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THE APPROACHES OF THE LEFT IN TURKEY
ON THE ARMENIAN QUESTION
BETWEEN THE YEARS OF 1961 AND 1972

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**The Approaches of the Left in Turkey on the Armenian Question
Between the Years of 1961 and 1972**

**1961 ve 1972 Yılları Arasında Türkiye Solunun
Ermeni Sorununa Yaklaşımları**

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PREFACE

When I was an undergraduate student, studying this subject was my dream. I thought firstly to study this subject when I read *1915'ten 50 Yıl Sonra, 2015'ten 50 Yıl Önce: 1965* (50 Years Later from 1915, 50 Years Before from 2015: 1965) which was a research book written by Serdar Korucu and Aris Nalcı published by the Armenian Culture and Solidarity Society in 2015. In that book, I saw that the protests of the Armenian diaspora against Turkey in 1965 were commented in even the press of Turkey. Thus I wanted to study the approaches on this issue of the left in Turkey.

Firstly, I thank Prof. Dr. Ömer Turan who recommended the master program in cultural studies of Istanbul Bilgi University to study this subject. The book *Devlet Aklı ve 1915: Türkiye'de "Ermeni Meselesi" Anlatısının İnşası* (The Reason of State and 1915: The Construction of The "Armenian Question" Narrative) written by him and Güven Gürkan Öztan became beneficial for my thesis. I thank the jury of the master program in cultural studies of Istanbul Bilgi University for giving the opportunity to study the subject. I thank Prof. Dr. Gülhan Balsoy for her help to me to find an advisor for my thesis and Prof. Dr. Bülent Bilmez who accepted to be my advisor for my thesis.

I thank my dear father Ared Pontioğlu who supported me to study and tried to help me to find sources for my thesis. I thank to the employers of TÜSTAV who help me through e-mail when I encountered a technical problem in the web site of TÜSTAV.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
Dev-Genç	Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu (Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey)
FKF	Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu (Federation of Thought Clubs)
PDA	<i>Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik</i>
THKO	Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu (People's Liberation Army of Turkey)
THKP-C	Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi (People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey)
TİİKP	Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi (Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey)
TİKKO	Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu (Workers' and Peasants' Liberation Army of Turkey)
TİP	Türkiye İşçi Partisi (Workers' Party of Turkey)
TKP/ML	Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist (Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist)
TÜSTAV	Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırmaları Vakfı (Foundation of Social History Researches of Turkey)
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the approaches of the left in Turkey on the Armenian question between the years of 1961 and 1972. The Armenian question is the question between Turkey and the Armenians who define the adverse events which they lived in 1915 in the Ottoman Empire as a genocide. Turkey rejects the claim of genocide about these events. In this thesis, I analyze the approaches of the left in Turkey, the socialist parties and factions in Turkey between 1961 and 1972, on the events that the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire lived in 1915.

For this thesis, I researched primarily the left magazines published in Turkey between the years of 1961 and 1972. I benefited also from the memory books about this period. I began to research from the magazine *Yön* that began to be published in 1961 and the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) founded in same year. I continued with the factions of TİP and their magazines. Finally, I researched the views of the armed organizations which were originated from the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey (Dev-Genç) from their defences in the courts and the articles of their leaders. From these sources, I found what then left in Turkey said about the events that the Armenians lived in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and analyzed their discourses.

As a result, I observed that until TKP/ML which founded in 1972, there is no organization recognized the Armenian massacre and claimed that a genocide happened in Turkey and Turkish nationalism has a dominance in the left of Turkey.

Keywords: Armenian Question, Left in Turkey, 1960s Politics in Turkey, 1970s Politics in Turkey, Left-wing Nationalism.

ÖZET

Bu tez 1961 ve 1972 yılları arasındaki Türkiye solunun Ermeni sorununa yaklaşımları üzerinedir. Ermeni sorunu, 1915'te Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda yaşadıkları olumsuz olayları soykırım olarak tanımlayan Ermeniler ile Türkiye arasındaki sorundur. Türkiye bu olaylarla ilgili soykırım iddiasını reddetmektedir. Bu tezde 1961 ve 1972 yılları arasındaki Türkiye solunun, Türkiye'deki sosyalist parti ve fraksiyonların Ermeni sorununa yaklaşımlarını inceliyorum.

Bu tez için öncelikle 1961 ve 1972 yılları arasında Türkiye'de yayımlanan sol dergileri araştırdım. Dönemle ilgili anı kitaplarından da yararlandım. Araştırmaya 1961 yılında kurulan Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TİP) ve *Yön* dergisiyle başladım. TİP'in fraksiyonları ve onların dergileriyle devam ettim. Son olarak Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu'ndan (Dev-Genç) çıkan silahlı örgütlerin görüşlerini savunmalarından ve önderlerinin makalelerinden araştırdım. Dönemin Türkiye solunun 1915 yılında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Ermenilerin yaşadığı olaylar hakkında ne söylediklerini bu kaynaklardan buldum ve söylemlerini çözümledim.

Sonuç olarak 1972'de kurulan TKP/ML'ye kadar Ermeni katliamını tanıyan ve Türkiye'de bir soykırım olduğunu iddia eden bir örgüt olmadığını, dönemin Türkiye solunda Türk milliyetçiliğinin baskın olduğunu gözlemledim.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ermeni Sorunu, Türkiye Solu, 1960'lar Türkiye Siyaseti, 1970'ler Türkiye Siyaseti, Sol Milliyetçilik.

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I examine the approaches of the left in Turkey on the Armenian question between 1961 and 1972. I studied especially 1960s because the adverse events that the Armenians lived in 1915 in the Ottoman Empire were for the first time brought up in that time as a genocide. In 1965, in the 50th anniversary of the genocide, according to the Armenians, commemorations and protests against Turkey were held in the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. The middle of 1960s is an important period for the politics of Turkey because the left in Turkey was developing in that time. When a new constitution came into force after the 1960 coup d'état in Turkey, with political liberalization, the left in Turkey found the opportunity to organize legally and flourish: the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) was founded; a socialist magazine *Yön* began to be published; a left-wing youth organization in the universities, the Federation of Debate Clubs (Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu - FKF) was founded; the founding party of the Turkish republic, the Republican People's Party (CHP) began to claim that it was on "the left of the centre" on the political spectrum.

The protests of the Armenian diaspora in 1965 were mentioned in even the Turkish press. There is a study about the news and articles in the Turkish press about these events in that year: *1915'ten 50 Yıl Sonra, 2015'ten 50 Yıl Önce: 1965* (50 Years Later from 1915, 50 Years Before from 2015: 1965), written by Serdar Korucu and Aris Nalçı.¹ I researched the responses of the Turkish left vis-à-vis the Armenian question from 1965 onwards and I embarked on making a research on the left in Turkey about this issue between 1961 and 1972 during when the armed leftist organizations got weaker after the 1971 coup d'état. I focused on the reactions and views of the left in Turkey about the Armenian question when this issue came up, so

¹ Serdar Korucu and Aris Nalçı, *1915'ten 50 Yıl Sonra, 2015'ten 50 Yıl Önce: 1965* (İstanbul: Ermeni Kültür Derneği Yayınları, 2014).

my literature review covers the magazines, journals and defences in the courts of the left organizations of that time where the views on historical events were discussed. Other useful sources for this study were the books written by leftists at that time. For example, a Kemalist, left-wing nationalist theorist and one of the writers of *Yön*, Doğan Avcıoğlu published a book which was titled *Türkiye'nin Düzeni* (The Organization of Turkey) in 1969, a study about the contemporary history of Turkey and an important source for the left in Turkey in early 1970s.²

For my thesis, I advised Ayhan Aktar and Boğaç Erozan for archives. The archives of the non-governmental organizations such as Tarih Vakfı, TÜSTAV were beneficial for my thesis.

Ayhan Aktar recommended also that initially I should read the book written by Ömer Turan and Güven Gürkan Öztan, *Devlet Akli ve 1915:Türkiye'de "Ermeni Meselesi" Anlatısının İnşası* (The Reason of State and 1915: The Construction of The "Armenian Question" Narrative). In the book, I found a chapter titled "Left Intellectuals and 1915" where the authors refer to a letter written by Cemal Süreya, a Kurdish, Alevi, socialist poet to a Turkish poet Turgut Uyar in 1965. In this letter, he says about the magazine which he published that:

Previously I named it Ararat, but after we had to change it, because the Armenians refer to the Mount Ağrı with the name of 'Ararat'. They established a union with the name of 'Ararat Youth Organization'. We did not like this similarity. We returned to 'Papirüs'.³

In 1967, Ramazan Yaşar and Yaşar Kemal, a notable Kurdish socialist writer and a member of the Workers' Party of Turkey, established a publishing house named "Ararat Publishing House".

² Pakrat Estukyan, Zakarya Mildanoğlu and Masis Kürkçügil, "1915 Sol İçin Piyasası Olan Bir Mesele Değildi", interview by Yetvart Danzikyan, *Agos*, accessed October 9, 2020, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11454/1915-sol-icin-piyasasi-olan-bir-mesele-degildi>.

³ Ömer Turan and Güven Gürkan Öztan, *Devlet Akli ve 1915: Türkiye'de "Ermeni Meselesi" Anlatısının İnşası* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), p. 206.

According to Turan and Öztan, there are two articles which were titled “Bir de Ermeniler Çıktı” (The Armenians Showed Up Too) published in the magazine *Yön* about the Armenian question: one of them was published in 1963 and the other in 1965. In the article on 9 May 1963, *Yön* claimed that the Armenian question is a question of the past but somebody from the Armenian diaspora had a dream to establish an independent Armenia on Turkey and gave some examples from the magazines of Tashnak (Armenian Revolutionary Federation, an Armenian nationalist party) in Europe. According to the magazine, these outlets say that “The writers of the outlets which are published in Armenian take swipes every day at our country and spill out their hatred. We present the ravings of these soft bullies which will be read with laughter by our readers.” In second article on 23 April 1965, *Yön* mentioned that the president of the United States Woodrow Wilson promised the east of Turkey to the Armenians in 1919. *Yön* claimed that the Armenians refreshed the disputes before 50 years from that time with large meetings in various countries as a result of provocations of the imperialists. Near this article, there is an article titled “How the Armenians Take Heart?” (Ermenilerin Cüreti Nereden Geliyor?). There, they explained the articles of the Treaty of Sèvres as it is related to President Wilson’s promise to the Armenians.⁴

In 1966, Mehmet Ali Aybar, the president of the Workers’ Party of Turkey between 1962 and 1969, also a specialist of international law, attended to the International War Crimes Tribunal that was a private people’s tribunal organized by Bertrand Russell to investigate and evaluate the foreign policy and military intervention in Vietnam of USA. This tribunal adjudged that USA carried out a genocide in Vietnam. In the tribunal, one of its members, Jean-Paul Sartre referred to the “Armenian Genocide” as an example of genocide from the past. Then Aybar said according to his memory book *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Tarihi* (History of the Workers’ Party of Turkey):

⁴ Ibid, p. 207.

Genocide is an intentional crime, a designed crime. It is a crime that aims to annihilate an ethnic group and is determined with the material actions and the way to success it. Being designed is a condition to commit the crime. An ethnic group is not three or five people. It means ten thousands, millions of people. If you do not annihilate whole or vast majority of them, you cannot achieve the goal. You should organize armed groups and educate them to kill thousands of people or charge the army to do it. If the ethnic group which you want annihilate lives in particular regions of the country, you should organize armed attacks like war operations. If they live among the majority, you should try different operations. Both of them are operations that the state carries out.

With these arguments, Mehmet Ali Aybar did not accept what happened to the Armenians in 1915 as genocide. He did not believe that it was a centrally organized massacre.⁵

Turan and Öztan also refer to a communist militant, the founder of the Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist İbrahim Kaypakkaya. In his article “Türkiye’de Milli Mesele” (National Question in Turkey) which was found in a case file of a court and published as one of his selective works⁶, we understand that he mentioned an Armenian massacre between 1915 and 1920:

National movements in Turkey are not still new and the Kurdish movement is not the sole movement. These national movements began before the fall of the Ottoman Empire and continued until today. Bulgarians, Greeks, Hungarians, Albanians, Kurds, Armenians, Arabs, Yugoslavs, Romanians... They revolted several times against Turks who were the sovereign nation in the Ottoman Empire, the history brought these national movements to conclusions, except Kurds... In the late 19th century and early 20th century,

⁵ Ibid, p. 207-208.

⁶ İbrahim Kaypakkaya, *Seçme Yazılar*, accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/turkce/kaypakkaya/kaypakkayasecmeyazilar.pdf>, p. 334-336.

the capitalism that had entered silently in the life of Eastern Europe and Asia awakened the national movements in the regions. Other nations inside Turkey broken away from Turkey and organized in separate nation-states (or multinational states) from Turkey in parallel with the development of the production of commodities and capitalism. The Armenians who were massively massacred and deported in 1915 and 1919 -1920 are exceptional.⁷

In this thesis, I start from the magazine *Yön* which began to be published in 1961 to examine the approaches of the left in Turkey on the Armenian question. Later, I examine the approach of CHP which began to claim that it was a centre-left party in 1965. Later, I continue with the general approach of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP), the socialist party which was founded in 1961 and its factions. In 1970, the Federation of Thought Clubs, the socialist youth organization, transformed to the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey (Dev-Genç) and this organization gave birth to armed organizations like THKO, THKP-C and TKP/ML and I examine also their approaches.

In this thesis, I use the concept “left” in the meaning of “all socialist movements”. In 1960s, the term “left” in politics was used for socialist movements as initially it was used for progressive, republican movements in France after the 1789 Revolution. In this context, the left in Turkey in 1960s included the movements which advocate providing the social justice in the capitalist system (like CHP, “Left of the Centre”) or democratically transition to the economic system based on social ownership and public enterprise (like TIP) or initially a national democratic revolution against the foreign capital, imperialism (like Doğan Avcıoğlu, Mihri Belli, FKF).

The Armenian question can be defined as the discussion between the Armenians who claim that they were exposed to a genocide in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and Turkey that claims that it was not a genocide, just a deportation for

⁷ Ömer Turan and Güven Gürkan Öztan, *Devlet Akli ve 1915: Türkiye’de “Ermeni Meselesi” Anlatısının İnşası* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), p. 209.

security in the conditions of the First World War. The use of term “genocide” which was coined by lawyer and philosopher of law Raphael Lemkin and accepted as a crime internationally in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948 for the Armenian deportation and its recognition as a genocide is always seen as a question by Turkey. In this thesis, I wanted to reveal the approach to this “question” of especially the revolutionary left in Turkey which has always been in opposition. The Armenian deportation in 1915 had been ignored since the foundation of the republic in 1923 and in this thesis, I demonstrate how the ignorance affected the politics and the left in Turkey too. Before 1960s, some people in the left mentioned the Armenian massacres in 1915. For example, Nazım Hikmet, poet, a member of the Communist Party of Turkey which lived between the years of 1902 and 1963, wrote these verses in his poem *Akşam Gezintisi* (A Tour in the Evening):

Refik the Typsetter and the middle daughter of Yorgi the Milkman
excused in the evening
Their fingers interlaced
The lamps of Karabet the Grocer glowed
This Armenian citizen did not forgive
that his father was slaughtered over the Kurdish mountains
but he loves you because you too, you did not forgive
those who soiled the hands of the Turkish people.

Another example as a communist who mentioned the Armenian massacres was Hikmet Kıvılcımlı. He became member of the central committee of the Communist Party of Turkey. In 1929, when he was jailed for 4.5 years, he wrote independently his work *TKP'nin Eleştirel Tarihi: Yol* (The Critical History of TKP: Way) included his views about the Kurdish and Armenian issues but this work was

published as a book series after his death (1971), in 1978.^{8 9} The views of Kıvılcımlı on the Armenian question is in the book of *İhtiyat Kuvvet: Milliyet (Şark)* (Substitute Power: Nationality (East)) of the series. In the book, he mentioned that there were two historical regions in the east of Turkey: Armenia and Kurdistan.¹⁰ He emphasizes that these names were used no longer in the republican era and says that he will research if the Armenian and Kurdish nations exist in the east part of Turkey. He begins with the Armenians to research and considered the Armenian-Kurdish relations too. He defined the Armenian society in the Ottoman Empire as a system of commerce which was based on the petit bourgeois majority that was generally bourgeoisified, had strong relations with “their big shot capitalist cognates” in important commercial centres such as Istanbul, Trabzon, assumed responsibility for carrying the British goods to Inner Asia over the Iranian plateau and the Kurdish society as a dispersed, apolitical mob with the feudal system. He described the Armenian-Kurdish conflict as a conflict between the bourgeoisie and feudal lords and the loser of this conflict became the Christian bourgeoisie in contrast to the Ottoman Europe.¹¹ He mentions the Turkish constitutional era bourgeoisie as another actor against the Armenians at that time: the Turkish bourgeoisie collaborated with the Kurdish feudal lords against the Armenian nationalism and they committed “a massacre with a sneaky atrocity which had been seen rarely in the world” according to his description.¹² He mentions also the crypto-Armenians in the east part of Turkey that remained after the massacre too. According to Kıvılcımlı, they were Kurdified. Kıvılcımlı believed that the Soviet revolution had resolved the Armenian

⁸ Duygu Özgür, “Hikmet Kıvılcımlı’dan öğrenecek çok şey var”, February 3, 2017, *Agos*, accessed August 5, 2022, <https://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/17650/hikmet-kivilcimlidan-ogrenecek-cok-sey-var>.

⁹ “İhtiyat Kuvvet: Milliyet (Şark)”, “Eser bilgisi”, kitanik, accessed August 6, 2022, https://www.kitantik.com/product/Ihtiyat-Kuvvet-Milliyet-Sark_0z8kglk3c4gtfq1qph.

¹⁰ Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Yedek Güç: Ulus (Doğu) - İhtiyat Kuvvet: Milliyet (Şark)* (Istanbul: Derleniş Yayınları, April 2016), p. 22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 23-24.

question because the three-fourths of the Armenians in the world lived in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Armenian diaspora would avenge the Turkish bourgeoisie through communism and he exemplifies the communist movements of the Armenians in Lebanon.¹³

My research is a qualitative research based on discourse analysis of the magazines and defences in the court of the left organizations in Turkey where their historical views were explained. I interrogate if they say about the Armenians or the CUP government in 1915. If they say, I read what they say about the Armenians or the CUP government in 1915. I interrogate if their view closed to Turkish nationalism as an ideology which is based only on the interests of the Turkish nation. I aim to reveal how much left-wing nationalism was extensive in the left in Turkey in 1960s from this issue.

In the background of left-wing nationalism in Turkey, we can say that there were the reaction to the membership of NATO of Turkey since 1952 and the approach to Kemalism as an anti-imperialist and progressive ideology. For example, as among the leaders of the youth movements, Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Çayan saw Kemalism as an anti-imperialist ideology, İbrahim Kaypakkaya criticized Kemalism as being collaborator movement with imperialism. This nationalist approach and historical sources effected to the approaches of the left in Turkey to the Armenians. The different view of Kaypakkaya is originated from his research from the Soviet resources about Kemalism like the article of Shnurov. He did comparisons between the histories of Turkey and China. For example, in the article “Şafak Revizyonizminin Kemalist Hareket, Kemalist İktidar Dönemi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları, Savaş Sonrası ve 27 Mayıs Hakkındaki Tezleri” (The thesis of the revisionism of the *Şafak* magazine about the Kemalist movement, the period of the Kemalist government, the years of Second World War, the post-war period and 27 May), he said “How the comprador bourgeoisie and feudal lords took the power after

¹³ Ibid., p. 24-25.

the 1924-1927 Chinese Revolution, in Turkey too, a similar event realized.”, “How the middle bourgeoisie in China participated to Kuomintang after the 1924-1927 First Revolutionary Civil War, those in Turkey participated to CHP.”¹⁴ According to the testimony of his comrade Muzaffer Oruçođlu, Kaypakkaya tried to contact with the old communists and be informed about the history of the Communist Party of Turkey, benefited from the Soviet sources and historians, for example, he liked Mustafa Akdađ as a historian because Akdađ had written about the Alevi massacres during the reign of Selim I and found objective his approach. He liked Akdađ as a historian who examined the issue with its economic base and looked deeply, not superficially.¹⁵ He said about the old members of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP):

According to an old revolutionary friend who listened someone who experienced 1930s, in that time the slogan of TKP was that: “Damned be the fascist dictatorship of the Kemalists”. However, this slogan was abandoned later.¹⁶

This point in his research shaped the view of İbrahim Kaypakkaya to Kemalism.

I examined the approaches of the left organizations on the Armenian question in the chapters.

¹⁴ İbrahim Kaypakkaya, *Seçme Yazılar* (İstanbul: Umut Yayımcılık), accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/turkce/kaypakkaya/kaypakkayasecmeyazilar.pdf>, p. 130.

¹⁵ Eylül Deniz Yaşar, “Kaypakkaya ile yıllarını anlattı: Sadelik, mülkten uzak durma, dayanışma...”, mezopotamyaajansi.com, accessed August 30, 2022, <https://mezopotamyaajansi.com/tum-haberler/content/view/97116>.

¹⁶ İbrahim Kaypakkaya, *Seçme Yazılar* (İstanbul: Umut Yayımcılık), accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/turkce/kaypakkaya/kaypakkayasecmeyazilar.pdf>, p. 165.

CHAPTER ONE

YÖN AND THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

The magazine *Yön* (Direction) was a Kemalist, left-wing nationalist and socialist magazine. When it was established in 1961, it was supported by many left intellectuals in Turkey. Followed articles of the manifest brief the ideology of *Yön* in the manifest which was published in first issue published on 20 December 1961:

1. We believe that arriving to the modern civilization level that the reforms of Atatürk aim, resulting the cause of education, reviving the Turkish democracy, realizing the social justice and sitting the democratic regime on a strong base is related to the success in developing economically increasing the level of the national production.

(. . .)

3. We find necessary to provide all opportunities, increase the investments rapidly, plan whole economic life, bring the social justice to the masses, end the exploitation and bring the democracy to the masses.

We believe that we can arrive to the aims which we want to realize through a new statist understanding.

- a. In the economic life of Turkey, a mixed system which sustains the state enterprises and private enterprises together will exist, but we do not believe that an economic system which the private sector dominates can carry up, rapidly and with social justice, Turkey to the level of the modern civilization. (. . .)¹⁷

¹⁷ “Bildiri”, *Yön*, December 20, 1961, p. 12-13.

According to these principles, we can say that *Yön* was a Kemalist and socialist magazine. In this magazine which was published in 1960s, executive editor Doğan Avcıoğlu and other writers highlighted the Armenian question when the Armenian diaspora began to mention the genocide happened in 1915 against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. About this question, the article “Bir De Ermeniler Çıktı” (The Armenians Showed Up Too) was published in the issue dated 9 May 1963 which ridiculed the publishings of Tashnak in Europe. The introduction of the article:

Today, the Armenian question does not exist, this question became history but some Armenians who left Turkey still dream an Armenia. Like Jews, they dream to return to the land of their ancestors and establish a state. They have a Tashnak Party and its media outlets. For example, *Harach-Paris* is a media outlet of Tashnak Party. The party’s youth organization has a media outlet called *Hayastan-Paris*. The bright spark authors of these outlets that are published in Armenian always take swipes at our nation and nurse a grudge. We published some example of the ravings of those freshwater bullies as a comedy page.

In this article, the magazine gives some examples from the magazines of *Harach-Paris* and *Hayastan-Paris*. According to the article, the magazine *Harach-Paris* claims that the one of reasons of the 1960 coup d’état in Turkey was that then prime minister of Turkey, Adnan Menderes accepted the reality of the Kurdish question and would accept withdrawing from the eastern provinces where the majority of the Armenians had lived until 1915, Turkey did not develop the eastern provinces because it knew that the Armenians would retake their homeland and the United States withdrew the missiles from Turkey against USSR.¹⁸

¹⁸ “Bir De Ermeniler Çıktı”, *Yön*, vol. 73, p. 16.

Second article with same title was published in the issue dated 23 April 1965, when the Armenian diaspora commemorated 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. This article emphasized the demand of the Armenians to implement the Treaty of Sèvres and Wilson's principles and that the Armenians and Greeks are used by imperialist powers against Turkey:

These poor water birds can dream an Armenia in Turkey because they rely on the support of their imperialist brothers who gifted the Arab territories to Israel. Their uncle Wilson had promised this to them in 1920s, he gifted the lands but an accident happened: Atatürk. He ruined Uncle Wilson's plan. They need to restore the plan! Uncle Sam who gifted Cyprus to Greeks can give Kars, Ardahan and a port near Black Sea. They will organize demonstrations on 23-24 April to call up their uncle.

Greeks and Armenians, who are used by imperialists against Turkey throughout the history, still have similar aims and desires under the shadow of the imperialists.¹⁹

The article gives reference to the article with same title in 1963; they remember that they became first media outlet that highlighted the Armenian question one of which is similar to the political activities *Enosis* (union with Greece) of the Greeks in Cyprus. From these articles, we understand the magazine *Yön* has a nationalist approach toward Armenians and Greeks. It views the demands of these nations as a threat against Turks in Turkey and Cyprus and proposes a struggle against them. We see this nationalist attitude in the article of Doğan Avcıoğlu in the issue 72 dated 1 May 1963 (the previous issue of the issue 73 dated May 9, 1963): "Türkiye'yi Saran Tehlikeler" (The Dangers That Beset Turkey). In this article, he warns the readers about the neighbours of Turkey, the Kurdish question, the Cyprus question and the Armenian question too:

¹⁹ "Bir De Ermeniler Çıktı", *Yön*, vol. 108, April 23, 1965, p. 7.

On the other hand, we lose the Cyprus case. The Kurdish question became apparent as a serious question. Armenian Tashnak Party began to get more visible in Paris too. Tashnak says “We will return to our homeland!”. The situation of Iraqi Turks is in more fragile situation.²⁰

From these articles, we understand that *Yön* pursued the Turkish nationalist ideology which defended not only the Turks in Turkey but also abroad. It is one of proofs of that *Yön* had a nationalist perspective about foreign issues and history. The anxiety of the occupation of Eastern Turkey by Armenians and Kurds affected their approach to the Armenian question. Lawyer Erol Ulubelen assumes same approach to the demonstrations for commemoration of the “51th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide” by the Armenians, in the issue 161 dated 29 April 1966, in the article titled “Vesikalarla Ermeni Meselelerinin İç Yüzü” (The Essence of the Armenian Issues in the Documents):

In this year too, on April 24, the Armenian-Americans walked in front of the United Nations in New York and wanted the territories from Turkey which they claim that they are Armenia and the Mount Ağrı (Ararat).

(. . .)

It is not a coincidence that the events in Cyprus and the revival of the Armenian issues are at same time. If you think that the Greeks promote these events, you know nothing about the events and history. These events are the proof of that the old hands began to play their old games.

(. . .)

²⁰ Doğan Avcıoğlu, “Türkiye’yi Saran Tehlikeler”, *Yön*, vol. 72, May 1, 1963, p. 8.

Imperialist United Kingdom wanted to divide the Ottoman Empire and capture the golden goose. These efforts existed since when the Ottoman Empire gave Cyprus to the United Kingdom. For that purpose, they provoked the Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians and Albanians. When European Turkey dissolved, it was Asian Turkey's turn. There the Armenians and Kurds had already been prepared. The Armenians as Christians could move against Turks in the public opinion of the world. (The same logic applies in the election of a monk as the president of Cyprus.) They would provoke the Arabs at same time like Armenians, thus they would deliver the blow of death. Imperialist United Kingdom had an eye on the oil fields and mines. If the Ottoman Empire collapsed, it would be easy to swallow the weak states, in the end, they swallowed all of them. As we do not knew what is economic exploitation yet, we cared about the loss of territories. For this reason, we could not see the real game of imperialism.²¹

Ulubelen continues to his article with citations from documents about the plans of the United Kingdom towards Ottoman Empire between the 1910 and 1913. He defends that the "Armenian Genocide" issue is a game played against Turkey like the case of Cyprus and there is an imperialist power like United Kingdom behind those issues and remembers the plans of UK against Ottoman Empire.

The writers of *Yön*, Doğan Avcıoğlu and Erol Ulubelen were sceptic against the Armenians like the Greeks about Cyprus. They thought that Armenians, Greeks and Kurds were employed as tools against Turkey by the imperialist powers. Their ideology was based on Turkish nationalism in foreign issues despite that they are leftist in economic issues like ideas of social justice and statism as stated in their manifestation in the first issue of the magazine. The foreign issues which they reacted were not only imperialism, the native ethnic groups in Turkey too like the Armenians, Greeks and Kurds. At this point, we see the synthesis of anti-imperialism and nationalism against the ethnic minorities in Turkey.

²¹ Erol Ulubelen, "Vesikalarla Ermeni Meselesinin İç Yüzü", *Yön*, vol. 161, April 29, 1966, p. 16.

Doğan Avcıoğlu, the founder and executive editor of *Yön*, wrote a book titled social history of Turkey which was mentioned as a source for Turkish leftist intellectuals at that time in the interview with Masis Kürkçügil and Zakarya Mildanoğlu.²² In this book, he approaches to the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP - *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), the governing party in 1915 in the Ottoman Empire which was charged with a genocide against the Armenians, as a movement which efforts to create the Turkish bourgeoisie whose theoretical pioneering figure was Ziya Gökalp. He tells the efforts of CUP to industrialize the country and create a “national economy” but does not explain what happens to the Armenians at the time.²³

Yön published frequently about the activities of the Armenian diaspora for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Two weeks later from the article of Erol Ulubelen, they published the manifestation of some Armenian-Americans about the Armenian Genocide with the note “On 24 April 1966, a manifestation which hundreds of Armenians signed was published in the newspaper *The New York Times*. The Turkish nationalists must know these manifestations”.²⁴ We understand from this note, *Yön* aimed to form a national consciousness against the claims of the Armenians. Addressing to the Turkish nationalists confirms the nationalist ideology of *Yön*.

Doğan Avcıoğlu worked as the deputy manager in the bureau of research and documentation of the Republican People’s Party (CHP).²⁵ The main cadre of *Yön* except Avcıoğlu was formed by Mümtaz Soysal, İlhan Selçuk, İlhami Soysal, Hamdi Avcıoğlu and Cemal Reşit Eyüboğlu. Before the 1960 coup d’état, they wrote in the

²² Zakarya Mildanoğlu and Masis Kürkçügil, “1915 Sol İçin Piyasası Olan Bir Mesele Değildi”, interview by Yetvart Danzikyan and Pakrat Estukyan, *Agos*, accessed October 9, 2020, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11454/1915-sol-icin-piyasasi-olan-bir-mesele-degildi>.

²³ Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Türkiye’nin Düzeni, Birinci Kitap* (Istanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1982), p. 260-279

²⁴ “Amerika’da Ermeniler”, *Yön*, vol. 163, May 13, 1966, p. 6.

²⁵ Tülay Gencer, “Bir Eylem ve Düşünce Adamı: Doğan Avcıoğlu”, PhD diss. (Ankara University, 2020), p. 55.

magazines close to CHP like *Forum*, *Akis*, *Kim* and *Ulus*.²⁶ They formed a Kemalist school of thought which originated from CHP and tried to develop Kemalism as a socialist ideology. It was an ideology that synthesizes nationalism and socialism. Naturally the ignorance regarding Armenian events in 1915 continued among them. The first article in *Yön* about the Armenian question goes as such “Today, the Armenian question does not exist, this question became history but some Armenians who left Turkey still dream an Armenia.”, reveals that beyond the ignorance, we see the legitimization of the deportation of the Armenians from Turkey and seeing the deportation as a solution. We see the continuation of the mentality of the Committee of Union and Progress among them.

Yön ended its publishing life on 30 June 1967 and published a letter to its readers in the last issue. In this letter, they said that they would give a break to publish and continue as a daily newspaper.²⁷ Later, Doğan Avcıoğlu founded the weekly newspaper *Devrim* (Revolution) on 27 October 1969 and it continued until 27 April 1971.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁶ “Yönden Okuyucuya”, *Yön*, vol. 222, June 30, 1967, p. 2.

²⁸ Kemal Barış Tıǧlı, “Doğan Avcıoğlu ve Devrim Gazetesi”, MA thesis (Ankara University, 2005), p. 1.

CHAPTER TWO

CHP AND THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

The Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP) is the founding party of the Republic of Turkey that considers its date of foundation as 9 September 1923. The party adopted six principles in 1935 under leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: republicanism, populism, nationalism, secularism, statism and reformism.²⁹ At that time, as single party in Turkey, CHP did not define itself as left-wing or right-wing party. In 1935 program of the party, they explained that one of their principles was corporatism: they defined it as “a society separated to various services in respect to the division of labour for individual and social life”. In continuation, they say:

Farmers, small artisans, small business owners, workers, free entrepreneurs, industrialists, merchants and civil servants are primary working organs of the Turkish national theory. Each of them should work for life and welfare of each other.

The object that our party aims with this principle is providing the social order and solidarity instead of the class conflict and according the interests to not opposing each other. The interests are according to the degree of capacity and labour.³⁰

Above expressions demonstrate that CHP refused the class conflict in the capitalist society and saw the nation as an organism that is comprised of varied occupational groups that support each other, so CHP had not an ideology related to socialism or social democracy which are critical to capitalism.

²⁹ “CHP Tarihi”, the official web site of CHP, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://chp.org.tr/haberler/chp-tarihi>.

³⁰ *C.H.P. Programı* (Ankara: Ulus Basimevi, 1935), p. 8-9.

After the coup d'état in 1960, a current close to social democracy developed in CHP, because in 1961, the Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP) was founded by trade unions. After the 1961 general elections, CHP established the new government. The theorist of the ideology *ortanın solu* (left of the centre) close to the current of social democracy in Western Europe and the writer of the book *Ortanın Solu*, Bülent Ecevit was appointed as the minister of labour. Then leader of the party İsmet İnönü explained firstly in 1965, before the general elections in same year, that CHP is situated in the left of the centre. In his interview with Abdi İpekçi in the newspaper *Milliyet* on 29 July 1965, he said that CHP was already statist party so it was already positioned at the left of the centre.³¹ On August 12, 1965, in his interview with the magazine *Kim*, he emphasized that the principles of populism and secularism of the party were in that position too.³²

İsmet İnönü was an officer who was a member of the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* - CUP) which was ruling party in the Ottoman Empire in 1915.³³ He had friendship with Talaat Pasha who was the interior minister of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and is accused by being perpetrator of the Armenian Genocide.³⁴ He said that Talaat Pasha was an altruistic man and he did not understand why Talaat Pasha left the country after the First World War.³⁵ About the issue of the Armenian massacre in 1915, he said in his memoirs that this issue was an accusation originated from hate against Turkey and the government of Damat Ferit Pasha supported and confirmed these claim and gave testimony about how the Turks tortured the Armenians.³⁶ İnönü, as originated from CUP and friend of Talaat Pasha, did not accept any accusation about the Armenian issue and saw the Damat

³¹ İsmet İnönü, "Kalkınma Muhafazakar Tedbirlerle Gerçekleşmez", interview by Abdi İpekçi, *Milliyet*, July 29, 1965, p. 1.

³² İsmet İnönü, "İnönü Kim'e Anlatıyor", *Kim*, vol. 369, August 12, 1965, p. 4-6.

³³ İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar* (Istanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1992), Book 1, edited by Sabahattin Selek, p. 39.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

Ferit Pasha government as traitor for its acceptance of the claims and testimony about what happened to the Armenians.

In 1965, between 14 March and 23 August, Bülent Ecevit, when he was just a member of the national assembly from CHP, wrote articles in the newspaper *Milliyet*.³⁷ The article which was published on 12 April was about the Armenian question. In this article which was titled “Ermeni” (The Armenian), he tells his meeting with an old Armenian female grocer in USA and observations about the Armenians in USA. The grocer was an Armenian who had been deported from Trabzon but she sold Turkish products, made Turkish coffee and read the coffee cup. Accompanied by his wife, they had a nice meeting with her. He emphasized that the Diaspora Armenians still continued to live with the Turkish language and culture, he gave other examples justified that and he said:

In spite of various entities and states keep alive the painful memories against Turkey, and the permanent provocations against the Turks, yesterday in USA, today in Lebanon, it is impossible to put out the love to Anatolia and the Turks and the Turkishness to the language to music, from their hearts.³⁸

Ecevit accepted that the Armenians had bad memories with the Turks but he saw the protests and accusations against Turkey as provocation against Turkey and emphasized that the Armenians still lived with the Turkish language and culture and they were close to the Turks.

Ecevit was elected as general secretary of the party in the 18th congress in 1966 and as leader of the party in 5th extraordinary congress in 1972. Although Ecevit’s discourse toward the Armenians was more moderate than İnönü, the policy

³⁷ “Bir Harf Hatası İçin Bile Düzeltme Yayınları”, *Milliyet*, November 13, 2006, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/pazar/bir-harf-hatasi-icin-bile-kosesinde-duzeltme-yayimlardi-177665>.

³⁸ Bülent Ecevit, “Ermeni”, *Milliyet*, April 12, 1965, p. 2.

of CHP about the Armenian question has always been to reject the accusation of genocide.

CHAPTER THREE

TIP AND THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

3.1. THE GENERAL VIEW OF TIP

In 1960s, one of the important entities of the left in Turkey was the Workers' Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi* – TIP). This party was established by twelve trade-unionists, Şaban Yıldız, Kemal Sülker, Kemal Türkler, İbrahim Güzelce, Ali Demir, İbrahim Denizcier, Adnan Ardan, Avni Erakalın, Kemal Nebioğlu, Hüseyin Uslubaş, Ahmet Muslu and Salih Özkaraydır, on 13 February 1961.³⁹ Mehmet Ali Aybar, a doctor of law, became the first leader of the party in 1962.⁴⁰

The party accepted its first program in 1964. In this program, the party defined itself as a Kemalist and nationalist party, one of the basic principles of the party is Turkish nationalism.⁴¹ In the program, they claimed that Turkish nationalism was an ideology which had never been racist, aggressive and exploitative; it was humanitarian because it advocated that all nations live together in freedom and fraternal solidarity. According to them, Turkish nationalism refused racism and all reactionary and conservative views and accepted all citizens of the Republic of Turkey as Turks and did not discriminate the citizens according to their religion, language, race and denomination.⁴² We understand from those expressions in its program, TIP saw Turkish nationalism as civic nationalism which embraced all ethnic groups in Turkey and the party's aim was transforming the Turkish state to a socialist state; its goals on economy were the nationalisation of the large means of production and distribution, public enterprises for absent branches of industry in the

²⁷ Günay Dumrul Uygur, "Türkiye İşçi Partisi 1961-71", MA thesis (Istanbul University, 2020), p. 36.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 41.

²⁹ *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Programı* (Istanbul: Türkiye İşçi Partisi Yayınları, 1964), p. 67-84.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 79-80.

country and establishment of a socialist economy in favour of the working class.⁴³ In connection with this fact, we can define TIP under the leadership of Mehmet Ali Aybar as a left-wing nationalist and socialist party like the magazine *Yön* in spite of some theoretical differences about the socialist revolution in Turkey. TIP aimed to realize the socialist revolution through parliamentary democracy, Doğan Avcıoğlu saw necessary a military coup.

The fact that the party adopted nationalism gives us a clue about that the party could not accept the accusation “genocide” for its nation. As I mentioned in the introduction of my thesis, the first leader of TIP Mehmet Ali Aybar, when he attended to International War Crimes Tribunal that was a private people’s tribunal organized by Bertrand Russell to investigate and evaluate the foreign policy and military intervention in Vietnam of USA, this tribunal adjudged that USA carried out genocide in Vietnam. In the tribunal, one of its members, Jean-Paul Sartre referred to the “Armenian Genocide” as an example of genocide from the past. Then Aybar said that according to his memory book *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Tarihi* (The History of the Workers’ Party of Turkey) that he published in 1988:

Genocide is an intentional crime, a designed crime. It is a crime that aims to annihilate an ethnic group and is determined with the material actions and the way to success it. Being designed is a condition to commit the crime. An ethnic group is not three or five people. It means ten thousands, millions of people. If you do not annihilate whole or vast majority of them, you cannot achieve the goal. You should organize armed groups and educate them to kill thousands of people or charge the army to do it. If the ethnic group which you want annihilate lives in particular regions of the country, you should organize armed attacks like war operations. If they live among the

⁴³ Ibid., p. 64-65.

majority, you should try different operations. Both of them are operations that the state carries out.⁴⁴

In the continuation of the text, he mentions his knowledge about the “Armenian Genocide” issue:

However, the Turks and the Armenians are two ethnic groups which had lived together for centuries and therefore have many common properties. The conflicts began in the late 19th century; they began through provocation of the great states to divide the Ottoman Empire. The events which were talked occurred during the First World War. During the First World War, mass killings happened in some eastern and south-eastern provinces. The Armenian gangs which benefited from the advance of the Russian army raided the Turkish villages and kill the innocent people like women, children, youth and elders. The Turks killed the Armenians including the women, children, youth and elders too. Apart from this, the Armenians in these provinces were deported, in other words, forced to emigrate. And killings, bad affairs happened during this emigration. In those years, I was a child. We had Armenian friends. We visited each other’s homes. These events upset my parents and whole family. They often talked and discussed. I heard the word “deportation” firstly in those discussions. But we should remark that out of those provinces, any conflict and bloody event did not happen between the Armenians and Turks. The mutual massacres, mass killings were an extent of the Russo-Turkish war. The Turks and Armenians lived together in peace for centuries in the Ottoman Empire. Armenians were appointed to the high positions in the state. Those events happened in the provinces near the border in the war. That was an extension of the war. However, it did not happen in other provinces. Therefore we cannot qualify these bloody events as a genocide. We cannot say that the government

⁴⁴ Ömer Turan and Güven Gürkan Öztan, *Devlet Aklı ve 1915: Türkiye’de “Ermeni Meselesi” Anlatısının İnşası* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), p. 207-208.

pursued a policy of genocide. However, if it was genocide, the government should be, directly or indirectly, behind these events.⁴⁵

From this text, we understand that the first leader of TIP Mehmet Ali Aybar did not believe that the Ottoman government of that time committed a genocide. He thought that there were reciprocal killings between the Armenians and Turks and then government did not have any responsibility, it was the extension of the Russo-Turkish war.

A notable writer which was known with his socialist views and closeness to TIP and who wrote in the media organs of TIP like the newspaper *Akşam* and the magazine *Ant* in 1960s, Aziz Nesin shared same view about “the Armenian Genocide” issue. In his article titled “Parmak” (The Finger) which was published in the newspaper *Akşam*, on 26 April 1965, two days later from the 50th anniversary of the date 24 April 1915 which the Armenians accepted as he mentioned that there was “the British finger” behind the Turkish-Armenian conflict and claimed that the United Kingdom created the Armenian question and established the Armenian parties Hnchak and Tashnak. As its result, the Armenians and Turks shed blood of each other and its responsibility belongs to the imperialist powers like the United Kingdom, France and Russian Empire according to him. He mentions “the American finger” (USA) too, that after the First World War, according to the Treaty of Sèvres, the USA president Woodrow Wilson promised the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire to Armenia and that USA revived the Armenian question and recommends not being a tool of imperialism to the Armenians.⁴⁶

The comments of Aziz Nesin about this issue show us that he had a nationalist attitude toward this issue and viewed the claim of Armenian genocide, as a plan against Turkey by imperialist USA. At this point, we can say that Doğan Avcıoğlu and other writers in *Yön*, Mehmet Ali Aybar and Aziz Nesin were under

⁴⁵ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Tarihi* (Istanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1988), p. 146.

³⁴ Aziz Nesin, “Parmak”, *Akşam*, April 26, 1965.

the influence of left-wing nationalism which was dominant ideology in the left in Turkey at that time.

In the party, various factions began to be formed in 1968. I examined every one of the factions.

3.2. THE OTHER GROUPS IN TIP AND THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

3.2.1. Ant

Ant (Oath) was a weekly magazine closed to the dominant faction led by Mehmet Ali Aybar and sometimes he wrote also in that magazine.⁴⁷ It began to be published by Yaşar Kemal, Fethi Naci and Doğan Özgüden on 3 January 1967.⁴⁸ As Doğan Özgüden defined, it was not a magazine supporting the government of Aybar, just unity of the party and against the opponent factions which would demolish the party.⁴⁹ Aziz Nesin wrote also in this magazine (see 3.1. General View of TIP).

Starting from the 60th issue of the magazine which was published on 20 February 1968, the magazine began to publish the memories of Zekeriya Sertel who was one of socialist journalists who had written in the newspaper *Tan*. In the text published in this issue, Sertel criticizes Enver Pasha and the government of CUP: he mentions the riches of war and corruptions at the time of the First World War. He mentions the currents in the Ottoman Empire at that time and that he was a Turkish nationalist at that time but not a pan-Turkist or Turanist. Therefore he criticizes Enver Pasha who is a pan-Turkist leader as a dreamer. He criticizes the government of CUP for transforming the Ottoman Empire to a German colony. He tells that after

⁴⁷ For example: Mehmet Ali Aybar, “Amerika Yenilecektir!”, *Ant*, vol. 59, February 13, 1968, p. 7.

⁴⁸ *Ant*, vol. 1, January 3, 1967, p. 16.

⁴⁹ Doğan Özgüden, “Doğan Özgüden’in Anılarının Gösterdikleri”, interview by Gün Zileli, Avrupa Postası, accessed on January 28, 2022, <https://www.avrupa-postasi.com/dogan-ozguden-in-anilarinin-gosterdikleri-makale.1276.html>.

the war, he was arrested because of his activities against the collaborator government that was founded by the Allies in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁰

In 61st issue of the magazine published on 27 February 1968, the memories of Zekeriya Sertel continue. He tells that the jail where he was kept, called “Bekirağa Bölüğü”, was filled by Unionists (members of CUP). From this jail, he mentions the suspects of the Armenian events. One of them which he met was Nevzat Bey, a former governor, convicted of the Armenian events and condemned to death. Sertel says that he knew that he was innocent and one of the victims of the British persecution. These expressions of Sertel show us that Sertel criticized CUP but only for its collaboration to the German imperialism but he believes that the Unionists were innocent about the Armenian events; the penalties given on this issue were British persecution.⁵¹ Zekeriya Sertel as a left-wing nationalist did not want to see the Unionists as criminals of the Armenian massacre mainly because the imperialists accused them; he criticized CUP just for being collaborator of the German imperialism.

Until 21 April 1970 when the last issue of the magazine was published, the Armenian question was mentioned in that only two issues as memories of socialist journalist Zekeriya Sertel. We understand from this fact that between the years of 1967 and 1970, the Armenian question was not often told and in the historical issues, CUP was criticized for being a collaborator of German imperialism but not for the Armenian massacres. It is the proof of that the left-wing nationalist ideology which was dominant in the Workers’ Party of Turkey at that time had influence on this publishing. We see the nationalist approach which ignored what the Armenians experienced and view the Turks as innocent.

⁵⁰Zekeriya Sertel, “Zekeriya Sertel’in Hatıraları”, *Ant*, vol. 60, February 20, 1968, p. 8-9.

⁵¹ Sertel, Zekeriya, “Zekeriya Sertel’in Hatıraları-2”, *Ant*, vol. 61, February 27, 1968, p. 8.

3.2.2. Türk Solu

Türk Solu (Turkish Left) was a weekly magazine that began to be published on 17 November 1967 on the purpose of being the common media platform of the Turkish left. They did not support directly the socialist revolution in Turkey in contrast to the government of TIP. According to the analysis of *Türk Solu* on 1960's Turkey, Turkey was still an underdeveloped agricultural country which had feudal ruins and in such countries, the triple alliance of imperialism, comprador capital and feudal lordship dominate the economy and thus the politics too. According to their manifest in the first issue of the magazine, the first revolutionary step that the Turkish society should realize was the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution that whole of the Turkish nation, except "a few parasites", would participate with its proletariat, petite bourgeoisie, intelligentsia and national bourgeoisie which may be "liberated" from the influence of the compradors. According to them, then revolutionary struggle in Turkey was a struggle against imperialism and its local collaborators for full independent Turkey, full democratic Turkey and the democratic revolution. They defined themselves "nationalist" as meaning of "advocating left-wing nationalism".⁵²

The theorist of "national democratic revolution" idea for Turkey, Mihri Belli wrote in the same time in the magazine *Türk Solu* which defends the idea of national democratic revolution. In his speech titled "Türkiye'de Karşı Devrim" (Counter Revolution in Turkey) that he gave on 5 December 1968 in the Faculty of Political Science of Ankara and published in the 64th issue of *Türk Solu* on 4 February 1969, he mentioned that until 1924, two million Armenians and two million Greeks left Turkey, thus the Turkish bourgeoisie found opportunities in the sectors that they had left.⁵³ Belli did not give any detail in his speech about what happened to the Armenians and Greeks. He did not give any information about the events which

⁵² "Neden Çıkıyoruz?", *Türk Solu*, vol.1, November 17, 1967, p. 1.

⁵³ Mihri Belli, "Türkiye'de Karşı Devrim", *Türk Solu*, vol. 64, February 4, 1969, p. 14.

caused those results. He just focused on the historical development of the Turkish bourgeoisie.

Except the Mihri Belli's speech, almost nothing is found about the Armenian question in the magazine. This fact proves also that the Armenian question was not an issue to be discussed. On 14 April 1970, the last issue of the magazine was published. According to their last explanation published in the last issue, because of the separation of Mihri Belli and some writers, the magazine was in a crisis and they gave a break. They said that they would publish the magazine under the name "Türkiye Halkının Kurtuluşu İçin Türk Solu" (Turkish Left For Liberation of the People of Turkey) but it has never been published.⁵⁴

3.2.3. The *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* and *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* magazines

The monthly magazine *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* (Light the Socialist Magazine) or briefly *Aydınlık* (Light) was established by the supporters of the idea "national democratic revolution" in TIP in November 1968. According to their manifestation in their first issue, they regarded then national liberation movements in Latin America, Asia and Africa as important forces against imperialism.⁵⁵ In this manifest, they said that Turkey needed also, first of all, a national struggle against imperialism:

In Turkey which is under the hegemony of imperialism and where feudal relations of production dominate in some parts, the next struggle is the "national democratic revolution" struggle. Today, the power which avoids the development and being a society which is independent and purified from the feudality of Turkey is imperialism that is representative of all reactionaries of the world. USA the head representative of imperialism and its partners in Turkey, the comprador bourgeoisie and feudal ruins are the

⁵⁴ "Yayınımıza Ara Verirken", *Türk Solu*, vol. 126, April 14, 1970, p. 2.

⁵⁵ "Dünya, Türkiye ve Devrimci Mücadele", *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, vol. 1, November 1968, p. 12.

power which avoids the struggle of independence and democracy of our people. The interest of all national classes like the industrial and agricultural proletariat, peasants which are dependent to the land, petite bourgeoisie like military and civil bureaucracy, small business owners, artisans, peasants which own small or medium size land and national bourgeoisie conflict with imperialism.⁵⁶

They suggested firstly the national democratic revolution with the national classes and later transition to socialism led by the working class for Turkey:

The national democratic revolution, as a joint movement of the national classes, will provide the domination of the modes of property of the national classes in the economy in the extent that they participated to the movement and in proportion of their power. In the economy of the national democratic revolution, there will be the modes of those classes: collective property of the proletariat, small property of the petite bourgeoisie and private property of the national bourgeoisie. The elimination of imperialism and its collaborators which is the greatest power that avoids the progress of Turkey, the realization of the national democratic revolution will remove the barriers in front of socialism and the revolutionary struggle which will be conducted by the basic power of the national democratic revolution, the proletariat with the village workers will result in socialism. The socialist revolution as different from national democratic revolution will be the revolutionary power of the working class which will be allied with working peasants and the domination of the collective mode of property in the economy.⁵⁷

As we see the citations above, the magazine *Aydınlık* suggested a revolution in two stages for Turkey: national democratic revolution and socialist revolution. According to them, Turkey needed firstly a national struggle against imperialism as a

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 25-26.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

country which is dependent to imperialism, after the achievement of the national democratic revolution; the working class would realize the socialist revolution. With this theory, this faction opposed the government of Mehmet Ali Aybar in the party which advocated directly the socialist revolution.

About their reading the history of Turkey, in their manifest, they did not mention what happened to the Armenians in 1915. As difference from Doğan Avcıoğlu and Yön, they were critical to the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) which was the ruling party in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. In their manifest, in the chapter about the history of Turkey, they mention the strikes in Ottoman Empire and CUP is criticized for banning and quashing these strikes and putting the Ottoman people in the First World War under the yoke of the German imperialism, in the direction of the decision of Germany but they do not say anything about the situation of Armenians.⁵⁸

In the 2nd issue published in December 1968, the magazine focuses on the issue “the relation between the Ottoman Empire and German imperialism” and shares the article titled “The Ottoman Empire and German Imperialism” written by German Marxist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg in April 1915. In this article, then Turkish government is criticized for being a duteous tool of the German foreign policy and allowing the domination of Germany in the military organization of the Ottoman Empire. Luxemburg says that from summer of 1912, the regime of the Young Turks became reactionary, it returned to the regime of Abdul Hamid II.⁵⁹ In the article, there is nothing about Armenians except the mention of that there was a national question that included the Arabs, Greeks, Kurds, Armenians in the Ottoman Empire that collapsed the empire.⁶⁰

In the 10th issue which was published in August 1969, about the Armenians, a circular letter of Kazım Karabekir, the commander of the Turkish army in the 1920

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁷ Rosa Luxemburg, “Osmanlı Devleti ve Alman Emperyalizmi”, *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, vol. 2, December 1968, p. 141.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 142.

Turkish-Armenian War was shared under the title “From Our History”. This circular letter was written and distributed to the soldiers in the army on 4 August 1920 according to the magazine.⁶¹ In the cover letter written for this document, the magazine says that this document is important as it proved the anti-imperialist solidarity of the oppressed societies which struggle for national independence and the societies which have realized their proletarian revolutions. It is showed as example of that one of conservative members of the petite bourgeoisie and bureaucracy like Kazım Karabekir even saw the friendship with a nation which did a proletarian revolution as the keystone of the policy of struggle for liberation when the struggle for independence was a matter of life or death.⁶²

In the circular letter which was shared in the magazine, Kazım Karabekir sees Bolshevik Russia as the leader of the oppressed and prisoner nations against the nations which enchained the other nations and filled the treasures from their fortune like France and the nations which they used like Greece and Armenia. He says that Bolshevik Russia abolished the tsardom and became enemy against the invader states to spread the freedom that it obtained to oppressed people too.⁶³ He mentions that France supported the Armenians to invade the cities like Adana, Urfa, Antep and Maraş and that the United Kingdom supported the Dashnak government in Armenia to press Turkey from the Caucasus and prevent the connection of Turkey to the Bolsheviks.⁶⁴

In this issue of the magazine, there is not any comment about the events in 1915, they just shared the circular letter of Kazım Karabekir to show his positive approach about the alliance of the Kemalists as a national movement against imperialism with the Bolsheviks. *Aydınlık* was against Dashnak as it was anti-

⁴⁹ “Tarihimizden: Kazım Karabekir’den Umum Kıtata”, *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, vol. 10, August 1969, p. 329.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 329-330.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 332.

Bolshevik and collaborator of the British imperialism but they did not do any comment about why the Armenians collaborated with France to invade the cities which are in southeast of Turkey today and what happened to the Armenians before the establishment of the Republic of Armenia in 1918. They just considered the alliance of the Turkish national movement and the Bolsheviks against imperialism. Their theory of “national democratic revolution” and left-wing nationalist approach was effective in the formation of this point of view and they neglected the history of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

When the 15th issue of the magazine was published, in January 1970, a split happened in the magazine. The other monthly magazine *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* (Proletarian Revolutionary Light) was founded by an opponent faction that includes notable people in the history of the left in Turkey like Doğu Perinçek, Gün Zileli and Cengiz Çandar.⁶⁵ In their manifestation which they published in the 1st issue, they mention that some separatists existed in the magazine *Aydınlık* and accuse them of participating to opportunism of Aybar and Aren and establishing a front of unity without principles with everybody and every idea against *Aydınlık* and its proletarian revolutionary line. They accused this front of being a union of interests, not explaining their views precisely and behaving like hypocrite bourgeois politicians.⁶⁶ In response to that, *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* in which notable people like Mihri Belli and Mahir Çayan continued to write published an explanation in its 15th issue: they asserted that the split was about the article “Proleter Devrimci Safları Çelikleştirelim!” (Let’s Tighten Up The Proletarian Revolutionary Ranks!) which was published in the 12th issue of the magazine. They say that this article mentions a tendency to left deviation in their ranks and proposes a struggle against the tendency to left deviation or left opportunism which is seen as same with opportunism of Aybar and Aren and cleansing of their movement from left elements fallen in this tendency. They add that some writers in the magazine continued to defend this view

⁵³ “Yaşasın Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık!”, *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık*, vol. 1, January 1970, p. 165.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

in the last issues until that time.⁶⁷ They reject the accusations of *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* and defend that the intellectuals originated from the petite bourgeoisie may be open to the effects of opportunism. In response, *Aydınlık* accused *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* of ignoring the problem of right deviation and right opportunism and seeing it as same with left opportunism.⁶⁸

After the 15th issue, any article about the Armenians is found in neither *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* nor *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* too. We saw again that the Armenian question did not come up in the media in the late 1960s and early 1970s as much as the middle of 1960s that corresponded to the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide according to the Armenians. They did not consider the history of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire when they analysed the First World War as in the publication of the circular letter of Kazım Karabekir in *Aydınlık*. At this point, we see the effect of left-wing nationalism and the approach to Kemalism as anti-imperialist ideology.

Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi continued to be published until April 1971 after the coup d'état on 12 March 1971. *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* declared on January 1971 that it will be published as weekly magazine but it would not happen.

3.2.4. Emek

Emek (Labour) began to be published as fortnightly magazine on 1 May 1969. The magazine was directed by Sadun Aren.⁶⁹ The magazine belonged to the faction which supported Behice Boran as leader and she wrote in this magazine.⁷⁰ The magazine was published until 27 April 1970. Between the days of 8 May and 16 July

⁶⁷ “Bir Açıklama”, *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, vol. 15, January 1970, p. 161.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 161-162.

⁶⁹ *Emek*, vol.1, May 1, 1969, p. 16.

⁷⁰ For example: Behice Boran, “Sosyalist Harekette Küçük Burjuva Etkenler”, *Emek*, vol. 2, May 19, 1969, p. 6.

in same year, the magazine continued to be published as weekly. In June 1970, *Emek* monthly magazine began to publish and continue until May 1971.

There is nothing about the Armenian question in the magazine as the issue did not come up much in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

3.3. THE BAN OF TIP

Mehmet Ali Aybar stayed as leader of TIP until his resignation on 16 November 1969 after the general elections.⁷¹ After Aybar, Mehmet Ali Aslan and Şaban Yıldız became respectively the chairmen of the party.⁷² In the 4th congress of TIP which was held on 29-31 October 1970,⁷³ Behice Boran was elected as new leader of the party.⁷⁴ After the coup d'état on 12 March 1971, the party was banned on 20 July 1971.⁷⁵ On 1 May 1975, the Workers' Party of Turkey was founded second time, led by Behice Boran.⁷⁶

⁷¹ “Yeni Bir Aşamamın Eşiğinde”, *Emek*, December 1969, p.2.

⁷² “Şaban Yıldız Genel Başkan”, *Emek*, December 29, 1969, p. 3.

⁷³ “IV. Büyük Kongre Başarıyla Sonuçlandı”, *Emek* (1970), vol. 7, December 1970, p. 9.

⁷⁴ “Anti-Faşist Mücadele”, *Emek* (1970), vol. 9, February 1971, p. 9.

⁷⁵ Günay Dumrul Uygur, “Türkiye İşçi Partisi 1961-71”, MA thesis (Istanbul University, 2020), p. 36.

⁷⁶ Türkiye İşçi Partisi, *Yolumuz Açık Olsun* (Istanbul: Türkiye İşçi Partisi Yayınları, August 1975), accessed April 23, 2022,

https://turkiyeiscipartisi.org/?SX=_pdf.php&PDF=_dokuman/_tip_yolumuz_acik_olsun.pdf.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE LEFT YOUTH MOVEMENTS IN EARLY 1970S
AND THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

In October 1969, as the result of an extraordinary congress in the Federation of Debate Clubs (*Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu*, abbreviated FKF), the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey (*Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu*, abbreviated *Dev-Genç*) was founded as a revolutionary socialist youth organization.⁷⁷

The Federation of Thought Clubs was founded on 16 December 1965 by five thought clubs which were formed by the students closed to the Workers' Party of Turkey in Ankara University.⁷⁸ In the student clubs, the “national democratic revolution” theory of Mihri Belli was dominant in contrast to Mehmet Ali Aybar and Sadun Aren who were directly in favour of the socialist revolution and FKF adopted the strategy of “national democratic revolution” in its 3th general assembly on 3-4 January 1969.⁷⁹ After its transformation to Dev-Genç, various armed organizations appeared from it: the People's Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO) led by Deniz Gezmiş, the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (THKP-C) led by Mahir Çayan in December 1970 and the Workers' and Peasants' Liberation Army of Turkey (TİKKO) as the armed wing of the Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist led by İbrahim Kaypakkaya in April 1972.

In this chapter, I examine the approaches of the party and armed organizations which came up from Dev-Genç.

⁷⁷ “fkf (DEV-GENÇ) kurultayı proleter devrimcilerinin!”, *Türk Solu*, vol. 100, October 14, 1969, p. 8.

⁷⁸ Turhan Feyizoğlu, *Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu: Demokrasi Mücadelesinde Sosyalist Bir Öğrenci Hareketi* (Istanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2004), p. 120-121.

⁷⁹ “FKF Kongresinde Milli Demokratik Devrim Stratejisi Kabul Edildi”, *Türk Solu*, vol. 61, January 14, 1969, p. 12.

4.1. THE PEOPLE’S LIBERATION ARMY OF TURKEY (THKO)

The People’s Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu* – THKO) was an armed organization founded in December 1970. The organization was founded by the university students some of whom got military raining in Palestine for guerrilla war. Its first activity became on 29 December 1970: an armed attack against a police point near the embassy of USA in Ankara. They did activities like taking the American servants hostage, robbing a bank. According to them, these activities were to prepare to a guerrilla war in the rural area.⁸⁰ In 1971, after the coup d’état on 12 March, they have difficulty to organize under the martial law that was declared on 27 April 1971 in 11 provinces.⁸¹ In that year, many members of THKO were arrested.

THKO, as just an armed organization, did not have any program or publishing. Therefore, the views of THKO are understood only from the defences in the courts of its members as written documents. In the 1st THKO case that lasted between July and October of 1971, Deniz Gezmiş and his friends, the notable members of THKO, explained their views about the history of Turkey in their defence. In the defence, they explained firstly the Marxist-Leninist theory of history, on this basis they said “The history of the societies is the history of the conflicts between the oppressor and oppressed.” and “Today, imperialism represents the oppressor and has yoked the poor nations for its interests.” These sentences are based on the works *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels⁸² and *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* of Vladimir Lenin which defines imperialism as the export of the capital and the division of all territories of

⁸⁰ Tuncer Sümer, “THKO Militanı Tuncer Sümer 68’i ve Denizleri Anlatıyor”, interview by Politez, *Politez*, accessed on February 25, 2022, <https://www.endiseli.org/detail/-/8783/thko-militani-tuncer-sumer-68i-ve-denizleri-anlatiyor#.YhgplehBw2x>.

⁸¹ Gülben Mat, “Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Sıkıyönetimler”, PhD diss. (Dokuz Eylül University, 2008), p. 346.

⁸² Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, “Chapter I: Bourgeois and Proletarians”, trans. Samuel Moore (1888), accessed March 19, 2022, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#a1>.

the world among the biggest capitalist powers.⁸³ After this introduction, they presented their analysis on the history of Turkey. In this analysis, they emphasize that Turkey was the first nation which battled against imperialism but it was semi-dependent and oppressed against US imperialism at their time. They emphasize the international struggle against imperialism also with examples at that time from Asia, Africa and Latin America.⁸⁴ They prioritised the struggle against imperialism in accordance with the theory of “national democratic revolution” that was adopted by Dev-Genç.

They began from the Battle of Malazgirt when the Seljuk Empire, firstly a Turkic state entered to Anatolia to analyse the history of Turkey and undertook a detailed analysis of the political economy of the Ottoman Empire. In the part that they analysed the second constitutional era of the Ottoman Empire (1908-1920), they viewed the Committee of Union and Progress as a patriotic and progressive party and the opposition party, Freedom and Accord Party (Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası) as a collaborator party of the United Kingdom. They highlighted that the Karakol Society and the associations for defence of rights (müdafaa-i hukuk cemiyeti) in Anatolia were founded by the Unionists to struggle against the imperialist powers that had occupied Turkey after the First World War, at same time, the Accordists collaborated with the foreign powers and in the republican era, continued in the Liberal Republican Party (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası) and Democrat Party.⁸⁵ At this point, I want to highlight that Karakol Society was founded on the order of Talaat Pasha who had fled to Germany and is charged with genocide against the Armenians as the interior minister of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 but the defence of Deniz Gezmiş and his friends does not contain any critique about Talaat Pasha. They considered

⁸³ Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, “VII. Imperialism as a Special Stage of Capitalism”, accessed March 20, 2022, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch07.htm>.

⁸⁴ *I. THKO Davası*, edited by Halit Çelenk (Internet edition, April 2013), accessed on March 12, 2022, <https://halitcelenk.org/sites/default/files/kitaplar/Halit%20%C3%87elenk%20-%20I.%20THKO%20Davas%C4%B1.pdf>, p. 316-317.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 329-330.

Karakol Society as an organization that struggled against imperialism for independence.⁸⁶

In their defence, they mention the support of Soviet Russia to Mustafa Kemal Pasha. They say that the Soviet delegation led by Colonel Budyenni promised to Mustafa Kemal Pasha in the meeting in June 1919 that Soviet Russia would support the resistance in Turkey and supply necessary arm and money against imperialism and the Armenian and Pontic Greek organizations which were under the order of the imperialist powers.⁸⁷ Deniz Gezmiş and his friends counted six articles about the struggle against imperialism and internal riots supported by imperialism and they say in 5th article: “In Eastern Anatolia, the internal riot which was started by Armenians for an independent Armenia with the support of USA was squashed by civil people and the army.”⁸⁸

In this part, they attribute to the Turkish-Armenian War, the Eastern front of the Turkish Independence War that happened in 1920. During the First World War, on 3 March 1918, the Ottoman Empire signed a peace treaty with Soviet Russia that wanted to withdraw from the war, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. According to this treaty, Soviet Russia ceded Kars region situated in Eastern Anatolia that included Kars, Ardahan and some part of Erzurum provinces of contemporary Turkey and that the Russian Empire annexed in 1878 to Ottoman Empire.⁸⁹ After the Armistice of Mudros signed on 30 October 1918, a provisional government named “Provisional Government of South West Caucasia” was founded by Turks there because the Ottoman forces had to withdraw according to the armistice.⁹⁰ Armenia, an

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 338.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 340.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 343.

⁸⁹ Marziye Memmedli and Hilal Akgüller, “Brest-Litovsk Antlaşması’nın Siyasi Sonuçları (Sovyet Rusya ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Açısından)”, *Belgi*, vol. 20 (Summer 2020), p. 2723, <https://doi.org/10.33431/belgi.745630>.

⁹⁰ Erkan Karagöz, “Güneybatı Kafkas Demokratik Cumhuriyeti ve Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Efsanesi”, p. 4, academia.edu, accessed April 24, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/9889313/G%C3%9CNEYBATI_KAFKAS_DEMOKRAT%C4%B0K_CU_MHUR%C4%B0YET%C4%B0_VE_TE%C5%9EK%C4%B0LAT_I_MAHSUSA_EFSANES%C4%B0.

independent republic at that time, did not recognize the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and claimed on Kars region. On 19 April 1919, Armenia occupied Kars with the support of the United Kingdom.⁹¹ According to the Treaty of Sèvres signed on 10 August 1920, a peace treaty after the First World War between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies, the western border of Armenia would be determined by the president of USA.⁹² In September 1920, the Turkish army commanded by Kazım Karabekir which was attached to Mustafa Kemal's government in Ankara began to attack Armenia to recapture Kars and the Turkish-Armenian War continued until 3 December 1920 when the Treaty of Alexandropol was signed. Turkey became successful to repossess Kars region.⁷⁹

After the six articles, the influence of USA on the internal riot in Eastern Anatolia was emphasized and in the defence, they mention that the US Department of State planned to establish a state in the Turkish Straits that would have an international status, an Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia and a Turkish state in Central Anatolia under the protection of US.⁹³

Similar to publishing the circular letter of Kazım Karabekir by *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* in its 10th issue (see pages 24-25 of my thesis), they did not explain what happened to Armenians in Ottoman Empire in 1915; they just focused on the relation between the imperialism and the Dashnak government of Armenia after the First World War. In addition to that, THKO viewed the Committee of Union and Progress as an anti-imperialist party and the predecessors of the national liberation movement against imperialism in Turkey, including Karakol Society founded by Talaat Pasha who is seen as one of the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide by Armenians. It proves how much Kemalist narrative of history and nationalist approach were effective on THKO.

⁹¹ Memmedli and Akgüller, p. 2730.

⁹² "Treaty of Sèvres, Article 89", Wikisource, accessed March 31, 2022, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_S%C3%A8vres/Part_III#Article_89.

⁹³ *I. THKO Davası*, edited by Halit Çelenk (Internet edition, April 2013), accessed on March 12, 2022, <https://halitcelenk.org/sites/default/files/kitaplar/Halit%20%C3%87elenk%20-%201.%20THKO%20Davas%C4%B1.pdf>, p. 344.

On 6 May 1972, Deniz Gezmiş and his friends were executed.⁹⁴

4.2. THE PEOPLE’S LIBERATION PARTY-FRONT OF TURKEY (THKP-C)

The People’s Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi – THKP-C) was founded in same time with the People’s Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO) led by Mahir Çayan in December 1970. As different from THKO, it was organized as a political party and its armed wing “the front”, it had a congress (general committee) and a central committee.⁹⁵ It prioritized the urban guerrilla war.⁹⁶

Mahir Çayan was one of writers of *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* and wrote his theory about the socialist revolution in Turkey in his work *Kesintisiz Devrim I-II-III* (Continuous Revolution I-II-III). In this work, he analysed the history of Turkey but he did not write anything about the second constitutional era of the Ottoman Empire, he just analyzed the Ottoman mode of production.⁹⁷ Mahir Çayan and his friends did a detailed analysis on the Ottoman history only in their defence in the case after they were arrested on 1 June 1971.⁹⁸ On 16 August 1971, their case started.⁹⁹ They began to read in the court on 25 November 1971 and escaped from the jail on 29 November.¹⁰⁰ According to the testimony of Sina Çıladı, Ulaş Bardakçı wrote the chapter about the structure of the Ottoman society and benefited from the book *Türkiye’nin Düzeni* (The Organization of Turkey) of Doğan Avcıoğlu.¹⁰¹ It proves that *Türkiye’nin Düzeni* of Avcıoğlu was an important source for analysis of the

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

⁹⁵ Turhan Feyizoğlu, *Mahir: On’ların Öyküsü* (Istanbul: Totem Yayınevi, 2017), p. 343.

⁹⁶ TC Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı Askeri Savcılığı, *İddianame (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Parti Cephe Davası)* (Istanbul, 1973), accessed May 1, 2022, http://librared.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/thkp-c-iddianame_watermark.pdf, p. 86.

⁹⁷ Mahir Çayan, *Bütün Yazılar* (Istanbul: Eriş Yayınları, 2003), p. 285.

⁹⁸ Turhan Feyizoğlu, *ibid.*, p. 485-488.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 513.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 543-547.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 538.

history of Turkey for the left in Turkey at the time (see Introduction, p. 2). In their defence too, they did not embark any analysis about what happened to the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. They just analysed then ruling party, the Committee of Union and Progress, as two wings: the dominant wing which was collaborator of the German imperialism and the radical wing that which would evolve to the Association of Defence of Rights after the First World War and they criticized the CUP government for being capitalist and against then workers' movements.¹⁰²

THKP-C dissolved after the clash in Kızıldere village on 30 March 1972 when Çayan was killed.¹⁰³

4.3. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF TURKEY/MARXIST-LENINIST (TKP/ML)

The Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist was founded on 24 April 1972 led by İbrahim Kaypakkaya.¹⁰⁴ İbrahim Kaypakkaya was one of writers of the *Türk Solu* magazine.¹⁰⁵ Later, he continued in the *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik* (PDA) magazine.¹⁰⁶ He was a member of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey (Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi - TİİKP) that was founded by the movement of PDA. He opposed the government of the party because he was in favour of an armed struggle.¹⁰⁷ In March 1972, he broke up from the party with some his friends.¹⁰⁸ Thus he founded the Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist and

¹⁰² Mahir Çayan ve Mücadele Arkadaşlarından THKP-C Savunma (Istanbul: 68'liler Birliği Vakfı Yayınları, April 2016), p. 49-50.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 621-630.

¹⁰⁴ "Who we are?", the official web site of TKP/ML, accessed May 3, 2022, <https://www.tkpm.com/who-we-are/>.

¹⁰⁵ İbrahim Kaypakkaya, "Değirmenköylülerin mücadelesine omuz verelim!", *Türk Solu*, vol. 105, November 18, 1969.

¹⁰⁶ İbrahim Kaypakkaya, "işçi-köylü hareketleri ve proleter devrimci politika", *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik*, vol. 5, May 1970.

¹⁰⁷ İbrahim Kaypakkaya, *Seçme Yazılar* (Istanbul: Umut Yayıncılık), accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/turkce/kaypakkaya/kaypakkayasecmeyazilar.pdf>, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

its armed wing the Workers' and Peasants' Liberation Army of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu – TİKKO).

In January 1972, while Kaypakkaya was prepared for the congress of TİİKP before his split from the party, he wrote his critique against the government of the party about the approach to Kemalism: “Şafak Revizyonizminin Kemalist Hareket, Kemalist İktidar Dönemi, İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları, Savaş Sonrası ve 27 Mayıs Hakkındaki Tezleri” (The thesis of the revisionism of the *Şafak* magazine about the Kemalist movement, the period of the Kemalist government, the years of Second World War, the post-war period and 27 May).⁹¹ In this article, Kaypakkaya drafted an article about the Kemalist revolution, written by Shnurov, a Bolshevik. Shurnov argued that the Turkish national revolution that was called “Kemalist Revolution” was governed by the national bourgeoisie of Turkey that was constituted by merchants, landlords and a little number of industrialists.¹⁰⁹ Kaypakkaya approved that the Kemalist Revolution was a national bourgeois revolution led by the commercial bourgeoisie in the alliance with the landlords and usurers.¹¹⁰ As different from other youth movements of that time like THKO and THKP-C, Kaypakkaya and TKP/ML defended that the class which realized the Kemalist Revolution was the comprador bourgeoisie which compromised with the European imperialist powers and Turkey continued to be a semi-colony.¹¹¹ He did comparisons between the histories of Turkey and China in same article. For example, he said “How the comprador bourgeoisie and feudal lords took the power after the 1924-1927 Chinese Revolution, in Turkey too, a similar event realized.”, “How the middle bourgeoisie in China participated to Kuomintang after the 1924-1927 First Revolutionary Civil War, those in Turkey participated to CHP.”¹¹² Later, he added “Mustafa Kemal and the classes which he represented were revolutionary and national liberator as Chiang Kai-shek and the classes which he represented”. He contrasted Mustafa Kemal

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 121.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 122.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 123-126.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 130.

Atatürk and Sun Yat-sen who was seen as Atatürk of China by TİİKP: he said that Atatürk was not Sun Yat-sen of Turkey; Chiang Kai-shek of Turkey because Sun Yat-sen was allied with the communists in China, Mao Zedong was also one of the members of the central committee of Sun's party. According to Kaypakkaya, Sun Yat-sen had friendly relations with USSR, was in favor of increasing the life conditions of the workers and peasants and giving them the rights and freedoms as much as a bourgeois democracy could give and he struggled for them until the end of his life. Sun Yat-sen was the spokesman of the peasants, not the capitalists and landlords.¹¹³ Kaypakkaya continued with Lenin's positive views about Sun.

According to the testimony of his comrade Muzaffer Oruçoğlu, Kaypakkaya tried to contact with the old communists and be informed about the history of the Communist Party of Turkey, benefited from the Soviet sources and historians, for example, he liked Mustafa Akdağ as a historian because Akdağ had written about the Alevi massacres during the reign of Selim I and found objective his approach. He liked Akdağ as a historian who examined the issue with its economic base and looked deeply, not superficially.¹¹⁴ He said about the old members of the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP):

According to an old revolutionary friend who listened someone who experienced 1930s, in that time the slogan of TKP was that: "Damned be the fascist dictatorship of the Kemalists". However, this slogan was abandoned later.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 165.

¹¹⁴ Eylül Deniz Yaşar, "Kaypakkaya ile yıllarını anlattı: Sadelik, mülkten uzak durma, dayanışma...", mezopotamyaajansi.com, accessed August 30, 2022, <https://mezopotamyaajansi.com/tum-haberler/content/view/97116>.

¹¹⁵ İbrahim Kaypakkaya, *Seçme Yazılar* (Istanbul: Umut Yayıncılık), accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/turkce/kaypakkaya/kaypakkayasecmeyazilar.pdf>, p. 164.

From this part, we understand that Kaypakkaya researched the history of the Turkish communists and discovered that the old communists did not have a positive view towards Kemalism. Thus Kaypakkaya formed his view towards Kemalism.

Kaypakkaya emphasized with reference to Shnurov again that the alliance of the commercial bourgeoisie, landlords, usurers and the weak industrial bourgeoisie substituted a part of the former commercial bourgeoisie which came with imperialism and the bourgeoisie of the national minorities such as the Armenians and Greeks. Shnurov explained that the national capital in Turkey was formed from partially the Armenian and Greek enterprises which were confiscated after they left the country, partially from despoiled state institutions and briberies. The Kemalist politicians held the institutions of the minorities like Armenians and Greeks and founded new enterprises.¹¹⁶ Kaypakkaya learned that a part of landlords in Turkey confiscated the abandoned lands of the Armenians and Greeks.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, he mentioned about the massacres against the Armenians and Greeks under the heading of the middle bourgeoisie in Turkey:

As in the era of CUP, in the republican era too, a part of the middle bourgeoisie which participated in the independence war prospered well by (. . .) confiscating the commodities and properties of the Armenian and Greek capitalists who left Turkey and were massacred, they broke away from other parts of the national middle bourgeoisie.¹¹⁸

It can be argued that this article of Kaypakkaya was we can say that it is the first text which argued that there was a massacre against Armenians and Greeks and their properties were transferred to the Turkish capital holders.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 127.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 128.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.129-130.

In the article “Türkiye’de Milli Mesele” (National Question in Turkey) which Kaypakkaya wrote in December 1971, in the part about the Kurdish national movement, he says:

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, capitalism that had entered silently in the life of Eastern Europe and Asia awakened the national movements in the regions. Other nationalities in Turkey were organized in separated nation-states (or multinational states) from Turkey as much as the development of the production of commodities and capitalism. The Armenians who were massively massacred and deported in 1915 and 1919 - 1920 are exceptional.¹¹⁹

This statement of İbrahim Kaypakkaya is clearly the acceptance of the Armenian massacre. We can say that TKP/ML founded by Kaypakkaya became the first movement that recognized the Armenian massacre in the history of the Republic of Turkey. In same article, “Türkiye’de Milli Mesele” (National Question in Turkey), Kaypakkaya says that in Turkey too, genocides happened:

The pressure of the bourgeoisie and landlords of the dominant nation for the sake of “the market” and the interests of the dominant bureaucracy leads to the extortion of the democratic rights and massive massacres (genocide). There are many examples of genocide in Turkey too.¹²⁰

As we see, İbrahim Kaypakkaya did not neglect the term “genocide” and used for the massacres in Turkey. Kaypakkaya wrote this article about the Kurdish question but if we think it with other articles which I mentioned above, it is clear that he qualified the massacres against the Armenians and Greeks as genocides.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 186.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

Kaypakkaya was arrested on 29 January 1973 in Tunceli. On 18 May 1973, he was killed in Diyarbakır Jail.¹²¹ TKP/ML is active even today.¹²²

¹²¹ Nami Temeltaş, “Ser Verip Sır Vermeyen İbrahim Kaypakkaya”, [bianet.org](https://m.bianet.org/bianet/yasam/174846-ser-verip-sir-vermeyen-ibrahim-kaypakkaya), accessed June 3, 2022, <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/yasam/174846-ser-verip-sir-vermeyen-ibrahim-kaypakkaya>.

¹²² The official web site of TKP/ML, accessed on June 3, 2022, <https://www.tkpml.com/>.

CONCLUSION

Between the years of 1961 and 1972, the events that the Armenians lived in 1915 were not discussed much in Turkey and in the world too. The Armenian deportation in 1915 had been ignored since the foundation of the republic in 1923 and the ignorance of the event affected the politics and the left in Turkey too. Before 1960s, some people in the left mentioned the Armenian massacres in 1915 like Nazım Hikmet, poet, a member of the Communist Party of Turkey who lived between the years of the 1902 and 1963 who wrote verses “The lamps of Karabet the Grocer glowed./This Armenian citizen did not forgive that his father was slaughtered over the Kurdish mountains but he loves you because you too, you did not forgive those who soiled the hands of the Turkish people.” about the Armenian massacre in his poem *Akşam Gezintisi* (A Tour in the Evening) and Hikmet Kıvılcımlı who mentioned the Armenian massacre in his work *TKP'nin Eleştirel Tarihi: Yol* (The Critical History of TKP: Way) which he wrote in 1930s when he was in jail. He believed that the creation of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic as land for the Armenians resolved the Armenian question and the Armenian diaspora would avenge the Turkish bourgeoisie through communist movements in the countries where they lived.

1965 was an important year as the year when commemorations were held by Armenians for “the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide”. In 1963, the *Yön* magazine became the first left-wing media outlet in Turkey that was interested in the claims of the Armenian diaspora. The director of the magazine Doğan Avcıoğlu had a past in the Republican People’s Party (CHP) as deputy manager in the bureau of research and documentation. The main cadre of *Yön* except Avcıoğlu was formed by Mümtaz Soysal, İlhan Selçuk, İlhami Soysal, Hamdi Avcıoğlu and Cemal Reşit Eyüboğlu. Before the 1960 coup d’état, they wrote in the magazines close to CHP like *Forum*, *Akis*, *Kim* and *Ulus*. They formed a Kemalist school of thought which is originated from CHP and tried to develop Kemalism as a socialist ideology. It was an

ideology that synthesizes nationalism and socialism. Naturally the ignorance of the Armenian events in 1915 continued among them. With their expression “Today, the Armenian question does not exist, this question became history but some Armenians who left Turkey still dream an Armenia.” in their first article in *Yön* about the Armenian question, beyond the ignorance, we see the legitimization of the deportation of the Armenians from Turkey and seeing the deportation as a solution. *Yön* viewed the commemorations of genocide of the Armenian diaspora as activities against Turkey to occupy the eastern part of the country with the support of imperialist powers. Their approach to the foreign issues, we see that they synthesized the anti-imperialism with nationalism against the ethnic minorities in Turkey.

In 1960s, the Workers’ Party of Turkey (TİP) had a Kemalist and left-wing nationalist ideology according to its program but they did not focus on the Armenian question. The leader of TİP Mehmet Ali Aybar’s reaction in the International War Crimes Tribunal to Jean-Paul Sartre about the expression “Armenian Genocide” was an exception. However, Aybar argued that there were reciprocal massacres between the Armenians and Turks and the Turkish government did not have any responsibility and it was an extension of the Russo-Turkish war during the First World War so, therefore it cannot be a genocide.

In 1965, the Republican People’s Party (CHP), the founding party of the Turkish republic, began to define itself as “the left of the centre” but as the leader of CHP, İsmet İnönü was a member of the ruling party in 1915, the Committee of Union and Progress and the friend of Talaat Pasha. CHP as a nationalist party has never accepted the accusation of genocide.

In the *Ant* magazine which began to be published by members of TİP in 1967, an interview with Zekeriya Sertel, a notable socialist journalist, was published and in this interview, Sertel conveyed that he viewed the members of CUP as innocent and refused the accusation of massacre to Armenians. This proves the effect of nationalism in TİP, as they ignored what the Armenians experienced. As a different explanation at that period: in Mihri Belli’s speech titled “Türkiye’de Karşı Devrim”

(Counter Revolution in Turkey) that he gave on 5 December 1968 in the Faculty of Political Science of Ankara and published in the 64th issue of *Türk Solu*, another Kemalist and left-wing nationalist magazine, on 4 February 1969, he mentioned that until 1924, two million Armenians and two million Greeks left Turkey, thus the Turkish bourgeoisie found opportunities in the sectors that they had left but in this speech, Belli did not give any detail about how the Armenians and Greeks left the country. The *Aydınlık* magazine published the circular letter of Kazım Karabekir in its 10th issue, in August 1969, to show his positive approach about the alliance of the Kemalists as a national movement against imperialism with the Bolsheviks, the editors of *Aydınlık* considered the Dashnak government in Armenia as collaborators of the British imperialism but did not write anything about what happened to the Armenians before 1918 when the Republic of Armenia was established and the Armenians came with French forces to the southern part of Turkey. Among the armed organizations which were founded by youth in early 1970s, the People's Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO) led by Deniz Gezmiş had a positive view toward CUP as a progressive and anti-imperialist movement which contributed to the independence war after the First World War, ignored what they did to the Armenians. The People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (THKP-C) was more critical to CUP like *Aydınlık* and considered it as two wings: the collaborators of the German imperialism and the radical wing which would contribute to the independence war after the First World War. They ignored the Armenians too.

TKP/ML is arguably the first organization which recognised the Armenian massacre. The leader of TKP/ML İbrahim Kaypakkaya as different from Mihri Belli explained how the handover of the commodities of the Armenians and Greeks to the Turkish bourgeoisie happened and mentions that they were massacred. When he mentioned the national movements in the Ottoman Empire, he counted the Armenians as an unsuccessful example because they were deported and massacred.

In this period, the cause of the difference between TKP/ML and the former organizations about this issue is the dominance of Kemalism and Turkish nationalism

in the Turkish left. Before TKP/ML, for example the *Yön* magazine as a nationalist magazine saw the “Armenian Genocide” issue as a threat of the Armenian diaspora against Turkey to establish an Armenia on its territories with the help of imperialism; TİP was a nationalist and socialist party according to its program, as different from *Yön* it advocated completely for the socialist economy. The other factions outside the government of the party like the magazines *Ant*, *Türk Solu*, *Aydınlık*, *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık*, *Emek* criticised CUP of being collaborator of German imperialism during the First World War. The reflection of this situation is seen in the analysis of history of Turkey made by armed organizations which were originated from Dev-Genç the socialist youth organization, like THKO and THKP-C. The fact that *Türkiye'nin Düzeni* (Organization of Turkey) written by Doğan Avcıoğlu the founder of *Yön* was an important source for the left to research the history of Turkey is important factor for this ignorance. İbrahim Kaypakkaya benefited from different sources like Shnurov, a Soviet academician to analyze the history of Turkey and considered the national question in Turkey. He did comparisons between the histories of Turkey and China. As his comrade Muzaffer Oruçoğlu told, Kaypakkaya tried to contact with the old communists and be informed about the history of the Communist Party of Turkey, benefited from the Soviet sources and historians, for example, he liked Mustafa Akdağ as a historian because Akdağ had written about the Alevi massacres during the reign of Selim I and found objective his approach. He liked Akdağ as a historian who examined the issue with its economic base and looked deeply, not superficially. The information which he got from the old communists in Turkey shaped his view towards Kemalism. He said that:

According to an old revolutionary friend who listened someone who experienced 1930s, in that time the slogan of TKP was that: “Damned be the fascist dictatorship of the Kemalists”. However, this slogan was abandoned later.

In this thesis, I revealed how left-wing nationalism and the anti-imperialist interpretations of Kemalism as anti-imperialist ideology were dominant in the Turkish leftist thinking in their analysis of the Armenian issue between 1961 and 1972.

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