹³	Sakarya	No Info
43	78, 111	August 9, 1952	Laborer ³¹⁴	Kayseri	No Info
44	78	1951	Tailor	Bozüyük	No Info
45	78	November 20, 1950	No Info ³¹⁵	Eyüp - İstanbul	No Info
46	79	January 26, 1950	Teacher	Sivrihisar	Higher Education
47	79	January 16, 1953	Prim. School Teacher	Erzincan	High School
48	79	March 23, 1962	Library Director ³¹⁶	Konya	Higher Education
49	79	January 9, 1960	No Info	Dursunbey - Balıkesir	No Info
50	79	June 17, 1962	No Info	Kayseri	No Info
51	79	February 5, 1950	Lieutenant Colonel ³¹⁷	Gölcük	Naval Academy
52	79	June 14, 1947	Lecturer	No Info	Higher Education
53	81, 99, 133	June 25, 1948	Doctor	Ceyhan - Adana	Medical Faculty
54	81, 107	November 25, 1951	Lawyer	Edremit - Balıkesir	Faculty of Law
55	82	April 12, 1954	No Info ³¹⁸	Alsancak - İzmir	No Info

³¹² He was a laborer in a Railway Repair Shop.

³¹³ He was a 65-year-old citizen and a member of the RPP Central Town Administration Board.

³¹⁴ He was an electrician in *Kayseri* Cloth Factory.

³¹⁵ She was a 75-year-old grandmother.

³¹⁶ He was the Director of *Konya* Public Library.

³¹⁷ He was a member of *Gölcük* Marine Factory American Aid Materials Coordination Committee.

³¹⁸ He signed his letter as “*Okuyucularınızdan*”.

Table A.1 (cont'd)

56	81	February 29, 1948	No Info ³¹⁹	Erzincan	No Info
57	82, 115	December 14, 1954	Retired Officer	İstanbul	Military Academy
58	90, 131	October 30, 1945	Sanitary Officer ³²⁰	Ereğli - Zonguldak	Middle School
59	90, 132	November 2, 1945	University Student ³²¹	Ankara	Faculty of Law
60	91	May 21, 1946	No Info	Ankara	No Info
61	92, 132	June 24, 1946	No Info ³²²	No Info	No Info
62	93	June 23, 1946	Contractor and Trader	Çanakkale	No Info
63	94	June 1, 1946	Literature Teacher ³²³	Kars	Higher Education
64	94, 133	July 3, 1946	Military Doctor	Ankara	Medical Faculty
65	95	July 17, 1946	Senior Captain	Sivas	Military Academy
66	98	March 28, 1947	No Info	Antalya	No Info
67	98	January 13, 1948	Laborer ³²⁴	Nazilli - Aydın	Primary School
68	100, 144	December 15, 1948	Lawyer	Salihli - Manisa	Faculty of Law
69	100	February 5, 1949	No Info ³²⁵	Ankara	No Info
70	102-103; 113, 134; 137	May 9-15, 1950; March 20, 1954; January 26, 1949	Customs Broker	İskenderun - Hatay	No Info

³¹⁹ He was the Chairman of the DP Provincial Administrative Board.

³²⁰ He was a Sanitary Officer in Port Construction.

³²¹ He was a senior year student in Ankara Faculty of Law.

³²² He signed his letter as “*Bir okuyucunuz*”.

³²³ He was a Literature Teacher in High School.

³²⁴ He was a laborer in *Nazilli* Fabric Factory.

³²⁵ She signed her letter as “*1 Nolu Okuyucunuz Asena*”.

Table A.1 (cont'd)

71	103; 145	May 26, 1950; April 28, 1950	Senior Captain	Heybeliada - İstanbul	Naval Academy
72	106	June 3, 1950	No Info	Reyhanlı - Hatay	No Info
73	106, 134	May 27, 1950	Pharmacist	Mersin	Faculty of Pharmacy
74	107	June, 1950	No Info	Cağaloğlu - İstanbul	No Info
75	108	March 20, 1951	Teacher ³²⁶	Gömeç - Balıkesir	Higher Education
76	109, 111, 134	June 6, 1952	Retired Colonel	Teşvikiye - İstanbul	Naval Academy
77	109	April 5, 1953; June 30, 1953	Retired Civil Servant	Kars	No Info
78	110	March 28, 1951	Retired Colonel	Bahçelievler - Ankara	Military Academy
79	112, 153	April 20, 1953	No Info ³²⁷	Şişli - İstanbul	No Info
80	114	August 5, 1960	Doctor ³²⁸	Finike - Antalya	Medical Faculty
81	117	December 9, 1955	No Info ³²⁹	Sultanahmet - İstanbul	No Info
82	117	October 14, 1955	Doctor	Bursa	Medical Faculty
83	119, 155	September 12, 1957	Doctor ³³⁰	İstanbul	Medical Faculty
84	120, 121	July 3, 1958	No Info	İstanbul	No Info
85	123, 156	October 10, 1958	Local Correspondent ³³¹	Tavşanlı - Kütahya	Middle School
86	124	February 24, 1959	Self-Employment	Galata - İstanbul	No Info

³²⁶ He was a middle-school Turkish Language Teacher.

³²⁷ He signed his letter as “*Bir okuyucunuz*”.

³²⁸ He signed his letter as “*Serbest Tabip Doktor*”.

³²⁹ He described himself as “*hür, müstakil ve bitaraf düşünen bir vatantaş*”.

³³⁰ He described his specialty as “*Dahiliye Mütahasssı*”.

³³¹ He was the Head of RPP District Youth Branch.

Table A.1 (cont'd)

87	125	March 11, 1960	Villager	Çaykara - Trabzon	Primary School
88	126	April 19, 1960	Retired Officer	İstanbul	Military Academy
89	131	February 10, 1950	Local Correspondent	İzmir	High School
90	132	July 2, 1946	Civil Servant	Hacıbayram - Ankara	Middle School
91	133	December 3, 1947	Group of 10 pro-DP People	Uşak	No Info
92	134	March 30, 1949	Self-Employment	Balıkesir	No Info
93	135	November 30, 1959	Senior Bureaucrat ³³²	Kayseri	Higher Education ³³³
94	139	June 13, 1952	No Info ³³⁴	Kızıltoprak - İstanbul	No Info
95	141	June 27, 1946	Self-Employment ³³⁵	Kütahya	No Info
96	142	July 19, 1946	Civil Servant	No Info	Middle School
97	146	May 22, 1950	Laborer ³³⁶	Elazığ	Primary School
98	152	1953	No Info ³³⁷	No Info	No Info
99	153, 156	January 10, 1955	No Info	London	No Info
100	154	June 15, 1954	No Info	Büyükkada - İstanbul	No Info
101	154	January 4, 1956	Legal Advisor ³³⁸	Bursa	Faculty of Law
102	155	July 30, 1955	Retired Prison Director	Çal-Baklan - Denizli	High School

³³² He was the Provincial Director of National Education of *Kayseri*.

³³³ Ankara Gazi University Faculty of Education Department of History.

³³⁴ He described himself as “*demokrasi idealisti ve rey sahibi, vatanın bir evladı*”.

³³⁵ He was a member of Provincial Entrepreneur Committee of the DP.

³³⁶ He was a laborer on State Railways.

³³⁷ This letter was deliberately sent as unsigned.

³³⁸ He was a legal advisor in *Bursa* Municipality.

Table A.1 (cont'd)

103	157	March 10, 1960	No Info ³³⁹	Adana	No Info
104	159	January 16, 1960	No Info	Fener - İstanbul	No Info
105	159	March 7, 1960	Teacher	Terkos - İstanbul	High School
106	159	April 21, 1960	Local Correspondent	Şebinkarahisar - Giresun	No Info
107	74	March, 1960	Laborer ³⁴⁰	İzmir	Primary School

³³⁹ He was the Head of *Yukarı Yavuzlar* Neighborhood Youth Branch of the RPP.

³⁴⁰ He was a laborer in the State Hydraulic Works.

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu çalışma, 1945-1960 döneminde Türkiye'deki demokrasi algılarını incelemektedir. Bunun için dönemin en önemli gazetecilerinden Ahmet Emin Yalman'a gönderilen okuyucu mektuplarını araştırma konusu olarak ele almakta ve incelemektedir. Bu okuyucuların demokrasi algıları ikili bir anlatı yoluyla incelenmiştir. Bu ikili anlatı, okuyucular tarafından '*Demokrasi ne değildir?*' ve '*Demokrasi nedir?*' gibi varsayımsal sorulara verilen cevapların incelenmesinden oluşmaktadır. Bu sorular varsayımsaldır çünkü okuyucular doğrudan bu sorulara değinerek cevap vermemişlerdir. Bu çalışmada, mektuplarda öne sürülen düşüncelerin genel olarak bu iki soru etrafında kümелendiği ortaya koyulmaktadır. İlk soru, okuyucular tarafından demokrasiye aykırı görülen politika ve uygulamalara işaret eden, dönemin yönetici elitine yöneltilen eleştirilere odaklanır. Bu çerçevede okuyucular önce tek parti döneminin, ardından 1946 sonrası CHP iktidarı döneminin uygulamalarını eleştirmektedirler. Bu eleştirilerin ortak noktası, CHP iktidarının serbest ve adil seçimlere izin vermeyerek milli iradenin tezahürünü engellemeye çalışması şeklinde özetlenebilir. 1950'den sonra toplumu kutuplaştıran DP iktidarının popülist ve anti-demokratik uygulamaları okuyucuların eleştirdiği başlıca konuların bir diğeridir. İkinci soru ise, bu okuyucuların demokrasi algıları doğrultusunda sundukları önerilere odaklanmaktadır. Okuyucular, demokrasi nosyonunun normatif, kavramsal bir tanımını yapmaya çalışmışlardır. Okuyucular, çoğunlukla demokrasiyi nasıl tahayyül ettiklerini anlattıkları mektuplarında önce milli iradenin tecellisine atıfta bulunarak popülist bir demokrasi tanımını benimsemiş, ardından demokrasiyi liberal-demokratik ilkeler çerçevesinde tanımlamaya çalışmışlardır.

Bu çalışmanın amacı popüler demokrasi kavramlarını keşfetmek iken, bu araştırmanın ampirik yöntemi bizi toplumdaki belirli bir grupta sınırlamaktadır. Çalışmada, 1950'lerde gazete okuyucularının yolladığı mektupları kullandığım için, örneklemim zorunlu olarak toplumun kentli orta sınıflarına karşılık gelen, daha eğitimli kesimleriyle sınırlıdır. Burada bahsedilen kentli orta sınıflara mensup bireyler, o dönemin yürütme erklerine/yönetici elitlerine/zümreye dahil olmayan kişilere, yani

siyasetçilere/karar vericilere ve/veya entelektüellere, gazetecilere, akademisyenlere vb. dahil olmayan bireylere atıfla kullanılmıştır. Tüm topluma ilişkin bir tartışma bu çalışmanın sınırlarını aşmaktadır ve temel amaç, dönemin önemli entelektüel gazetecilerinden biri olan Ahmet Emin Yalman'a okur mektupları gönderen, kasaba ve şehirlerde yaşayan orta sınıflara mensup bireylerin demokrasi algılarını ortaya çıkarmaktır.

Bu çalışmanın temel sorunsalı, Türkiye'de 1945-1960 döneminde kentli orta sınıflara mensup bireylerin demokrasiyi nasıl tahayyül ettikleridir. Yalman'a mektup gönderen okuyucuların ortaya koyduğu fikirlerle yanıtları aranacak olan bu soru, ancak bir takım ikincil sorulara cevap aranarak tatmin edici bir şekilde cevaplanacaktır. Bu sorular: dönemin kentli orta sınıflara mensup bireylerinin demokrasi algılarını etkileyen temel faktörler nelerdi? 1945-1960 yılları arasında bu bireylerin demokrasi algılarında ne gibi değişiklikler oldu? Gündelik siyasete, parti liderlerine ve bu liderlerin konuşmalarına odaklanılarak yapılan dönemin anlatısı ile kentli orta sınıflara mensup bireylerin gönderdiği okuyucu mektuplarının içerikleri arasında ne gibi paralellikler bulunabilir?

Bu çalışmanın temel argümanı, dönemin şehirli orta sınıflara mensup bireylerinin demokrasi algılarının başlangıçta Batı tipi liberal demokrasilerin prosedürleri etrafında şekillendiği ve daha sonra daha çok liberal-demokratik denetim ve denge mekanizmalarının gerekliliğine odaklanan bir biçime dönüştüğüdür. Bu bağlamda, demokrasi algılarının birbirini izleyen iki sürecin etkisi altında şekillendiği söylenebilir. İlk olarak, 1945-1954 dönemine hâkim olan milli iradenin tecellisi şeklindeki popülist söylem, demokrasinin çerçevesinin bireyler tarafından serbest ve adil seçimler gibi prosedürler şeklinde çizilmesini sağladı. Dolayısıyla 1945-1954 arası dönemde söylemin kentli orta sınıf bireylerin demokrasi algılarını belirlediği ve demokrasinin bu çerçevede tahayyül edildiği söylenebilir. Daha sonra ikinci olarak, popülist söylemin toplum üzerindeki etkisi zayıfladıkça, DP iktidarının liberal olmayan ve anti-demokratik yapısı daha görünür hale geldi. Böylece bireylerin demokrasi algıları, milli iradenin tecellisinin tek başına demokrasiyi tanımlamak için yeterli olmadığı ve bu çerçevede, demokrasinin, bireysel hak ve özgürlükleri garanti altına alan birtakım kontrol ve denge mekanizmalarını içermesi gerektiği şeklinde bir algıya doğru evrilmeye başlamıştır. Nitekim, 1954-1960 arası dönemde siyasi

gelişmelerin bir sonucu olarak demokrasiyi somut temellere oturtma çabalarının söylemi belirlediği ve dolayısıyla demokrasinin kentli orta sınıf bireyler tarafından bu yönde tahayyül edildiği bu çalışmada ortaya konulmuştur.

Bu çalışmada Hoover Enstitüsü Arşivleri'nde yer alan "Ahmet Emin Yalman Sayfaları"ndan elde edilen okuyucu mektuplarında yukarıdaki sorulara cevap aranmıştır. Bu anlamda bu çalışma, arşiv araştırmasına dayalı olarak hazırlanmış bir söylem analizi niteliğindedir. Ahmet Emin Yalman Sayfaları, her biri değişen sayıda klasör içeren 28 kutu belgeden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmada sadece 1945-1960 yılları arasında Yalman'a gönderilen okuyucu mektupları incelenmiştir. Bu inceleme sırasında, bu çalışmanın odaklandığı konular kapsamına denk gelen hiçbir mektup dışarıda bırakılmamıştır. Ancak Ahmet Emin Yalman Sayfaları'nda bulunan üç grup mektup çalışma dışında bırakılmıştır. Bu gruplar; i) dönemin aydınları, gazetecileri ve siyasetçilerinin gönderdiği mektuplar, ii) bayram tebrikleri, geçmiş olsun telgrafları, başsağlığı kartları gibi bu çalışma ile ilgisi olmayan mektuplar ve iii) bu çalışmanın kapsamı dışında içerik barındıran mektuplardır. Bu noktada, bu çalışmanın zaman dilimi dışında gönderilmiş olan mektuplar da dışarıda bırakılan dördüncü grup olarak eklenebilir.

Daha önce de belirtildiği gibi bu çalışmanın amacı, 1945-1960 arası dönemde kentli orta sınıf bireylerin demokrasi algılarını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Ancak bu amaçla yapılan bir çalışma, en başta, Yalman'ın okurlarının etkilenmiş oldukları muhakkak olan ve dönem içerisinde entelektüel çevrelerde cereyan eden demokrasi tartışmalarının incelenmesini gerekli kılmaktadır. Aslında 1945'ler ve sonraki dönemlerdeki demokrasi tartışmaları literatürde oldukça önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Ayrıca okuyucu mektuplarını inceleme nesnesi olarak alan bir araştırmanın yöntemini incelemek de dönemdeki demokrasi tartışmaları kadar önemlidir. Böylelikle çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde, bu çerçevede yapılan çalışmalardan bazı örnekler vererek mektup yazma eylemine teorik yaklaşımları ortaya çıkartmak ve aynı zamanda dönem içinde entelektüel ve siyasi düzeylerde yaşanan demokrasi tartışmalarının seyrini tasvir etmek amaçlanmıştır.

Dolayısıyla, kısaca Bölüm 2'nin amacı, mektup yazma eylemi ile ilgili literatürü gözden geçirmek ve bu çalışmanın teorik çerçevesini ön plana çıkarmaktır. Bu

anlamda, mektup yazışmalarının teorik çerçevesini ortaya çıkarmak için, ‘*Kimler mektup yazar?*’, ‘*Okuyucular neden mektup yazarlar?*’, ‘*Mektup içerikleri nasıl değişiklik gösterir?*’ gibi cevaplanması gereken birtakım sorular bulunmaktadır. Mektuplar birçok farklı konu üzerine yazılabildiği için bu ana konuların içerikleri de çeşitlilik göstermektedir. Siyasi konular genellikle siyasi partiler, polemikler ve seçim yarışları olarak özetlenebilir. Özellikle seçim dönemleri, kitlelerin daha siyasallaştığı dönemlerdir. Bu dönemlerde okurların bir kısmı siyasi duruşlarına uygun mektuplar yazarken, diğerleri seçim yarışının kendine özgü ve anlamsız polemiklerinden ve siyasetçilerin güvenilmezliklerinden bahsederler. Bu mektuplar, okuyucuları -ya da sıradan insanların- büyük ölçüde siyasi alana dahil olma çabalarının ürünüdür.

Daha sonra 1945-1960 döneminde entelektüel ve siyasi çevrelerde cereyan eden demokrasi tartışmaları analiz edilmiştir. Tartışmalar entelektüel ve politik çevrelerde gerçekleşse de, kentli orta sınıf bireyleri ve toplumun diğer bazı kesimleri, bir avuç aydın tarafından yürütülen demokrasi tartışmalarından habersiz olarak değerlendirilemez. Aksine, bir gazeteciye okur mektubu gönderebilecek bir kişinin bu tartışmaları çok yakından takip etmesi gerekiyordu. Nitekim bu bireylerin, aydınların ortaya koyduğu tartışmalardan demokrasi hakkındaki fikirlerini damıtarak okuyucu mektuplarını yazdıkları açıktır. Dolayısıyla bu tartışmaların Yalman okurları tarafından yakından takip edildiği düşünüldüğünde, bu tartışmaların dönemin demokrasi algısını ortaya koymada önemli olduğu anlaşılmaktadır.

Bu bağlamda 1945-1960 dönemini demokrasi tartışmalarının seyri açısından üç kısma ayırabiliriz. Genel olarak, Batı'da liberal demokrasi teorilerinin gelişimi ve onun idari mekanizmalarının bu tartışmaların odak noktası olduğu söylenebilir. 1945-1950 dönemindeki demokrasi tartışmaları, Batı tipi liberal demokrasilerin bir yönünü ifade eden demokrasi rejiminin prosedürleri etrafında toplanmaktadır. Toplumdaki sosyal sınıfların varlığını kabul etmemek için o dönemin demokrasi tartışmaları Kemalist modernleşme hedefleri çerçevesinde “halk” gibi muğlak terimler kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Ayrıca, bu dönemde demokrasi tartışmalarının devam ettiği iki ana mesele vardı: serbest ve adil seçimler ve anti-demokratik yasaların demokratikleştirilmesi.

1950-1955 arasındaki demokrasi tartışmaları popülist söylemin etkisi altında kalmıştır. Merkez-sağ bir parti olarak DP'nin ekonomik liberalizm, dini hassasiyetler

ve milliyetçiliğin üçlü kombinasyonunu sunduğu söylemi, dönemin demokrasi algısını belirlemede çok etkili olmuştur. DP'nin milletin gerçek temsilcisi olarak kendisini ön plana çıkartan milli iradenin tecellisine dair popülist söylemi, toplumu kutuplaştıran ve onu iki karşıt kampa bölen bir ortamın yolunu açmıştır. 1955-1960 dönemindeki demokrasi tartışmaları, DP'nin liberal olmayan ve anti-demokratik uygulamalarının bir sonucu olarak, özellikle liberal entelijansiyada demokrasinin tanımı ve algısı içerisinde bir paradigma kayması ortaya çıkartmıştır. “Halk” kavramı yerini “birey” kavramsallaştırmasına bırakmıştır. Bu dönem aynı zamanda bağımsız yargı, hükümetler üzerinde yasama denetimi, sivil toplum denetimi gibi mekanizmalarla sağlanabilecek bireysel hak ve özgürlükler biçiminde hukukun üstünlüğü kavramının demokrasi kavramına dahil edildiği bir dönemdir.

Üçüncü bölümün öncelikli odak noktası, önce Ahmet Emin Yalman'ın ideolojik pozisyonunu ortaya koymak, ikincisi ise Yalman'ın okuyucularının sınıf karakterlerini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Yalman'ın ideolojik pozisyonu, dönemi etkileyen ideolojik eksen hakkında pek çok ipucu içermektedir. 1945 sonrası dönem aynı zamanda dünyanın iki kutuplu olmaya başladığı bir dönemdir. Yalman, liberalizme olan bağlılığı ve anti-komünist duruşuyla ünlü bir gazeteciydi. Başka bir deyişle, iki kutuplu bir dünyada Batı bloğunun temsilcilerinden biriydi. Ayrıca Türkiye'de demokrasi tartışmaları Batı tipi liberal demokrasi anlayışı etrafında şekillenmeye başlamıştı. Dolayısıyla Yalman'ı takip eden okuyucuların liberal ideolojiden etkilenmemiş olması mümkün değildir. Bu bağlamda, okuyucu mektuplarında Yalman'ın temsil ettiği liberal ideoloji ve anti-komünist norma aykırı içerik hemen hemen hiç yoktur. Dolayısıyla, bu ideolojik etkiler, okuyucuların demokrasi algılarının benzer normlar etrafında şekillenmesinde çok etkili olmuştur. Bu çerçevede mektupların analizi ilerleyen bölümlerde yapılmıştır.

Yalman'ın ideolojik konumu, okuyucuların belirli sınıf karakterlerine mensup olmalarının da belirleyicisiydi. Yalman'ın okuyucularının neredeyse tamamı kentli ve belli bir entelektüel seviyede eğitilmiş bireylerdi. Retorik unsurlar ve okuyucuların bunları kullanma şekilleri, okuyucuların sınıf karakterine ve entelektüel seviyelerine ilişkin bir perspektif sağlamıştır. Yani kısaca, Yalman'ın okuyucuları kentli orta sınıflara mensup bireylerden oluşuyordu. Kentli orta sınıf bireyler olan okuyucuların liberal normları benimsemiş olmaları, dönemin ideolojik karakteri göz önüne

alındığında şaşırtıcı değildir. Yalman'ın okuyucularının mektuplarında ortaya attıkları fikirler, bu kişilerin demokrasi tartışmalarını ve dönemin siyasi gelişmelerini yakından takip ettiklerini göstermektedir. Mektupların o dönemin siyasi tartışmalarıyla ilgili çeşitli yanları vardır. Bu durum, kentli orta sınıf bireylerin siyasi alana dahil olma çabalarının bir ifadesidir. Aslında birçoğu bir adım daha ileri giderek siyasi meselelere taraf olmuşlar ve müdahil olarak onları belirli çerçevelere oturtmaya çalışmışlardır. Bu bireyler, erken cumhuriyet döneminin Kemalist modernleşme idealinin somutlaştığı kesimi temsil ederken, liberal demokrasi kavramının çoğunlukla onlar tarafından benimsenmesi ve Kemalist mirasla harmanlanmış demokratik ilkeler için güçlü taleplerin ortaya çıkması şaşırtıcı değildir.

Bu anlamda Yalman ile okurları arasında kurulan ilişkinin haritası çıkarıldıktan sonra okurlarının Yalman'ın ideolojik ve politik pozisyonlarına yakın olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Yalman'ın liberalizm ve demokrasi ile ilişkisi, okuyucularının demokrasi algılarının liberal-demokratik prosedürler ve mekanizmalar etrafında şekillenmesini sağlayan faktörlerden biridir. Aslında bu liberal-demokratik eğilimin, döneme hâkim olan ve zamanla hegemonik hale gelen ideolojik eksenin etkisinin sonucu olduğu söylenebilir.

4. bölümde Yalman'a gönderilen okuyucu mektuplarında okuyucuların hem CHP iktidarına hem de DP iktidarına yönelttikleri eleştiriler analiz edilmiştir. Bu anlamda bu bölümün nihai amacı, okuyucuların '*Demokrasi ne değildir?*' sorusuna verdikleri cevaplara odaklanan negatif bir yaklaşımla dönemin demokrasi çerçevesini kendi eleştirileriyle nasıl belirlediklerini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Ahmet Emin Yalman Sayfaları'ndaki tüm mektuplara bakıldığında bu eleştirilerin çeşitli konularla ilgili olduğu görülmektedir. Ancak bu bölümde CHP ve DP dönemlerinin ruhunu yansıttığı düşünülen iki uğrak eleştiri içeriği olarak seçilerek incelenmiştir. Bu bağlamda CHP iktidarı dönemi serbest ve adil seçimler ile DP iktidarı dönemine yönelik kutuplaştırıcı politika ve uygulamalar okuyucular tarafından eleştirilen uğraklar olarak seçilmiştir.

CHP döneminin ruhunu en iyi tanımlayan olgu, milli iradenin tecellisi olarak formüle edilen popülist söylemler çerçevesinde serbest ve adil seçimlere yönelik artan toplumsal taleptir. Ancak CHP bu demokratik talep ve beklentileri hayata geçirmek konusunda isteksizdi. Böylelikle, 1945-1950 döneminde demokrasi tartışmalarının,

serbest ve adil seçimler için temel bir demokratik talep etrafında toplandığı söylenebilir. Ancak bu taleplerin prosedürel mekanizmalarla sınırlı olduğu söylenebilir. Öyle bile olsa, 1945-1950 arasındaki demokrasi tartışmaları o kadar popülist bir şekilde ortaya çıkmıştır ki, sonuçta toplumun büyük bir kısmı -buraya entelektüelleri dahil etmek gerekiyor- milli iradenin tecellisi söylemi etrafında fikir üretmeye başlamışlardır. Serbest ve adil seçimler, demokrasiye geçişin anahtarı olarak görülmüştür. Böylece diğer tüm ikincil sorunların bu yolla çözülebileceğine dair yanıltıcı bir algı toplumda yerleşmiştir.

Ancak, bu yaklaşımın birbiriyle bağlantılı iki sorunlu yanı vardır. Birincisi, okuyucuların seçim odaklı talepleri, demokratik katılımın nasıl olması gerektiğine dair yanıltıcı bir çerçeve içermektedir. Dönem içindeki serbest ve adil seçimlerin manası, gerçekte seçim anındaki oy kullanmak dışında herhangi bir demokratik katılım uygulamasını içermiyordu. Yalman'ın okuyucularının gönderdikleri arasında zamanının ilerisinde düşüncelerle dolu mektuplar ve CHP iktidarına yönelttikleri çeşitli eleştirilerle siyasi alana müdahale etmeye çalışan şahıslar olsa da, bunların sayısı oldukça azdı. Aksine okuyucu mektupları incelendiğinde, okurların çoğunun demokrasinin serbest ve adil seçimlerde oy kullanmaktan, kitle temsilcilerini seçmek ve sorunların çözülmesini beklemekten ibaret olduğu algısına sahip oldukları görülmektedir. Durum böyle olunca toplumun büyük çoğunluğunun oy makinesine dönüştüğü ve “demokrasinin” gelişiyi çözülmesi hayal edilen hiçbir sorunun çözülemediği görülmektedir. Demokrasinin hak ve özgürlüklerle ilgili belirli mücadeleleri içerdiği anlayışı ancak 1954 seçimlerinden sonra toplumda yaygınlaşacaktır.

Aslında 1945 ile 1954 arasındaki tüm döneme hâkim olan ikinci sorunsal, milli iradenin tecellisi fikriyatını parlatan popülist yaklaşımlardı. DP popülizmi olarak tanımlanabilecek bu yaklaşım, tüm toplumu tek bir kitle olarak gören ve her uygulamanın herkesin refahını içerdiği Kemalist Halkçılık ilkesinden farklı bir popülizm biçimiydi. Böylelikle, DP'nin muhalefet yıllarından beri ortaya attığı popülist söylem, CHP'nin elitist iktidar zihniyetinin toplumun çok büyük bir bölümünü marjinalleştirdiği ve tüm toplumun yararına başlatılan uygulamalardan ancak sınırlı bir yönetici elitin yararlanabildiği şeklinde bir söylem halini almıştır. Dolayısıyla, CHP'nin elitist iktidar anlayışını durdurmak için milli iradenin tecelli etmesi

gerekiyordu ve bu amaçla, sessiz kitlelerin temsilcisi olduğunu iddia eden DP iktidara gelmişti. Ancak bu şekilde halkın demokratik gücü ifade edilebilirdi. Ancak 1945 ile 1954 yılları arasında geçerli olan bu yaklaşım, kitleleri zamanla soyut oy verme failleri haline getirmiş ve böylece kitleleri demokratik pratiklere gerçek anlamda katılmayacak şekilde konumlandırmıştır. Dolayısıyla, ‘halk’ ve ‘millet’ terimleri, bu popülist söylemin etkisi altında birer boş gösterene dönüşmüştür.

İlk döneme de hâkim olan bu popülist anlayış neticesinde üst düzey DP yöneticileri, Kemalist ilkelerin bir kısmını milletin benimsemediği ilkeler olarak göstererek, onlar arasında birtakım ayrımlar yaparak geçmişle hesaplaşma içine girdiler. DP, bu ayrımın yanı sıra, muhalefetteki CHP’yi şeytanlaştırarak, üzerinde bazı baskı mekanizmaları kurdu ve böylece iki tarafın destekçileri arasında kutuplaşmalar yarattı. Nitekim ikinci bölümde daha çok okuyucuların DP iktidarının kutuplaştırıcı politika ve uygulamalarına karşı yönelttikleri bu eleştirilere odaklanılıyor. Bu anlamda 1946’dan sonraki seçimlerde birden fazla siyasi partinin yarışmış olması, siyasi mücadelelerin ülkenin en ücra köşelerine yayılmasına, siyasetçilerin köylere giderek siyasi propaganda yapmalarına ve dolayısıyla bireylerin zamanla daha politize hale gelmelerine sebep olmuştur. Aslında okuyucuların o dönemin bir aydınına eleştirel mektuplar göndererek siyasete müdahale etme çabaları, kitlelerin bu siyasallaşmasının sonucuydu. Ancak, bu siyasallaşma sürecinin olumsuz sonuçlarından biri, toplumun iki karşıt, düşman kampa ayrılmasıydı. Sonuç olarak 1950’lerin sonlarında yükselen muhalefete karşı baskı politikalarını sıkılaştıran DP iktidarı, muhalefette iken eleştirdiği CHP iktidarından daha sert bir siyasi çizgiye geçerek toplumdaki kutuplaşmanın üst düzeye ulaşmasına neden olmuştur.

Okuyucu mektuplarındaki eleştiriler incelendiğinde, 1954 öncesinde gönderilen mektuplarda daha çok münferit olaylara değinildiği, ancak 1955’ten itibaren eleştirilerin demokratik hak ve özgürlükler çerçevesine kaydığı görülmektedir. DP’nin 1955’ten sonra demokratik hak ve özgürlükleri kısıtlaması ve muhalefet ve destekçilerini DP’yi iktidardan indirmek için gizli planlar yapmakla suçlaması, toplumdaki kutuplaşmaların derinleşmesine neden olmuştur. Böylece okuyucular, DP’nin bu kutuplaştırıcı söylem ve uygulamalarını eleştiren mektuplar göndererek demokrasiyle çelişen uygulamaları ortaya çıkarmaya çalışmışlardır.

Beşinci bölümde, milli irade, liberal-demokratik bireysel hak ve özgürlükler gibi konular tartışılarak okuyucular arasında yaygın olan demokrasi algıları incelenmiştir. Demokrasi algılarının 1945-1960 dönemi domine eden demokrasi tartışmalarından, hegemonik mücadelelerden ve ideolojik etkilerden beslendiği açıktır. Bu nedenle dönemin demokrasi tartışmalarını belirleme gücüne sahip yaklaşımların belirlenmesi demokrasinin okuyucular tarafından nasıl tahayyül edildiğini ortaya çıkarmak açısından önemlidir. Böylelikle okuyucular, Ahmet Emin Yalman'a gönderdikleri okuyucu mektupları ile fikirlerini ortaya koyarak demokrasinin çerçevelerini çizmişlerdir. Diğer bir deyişle, okuyucuların ‘*Demokrasi nedir?*’ sorusuna verdikleri cevapların ön plana çıkarılması, okuyucuların zihniyetinin kılcal damarlarına ulaşılmasında önemli bir yere sahiptir. Bu anlamda kentli orta sınıf bireyler arasında güçlü bir demokrasi talebi olduğu görülmüştür. Demokrasi kavramına atfedilen çeşitli anlamlar ile bu taleplerini dile getirmişlerdir.

1945-1960 döneminde demokrasi tartışmalarını yönlendiren ve belirleyen iki sürecin olduğu daha önce gösterilmişti. Popülizm, toplumun elitler ve halk arasında bölündüğü düşüncesi iken, bu iki grup arasında antagonizmalar üretmeye dayanan bir süreçtir. Nitekim bu süreçlerden ilki, CHP döneminin “yönetici elitleri”nin karşısına “halkı” yani milleti yerleştiren popülist söylem dönemidir. Bu anlamda 1945-1954 arası dönemde, demokrasinin tanımlayıcı biçimleri popülist söylemin etkisi altında kalmış ve kentli orta sınıf bireylerin demokrasi algıları, söylemin yönlendirdiği yönde şekillenmiştir. Böylece, popülist karşıtlıklar üzerinden demokrasi, milli iradenin tecellisi olarak tanımlanmaya başlanmıştır. Bu retorik, 1950 seçim yarışında doruk noktasına ulaşmış ve sonunda DP'nin seçimleri kazanarak iktidara gelmesiyle popülist demokrasi şeklinde tanımlanabilecek bir süreç başlamıştır.

Yalman'a gönderilen okuyucu mektupları incelendiğinde kentli orta sınıf bireylerinin 1950 öncesi dönemdeki demokrasi algılarının popülist söylem çerçevesinde şekillendiği açıkça görülmektedir. Bu dönemde en çok dile getirilen konu serbest ve adil seçimlerdir. Popülist retoriğin ürettiği karşıtlıklar, CHP iktidarının serbest ve adil seçimlere izin verme konusundaki isteksizliğine öfke şeklinde mektuplarda tezahür etmektedir. Böylece okuyucular bir yandan CHP'nin “halkı” küçümseyen seçkinci yönetici ruhunu eleştirirken, bir yandan da yönetimde söz sahibi olması gerekenin “halk” olduğunun altını çizmişlerdir. Bu dönemde, popülizmin antitezi olarak

korporatist ve temsili demokrasi nosyonuna işaret eden içerikli mektuplar olmasına rağmen, bunların sayısı oldukça azdır.

Demokrasi algısının popülizmin etkisiyle şekillenmesi üç ana sorunu beraberinde getirmiştir. Birincisi, popülizmin özünde var olan bir sorun olarak, “halk” olarak nitelenen kitle içerisindeki faillerin muğlaklığıdır. Bu noktadan itibaren iradesi tecelli ettirilen milletin kimlerden oluştuğu belirsizdir. Neticede millet terimi, popülist söylemin bir sonucu olarak bir boş gösteren halini almıştır. İkincisi, popülist söylem açısından söylemek gerekirse, 1950 seçimlerinde milli iradenin tecelli etmesi sonucunda, demokrasi kavramı seçimlerin eşdeğeri olarak görülmeye başlanmıştır. Seçimlerin serbest ve adil bir şekilde yapılması demokratik bir düzen kurmak için yeterli olarak görülmeye başlanmıştır. Popülist demokrasi anlayışının bu yaklaşımı, seçimlerin, oy verme eyleminin, parti liderlerinin, milletvekili sayılarının ve oy oranlarının zamanla fetişleşmesini sağlamıştır. Sonuç olarak, bu fetişleşme süreci, toplumda hükümeti destekleyen çoğunluk ve hükümeti desteklemeyen azınlık şeklinde kutuplaşmalar yaratmıştır. Ek olarak, seçilmiş hükümetin kademeli olarak bir çeşit keyfi idare trendine kaymasına yol açmıştır. Özellikle on yıllık DP iktidarı, bu kaymanın bariz örneklerinden birisi olarak gösterilebilir. Aslında bu, aynı zamanda popülist demokrasinin ortaya koyduğu üçüncü soruna da işaret etmektedir. Bireylerin temel hak ve özgürlüklerini sınırlandırmak için yöneticilerin sınırlarını çizecek denetim ve dengelerin olmaması, rejimin otoriterleşmesine neden olmuştur.

Popülist demokrasinin yol açtığı bu sorunlar, demokrasi algılarında meydana gelen dönüşümle birlikte 1954 yılından itibaren kentli orta sınıf bireyler tarafından daha net görülmeye başlandı. Diğer bir deyişle, popülist nosyonun zayıflamasıyla, DP iktidarının liberal olmayan ve anti-demokratik kimliği daha belirgin hale geldi. Dolayısıyla seçimlerin serbest ve adil bir şekilde yapılmasının, yani milli iradenin serbest bir şekilde tecellisinin tek başına “demokratik rejim” için yeterli olamayacağı anlaşılmaya başlanmıştır. Böylelikle, bireysel hak ve özgürlüklerin güvence altına alınabilmesi için kentli orta sınıf bireyler, liberal-demokratik denetim ve denge mekanizmalarının gerekliliği konusundaki taleplerini artırmaya başladılar. Bu bağlamda okuyucular, DP iktidarının işçilerin grev ve sendikal haklarından, toplanma ve gösteri hakkından üniversitelerin özerkliğine kadar uzanan demokratik hak ve özgürlüklere riayet etmesi üzerine mektuplar yazmışlardır.

Okuyucuların demokrasi algıları, anayasaya riayet, anti-demokratik yasaların demokratikleştirilmesi, yöneticilerin yetki sınırlarının belirlenmesi gibi liberal-demokratik ilkeler çerçevesinde şekillenmiştir. Sonuçta bu dönemde demokrasi kavramı sosyal olarak kurumsallaşamamış olsa da kentli orta sınıf bireylerin demokrasi algılarının bu yönde gelişmeye başladığı söylenebilir. Liberal-demokratik ilkeler, temel bireysel hak ve özgürlükleri bir dereceye kadar garanti altına alacak mekanizmalar içerir. Bu noktada, demokratik düzen için önerilen tüm bu mekanizmalar, esasında prosedürlerden fazlası değildir. Son tahlilde, tüm bu prosedürel uygulamalar, demokrasi mefhumu için vazgeçilmez bir norm olan hukuk devletine atıfta bulunmaktadır. Halbuki, hukuk devleti, sanıldığı gibi zamansız, mekânsız, evrensel bir iyi değil, daha çok mevcut düzenin tarihsel örgütlenmesinden ibarettir. Dolayısıyla demokratik düzen için esas olarak gerekli olan, demokrasi kavramının kurumsallaştığı bir sosyal yapı inşa edebilmektir. Aksi takdirde demokratik mekanizmaların yozlaşmasının önünde hiçbir engel yoktur.

Bu çalışma, 1945'ten 1960'a kadar olan süreçte, Türkiye'de kentli orta sınıflar için "demokrasinin" ne anlama geldiğini ve bu kavramların zamanla nasıl değiştiğini ortaya koymuştur. Popüler düzeydeki bu değişimlerin arkasında, Türkiye'deki hegemonik mücadelelerin ve ideolojik etkilerin çeşitli katmanlar halinde ortaya çıktığı iddia edilmiştir. Bir düzeyde, mektuplar, egemen söylemi şekillendiren elit gruplar arasındaki hegemonik mücadeleye işaret etmektedir. Bu çerçevedeki mektuplar, bu dönemde kentli orta sınıflar arasında "demokrasinin" adeta bir boş gösteren haline geldiğini açıkça göstermektedirler. 1945'ten başlayarak, okuyucular sık sık demokrasiyi nihai iyilik olarak adlandırdılar ve kendi şikayetlerini demokrasi talebiyle ilişkilendirdiler. Okuyucu mektupları, DP'nin popülist söyleminin, özellikle 1950'lere kadar, şehrli orta sınıfların demokrasiyi nasıl anladıklarını etkilemekte başarılı olduğunu da gösteriyor.

Bununla birlikte, daha derin bir düzeyde, bu okuyucu mektupları liberal demokrasi anlayışlarının hegemonyasının kapsamını ortaya koymaktadır. Okuyucu mektupları, ağırlıklı olarak demokrasi prosedürlerine odaklanmakta ve nadiren bu çerçevenin ötesine geçmektedirler. Örneğin, sosyalist çerçeveyi veya katılımcı mekanizmalar üzerine inşa edilmiş demokrasi nosyonlarını görmüyoruz. Siyasi aktörler arasında süregelen derin siyasi kutuplaşmaya rağmen liberal demokrasi kavramlarının sorgusuz

sualsiz hegemonyası, dönemin siyasi partileri arasındaki ideolojik benzerlikleri yansıtmaktadır. Bu mektuplardaki liberal hegemonyanın aynı zamanda uluslararası koşulları ve Yalman'ın kendi siyasi konumunu da yansıttığına inanıyorum.

Bu hegemonya mücadelesinin ve iki tür sonucunun mektuplara nasıl yansıdığı, dönemin ideolojik yaklaşımlarının kentli orta sınıflar üzerindeki etkilerini görmek açısından önemlidir. Okuyucu mektuplarının içeriğine baktığımızda, öncelikle liberal kavram dışında hemen hemen hiçbir konumun olmadığı söylenebilir. Başka bir deyişle ne sosyalist nosyonlar ne de demokrasinin doğrudan katılım normu mektuplarda vardır. Demokrasi, bir boş gösteren olarak, esasen Batı tipi liberal demokrasi nosyonları etrafında çerçelenmiştir. En önemlisi, okuyucu mektuplarında prosedürel bir demokrasi anlayışı hakimdir. 1950'den önce okuyucular yalnızca seçim kurumlarına odaklanırken, 1950'den sonra okuyucular yürütme gücünü sınırlandıran kurumları talep etmişlerdir. Her durumda, demokrasi tartışmaları nadiren kurumsal çerçevenin ötesine geçmektedir. Dolayısıyla, bu mektupların kentli orta sınıflar arasındaki liberal demokrasi nosyonlarının hegemonyasını da yansıttığını iddia etmek mümkündür.

Ahmet Emin Yalman'ın ideolojik konumu ise dönemin ideolojik ruhu ile ele alınması gereken bir konudur. Yalman, liberal değerlere güçlü bir şekilde bağlı olan ve anti-komünizmi savunan bir pozisyondaydı. Bu nedenle, liberal ideolojinin önde gelen temsilcilerinden biriydi. Ancak Yalman için 1950'den sonra ortaya çıkan bir mesele, zamanla DP iktidarı ile çatışmasına neden oldu. Bu durum, Kemalist ideolojiye karşı hegemonik olmak için savaşıyor, laiklikten uzak, popülist ve dini referanslara dayanan DP iktidarının siyasetiydi. Nitekim, DP'nin anti-demokratik ve liberal olmayan bir kimliğe sahip olduğunun açıkça ortaya serilmesi neticesinde, Yalman'ın DP'nin hegemonik pozisyonunun saflarından kopuşu gerçekleşmiştir.

Sonuç olarak, liberal ideolojinin ve CHP ile DP arasındaki hegemonik mücadelelerin etkisi altında, şehirli orta sınıf bireylerin demokrasi algıları, başlangıçta serbest ve adil seçimler gibi Batı tipi liberal demokrasi kavramlarına ait prosedürler etrafında şekillenmiştir. Onların demokrasi algıları daha sonra milli iradenin tecellisi şeklindeki popülist söylemden etkilenmiş ve nihayetinde toplum nezdinde liberal-demokratik ilkelerin kurumsallaşmasının gerekliliği haline dönüşmüştür. Bu hegemonik

mücadelenin bugün de devam ettiğini düşünürsek, bundan bitmiş bir hikâye olarak bahsetmenin mümkün olamayacağı aşikardır.

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