LEFTIST DIASPORIC IDENTITY:

THE EXPERIENCE OF TURKISH AND KURDISH

REFUGEES IN SWITZERLAND

by

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The population of leftist activists in Turkey in the second half of the twentieth century has long been an under-researched community. Many members of this diverse group of people fled the country after periods of post-military coup clampdowns, with a large percentage settling as refugees in various European countries. Within this community not only is there ideological variance under the broad heading of "leftism" but also significant ethnic and socio-economic differences. This research attempts to understand how leftist ideology has played a role in the formation of collective identity, focusing in particular on the comparison of Turkish and Kurdish members of the refugee community in Switzerland. By utilizing the findings of in-depth interviews I conducted, this thesis addresses the following research question: What forms of collective identity emerge from the Turkish and Kurdish refugee experience in Switzerland and in what ways can leftist ideology be viewed as the basis for a diasporic identity? I have chosen to examine two research sites of the refugee community: first, the legal process and second, changing forms of political activism. Using the findings from these sites, I argue that a specifically leftist collective identity has shaped the refugee experience and that political ideology has played a key role in the formation of diasporic identity over more commonly examined sources such as national, religious, or ethnic background.

Key Words: diaspora, transnationalism, refugee communities, leftist ideology, political activism, collective identity, legal process

ÖZET

Türkiye'deki solcu aktivistler ve bu grubun kimlik değişimi akademik literatürde çok araştırılmış bir konu değildir. Bu toplumun birçok üyesi askeri darbelerden sonra ülkeden kaçmış ve çoğunlukla değişik Avrupa ülkelerine mülteci olarak yerleşmişlerdir. Bu toplumun içinde, genel 'solculuk' adı altında sadece ideolojik farklılıklar değil, aynı zamanda etnik ve sosyoekonomik farklılıklar da bulunmaktadır. Bu araştırma, sol ideolojinin kolektif kimlik oluşturmada nasıl rol oynadığını, İsviçre'deki Türk ve Kürt mülteci cemiyet üyelerinin karşılaştırmasını yaparak anlamayı amaçlamıştır. Derinlemesine yapılan görüşmelerden çıkan sonuçları kullanarak, bu tez iki araştırma sorusunu ele almaktadır: İsviçre'deki Türk ve Kürt mülteci deneyimlerinden ortaya çıkan kolektif kimlik hangi formlarda oluşmuştur? Hangi biçimlerde sol ideoloji diasporik kimliğin temeli olarak görülebilir? Bu mülteci toplumunu iki araştırma alanında incelemeyi seçtim: ilki yasal süreçler ve ikincisi de değişen siyasi aktivizm boyutları. Bu alanları incelemek, ulusal memleket ve göç edilen ülkedeki transnasyonal anlayışların nasıl değiştiğini ve aynı zamanda ulusal, dinsel ve etnik geçmiş gibi sıklıkla incelenen boyutlar yerine, siyasi ideolojinin diasporik kimlik oluşumundaki rolünü anlamayı mümkün kılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: diaspora, transnasyonalism, mülteci cemiyetleri, sol ideoloji, siyasi aktivizm, kolektif kimlik, yasal süreçler

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

BSP	United Socialist Party
DEV-GENÇ	Federation of Revolutionary Youth of Turkey
DEV-SOL	Revolutionary Left
DİSK	Confederation of Workers' Unions of Turkey
HADEP	The People's Democratic Party
NSM	New Social Movements
ODTU	Middle East Technical University
ÖDP	Freedom and Solidarity Party
PDA	Swiss Labor Party
PKK	Kurdish Workers' Party
RPP	Republican People's Party
SVP	Swiss People's Party
THKP	Turkish National-Liberation Army
TLP	Turkish Labor Party
TKEP	Turkish Communist Labor Party
TOB-DER	Turkish Teachers' Association
TP-LP/F	Turkish Popular-Liberation Party/Front
TKP-ML	Communist/Marxist-Leninist Party of Turkey
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees
YDGD-F	Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Federation

INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, STUDY RATIONALE, AND METHODOLOGY

For decades Western Europe has been a key destination for all types of emigrants from Turkey. These groups of people reflect different reasons for leaving, varying migratory paths, and divergent resettlement experiences. Many of the political refugees living in Western Europe fled during a context of political instability and state repression in Turkey. In fact, estimates indicate that there are hundreds of thousands of refugees from Turkey living in Western Europe today (UNHCR, 2005). Two time periods in particular have produced a large number of outgoing refugees: the time after the September 12, 1980 military coup and the war between Kurdish separatists and the Turkish army in southeastern Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s. A large number of the refugees of this post-1980 coup era, both Turkish and Kurdish, come from within the leftist movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Though their numbers are smaller than the economic immigrant population in most countries, they can be characterized an active and vibrant refugee community. The experiences of such Turks and Kurds who fled after the 1980 coup and settled in Switzerland constitute the focus of this thesis.

As part of the fieldwork for this research, I conducted interviews with members of this community, all of whom gained refugee status in Switzerland in the post-1980 period.

The 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and subsequent 1967

Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees define a refugee as:

> a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution". (UNHCR, 2007)

The 1951 convention is the basis for refugee policy and law in Switzerland and all other

Western European countries. For the purposes of this thesis, the term "refugee" will

refer mainly to the social and political dimensions of people who have undergone exile[1],

rather than the strictly legal dimensions of the status. As a further point of clarification,

"asylum-seekers" are individuals who apply for refugee status outside of their home

country. When such an application is accepted, they gain the legal status of refugee.

Unless otherwise stated, this thesis will use the terms "asylum-seeker" and "refugee"

interchangeably. While many of the participants in this research have refugee status, a

few are waiting on their application, and still others are naturalized citizens.

Missing in the academic literature is research into this population of leftist activists that

scattered to the various countries of Western Europe. Though not a member of the

European Union, Switzerland has long been a destination for refugees fleeing Turkey

due largely to its economic strength and high quality of life. In this thesis, therefore, I

have set out to understand how leftist ideology has played a role in the construction of

new forms of collective, or shared identity in the diaspora, focusing in particular on the

comparison of Turkish and Kurdish individuals in Switzerland. Taking the literatures on

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[1] Unlike "refugee", "exile" is not a legal term but in this research will also be used to refer to the forced dispersal of a population from their home country.

social movements and diaspora as the theoretical framework of my analysis, I use the findings from the fieldwork I conducted to explore the research questions highlighted below. The following sections lay out the research questions and rationale for the study, methodological choices, and thesis structure.

Research Questions and Rationale

The main research question of this thesis is as follows: First, what role does political belief or ideology play in the construction of a collective identity among exiled communities? More specifically, I engage with the question of how leftist ideology has contributed to the construction of identity within the Turkish and Kurdish refugee communities in Switzerland.[2] Second, I also examine the following questions: What are sources of contention within this community and how does that affect an understanding of collective identity? Are there grounds to consider the existence of a diasporic leftist identity that accomodates ethnic identity and allegiances, particularly when comparing Turkish and Kurdish individuals? Accordingly, I argue that the life trajectories of these individuals, their relations with state institutions in both Turkey and Switzerland, and changes in their political activism and ideology constitute a collective leftist identity that is diasporic in nature, while taking into account contention within the community.

There are three reasons why this particular research topic is relevant to scholarship. The first is related to the literature on social movements and diaspora. The social movements

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[2] Here and throughout the thesis, "Turkish" and "Kurdish" refer to ethnic background, though both populations come from the nation-state of Turkey.

literature is characterized by a wide variety of research on successful mobilization efforts such as the American Civil Rights movement (Isaac, 2008, Tarrow, 2008, McAdam et al., 1995). There has been less research conducted on movements that were violently interrupted with state repression and whose members were forced to flee. In addition, the contentious relations within movements have traditionally been understudied in favor of focusing on similarities within. This thesis seeks to add those dimensions to the literature. The concept of "diaspora" has expanded into an academic field of study examining groups of ethnic, religious, and national groups of dispersed peoples and their real and imagined relations with the homeland (Anthias, 1998, Butler, 2001; Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 1997, Safran, 1991; Sökefeld, 2006, Tambiah, 2000, Turner, 2008). It has very rarely however, been utilized to study collective identity formation among exiled peoples on the basis of ideology or political belief (Anthias, 1998). Regardless of time or place, politically engaged individuals are actively involved in constructing notions of how society should function. They often base their political activism on such notions and also the professions they choose to do, the people they socialize with, and their conceptions of self. The question remains as to how that construction shifts when displacement occurs from the home country[3] to the host country and how that shift also constitutes new diasporic understandings of self.

The second aspect is more context-specific. For scholars working on issues related to Turkey, there is a noticeable absence of research on the fate of a significant number of people who fled the country due to political persecution. While an impressive body of

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[3] Though the use of the terms "home country" or "homeland" and "host country" or "hostland" could be debated, for the purposes of this thesis, they will be used interchangeably to refer to Turkey and Switzerland, respectively.

scholarship on Kurdish refugees from Turkey living in Europe is evident (Argun, 2003; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2000; Soguk, 2008; Sokefeld, 2006; Van Bruinessen, 1998), research on people from Turkey exiled due to political ideology regardless of ethnic background has remained relatively unexplored. This thesis can contribute to studies on Turkish society by analyzing the ideological and identity-based changes in a population whose activism contributed greatly to the political discourse of a certain era (and arguably whose absence also contributed to the political discourse of later eras). Numerous scholars have studied the post-1980 coup era in Turkey in terms of domestic political and economic change and shifts in foreign policy. It can be argued, however, that without examining the experiences of the many people who were forced to leave and the subsequent rupture of a large portion of the leftist political field, it is difficult to draw conclusions about subsequent political and economic change. In other words, this mass exodus is inextricably linked to many developments within the country occurring both before and after the 1980 coup era.

The final reason relates to the second, though on a more normative level. There is undoubtedly great diversity within the community of exiled people from Turkey, but for all in one way or another, the process of displacement constitutes a traumatic event that not only fractured a social movement but also upended people's lives. The purpose and result of exile for the state apparatus is to silence opposition through physical distance. The refugee movement out of Turkey not only affected the political discourse within but also separated people from their families, friends, and homeland. In this sense, studying such a population can help to recognize past political repression and how it relates to contemporary phenomena, whether that be the recent initiatives to open up the public

5

space to minority cultures, the ongoing democratization process, or even the accession of Turkey into the European Union. My primary goal in this research is to develop a scholarly perspective on the process of diasporic identity formation. Part of that goal is including the voices and making visible the agency of those who have been absent from the political discourse in Turkey.

Methodology

The methodological focus of this thesis is mainly qualitative. The fieldwork consisted of in-depth interviews[4] that lasted anywhere from one hour to four hours based on participant input. While the questions were the same for all the interviewees, I did not attempt to cut short any answers and allowed individuals to provide as much information as they saw fit. In addition, interviews were conducted according to where the refugees could fit me in to their schedules. I met many in cafes or restaurants while others spoke with me at their place of work. Still others invited me to their homes. During the course of the fieldwork, I conducted 24 interviews with refugees from Turkey currently living in Switzerland[5], with one of those 24 later asking me not to use any information gleaned from his interview due to his ongoing application to the Swiss state for citizenship[6]. These interviews covered questions relating to political activism in Turkey, experiences of migration, relations with the state, and changes in political ideology in Switzerland.

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[4] See Appendix A for a copy of the interview questions.

[5] Chapters Three and Four will highlight demographic information about the participants in more depth.

[6] Such a request in and of itself is indicative of the tenuous position of many refugees, particularly those who are more recent arrivals and do not have the security Swiss citizenship affords.

In terms of selection, I utilized a snowball sampling approach. This method involves asking interviewees to recommend other potential participants and is a useful approach in sensitive populations that may harbor doubts about outside interviewers and are otherwise difficult to reach (Bloch, 2007; Colson, 2003: 6; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 94). This is particularly true with refugee populations, who are characterized by displacement and mistrust of authority figures (Malkki, 1995: 47).

My primary contact was a refugee and former activist living in Switzerland who was a colleague of an academic acquaintance; though I also had a separate acquaintance of my own that also introduced me to a few refugees in his social circle. Having lived there for a long time and active in the refugee community, this primary contact served as a community gatekeeper through whom it was possible to meet a wide range of refugees living in various places in Switzerland. I was then able to meet others through certain key individuals. This occurred after discussing my research topic in depth with this gatekeeper and vocalizing my intent to speak with an equal number of Turks and Kurds if possible and as wide a range of perspectives as possible. This person then purposefully sought to put me into contact with people he had divergent views from. The fact that this individual vocalized such differences in opinion reflected in and of itself the great degree of diversity within the community. It also highlighted how such a revelation is only possible through the snowball sampling method, which can reveal much about the "power relations" and "social knowledge" within a networked community (Noy, 2008: 329). As a gatekeeper, while he is a trusted member of the community, he also holds critical views on homeland politics, for example, that differed from the views of other

refugees. Accordingly, the findings of this thesis highlight how this group of people I interviewed can speak to both shared and contested understandings of the memories of political activism and migration, the process of resettlement, and changes in political ideology.

It is important to take into account my role as the interviewer and the power dynamics that can arise in such interactions, including myself as the potentially "intrusive outsider" (Burawoy, 2009: 56). Establishing trust with the participants was my first goal. I was lucky in that the community gatekeepers were people in whom almost all of the participants placed great trust. Nearly all the refugees stated that since that person had recommended me, they would have no problem speaking with me. Nonetheless, there are a couple of factors that may have played a role in influencing participant answers and interactions with the interviewer. First, although the vast majority of refugees were outwardly friendly and open about their experiences, my status as Turkish (and American for that matter) may have played a role in participant reactions. It is possible, for example, that some Kurdish participants may have felt pressure to seem less nationalistic in order to make me as a Turk feel more comfortable speaking with them, though I made it a point to ask all refugees to speak openly about any political views they may have. Second, many participants assumed leftist concerns had brought me to the topic. The following anecdote highlights this. Several refugees asked if I was named Deniz after Deniz Gezmiş, a leftist leader who was executed in the wake of the 1971 military coup and afterwards became a martyr for the revolutionary cause in Turkey. In response I stated that I was not and explained a bit of my family background to contextualize my own transnationality and interest in the topic.

8

Finally, some respondents may have held back when discussing some of the past activities they were involved in, with some openly stating that they rather would not speak about such topics. It is not surprising that many refugees may harbor suspicions regarding an outsider asking them to share deeply emotional details about their political activism and treatment by the state. In order to confront these issues head on, I made it a point before even beginning the interview to reassure the interviewees about the anonymity of the interviews and that they in no way should feel the need to speak about any topic they did not feel comfortable discussing. I was equally forthright in explaining my motivations for doing the research and in answering any questions they had about me or my research interests. In addition, I brought a letter with me from the university confirming my status as a researcher writing a Master's thesis and detailing the protected nature of the interview findings. While most individuals did not desire to examine this letter and often expressed a lack of concern in regards to anonymity, because the very topic of this thesis involves issues of violence, painful separation, and exile, it was important to offer this object as a reassurance that my interest was first and foremost in protecting their privacy.

As a qualitative study, the personal accounts highlighted in this thesis all start from various narrative positions and reflect past experiences and perspectives of the refugees. As Burawoy (2009: 36) notes, "the interview is a social context, embedded in other contexts, all of which lend meaning to and are independent of the question itself". Similarly, both the interviewer and interviewee are also embedded within certain social contexts and bring to the process their own perspectives and prejudices (Denzin and

Lincoln, 1994: 481). Because this research focuses on the process of exile and resettlement, many of the painful experiences recounted could appear to dominate refugee lives. Nonetheless, as the refugees pointed out, their everyday lives are also characterized by a certain degree of economic comfort, educational opportunities, and the process of acculturation into Swiss society. In her study of Hutu exiles, Malkki (1995: 47) points out part of the researcher's task when working with such sensitive populations is to listen to people's narratives while at the same time attempting to maintain a delicate balance between asking about experiences and knowing when and what not to ask. In my experiences with this community, I also tried to maintain such a delicate balance by avoiding questions relating explicitly to prison time, torture, or the process of leaving, as the latter was often performed illegally. If the refugees brought up such topics, as many did, I then allowed them to guide their own explanations and reassured them that at any time they could change the topic.

Thesis Structure

I have organized the thesis according to a historical chapter, a literature review, and the final two chapters examining the results of the fieldwork interviews. The first chapter, "The Context of Movement" accomplishes two goals: first, it presents an overview of the history of the leftist movement in late Ottoman and Republican times in Turkey; and second, it provides background to the Swiss refugee regime. Examining the dominant state ideology of the secular Turkish state and the key leftist figures, parties, and organizations allows for a contextualization of the suppression of the Turkish leftist movement and the subsequent forced migration. Likewise, the section on asylum policy

and refugee resettlement in Switzerland provides a background to changes in collective identity through time.

Chapter Two, or "Collective Identity in Social Movements and Diaspora Theory", lays out the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. It is also divided into two sections, the first examining the social movements literature and the second focusing on diaspora theory. I use the social movements literature to understand how and why exiled individuals originally become engaged in leftist activism in their homeland and more importantly, how that activism has affected their collective identity as exiles in the diaspora. The focus on diaspora theory in the second half of the literature review is relevant because the refugees of that era fled to many different countries of Europe, could not return for many years, and engaged transnationally with the homeland. By critically engaging with the diaspora literature, I will provide the theoretical background for later analyzing whether or not such forced dispersal constitutes an aspect of leftist diasporic identity.

The final two chapters concern the fieldwork I conducted in Switzerland in the summer of 2009 and the winter of 2010. As with any qualitative work focused on in-depth interviews, the individual insights and experiences provide a rich breadth of opportunities for analysis. Chapter Three, entitled "The Roots of Political Activism and the Legal Process", consists of three main sections: the paths to activism in Turkey for the refugees; the relations with the martial law regime in Turkey both before and after the 1980 coup; and finally, relations with the refugee resettlement regime in Switzerland. Throughout the chapter I examine how refugee responses reflect relations

11

with the legal process in both countries and also tensions within the movement in regards to socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, and time of arrival in Switzerland. At the same time I draw on findings from the social movements literature to develop a concept of collective identity that reflects shared experiences with state repression in the homeland and experiences as a refugee in the Swiss legal system.

The fourth chapter, "Changes in Political Activism and Identity", deals mainly with transformation in both political beliefs and levels of activism through time. This chapter focuses on the following: breaks with the leftist movement in Turkey; the professions refugees have chosen to pursue; the social circle they have built up in the diaspora; transnational relations with the homeland; and how they view their own political identity and changes in their political ideology in the hostland. Here too I draw on collective identity in addition to diaspora theory to conceptualize how political activism and understandings of self have shifted from more radical notions of revolution to sentiments grounded in minority rights, environmental concerns, and even artistic and personal development. Lastly, I examine whether or not such shared experiences also contribute to a collective identity that is diasporic in nature. As the final chapter, the Conclusion will summarize the thesis findings, suggest some further areas of research, and highlight the contributions of these findings to the body of the literature on social movements and diaspora.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONTEXT OF MOVEMENT

1.1. Overview of Chapter

This chapter will provide a broad context for the mass movement of political refugees from Turkey to Switzerland. Though Europe as a whole was the destination for most people fleeing from prison or the threat of prison in the wake of the 1980 military coup, Switzerland also provided refuge to large numbers of Turks and Kurds coming from Turkey. Contextualizing this particular movement and the resulting collective identity formation that grew out of it requires a deeper analysis of the history of the socialist movement in Turkey on the one hand and on the other, the refugee regime in Switzerland. The relationship between leftist activists and the Turkish state has long been marked by contentious opposition because of the state's historical opposition to mobilization based on a class-based reading of societal ills. As a result of the military coup of 1980 in Turkey and the resulting fracturing of the leftist movement, the path that these actors followed through transnational networks and into the Swiss refugee resettlement system also constitutes a collective experience. This chapter will couch that experience in the historical and structural characteristics of both the Turkish state and Swiss refugee resettlement regime before continuing on to the literature review and then the fieldwork findings.

13

The chapter is divided into three main sections with several sub-sections within. First, I present a short overview of state-society relations in the late Ottoman to Republican era in Turkey and a discussion of Kemalism, the dominant state ideology of that era. Examining these relations is relevant because it helps us both to understand how leftist thought and action developed in Turkey and how it both reproduced certain aspects of the dominant state ideology while at the same time challenging it. Second, I lay out a relevant history of the socialist movement in the Republican period until the 1980 coup while taking into consideration intra-movement contention as well. In the third section of the chapter I will focus on the demographic composition of Turkish and other refugee nationalities in Switzerland; the role of the Swiss state and Swiss law in the resettlement of refugees; and finally, how Swiss national identity plays a role in that process.

1.2. The Early Republican Years and Emergence of Kemalism

Dating back to the late Ottoman era, leftist groups of all stripes were often engaged in a contentious relationship with the Turkish state. This section examines the role the state ideology of Kemalism played in the development of the Turkish path of modernization and its views on socialism. This is relevant because the active suppression of socialism and communism in the early Republican era affected later leftist organizing. The seeds of the modernist institutional reform undertaken by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the early Republican era can be located within a century-long series of reforms initiated by Ottoman leaders. Implementation of taxation policies, the centralization of bureaucratic

14

and military structures, development of scientific and technical expertise, and the institutionalization of census taking were all key aspects of the development of the Turkish state apparatus that would influence the maintenance of a strong central state in Ankara in the Republican years (Zürcher, 2004: 98). Alongside this process within the Ottoman Empire came the influx of modern ideologies and belief systems including liberalism, socialism, and scientific rationalism (Ahmad, 1993). As the state ideology of the modernizing Republic, Kemalism was both affected by and critical of these incoming belief systems.

1.2.1 Defining Kemalism

A rich literature on the historiography of the Kemalist ideology reflects the debate among scholars as to the role of Atatürk's legacy on Turkish society. Building both on previous Ottoman structures while explicitly rejecting aspects of the past, Atatürk successfully held together and innovated on what can be called a "Kemalist state" through the establishment of sole power in the years 1923-1925. A large part of this modernization project undertaken in the wake of the Independence War included not only the creation of a secular state but also the creation of an independent national ideology over explicitly religious or class-based ones (Mardin, 1971: 209). Actions taken at the time included the abolishment of the Caliphate and the suppression of both heterodox religious and leftist political activity (Zürcher, 2004: 103, 105). Atatürk also institutionalized the regime through the first political party of the country, the Republican People's Party (RPP) and its one-party rule until 1945 (Zürcher, 2004: 103).

As a state ideology that developed and transformed through time, Kemalism can partly be described as consisting of the Six Arrows of the RPP, set out in the party platform of 1931 (Zürcher, 2001: 189). The RPP's symbol presents the following as its central tenets: "republicanism, nationalism, populism, secularism, etatism, and revolutionism" (Yılmaz, 1997: 30). In later years in fact, revolutionism, etatism (particularly of the economic variant), and populism became important beliefs of the socialist movement. Though this seems like an all-encompassing ideology with clear-cut tenets, many scholars view Kemalism as a less than well-defined ideology. Zürcher (2001: 189) argues that Kemalism as an official ideology "never became a coherent, all-embracing ideology, but can best be described as a set of attitudes and opinion, which were never defined in any detail" and developed over decades. In relation, the traditional historical view of Kemalism among many scholars has been that it is a paradigmatic set of modernizing principles for creating and governing the nation-state characterized by a conscious pragmatism and flexibility (Kili, 2003; Yılmaz, 1997: 29). This is in addition to its attempt to find a third way aside from fascism and particularly communism. Scholars point to Atatürk's speeches, laws and decrees, and written documents by the Kemalist regime in the early years of the Republic to support this view (Ahmad, 1994: 72-73).

Other scholars also take a more critical view. As the dominant national ideology, Parla and Davison (2004) argue, Kemalism can broadly be defined as a hegemonic *corporatist* ideology that has very specific views of state-society relations. Corporatism refers to an ideology consisting of a:

rejection of the categories of individual, class, and tradition as the core analytical

16

categories of its political vision, though each may play some role within different corporatist articulations. Corporatist formulations derive models of society and forms of political and economic organization from "occupational groups", professional organizations, or corporations. (Parla and Davison, 2004: 36)

Thus corporatism rejects the overtly individual-based understandings of freedom in liberalism and the class-based tenets of communism. Throughout the twentieth century, communism was seen in Turkey as a threat because of its very emphasis on class as the basic component of society. Likewise, the military coups throughout the century and subsequent constitutional amendments have reproduced the central priorities set out by Mustafa Kemal in relation to stamping out communism (Parla and Davison, 2004: 40). Such a discourse minimizes class differences and emphasizes state domination over public spheres (Ergil, 2000: 45). In addition, Kemalism necessarily informs the actions, institutions, practices, and symbols of political life while at the same time being acted upon, changing, and adapting through time. According to this view, therefore, Kemalism has long presented itself as being a nonideological, practical, and modern approach to the unique situation Turkey found itself in at the beginning of the Republican period (Bagdonas, 2008; Parla and Davidson, 2004: 8).

While the corporatist aspects of Kemalism help to explain why leftist activity was actively suppressed, the lack of public space for ethnic difference or a class-based ideology are features of what Yılmaz (1997: 31) calls the "Tanzimat Syndrome". This refers to the idea that any call for rights threatens the indivisibility of the nation-state and that there are forces both within and outside of Turkey lying in wait to "carve up" the nation into separate parts (Yılmaz, 1997: 31). This is related also to the type of nationalism in Turkey that places great importance on territorial boundaries (Cizre-

Sakallıoğlu, 1994: 256). This ideology has even changed the physical geography of the country. In his description of how the physical landscape of the region that in official discourse had previously been referred to as "Kurdistan" changed in the early years of the Republic, Zeydanlıoğlu (2008: 162) calls this process a "spatial Turkification", wherein the 'nationalization' of the land was to assist the transformation of its inhabitants. Mountains, hills, schools and official buildings were inscribed with the symbols of the Turkish flag, the crescent and star, as well as nationalist slogans such as "How happy is the one who says I am a Turk". For minority groups such as Kurds this has played a large role in their distrust of the state.

The lack of consideration for class-based or ethnic group-based differences has greatly affected the leftist movement in Turkey. It is from within this corporatist discourse that leftist groups in Turkey integrated foreign thinkers such as Marx and Lenin to create a certain conceptualization of the role the state should play in state-society relations. At the same time they often drew on Mustafa Kemal as an exemplary leader in the fight against imperialism and in defending Turkey's economic development from outside influence (Kanık, 2004; Lipovsky, 1992; Samim, 1981). This brings out a fundamental tension within Turkish leftism in the twentieth century. By incorporating aspects of Kemalist thought and aspects of Marxist thought, leftists were attempting to mold an approach suitable for the "special" case of Turkey but were confounded because of the openly hostile view towards leftist activity by the state apparatus. Therefore, it is perhaps better to view Kemalism as a dynamic yet hegemonic state ideology that is also characterized by counter-hegemonic voices struggling over meanings (Bagdonas, 2008).

If we view ideology as a dynamic set of practices that have to be constantly reproduced, then it can be said that:

> Kemalism is not a unified system that drives the action in a consistent direction. Rather, it comes as a package of various meanings, as a repertoire, from which political actors select different pieces for constructing their discourses. (Bagdonas, 2008: 104)

In that sense, leftists, right-wing nationalists, army generals, and intellectuals all have drawn on Kemalism in stating their vision for Turkey (Belge, 2009: 12). While it can be argued to what degree the Kemalist ideology is flexible, it is this perception of flexibility that lends itself to being constantly "claimed" and "redefined" as the true Kemalism, or the true path of what Mustafa Kemal would have wanted for the country (Bagdonas, 2008: 111). One organ for such contestation is the Republican People's Party. Long an arm of the Kemalist regime, it also gradually became the organ for center-left politics. The following section examines its role in drawing leftist supporters.

1.2.2 The Republican People's Party

Later fieldwork chapters will highlight the role familial membership and allegiance to the RPP played in the political socialization of leftists in Turkey. In the 1920s and 1930s it functioned primarily as the carrier of Kemalism's central tenets and a medium through which to enact rapid social change (Koçak, 2004: 121). The 1930s were characterized by the increasingly authoritarian single-party rule of the RPP and the suppression of organizations such as "the Turkish Women's Union, the Freemasons Lodge, professional organizations such as the Teachers' Union, the Reserve Officers Society and the Society of the Newspaper Journalists and the cultural and educational clubs of the Turkish Hearths (Turk Ocakları)", not to mention the purging of Istanbul University

19

(Zürcher, 2004: 106). This was largely due to the desire on the part of Kemalist officials and Atatürk himself to ensure that the values laid out in the party platform were carried out without dissent. In fact, Cağaptay (2002: 69) argues that in this period of "high Kemalism", the "wall between the CHP (RPP) and the Turkish state gradually collapsed – between 1935 and 1937 the CHP (RPP) moved to merge with the state".

The RPP introduced a series of measures aimed to educate the masses of Anatolia (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998a; Zürcher, 2004). This is relevant because demographically a large percentage of the leftist movement studied in this thesis originated in the towns and small cities of Anatolia. One such measure taken was the introduction of the People's Houses (*Halk Evleri*). These cultural centers were built in areas across the country with the purpose of educating the people in nine areas: "language and literature, fine arts, theatre, sports, welfare, educational courses, libraries and publications, village development, and history" (Zürcher, 2004: 106-107). A smaller version was established in villages and was called People's Rooms (*Halk Odaları*). In total, there were 478 People's Houses built and 4,322 People's Rooms founded throughout the country. While originally meant to educate members of the peasant and agricultural class, they ended up becoming centers of meeting for teachers, intellectuals, bureaucrats, and members of the professional class (Zürcher, 2004: 107). Critically, these Houses played a key role in the development of the power of the RPP in socializing and mobilizing loyal members belonging to the bureaucratic and middle classes outside the metropolises of Turkey (Zürcher, 2004: 108). This mobilization found a home in the *Ülkü* journal of the early 1930s (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998: 72-73). The journal consisted of RPP officials and other members of the intelligentsia who exalted rural and peasant Turkish life and tended

towards an anti-urban and anti-industrial perspective (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998a). More importantly, writers at this journal and other thinkers of the time were worried about the potential growth of class-conscious political activity, which Western countries at the time were witnessing as a byproduct of the process of industrialization (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998a: 85).

In addition to the People's Houses, the RPP-established Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*) were located throughout rural areas and served to train large numbers of teachers and fight illiteracy (Koçak, 2004: 119). The closure of these institutes in 1950 by the RPP due to fears of communist infiltration highlights both the broad spectrum of ideology in the RPP and the anti-communist sentiment of the time (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998b: 65). Although the actual content of publications in the Village Institutes was far removed from communist or socialist ideas (they hewed more towards a Kemalist style of classless populism), they did serve to contribute to the development of a consciousness of injustice and collective sentiment. In addition, they opened up these places to the world through newly introduced technologies such as the radio and later became part of a discourse within leftist circles that highlighted the struggle of the institutes against large landowners (Karaömerlioğlu, 1998b: 70-71).

As will be seen in later chapters, many leftists trace their ideological roots back to the RPP and the influence of the People's Houses and Village Institutes. Although the leftward turn of the party occurred later in the mid-twentieth century under Bülent Ecevit's leadership and within a context of growing intellectual diversity and multi-party rule (Karpat, 2003: 365), its mandate in controlling the social and cultural life of the

country at this time also served to increase its popularity among a bureaucratic and intellectual middle strata of Turkish society who supported the active role of the state. In fact, the establishment and later closure of the People's Houses and Village Institutes present useful examples of how the leftist movement in Turkey has always integrated tenets of Kemalist thoughts and practices while at the same time being perceived as a threat by the state. This makes more sense when viewing Kemalism as a hegemonic ideology. Because it is dominant in all spheres of social life, it "manages to be a surface of inscription into which different social identities can articulate their demands" (Çelik, 2009: 224). Even if not all leftists identified as Kemalists at the time, the movement as a whole has drawn on it to justify their positions and has served as a legitimizing tool in political discourse. The following section will highlight how that has occurred.

1.3. A Brief History of Socialism in Turkey

While examining the historical context of the leftist social movement studied in this thesis, I will draw on the previous section's analysis of state-society relations and state ideology. This section will present the relevant time periods and events to contextualize future fieldwork chapters.

1.3.1 Socialism in the Late Ottoman Era

Ottoman Turkey was witness to growing legal socialist and underground communist movements, as was characteristic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in general. This was true particularly within Armenian, Greek, Macedonian, and Bulgarian

circles and areas geographically closer to Europe, where socialism and nationalism constituted twin ideologies "imported" from the West into the multiethnic empire (Tuncay and Zürcher, 1994). Bulgarian and Jewish workers in Thessalonica formed the first socialist association in 1909 and in 1910 the Ottoman Socialist Party was formed, though these were explicitly not communist parties (Lipovsky, 1994: 9). The mix of social radicals, socialists, and anarchists drew inspiration from the ideas of the French revolution and while not successful in forming a cohesive movement, these groups of socialists did inspire members of the Young Turks (Ahmad, 1994: 18). Their revolution against monarchical power and development of scientific-based knowledge of the Ottoman political structure (Mardin, 1971: 201) provided the seeds of the Republican revolution that followed.

The Russian Revolution and proximity of Turkey to the Soviet Union also influenced domestic movements. In fact, the first Turkish Communist Party was actually founded within the borders of the Soviet Union in 1920 by Mustafa Suphi (Samim, 1987: 149; Kanık, 2007: 3) and drew to it members of the Turkish Workers and Peasants Socialist Party which had been formed in 1918 (Lipovsky, 1994: 9). Suphi was one of 15 Communists to join the War of Independence in Turkey and was initially welcomed by Turkish forces. His ideological ties with Soviet Russia and moves to establish a viable Communist presence in the country established him as a threat all the way up the chain to Mustafa Kemal, as recent research shows (Hür, 2009). In fact, his assassination by drowning in Trabzon in January 1921 along with a group of fellow Communists (Samim, 1981: 63) has been called the first political assassination of modern Turkey (Hür, 2009). In addition to the assassination of Suphi and the general suppression of the

23

Communist Party in the waning years of the Ottoman Empire and early years of the Republic (Kanık, 2007: 3), socialism had to contend with the growth of nationalism and the events surrounding the Turkish War of Independence of 1919-1923.

1.3.2. Early Republican Socialism

There were leftist intellectual currents active in the early Republican era that rejected Communism and embraced ideological concepts more closely aligned with Kemalism. For example, the influential *Kadro* journal was a forerunner of many left-leaning Turkish journals that would be published in subsequent decades. Initially published in 1932, its founders and writers were directly involved with RPP activities and sought to encourage a more active role for the party in enacting societal change (Zürcher, 2004: 109). *Kadro* encapsulated socialist leanings with a nationalist perspective (Türkeş, 1998) and was influenced by not only Turkish nationalist thinkers such as Yusuf Akçura and Ziya Gökalp, but also Lenin and Marx (Türkeş, 1998: 92-94). Rather than Communism itself, it was the anti-imperialist nature of the Russian revolution that interested Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, the main thinker of the journal. According to Aydemir, a national independence struggle (*ihtilal*) would be followed by economic independence from world capitalist system (*inkilap*), a view that emphasized national independence struggles over class-related ones (Türkeş, 1998: 95). In this sense the writers hewed towards more of a corporatist understanding of state-society relations rather than a socialist one. In fact, its authoritarian streaks can be attributed to the influence of Nazi Germany at the time as much as the Soviet Union (Zürcher, 2004: 109).

Notwithstanding those influences, however, *Kadro* often emphasized the unique nature of Turkey and the differences between socialism in Western industrialized countries and non-industrialized countries, noting that while Marx had been largely writing about Europe, an alternative route would be necessary for an under-industrialized country such as Turkey (Türkeş, 1998: 104). This can explain to a large degree *Kadro's* advocacy for a type of authoritarian rule that would promote equality and avoid the perceived anarchy of democratic governance. This authoritarian and state-centered approach seems paradoxical to what the Left generally advocates, yet *Kadro* is significant in its subsequent influence on Turkish leftist thought. It also represents an attempt to bridge leftist thought with some of Kemalism's tenets: independence and etatism (Türkeş, 1998: 105, 110). This does not mean, however, that it represented in totality left-leaning thought or activity in the country. In actuality, the 1930s were characterized by a general suppression of all overtly socialist and communist activism, as nationalist and corporatist strains took precedence (Ahmad, 1993). The next section examines the role of the first legal socialist party in the Republican era.

1.3.3. The Multi-Party Era and the Rise of the Turkish Labor Party

As Turkey transitioned to a multi-party state in the mid-twentieth century, the push for a party more explicitly representing the interests of workers arose. The fall of the single rule of a bureaucratic order and the growing power of "agrarian-entrepreneurial groups" represented a shift in the power allegiances and an opening in the space for mass participation in the political system (Karpat, 2003: 378). Although democratic institutions were nominally developing, there was still resistance to any mention of communism or a class-based discourse within a party platform. After the conservative

25

Democratic Party gained power and ruled in the 1950s, the socialist movement suffered as a result of the government's suppression of any type of labor-based organizing, continuing practices started early on in the Republic (Lipovsky, 1994: 11). As a result of a ban on communist organizing, the Turkish Communist Party, for example, was forced to operate underground and illegally.

While the regime under the Democratic Party equated calls for democracy and political plurality with a desire to break up Turkey through subversive communist propaganda (Yılmaz, 1997: 33), the political climate changed somewhat after the 1960 coup which deposed the Menderes government. The coup was perpetrated not by army generals, but rather low-level army officers unhappy with their status, among other reasons. This left a lasting influence on many within the Left in Turkey, who saw the military as a potentially sympathetic agent in the socialist struggle (Ahmad, 1993: 122-123). The 1961 constitution, written with the collaboration of academics and members of the intelligentsia, on the one hand introduced more democratically conceived institutions and provided the right to unionize and strike, while on the other hand strengthening the investment of the military in finance and industry (Ahmad, 1993: 130). This therefore undoubtedly constituted a reshaping of the political landscape, but one in which the Kemalist discourse was reworked to provide additional space for military influence in state-society matters.

The reproduction of this discourse is also visible in the party platform and organizing attempts of the Turkish Labor Party (TLP), formed in 1961 by twelve Istanbul trade union officials (Lipovsky, 2004: 11). The party consisted of the following: industrial

26

workers like bureaucrats, intellectuals, students, and craftspeople (47 percent), laborers (27 percent), peasants (17 percents), and agricultural laborers (nine percent) (Bal and Laçiner, 2001: 98). In addition to better conditions for workers and an alternative path to economic development, the TLP maintained a platform of a peaceful foreign policy while maintaining what the party viewed as a "struggle for the independence of Turkey from the imperialist powers" (Lipovsky, 1994: 18). Here we see echoes of the Kemalist discourse of anti-imperialism and independence serving as an active part of their ideology. While throughout the Republican era Turkish socialist parties have always fought for relevance in the eyes of the public and often failed in that endeavor (Samim, 1987; Lipovsky, 1992), the TLP and its early success do present somewhat of an exception to that rule. The 1965 parliamentary election presents the biggest success that the TLP ever garnered, where it won 3 percent of the national vote and sent 15 delegates to the Parliament (Kanık, 2007: 1; Lipovsky, 1994: 19). Many members of the TLP, in fact, were former RPP members who felt disillusioned from what they viewed as ambivalence on the part of the RPP towards leftist ideas and economic statism, which they advocated for (Karpat, 2003: 395). Significantly however, the word "socialist" never appeared in early party statements or memoranda. Party leaders were careful to tiptoe around what continued to be a fierce anti-leftist position of state organs (Ahmad, 1993; Lipovsky, 1994: 15). While the TLP attempted to forge a party line that represented the interests of workers within the growing post-war economy, it is important to remember that the 1961 constitution did not provide an open space for a viable working-class movement based in socialist origins to arise. The existence of electoral laws establishing a high minimum threshold highlight how a more moderate

27

socialist party such as the TLP was nominally allowed but prohibitively regulated (Ahmad, 1993: 145).

Perhaps more importantly, aside from limited electoral successes, the TLP served as a catalyst for many other socialist organizations and publications to sprout up into the political sphere of Turkish society, including the leftist labor union *DİSK* (Confederation of Workers' Unions of Turkey) in 1967 (Ahmad, 1993: 134). The party was very influential in promoting a more moderate form of socialism through democratic means and limited recognition of minority groups. Nonetheless, the strains mentioned above that appeared in the 1960s arose due to several factions pushing for more radical means with which to enact revolutionary change in Turkey, as will be further discussed below. In addition, global events were creating tensions within the group. The Soviet Union's annexation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, for instance, created a dilemma for anyone concerned both with socialism and issues of sovereignty and independence, as so many Turkish socialists were (Lipovsky, 1994: 49). As divisions grew, one voice that represented more radical tendencies pushing for change included Mihri Belli, a member of the outlawed Turkish Communist Party and writer for the more radical journal, *Türk Solu*, who called for a "national democratic revolution" meant to overthrow the existing regime by enlisting the help of the military and civilian "intelligentsia" (Lipovsky, 1994: 40). A group called the Proletarian Revolutionaries similarly called for a similar overthrow though with the peasant movement at the helm and without the help of the military (Lipovsky, 1994: 40). Another voice in opposition to the perceived passivity of the TLP was the *Yön* journal, established in 1961 and led by Doğan Avcıoğlu, who called for a type of socialist "etatism" wherein the state would take an active role in

28

equalizing socio-economic classes and pulling Turkey out of NATO membership, a position similar to most leftists at the time (Lipovsky, 1994: 108). Nonetheless, *Yön* did feature heterodox voices from within the leftist community and in many ways presented a continuation of the previously influential leftist organ, *Kadro*, in terms of its fierce anti-imperialism and corporatist and authoritarian tendencies.

1.3.4. The 1960s and the Rise of Dev-Genç

While anyone who fell under the broad heading of "Turkish socialism" advocated an alternative path to wealth distribution and industrialization and espoused foreign policy views critical of Western military alliances, the divisions between various ideological currents within the movement in the 1960s led to splits arising between moderate and radical strands (Ahmad, 1993; Lipovsky, 1994: 107). One of the more moderate TLP leaders, Mehmet Ali Aybar, characterized Turkish socialism as "a completely independent movement in the socialist current" and attempted to paint the movement as somehow separate from socialist regimes abroad (Lipovsky, 1994:55). This position was undoubtedly taken not only to appease authorities who were suspicious of any similarities to communist regimes abroad but also to convince Turks of his anti-imperialist (whether that be American or Soviet) leanings. TLP leaders and Aybar in particular, however, were seen as too timid in their advocacy for democratic processes by many younger and more radical groups within the party. This ideological infighting led to factions upholding the national-democratic revolution idea splitting off from the TLP and not only becoming more radicalized in the process, but also pulling national attention away from more moderate strands of the movement. The late 1960s were characterized by the rise of *Dev-Genç* (the Federation of Revolutionary Youth of

29

Turkey), the student movement that had started in the 1950s from an organ on university campuses called the Idea Club Federation but grew over the years into a loosely organized movement that rejected the TLP and took as role models not only Marx and Lenin, but also Stalin, Mao, Castro, and Che Guevara (Lipovsky, 1994: 118-119; Landau, 1974: 39). They were also more politicized and more organized than movements before it and were characterized by youthful rebellion against social as well as political structures (Balbay, 2009: 32).

In fact, it can be argued that *Dev-Genç* was a heterodox youth movement characterized by a diversity of views on how radical to be. The more revolutionary groups distanced themselves from the organization through violent acts such as bank robberies, assassinations, and kidnappings of American military members. Among those were two groups in particular, the Turkish National-Liberation Army with its leader Deniz Gezmiş and the Turkish Popular-Liberation Party/Front led most famously by Mahir Çayan (Lipovsky, 1994: 119). Both leaders were eventually killed by military forces and thereby immortalized in the eyes of many revolutionary followers. This was coupled with rising violence between left and right factions in the country. The military intervened in 1971, citing this violence and the ineffectiveness of the government at the time as reasons. Adding fuel to the radicalized fire, though they had increased their participation in the elections, the TLP experienced losses in the 1969 parliamentary elections, not only because of a law that made it more difficult for small parties to enter the parliament, but also because of the infighting within the party itself (Kanık, 2007: 53). This served as a signal to many youth activists that the TLP had failed in its moderation.

In her study of the concept of youth in Turkey, Neyzi (2001: 419) argues that in the post-1968 period, the dominant public discourse painted youth as threatening national values and as *eşkiya*, or "bandits", though these youth activists still retained aspects of the dominant national ideology. She draws on a section from a letter written to the father of *THKP* leader Deniz Gezmiş (Neyzi, 2001: 419), "You raised me with Kemalist ideas. I grew up listening to memories of the War of Independence. Since then I have hated foreigners. We are the fighters of Turkey's second War of Independence." Gezmiş and others even named their proposed walk from Samsun (a city with historical importance for the War of Independence) to Ankara "Tam Bağımsızlık İçin Mustafa Kemal Yürüyüşü" ("Mustafa Kemal Walk for Total Independence") (Balbay, 2009: 33). In an indication of the power of Kemalism as a hegemonic discourse, even the most radical members of this generation of leftist activists viewed themselves as heirs to the Kemalist legacy. At this juncture it was possible within the leftist movement to imagine oneself as being both a Kemalist and a Communist (though perhaps not verbalized using precisely that terminology).

After the March 1971 coup, the Turkish military overthrew the civilian government and declared martial law in 11 provinces out of 67, a period that continued for two years (Nye, 1977: 209, 214). While the 1961 constitution was not rewritten, several amendments meant to limit the "abuses of freedom" were passed into law (Nye, 1977: 213). Quite significantly, many leftists initially saw the coup as a possible repeat of the 1960 coup, where junior officers overthrew the corrupt regime. In fact, two of the officers had been writers at the leftist magazine, *Türk Solu* (Kanık, 2007: 58). However,

just as the TLP had to some degree misjudged the leftist leanings of the voting population, *Dev-Genç* misjudged the willingness or ability of the military to intervene in the process of the National Socialist Revolution. The TLP was shut down (and accused of supporting Kurdish separatism), as was DİSK. Dev-Genç and Idea Club offices were raided, and right-wing groups began to turn to vigilantism (Ahmad, 1993: 148-149; Ergil, 2000: 54; Kanık, 2007). The coup generals also declared curbs on political activity and press freedom. They also brought changes to the constitution and the political governing structure, thereby awarding a heightened role for the military and president (Ergil, 2000). These measures ensured the shut-down of any viable leftist presence within the political mainstream.

1.3.5. 1971-1980 and the 1980 Coup Era

The period of migration relevant to this research mostly encapsulates people actively involved in leftist political parties, unions, revolutionary groups, and socio-cultural organizations during the late 1970s, which was a period characterized by right-left clashes. Many of the various leftist groups of the 1970s, including extremist ones, featured loose and nonhierarchical membership structures and were formed in reaction to state repression. Such repression did not succeed in shutting down the social movements and, to the contrary, many people became more hardened by prison time and a seeming failure on the part of the democratic system to effect change. A weakened economy and the growing urban, industrial population[7] also saw a growing trade union movement willing to exercise its right to strike. The executions of the youth movement

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[7] In 1950 the urban population of Turkey stood at 18.4% while in 1981 it had increased to 47% (Margulies and Yıldızoğlu, 1984: 16). Similarly, in 1950 27.2% of workers were employed in factories, while in 1970 that percentage had increased to 46.4% (Margulies and Yıldızoğlu, 1984: 17).

32

leaders also led to discontent among the left and served to further inflame conflict between youth left and right factions, which grew particularly heated in the late 1970s (Kanık 2007; Lipovsky, 2004). The state sought to marginalize the left even further than before.

There were also generational changes between the leftists of the late 1960s and those in the 1970s. The leftists of the 1970s (often referred to as the '78ers) were characterized by an increase in the involvement of women, Kurds, and members of lower socio-economic status and rural backgrounds (Sayarı, 1985). This was essentially a youth movement and "friendship networks, family ties, political committees, and commune-type living arrangements" played a large role in the political socialization of leftists in this era (Sayarı, 1985: 4). In his memoir of the late 1970s, Mustafa Balbay (2009: 41-42) recounts how politicized the universities were at the time. He points out that the general timeframe of socializing a neophyte university student into a hardcore revolutionary generally took about a week. His anecdotal account illustrates how the heady atmosphere of campus politics spread throughout the country and how the legacy of 1971 further radicalized many on the left. In addition to this type of socialization, for many leftists time spent in jail had led them to question basic Kemalist ideas of revolutionism and the idea that a group of civilian and military intellectuals would rise up in support of the working class (Kanık, 2004: 61). As Kemal (1981: 13) states, "The Marxist movement only started dissociating itself from Kemalist positivism in the late 1970s – and even then only to a certain extent". This change can partially be explained by the 1980 coup, which played a decisive role in that process of dissociation.

When the coup of September 12, 1980 occurred, large swathes of the country regardless of ideology thought that the coup would be similar to those before it in terms of severity and viewed the military as potentially serving as an impartial arbiter of state-society relations. Many thought that it would stop the fighting that had claimed at least 4,500 lives and injured roughly 20,000 up to that point (Sayarı, 1985: 1; Arıkan, 1998: 120). In this case, however, the military response was more organized, fiercer, and more importantly, more ideological than previous interventions (Ahmad, 1981: 6). The ferocity of the military response, particularly to leftist groups –the vast majority of whom were not involved in any form of violent struggle– soon became apparent. The previous factional fighting had led to Turkey's place in NATO being threatened and the military responded partly with a reassurance to its military allies (Sayarı, 1985: 2). In the actual communiqué communicating the takeover, General Kenan Evren stated the following as a patriarchal justification for the intervention, "the state was left powerless and made impotent" (Ahmad, 1981: 5).

Those taken into custody on both the right and the left in the wake of the coup consisted of "free professionals (16 percent of the total), workers (14 percent), government employees (10 percent), teachers (7 percent), etc.", with only 20 percent of those arrested "students or dropouts". One-fifth had had no formal schooling and one-third had not finished grade school (Sayarı, 1985, 10). The majority arrested were leftists although right-wing factions had been responsible for a larger share of the actual deaths and injuries in the previous period (Ahmad, 1981: 10). Immediately after the coup dozens of party offices were shuttered, 150 trade union offices were shut down, 50,000 striking workers were forced back to their jobs, and within three days at least 15,000 people had

34

been arrested (Paul, 1981: 3). The subsequent widespread imprisonment of thousands and torture instituted throughout the country's prisons made for the wholesale suppression of any leftist sentiment at the time. The argument claiming the systematic use of torture is heightened through evidence pointing to its increased use long after the immediate post-coup period (Barchard, 1984: 4-5). In addition to the long-lasting effects of imprisonment, torture, and martial law, the main "institutional legacy" of three years of military rule was the 1982 constitution (Keyder, 2004: 66). In addition to that, the coup regime established a "parallel legal system" with State Security Courts used to prosecute defendants for political purposes that covered "crimes against the state", a phenomenon that led to a sharp decrease in both government accountability and civil rights (Keyder, 2004: 66, 72), not to mention imprisonment for hundreds of thousands, many of whom were locked up for seemingly innocuous infractions. This parallel legal system was not new. Rather, the constitution of 1961 and the 1973 constitutional amendments had already set the ground for the expansion of military power in the wake of the 1980 coup through parallel executive and judicial military organs alongside civilian ones (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1997: 157). The deleterious effects of this parallel system on political activists will be discussed further in the fieldwork chapters.

Ideologically also, the Left was largely neutralized while Kemalist and Islamist strains gained power (Arıkan, 1998). This political neutralization prevented widespread opposition to the neoliberal economic restructuring that followed in the 1980s (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1991). In addition, the increase of Islamist involvement in political life was something seen by the Turkish military and American interests as producing a secure bulwark against the potential Communist threat (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1994: 262; Keyder,

35

2004: 69). In fact, the "Turkish-Islamist synthesis" was a conscious effort on the part of the military intelligentsia to suppress socialist actors in society through the promotion of religious and national identity over a leftist one (Yavuz, 2002), through a reworking of the Kemalist doctrine (Parla and Davison, 2004). The military desired a more 'tightly-integrated, indivisible (in terms of social class, ethnicity or sect), non-ideological and "consensual" society, like the Turkey of the 1930s' (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 1994: 262). At this point, the state authorities viewed political and ethnic pluralism as a failure and blamed communist influence within the country. Though it was anything but, the reign of Turgut Özal in the 1980s presented itself as a technocratic and apolitical governance style, largely in response to the military's push to neutralize any perceived political conflict. It is here that many within the leftist community began to view the state in an even more critical view than before, largely as a result of their treatment by the military apparatus, which ranged from living underground to prison sentences to torture. Not all members of the leftist movement had previously viewed the state as a potential ally, however. Minority groups such as the Kurds had long had an antagonistic relationship with state organs, as the next section highlights.

1.3.6. Kurdish and Alevi Leftists

The active negation of Kurdish identity in the early years of the Republic is a topic that has been widely researched and analyzed (Yeğen, 1996; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008). The advent of electoral politics in the 1940s and 50s presented the first instance in which Kurdish votes (or rather votes in Kurdish regions) were courted by political parties such as the TLP. From then on Kurds became active in leftist movements and displayed increasing involvement in the political culture of Turkey. However, although TLP and

Dev-Genç were among the few organizations to recognize the issue of Kurdish ethnicity and rights, it was within a discourse of socialism, class differences, and feudalism, not ethnic identity or ethnic nationalism (Grigoriadis, 2004: 10). This led in later years to a certain disillusionment regarding the Turkish leftist movement among politically active Kurds, who felt as though their particular experiences were given short shrift (Yavuz, 2001: 10).

The modernization process undertaken by the Kemalist regime in the region had promoted cleavages in the loose state-society relations between the Ottomans and the Kurds and thereby radicalized the population by attempting to reign in the periphery under the central control of Ankara (something begun in the late Ottoman era) (Grigoriadis, 2004: 14). There had already been forced deportations and numerous detainments of prominent Kurdish thinkers and activists in the aftermath of the 1960 and 1971 coups (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008: 164). Within that context, many Kurdish groups began to establish themselves more strongly within both a leftist and Kurdish nationalist discourse in the 1970s. Such examples include the *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* (Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths), *Özgürlük Yolu* (Freedom Road), a Kurdish socialist party, and *Kawa* (Grigoriadis, 2004: 10). The attractiveness of leftist ideology to portions of the Kurdish population in the 1970s is partially explained by the policy of the Turkish state in arming local land owners after insurrections against them by members of the *PKK* (Kurdish Workers' Party) (Keyder, 2004: 74). Originally formed as an "anti-feudal movement", the *PKK* later took on a Marxist discourse and more significantly, an ethnic nationalist one. In other words, for young Kurds from a peasant

37

background, the arming of landowners by the state exacerbated class cleavages, thereby making leftist ideology more favorable to the disenfranchised.

In fact, when the separatist *PKK* was formed in 1977 by *Dev Genç* members who had left the organization, its founding text "described Turkey's southeastern and eastern provinces as colonies and argued that the Kurdish feudalists and bourgeoisie had chosen to side with the Turkish ruling classes in order to participate in the exploitation of the Kurdish peasantry and working class" (Grigoriadis, 2004: 11). In relation, one reason for the popularity of the *PKK* in attracting Kurds to its cause regardless of tribal affiliation was precisely because of the tightening of political expression in the late 1970s and in the post-1980 coup era, thus forcing more moderate Kurdish political groups to close (Grigoriadis, 2004: 11-12). Bozarslan (2001: 46) similarly argues that the brutality of the military response to separatist activities and on the Kurdish population in general after the 1980 coup led to a hardening of opinion among Kurds in the area against the state. Or, alternatively, although the Kurdish rebellions early in the Republican era were characterized by a rejection of the Turkish state, "not because it was Turkish but because it was a state", by the time of the post-1980 coup era, rebellions started against the state "not because it was a state but because it was Turkish" (Bozarslan, 2000: 17). The ethnic component had entered the discourse.

In the aftermath of September 12th, many legal organizations such as the Turkish Teachers' Association, TOB DER, and the Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Association were raided. Located in Diyarbakır, these organizations and their members and leaders were charged with 'establishing a clandestine organization "aimed at

secession"' (Howe, 1980: 5). Those associated with such organizations were not the only ones to be arrested, however. One can also not underestimate the range of abuse and torture perpetrated on prisoners in the southeast, particularly at Diyarbakır's No. 5 military prison. The "ethnic character" of the torture was manifest not only in the particular cruelty and terror with which it was doled out, but also in the "Turkifying" practices of the military authorities. In addition to physical torture, examples include forcing prisoners to learn 50-60 nationalist Turkish songs, confiscating prisoner money in order to buy flags and posters of Mustafa Kemal and Kenan Evren to hang in the cells, and the banning of the Kurdish language within prison walls (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2009: 12-13). As mentioned above, the Diyarbakır prison acted as an inculcator for a Kurdish identity that felt severely repressed by the Turkish nationalist military. One former prisoner stated the following about prisoners released from the jail (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2009: 9):

> Almost 80 percent of these people went to the mountains [took up arms]. It was very difficult to pursue a normal life after having experienced such brutality. You know, it is said that 'the *PKK* movement exploded in 1984', this date is when many people were released from the Diyarbakır prison.

Kurds not only had a contentious relationship with the state but also, starting in the 1970s, many socialist Kurds became more disillusioned with the socialist movement in Turkey (Belge, 2009: 13). The willful ignorance on the part of the socialist movement of the ethnic component to oppression in Turkey bothered many Kurds whose experiences were heavily informed by repressive treatment by the state. This point of contention came up in the course of the thesis fieldwork as well.

39

There is also the additional aspect of religious identity. It is important to include the role Alevism (a heterodox branch of Shiism) played in the growth of leftist organizations in Turkey. Long viewed as supporters primarily of the RPP because of the perceived protection secularism provided from Sunni hegemony, many members of the Alevi community (of which there are both Turkish and Kurdish adherents) have been active in leftist movements. To many analysts the massacres in Kahramanmaraş and Çorum in 1978 were manifestations of both anti-Alevi as well as anti-leftist sectarian violence (Grigoriadis, 2004: 18; Paul, 1981: 3). Teachers' associations in the Kahramanmaraş area at the time were accused by right-wing leaders as being "leftist, communist, atheist, or Alevi" (Gürel, 2004: 4). The very juxtaposition of those terms indicates a strong identification of Aleviness with leftist sentiment and a move from a religious identity to that of an ethnic one. Leftists themselves often framed the previous Alevi activism as essentially "proto-communist movements" in nature (Van Bruinessen, 1996: 8). The issue of Alevi identity becomes quite strong for many in the diaspora and will be explored in further chapters.

Whether Sunni, Alevi, Kurdish, or Turkish, the experience of leftists in the post-1980 coup period indicates that there was a systematic attempt to suppress not only socialist perspectives and liquidate its leadership, but also the heterodox ethnic voices from within. There is often a focus on the military coups as being critical junctures (as they are in many ways), but repression of leftist activism has been a characteristic of numerous governments in the history of the Republic. Furthermore, while much attention has been given to the radical left groups and the kidnappings and robberies associated with them, many thousands of moderate leftists were also swept up in the

mass arrests, while others experienced the terror and paranoia that accompanies a life underground. For many of those who lived *incognito* or spent time in prison, the only viable option in the struggle for survival was to leave the country, often by illegal means. Most fled to Europe, where the community of exiled Turks and Kurds is most active today. As this thesis is focused on Switzerland as the hostland of refugees fleeing Turkey, the next section provides a broad overview of how the Swiss state and Swiss national discourse interact with the refugees of this particular movement.

1.4. Refugees and the Swiss State

Switzerland is only one of the many European countries in which thousands of Turks fleeing the 1980 regime attempted to gain residency. As a non-EU, multi-lingual, and con-federal country with a historical tradition of nominal neutrality, refugees experience resettlement and acculturation in ways divergent from other European countries, as the following sections will highlight. The majority of Turks living in Switzerland actually emigrated as economic immigrants instead of as asylum-seekers. Of the 83,000 Turkish citizens living in Switzerland, 1.3 percent of them have become naturalized Swiss citizens and 74 percent have permanent residency. Of that 74 percent, only 2.3 percent retain refugee status (Fibbi et al., 2003: 221). The following table highlights the numbers of Turkish immigrants throughout time.

41

Table 1.1: Numbers of Turkish Citizens Living in Switzerland Legally

Year	Registered Turkish citizens in CH
1960	645
1970	12,215
1980	38,626
1990	81,655
2003	82,093

Source: Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2000b: 1697

As is evident, the numbers of Turkish citizens in the country greatly increases in the 1980s and 90s. Refugees constitute a relatively small percentage of these numbers but they are a highly visible group due to their political activism (which will be explored in later chapters) and the dominance of refugees from Turkey in the general refugee population in Switzerland as a whole.

This section, therefore, will present the following: (1) how the Swiss state views and processes these migrating groups of people falling under the status of "asylum-seekers" or "refugees"; (2) a general demographic survey of the refugee population in Switzerland with a focus on refugees from Turkey starting from the timeframe of the 1980 coup on forward; and finally (3) how national identity and the public discourse regarding foreigners (itself a term used to refer to immigrants and refugees) play a role in creating an environment for those fleeing oppressive regimes, Turkey in particular.

42

1.4.1. Refugee Law and Resettlement

In addition to the definition of a refugee described in the introduction, Swiss law defines "serious disadvantages" faced by refugees as including the following: "menaces to physical integrity, life or liberty, as well as any actions causing unbearable psychological pressure" (Frey, 1988: 441). Though this would seem to cover large swathes of migrating peoples, refugees are just a small portion of the immigrant population in Switzerland. Twenty percent of the Swiss population is foreign and 25 percent of its workforce is foreign, both of which are the highest in Europe (Afonso, 2005: 1). Part of that is due to its strict citizenship laws and who is counted officially as a "foreigner"[8]. Swiss citizenship laws are based on the concept of *jus sanguinis*, which defines citizenship according to blood lines tying the person to that country. This differs to a certain degree from *jus soli*, which is the citizen-by-birth model on which French and American citizenship is nominally based (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006a: 2). With a naturalization rate of 1.4% (the lowest in Europe after Germany), most immigrants and refugees alike (and often their children as well) are counted as foreigners by Swiss law (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006b: 1694). This high immigrant rate and stringent citizenship laws create a tension within Swiss society, where the law does not encourage integration of a very visible immigrant population. It likewise affects how refugees negotiate their identity as guests within a country that on the one hand seems to accept them while on the other maintaining a distance.

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[8] In Swiss law and public discourse, the word "foreigner" is used in place of "immigrant". For the purposes of this thesis, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

As stated previously, as the numbers of asylum-seekers increased significantly in the 1980s, the state had not yet established a uniform policy towards processing so many claims. The responses to these asylum-seekers, therefore, were also less than uniform (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006b: 1704). In the past two decades, however, foreigner law has grown increasingly strict and prohibitive, with two major trends emerging: a sharp difference between European Union and non-European Union immigrants and a sharp difference between white-collar workers and both blue-collar workers and asylum-seekers (Ecoffey, 2007: 4). In addition, under Swiss law there is a division between general laws on foreigners and asylum law. Under asylum law, there are two categories: people fleeing violence or under threat of civil violence and those who are politically prosecuted (Ecoffey, 2007: 44). These divisions are not horizontal typologies; rather, they constitute a hierarchy of immigrant type, with European and white-collar workers on top, and refugees and asylum-seekers often situated on the lowest rung.

While asylum law is enacted on the federal level through the Swiss Federal Office for Refugees (FOR), the 26 cantons have a very high level of input and de facto decision-making power over applications (Holzer et al., 2000: 251-254). When asylum-seekers enter the country they are sent to one of eight different federal centers spread throughout the country. These centers decide on which canton the refugee will be sent to. They make the decision supposedly according to the size and general refugee population of the canton and not the population of that particular national group in that canton (Holzer et al. 2000: 255, 266). Refugee preference or the location of family or friends is not considered in this decision-making process. A refugee with family members in a French canton may very well be sent to an Italian canton, for instance. Having analyzed a data

44

set of 180,000 asylum applications from 1988 to 1996, Holzer et al. (2000: 251-252) argue that taking into account canton size, linguistic difference, density of foreigner population in the sub-units, and political views towards foreigners, it is still very hard for the Swiss asylum system to maintain consistency and fairness across the board of asylum claims due to the extremely decentralized nature of the system. Therefore the treatment one refugee receives in one canton may vary greatly from one in a neighboring canton just kilometers away. On the other hand, more recent moves towards centralization indicate that there is an overarching concern increasing within the society to control not only the number of asylum-seekers entering the country but also where they live and what they do once they are there.

1.4.2. Demographic Trends and Turkish Migration Patterns

An analysis of the refugee policy discourse in Switzerland reveals on the one hand a deep-seated suspicion towards the idea of the foreign as embodied by refugees and immigrants alike. On the other hand not only is there an established desire for immigrants as essential workers for the national economy but also a humanitarian tradition that dates back to the founding of the Red Cross and the stated foreign policy of neutrality (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006a: 15). This suspicion within the discourse is articulated in the particular notion of "Überfremdung", a uniquely Swiss concept "which refers to the idea that excessive numbers of foreigners could threaten Swiss identity" and an ideological construction that gains in strength when numbers of immigrants rises above a certain threshold (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006a: 6; Afonso, 2007: 10). While previously anti-Semitism (Zimmer, 1998: 655) and perhaps a fear of spoiling relations with Germany had prevented Switzerland from opening its doors to large numbers of

45

Jews fleeing from the Nazis, anti-communist sentiment in the post-World War II era opened the border for thousands of refugees fleeing from communist countries. In fact, for refugees coming from communist countries, there was no individualized processing mechanism set by the state for interviewing and ascertaining the legitimacy of the claims. Merely crossing the border was enough for a refugee from those countries to gain residency (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006a: 9). This constitutes a sharp hierarchy of refugees based on their country of origin. However, in the 1980s the numbers of asylum applicants sharply increased and also featured more applicants from non-European countries such as Chile, Turkey, Cambodia, Zaire, Laos, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Middle Eastern countries (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006a: 10).

Switzerland was the fifth most popular country for Turkish asylum seekers in the years 1996-2005 after Germany, Iraq, France, and United Kingdom, respectively. In the year 2004, this country of roughly seven million registered 14,248 asylum requests for residency (UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2005: 525). In contrast, France's requests numbered 61,048 while its population numbered approximately 60 million (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006a: 1). To give an idea of scale, the following table highlights the number of lodged requests for asylum in other countries of Europe.

Table 1.2: Requests for Asylum in European Countries

Regions/Countries	Requests for Asylum	Population (2004)
Europe	444,000	N/A
France	61,058	62,292,241

United Kingdom	40,202	59,699,828
Germany	35,613	82,531,671
Austria	24,676	8,142,573
Sweden	23,161	8,975,670
Belgium	15,358	10,396,421
Switzerland	14,248	7,364,148

Source: Eurostat, n.d.; Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006a: 1

Those are only the lodged requests, however. Actually acquiring official refugee status is a drawn-out process with a low rate of acceptance. As an example of the sea change in state policy towards refugees, the following graph shows changes in the acceptance rate for asylum-seekers in Switzerland versus how many applications were filed.

Figure 1.1: Acceptance Rate for Asylum Applicants in Switzerland
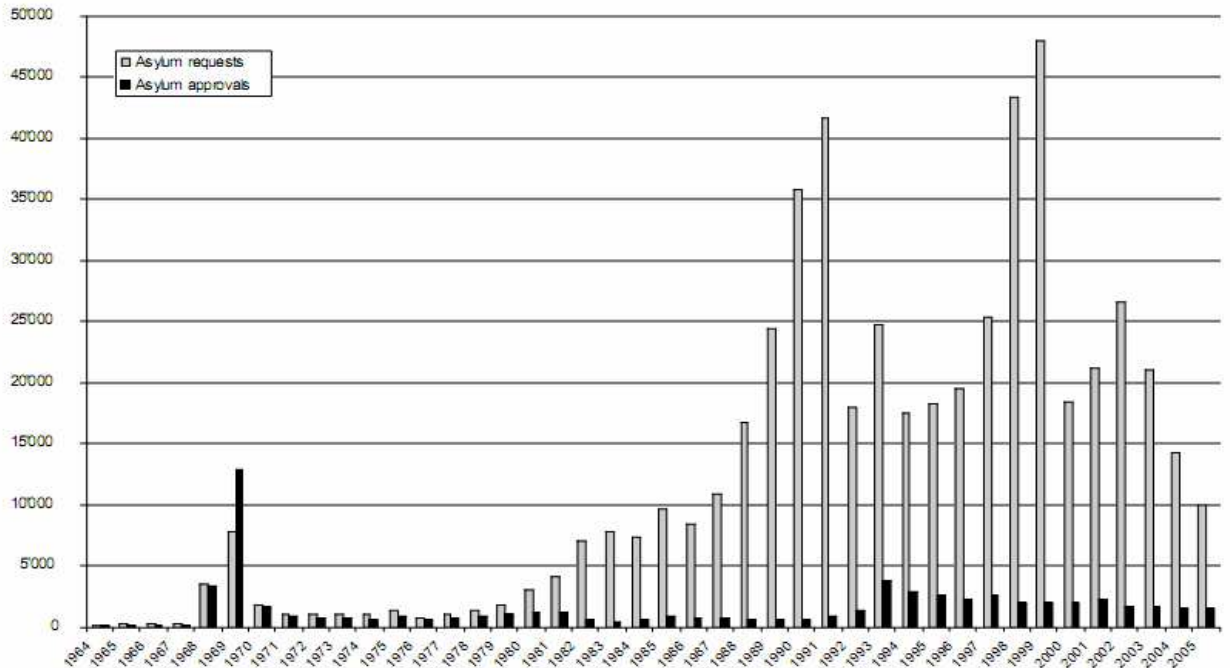
Source: Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006a: 11

47

While in earlier years the rates were closer together, the wars in the Balkans, Turkey, and Africa in the 1990s led to both a high asylum application rate of 146,587 between the years of 1990 and 2002 and a low acceptance rate (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006a: 12). For another highly visible refugee group, the ethnic Tamils from Sri Lanka, every single asylum application filed before 1993 was accepted whereas after 1993 the number of accepted applications dropped significantly (Zunzer, 2004: 17).

One interesting divergence from that trend occurred in the 1990s for Kurds fleeing Turkey. As the fighting between the *PKK* and the Turkish military was raging, a large number of asylum-seekers from Turkey received refugee status. In 1995, one out of every two applications for asylum in Switzerland from Turkish citizens was accepted (Holzer et al., 2000: 254). Scholars argue that the majority of people from Turkey applying for asylum between 1981 and 2000 were ethnically Kurdish (particularly in the 1990s) though no research exists on the ethnic background of foreign nationals (Fibbi et al., 2003: 218). Significantly, while the refugee percentage of the Turkish resident population overall in Switzerland was 5 percent in 1987 and 12 percent in 1990, that number increased to a high of approximately 40 percent in the early 2000s (Fibbi et al., 2003: 218). The following figures, while not showing total asylum applications[9], do highlight how high outstanding asylum requests by Turkish nationals were in contrast to the other top nine nationalities requesting asylum.

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[9] That information was, unfortunately, not available at the time of research.

Table 1.3: Nationalities and Outstanding Asylum Requests in Switzerland

Nationality	Total	Date of Request							
		1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Angola	380	5	7	86	5	5	13	30	229
Ethiopia	299	1	17	62	16	10	22	73	98
India	644	0	0	0	3	4	7	102	528
Iran	882	1	4	18	34	40	311	242	232
Lebanon	713	0	2	5	8	32	52	207	407
Pakistan	652	0	0	5	9	10	28	108	492
Sri Lanka	2,060	0	1	138	241	173	47	139	1,321
Turkey	10,556	0	28	361	460	324	601	2,227	6,555
Yugoslavia	623	0	1	2	6	8	18	39	549
Zaire	272	8	8	79	21	22	8	37	89

Source: Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies, 1989

The numbers for Turkish asylum-seekers continued to rise in the 1980s and to this day they still constitute the largest refugee community in the country. The table below illustrates the high number of requests in the late 1980s and early 1990s (these figures do not include family reunification with refugees).

Table 1.4: Total and Turkish Nationals' Asylum Requests in Switzerland

Year	Turkey	Total
1986	3,989	8,302

1987	5,845	10,866
1988	9,835	16,489
1989	9,609	24,325
1990	7,611	35,881
1991	4,535	41,663
1992	1,967	19,109
1993	1,281	25,827
1994	1,174	16,872
1995	1,364	18067
1996	1,379	19,418
1997	1,445	25,507
1998	1,598	42,979
1999	1,515	47,513
2000	1,486	19,750
2001	1,995	21,854

Source: Federal Office for Migration, 2010

The swell of applications in the late 1980s and early 1990s are accounted for both by the number of people getting out of prison after serving sentences handed out in the post-1980 coup time period and Kurds fleeing from the war between the Turkish military and the *PKK*. Unfortunately, statistics regarding the years 1980-1986 were not possible to obtain.

Humanitarian reasons are often given as an explanation for the rise in refugees in the 1980s and 90s. The issue of economics is perhaps more pertinent to understanding demographic trends with refugees. When the global economic recession hit Switzerland in the 1970s, the majority of foreigners working in Switzerland held only one-year work permits and many were not renewed. This indicates that immigrants and it can be inferred asylum seekers as well, are used by state policy makers as economic buffers for times of boom and decline (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006b: 1602). Although one of the oldest industrialized countries of Europe, Switzerland's industrialization process developed unevenly and in certain specific sectors (Zimmer, 1998: 654). In fact, the Swiss economy has long been bolstered by state-sanctioned alliances between export-oriented industries and more protectionist-prone industries such as agriculture and the handicrafts (Afonso, 2007: 9). At the beginning of the twentieth century, large infrastructure projects for building roads, tunnels through mountains, and building construction necessitated large amounts of labor, thereby leading to an increase of foreign workers. Although the issue of *Überfremdung* has already been discussed as contributing to the historical waves of stricter immigration policy, Afonso (2007: 9) argues that over time and particularly in the 1980s and 1990s Switzerland moved from a relatively laissez-faire immigration policy to a more centralized and stricter implementation. This is partially due to the epistemic community of Swiss economists who have often framed the issue of immigrant contribution to the economy as a policy that has "benefited low productivity domestic sectors and hampered the competitiveness of the Swiss economy". They argue that the buffer that immigrant work has served to shield the Swiss economy from unemployment and economic stagnation has propped up the economy in an unstable manner. Instead, free market policies with more targeted

51

immigration policy would benefit the Swiss economy better (Afonso, 2007: 22). This argument has gradually been realized in policy, which has led to more high-wage workers immigrating to Switzerland and refugees instead serving as low-wage workers. Discriminatory hiring practices within white-collar sectors were highlighted by several refugees in this study, as later chapters will show.

As stated before, the mid-1990s showed a sharp increase in the percentage of asylum applications that were accepted. While in 1986 6.9 percent of all asylum applications from Turkish citizens were accepted, in 1995 that figure had reached 47.1 percent. Four thousand seven hundred applicants from Turkey were granted asylum status by Switzerland between the years of 1986 and 1995, with an overall rate of 9.1 percent (Holzer et al., 2000: 254). It is important to point out that not all of those whose asylum applications are rejected are deported. Many stay for years applying and re-applying and fall under a relatively new category of foreigner who can not be deported back home but also does not have the status of refugee and can not work (Holzer et al., 2000: 254). This creates a problematic existence for some refugees in this thesis, who wish to establish a life and work but can not due to such restrictions. There is also the added issue of mobility among cantons when languages are different. A large number of refugees coming to Switzerland do not speak French, German, or Italian and therefore learn the language in the canton in which they are based. If after that preliminary period in which they are required to stay in that canton they decide to move to another canton with better job opportunities, social or familial networks, or other potential reasons, there is the added difficulty of having to learn another language. The small geographical size of the country adds to that problem.

1.4.3. Swiss National Identity

There is a fundamental paradox for anyone studying migration issues in Switzerland: how does one explain the presence of a strong sense of *Überfremdung* in such a multi-lingual, con-federal society where *difference* has been the ideational basis on which deliberative democracy has developed? While Switzerland is a multilingual country, it would not be entirely correct to call it multinational. As Stojanovic (2003: 49-53) points out, although the German, Italian, and French cantons of Switzerland constitute linguistically diverse communities, they are not nations in the sense of having separate ethnic or cultural identities. In fact, the various cantons of Switzerland evolved into communities before the French, German, or Italian nation-building eras. Switzerland can best be described as a "voluntaristic nation", which is held together by "direct democracy, multiculturalism, and federalism" (Dahinden, 2008: 57), but also one characterized by a deep connection to the geography and particular cantonal and local community allegiances. Zimmer (1998: 655) even talks of a particular strain in Swiss intellectual thought that had historically shunned modernity and exalted the Alps as symbolizing what was pure and unchanging about Switzerland. Such a close-knit relationship to geography and local community can be problematic for migrating peoples because of hostility they may encounter from a population not characterized by cosmopolitanism or exposure to foreigners.

Swiss citizenship itself, however, is multi-layered and consequently there are three levels: community, cantonal, and national (Dahinden, 2008: 73). In a study based on Swiss allegiance conducted in the 1990s, researchers found that of Germanophone, Francophone, and Italophone groups, all show on average 75% allegiance to

Switzerland, 50-75% show allegiance to the canton (the Germanophone regions professing a larger degree of allegiance), 50% to the local community, and only about 45% for linguistic community (Stojanovic, 2003: 75). In effect, while the Swiss are diverse in terms of language and tied to their local community, they are also extremely loyal to the idea of a Swiss national identity (Stojanovic, 2003).

In regards to relations with immigrant groups there exists a sharp divide between insider and outsider, even with French- and German-speakers from other countries. The discourse on foreigners is characterized by the following: "ethnic or national groups are regarded as fixed variables and group formation of immigrants along ethnic lines is taken for granted" (Dahinden, 2008: 58). Immigrants and refugees are viewed in terms of identity as extensions of their homelands, and "the further away these groups are from their original national territory, the greater the 'cultural distance' from the Swiss is perceived to be" (Dahinden, 2008: 58). This again goes back to the issue of geography and proximity to Switzerland itself. While Germans are still considered foreigners in Switzerland, they are often seen as closer in terms of identity to the Swiss than Turks, who are often viewed as closer than Sri Lankans. This is reflected in the respective decrease in distribution of residency permits to nationals from those countries (Holzer et al., 2000).

In addition to the historical nation-building process in Switzerland, aspects of the political governing structure also shape national identity, as is true of any country. The use of the popular initiative and referenda within the Swiss semi-direct democracy system means that citizens can often introduce new legislation or attempt to change

54

existing law, with certain exceptions (Linder, 1994). In fact, as Riaño and Wastl-Walter (2006b: 8) point out, the push for tightening asylum and refugee laws often comes from popular initiatives started by citizens. The majority of the time these initiatives fail but still serve a purpose in shifting the public discourse towards the citizen groups' side and pressuring existing governments to follow up with tighter restrictions. It is often the Swiss government that takes a more positive view towards immigration and the rising popularity of the right-wing party, the *SVP*, can partially be explained by public dissatisfaction with such governance (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005). Under such strict citizenship laws, it is difficult for refugees to gain the right to vote and therefore participate in the Swiss direct democracy system. This creates an uncomfortable space for political refugees from Turkey, whose political activism in their homeland was the very reason why they were exiled. The fact that they largely come from educated backgrounds (Fibbi et al., 2003: 219) and perhaps their previous political activism, also leads to frustration when they are unable to participate in the civic and political life of the hostland due to excessively restrictive citizenship laws.

While factors such as demographic trends, national identity, and governance structures undoubtedly play a role in the refugee resettlement process, Switzerland is part of a broader trend often termed "Fortress Europe", whereby industrialized countries within the European sphere are tightening their borders against immigration due to the intra-European free movement of labor and the controversy the issue engenders at the voting booth (Holzer et al., 2000: 252). As will be seen in later chapters, the time of arrival of refugees has greatly affected their experiences in the refugee resettlement system. Many who came immediately after the 1980 coup encountered a more relaxed and *laissez-faire*

system of resettlement while those who came later in the decade or in the 1990s encountered a state much more concerned with exerting control over refugee lives.

1.5. Conclusion

What ties together the history of the leftist movement in Turkey and the refugee regime in Switzerland is the collective movement of thousands of people fleeing the military regime in the post-1980 period, as this chapter has illustrated. In the first instance the Turkish state defined this group of people based on their contentious political activism (often colored by ethnic status), while in the second the Swiss state defined them as "asylum-seekers" or "refugees", this time according to the reasons for their migration. At the same time, issues of ethnic, religious, and educational background; gender; time spent in prison; and time of arrival in host country all play a role in how these actors experience the Turkish state and Swiss refugee resettlement regimes. The remainder of this thesis, therefore, will be concerned with determining to what degree this experience of leftist activism and forced migration constitutes a diasporic collective identity. The following chapters draw on theory and fieldwork to situate the role individuals themselves play in the larger historical and institutional processes discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND DIASPORA THEORY

2.1. Overview of Chapter

For refugees or exiles maintaining memories of homeland political activism and adapting to hostland involve a negotiation between personal beliefs and the necessity to survive. The collective identity formation process of Turkish and Kurdish refugees in Switzerland has involved the transformation of their ideology, which here refers to the political world-views on which their activism was based. In this chapter I deal specifically with the often contentious issue of collective identity formation through the respective literatures of social movements and diaspora. This will provide the theoretical groundwork for my fieldwork findings detailed in later chapters. I hold that for Turks and Kurds and perhaps other exiled political communities, adaptation to the host country involves a process of identity renegotiation that is characterized by certain shared collective experiences and intra-movement contention.

The following questions are posed and addressed throughout the chapter: how does the literature on social movements and collective identity contribute to understandings of the transnational and diasporic existence of refugees and exiles? Likewise, how is the

57

diaspora approach a useful tool in understanding the identity formation of groups that have fled their home country? What happens to collective identity when a social movement is severely repressed by state institutions and its members are forced to flee? To what degree is collective identity within social movements characterized by contention and dissimilarity between members rather than unified beliefs? What power inequalities are reproduced within social movements and within the diaspora? Finally, is there a foundation for political or ideological belief to be part of diasporic identity formation?

Before that, however, it is useful to define some of the key terminology. Though capable of being understood in different ways, a social movement essentially refers to the collective action of a group of individuals wishing to effect change from the ruling power structure. As Diani (2000: 1) points out, they:

> cannot be reduced to specific insurrections or revolts, but rather resemble strings of more or less connected events, scattered across time and space; the organizations, with various levels of formalization, linked in patterns of interaction which run from the fairly centralized to the totally decentralized, from the cooperative to the explicitly hostile. Persons promoting and/or supporting their actions do so not as atomized individuals, possibly with similar values or social traits but as actors linked to each other through complex webs of exchanges, either direct or mediated. Social movements are in other words, complex and highly heterogeneous network structures.

Diani takes a more network-based approach to understanding social movements and this definition in particular fits the diffuse and multi-organizational nature of the Turkish leftist movement of the 1970s and 80s in contrast to more structured and hierarchical social movements. In addition to its organizational characteristics, the movement was also heterogeneous in terms of political belief and ethnic, gender, class, religious, and cultural background. Such a definition allows for an approach that takes into account the

"negotiation and malleability of identities and interests", particularly when networks are viewed as "communicative structures" that are acting and acted upon (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 218-219).This does not mean, however, that there are no commonalities within the movement that emerged in Turkey. Economic equality, justice, youth involvement in politics, socialist reforms, and revolution constitute broad aims that nearly all activists viewed as desirous and worth mobilizing for.

The particular case of the leftist movement in Turkey and its activists diverges, however, from the majority of the literature in a few key ways. First, this movement was most active during a high-risk period and was subsequently suppressed by a military coup. Issues of mobilization and motivation are likely to be very different from social movements active in relatively stable countries. Second, a large portion of the literature takes a look at movements within the United States and Europe. While there have certainly been high-risk movements within the Western world in the twentieth century, (the Irish Republican movement and American civil rights movement being such examples), the majority of the movements studied in the Western world have tended to be those working within the institutional paradigm, not directly challenging it. The Turkish leftist movement, however, was one that not only was seeking to effect regime change but also was subsequently repressed by a military government. Third, this research is being conducted with *former* activists who both through the geographic displacement of exile and the effects of time, are engaging primarily with their memories of past activism. Some researchers view such research as contributing to a "retrospective bias", wherein certain memories are privileged over others and reinterpretation is a methodological problem (White, 2007). I take the view, however,

that reinterpretation is a constant and everyday practice and that the memories activists choose to report are significant in and of themselves. Finally, much of the literature on social movements stresses the commonalities of identity within the movement. However, social movements are characterized by power differences and contention as is any other social institution. In fact, this thesis seeks to understand those power differentials and how they contribute to divergences in leftist political identity. This chapter, therefore, will broadly look at the social movements literature while taking these four concerns into account.

As for diaspora, the question as to whether there exists such a phenomenon as "leftist diasporic identity" diverges from the diaspora literature. Whether one takes a typological or process-oriented view (as will discussed in more depth further in the chapter), the unit of study tends to be focused on similar religious, national, or ethnic groups. The diaspora section in this chapter aims to open up the possibility of examining identity through political affinity or ideology, rather than just ethnic or national allegiances. In following the temporal order of refugee movement, the chapter is divided into two main sections: (1) an overview of the social movements literature and its views on collective identity; and (2) a section on both theoretical and empirical findings in the research on diaspora.

2.2. Collective Identity within Social Movements

Although the leftist political refugee flow out of Turkey is by no means homogenous in terms of ethnicity, gender, class, or even level of ideological commitment and activism,

it is useful to examine social movements because they provide a channel through which politically active individuals negotiate and renegotiate the parameters of their identity. Particularly for activists in Turkey, the discourse of socialism, communism, justice, revolutionary politics, and liberation were key identity themes around which a very diverse movement coalesced. The theoretical models surveyed below are representative of the various ways scholars view collective identity.

2.2.1. Resource Mobilization Models

Until recently the resource mobilization and political process models were the preeminent ways of examining how groups form in order to seek redress from the state or change in society. These perspectives tended to focus more on organizational explanations and historically-grounded attempts to gain access to the political systems, respectively (Diani, 2000: 157-158). Within the resource mobilization paradigm, individuals are seen as rational actors and collective identity is built through networks based on the availability of resources and movement leadership capable of taking advantage of those resources (McAdam et al., 1995). Within these theories however, identity tends to be viewed as primarily instrumental or as a tool with which people can be mobilized and motivated to act. Similarly, political process theory or political opportunity theory also emphasizes how movements come about according to political opportunities and then refashion those opportunities through collective mobilization (Tarrow, 1994).

This perspective does aid, however, in understanding the role political opportunities and state structures play. The role of the state is clearly relevant in the case of the Turkish

leftist movement. Without understanding state ideology and military intervention, it is difficult to understand the diasporic scattering of political exiles throughout Europe. Nonetheless, as previously pointed out, much of the social movements literature concerns low-risk activism. The systematic use of repression by states on social movements is an under-studied area (Edelman, 2001: 297). There is some research into how movements challenging state institutions and regimes often face more repression than pro-state movements, as a study comparing state repression of anti-state IRA activities and pro-state paramilitary forces in Northern Ireland shows (White, 1999: 196). Similarly, Schneider's (1995) study of anti-state mobilization during the Pinochet regime in Chile highlights how relations between political organizations and informal networks of poor and working-class in the shantytowns led to a cultural movement of resistance against the regime. However, she argues that the economic crisis of the era, not identity issues, provided the political opportunity for Communist organizations to skillfully play sides off on one another (Schneider, 1995: 15-16). State repression often plays a role in mobilizing people to become politically active, particularly when certain segments of the population are targeted. As White (2007: 288) points out, "recruitment into a social movement changes one's location in the social structure, one's social networks, and one's self". Joining a movement makes a clear statement in regards to how one views the legitimacy of the state. Therefore, it can be argued that the degree to which political opportunities open up for movement mobilization is linked to types of state institutions.

This does not mean, however, that all members of the movement react in the same way to state institutions or political opportunities. Rather, the process of framing that arises

62

sets out a new perspective on an issue or problem that members of a group seek to redress or have chosen to identify themselves with (Diani, 2000: 162). Benford and Snow (2000) draw on Goffman's concept of the frame to offer the importance of meaning construction in social movements. Goffman viewed frames as "schemata of interpretation" that allow subjects to integrate, contextualize, and order experiences in their lives and the larger society (Goffman cited in Benford and Snow, 2000: 614). The scholars extrapolate that concept to social movements. In this perspective, social movement actors are "signifying agents" who are actively involved in the creation and maintenance of meaning through a dynamic process also characterized by contention (Benford and Snow, 2000: 613-614). Such an understanding implies that social movements do not just grow out of previously existing ideologies but rather involve the shaping of those very ideologies.

While consideration of opportunity through political structure is important to consider, it does not address the free rider problem (Wood, 2001; Crossley, 2003: 52). In other words, why would anyone join a movement whose benefits will reach beyond the immediate members, particularly in high-risk contexts? Identity-based perspectives attempt to address this issue, as the next section will illustrate. The resource mobilization paradigm also does not address the cultural aspects of movements themselves, and how belonging to a movement can become an end in itself, not merely the means to a clearly stated end (Polletta, 2004; Polletta and Jasper, 2001).

63

2.2.2. Identity-based Perspectives

Recent research has more explicitly explored the concept of collective identity within social movements. The collective identity perspective addresses the *why* questions of social movements in addition to the *how*; for example, why people choose to join movements when considering the free rider issue, and the cultural effects and norms that develop out of social movements (Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 283-284). In a sense, rather than examine what social movements achieve by using 20/20 hindsight (e.g. looking at the legislation enacted as a result of the civil rights movement in the United States), newer research examines how social movements can be sites of active identity- and meaning-making. Part of what participants in such movements achieve is a new sense of identity, one that most importantly is shared across the group. Polletta and Jasper (2001: 285) define collective identity as:

> An individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity.

In such a definition, identity is not a separate phenomenon that acts as a motivating factor to join a movement and exists separately from institutions such as the individual. It is also not a "rational action" or merely a cultural construction creating all subsequent rationalities or interests. In this perspective, rather, identity is conceptualized as constituting a relationship between "discursive practices" and societal structures, with the direction of causality diminishing in importance (Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 285). It also places more importance on the "shared set of beliefs and sense of belongingness" that characterize not only the external identity of the movement as a whole but also how actors within the movement view themselves in relation to others (Diani, 2000: 161).

An in-depth study of left- and right-wing activists in the United States also highlighted how activism was an expression of identity and a way of further constructing identity rather than merely a strategic decision of movement leaders to mobilize for collective petitions of rights or changes in political structures (Teske, 1997). Research into American anti-nuclear activists also revealed that egalitarian decision-making structure within the organization related to the political aims of the movement itself (Downey, 1986). Likewise, leaders and participants of the American civil rights movement of the 1960s consciously chose a strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience as reflecting the types of rights they were lobbying for (Isaac, 2008).

Some more critical approaches dismiss a difference between structure and culture/agency and view culture rather as (Polletta, 2004: 100):

> the symbolic dimension of all structures, institutions, and practices (political, economic, educational, etc.) … Culture is thus patterned and patterning; it is enabling as well as constraining; and it is observable in linguistic practices, institutional rules, and social rituals rather than existing only in people's heads.

Similarly, emotions too can be viewed as constitutive of relations and phenomena in the social world (Goodwin et al., 2001: 9). Rather than viewing emotions as irrational crowd-based behavior or individual-based inner conflicts only, this approach views them as an important aspect of the motivations and basis for collective identity and therefore motivation to join a movement (Goodwin et al. 2004: 2, 4). "Injustice frames" serve as one way movement leaders recruit but also a powerful emotional motivation for identity-based claims (Goodwin et al., 2004: 8, 9). As Gamson (1992: 32) points out, of all the emotions, injustice is most closely associated with "the righteous anger that puts fire in

the belly and iron in the soul". On the other hand, emotions can also be manipulated, subconsciously hidden, or viewed as dangerous to a movement (Goodwin et al., 2001: 14-15). Part of the fieldwork conducted in this research is devoted to understanding the motivations for joining a movement and the potential role that emotions play in this process. Reasons for joining relate to the broader issue of collective identity. Just as an individual's background may lead him or her to join a movement, being in the movement itself can also be the goal for the type of identity formation and emotional work in which they wish to engage. As Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005: 493) point out, however, emotional ties to movements are often interrupted and can be quite contentious. These interruptions can lead to disillusionment and abandonment of movement ideals and practices, something which I will analyze further within the memory work former activists engage in when recalling their movement activism.

2.2.3. Social Movements and Networks

Network analysis also utilizes a similar understanding of identity when explaining why people choose to join certain movements. Instead of viewing motivations as based in allegiances to more-or-less fixed categories such as ethnicity, gender, and class, it instead advocates to look at networks of social relations, with patronage, urban communities, and political organizing being some examples that lie outside of the traditional relationships thought of as relevant to social movement organizing (Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 288). Informal networks within local communities are also especially important (Diani, 2000: 160; Schneider, 1995). Examining networks and collective identity is useful because it not only takes into account the influences of family, peer groups, and professional ties, but also allows the researcher to see how diasporic groups

keep up with networked relationships from the homeland while in the hostland and how they form new relations. In other words, using this approach can address the issue of whether or not diasporic groups that come from a social movement in their homeland are retaining similar types of networks or seeking new avenues for themselves. More importantly, looking at networks also allows one to analyze the milieu within which activists are socialized and to what extent they are born into environments that facilitate (or perhaps even ensure) movement participation.

Emirbayer and Goldberg (2005: 491) view power within social movements as transactional and that power 'is itself not a substance or a possession to be "seized" or "held" … but rather, an outgrowth or effect of the relative positions that actors occupy within one or more networks'. This relational understanding can account for the contentious aspects within social movements. In such an understanding, educational background or ethnic identity may become a marker that stratifies movement structures in unequal ways. In addition, looking at this networked understanding of collective identity allows the researcher to analyze instances when the "sense of belongingness", often taken for granted within study of social movements (Diani, 2000: 170), is *not* shared by all coming from that movement. The frustration felt by women in exiled leftist communities from Chile (Eastmond, 1993) or Kurds within the Turkish leftist movement, for example, represents how this intra-movement "bargaining process" functions (Diani, 2000: 170). This term refers to the process individuals engage in when dealing with thoughts that diverge from the common beliefs and modes of operating within the organization or movement itself.

67

2.2.4. Youth Activism

As Braungart and Braungart (1990: 276-277) found in their study of former left- and right-wing youth leader activists in 1960s America, not only did politics (and their participation in it) play a key role in constructing meaning and identity throughout activists' lives, but the generational aspect provided a collective identity of being together in an important and exciting time in history. Likewise, while the leftist movement in Turkey was comprised of overlapping gender, ethnic, religious, and class-based identities, one feature that did characterize the majority of the participants (though certainly not all), was age. With a large amount of organizing occurring in high schools and universities (sometimes even middle schools), the spirit of the 1960s was manifest in the organizing itself all the way up to the 1980 coup. To quote one activist, "1968 came late to Turkey".

The aforementioned study found that while the emphasis or specific issues of concern changed over time, most of the former youth leaders retained their core set of political beliefs (Braungart and Braungart, 1990). The life-cycle perspective that the scholars used argues that inter-generational difference is part of a developmental process that adolescents go through when entering into adulthood. A large part of that process involves questioning authority, establishing self-identity amongst peer groups, and often joining political and social movements advocating change (Braungart and Braungart, 1990: 245). As Braungart and Braungart (1990: 252) point out in regards to the interview process of participants' recounting their memories:

> the interest is less in accuracy of the account than in how events have been remembered and interpreted, for it is these interpretations that have affected subsequent perceptions, attitudes, and responses to politics … Of special interest is

how young individuals come to attach their personal lives to history as a part of a generational movement, and, in turn, the effect of that experience on the course of their adulthood.

An interesting commonality to emerge from the study was the importance of singular societal events and how that affected the family unit. Examples include McCarthyism for the both leftist and conservative activists, the civil rights movement for leftists, and the Hungarian uprising for conservative activists. This is a relevant point to consider when studying the migration of political refugees from Turkey also. Events such as the bloody events of May 1, 1977, the massacres in 1978 in Kahramanmaraş, and of course the coups of March 12, 1971 and September 12, 1980 all played an important collective role in the lives of political activists, as did Bloody Sunday for Irish Catholic activists and the Pinochet coup in Chile (White, 2007: 293; Schneider, 1995). In addition, in many ways, the two coups in Turkey acted as generational dividers of leftist activists, with the earlier coup influencing the generation of activist youths coming after it.

Many respondents in the Braungart and Braungart (1990) study pointed out that values and attitudes were often more important than political views per se, and that issues such as Jewish identity for the leftist activists played an important role. The association between Jewishness as a religious and ethnic identity and leftist politics in the United States is relevant to the study of leftist ideological bent within Kurdish and Alevi groups in Turkey. While the state-society relations are clearly quite different between the two cases, they do both present examples of minority cultures characterized by contentious attitudes towards the political structure. Furthermore, no political activists came from homes where both parents were of the opposite ideological bent (Braungart and Braungart, 1990: 258-259). Family clearly influences recruitment into political activism,

69

and research has shown that activists who are influenced by their family politically tend to stay more politically engaged for longer (White, 2007: 291). Aside from the issue of generational collective identity and familial influences, such findings beg the question of the degree to which activists really choose their movement participation. On the superficial level, there seems an obvious choice between becoming actively involved and staying "neutral", but in many cases, the issue of agency becomes clouded. Particularly in repressive contexts, where family members can be punished for what their relatives do or where extreme discrimination colors the everyday fabric of life, the clarity of mobilization becomes harder to ascertain. I will explore this issue further in the fieldwork chapters.

2.2.5. New Social Movements Perspective

The New Social Movements (NSM) perspective, popular particularly in Europe and Latin America, takes a more contextualized view of contemporary social movements. Rather than being concerned with explicitly economic issues, its scholars argue that modern-day movements are mostly concerned with post-materialist and post-1968 issues of identity and quality-of-life, often those that reach beyond merely national issues (Pichardo, 1997). Examples include the gay rights, environmentalist, animal rights, anti-globalization movements, and so on (Edelman, 2001: 288).

Perhaps more importantly, rather than taking an instrumentalist view of identity, this theory views the actual movement work as an expression of identity, which is also a part of the everyday practices of people. Movements also tend to be "self-reflexive" and concerned with making tactical and organizational choices in line with their particular

70

political beliefs (Pichardo, 1997: 415-416). Although the new social movements (NSM) approach has emphasized identity politics based on cultural self-identification (Diani, 2000; Polletta and Jasper, 2001; Hunt et al., 1994), it also represents a post-1960s repudiation of the traditional left-right paradigm (Laclau & Mouffe in Edelman, 2001: 289):

> the NSMs emerge out of the crisis of modernity and focus on struggles over symbolic, informational, and cultural resources and rights to specificity and difference. Participation in NSMs is itself a goal, apart from any instrumental objectives, because everyday movements practices embody in embryonic form the changes the movements seek. The NSMs diffuse "social conflictuality to more and more numerous relations".

This proliferation of "points of antagonism" produces "new social subjects" whose "multiple social positions" complicate interpretations of political agency based on a single, privileged principle of identity (Laclau & Mouffe in Edelman, 2001: 289). On the outset, the Turkish leftist movement seems to belong to the struggles of the traditional Marxist paradigm, not an NSM one. However, I argue that "struggles over symbolic, informational, and cultural resources and rights to specificity and difference" as quoted above, though not a stated aim of the movement, *was* a source of contention amongst Turks and Kurds, Sunnis and Alevis, and men and women within the movement. This contention spilled over into the diaspora as well. In effect, the idea that NSMs contend with way of life issues while explicitly leftist and anti-state movements do not ignore the identity-constructing aspect of those social movements also (Edelman, 2001: 288). Nonetheless, the NSM perspective helps to place the collective identity of former activists in exile, whose political concerns may have shifted more in line with issues of individual growth and choice. That too will be addressed in further chapters.

71

As outlined above, the theories discussed until now offer useful aspects with which to study the Turkish leftist movement of the 1970s and 1980s. However, the question remains as to what happens to collective identity, contested though it may be, after a traumatic fissure within the movement. I argue that many of the activists involved in the Turkish leftist movement were from a young age socialized into a perspective characterized by a certain critical stance towards the state. Here I stress an understanding of the state as espousing a Kemalist ideology characterized by hegemonic Turkish-Sunni practices, as outlined in the first chapter of this thesis. The fact that many activists were Kurdish and Alevi lends credence to the idea of such a critical stance. This is arguably true also for Turkish exiles who share many of the following phenomena: childhood influences from family; youthful activism and the "cultural and symbolic resources" used in social movement activism (Crossley, 2003: 57); fear of arrest and actual incarceration and torture; the process of fleeing to countries in Europe with fake passports through criss-crossing networks of sympathizers and former activists; relations with the Swiss state in gaining refugee status; and their subsequent career and political choices. Thus while the very nature of being a political activist involves being actively opposed to the established order and "entails acquisition of a reflexive disposition" (Crossley, 2003: 55), the fracturing of a social movement changes many key aspects of an actor's political and personal identities. Diaspora theory may offer mechanisms for addressing such changes.

2.3. Diaspora: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Findings

For many activists involved in social movements that directly challenge a repressive political order, the threat of imprisonment, torture, and even death often leads to the necessity to flee the country. The majority of those emigrating from Turkey in the wake of the 1980 military coup settled in the various countries of Europe and today constitutes what may be considered a diaspora. The term "diaspora" as a religious concept dates back to the mass dispersal of ancient Jews and since then has been used to refer to, among others, the Armenian, African, and Chinese communities forced from their homelands to various locations around the world (Butler, 2001; Cohen, 1997). The long and storied history of the term makes it important to clarify how it is studied in contemporary social science scholarship, however. Safran's (1991: 191) following definition of the term has often been used in shaping a comparative understanding of diasporic groups: "dispersal to two or more locations, collective mythology of homeland, alienation from hostland, idealization of return to homeland, and an ongoing relationship with homeland". In addition to these features, the following can also be added to the notion of diaspora: "a self-awareness as a group of its own existence, that the perceived relationship to a homeland can be real or imagined, and that temporally it should last at least over one generation" (Butler, 2001: 192).

While popular, Safran's conceptualization has been viewed as problematic by scholars. Clifford (1994) critiques Safran's "ideal type" understanding of diasporas as confining diasporic experience too closely with predetermined and atomized groups. He instead

argues that for displaced peoples, "decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin" (Clifford, 1994: 306). In this sense communities dispersed to various locations share not only memories of homeland but also the everyday experiences of exile. Rather than maintaining a static relation with a homeland frozen in time, these communities are actively engaging in changing notions of their experience that is shared and can be termed "diasporic". In addition, the tensions that exist within such groups also constitute part of their identity as a diasporic community. Such a notion of diaspora necessarily includes the "political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community" (Clifford, 1994: 7).

By examining the theoretical and empirical findings within the literature on diaspora, therefore, this section assesses its capacity to explain the collective political identity of the Turkish and Kurdish community in Switzerland and how it may be possible to conceptualize a leftist exiled community as a diaspora. This part is divided into two categories: a brief summary of the main theoretical debate within diaspora theory over using a typological or process-based approach, followed by an empirical section that analyzes research conducted on various diasporic communities and how their experiences may compare to the more specific example of Kurds and Turks in Europe. Diasporic communities often engage in what Benedict Anderson terms "long-distance nationalism" (Anthias, 1998: 564; Tambiah, 2000: 171; Turner, 1998; Van Bruinessen, 1998: 48). As many Kurds became disillusioned with the Turkish leftist movement due to its neglect of issues specifically related to Kurdish repression, the focus for many of

them began to turn towards the Kurdish nationalist movement and achieving statehood for the region in Turkey. While this connotes a tie to the home country, it is becoming increasingly clear that the collective identity of a scattered community is not merely characterized by a singular conception of home defined by nationalism, but are instead constructing new identities based on the transnational nature of their existence. In many ways, the word "diaspora" itself is "a traveling term, in changing global conditions" (Clifford, 1994: 302) and likewise its use within the social sciences has also changed. It therefore presents opportunities for scholars to better conceptualize how economic migrants, refugees, and political exiles transforming their identity with multiple notions of home. My aim is to build on the literature of this section in order to understand whether or not a leftist collective identity trumping divisions between Turkish and Kurdish political refugees exists.

2.3.1. Typological Understandings of Diaspora

As Butler (2001: 189) points out, although populations of humans have always migrated for various reasons throughout time, not all such movements constitute a diasporic grouping. Numerous scholars have attempted to define what constitutes diaspora and create theoretical parameters from which researchers can benefit. This next section assesses such findings in order to sketch out the most useful conceptualizations of the idea, starting first with how typologies contribute to a diasporic understanding.

The traditional mode of studying diaspora has been through the ethnographic approach of creating typologies based on reason for dispersal. This effort to isolate the important characteristics of each group has been useful in providing the field with detailed

75

historiographies and contextual knowledge of various groups, how reasons for dispersal contribute to how relations with home country are maintained, and how acculturation processes in the hostland occur. Cohen (1997) traces the various forms of diasporic communities that have arisen since the Jewish diaspora and lays out five various types: cultural, imperial, trade, labor, and victim. Having a working definition and rich understanding of various groups, however, can contribute to a certain reified and static conceptualization of diaspora which ignores the variation within. Furthermore, while such typologies are no doubt useful in understanding the plethora of diasporic experiences, it precludes a "comparative schema", or a tool that would allow scholars to conceptualize groups in relation to one another. In addition, many migrants fall into more than one typology. A Greek Cypriot living in the Great Britain, for example, may be understood to be within the imperial, trade, and labor groupings (Anthias, 1998: 563-564). It is perhaps more useful to look at the particular path of certain groups of migrating peoples, rather than the singular reason for expulsion. As Anthias (1998: 565) states, one otherwise runs the danger of falling into a situation where:

> the *explanas* becomes the *explanandum*. The fact that a population category may be identifiable by an attributed origin (other or self), does not provide sufficient grounds for treating it as a valid sociological category. The differences within the category may be as great as those between the categories. This is not merely a theoretical matter; power hierarchies within groups cannot be addressed.

This is significant because such typologies often fail to take into account other factors, such as race, gender, and class, which play a role in the formation of identities and power relations within diaspora groups. This does not mean that researchers must use primordial understandings of ethnicity or nationalism. For those in the diaspora who identify with a certain ethnic or national identity, the effects of that identity are very real (Sökefeld, 2006: 266). These "imagined transnational communities" are relevant

76

because they reflect how certain communities view their place in relation to home- and hostland. Even in cases of contention intra-community, the very argument over differing identity supports the notion that there is a basic commonality within that group (Sökefeld, 2006: 267).

Argun's (2003) in-depth exploration of the transnational dimensions of *Deutschkei*, or the name given to people from Turkey living in Germany, parses the idea of a Turkish diaspora by illustrating its diversity of ethnic, religious, and ideological identities. Accordingly, Alevis, Kurds, ultranationalists, and Islamists all constitute various groupings which at times may overlap but tend to be well-organized, well-financed, and active in the politics of the home country. The relationship with the homeland may be contentious as in the case with Kurds, or supportive, as with ultranationalists (Argun, 2003: 66). This illustrates the importance of examining more deeply not only the differences between diaspora groups but also both the intra-group differences and subsequently the varying ways with which they form ties with the home country. In relation, Ostergaard-Nielsen (2000) also examines Turks and Kurds, though she analyzes the ways in which both groups lobby their host countries of the Netherlands and Germany in regards to political issues of importance in Turkey. As she argues, the very concept of 'national "boundedness"' of Turkey's domestic issues are challenged because of the intense lobbying of Western European governments, whose foreign policies are in turn informed by these attempts (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2000: 261).

2.3.2. The Process-Based Approach to Diaspora

Other scholars treat diaspora largely as a process through which migrant communities are able to subvert their identity through transnational allegiances and new constructions that diverge from primordial understandings of home. Essentially, syncretism comes to define new forms of identity and can be characterized by what Clifford (1994: 308) calls "selective accommodation", or the process by which people make sense of where they are living through establishing themselves as different. If, for example, a person of African descent is born in Jamaica he or she may view him or herself as part of the African diaspora. However, if that person then moves to Great Britain, he or she then becomes part of the Caribbean diaspora or perhaps even a Jamaican diaspora. This highlights the difficulty of defining a diasporic group when there are multiple identity formations that occur during the course of a person's migration. Rather, it is possible to examine the processes by which social groups engage in "diasporization", what is also termed an "epistemology of diasporan studies" (Butler, 2001: 193). Studying diaspora as a process also allows the scholar to examine how long distance nationalism can give an exiled group a certain degree of capital in what may seem like a powerless situation. Numerous scholars have addressed how migrants and refugees have engaged their home countries through financial success and social mobilization in host countries (Levitt and Glick-Schiller, 2004: 15) and even how the process of leaving a homeland and settling in a new one can result in ethnic fundamentalism or support of militant groups in the home country (Anthias, 1998: 567).

Some scholars postulate that diasporic people live in a process of "relationality" with more urgency than other populations (Soğuk, 2008: 174). Having conducted

ethnographic research with Kurds in Europe, Soğuk (2008: 176) argues that the community exhibits "EuroKurdishness", or the process by which they utilize their agency to "implode territoriality in transversality". In other words, the community showcases a certain degree of "aterritoriality" in how they view Europe as a space for them to negotiate their Kurdishness, often by calling on the territorial aspects of Kurdistan. Taking it a step further, the scholar also postulates that, "the Kurds can be claimed to be communicating to Europe's aspiring Europhiles how to grow Euroversal" (Soğuk, 2008: 176). By examining the dynamic and often contested nature of Euro-Kurdish institutions and organizations, diaspora itself is conceptualized as "diasporic agency" in its capacity to create a post-Cartesian understanding of borders and space (Soğuk, 2008: 191). This take on diaspora is significant for many reasons, one of which is the recognition of self-conscious understanding of transversality of groups themselves (Soğuk, 2008: 180). Groups are not only caught up in a process of transnationalism, but are actively constructing an identity characterized by something beyond merely homeland and hostland. They are often also willing to take advantage of the opportunities such a construction may bring to effect change. At the same time, for those who have crossed borders while fleeing and may not have the right to return, the reality of borders remains in the construction of their exiled identity.

The Kurdish diaspora undoubtedly constitutes one of the most politically active diasporic groups in Europe, largely as a result of the circumstances through which they migrated (often as refugees), and that has also affected the self-consciousness of that transversality. Van Bruinessen (1998) points out that it is when Kurds started arriving in Europe in larger numbers that the growth of an ethnic consciousness arose. Both waves

79

of *gastarbeiter* in the post-World War II era onward and migrations of refugees both from the region in the 1980s and 1990s all comprise what is thought to be a community in Germany alone numbering 400,000 (Van Bruinessen, 1998: 45). The Kurdish Institute of Paris, MED-TV, the revival of the Kurmanji dialect in Sweden as a form of "high" Kurdish, and *PKK* recruitment and funding all constitute ways in which Kurdish ethnic identity emerged in a form unique to the time and place (Van Bruinessen, 1998). However, the assumption of agency in Soğuk's argument does not leave room for the reproduction of certain power relations that may also be occurring in the process of Euro-Kurdishness. How are these groups reproducing power inequalities carried over from their homeland? What change is occurring through this process? The following section will examine more closely how such communities are negotiating the transnational nature of their existence and the issues of both host and home country that they deem important.

2.3.3. The Transnational Perspective

In many ways, studying diasporic communities under the umbrella of transnationalism seems intuitive, as the very nature of dispersal from a homeland implies a necessary link between host and home countries. In a Bourdieuian sense, institutions and individuals can be viewed as interacting in networks constituting a singular transnational field, which 'consists of relationships between different "positions", with various types of "resources", economic, symbolic, etc., flowing between them' (Crossley, 2003: 59). The dimensions of transnationalism thus are "multi-dimensional, encompassing structured interactions of differing forms, depth, and breadth that are differentiated in social theory by the terms organization, institution, and social movement" (Levitt and Glick-Schiller,

80

2004: p. 9). This approach allows one to look analytically how various levels of refugee life take place on a transnational plane, whether they be familial ties, news consumption, internet-based communication, economic remittances, emotional work, or traumatic memory. This also lets scholars to step outside of the "nation-state container" (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004: 6). For many exiled activists, coming from a fractured social movement, transnational activism can help to keep alive forms and sites of protest (Crossley, 2003: 59). This includes the transnational networks criss-crossed across Europe that allowed refugees to get out of Turkey and to Switzerland, for example, and the activism many carried out for years on behalf of leftist and nationalist groups in Turkey.

In addition to transnational flows of people, the past twenty-five to thirty years have been characterized by the transnational flows of capital and information in the era of neoliberalism (Tambiah, 2000: 163-164). The push and pull factors of migration are complex, including civil strife, economic changes, the fall of the Soviet Union, and turmoil in post-colonial states (Tambiah, 2000: 166). Within this temporal context, diasporic groups can be seen as representing the postmodern condition of deterritorialization conceptualized within three types of networks: "vertical networks", referring to the official and unofficial processes through which immigrants and refugees try to establish an existence in host countries and two types of "lateral networks", one which attempts to preserve and build upon relations with home communities and another termed the "transnational global network"; in effect, a type of consciousness and ordering that rises above borders of both home and host countries (Tambiah, 2000: 169-170). In the case of leftists from Turkey, for many years there were explicit relations

between groups in Europe and their counterpart organizations in Turkey. The same continues to be true with Alevi and Kurdish groups mobilizing in Europe (Sökefeld, 2006; Van Bruinessen, 1998). While both vertical and lateral networks are important for understanding diverse phenomena like immigration and asylum status and financial remittances, respectively, the third process highlights a newer understanding of transnationalism and perhaps diaspora by extension. Essentially, transnational linkages that connect diasporic groups to one another need not revolve around "a teleology of return" or a real or imagined homeland; on the contrary, transnationalism *itself* may be just as important as traditional conceptualizations of home (Tambiah, 2000: 172). This is similar to a certain degree to Clifford's (1994) understanding of diaspora as well. Nonetheless, extending this type of imagining to diaspora would not be without problems. One could argue that such an understanding would dilute the meaning of diaspora to the point where it can describe any immigrant group. It is useful in characterizing the nature of contemporary diasporic groups as functioning within the "multiple modernities" of increased transnational human, capital, and information flows. My research refers more to the second type of lateral network and how it affects the vertical networks within Switzerland and the relations with home communities. In other words, is there a new type of transnational consciousness amongst Turks and Kurds that is characterized by collective memory of leftist struggle in Turkey and the adaptation processes in Switzerland? To extend that further, if there is such a consciousness, is it diasporic in nature?

2.3.4. Political Exiles

Like diaspora, exile is a concept rooted in a religious and literary tradition and political exiles constitute a group of people that have rarely been studied as a diaspora in and of themselves. Instead, political refugees forced from their home country are often counted as members of a national diaspora, rather than representing one in terms of ideological background or political status. According to Wright and Zuniga (2007), the 200,000 people (approximately two percent of Chile's population at the time) who were exiled in the aftermath of Pinochet's coup in Chile in 1973 constituted a diaspora, when the definition of diaspora is taken at its broadest to mean "a forced dispersion of a defined group to multiple sites that lasted a substantial time during which transnational ties to the homeland were maintained" (Van Hear in Wright and Zuniga, 2007: 31).

It was the combined phenomena of leftist defeat, shattered careers, uprooting of families and communities, torture, and mass exile as government policy that gave the Chilean diaspora a particular character, similar to other leftist groups exiled in the latter part of the twentieth century from South America (Wright and Zuniga, 2007: 32). As with any other diasporic group, nonetheless, the process of movement and host country experience changed members in different ways. For Chileans in Western Europe (and some who experienced life in Communist Europe before going to Western Europe), exile not only affected their views on their home country but also their ideology. As one Chilean puts it, "before the coup we gave less importance to democracy because we had never experienced dictatorship and human rights violations were sporadic. Representative democracy and socialism are integrated in our discourse; in the old discourse they were antagonistic terms" (Insulza in Wright and Zuniga, 2007: 42). In

83

other words, the political socialization of the refugee group in Europe led to a change within the collective identity. With the combined economic woes of Chile under Pinochet and the success of the exiled community in redefining their exile as a violation of their human rights, this move towards democratic socialism within the disparate Chilean communities was significant. In many ways, Turkish political exiles are similar to their Chilean counterparts. My fieldwork will attempt to ascertain if refugees from Turkey also went through such a process as many Chileans, thus potentially furthering the idea of a collective diasporic identity based on leftist ideology.

In similar fashion, Rollemberg's (2007) account of the exiled Brazilian left in the years 1964 to 1979 also illustrates how the unifying element of political ideology (and radicalism to varying degrees) contains many dynamic elements affecting the experience of the dispersed population including socio-economic status, age, knowledge of host country language, family reunification, gender, and party or organization affiliation (p. 82). Like the Chilean exiles, Brazilian leftists also experienced a sense of uprootedness and a sharp break with a struggle in which they had invested their life's meaning. However, exile is not necessarily a process marked solely by a sense of lonely expulsion but is rather characterized by a more complex set of criss-crossing identity allegiances. It can be described as (Rollemberg, 2007: 82):

> a story of disorientation, of a crisis of values that meant the end of a journey for some and the discovery of new possibilities for others. It is a story of inglorious and futile effort to maintain an identity. And it is a story of redefinition and reconstruction of identity that extended throughout the phases of exile and for many continued even after returning to Brazil.

This happened for the majority of Brazilian exiles, whether they were satisfied or disillusioned by their diasporic experiences in both Communist and non-Communist

countries or content with the educational and employment options available to them (Rollemberg, 2007). Essentially, the experiences of exiled peoples, though varied, do share some common characteristics through which one can understand how both memories of and reconstruction of home and identity occur. For many Brazilian exiles, "homeland" implied "the armed struggle and the revolution they would return to" (Rollemberg, 2007: 87) while for others exile meant abandoning political involvement in an attempt to start a new life (101). Likewise, for many Brazilians with a university education and a professional career, working as doormen or janitors presented a humiliating demotion into jobs that Europeans often did not want to do while for exiles of a lower socio-economic class in Brazil educational and professional opportunities in other countries presented a way out of poverty and cemented their status as permanent residents (Rollemberg, 2007: 99-100). The exile of politically active groups presents a situation characterized by numerous intersecting aspects of identity, but on a plane of existence that may warrant the designation of diaspora.

This section of the literature review has presented a broad introduction to the main divergence that exists within diaspora theory, in addition to the research conducted on transnationalism and political exile. There are three important findings from this analysis that can be highlighted. First, in order to analyze the processes at work within a diasporic group, it is important to clearly define it, taking into account the overlapping layers of identity and transnational nature of groups today. As Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004: 10) point out, "In any given study, the researcher must operationalize the parameters of the field they are studying, and the scope of the networks embedded within it, and then empirically analyze the strength and impact of direct and indirect

85

transnational relations". Second, whether utilizing the social field concept, social movements literature, or the multiple modernities framework, any analysis of diasporic communities would ideally be further helped by an explicit focus on the underlying power relations, taking into account issues of class, racial and ethnic identity, and gender within the group's transnational identity (if such an identity can be established), in addition to a concerted effort to understanding the power relations both in the home and host countries (Levitt and Glick-Schiller, 2004; Anthias, 1998). Finally, if, as Butler (2001: 194) argues, "rather than being viewed as an ethnicity, diaspora may be alternatively considered as a framework for the study of a specific process of community formation", then the possibility arises of using this growing epistemology of diaspora groups to study potential formations of transnational communities that have not heretofore fallen under the rubric of diaspora. Some examples could be groups based on gender, sexual orientation, or political ideology, although special effort must be undertaken to ensure that the concept does not lose its definitional and theoretical capacity.

2.4. Conclusion

By examining both the social movements and diaspora literatures, I have attempted to establish theoretical mechanisms through which to examine a certain kind of collective identity formation. This type of formation will be explored in the following chapters, which consist of fieldwork I have conducted with Kurdish and Turkish leftist activists who now hold the status of refugee (and sometimes citizen) of Switzerland. In the

following chapters, I intend to explore if and how this group of political exiles share a diasporic collective identity based on a leftist worldview by drawing on their past and present activism and relations with both the Turkish and Swiss states. I am also concerned with how within this context former activists are effecting change rather than just reproducing existing power inequalities within their community. As Polletta (1998: 422) points out, by their nature social movements represent examples of when "agency explodes structure" and "the taken for granted becomes precarious". As political activists and later refugees, the interviewees' experiences in both homeland and hostland were characterized by precariousness as well. However, their political, professional, and social choices and struggles represent assertions of agency within often repressive contexts. The following chapters attempt to uncover how political refugees have exploded (or attempted to explode) structures through not only their past political activism but also contemporary struggles within the hostland.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROOTS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND THE LEGAL PROCESS

3.1. Overview of Chapter

While the community of political refugees from Turkey living in Switzerland is diverse in numerous respects, they do share certain experiences as activists in the homeland and refugees in the hostland. This chapter will analyze how members of this population forged a collective identity as activists within the Turkish leftist movement and their relations with the legal process in both Turkey and Switzerland. The legal process refers to the repressive measures taken by the Turkish state, the related ambiguity of law of the martial law regime, and the experience within the refugee resettlement regime in Switzerland. While much of these experiences constitute a collective experience, there are issues of ethnic and religious background, class, gender, and time of arrival to the hostland that problematize a collective understanding of experience. Throughout the chapter I will insert relevant quotations taken from the participants themselves and analyze these accounts by drawing on the social movements literature.

3.1.1. Demographic Information

This chapter and the next build upon in-depth interviews I conducted in the summer of 2009 and winter 2010 in Zurich, Bern, Geneva, and Neuchâtel, Switzerland. In the

course of the fieldwork, I conducted 23 interviews with refugees from Turkey currently living in Switzerland. The following table highlights the ethnicity, religion, and gender of the participants, in addition to other relevant information.

Table 3.1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Turkish	13
Kurdish	10
Alevi	13
Sunni	10
Male	18
Female	5
University graduates (in Turkey or Switzerland)	13
Leftist Family Background	21
Spent Time in Prison	12
Left Turkey in 1980s	13

Though my initial goal was to interview more women and an equal number of Turks and Kurds, it was more difficult to gain access to the desired number of participants in such a short amount of time. The term "leftist family background" here refers to participants who had relatives involved in unions or left-leaning organizations or political parties. In

89

addition, all of the 12 people who spent time in jail experienced some form of torture and while 13 of the participants fled to Switzerland in the 1980s, 12 came in the 1990s.

In addition to the information contained in the table, the interviews revealed other relevant findings. First, all the refugees became involved in political activism from a young age, many starting as young as middle school and most starting in high school continuing into young adulthood. Second, with the exception of one participant, most came from villages and towns in Anatolia. Only three people were born in the major cities of Ankara and Istanbul. Their parents, however, came from various towns of Anatolia. Third, of the nine Kurds that I interviewed, all were also Alevi. In other words, none of the Kurds that I interviewed identified themselves as Sunni. In fact, many of the Alevis (both Turkish and Kurdish) that I talked with mentioned that they come from *Dede* families, a term which refers to the holy men within the Alevi tradition. Fourth, 16 of the participants had actively been involved in a leftist organization in Turkey, however loose their ties may have been to those organizations. Only three had been active in a party or labor union in the homeland and significantly, two respondents had not been actively involved in any political organization or party but instead faced repression because of their ethnic Kurdish and Alevi status. Finally, none of the respondents are currently involved with the same organization, union, or party that they were originally involved with. The reasons for that will be explored further in the fourth chapter. The following section looks more in-depth at how and why participants became involved in leftist activism.

3.2. The Roots of Activism

The circumstances in which the participants were born and raised have affected greatly the trajectory of their political activism. Social structures such as religious or ethnic background, socio-economic resources, and educational level played a large role in nudging many towards a leftist disposition. This section looks at those factors in the socialization of youth into a political discourse defined by a struggle to redress injustice and inequality.

3.2.1. Early Influences

Significantly, the majority of the participants were born into politically left families, something which has been shown to greatly affect political ideology and activism, as the previous chapter highlighted. With the exception of two former activists who came from politically conservative backgrounds, all had immediate or extended family members actively involved in trade unions, student organizations, or leftist parties. In fact, being born within an environment of political activism and socialized within it was described by several refugees as "falling into politics". Such associations led many to be present at famous events in leftist history in Turkey, such as the bloody events of May 1st of 1978 or the Kahramanmaraş massacres. Many were born in or lived in areas known as leftist strongholds at that time such as Artvin, Dersim, Ardahan, or leftist neighborhoods in Istanbul such as Kartal. Numerous study participants also drew on experiences of meeting relatives or writers and activists famous within the leftist movement. The early

socialization of many of the refugees within a left-oriented perspective clearly influenced their later activism.

While family influence was significant, many participants pointed to the moderate nature of their families leftist sympathies as contrasting with their own more radical perspectives towards political change. The following quotation highlights this:

> My father was a leftist. He didn't raise me as a leftist but when I was 14 or 15 I was a bit of a problem child, going to the local cafe, gambling, chasing girls. My mom complained so my father took me under his wing. My father was a boxer and his manager … was a part of a group that had separated from Aybar's TİP[10]. So I grew into my socialist ideology around Aybar. I was young, too young to understand. Of course, as I grew older, I wanted to be more radical. My father thought that that was wrong. It was around 1977 that I got more radical. Actually, I was the one who recruited my friends to socialism. The right-wingers were attacking us and the establishment leftists were not taking this seriously. (Cahit[11], Sunni Turkish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist party member, elementary school graduate)

Cahit's account presents the type of generational divide that existed between earlier leftists and the later activists, who often called out the perceived ineffectiveness of more traditional forms of leftist politics in Turkey, such the RPP or even the more left-leaning TLP. Youth of the time were not then simply carriers of a previous generation's leftism, rather, they were challenging the status quo of the previous generation's activism. In relation, using a social movements perspective, we can see that networks played a major role in mobilizing people to activism as in the case of Cahit, where rebelling against preexisting networks was a key component to mobilizing other youth (Diani, 2000). The life-cycle perspective also posits that while families tend to affect the political

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[10] *TIP* here refers to TLP, the Turkish Labor Party

[11] All names have been changed to protect participant identity. I have also not given organization names so as not to reveal too much personal information.

92

worldviews of children, part of entering into adulthood entails questioning the authority of elders and attaching allegiances to a newer generational movement (Braungart and Braungart, 1990).

In addition to family and peer influences, most respondents pointed out the role that curiosity played in increasing their interest in questioning the societal structures around them, with reading for many also serving a major role in their political socialization:

> We were close to the Georgian border. My father had a store selling fruits and vegetables to soldiers. There were always lots of soldiers. We were in the buffer zone against Communism. We didn't have electricity but you could see them across the border, playing soccer in well-lit fields. My grandfather was from Georgia actually. So I was curious about that land … Under the stationary store the *Işçi Partisi*[12] and *Dev-Sol*[13] had offices. We always saw bearded men and women smoking together there. I was scared of that place but I was sent there one day by a friend … They took me and showed me the library, music room, etc. There was so much smoking!! But they influenced me. They would wrap the books in newspapers and tell me to read it secretly. I would bury it and read it in the outhouse. In the summer I would store it in the well and read it when I had time to myself. (Kenan, Sunni Turkish male, mid-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

Similar to other accounts, Kenan's story reflects how reading itself constituted a provocative act within the societal climate of the time. As he went on to explain, he had to hide books because his family was afraid that their house would be searched if word got out that there were books inside. An earlier townsperson had gotten in trouble after the 1971 coup for just such an act. Such varied works such as the Grapes of Wrath, the Koran, and works by Çetin Altan (writer and former TLP member) were mentioned by participants as examples of works of literature that both excited them and drew them

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[12] Turkish Labor Party

[13] *Dev-Sol*, or Revolutionary Left, was a faction that broke off from *Dev-Genç* in 1978.

towards leftist ideology and a more radical political disposition than their forefathers. In this case, the spatial understanding of forbidden places, such as the seemingly more developed area over the border and the offices of the TLP and *Dev-Sol* played a role as well in inspiring curiosity in the participant. This in addition to the presence of men and women smoking together which Kenan reported as a provocative act at the time.

3.2.2. Alevi and Kurdish Identity

For many participants Alevi and Kurdish identity played a large role in drawing them to leftist ideology because of the historically contentious nature between those groups and the Turkish state. The following answers to the question, "What were the reasons for becoming politically active?" illustrate the relationship between these minority identities and affinity to leftist ideas:

> When you think about it, I was Kurdish and Alevi. You're automatically in the leftist wind. You go to school and get influenced. As a kid you were in this and with a bit of intellectual influence, you become politicized. You know there are three K's that have been considered dangerous since the beginning of the Republic: *Kürtler* (Kurds), *Kızılbaşları* (derogatory term for Alevis), and *Komünistler* (Communists). I only chose one of those, I was born the other two. (Yavuz, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later leftist Kurdish movement member, high school graduate)

> Being Kurdish and Alevi means you're both political and a minority. You have no relationship with the state, there are no relatives in the police or military. Automatically you're in opposition by the nature of who you are. My family was left-leaning but not too much. My mother and father are illiterate. (Ali, Alevi Kurdish male, early forties, Marxist debate club member, university graduate)

The repeated use of terms such as "automatically" in relation to this question by numbers of former activists highlights the perception of being born into a status that leads one to be "naturally" opposed to the state. In many ways, opposition towards the state had become a normalized aspect of their identity. On the one hand, Yavuz points to

94

being Kurdish and Alevi as being aspects of identity that he was born into, while he chose to be a leftist. However, by pointing out the "three K's" idea, he is implying that the latter choice was a normal progression from the other two. Likewise, Ali's "no relationship with the state" seems extreme but again serves to highlight how aspects of the Kemalist state and Turkification of all regions helped to develop this critical stance. As Yavuz and Ali point out, furthermore, being both Alevi and Kurdish led to multiple layers of minority status.

For many Kurds and Alevis this critical stance develops early in life, as the following answer to the question of why one became interested in leftist politics shows:

> I think it's because I come from two different cultures. My mother came from a rich family while my father was poor. We were also Alevi and that had an effect. Hiding it created conflict. It pushed me to question things. In the summer meadow I would go to the mosque and pretend I was Sunni. I learned Aleviness in Europe actually. My grandma wouldn't fast so I would lie for her. There would be fights in my neighborhood between Sunnis and Alevis. These were the basic reasons. (Zerrin, Alevi Turkish female, mid-forties, participant in a communist party, some high school)

> When I came to Istanbul from Elazığ, I didn't know any Turkish. People looked down on us. As kids, people would call us Kurds or *kıro*[14] to insult us and we would deny it, "No, we're not!" (Hüseyin, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, teachers' association and center-left party member, university graduate)

Many refugees noted the need to hide an aspect of their identity, or pretend to conform to the majority culture. It can be argued that the need to "play the game" of the hegemonic Turkish-Sunni culture in their homeland and the childhood shame they witnessed were driving forces behind their involvement in the movement. Pretending to be something one is not, as Zerrin and Hüseyin did as children represents the

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[14] The term "kıro" actually means "boy" in Kurdish but has become a derogatory term in Turkish with connotations of lower-class status.

reproduction of certain social practices (e.g. fasting, going to the mosque, and negation of ethnic identity) that privileges certain power structures within society. In addition to familial and ethno-religious background, many activists drew on the emotional aspects of ideological sentiment as being key to their involvement in the leftist movement (Goodwin and Jasper, 2001). The following section explores this in more depth.

3.2.3. The Emotional Aspect of Becoming Politically Active

As pointed out earlier, the vast majority of the participants came from Anatolian towns or cities. For one younger participant who was active in the 1980s and spent 12.5 years in jail, becoming a militant arose partially from the aspects of urban life as experienced by rural-to-urban migration:

> I was an active militant. I came to Istanbul to be a university student in 1985. I later finished school and earned my degree in jail. Student organizations were starting back up again after the 1980 coup. My organization[15] was the most active one. It's a phenomenon. Everything that was legal and legitimate becomes illegal. It was a schizophrenic time. We were all affected by it. Being 16-17 also affected it of course, being young. It all came together. The social injustice we saw, the poverty. It all pushed me towards it. There was also the issue of coming to the city and seeing urban life for the first time. I brought that provincial culture with me. There was a conflict of identity for me that mirrored the conflicts going on outside. I was upset at the urban life. I guess there's a certain amount of having an inferiority complex in this also. Over time, though, you come to terms with it. (İsmet, Sunni Turkish male, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

> I don't know how much was conscious or sub-conscious. I don't know. My father was a social democrat. He was a worker and a member of *DİSK*[16]. He tried to unionize and bring it to where he was working. He belonged to the board of directors. He wasn't literate but was a hardcore member of RPP. I grew up in a time of parliamentary, anti-fascist fronts. The students' movement was ongoing.

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[15] Although here he states his organization's name, I have changed it to "my organization" so as to protect his anonymity. I have also done this throughout the participant excerpts.

[16] *Devrimci Işçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, or the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions, was and is the most leftist of the union confederations in Turkey.

96

> This was not everyone but a minority of people. It took time for the '68 students' movement to hit Turkey, which happened in '71. Defeat isn't an ideology, defeat is physical. It's easy to be on the side of the oppressed when you are new migrants from Anatolia. It's already in you. (Hüseyin, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, teachers' association and center-left party member, university graduate)

For both İsmet and Hüseyin the heady atmosphere of youth, political and legal instability, and ideological clashes directly affected their perception of their own place within society, echoing Emirbayer and Goldberg's (2005) emphasis on the role that emotional work plays in social movements not only as a magnet for individuals with certain identities but also as a site of active identity-making. The emotions that emerge from these accounts relate directly to issues of inequality and the ways in which personal background fits into that understanding of inequality, not to mention the influence of outside revolutionary culture entering Turkey at the time. By drawing on the emotion-laden term "schizophrenic" to describe the post-coup era, İsmet's account highlights how the intersection of legal uncertainty and youthful unease within a newly urban context had a direct effect on his revolutionary leanings. Though not sure of what influenced him into leftist ideology, Hüseyin's recollection of his father, a pro-union and pro-RPP man who was illiterate nonetheless, further illustrates the class component of his entrance into leftist activism.

Many activists recounted stories of oppression and injustice and even love spurring them on to become involved in political change. According to Talat, an Alevi Kurdish male, dedication and will was a sign of identity within the movement, "For us in the movement, everything was *irade*[17]. We were ready to give up everything for the

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[17] The term "irade" can be translated as "will", and connotes a strong certainty to any action associated with it.

97

revolution. It grabs people." This statement reveals a seeming contradiction. On the one hand he points to will, a type of conscious decision-making, while on the other pointing to "being grabbed", almost without a choice in the matter. Other similar accounts indicate that the notion of revolution and the context of the times served as an outside force for channeling beliefs into activism. That activism, in turn, was largely driven by what the participants viewed as conscious and willful choices. The issue of ethics and worldview also came up as reasons, as the following quotation highlights.

> Of course family was an influence. How should I say- the ethical side, the relationship with money, that's where you learn such values. How can I explain this? With money and relationships with people. There's a conflict between what you see at home and reality; your personal identity forms accordingly. The 1968 generation also influenced me a lot. I was in middle school and high school at that time. It was a very exciting time. I became sympathetic to the leftist perspective … But also the *Bekhtasi* aspect and *Melamlilik*. I learned all this more later. I was part of an immigrant family. I always learned not to give importance to money. The important thing is friendship and having enough to get by. To never treat someone poorly, to help people, and to respect everyone. (Aziz Dede, Alevi Turkish male, mid-fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some university)

Here Aziz Dede[18], an immigrant to Turkey with his family from Macedonia, recounts aspects of his Alevi identity but more importantly the family culture of ethics over outright politics *per se*, which echoes many of the Jewish political activists of the 1960s in the United States in recounting their own familial ethical influences (Braungart and Braungart, 1990). The clash between what he saw at home in terms of values and what he saw outside produced a strong reaction channeled into activism. Other Alevi refugees also drew on their Alevi background as contributing to such a sentiment. Rejection of religion and God was also among the characteristics of changes from previous generations that many refugees mentioned:

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[18] Here "Dede" refers to Aziz's status as an Alevi follower and holy man. His friends affectionately refer to him as "Aziz Dede" and he too refers to himself with that moniker.

> While I was in high school, people following Kaypakkaya[19] came and influenced me. They told us not to tell our elders but that there was no God (laughs). So I rejected God in 1969 … This is not necessarily related to socialism but being a revolutionary means looking suspiciously at institutions, religious ones being the first among them. It eventually turns into a political thing. (Talat, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-fifties, conservative Marxist-Leninist organization member, high school graduate)

Interestingly, rather than tie his rejection of God as a youth to socialist ideals, Talat instead ties it to a revolutionary way of looking at things. Many other refugees mentioned the revolutionary or rebellious aspect of joining a movement in addition to the fight against injustice or inequality. Likewise, his expression of atheism was also echoed by other refugees as being part of a youthful process of developing their political identity as leftists.

These accounts of becoming involved in activism highlight how socialist ideology became a strong tool for challenging societal structures while at the same time serving as an ongoing form of identity construction for these former activists. Family background, ethnic and religious minority status, rural-to-urban migration, and emotional engagement with inequality, injustice, and rejection of God were all factors that drew many of them to the movement. Such a critical disposition towards the societal status quo was eventually channeled into activism. This activism in turn led to repressive measures taken by the state against the leftist activist community. In many ways, this early critical disposition is directly related to their later activism. As one refugee pointed out, "If we were so comfortable in Turkey, we wouldn't have been radicals".

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[19] İbrahim Kaypakkaya was a radical leftist organizer and thinker.

3.3. Ideological Beliefs as Activists

Questions relating to the content of ideological belief revealed terms that participants repeated throughout the interviews. The words "equality/inequality" and "justice/injustice" were mentioned thirteen times, while the words democracy/democratic" were mentioned 11 times, with "socialism/socialist" used 12 times, and "communism" or "Marxism" used eight times during the course of the interviews. This is, of course, in addition to other terms such as "classless society", "gender equality", "anti-imperialism", "(in)dependence", "revolution", and "freedom". The ideology-related questions I asked turned out to be highly relevant because many refugees pointed out how important such debate and controversy on issues of terminology and ideology were to their movement. In other words, argumentation and intellectual debate were part and parcel of their social movement identity and part of the ongoing framing process (Benford and Snow, 2000), as the following quotation illustrates:

> We debated everything. We wanted economic justice, and end to poverty, obviously. Also, in our generation we were reacting against family authority, questioning men-women relations (though we didn't voice it so much as feminism), we were interested in cinema, theater, etc. We really lived in those 2-3 years! We lived so much! For example, I would take a night bus from Aydin to Istanbul to see a play and would come back the next night. I believe '68 didn't happen in Turkey- only on the top, among the elites. We lived it later. Men and women lived in the same place together. I had a girlfriend at 17. There were lots of urban types. *(Do you see this as one social movement?)* Yes, but it was very diverse. My organization in Kars was very different from the one in Adana. I didn't recognize my organization's people from Adana. They were almost fascistic when I got to know them in jail. (Mustafa, Alevi Kurdish male, late-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some graduate school)

Mustafa's account illustrates how reacting against both the political, public order, and the familial, private realm signaled a break with the status quo in regards to sexual relations, the arts, and urbanism. The idea of "living '68 later" arose in many refugee accounts of the time and here Mustafa articulates it as a working-class phenomenon at the time that was characterized by a process of talking about ideas and change. Interestingly enough, jail instead of the actual sites of activism served as a space where divergent elements within the movement met one another. Mustafa's description of one city's organizational members as being "almost fascistic" highlights not only the splintered nature of the movement, but also the degree to which prison played a role in bringing such elements together.

While most refugees shared this passion for thought, debate, and socialist worldview, ideological views did diverge. For many communism was a far-off goal to aspire towards, while for others it represented the state-sponsored capitalism and despotism of the Soviet Union. For those of the latter persuasion, revolution itself was a higher goal and infused all aspects of their lives, whether personal or public:

> I never saw myself as a nationalist. In fact, I was the opposite. Fascists were the nationalists. Yes, we were very anti-imperialist. That was the "main vein" of our beliefs. More than Marxist, we were anti-imperialist and here you see the influence of Guevara. Nineteen sixty-eight actually came late to Turkey. But for us Kemalism was not a sympathetic movement. Yes, it was a modern movement but we didn't identify ourselves that way. We actually critiqued people who believed that. However, we can't critique it the same way today. Then we saw it as a capitalist issue as in- why didn't Atatürk go socialist? But now we critique Kemalism for different reasons- treatment of minorities, etc. We didn't have the capacity to critique the statist qualities of the ideology because we were statists of a sort. We had ties to Kemalism but we didn't self-identify as Kemalists. (Murat, Sunni Turkish male, early fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some PhD work)

Murat is similar to all other Turkish participants in that he explicitly did not identify with Turkish nationalism. In this case and for many within the leftist movement, nationalism was an ideology of the Other, i.e. the fascists. The collective leftist identity also developed according to how movement actors viewed themselves in relation to an Other. At the same time, there is a process of self-critique that Murat also engages in. While critiquing the statist aspects of his former movement, he also acknowledges that movement grew out of such an understanding, thus echoing the findings of the literature on the topic (Belge, 2009; Lipovsky, 1992).

In fact, nationalism and Kemalism as a whole were never mentioned as ideological beliefs held by the refugees, whether in the past or the present day. Likewise, *vatanseverlik* (loosely translated to "patriotism" but also evocative of love of the soil or home) was mentioned only twice. Interestingly however, one female refugee of Turkish and Sunni background, Ayşe, questioned me on the issue of asking about ideological belief:

> I don't see what's necessarily wrong with nationalism. What can possibly tie us together if not our country? I think there's a difference between chauvinism and nationalism. I'm not *Atatürkçü* (Atatürkist) but Atatürk was a special person. The way he treated women- he was respectful towards them. Towards his wife, etc. Who has been like that since him? Not even his successor İnönü was like that. (Ayşe, early fifties, not directly involved in organizations, Master's)

Although she did not identify as a nationalist and arguably takes a more nuanced view of such ideologies, Ayşe's critique of framing nationalism felt towards "our country" as a chauvinist ideology reflects her own reading of national ideology. Her referring to Atatürk as a "special person" highlights the multiple readings of Kemalism (or in this case Atatürkism) that can be made. This reading separates him as a person from the

ideology based on his rule and highlights his personal treatment of women over discourses of nationalism or revolutionism. In this way as well Ayşe lays claim to the gender equality issue that she repeated throughout her interview as being a strong part of her leftist identity.

For those who served sentences in prison, there was an outright and impassioned rejection of Turkish nationalism in general and strains of the Kemalist ideology as well. Cahit served 6.5 years of a 15-year jail sentence after being charged in a collective trial[20] and left while his case was still pending. When I asked him about his current ideological beliefs, he stated that he is still a socialist, a communist, and a Trotskyist. Upon asking him about his views on nationalism or Kemalism and if he would consider himself to adhere to those ideologies, he stated the following:

> Yes, the *kızıl elmacılar* (TKP) were like that, but me, no, I'm not a Kemalist. Çayan and others were Kemalists and saw Atatürk as a hero but all that changed after 1980. Gezmiş too was a Kemalist. Kaypakkaya, however, saw Atatürk as a fascist. But, again, that all changed after 1980. (Cahit, Sunni Turkish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist party member, elementary school graduate)

For Cahit and many others, the state repression in the post-1980 period led to a fervent anti-nationalist perspective. As he points out later in the interview, prison time played a role in this as well. While interviewees were fairly united in their rejection of Turkish nationalism, there were certainly ideological differences within the movement, as the following section highlights.

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[20] The use of mass trials is another aspect of the martial law period that warrants further investigation.

3.3.1. Intra-Movement Contention

Ideological views within the movement were far from uniform. The fieldwork findings reveal how movement organizations became a site of contestation for minority groups within such as Kurds, Alevis, and women, particularly when the stated ideology did not match with actual practice.

> We were against injustice and inequality but after a while I realized that there was injustice and inequality within the organization too. I went against it. It was a status issue. There was hierarchical discrimination. I became disillusioned in jail and with time it got worse. I was in the wrong place actually for my personality and mindset … I was a democrat. Or, at least, that's what I would like to think I was. (Smiles) I was a socialist. I only came face-to-face with nationalism when I was in jail-Kurdish, Alevi nationalism, and so on. Same with religion. Now I'm a liberal. (Laughs) No, I'm kidding but I don't see myself as a socialist. I shouldn't sit here and pretend I'm a socialist with the type of life I lead. I don't want to be hypocritical. *(Is your change of heart mostly from your experience in jail?)* Yes, my experience there changed things for me. (Leyla, Sunni Turkish woman, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

Leyla's issues with the organization developed in jail (where many participants recounted shifts in their ideological beliefs) and related mainly to the hierarchies which existed within the very movement that was nominally against such hierarchies. As the New Social Movements perspective points out, many post-1968 movements such as the feminist, environmental, and gay movements arose out of just such dissatisfaction with intra-movement discriminatory structures (Edelman, 2001). Similar to Mustafa's experience explored earlier, her time in prison, not the organization itself, exposed her to individuals of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Both the hierarchical discrimination and exposure to various ideologies led her to reexamine her own identity in relation to the movement. At the same time, Leyla's account is also full of self-corrections and ironic statements, revealing a perspective critical of both herself and the movement and similar in that sense to Murat's self-critique of the statist aspects of the

104

movement above. Her reference to the "life I lead" refers to her relatively comfortable economic situation in Switzerland and is pointed in its acknowledgement of adjusting ideological belief with on-the-ground reality.

Upon peeling back the layers of ideological belief, it becomes apparent that the minority status of many activists colored their ideological belief, whether that be gender or ethnic group:

> I was always humble. All I cared about was equality. This is political, economic, sexual, etc. Everyone was always labeling me- everyone but me. Freedom, living like a human, equality- that's what I wanted. Actually, I was more anarchical than socialist (laughs). Socialism was a godly thing that I strove for, something to be reached. Philosophically I agree with socialism but there are problems in implementation. *(What do you mean you were more anarchical than socialist?)* As a difficult woman, anarchy makes sense. I was *hırçın*[21], rebellious. (Zerrin, Alevi Turkish female, mid-forties, participant in a communist party, some high school)

Similar to many activists, Zerrin saw socialism (or communism for others) as a goal worthy of striving for. In this sense socialism becomes an atomized ideology existing outside of the desires of individuals on a personal level. In this context, Zerrin's struggle to define herself rather than allow others to define her not only pushed her to join the movement, but also led her to feel disillusioned with it. As a *hırçın* woman she also felt oppressed by the patriarchal nature of the movement and found a degree of liberation as a woman in Switzerland, as will be further recounted in the next chapter. Throughout her interview, in fact, her account of her beliefs was filled with references both to socialism on the one hand and the more grounded desire for gender equality and freedom.

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[21] Here the term she uses, *hırçın*, can be translated to vicious or shrewish. Significantly, it is used most often to describe women seen as displaying such behaviors.

Similarly, Ayşe's views on poverty and inequality pushed her to become involved, but her actual activism consisted of involvement in the cultural sphere and helping women within the movement:

> I wasn't involved directly in organization activities. I always hung out with people who were interested in art, theater, music, etc. You see the same people in your circle. We were lucky at my university. A bus to go to the symphony would take us regularly from the dorms. We would go to the Ankara Arts Theater. I wasn't in a circle of hicks. *Dev-Yol*, *Dev-Sol*, the men in these organizations were busy pulling women's legs apart and getting them pregnant. I had to help out a lot of girls in bad situations. (Ayşe, Sunni Turkish woman, early fifties, not directly involved in organizations, Master's)

Ayşe's disdain for many of the men in the movement, which she here refers to as "hicks", was an important aspect of her memories of her activism. She viewed her interest in the arts and women's issues as contrasting to the highly sexualized concerns of men at the time. For both Zerrin and Ayşe, the issue of male hegemony within the movement was a serious point of contention. Both women, who do not know each other, quite significantly used the loaded term "masturbatory" to refer to what they viewed as the pontificating and endless debate of men within the organizations they were familiar with. In essence, though affected by issues of religious discrimination in Zerrin's case and poverty in Ayşe's case, they saw themselves as distanced somewhat from the movement due to its dominant male culture. Interestingly, when I asked Ayşe if she considered herself a feminist towards the end of the interview, she looked at me in disbelief and asked if I had been listening to her account at all and that she of course was. Her reaction to such a question highlights how her feminism is not only an important part of her identity but also an explicit one. In addition, her need to distinguish herself as a more cultured participant (and not a hick) is significant as it potentially reveals some of the class-based contention within the movement's demographics. Being

106

a graduate of a prestigious university and "well-raised" within a "cultured" household as she put it illustrates how in addition to a gendered understanding of her past, she also engages in class-based one as well.

In addition to issues of hierarchical organization and gender, for many Kurds the perceived hegemony of Turkish nationalism within the movement was also a motivating factor to shift ideological allegiances:

> I was in a leftist organization at first and later a Kurdish leftist one. *(Why the switch to a new organization?)* I got to know different people. I began to realize that it's not just a class issue but a national one also. I thought that if I'm going to struggle, I should do both. I embraced both: first came the nationalism aspect. I began to believe that this was an important issue … We were mad though about the term "Kurdish nationalism". After all, defending rights isn't nationalist. Today when we look back to that time, we can see that we were right. Look what's happening now. Communism died but the Kurdish issue continued. When the *PKK* formed we saw the leftist movement as too nationalistic. (Yavuz, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later leftist Kurdish movement member, high school graduate)

> All the organizations I've been in have defended a communist society. In theory they are against nationalism and for a classless society. I also thought this way. When I went to jail I started to think about Kurdish nationalism. There weren't that many Kurdish organizations back then in Istanbul. I started to read about things. The Left in Turkey was never international on the one hand but also not really concerned with Kurdish issues. It was always about and for Turks. In jail, the officials did a head count and asked our race. Some of us answered "Kurdish". The officers didn't get upset but many of the Turkish leftists got upset, saying "We're all brothers here. Why do you say things like that?" You know, the Turkish left never looked at Kurdish issues but they could name every single river in Russia! They would always say, "There's no need to be nationalistic". Instead of reading Mao and Lenin, perhaps they should have studied Atatürk. So a question appeared in my mind regarding this topic. For example, in jail we would hold trivia games to win tea and during that time I realized a lot of people didn't know about the Sheikh Said Rebellion. (Ümit, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later Kurdish nationalist movement member, elementary school graduate)

As is evident from these accounts, the term "nationalism" itself became a contentious term within the movement. For Yavuz, Kurdish members of the leftist community

107

dissatisfied with the dominance of class-based readings of society over issues of ethnic discrimination were not nationalists so much as claiming rights already extended to more privileged members of Turkish society. His shift to a Kurdish leftist organization was a way to "do both" as he states. In other words, it allowed him to engage both in national and leftist politics. Likewise, in Ümit's case, the Turkish leftists he encountered viewed nationalism negatively due to their own embrace of a class-based reading of societal problems while at the same time ignoring issues of ethnic discrimination felt by Kurds throughout the history of the Republic. Ümit's critique of the leftist movement being overly concerned with international socialism over domestic issues was also stated by others. In fact, for the Kurds I interviewed who echoed such critiques as Yavuz and Ümit, the issue was not so much a recognizable shift from socialist ideology to nationalist ideology, but rather a growing dissatisfaction with the Turkish Sunni hegemony within organizations that were in theory supposed to reject such ideological worldviews[22].

These excerpts have shown that though the leftist movement at the time was radical and often progressive in many of its beliefs and methods, aspects of it reproduced power inequalities by prioritizing certain ideological stances over others and minimizing the minority voices of women, Alevis, and Kurds. This degree of contention within the movement potentially problematizes the argument that this social movement created a collective identity that followed on into the countries of dispersal. I argue that while

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[22] Many of the Kurds I spoke with eventually came to reject Kurdish nationalism over what they saw as its close-minded nature. This tended to occur later in their time as refugees and does not change the conflicts that arose within the Turkish leftist movement, however. That particular dimension will be discussed further in the following chapter.

there are such differences, most participants retained their socialist beliefs while also casting a critical perspective on past movement activities, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or time of arrival. That in and of itself is a collective exercise that the next section explores in more depth.

3.3.2. Looking Back: the Capacity for Self-Critique

During the course of the interviews, many refugees expressed critiques of themselves and others in the movement. In response to a question on ideology and how he viewed himself as opposed to now, one former participant responded with the following statement:

> I wanted to see democracy. But when I look back on it, we didn't really understand what it meant to be a "democrat". We wanted freedom (for women for example), less poverty, a more just income distribution, higher incomes, more freedom for Kurds, free university, those types of things. However, we were not without a dominant masculine understanding and a dominant sexual identity. We didn't understand about different sexual identities. We were very conservative. Also, there was no environmental awareness. I remember the people working on saving the Caretta Caretta sea turtles were ridiculed at the time. When it came to Alevis, we were a bit exploitative. We wanted them in our group but did not really pay attention to their needs. (İsmet, Turkish Sunni male, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

İsmet spent more than a decade in jail for his activities as a political radical and during that time developed a realization of issues outside of the leftist mainstream at the time such as environmentalism, gay rights, and patriarchal domination. For him time in jail and a process of reflecting on past activism opened the door to such a realization. Later in the interview he acknowledged his status as part of the "hegemonic culture" by nature of his being Turkish and Sunni (and conceivably, male). For many of the refugees,

109

particularly those who spent time in jail[23], remembering their ideological views at the time involves a process of questioning and self-critique, a type of added embodiment of the "reflexive disposition" often characteristic of social movement members (Crossley, 2003: 55). The following former activist goes so far as to compare his organization to the head of the military junta:

> In fact, we had some similarities with Kenan Evren. *(How so?)* Let's say you're against something. Evren would think, there's a suspect in the village, but then would surround the whole village. In 11 years in jail, when one person shouted a slogan, we all were punished by not being allowed to have visitors or phone calls. But we weren't so different you know. For example, we would beat up people walking hand-in-hand. We saw it as immoral; this was part of a backward culture. That wasn't socialist. Love should be included, as should freedom. The problem with us revolutionaries, and this is true of all the left groups was that we knew what we wanted to break down, but didn't know what to replace it with … We weren't that different from how Islam views the Koran. No critiquing ourselves… Let me tell you, if the Left of that had time had taken power, we would have been ten times worse than Kenan Evren (Talat, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-fifties, conservative Marxist-Leninist organization member, high school graduate)

Talat's organization was known for being more conservative than organizations such as *Dev-Genç*. He simultaneously points out three aspects of his organization that he views as negative: their conservatism on sexual matters, an over-reliance on criticism instead of finding potential solutions, and lack of a self-critical nature. Quite significantly, he today makes a connection between socialism, love, and freedom. This indicates that while he still claims socialism as a term to describe his beliefs, his notions of what that entails have shifted. This was true of many former activists engaging in self-critique of past movement activity. At the same time, by comparing the close-mindedness of his organization with what he views as the close-mindedness of Islam, he reveals a

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[23] The role of prison time in the transformation of political beliefs and understandings undoubtedly warrants further research.

110

prejudicial view of religion. This seemingly contradictory sentiment was echoed by other refugees as well.

While Talat's account may tip over into hyperbole, all the participants brought forth a critique of the movement and socialist ideology as they experienced it while at the same time pointing out that they did not know what the "true" socialism was. In their interviews, in fact, they engaged in a redefinition of what socialism actually is, in contrast to how they perceived it at the time. In addition, included in Talat's and others' critique was a very conscious acceptance that the movement had patently failed, though the reasons varied according to the participant. Such a perspective indicates a shared disposition towards memories of the past and is, as I argue, a part of their collective identity. That particular dimension of critique will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Undoubtedly, it is possible to find contention within any social movement, particularly one as large and heterogeneous as the leftist movement in Turkey. Understanding collective identity as broadly encompassing shared values and beliefs allows us to view this community as sharing much while not making it immune from disharmony. At this juncture I argue therefore that factors such as belonging to a minority group, having politically active families and peer groups, spending time in jail, and being forced into exile all contributed to the development of a collective identity characterized by self-reflexivity and critique on past ideological belief and movement activism. Even the one person who claimed to not have witnessed a change in his ideological belief through time attributed it to a *negative* characteristic- his stubbornness in maintaining his dyed-

in-the-wool Communist beliefs. The next section deals primarily with the period after the 1980 coup and the often confusing nature of legality and illegality refugees faced in relations with both the Turkish and Swiss states.

3.4. The Martial Law Regime

The next two sections specifically examine how the participants in this research experienced the legal process, in both home and host countries, and to what degree that experience is shared. By "legal processes" I refer to the ambiguous juridical practices in the period surrounding the 1980 coup in Turkey and the refugee resettlement process in Switzerland. The fieldwork presented here reveals that all the participants share a complicated and often problematic relationship with the state and legal systems in both countries. This commonality not only links two societies through transnational forced migration but also contributes to our understandings of collective identity in the diaspora. The legal process is never constituted by an even and consistent series of practices in totality and while the concrete problems faced by refugees vary greatly (e.g. torture and jailing in Turkey and state surveillance in Switzerland), the lived experiences of these actors present relevant linkages.

3.4.1. Ambiguity of Law

In addition to the harshness of the state response to the leftist movement in the wake of the coup, the ambiguity of legality in the post-coup era in Turkey (and undoubtedly before also for those living in martial law areas) served to further disrupt the movement

as a whole. As Davies (2005: 14) points out in her examination of the principle of exclusion within the study of law, any new legal system implemented in a post-revolution or post-coup d'etat society draws its identity from the very difference from the previous legal system, or as she states, "this system of differentiation is the traditional condition for the unity, independence and sovereignty of a legal system". In other words, a new legal system is new because it is labeled as such and can be identified thusly. Examples of exclusion under new law could range from the disenfranchisement of political prisoners, to hindering their right to legal counsel, to the implementation of mass trials. Implicit in her thinking, however, is an assumption that the lines between the new legal system and the old legal system are clear. I would argue, however, that in a post-coup society such as Turkey in that era, the differentiation *itself* was not only unclear but that the system of martial law drew power from that very lack of clarity. Within such a field, social actors deemed enemies of the state often lacked knowledge of their own legal status. Subjects, or in this case, citizens, often did not know whether they were included or excluded from the law as the following quotations from two interviewees show:

> I was not an active member of any organizations but I did act in a play that was put on for an illegal organization. Of course we were photographed. It was after that that the authorities began searching for me and I had to flee. (Arif, Alevi Turkish male, late forties, unaffiliated, some university)

> My group had a newspaper and I was the editor-in-chief. It wasn't anything prestigious, we were a group of about 30 people and it was normal for people to take up different jobs in the organization. We got in trouble because we dared to talk about Kurdish issues. In 1993 we published an article called "Kurdish Progressivism". We didn't even mention the term "Kurdistan" in the article but since I was the editor-in-chief, I was charged with "divisiveness" of the then eighth and 312th articles. I was charged in military court. It's crazy that a civilian can be charged in a military court. These were very humble writings, nothing about Kurdistan. We were not revolutionaries. We didn't advocate violence. We were a theoretical discussion group. (Ali, Alevi Kurdish male, early forties, Marxist

debate club member, university graduate)

For Arif, it was not membership in an illegal organization or even commission of an illegal act that ensured his warrant for arrest. In fact, he did not belong to any organization officially. Rather, the very act of being photographed while an illegal organization was under surveillance was enough for him to be investigated and threatened with imprisonment. This ambiguity[24] spread beyond the post-coup era as well. Ali was politically active in the 1990s, a time nominally post-martial law in nature. However, the repressive 1982 constitution coupled with the war in the southeast made any Kurdish activism perceived as a threat. As the accounts of refugees who came in the 1990s attest, the increase in numbers of extrajudicial killings and unlawful seizure of political activists made the political climate at that time dangerous as well. For Ali, the act of merely publishing an article led to his being charged with "divisiveness", an act that is considered to be against one of the main tenets of the Kemalist ideology. Neither of these two refugees belonged to a nominally illegal organization (however problematic that legal categorization may have been), but their supposed political background was enough to render them as suspicious.

Citizenship laws were also opaque in the post-1980 coup era and many refugees experienced being stripped of their citizenship. Particularly difficult for many refugees of Turkish origin was the loss of citizenship:

> In 1984, three people were stripped of citizenship. I was one of them. One year later, the Parliament changed and tried to redress that so I went to the Turkish consulate in Switzerland but found out from *Resmi Gazete*[25] that they had done it

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[24] Though not possible here, a deeper analysis of the actual laws would be a significant contribution to the literature.

[25] This refers to the official state newspaper that publishes news on legislative decisions.

114

again and took me out of my citizenship again. (tears well up in his eyes) Can you imagine what it's like to lose your citizenship not once, but twice!? I mean, what is that? So, I left the issue alone. (Arif, Alevi Turkish male, late forties, unaffiliated, some university)

In Arif's emotional statement we see how losing one's citizenship results in a very concrete experience of loss. In addition, this loss is compounded by the sense of defeat that arises from the effort to claim that right, even while in the supposed safety of another country. With his concept of *homo sacer* (bare life), Agamben (1998) expounds upon the schism between one's biological and political lives during a time of exception such as martial law, wherein the state is able to suspend the law and exist outside of it. In such a case, the law separates "the rights of the citizen from the rights of the man" (Kaslı and Parla, 2009: 204). In other words, by stripping people of their citizenship under the "state of exception" of martial law in Turkey, people lost their rights as citizens and therefore protection under the law as political subjects while still being subject to the law and the punishments that authorities could mete out. This process further contributed to an existence of legal limbo for refugees and served to fuel a sense of powerlessness. It also allowed the state to achieve a very tangible goal of silencing voices of society deemed harmful.

3.4.2. Torture and Prison

As pointed out earlier, all the refugees who were imprisoned reported various forms of abuse while in custody. Although none of the interview questions directly asked about time in jail due to the sensitive nature of the topic, many participants quite openly recounted their experience with a small number intimating abuse but not wanting to go deeper into the experience. The following excerpt highlights the grey nature of what is

considered legal or illegal and how torture became a systematized practice in the prisons.

> After September twelfth, there was a period of ninety days torture and it was inflicted on me too. Besides being tortured, hearing the voices of those being tortured is in many ways just as bad. We saw how ready the state was to do this. We were shocked. I hadn't really done anything illegal. I was involved in a Revolutionary youth group but I wasn't even a member! This was a legal organization anyway. The state judged a legal organization as illegal, as an arm of the Communists[26]. (Mehmet, Alevi Turkish male, late forties, revolutionary federation member, some high school)

Here we see that what was once legal becomes illegal in a time of martial law though that illegality remains mysterious to the participant. This is true both in terms of the status of the organization and Mehmet's role in it. Ironically, at the time he viewed himself as a patriot willing to work to overthrow a regime that would be supported by members of the military and state bureaucracy in the revolution. The reaction by the state, in fact, was a shocking one for many of the refugees of *Turkish* origin that I talked with. Having been educated within the state discourse of Kemalism, the 1980 coup played a decisive role in the many of the refugees' lives by shifting their orientation towards the state from one of neutral acknowledgement and sometimes open support to a more critical perspective. For Kenan, for example, leaving Turkey and the memories of being disappeared and tortured brought forth the following emotions:

> I was very scared. It was all a blur until then. Actually, to this day, I would rather die than live it again. It was a wonderful feeling to come here. I hated Turkey for years. I hated the people- how could a person of a similar nation do this to another? … However, I've always loved my homeland. I hated the regime, the politicians. I'm happy to see a book written by Apo[27] sold now on the streets of Turkey. (Kenan, Sunni Turkish male, mid-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement

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[26] Throughout much of the history of the Turkish Republic and even before during Ottoman times, it was illegal to call oneself a Communist and organize thusly. Being a socialist, however, was nominally legal.

[27] Apo refers to Abdullah Öcalan, the former leader of the *PKK* who was captured by Turkish forces in 1999 and is currently serving a life sentence in prison.

116

member, university graduate)

The idea of a "person of a similar nation" doing this to another was initially an unthinkable premise for him and many other Turks. This is significant because it implicitly draws a linkage between the state and nation, something that becomes fractured through his experience. This rupture is further highlighted by the distinction Kenan comes to draw between the homeland on the one hand and the political class and state apparatus on the other. Some Kurdish participants expressed less surprise at state brutality, however. Since many reported family members being tortured before them, the use of such a mechanism on the part of the state was not wholly unexpected. For refugees who escaped immediately after the coup and before lengthy prison sentences, it was possible to avoid torture. Here the time of arrival issue colors the collective experience of refugees as those arriving in the early 1980s were often able to avoid such state-sanctioned treatment.

For many of those who served jail time, however, physical release did not necessarily clear up their legal status. In detailing her time upon getting out of jail, Leyla revealed the following:

> After I got out of jail I could have left but I stayed in Istanbul for a year. In fact, I went to the judge in reference to my case and he turned to me and said, "What are you still doing here? You haven't gone abroad yet?" *(This is interesting. Do you think that this reflects a de facto state policy on political refugees? That they want people to leave but don't have an official policy on it?)* Oh yes, I think so. The jails are full, they want people to leave but they don't want them working or functioning in society. They want to get rid of us. For example, my husband was released from jail and came to Switzerland. What happens after he arrives here? An arrest warrant is issued for him immediately so that he can't go back for fear of arrest. (Leyla, Sunni Turkish woman, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

117

In her case, attempting to establish the status of her case actually leads to an unofficial yet painstakingly clear emphasis on the part of the state bureaucracy to her to leave Turkey and go abroad. Similar to the citizenship issue, here we can see how outright migration is expected of those who are deemed undesirable to the political order. A person may be there physically but is neutralized politically under a martial law system (Agamben, 1998). In other words, the "option" of migrating as communicated by the judge to Leyla constitutes a political neutralization yet requires the actual physical movement of the activist to be realized. These times of exception led not only to the neutralization of people politically but also in more starkly physical terms. Sometimes prisoners were literally stripped of their clothes, as the following quotation illustrates:

> There was a lot of psychological torture used on people in prison. For example, when people started a hunger strike, the officers would bring in kebab and other delicious-smelling foods, loud music was played, we were made to strip. We basically went naked for two years. But Diyarbakır was like Vietnam, a concentration camp like in the Nazi era. This is what we heard in jail in Istanbul, you can see it in Hasan Cemal's writing too. (Ümit, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later Kurdish nationalist movement member, elementary school graduate)

Being forcefully stripped and left for long periods of time naked essentially goes beyond the political into the biological. Such actions further lead to the fracturing of a social movement as individuality and ideological belief are stripped away to reveal the bare life. The degree of torture varied according to the ethnic composition as well. Many refugees recounted the difference in treatment between jails in Istanbul and Ankara and those in Diyarbakır. In the words of one refugee, "According to what friends who had served time in Diyarbakır told me, Mamak was like a 3-star hotel in comparison."

Likewise, the following quotation highlights how minimal accountability exists for a state operating under a time of exception. In the following case, bureaucratic error resulted in the extrajudicial murder of an unintended victim.

> Before the 10 year anniversary of September 12th, all the pamphlets came to my place of work with my business's trucks. It turns out the kid driving the truck was being searched for- I did not know this. He took out a gun and shot dead a policeman. They picked me up after that- I was blindfolded and passed out. I was in jail for 45 days. I was disappeared. A guy who identified me went and told the party who called an international human rights organization. Because of that organization I was able to come to Switzerland. My cousin started searching for me in Ankara. Unfortunately, he had the same name as someone from Malatya who was in Dev-Sol. He was just a kid. My cousin's body was found a month later on the side of the road (wipes tears). All because they couldn't have been more careful with the identification process. (Kenan, Sunni Turkish male, mid-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

Here "I was disappeared" refers to the extrajudicial seizure of people by state forces. While many refugees noted how the *idea* of torture (and subsequent information given up during that process) was enough to motivate them to flee, for those who remained in Turkey, time spent in jail often reflected the ethnic background of a person, in this case one's ethnic and religious background in particular:

> I had 16 years more to go in my sentence after I had served 11.5 years but they paroled me. I remember Alparslan Türkeş once saying in regards to Turkish leftists, "Let's set free our children". Obviously he meant the Turkish children, and keeping the Kurdish ones in jail. So there's definitely an aspect of "get the hell out" in regards to the state and Turkish political prisoners. After all, 3, 5, and 10 years in prison produce different results. If a person is in jail for more than 5 years, they are usually fairly docile upon coming out. It changes people. A person who is a hard-core ideologue will not change no matter how long they are in jail, but most do. Of course, none of what I just said is true for *PKK* people. The state does not look the same way at them. I would say there's been a de facto amnesty for many Turkish political prisoners. (Leyla, Sunni Turkish woman, early-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

> I was caught by the authorities when I was 21 and I stayed in jail for 15 years. It's in jail that you really see the difference in the treatment of Turks and Kurds. When I was in jail a capital punishment law came out and those with a capital punishment conviction were commuted to ten years instead. Kurdish groups, however, did not get this commutation. Instead, we served sentences twice as long

119

and this was all according to the law! … I think this happened in 1990 if I'm not mistaken. I remember a Turk from *Türk Solu* who got out said, "Everyone should have a state behind them." (Yavuz, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later leftist Kurdish movement member, high school graduate)

These accounts indicate a double standard for Turkish and Kurdish political prisoners and further problematize viewing the post-coup juridical practices of the Turkish state as merely being an issue of stamping out communism. Though a Turk, Leyla acknowledges such a disparity when discussing the treatment of the PKK by the state. The ethnically discriminatory practices within the legal regime a full decade after the coup support the idea that a martial law regime can normalize extrajudicial practices into law, as Yavuz's account suggests. While intra-movement contention contributed partly to the disillusionment of Kurds, discriminatory legal practices such as these undoubtedly also contributed to the fracturing of the leftist movement along leftist lines.

3.4.3. The Process of Leaving

The actual movement of refugees from Turkey to Switzerland presents a kind of shared experience: e.g. obtaining passports through alternate means, arranging transport, meeting organizational contacts in the various countries in Europe, and so on. Because the vast majority of refugees made that journey through quasi-illegal means, it was not a topic eagerly discussed. As one participant pointed out, the mass movement was a "societal event" that consisted of transnational networks of organization members zigzagging around Western Europe. For many Switzerland was not their initial destination. Greece, France, or Germany often emerged as potential countries, but many ended up in Switzerland for economic or other reasons. Overwhelmingly leaving was characterized as providing incredible relief. The process of hiding while still in Turkey

was coupled with an indescribable fear of being imprisoned, tortured, or even killed. Nonetheless, many believed they would be back in a matter of a couple of years if not months and continued on their path of activism on the transnational plane from Europe. The following quotation reflects the sentiment of many at the time:

> The police caught many people and my name came up. At that time the police had changed their strategy and were using more long-term surveillance to watch people and then arrest many in a net operation. For a year I stayed in different houses but I remained in the movement though there were fewer people. We engaged in less dangerous activities like graffiti, but still, everything was dangerous. It was hard to know who was caught, who was being watched, who to trust. This went on for a year. Our lives, our very movement greatly narrowed. At that point I thought it would be better to get out … I had an amazing sense of relief to be away from a life of running away, from the fear of being murdered or arrested. (Murat, Sunni Turkish male, early fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some PhD work)

Four refugees described their world before leaving as "narrowing" or "growing smaller". The similarity of this physical description connotes a type of shared release from fear that shaped the actual migratory experience. While relief accompanied most of the refugees no matter when their time of arrival was, for those who did spend time in jail and were tortured, leaving Turkey was particularly a joyful experience:

> I was so relieved. When I was disappeared I was tortured and even raped so for me just seeing the Bulgarian police made me so, so, so happy. I put my head out the window and screamed for joy. The fear was gone. (Can, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-forties, unaffiliated, elementary school graduate)

This experience, however, was not without ambivalence for many participants. For Hüseyin, for example, the experience was coupled with the naïveté of youthful confidence:

> But really in Turkey you felt the circle getting narrower and narrower. Maybe looking back on it now it seems scary. The youth movements were the motor, you see. We were *delikanlı*, both girls and boys. It was a dynamic time. There wasn't so much fear. I'm so happy that I never lived through torture but back then we really didn't fear it. *(Was going to jail and being tortured in a way a type of badge of honor?)* No, but going into jail was like a profession in a way. I mean before

121

> September 12, you could go in and out, no problem. But not after September 12. We were so inexperienced. (Hüseyin, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, teachers' association and center-left party member, university graduate)

The use of the term *delikanlı*, or "wild-blooded", is interesting in regards to its evocative and connotative power in Turkish. It evokes a youthful form of masculine passion and is often used to address young men in an affectionate manner by elders. It nonetheless contains a certain patriarchal justification of "boys-will-be-boys" activities. In this account, Hüseyin quite significantly uses it in regards to *both* boys and girls to describe the degree of their revolutionary passion. In fact, in Hüseyin's understanding, youthful naïveté and exuberance were what drove the movement and blanketed the fear of the time. Part of what gave leftist youth in Turkey motivation to continue political activism at the time was the ways in they saw themselves as the true representation of the "people" (Neyzi, 2001: 412). Youthfulness was also one way the more radical arms of the leftist movement framed their aims and methods.

This section has illustrated the myriad ways in which the law functioned inconsistently for the participants and served to fracture of the leftist movement in Turkey. Just as the Turkish state drew a certain degree of power over political activists in the era of martial law, so too has the Swiss state drawn power from the refugee regime by exerting power on and directing the lives of refugees, as the next section will illustrate. In fact, to draw on Davies (2005), while membership in illegal organizations, jail time, and torture served as exclusionary principles for the interviewees in Turkey, those same features served as inclusionary principles for the Swiss state in the process of gaining refugee status. I do not mean to imply that the brute actions by the Turkish state apparatus are directly comparable to the Swiss refugee regime. Instead, the following analysis can

help link past experiences in Turkey with the experience of refugee resettlement in Switzerland. Such connected experiences are one aspect of the diasporization process for these exiles.

3.5. The Process of Refugee Resettlement

This section deals primarily with the interaction between members of the leftist community and the refugee resettlement regime of the Swiss state, including officials such as bureaucrats and social workers. The interviews revealed a growing preoccupation on the part of the Swiss state through time with controlling not only the lives of refugees but also the very definition of who constitutes a refugee. This latter point is particularly true for the participants whose time of arrival was in the late 1980s and 1990s, a period of increased Swiss anxiety on the topic of asylum-seekers, the break-up of the Eastern bloc, internecine wars in Yugoslavia and various African countries, and recession in Switzerland (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006: 12). In fact, the experiences of those who came in the early 1980s immediately after the coup and those who came later indicate a stark difference for a number of reasons. Not only is there the issue of increased migration in that time era (see Figure 1.1), but many of those who came later did so because they were only able to leave after serving lengthy prison sentences in Turkey. That experience colored their experience with refugee officials, as the following sections illustrate.

123

3.5.1. The Interview Setting

All potential refugees go through a formal interview process in order to present their reasons for seeking asylum in Switzerland. As part of this process, officials ask a wide variety of questions in order to ascertain the veracity of applicant statements. Asylum-seekers are expected to divulge a large amount of personal information during such interviews. Because many activists were coming from a background of uneasy relations with state institutions, the interview process in Switzerland likewise often became marked with uneasiness. The experiences of the interviewees as recorded below reflect this.

> You go in to the interviews with translators. I felt very uncomfortable. First, the way the official acts. Second, you are expected to open up to someone who doesn't recognize your confidentiality. It fosters insecurity, which is a problem. In jail, it's different to talk about what happened to you because you are surrounded by people who share the same fate as you but talking about things like torture with these people makes you nervous. To give an example of this insecurity, one official I was talking with kept talking about a problem but I couldn't understand what he said and I got anxious. Of course the translator wasn't translating every single word the official was saying. It turned out the official was upset because the printer kept printing two papers at once. But of course I couldn't understand that. (İsmet, Sunni Turkish male, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

For İsmet, having spent many years interacting with officials in Turkish prisons, the process of going into an interview was replete with anxiety. He told me later that even talking with me, the interviewer, led him to carry those often painful memories with him for many days afterwards[28]. Other refugees also noted how the interview process itself generates and fosters insecurity and confusion. The seemingly absurd nature of the printer situation in İsmet's case highlights the vulnerability of refugees whose lack of

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[28] This illustrates how not only interacting with refugee officials in a position of power can lead to unease but also the very process of recounting experiences with an interviewer such as myself. Because interviewees open themselves to a potentially vulnerable position by speaking with me, I especially take care to protect their identity and reassure them of that effort.

language skills place them in a tenuous position of dependence on officials belonging to the state bureaucracy.

Many refugees reported having to having to prove their identity in addition to recounting past traumas. Officials working within the refugee resettlement regime have over time been trained to be able to ascertain whether or not one is telling the truth in regards to their identity and past trauma.

> When it comes to something like torture, like any question you live the trauma again when you talk about it. The official asked me the same question about torture four times and I kept answering furtively. He kept asking, "Why won't you answer my question?" I thought he couldn't understand why I was so hesitant and that he took it to mean that I was not being truthful. I later realized that the officials are trained to push you in order to understand if you're lying or not. (İsmet, Sunni Turkish male, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

> It was difficult. I got my residency in 2.5 years. People had told me that with my profile I would get it easily. But there is the sentiment here that if the state kept you in jail that long there must be a reason. Even though it's clear that I am Leyla, they would do things meant to trip me up like ask the name of my brother-in-law's wife in order to prove my identity. They asked me pointblank many times, "Are you Leyla?" It was strange and deeply discomforting, having to prove your very existence. (Leyla, Sunni Turkish woman, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

The fear of being assessed as a liar arguably becomes a controlling mechanism that increases the vulnerability of the refugee within the resettlement process. Having to prove the veracity of one's own name is also an alienating practice in that it calls into question one of the most basic understandings of one's own self. In relation, suffering itself becomes a sign of validity for refugee status, as the following excerpt illustrates.

> It has always been difficult because of my health problems. I never was tortured, in jail, or in an organization. In Switzerland, the refugee law really works against the refugees. The more you were raped, tortured, etc. the better. The Swiss state does not see you as a human unless you live through something inhuman. There's always this push for you to prove your pain to the authorities and everything is set

125

> up around that ... I witnessed a massacre! Was that not enough? (Yıldız, Alevi Kurdish female, late thirties, unaffiliated, university graduate)

For Yıldız, who ran away from an abusive home at 16 and fled to Switzerland from Kahramanmaraş, her narrative did not fit the template of the "ideal refugee". Drawing on Davies (2005) again, we see that the very thing that excluded someone from the protection of the law in Turkey (status as a Communist, political activism, etc.), served to provide inclusion in a country like Switzerland, where the concern with the veracity of refugees' claims leads to an onus on the refugee to "prove" his or her suffering through a form of confession. Such confessionary methods exist in addition to tangible items of "proof" such as jail records or reports detailing torture.

In addition to the "foreigner police", as the bureaucrats who deal with refugees are called, social workers from various charitable organizations serve as outsourced arms of the state in helping with refugee resettlement, from helping with job training to finding a new home. Caritas is an example of such an organization:

> We had a bad experience with the social worker. Not everyone has this experience. It's a matter of luck, you can get a very sympathetic, helpful person to help guide you but we didn't. The social worker is there to help you find courses, provide funds, basically to *organize* your life. You used to be able to choose from a variety of organizations like Caritas to help you but you can't anymore. Of course, there's an exploitation of the welfare state on the part of immigrants, I would admit that. For example, people work under the table and take monthly aid, for instance. Over time, this has changed the state's perspective. Together with the neoliberal changes of the 1980s and on, not to mention September 11th, the state's attitude towards refugees and immigrants has changed. Our social worker reflects that. He/she wasn't helpful at all. S/he discourages various paths, as though some goals were too lofty for refugees. Some social workers are different and non-intrusive but still social workers are like the *police*. They have information on you. For example, I went to renew my pass for the railway and tried to change my address while doing so but the clerk told me it had already been changed for me. (İsmet, Turkish Sunni male, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

This excerpt highlights how the need to control information on refugees can be more invasive than the actual interview process due to its invisibility. Here the social worker not only serves as the only access point to governmental services but also as a limiting mechanism, a type of personified glass ceiling that can limit refugee aims. Similar to the grey nature of law in post-1980 Turkey, the lack of knowledge regarding one's status and lack of control over the most basic aspects of an individual's life serve to heighten state power and reproduce through time. In addition, Swiss policy on refugee resettlement has changed according to external global events and domestic economic conditions. These changes have affected the experiences of refugees from Turkey in ways that differ according to time of arrival.

3.5.2. Time of Arrival and Contestation

As stated previously, this fieldwork revealed varying experiences between refugees who came immediately after the 1980 coup and those who came in the late 1980s and 1990s. First, in addition to many of the later arrivals having served lengthy prison sentences, the population of Turks and Kurds fleeing immediately after the coup tended to be more educated and better-resourced financially (Fibbi et al., 2003). Second, the war in southeastern Turkey had begun to flare up in the late 1980s and the transnational Kurdish movement in Europe was beginning to petition national governments harder to recognize their grievances in Turkey. Finally, the numbers of refugees coming to Switzerland in general greatly increased as the 1980s progressed (see Table 1.1). Refugees coming from Turkey at later times, therefore, had a harder time with gaining access to refugee status and services. For Murat, who came immediately after the coup, his experience reflected not only the benefit of coming from an educated background,

127

but also the ease of belonging to a minority group whose numbers were so few as to warrant little concern on the part of the state:

> It was a really good experience for me. We were so few back then. I was a university graduate so I had a certain status. I learned German fairly quickly. I was politically active. I had good relations with parties, church organizations, etc. … They wanted a whole bunch of paperwork, information, diplomas. It took about two years because getting documents took a long time and at one point my name had been written wrong … I started to give seminars on Turkey's political situation. (Murat, Sunni Turkish male, early fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some PhD work)

As an arrival immediately after the 1980 coup, Murat's privileged profile as a university student with language skills allowed him to gain a foothold in the system and use it to his benefit. This type of experience changed greatly for those who came later, however. Talat recounted his experience of coming in 1996:

> See, there are two groups of European Turks. On the one hand, there are the *gastarbeiters* (guest workers), who have a certain mentality and their kids with their own mentality. Then on the other hand there is the refugee generation of the 1980s. Within that grouping, the real refugees fleeing wouldn't even constitute 1/1000 of the population here. The large majority of this group actually comes for economic reasons. Actually, Switzerland never prefers real political people *(Why?)* If you've done politics for 30 years in your home country, they wonder why you did it for so long. You say you're no longer in an organization but the state is suspicious of you. Think of this- I was a witness for my cousin who wanted asylum and he got his status in 6 months while I got it in 32!! He wasn't even political!! We're a threat to them. Another example, a guy gave some bread to some *PKK* fighters and then the Turkish military arrested him. That guy gets status here immediately. *(Are you saying he's kind of an "ideal refugee"?)* Yes! Exactly! He falls into that ideal refugee status. (Talat, Kurdish Alevi male, mid-fifties, conservative Marxist-Leninist organization member, high school graduate)

Talat here draws two different distinctions that arose with a number of refugees I spoke with. On the one hand he recounts the difference between economic immigrants and political refugees[29]. On the other, he states a distinction between people who are given asylum due to their ethnic background and those refugees who had been politically

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[29] The tensions between these two groups will be discussed more in the next chapter.

128

active in the movement, the so-called "real refugees". This sentiment reflects the feeling on the part of many who served prison sentences and came later that their experiences constituted a "truer" refugee past. Such a statement lies in opposition to that of Yıldız, whose personal experience of being Kurdish, Alevi, female, and disabled, led her to espouse a broader understanding of refugees and to state that "everyone after 1980 was oppressed. Everyone should have had the right to leave Turkey". Though distinctions can be made between politically active individuals and those persecuted because of their ethnic background (Fibbi, 2003: 219), according to the Swiss law, they both count as refugees. The term itself therefore has become a site of contestation that various members of the community seek to claim for their identity. Talat's example of his apolitical cousin also reflects the perception on the part of many refugees that the state targets certain types of people but that that process remains ambiguous to those going through it.

The Swiss state was not blind to the ethnic component of the conflict in Turkey. Some Sunni Turks who came in the 1990s recounted how officials greeted their stories with disbelief due to the dominant discourse at the time that Kurds and Alevis were the oppressed groups in Turkey. Yusuf came in 1996 and stated the following in relation to the difficulty with which he received his status:

> It was very hard. It took me three years to get my official status. The social workers here expect a village Kurd. A Turk from a university is weird for them. I wasn't what they expected. A person I applied together with had the same type of documents but got their status in seven months. There's a certain refugee politics here- more sensitive to certain regions. People come here illegally and do illegal stuff and the police don't find out … They always expected a certain profile. In Switzerland people don't talk against their country- why should I talk against Turkey? For me economically it's more comfortable here. I'm not here because I hate my country. (Yusuf, Sunni Turkish male, mid-forties, Marxist-Leninist

movement member, some university)

For Yusuf, the ease with which Kurds get their status in comparison to Turks was a source of frustration for him and revealed not only his unease in talking about the issue but also certain discriminatory views he held. Throughout the interview he referred a number of times to the "people from the east", only admitting that he was referring to Kurds when I asked him to clarify what he meant by the term. Though not self-identified as a nationalist, his account reflects a felt need to defend his country in the face of Swiss state officials and to claim his status as both a Turk and a refugee. Similar to Yusuf, another Sunni Turkish refugee, Kenan, also struggled to be recognized as a victim of state repression, though in the 1990s he was extra-judicially seized by Turkish officials, tortured, and later airlifted to Switzerland in a wheelchair with help from an international human rights organization. Because these two refugees did not serve long jail sentences, it was harder to "prove" punishment from the state. What is relevant here is the *perception* held by Turks regarding discriminatory practices by the Swiss state towards Turkish refugees who came in the 1990s.

While being Turkish and victims of state repression often led to disbelief on the part of Swiss refugee officials, being Kurdish and spending time in jail did not necessarily ensure ease of access to Swiss society, as the following excerpt from a participant who came in 1996 shows.

> Of course I brought all the documentation. It was clear- I was in jail for 11 years. They couldn't believe that I got the death penalty for merely owning a paper! My lawyer was a Swiss man who had been in Turkey and had witnessed cases after September 12, 1980 so he explained to them that it was a martial law situation. *(After what you had seen in Turkey, were you suspicious of authorities in CH?)* Yes. I have an example from the interview that you go through. The woman taking my statement at one point asked, "Why did you decide to leave Turkey?" I

130

explained that although I was out of jail the authorities wouldn't leave me and my family alone. At that point she said, "Well perhaps they won't leave you alone here either". At that point I decided to leave, I was so upset. I told my attorney that I would go to the U.N. and asked to be transferred to another country in Europe. She turned red and became very flustered. She apologized profusely. She even brought me some water! I said to her, "I'm not a murderer. I'm a journalist, an intellectual." But other friends have had to prove their identity. Of course most people have fake passports when they come in. Then again, we come from a place where the state stamps the passport of murderers. (Talat, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-fifties, conservative Marxist-Leninist organization member, high school graduate)

For Talat, while prison time and a capital offense conviction for owning a newspaper bolstered his case further, that same profile served to increase disbelief and suspicion in the eyes of the refugee official. Returning again to the exclusionary/inclusionary dichotomy, while such a conviction should provide some inclusion in Switzerland within the refugee regime, the increasing suspicion on the part of the state towards asylum-seekers in the 1990s reveals an erosion of that understanding. In fact, all of the accounts presented in this section illustrate how the act of giving personal information, a type of forced confession, within the ritual of the refugee interview serves not only as a form of control over refugee lives in Switzerland but also as a reminder to the refugee of the past in Turkey. The power resides in both the information and emotional vulnerability such a process engenders in the refugee as he or she attempts to build a life and new identity in the host country while at the same time balancing memories from the home country.

3.6. Conclusion

People often ask me what I would do if I saw my torturers face-to-face. I would do nothing. It was his job just like my job was to be a revolutionary! It's all about context. No one really chooses their role in society. If you're born Kurdish, Alevi, and a student- you're a leftist. If you're born in a fascist environment, it's natural to become a prison guard! Particularly when you're so young, you're not so

131

conscious. They mixed us up with fascists for 5-6 years. They thought it would help us to socialize with one another. We never even talked to each other. For us, they had killed our friends and the same for them. But actually when you dig deeper, we're not so different. I don't believe in destiny but people are assigned roles in a way. *(You were all politically active.)* Yes, we all shared a passion to save Turkey. (Yavuz, Alevi Kurdish male, late-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later leftist Kurdish movement member, high school graduate)

Though primarily seen as sites of resistance to the established order, social movements also encompass the same inequality seen throughout other societal institutions. For Yavuz, who spent 15 years in jail, part of the time in Diyarbakır's notorious Number Five Military Prison, looking back on his experience of political activism involves contextualizing the roles (however unequal they may be) various people play in society while at the same time engaging in critique of the movement itself, though his view on facing his former torturers by no means is a uniform sentiment. Within Yavuz's statement we can also find the acknowledgement that everyone is involved in one way or another in the reproduction of certain structures through their actions and choices[30].

By recounting the development of their ideological beliefs, their reasons for joining the leftist movement, and their relations with the state in both Turkey and Switzerland, we can also see how refugee memories reflect certain shared emotions, experiences, and rationalizations. Interestingly enough, even similar instances of intra-movement contestation and resistance to state repression can also qualify as constituting a type of shared collective identity. In the next chapter, therefore, I argue that these exiles are actively renegotiating their leftist identity in ways that attempt to promote their agency and individuality within a broader diasporic community.

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[30] Including the interviewer.

CHAPTER 4

CHANGES IN POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND IDENTITY

4.1. Overview of Chapter

As the previous chapter examined refugee relations with the state and legal process, this chapter examines the ways in which this community is now engaging in political activism. I also analyze here how their contemporary forms of activism constitute a diasporic collective identity, particularly one based on shared leftist political belief. In so doing, I argue that the political activism of refugees in Switzerland constitutes a new form of collective identity that is not concerned primarily with homeland politics. Instead, it is an ongoing process involving the reconciliation of past activism with contemporary societal conditions within the hostland and characterized by shifts in ideology and identity. The following are areas that reflect the collective identity of the refugees in the hostland: the process of resettlement in Switzerland, their social circle and career choices, shared perspectives on both home and hostland, and how they currently view their political ideology and identity.

Throughout the interview process, all participants expressed change through time in relation to their political identity and levels of activism. This seems understandable considering how long many of them have been in Switzerland. The length of time that

has passed since the majority of the refugees migrated is highly relevant to the type and strength of their political activism. Quite significantly, none of the refugees I spoke with still belong to the organizations in which they were formerly active. Many of these groups grew increasingly radicalized and most eventually broke up. This break with their former organizations did not occur immediately. On the contrary, the change that refugees underwent came as a result of a long period of working through personal crises and the renegotiated understanding of self within the new context of the hostland. For a long time, many refugees "hadn't really left Turkey", though they were physically in Switzerland. The experience of "leaving Turkey" emotionally through the renunciation of organizational activities and a shift towards concerns grounded in Switzerland is the concern of this chapter. This break is also reflected in the zero number of refugees who stated a desire to return permanently to Turkey, as the table below highlights.

Table 4.1: Present-Day Characteristics of the Participants

Holds Swiss citizenship	12
Has visited Turkey since departure	12
Reads Turkish newspapers on a regular basis (minimum 2-3 times a week)	15
Expressed desire to move back to Turkey permanently	0
Actively involved in politics in Turkey	4
Actively involved in politics in Switzerland	15

Works in social work or political arena	10
Social circle mostly people from Turkey	10
Part of family reunification	8

Aspects of this table will be discussed in further detail throughout the chapter, though it is useful to quickly point out certain trends that emerge. First, most of the refugees who have Swiss citizenship have been in the country since in the 1980s. Several participants pointed to the large amount of money and near-perfect record with no criminal past, zero debts, and consistent employment necessary to gain it. Those who have citizenship obviously have more access to the political opportunity structure such a status affords, such as voting, being involved in party politics, and running for office. Furthermore, those with passports on the whole have been able to visit Turkey and do so quite often. Interestingly, while some people did express ambivalence regarding eventual permanent return to Turkey, none viewed it as a viable option or something that they desired to do. In terms of political activism, most people remain involved in political issues in Switzerland in one way or another. In this table and the chapter as a whole political activism or participation includes professional membership or jobs in unions, immigrant rights organizations, torture rehabilitation centers, and the Green and Socialist parties. For those whose jobs do not directly involve politics, many pointed to membership in organizations such as Amnesty International, Pen International, housing collectives and food cooperatives, feminist groups, and activism in the anti-globalization movement. Likewise, many refugees talked about attending union strikes and May first rallies and

organizing protests over issues in Palestine, Albania, Sri Lanka, and Central America. In addition to political activism, the table highlights with whom the refugees choose to surround themselves. Though family reunification was not explored in depth, it does appear that refugees of Kurdish descent tended to have more experience with family members also coming to Switzerland as asylum-seekers. This most likely has to do with the war in the southeast, which has largely produced refugees of Kurdish origin. The first section looks at how the shared initial experiences in the hostland affected later development of collective identity.

4.2. The Resettlement Experience

The process of resettlement involves the often complicated and anxiety-ridden process of gaining legal residency and access to state-funded services such as language courses, housing aid, and job training. It is also when refugees begin to reassess and renegotiate their organizational loyalties and political aspirations in light of the sharp break they have experienced with their home country.

4.2.1. Experiences with Employment and Housing

In order to better understand the process of arrival and resettlement in Switzerland the interview consisted of several questions regarding refugee experience of finding his or her first house or first job in the country. As in the previous chapter, a clear demarcation between early arrivals immediately after the 1980 coup and later arrivals in the late 1980s and 1990s emerged. The following excerpts highlight such early experiences.

Within the first week that I came I found a job at McDonald's! I knew a bit of French. We (the refugees) didn't have a house when we came. We stayed in refugee housing. We had the right to work immediately, though. I stayed there a week and then rented a room from a friend. McDonald's had rooms so I got a studio from a seasonal worker, a Portuguese, after 2-3 months when he went back home. Then I found a place from friends in the work environment. There weren't such a large number of immigrants or refugees as there is now. It wasn't hard as a refugee to find an apartment, you could openly say that you were a refugee. Now it's not possible. Having a network was helpful but not necessary. (Murat, Sunni Turkish male, early fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some PhD work)

I worked as a waiter for a while. I didn't like going to get money from the state. I started working after 1.5 years. Five to six years later I started working for a printing house. In terms of a place to live, I found it through friends and it was easy. Everyone that came in 1985 or '86 went through the same house! There were no refugee camps back then so it was a type of collective living. I still see that place sometimes. I have good memories from there. I would sometimes come home and there would be two new faces. (Mustafa, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some graduate school)

Similar to these accounts, many refugees who came immediately after the 1980 coup reported the relative ease with which they found both work and housing. The economic situation in Switzerland at the time necessitated cheap labor while housing had not yet become a process marked by low supply and overt discrimination. As Murat points out, the term "refugee" itself was not perceived as negatively as it is now and for many at that time, the lack of a strict refugee regime allowed for more of a "sink or swim" mentality in terms of resettlement. While many found jobs and housing quickly, they also had less support from the state. This was not viewed as negative on the whole by the participants who arrived earlier. Likewise, Mustafa's account of staying in collective housing rather than a refugee camp highlights the plausibility of staying in more personalized accommodations rather than a state- or charity-run institution. Overall, such accounts reported a much lower amount of concern on the part of the Swiss state towards asylum-seekers in general. This fits with the low numbers of asylum-seekers applying for residency in those years.

In addition, those that came with a university degree or partially fulfilled university degree from also benefited from their socio-economic background, regardless of time of arrival. Likewise, language skills or the ability to learn languages in the host country quickly was an added benefit to those going through the resettlement system. For Ayşe, who came in 1984, going through the system was aided by her university degree from Middle East Technical University and her language skills:

> It was pretty easy. I speak English and French. I already spoke English very well and I learned French in six months. English is an imperialist language but it did help to know it. My ex-husband couldn't speak it but I learned French quickly. (Ayşe, Sunni Turkish female, early fifties, not directly involved in organizations, Master's)

The difference in language skills affected her marriage negatively precisely because of the better employment she was able to come by. Though it certainly helped to have such language skills, Ayşe still pointed out that there was *de facto* discrimination in the white collar job market against immigrants: "If they would allow me, I'd be an engineer. I've done a lot. I've been a babysitter, cleaner, fundraiser, organizing trustees with banks and the U.N. I've worked with environmental groups, dealing with mining issues and environmental protection." Here "they" refers to the tightly regulated engineering field and the requirements to work in the relevant sectors. Even for highly educated refugees, therefore, the jobs upon arrival were often low-paid jobs in the service or manufacturing sectors, echoing Rollemberg's (2007) account of educated Brazilian exiles involved in jobs they were overqualified for. Cleaning, food preparation, factory work, and delivery jobs were all examples of work refugees mentioned as engaging in at the beginning of their stay in Switzerland. Many college-educated refugees resented the discriminatory hiring practices, "When you start to work, there's lots of racism. On the totem pole I

come somewhere after a Spanish or Portuguese woman. (laughs) You have to prove yourself as a minority. You don't feel totally comfortable." As a graduate of prestigious Turkish technical university and an engineer, Ali's experience of the work world was greatly colored by his need to prove himself as equally competent to other engineers of Swiss background. His insightful take on his status according to other immigrant groups highlights how stratified the process of integrating into the work force is, particularly among white-collar jobs.

For those without much formal education, the possibility of social mobility presented even more of a problem. Though it is technically possible for anyone to finish schooling in Switzerland, many recounted the need to immediately earn money and language barriers as serving as a barrier to education. Likewise, even university-educated refugees faced a unique set of problems when they came from a jailed background in Turkey. İsmet spent 12.5 years in jail and reflects on his experience below.

> I don't currently work. In Turkey I was involved in organization activities. I don't really have any skills because I never learned any as I was in jail. *(Aren't there certain skills involved in working for such a political organization?)* Yes, there are certain types of management skills that you learn in jail but unfortunately there is no material way to measure this. When I came my wife was already here in a house. I was in a refugee dorm first. Then I went to a housing unit for married couples for a month and then our own house. This was for 1.5 years. We had no choice in the selection of this house. Then we got permission to stay. It took five months. My wife was pregnant at that point. We wanted to make sure that our place was near Bern and a bigger place for a family. It was hard to find a place. We applied to 100 places at least. But there are a series of difficulties: First, there was a problem with my identification card.: when you apply as a refugee they give you a different i.d. marking that you've applied for refugee status. So we got an F permit instead of a B permit. People here call it the "Terror-F". It essentially lets the person know that you were involved in some sort of violent activity. But it's not so straightforward. Not everyone in the same situation as me gets that permit. I knew people who came around the same time with a similar history and they got permit B. You give them a package of documents but what kind of person the agent is becomes very important. Second, the fact that you're not working doesn't

139

> look good when applying for an apartment. Materially it's actually not that important because there's a regular check coming from the state but the Swiss still look down on those who aren't working. Three, being foreign never helps here when looking for housing. *(Can they see your status when you apply?)* Yes, there's a space to write which permit you have. (İsmet, Sunni Turkish male, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

Though İsmet is also a graduate of a prestigious Turkish technical university, the "markers" of his time in jail, lack of job experience in his field of interest, and status as a refugee color his experience with finding housing. He lays out a multi-faceted account of his identity in the eyes of the Swiss; in effect, his status as a holder of a "Terror-F" refugee, his status as unemployed, and his general status as a foreigner. It highlights the stratified nature of refugee status as not all refugees have the same type of permit. As someone who arrived very recently in Switzerland, İsmet's case presents a stark contrast to those who came earlier. For many the resettlement process was relatively short-lived experienced as they quickly gained access to educational opportunities. For those who came later, although there was a more established system of aid and support by the state for longer periods of time, employment opportunities were fewer and farther between.

An interesting related phenomenon is the number of refugees who became social workers, a job which involves working with other refugees, immigrants, and poor and working-class Swiss. In this thesis, out of 24 people, six had either previously worked as social workers or currently were. In fact, this has become a topic of amusement within the community. Many joked about social work as a kind of typological job for Turkish leftists who want to stay socially active and still make a decent living, as the following statement by a social worker from Turkey shows.

> I've had a lot of relationships with social workers. The reason we chose it as a profession because its training closely matched the Turkish system. The university

140

system on the other hand is very disciplined and we're not very disciplined[31]! So we fit that particular school culture more. Two, it was easier to finish and graduate from. Three, we saw it as more social, more political. Fourth, there was a bit of people following what others were doing. There was a bit of competition in that way. (Cem, Alevi Turkish and Kurdish male, mid-fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university)

In some ways refugees were taking advantage of the opportunity structure in this particular segment of the economy. Their language skills and educational background (all of these six had at least started university in Turkey) gave them access to a relatively well-paying, high-status job in Switzerland. Perhaps more importantly, it allowed them to stay socially engaged in the hostland. In addition to social work, many activists work in party politics, with the Green Party the party of choice for many in the exiled community. Hüseyin is a naturalized Swiss citizen active in municipal Green Party politics and works as a therapist at a torture rehabilitation center. According to his account, work itself is one reason why going back to Turkey would not be feasible. The inability to do work he feels politically and emotionally invested in while still retaining the ability to look after his family is a barrier to imagine the possibility of returning to the homeland.

Accounts also revealed that citizenship did not necessarily end discrimination within the Swiss job market. The following excerpt highlights this.

> I don't call myself an exile or refugee. I got rid of that very quickly. I started to see myself as an immigrant. Now I'm a citizen and I feel equal civically and legally but not socially. I see myself as a minority. I have had a problem of equality of opportunity. This isn't just how I feel but how many people feel. There is serious discrimination here. I did the first research into discrimination against Turkish, Albanian, Portuguese, etc. … I have a lot of friends who were social workers but

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[31] Most Swiss do not study at university and instead move from high school into various trade schools of higher learning, whether they are for blue collar work or white collar professions such as business, nursing, or social work.

never became management. They are told that they make mistakes letter writing in German. However, one can easily see that these are prohibitive standards. Of course I will make small mistakes! German is not my native language. I speak Turkish, German, French, and English! … At Caritas, an organization that works with refugees, I was told that a former refugee can not work with the integration of refugees! This is Caritas for God's sake. I wrote a letter to them critiquing them and they wrote back saying it was obvious that I was upset because I didn't get the job. (Murat, Sunni Turkish male, early fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some PhD work)

Murat's experience of discrimination (ironically within a refugee organization), leads him to a self-perception as a citizen with political rights who nonetheless retains the status of a foreigner. As he later noted in the interview, this experience likewise contributed to his increasing conceptualization of himself as an immigrant rather than a refugee precisely because treatment by the hostland made no such distinction between the two.

Discrimination within the job market and housing sector has even led some refugees to change certain perspectives on their homeland, as the following excerpt highlights:

My negative views towards Turkey softened a bit. I realized that it is not a banana republic. Like all immigrants, we encountered racism here. It often causes immigrants to turn inwards on themselves. As a Turk and Sunni I'm part of the hegemonic culture in Turkey and was discriminated against there really only as a leftist. Having lived here, I now sympathize with minorities in Turkey or other countries for that matter. It's not true to say "There's no racism in Turkey" but here in Switzerland it's much more noticeable. (İsmet, Sunni Turkish male, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

This illustrates how İsmet's perspective on his own status within society has shifted as a result of his experience as a refugee in Switzerland. In other words, this realization of privilege in the homeland was partially realized through his experience of discrimination in the hostland. İsmet's experience as well as others' represents how livelihood issues such as work and housing are characterized by tensions that reveal discriminatory

142

practices of the hostland, educational differences in refugee background, and the increasingly controlling nature of the asylum system in Switzerland through time. The process of gaining work and housing were not the only way refugees experienced resettlement. Finding housing, learning a language, and job training all constitute practices that contribute to shifts in collective identity. On a more emotional level, severing ties with the organizations they were involved with in Turkey was also part of that process.

4.2.2. Organizational Breaks

Not every refugee in this study was directly involved in organizational activities though most were. Many continued activism in the transnational arena through a type of lateral network that more explicitly concerned with the politics of the home country (Tambiah, 2000). For many years in fact these refugees were actively involved in transnational politics through party or organizational linkages in Europe and believed that return was imminent. In fact, that ongoing engagement with hostland politics was one barrier that many participants expressed as limiting their language learning and social integration into Switzerland for the first couple of years of their migration. Instead of learning German or French, many exiles were actively involved in trying to enact change in Turkey through the complex networks of organizations such as *Dev-Yol*, *Dev-Sol*, the *PKK*, and others. As one participant who came in the immediate aftermath of the 1980 coup stated, "Before we knew how to buy a bus ticket here, we became organization leaders". Precisely because they were removed from the context of state repression, they were able to head up activism from afar. For most activists however, a break with the organization occurred some time into their stay. Often this change became a source of

143

contention within the community of exiles in Europe, with some wanting to focus on conditions in the host country and others who wanted to focus more on Turkey's political situation.

> I follow Turkish politics but I'm not so involved. There was a division back when we came. Some thought that we needed to organize and be political according to Turkey. The other side thought we should focus on here as an immigrant group. This happened before the 1990s. I was of the latter school. In fact, we published a magazine in Turkish and German geared towards immigrant lives here- *Alttakiler*[32] in the 1980s. (Cem, Alevi Turkish and Kurdish male, mid-fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university)

Both here and in later parts of his interview, Cem's account reflected the concerns of the majority of the refugees, who gradually became focused on improving their lives as immigrants, rather than refugees *per se*. Other refugees also recounted a shift towards working for Turkish-German newspapers and magazines geared towards the Turkish community as an immigrant community rather than exile publications for domestic Turkish political organizations. The notion of living in the country you physically are in and being engaged in issues of relevance to that minority community became more and more salient for many refugees and in turn colored their notions of return, as later sections will explore in more depth. The following quotation addresses one refugee's attempt to help form a Turkish political party from abroad.

> I was a founder of a socialist party. I worked there for many years. Then it changed into another party. Organizational politics bothered me. There was a constant psychological hierarchy. They weren't open-minded enough. Just like Muslims think anything outside of the Koran is forbidden, well they're not too different from that. After all, no one is really socialist if they haven't lived in a society that is socialist. (Zerrin, Alevi Turkish female, mid-forties, participant in a communist party, some high school)

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[32] *Alttakiler* translates to "The Downtrodden".

144

Zerrin's frustration with organizational hierarchies echoes a sentiment seen also in the previous chapter in relation to leftist organizations in Turkey. Many refugees felt not only the need to focus on their needs as immigrants in the host country, but also to gain independence from organizational politics in general, particularly in a form that seemed to perpetuate the type of systemic issues that they had been seeking to change. In addition, her comparison of the close-mindedness of organizational politics and Islam echoes Talat's earlier sentiment on his former organization as well.

Accounts by Kurdish refugees illustrate a more ambivalent attitude towards organizational politics. While the activism of the Turkish Left died out in the diaspora, Kurdish transnational activism actually found a home for increased mobilization. One Kurdish refugee formerly active in *Dev-Genç* and now supportive of *PKK* goals stated the following in relation to coming to Switzerland, "I changed. First, jail changed me. Second, the fact that Kurds were so active here and the leftists were doing nothing really. The Kurdish nationalists were the active ones!" Being physically removed from Turkey actually allowed a space to open up for political activism, cultural self-expression, and even discovery of the written form of the language they spoke growing up. One refugee recounted her experience of attending a course in written Kurmanji and the highly emotional event of reading a book printed in Kurmanji for the first time. However, transnational Kurdish activism has been characterized by disillusionment on the part of nearly all.

> Most people in my organization were either caught in Turkey or massacred in Syria by Intelligence forces after September twelfth. Many changed while in jail. When I look back on it, I find it narrow and primitive. Maybe we were progressive for our time but it doesn't seem so now. It's not logical to expect a socialist or communist revolution; this has to do with the winds of the times, the zeitgeist. Now I'm more

145

interested in cultural issues and am more democratic. I still believe in choice for both Turks and Kurds. Let them both decide if they want to live together. I used to believe in raising consciousness among the proletariat. But now I see that such a revolution isn't possible. (Yavuz, Alevi Kurdish male, late-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later leftist Kurdish movement member, high school graduate)

I always lived Kurdish culture here because we couldn't there! Music, theater, a *saz* group. I was in charge of the cultural chapter of an association and in that aspect it was quite rich. For example, we hosted a meeting of 100-150 Kurdish youths once. We'd do projects and I would work for 6 months at a time on this, for example. There weren't so many Swiss- it was closed to them. There weren't so many Turkish groups involved, either. The Kurdish groups were quite closed. The *PKK* didn't really much like Turkish leftists and vice-versa … I was a *PKK* sympathizer for ten years until Öcalan was captured. After that the types of people recruited changed. Conflicts arose. The discipline was destroyed. People were threatened. People got involved in drugs; the personal aspects and political views did not match. People who didn't really believe were promoted and given initiative! I didn't want to be involved with it. Individuals give their lives for this and some guy comes and scams everyone. No, this isn't acceptable for me. All of my generation- good people, have left. If I said this in front they'd be violent with me but it's true. I defend the Kurdish cause but I'm not active. I used to go to demonstrations and concerts but not so much anymore. It became repetitious over time. (Can, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-forties, unaffiliated, elementary school graduate)

Yavuz's sharp use of the terms "narrow" and "primitive" on the one hand and "logical" and "choice" on the other indicates what he views as a clear qualitative break between previous ideological views and his present-day emphasis on rights and democracy. The term "zeitgeist" is also loaded with connotations suggesting contemporary conditions. Similarly, the underlying belief in the Kurdish cause remains for Can but his frustration with what he views as the closed nature of the *PKK* and the post-Öcalan capture period bothered him to the degree that he withdrew into other pursuits, though he draws a line between the cultural dimension of expressing Kurdish identity and the politics of the *PKK*. His statement that the "personal aspects and political views" did not match reflects the intra-movement contention felt by both Turks and Kurds in this study. Yıldız's

146

experience, while concerned primarily with her activism in Switzerland, also reflects this.

> Yes, at the beginning I was quite active. I started and signed petitions. I worked on informing the public about issues in Turkey. I brought authors here. I brought Kurdish groups to speak here and people from the Kurdish party in Turkey when it was closed down. I tried to watch everything but I never had loyalty to one group or party … It has greatly decreased now. Being active- it's definitely gone down. I have to deal with myself first before changing the world. My interest is still great but these days I want to deal with art and culture before Swiss and Turkish politics. I realized in relation to both Turkish and Kurdish groups- if you want to change something you need to live there! Yes, I can affect things in Turkey by sending money but it's not the same. (Yıldız, Alevi Kurdish female, late-thirties, unaffiliated, university graduate)

At first glance, Yıldız fits into the mould of a transnational activist. She organized speakers to come from Turkey and educated the hostland population on homeland-related issues. However, we see through time that the nature of that activism changes. Not only does Yıldız wish to focus on her own development but she vocalizes the sentiment voiced by others that living in Turkey is key to working on issues related to Turkey. In many ways, this qualifies the argument of the transnational literature that identity and activism rise about the boundedness of national borders. For many refugees, there was quite a clear line between homeland politics and hostland politics. In addition, the newfound focus that Yıldız places on personal development, art, and culture was also a sentiment expressed by many who felt disillusioned within organizational hierarchy and politics, whether Turkish or Kurdish. On the other hand, this shared experience of breaking with organizations focused on Turkey does not mean that levels of political participation or activism necessarily decreased for all. On the contrary, many refugees became engaged in new forms of activism such as Green Party participation or immigrant rights.

147

In fact, through the course of the fieldwork, it became increasingly clear that the political culture of Switzerland itself played a role in forging new forms of participation. In the words of one Turkish refugee, 'I think the political socialization here was very important and the movements that we found here. In Turkey we didn't know what "green" politics were. But here you can't find one Turk that isn't green in some way.' In other words, the physical break with Turkey, the political break with organizations in Turkey, and the experience with Swiss (or Western European) political culture all played a role in change among the politically active, similar to other political exiles (Wright and Zuniga, 2007: 42). It is relevant to the resettlement process in how refugees articulated their socialization and acculturation process in Switzerland as being tied to that organizational break. Although nearly all retained their leftist beliefs and ideals, almost all expressed the importance of breaking off from such ties to their process of resettlement. This does not mean, however, that memories of past activism are characterized solely with critical and negative sentiments. As Talat states,

> I should emphasize, there were many good things about our movement. First, we were very sensitive. Second, we were honest, brutally honest (our discourse and protest were one). Third, the friendship was immensely strong. Here friends won't even loan money to one another. While in jail, we would allow ourselves to be tortured instead of a friend who was in a bad way. Other than that, there is no need to idealize the movement. I still believe in equality and that Marx was a scientist, not just an ideologue but God protect anyone who gets the socialism that we believed in! Back then I adored Lenin but now I see him as a dictator. (Talat, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-fifties, conservative Marxist-Leninist organization member, high school graduate)

Talat's view of his time in the movement reveals tensions between looking back through a critical lens and retaining positive aspects of it as well. Allowing oneself to be tortured instead of one's friend is a potent reminder of the types of bonds he formed and is contrasted with what he perceives as a Swiss understanding of friendship. At the same

time, he asserts a highly critical perspective on the drawbacks of the former movement while still maintaining certain fundamental beliefs. His view on Marx is particularly illuminating. He respects him now as a scientist, not as an ideologue. Similar to previous accounts, socialism remains an important aspect of identity, but its definition has shifted to allow for change.

Talat is not alone in this regard. Many refugees explicitly rejected romanticizing both the movement they were involved with and the homeland in general while retaining core political beliefs. I argue therefore that part of the resettlement process for members of this community involves facing their previous political activism in a critical light and being involved in political life in the host country. The process-based approach to diaspora allows us to understand how these individuals are rejecting a primordial understanding of the home country and creating new forms of identity in the hostland within the context of their particular movement. They do not view their activism or even identity as existing solely through the lens of their national or ethnic background. In this sense, all of the refugees share a collective understanding of change through time. Another way to view this collective understanding of change is through the group of people the participants have chosen to socialize with, as the following section explores.

4.3. The Social Circle

The social networks that people have formed in the diaspora can give insight into the collective changes they have experienced through time. As Table 4.1 highlights, ten

people counted as Turks and Kurds as constituting the majority of their circle of friends. This does not mean, however, that the remainder of participants did not count people from Turkey as belonging to their social circle. Instead, most of those refugees pointed to their group of friends as being comprised of other foreigners and Swiss alike. Almost all the refugees singled out racist and right-wing individuals, whether Swiss or Turkish, as being absent from their social circle. Interestingly, while some did maintain friendships with nationalist Turkish or Kurdish friends, most stated that the majority of their friendships were with leftists or liberal-minded people of all national backgrounds, political exiles from various countries, and both Turks and Kurds. This lends support to the idea of a diasporic collective identity based on leftist ideology rather than ethnic or national background. Values and ethics seemed to play largest role in choosing friendships as many refugees stated they could not be friends with very conservative, religiously devout, or bigoted people. Nonetheless, several instances of contention, often based on socio-economic class differences between groups, did arise during the course of the interviews. For instance, many refugees described the type of tensions that have existed between immigrants and refugees from Turkey living in Switzerland, as the following section highlights.

4.3.1. Refugees and Immigrants

Although several participants recounted contention between refugees and native Swiss, there were also numerous stories about relations between economic immigrants from Turkey and political exiles. The following account is from a refugee who came soon after the 1980 coup.

When I first arrived there were older Turks who came as guest workers and 200 of

them signed a petition for us to leave! There were 1,500 guest worker families at that time. When that happened, I decided to get to know them … Anyway, they started to get to know me and 5-6 other people. We became part of that community. I ended up having better relations with them than other leftists. (Arif, Alevi Turkish male, late-forties, unaffiliated, some university)

Though this story was highlighted by Arif as a positive example of expanding his social circle, it nonetheless shows the degree of suspicion on the part of the immigrant community towards the recently arrived political refugees. Both immigrants and refugees carried with them their respective biases from the home country onto new turf. Although this may have changed somewhat through time, it was at the beginning a source of mutual distrust.

I want to add something if I may. The economic immigrants and refugee communities never came together. There was fear there on both sides. The refugees saw the immigrants as representing bad, capitalist thinking. To them the immigrant seems very pro-system, he goes to the consulate regularly. Naturally people see one another as friends in the same community. (Hüseyin, Alevi Kurdish male, late-forties, teachers' association and center-left party member, university graduate)

This account similarly highlights contention while shining a light on its mutually reinforcing aspect. Not only were Turkish immigrants suspicious of politically active "trouble-makers", but refugees were also suspicious of those they viewed as part of the system they had been actively trying to change. One female refugee highlighted her discomfort with the amount of nosiness associated with the immigrant community in contrast to the more liberal refugee community.

I am very uncomfortable with much of the Turkish circles. I also don't like some of the more psychotic actions of Eastern people. (Here upset and hesitates to continue.) *(Please feel free to say what you think about this.)* Some of the economic immigrants are really insufferable. They are often messing in my business. (Zerrin, Alevi Turkish female, mid-forties, participant in a communist party, some high school)

151

As a self-described free-spirited woman who received criticism from the Turkish community for divorcing her husband while he was in jail, Zerrin's account reflects the constricted feeling relations with immigrants gave her. As she recounted later in her interview, the greatest single aspect of living in Switzerland was the freedom women had to live their lives as they pleased. She no longer wanted to visit Turkey because of the difficult circumstances she had as an independent woman who liked to have a drink and smoke when visiting her hometown in southern Turkey. While she hesitated to identity "Eastern people" as Kurds, she did later admit that many of them were. She went to great pains to point out that her ex-husband had been Kurdish and that it was a mindset issue rather than an ethnic one. Her hesitancy does reveal the existence of unspoken biases and discriminatory tendencies that Turks harbor towards Kurds.

Nonetheless, there are many cases in which immigrant-refugee relations exposed the vulnerable position from which any foreigner, whether immigrant or refugee, has to negotiate their way through the process of acculturation, as the following quotation highlights.

> Well, in the 1980s before the internet, Kurds here had to form groups to support each other. I met a Kurdish woman once from Maraş who came here in 1970. She said, "Thank God for the refugees! We couldn't go to the market out of fear. We didn't know how to do anything here, how to speak with people. They helped us and made people aware of us." (Yıldız, Alevi Kurdish female, late-thirties, unaffiliated, university graduate)

In this case refugees actually aided in the process of making foreigners visible and therefore claiming rights within in Swiss society. This advocacy role helped in some ways to develop relations more positively. In addition, the fact that many Kurds who came in the late 1980s and 1990s underwent family reunification or had family members

qualify for refugee status helped to establish a wider community in contrast to many Turkish refugees who were more isolated. A deeper analysis of refugee-economic immigrant relations could potentially reveal the class-based assumptions undergirding such interactions. The fact that many economic immigrants have less formal schooling than many of the refugees also adds to this potentiality (Fibbi et al., 2003).

4.3.2. Contention within the Social Circle

Many of the Turks and Kurds who marry Swiss nationals or have children reported engaging in a concerted effort to avoid associating too much with people from Turkey, regardless of ethnic background.

> I don't know many people from Turkey here. But if I walk ten meters from the train station I say hi to at least ten people. When I go on holiday, I miss Bern. Most of my friends are Swiss. I have few friends from Turkey … Actually, I try to stay away from Turkish or Kurdish groups. Their goal is to take you into their group and use you and wear you out. They don't seek me out either. I'm waging a cultural struggle now. I work on making movies, writing books, I published a recipe book. People ask me- "Why aren't you doing something after spending 15 years in prison?" I am, just not in a narrow way in a group. My Swiss circle is wide. (Yavuz, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later leftist Kurdish movement member, high school graduate)

For Yavuz, friendships with other Turks and Kurds entails entering into a political discourse that he wishes to avoid. Similar to Yıldız above, his concerns have moved from politics to poetry, filmmaking, and cooking. It is important to note here that he does not view himself as becoming passive. Rather, he is channeling his activist energy, albeit in a different way than before. Interestingly, though, when I came to Yavuz's restaurant to interview him, two of his friends that he was jailed with in Diyarbakır were also there visiting him. This reveals a tension that arose during the course of the interviews. While on the one hand critical of Turkish and Kurdish social circles, many

153

refugees still retain friendships that transnationally stretch back into the homeland. Even though such friendships constitute a type of tie with the homeland, many participants did not want to be defined socially by the national or ethnic group to which they belong. Part of that sentiment includes a rejection of nationalist sentiment as well.

During the course of the interviews, it became clear that there was a conscious effort on the part of many of the participants to highlight how distanced they felt from not only nationalist but also ethnic nationalist or dogmatically leftist circles. While pointing out a few friendships with members of these circles, they at the same time attempted to distance themselves from dogmatic or demagogic strains within the community. The following statement reflects this.

> The following profile bothers me: no matter whether *Dev-Sol* or *TKO*, or whatever, many of refugees from Turkey never brought closure. For them to still be working towards that goal of previous times is sad. Particularly when there's no development within. They just bow down to an idea. They don't read. A guy got mad that I was reading Freud. Come on, Freud was one of the most important thinkers of his time! *(Do you think there are many people like that?)* Luckily there aren't too many. (Laughs) It's ok, I mostly ignore such thinking. But they do block some progress. They're essentially like a sect. (Talat, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-fifties, conservative Marxist-Leninist organization member, high school graduate)

For Talat and many others, the unchanging perspective and lack of critical self-analysis found within some members of the leftist community struck them as particularly problematic within the new national context of Switzerland. Interestingly, in my interviews I did not come across anyone with such views though it was often reported by others. As Talat admits, he does not know many people who fit such a description, yet this typology of unrepentant and dogmatic leftist arose as a type of leftist many refugees rejected. This further indicates that the notion of what it means to be a leftist has shifted for many refugees.

Ethnic nationalism also arose as a problematic issue for many refugees. Significantly, criticism of Kurdish nationalism was voiced by almost all of the Turkish refugees. Many of them specifically called out the *PKK* as partaking in a problematic discourse.

> I don't feel comfortable with some Kurdish people. Or rather, anyone with strong nationalist sentiments. This could be Kurds or not. I've also noticed it with Alevis too. I haven't socialized with too many Turkish nationalists. (Leyla, Sunni Turkish woman, early-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

> The murder of Hrant Dink really shook me up. It showed how very bad nationalism is. For example, you get closer and closer to Kurdish nationalism and you see how aggressive and bad *PKK* discourse is. In the end nationalism is a constructed thing and seeing people organizing around it makes me sad. I went into jail in 1992 and quickly lost my connection with my organization. Maybe because people who call themselves socialist got so conservative. I got less conservative. It bothers me. *(Why?)* Because at some point you get to a breaking point. (İsmet, Sunni Turkish male, early-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

Interestingly, both Leyla's and İsmet's accounts, similar to other Turkish refugee critiques of Kurdish nationalism, are couched within a criticism of nationalism itself over the specifically Kurdish nature of it. In fact, İsmet simultaneously critiques the discourses of *Dev-Sol* socialism, Turkish nationalism[33], and Kurdish nationalism. Other refugees also stated that they did not know many Turkish nationalists in Switzerland but instead were faced with Kurdish or Alevi nationalism more than other ideologies. To what extend this discomfort is due to the Kurdish nature of the sentiment or nationalism itself is difficult to ascertain but it indicates an underlying tension.

As previously mentioned, while sympathetic to the Kurdish cause, almost all of the Kurdish refugees expressed discontentment with the Kurdish nationalist movement and

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[33] Hrant Dink was a Turkish journalist and publisher of Armenian descent who was assassinated by a Turkish nationalist in 2007.

155

second-generation *PKK* activism. Some claimed socialist identity as being stronger than their Kurdish identity, while others pointed to the violent nature of the group, particularly in its later generations. The following excerpt reflects this critique.

> When I first came here, it wasn't so foreign for me because of the tourism industry that I had worked in. I even found a girlfriend in the first week! (laughs) I was critiqued by other Kurds because I wasn't political or ideological. So I went to a *PKK* organization once. My older brother was already here and active. People would tell me- "we need to be in the mountains fighting." That was always strange to me. I became more ideological here actually, through reading *PKK* publications and so on. It's an emotional issue, your homeland and so forth. The *PKK* is so good at this type of thing. It's a reality, actually. The day-to-day events in Turkey are enough to motivate people. They record such events and present it in a certain way… *(Kind of like agitprop?)* Yes. You're at home watching TV and you see people dying. These concepts of *Serkabun* (independence) and *Berkadun* (struggle). You live with that. So we were caught up in that. At that time having a profession here was below us. Without having a country you are nothing! Now I see it's wrong to think that way (laughs). It's wrong to live here and do nothing here. I want a Kurdistan but I don't want to focus just on that. I was very emotional and with my youth it was stronger when I first came. I did that for 10 years. (Can, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-forties, unaffiliated, elementary school graduate)

In contrast to the other Kurdish refugees interviewed, Can was not politically active in Turkey (he was arrested for speaking up at a state-sponsored rally). Instead, he became politically active in Europe, as did many other Kurds throughout Europe who fled due to ethnic persecution (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2001; Van Bruinessen, 1998). In fact, initially he felt that his former work in the tourism industry in Turkey gave him a certain degree of cultural capital to gain economic and acculturative success in Switzerland, i.e. ease with learning languages, interacting with foreigners, and so on. Nonetheless, he became active in the hostland. His account zeroes in on how the "injustice frames" utilized by a movement can be a site for ongoing emotional work (Goodwin et al., 2004: 8-9; 14-15) through the collective re-imagining of homeland (in this case Kurdistan), using the twin concepts of independence and struggle. Though he is now distanced from *PKK* circles,

156

his process of looking back to his activism in Switzerland actually echoes how many older Turkish and Kurdish activists critically assess their movement experience in Turkey. In addition, he also echoes the sentiment of others that being involved in life in the hostland is preferable to focusing only on hostland politics.

While wishing to maintain close relations with politically like-minded people, Can and others at the same time voiced a desire to move beyond a boxed-in political or ethnic identity. In the words of one refugee, "I don't want to be defined by my culture. I want to rise above my culture".

> Most are people from Turkey- old friends. We- I should say "I"- we live a bit of a ghetto. We are more picky now in terms of friends. *(What do you mean by "ghetto"?)* I mean we live in a narrower context in terms of our social circle. For me though, people shouldn't be sexist, racist, or fascistic. It's not about being leftist. It's about your conscience and equality. This isn't from a dervish understanding, but a type of consciousness to not harm people. I have some Greek, Italian, Swiss, and Yugoslavian friends. There are some Argentinean and Chilean refugee friends too. I'm one of the Mosaic founders but I've never been a "cafe" type, just sitting around talking. I've never had time. Talk is important from a young age, but I prefer focused talking. At Mosaic I help with meetings, presentations, and arranging the books. For example, we arranged some transsexuals from Turkey to come and speak. We were a bit nervous but it went really well. These are the type of things I want to do. Ninety percent of my friends are leftist. It's not so much about politics but a type of social feeling. (Mustafa, Alevi Kurdish male, late-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some graduate school)

Interestingly, Mustafa does not view the "ghetto" he refers to in ethnic terms. Rather, he is referring to the pickiness he and his friends engage in with regard to their social circle. His "pickiness" involves surrounding himself with people who share a "type of social feeling" rather than a strict, dogmatic adherence to certain political tenets. Many other refugees also echoed the importance of equality and a rejection of sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of bigotry as being key to the formation of their social

circle. While these values are not necessarily leftist in nature, the participants in this study view them as constituting a part of their leftist understanding. At the same time, most of Mustafa's friends tend to be from Turkey. This highlights the tension mentioned earlier between wanting to rise above national background and maintaining friendships with people from that part of the world. In addition, his preference of "focused talking" over "just sitting around talking" also highlights an attempt to move beyond the type of deep discourse of youth to a more tangible implementation of political beliefs. As a founder of Mosaic and organizer of events there, Mustafa has honed in on a space that embodies these efforts. The following section examines how such physical spaces that arose during the interviews function as meeting points for members of the diasporic community.

4.3.3. Community Centers

Mosaic is a collective cultural center located in Zurich formed years ago by Turkish and Kurdish former members of *Dev-Genç* and *Dev-Sol*. It consists of a dining area the size of a small restaurant with a corner kitchen. A larger adjacent room consists of a library of books in Turkish and Kurdish and an area for children to play in. Organizers hold meetings and invite speakers for discussions on various political and cultural topics. Every Friday night a different member of the community cooks dinner and the proceeds go to fund the overhead and upkeep. It is a meeting ground largely for former leftist activists from Turkey but also plays host to Swiss and other international visitors. One refugee informed me that numerous Master's theses had been written on the role of Mosaic in the acculturation process of refugees from Turkey in Zurich. I attended one such Friday night dinner there in the course of conducting my field work.

As a key meeting ground for members of the community, this communal space constitutes one of the many places in Switzerland where members of the leftist community congregate and socialize. Rather than a political organization, Mosaic functions rather as a social space where like-minded people meet to talk, eat, drink, and have their children play together. This is not the only place where this occurs, moreover. Two of the refugees (unknown to one another) that I interviewed own and manage restaurants located in community centers in Bern and in fact were the locations where I conducted the interviews. These centers are funded by the municipal government and are located in buildings where groups of people not only eat but also use other rooms for social and political events and advertise political meet-ups. Many refugees congregate in these centers and one of the restaurateurs I spoke with employs other refugees from Iraq and Cambodia. Though opening a restaurant in such a place represents an example of the limited employment opportunities that are available to immigrants without a certain educational background, they also function as spaces where individuals can forge a sense of community with both Swiss and foreigners alike. One restaurateur pointed out that such a set-up allows his son and daughter to come after school to study and at the same time allows for socializing with people from the neighborhood. Additionally, another refugee I spoke with works as a chef in the restaurant of a large collective arts center. He also lives in communal housing, something he has done since he arrived in Switzerland. Yet another exile works in a cooperative farming community. While these spaces constitute an important economic opportunity for the refugees to forge a satisfactory life, they also embody aspects of their social and political identity both in the types of people they attract and in the sense of community it fosters.

159

In fact, the refugees I spoke with emphasized the collective nature of these centers and the important role they play in their social lives. Other refugees likewise pointed to their activities in some *Halk Evi* (People's Houses) located throughout Switzerland. The fact that these centers are called *Halk Evi* instead of the German or French equivalent indicates that there is a link between these places and earlier experiences with People's Houses and Village Institutes in Turkey. In fact, the very collective nature of these places is something refugees pointed to as a positive and attractive aspect of them. While the restaurants are obviously open to anyone who wishes to come, they, Mosaic, and the People's Houses tend to be attended by members of the leftist community, Turks and Kurds alike.

4.4. Transnational Relations with the Homeland

Changing views of the homeland and hostland occur hand-in-hand with the renegotiation of political ideology and identity in the diaspora. Identifying the types of relationships refugees forge with the homeland help us to understand how this change occurs. Tangible relations with the homeland can be examined in several different ways. Travel done back and forth (for those who can), financial remittances, internet and telephone communication, family reunification, and transnational political and cultural organizing are all ways in which immigrants engage with the home country. In addition to the tangible relations there are also facets of living abroad that are emotional, involve issues of identity and memory, and transcend the nation-state container (Levitt and Glick-

160

Schiller, 2004). In terms of actual travel, the refugees in this research fall under two categories: those with Swiss passports who can (and often do) go back to Turkey and those who can not. Of those that do return on a regular basis, the process of visiting Turkey is often filled with trepidation in regards to relations with customs officials and the police. Likewise, many refugees send money home and most speak with family on a regular basis. Whether discussing tangible relations or the emotional work that goes on from a distance, though, the negotiation of identity on the transnational plane can be thought of as what one refugee called "difficult art". Regardless of whether or not refugees want to return, there is an ongoing relationship with the homeland maintained by the community, which comprises an essential component of diaspora theory. This section, therefore, looks at transnational relations with the homeland by examining how refugees view visiting or permanent return; their consumption of Turkish news and contacts with family and friends there; and the contention that exists between leftists in Turkey and leftists in the diaspora.

4.4.1. The Issue of Return

Of the 23 refugees in the study, 12 are naturalized Swiss citizens, with almost all of them coming in the early 1980s. Although other refugees without Swiss citizenship can travel, many do not return to Turkey because of ongoing trials, outstanding military service, or threats from the police. Even among those who do visit on a regular basis, many reported feelings of nervousness when dealing with police officials.

> When I went to Greece (I couldn't go to Turkey before I got my Swiss passport but the climates were similar) on holiday, I immediately looked for Swiss newspapers. When I touched down in New York City, the first thing we looked for

> was the *NZZ*[34]. You get used to life here. When I go to Turkey, I'm a sweating nervous wreck until I get out of customs. It's the same thing when I'm leaving too. Here I don't have that paranoid feeling. Still, I need to keep it in perspective, I'm a boy from Anatolia. It's hard to change that perspective totally. (Kerim, Sunni Turkish male, mid-fifties, a socialist party member, university graduate)

As a resident of Switzerland since 1981, Kerim has in many ways become like any other citizen of Zurich. The first newspaper he seeks when he goes abroad is the *NZZ*. Having received Swiss citizenship, he has visited Turkey many times since becoming a Swiss citizen, yet his trips are still marked by a certain anxiety that does not subside completely until he is back in Switzerland. Interestingly, Greece was mentioned by many refugees as a "substitute" destination of travel for Turkey as the climate, cuisine, and certain cultural practices are similar to the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts of Turkey. Greece was often a favored transit country for those making their way through Europe as well. For many who are unable to physically travel to Turkey, Greece has become a way of returning without actually returning.

Even for the refugees that do visit on a regular basis, they did not express the desire to return permanently. For many this was related to their acculturation process and changing class status in Switzerland. While Swiss cultural practices and discriminatory attitudes were echoed by many as problematic, there was nonetheless an acknowledgement of the "good life" that middle-class people were able to participate in within Switzerland and how that affected any notion of permanent return. As one refugee stated, "First, there's the problem of not integrating, then a problem of integrating. (Laughs.) Life is good here, even for a working class person. You get comfortable after a while." The following excerpt also reflects this.

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[34] *NZZ* refers to *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Zurich's main newspaper.

> I got amnesty for my conviction so I can go back to Turkey. Now I consider myself an economic refugee, though. There's a certain level of comfort in living here. We're not machines, you know. We eventually get used to life here. (Ali, Alevi Kurdish male, early forties, Marxist debate club member, university graduate)

Both refugees significantly used forms of the term "comfort" to describe life in Switzerland. The lack of economic opportunities in Turkey coupled with the very tangible concern of supporting oneself and one's family lead to Ali's self-described status as an "economic refugee". His statement, "We're not machines, you know" shows that while political beliefs and ideology may play a key role in refugee lives, getting by is the concern of all, as it is among many individuals in any society. While many refugees criticized Switzerland for its societal dependence on economic success, none harbored a desire to return to Turkey.

This was true both with Turks and Kurds. While the issue of return is more problematic for Ümit's case due to his involvement with a pro-Kurdish organization, his sentiment regarding the "problem of integrating" highlighted above was echoed by many other refugees who also rejected permanent return. Comfort was not the only aspect of Switzerland that the participants signaled as reasons not to return. Other more political concerns were raised also.

> Putting leftism aside, I would like for transparency and democracy to exist in Turkey and I always wanted this. People were wiped out and these acts were blamed on others: Bahriye Uçok, Muammer Aksoy, Uğur Mumcu. They blamed it on religious extremists or *PKK* terrorists, but it was really the state that was supported through Turkish-U.S. relations. These were state-sanctioned murders. Switzerland is a special place. It's transparent here, even though it's one of the most capitalist countries in the world. I would give up communism and Marxism for transparency. No one starves here. I want to live in a Turkey like that. A place where women are comfortable and can marry whomever they want, for example. (Mehmet, Alevi Turkish male, late forties, revolutionary federation member, some high school)

As earlier highlighted in Ümit's quotation, integration has the unintended consequence of changing one's living standard and therefore views on their homeland as a place worth visiting but not for living. Likewise, Mehmet's changes in ideological belief have occurred because of his experience as a refugee in Switzerland. Placing women's rights and governmental transparency alongside capitalism above communism and Marxism is a stark ideological declaration in and of itself. In other words, it is not Turkey as a whole that he rejects; it is rather the political environment that he finds problematic. Likewise, most refugees drew on the beauty of the landscape, positive aspects of Turkish culture, and their ties to the country. It is important to point out here that not all refugees view Turkey as politically worsening. In fact, most applauded growing cultural rights for Kurds and Alevis and a few expressed satisfaction at growing religious freedoms in the public sphere.

In addition to the reasons listed above, for many there are other issues affecting their view on return: e.g. residual anger over their treatment by the state, a refusal to do military service, and political opposition to the treatment of Kurds by the military. Some participants voiced the issue of return with a more transnational and novel understanding, as the following quotation illustrates:

> I thought a lot about moving back and always left the door open to it. But the conditions were never right. Social mobility is also much higher now. Even if we move, it wouldn't be in the classic sense of moving back for good. My wife is from here. My kids are in high school and university here. If I went there, I would have to work in jobs that I don't agree with ideologically. If I did do jobs I agreed with, the pay would be too low to get by. When I was reading about the latest general elections there, I got more and more interested in going back and getting involved in politics there instead. But here it's much different. People here are constantly producing something, a platform, a policy, etc. You're expected to do that. There's none of that in Turkey. What exists is a lot of empty chatter.

164

(Hüseyin, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, teachers' association and center-left party member, university graduate)

Hüseyin too echoes earlier quotations with his statement on social mobility, his Swiss spouse, and ideological principles as tying him to Switzerland, not to mention his critique of political work in Turkey. More interestingly, however, is his statement that even if he were to move, it would not be in the classic sense of moving back for good. It is quite apparent from his statement and others' that while permanent return is not desired on their part, there is an acknowledgement of the transnational nature of their existence. It is increasingly difficult to label Turkey as "homeland" (a designation that may be problematic for Kurds) and Switzerland as just "hostland". In many ways the terms can describe both Turkey and Switzerland. As one refugee pointed out, "I have been living longer in Switzerland now than I did in Turkey." For many Switzerland has in many ways become home, whether or not that process has been by choice.

> I'm definitely not returning for good. Is it from being stubborn, I don't know. I don't want to return to a place I fled from. I couldn't live there. There's no hope for change. *(Are you angry?) Yes*. Well, I shouldn't exaggerate but yes I am. I had friends who had to flee. People who killed themselves here. My cousins living there, who are educated- university-educated and leftists, they don't know the history of this period. I couldn't go there for 16 years. Now I go once a year, once every two years. (Mustafa, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some graduate school)

> I used to keep up more with Turkish news. I used to read the daily newspapers. And I kept up with news by talking to friends in Germany. Now I don't so much. At the beginning, yes. But now with all the tribal nationalism- I'm not interested … And I have virtually no interest in terms of moving back. When it comes to visiting, I'm not that interested to be honest. I've decided to leave my bones here in Switzerland … Back in the old days, I used to spend weekends at the train station with others. The poet Yahya Kemal once asked, "What do you love about Ankara?" and to that I can say, "The train station, because it goes to Istanbul." Well, here it's the same thing. It's the place that brings me closest to our homeland. (Arif, Alevi Turkish male, late forties, unaffiliated, some university)

Both Mustafa and Arif's accounts reflect the anger felt towards their treatment in Turkey and a remaining consciousness of the sharp break that occurred in the process of leaving. Earlier in his interview, Arif had drawn on the importance of the local soil to his family and the area he is from in southeastern Turkey. In addition, the process of losing his Turkish citizenship twice was a source of deep trauma. Although his memories are a mix of good and bad, returning is a process that is too painful to undertake. At the same time, his practice of hanging out and drinking a coffee with friends in the train station of his Swiss city of residence reflects the ongoing process of remembering the homeland, however contentious those memories may be. As the first person in his family to leave his region, even the act of "leaving his bones" in Switzerland was a highly symbolic choice he made as a statement on his treatment in Turkey. While Arif's understanding of homeland is quite localized, other accounts also illustrate a wider territorial understanding of homeland.

> While I'm not a nationalist I did change a bit in Switzerland. I was surprised by the level of racism here and I didn't expect it before I came. I have always been an internationalist. I expected the same of here but I didn't find that. Until they get to know me as Ali, I'm a foreigner first and foremost. Living here I came to appreciate my geography. *(I notice you say "geography" instead of "country". Why?)* Yes, for me this includes all the areas the Ottomans once were, from the gates of Vienna to Persia. I would feel comfortable in all those lands. I'm still a Trotskyist, though, still a socialist. (Ali, Alevi Kurdish male, early forties, Marxist debate club member, university graduate)

Ali, who came in 1995, mentioned that he often visited Turkey to get away from the racism he experienced in Switzerland. Interestingly, he quite significantly drew closer to a particular novel re-imagining of his homeland as being a wider geographical space that comprises former Ottoman areas. On the one hand there is a very conscious recognition of homeland discrimination within a national context. On the other, his "geography" is not one that draws on national borders as defining the parameters of his identity.

Not surprisingly, for those who can not return, imaginings of homeland often diverge in certain ways from those who can.

> I really felt the handicap of not speaking the language. I started to feel as though language is a type of homeland. You don't feel that in Turkey, in your native land. You can't talk with the same relish as you do with friends from Turkey. You miss your close friends. There's loneliness. The feeling of being at home, I don't feel it here. With time those feelings starts to fade away but I've never felt that one day I would belong here. For example, one day we saw an old friend that we hadn't seen since Turkey and I was *so* happy because he belonged to *our story* from before here! Istanbul of course plays an important role in this. Walking around the city, sharing experiences with people, that is different. (İsmet, Sunni Turkish male, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

Although İsmet's wife is Turkish and shares a similar experience of incarceration, part of re-imagining the homeland for him occurs through language itself and the practice of chatting with friends. Seeing someone he knows from Turkey serves to further tie him to the homeland and perhaps also reinforces memories of his identity as it existed long before he moved to Switzerland. Even İsmet, however, rejects the idea of moving back for good. Having had a child with his wife, his perspective has changed to include the child's interests in having an education he deems better in Switzerland. Regardless of the rejection of permanent return, refugees still find ways to engage transnationally with the homeland. Consumption of news constitutes one such avenue.

4.4.2. Consumption of Turkish News

Quite significantly, while most refugees reject the notion of return, they remain interested in Turkish news. In fact, the vast majority of refugees keep up with Turkish news on a regular basis, with very few no longer reading Turkish newspapers or watching television news. Of those participants who no longer check in on news, they

167

did keep up with news until relatively recently. Many who do read newspapers on a regular basis counted the online versions of publications such as *Yeni Şafak*, *Zaman*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Radikal*, and *Taraf* as sites they regularly visit. These newspapers range from conservative to liberal, respectively, and that variety of ideological viewpoints was an expressed desire they stated. Several participants also noted their conscious attempt to read more religiously inclined newspapers since that reflected the party in power and the contemporary political discourse in Turkey. A few refugees also counted socialist magazines and newspapers among their reading list, including *Birikim*, *Bir Gün*, *Ses Online*, *Sosyalist Işçi*, *bianet*, and *Özgür Gündem*. This is in addition to the newspapers like *Hürriyet Avrupa* printed in Turkish and geared towards the immigrant community as a whole. The following excerpts highlight these practices.

> For twenty years I watched Turkish TV and read Turkish newspapers. I was so close that I could feel Turkey's breath in my ear. For example, my kids speak perfectly good Turkish with me even though they never went to a Turkish school. (Zerrin, Alevi Turkish female, mid-forties, participant in a communist party, some high school)

> Yes, I follow events. I read our newspaper here, *Politika*. I read everything that I can. We Kurds are interested in what happens in Turkey, even when the prime minister raises his finger. (Ümit, Alevi Kurdish male, mid-forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later Kurdish nationalist movement member, elementary school graduate)

The notion of "feel(ing) Turkey's breath in my ear" and all that entails reflects how refugees formerly active in Turkish politics have engaged in a newer form of transnational activity. For those interested in Kurdish issues as well, the current political discourse in Turkey focusing on increased dialogue with Kurds has informed their interest in following the news. This sphere of engagement through news has been further strengthened through technologies such as the Internet and satellite TV. However, all refugees, even more recent arrivals, noted that they also read Swiss newspapers on a

regular basis and emphasized the importance of doing so. This is relevant because it shows that refugees are not merely involved in the current affairs of their homeland. It reflects a general interest in staying informed on topics of interest in both places. In fact, regardless of the levels of formal schooling, all the participants noted their interest in reading newspapers and books in general. This higher-than-average emphasis on intellectual pursuits may also play a role in their interest in homeland, hostland, and world events.

While on the one hand most participants refused to see return as possible and more importantly, did not express a desire to return, they continue to stay engaged with the homeland through the hearty consumption of news. I argue here that this seemingly conflicting process of following political events and news while harboring little nostalgia for return is directly related to some key aspects of refugee lives. First, the deep rupture of the social movement and the subsequent ill will it created a certain critical disposition of the refugees towards Turkey. Second, the amount of time that has passed has led to a socialization process that makes permanent return seem inconceivable. Finally and particularly relevant to this thesis, the renegotiation of identity on the transnational place and technological advances have allowed refugees to remain in the hostland while engaging with the homeland on a plane that does not necessitate return. In some ways, for many, being able to visit strengthens the desire to not move back precisely because refugees can still live aspects of Turkey while retaining aspects of Switzerland they desire. Staying engaged with homeland news is one way they accomplish this. Technology is another, as the following quotation highlights.

I visit often. Turkey grew very close to us. Flights used to cost 800 Francs.

169

> Telephone calls cost 2.5 lira per minute. Now it's so much closer. There are more available and cheaper flights. Skype, sms … Even people that I thought I would never talk to I see on Skype by chance. We can live Turkey without stepping foot there. (Murat, Sunni Turkish male, early fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some PhD work)

This account falls into the "transnational global network" that Tambiah (2000) discussed in relation to transnationalism. Rather than a lateral network that builds upon relations between host and home countries, this type of networking allows one to "live Turkey without stepping foot there" and constitutes a type of relation beyond national borders. In this sense, Murat's sentiment is similar to Hüseyin's conceptualization of moving to Turkey in a manner different from permanent return.

Though research has shown that Turks, Kurds, and Alevis are often actively involved in forging transnational political ties with Turkey (Argun, 2002; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2001; Sökefeld, 2006; Van Bruinessen, 1998), I have found that the participants in this research showed lower rates of active participation in homeland politics. A few mentioned tentative relations with leftist political parties in Turkey, one unionist refugee talked about conducting meetings with unions in Turkey, and one Kurdish refugee mentioned organizing on behalf of Kurdish rights in Turkey. On the whole however, active involvement in Turkish politics did not seem to greatly color the nature transnational relations with the homeland. This seems to indicate that while refugees are engaging in a form of cultural transnational interaction through travel and new technologies and consumption of news, their notions of transnational political activism have transformed into more localized understandings. In fact, when it comes to political activism, there is a pronounced consciousness of being away from the homeland and being involved in issues related to the hostland.

170

In terms of diaspora theory, the following certainly characterize the Turks and Kurds of this research: dispersal to two or more countries, the continued relationship with the homeland, and alienation from homeland. The "idealization of return to homeland" (Safran, 1991: 191) is difficult to ascribe to this community, partly because of the transformations in identity and circumstance that were detailed above. As Clifford (1994) points out, moreover, a shared history of repression and dispersal can be as significant in forging diasporic identity as and type of imagining of return or even origin. While the refugees share certain positive and negative views of Turkey, none engaged in a process of actively re-imagining return. This could partly be because many can and do visit the country and therefore are faced with the contemporary dynamics of Turkish society. However, that does not explain the lack of desire to move back on the part of refugees who currently can not visit. I argue here that in addition to the rupture of the social movement in Turkey by harsh state repression and the subsequent acculturation and resettlement process in Switzerland, changing economic and class-based concerns, the changing nature of political ideology, and new forms of activist identity have also contributed to this decreased desire to return. Because political activism has defined the notions of self for these participants throughout their youth and adulthood, it is important to examine how changes in identity and ideology have occurred in exile.

4.5. Changes in Political Ideology and New Forms of Identity

4.5.1. Political Socialization in the Diaspora

While most refugees rejected being labeled as "social democrats", perhaps because of the negative connotations it engenders in Turkey among leftists, many acknowledged that much of the change they wanted to see in Turkey was the type of platform that European social democrats often pushed for.

> In Turkey at that time the issues that socialists dealt with were the social-democratic issues of Western Europe outside of revolution. But when we came here, the things we expected from Turkey were those issues. Human rights, social rights, democratization, etc. All of a sudden we found ourselves amongst those beliefs. This has to do with how we were affected, socialized here and how we wanted to see Turkey change … Even our views towards our friends have changed, the ones still involved in politics. They are not as liberal, not as open-minded, they are more hypocritical. Sometimes I help out at foundations in Turkey, *Ardahan'lılar*[35]. The issue of equal opportunity arises and they accuse me of giving up the socialist ideals. There are women who can't get their breast exams and have cancer right under their noses. They don't deal with daily problems and get mad that I isolate them from the Revolution. (Murat, Sunni Turkish male, early fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some PhD work)

Murat's account was echoed by other former activists who continue to be active in political and social issues but view their time in Switzerland as playing a key role in shifting their viewpoints. The increasing focus on issues of democracy, minority rights, freedom, and the environment over notions of revolution, socialism, and communism arose again and again. While most participants still drew on their socialist identity and continued belief in social justice and equality as constant throughout their activist lives, these other shifts also played a key role in what they saw as a difference between themselves and leftists in Turkey. The "outside of revolution" aspect that Murat touches upon is important as well. Without a doubt, the Left in Turkey in the 1970s was more

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[35] This is an organization that works with people from Ardahan and its region.

172

radicalized than social democratic politics in Western Europe, and migrating to Europe served to socialize many people into more establishment-friendly activism. This has caused contention between Turkish leftists in the diaspora and those who remained in Turkey, as Murat's account shows. Frustration with leftists in Turkey arose often from refugees who felt as though practicality was forsaken for political purity. The veracity of the critiques of leftists living in Turkey can be questioned but what is relevant is how the refugees share a critical perspective on leftists in the homeland.

For politically active leftists who had previously been militants as Murat had been, Switzerland served a role in promoting peaceful understandings of political change, as the following account also highlights.

> No, I'm not really involved in Turkish politics. Not so much with organizations, at least. I try to help out with events, projects, individuals, though … My thoughts have changed. We went from a pro-gun mentality to a more peaceful movement. In that magazine *Alttakiler*, we pushed peace. I *developed* myself a lot. That was 1987. I'm not a social democrat, though. We're more humanist, freedom-oriented, tolerant of religion, environmentally-conscious, and rights-oriented. We thought a lot, argued a lot. Now it's easy to say no to violence. But back then it was hard. The idea of revolution is violent. The political culture here in Switzerland affected me a lot. GSOA[36] really affected us. I knew their lawyer and we would see each other. So we started to support them and follow their line. We became anti-militarist and pro-freedom of conscience … I'm just not in the same place as friends back home. Here we developed certain sensitivities towards women, environment, racism, gays, etc. We thought about and debated these things. We worked through it. There are people in Turkey like that, sure, but it tends to be a different perspective from ours. (Cem, Alevi Turkish and Kurdish male, mid-fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

It is important to point out that not all political refugees were involved in the Turkish leftist movement as militants but for a great many activists revolution and the violence

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[36] *Gruppe für eine Schweiz ohne Armee* (Group for a Switzerland without an Army) is an anti-militarist, pro-peace organization that has promoted several citizens' initiatives in favor of abolishing not only the army but also the sale of arms to other countries.

173

that went with it were an important part of the discourse. For Cem as for many others, the post-1968 leftist discourse, with its emphasis on rights, religious freedom, and the environment, filled the space left by the sharp break with the leftist movement and served to re-channel a continued concern with social justice. Many refugees pointed to their membership in the Green Party as a medium through which they channeled their activism. Two of the refugees I spoke with were actual Green Party representatives in both city and federal governments while others either volunteered or attended rallies organized by the Party. Both Murat and Cem, however, were early arrivals to Switzerland and both were university-educated. Their experience was characterized by a long process of reflection and a focus on developing themselves into new political animals. Their jobs, furthermore, included working with these issues directly.

Even refugees who view themselves as having undergone less ideological transformation than Murat or Cem mentioned a realization that the "times" had changed.

> The movement doesn't change. Socialist International changed and Tony Cliff stated that the anti-globalization movement was what would determine the Socialist International. He stated that parties in countries weren't important; instead it's the global movement. He formed an organization to reduce debts of third world countries to IMF. That's how the movement has been in the past ten years … Also in Turkey- the cultural center in Beyoğlu, *Kara Kedi*, is an example of an organization like that ... Some people call us soft because we also include the rights of transsexuals. It's clear though that this capitalist system can not be sustained. Everyone is against something and it's more open because not everyone is a Communist, they don't necessarily know Stalin or Trotsky but they know all is not well. (Cahit, Sunni Turkish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist party member, elementary school graduate)

The transnational anti-globalization movement has replaced older, more nationally-based forms of socialist protest according to Cahit and represents a manifestation of the "transnational global network" (Tambiah, 2000) within the political activism sphere.

174

While the priorities have changed, the energy in the form of the movement remains within such a perspective. Here again the issue of rights arises. For Cahit, the transnational nature of the anti-globalization movement has also provided an avenue for activism that a refugee exiled from his homeland can pursue. In other words, political exiles are finding novel ways in which to stay politically engaged within new forms of social movements and leftist politics. This does not mean, however, that the process of political socialization was unproblematic for all refugees, particularly those that came to an environment increasingly hostile towards foreigners. Heightened anti-refugee sentiment felt by many of the refugees who came in the 1990s often manifested itself in their decreasing interest in political activism as a whole. Many refugees who spent time in jail also expressed a lowered interest in politics. Though not addressed directly in the interview, the demoralizing aspect of prison time undoubtedly played a role in this.

> No, I'm not involved in Turkish or Swiss politics at all. I follow the news here, but not religiously. I do follow the Swiss elections because those are issues that affect all of us … My interest went down immensely but that happened while I was in jail. I carry a certain superficial interest but that's about it … I prefer to be in my turtle shell to be honest. (Leyla, Sunni Turkish woman, early forties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, university graduate)

Having become immediately disillusioned with her organization upon entering jail for what would turn out to be a long stay, Leyla's outright rejection of politics can be traced back to her experiences in Turkey. Her self-described fiercely protective perspective towards her husband and child directs any and all the choices she makes in the hostland. Just as many refugees have rejected political activism for art, writing, or filmmaking, Leyla has embraced her family as a top priority. Such choices feed into the changing understanding of identity. Her use of the term "turtle shell" is interesting. While her actions may constitute what many would consider a "normal" life, i.e. working, taking

175

care of her family, etc., for a former activist as herself it represents an act of withdrawing. This self-assessment further highlights how the framing of oneself as an activist continues even when there is a rejection of that very identity.

4.5.2. Changing Notions of Identity

The interview process directly probed the ways in which the participants view themselves in terms of their identity. After their arrival in Switzerland, many refugees began to feel as though the struggles they faced were similar to the struggles faced by all immigrants. Although the contention between refugees and immigrants from Turkey was discussed in a previous section, the interviews also revealed that many politically active individuals through time began to frame both their activism and their own identity in terms of an immigrant one.

> I feel a commonality with anyone who has come here as an immigrant, whether leftists or rightists. We share similar concerns. This was different twenty years ago. Now you are part of the system so it's a response. For example, I'm the head of an umbrella organization for all immigration-related groups. This is a non-ideological group. (Cemile, Sunni Turkish female, mid-forties, active in school associations, university graduate)

Not only does Cemile feel a commonality with other immigrants regardless of national background, but she channels her concern for social and political issues through the medium of a group that advocates for immigrant rights. She also recognizes the changes that have occurred through time in relation to her identity. In addition to taking advantage of the particular opportunity structures available for such work, she is able to continue the process of social justice that she and other refugees engaged in while active in Turkey. At this point, it is helpful to revisit the concept of identity as arising from the relationship between "discursive practices" and societal structures (Polletta and Jasper,

176

2001: 285). Refugees like Cemile are able to draw on an activist past, educational background, and contemporary societal structures to remain engaged in ways that shape their identity. This is also true for those who work in or are involved with immigrant rights organizations, the Green Party, the anti-globalization movement, and various types of cooperatives.

The literature on exiles suggest that while the process is marked both by disorientation and openness to new possibilities, the degree to which it occurs varies for different groups and individuals (Rollemberg, 2007). While many participants identified as immigrants (particularly those active in immigrant political circles), some continue to identify as refugees or exiles and draw on the process of banishment as continuing to define aspects of their identity.

> I absolutely feel like a refugee and an exile. What made Nazım[37] Nazım was being an exile. Right at this very second, I feel like an exile. We were kicked out. We didn't want to leave. And now they see what happens, what has become of the country … I don't like politics anymore- I hate it. Unions, parties- they're terrible. Leftists became rightists. Islamists are the liberal ones now! I don't like it. I find the whole discourse very fake and disingenuous. (Zerrin, Alevi Turkish female, mid-forties, participant in a communist party, some high school)

For Zerrin, claiming her status as an exile is a way for her to voice her disappointment both at the way in which she was treated and at the trajectory of events in the homeland. While rejecting the contemporary political discourse she also establishes a link between contemporary political developments in Turkey and the forced migration of a population of politically engaged people. Among these refugees, memory and the emotions associated with the exile experience function as a type of anchor to their changing identity through time. When speaking with Zerrin, there were times in the interview

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☐ This is in reference to Nazım Hikmet, a leftist poet and perhaps the most well-known Turkish exile.

177

where she would gently grab my arm and ask that I be sure to write what she was saying regarding her experience, as did others as well. There was a heightened emphasis on remembering and recording and on an emotional level a palpable sadness at the unnecessary nature of the exile. Another participant similarly stated, "Thirty years ago, we were calling for something like *TRT6*[38]! We weren't radicals. We were exiled. Was it really worth it really to put us all through such pain?"

As highlighted in earlier sections, many interviews revealed a growing concern with personal development and growth. As the following excerpt shows, however, this does not necessarily mean that there has been a sharp change in basic political values, but rather that the methods and interests have shifted.

> I don't put politics within identity. But personally, as much as possible I try to be active in everything according to my political and personal beliefs, but not in an organizational way. It's more individual and personal. I'm into personal development. I give seminars on Alevi issues, more *Bektashi* and Sufism actually. It was more about collective identity back then but now it's just me. (Aziz Dede, Alevi Turkish male, mid-fifties, Marxist-Leninist movement member, some university)

Through this excerpt it is possible to see a common thread heard throughout participant responses. For many political ideals and personal ideals are often one and the same though a dogmatic or organizational understanding of politics is not a key part of their identity. This quotation echoes the anti-organizational perspective highlighted earlier on in the chapter. Aziz Dede was unique in highlighting an increase in religious belief, though many did also focus on individual development while still retaining a certain socialist and collective consciousness.

 Started in 2009, *TRT6* is the first Kurdish-language channel produced and broadcasted in Turkey. It should be noted, however, that it is state-run and tightly controlled.

I got offers to work for Swiss organizations. I looked to run for political office. I began to think, "Why am I always on the side of the oppressed?" I worked with the *PDA*, the Communist Party here in Switzerland. I went to protests. "Why? Why?" I'd ask myself. I was also involved in Planet 13 also and the Immigrants' Party. But I didn't want to deal only with immigrant "othering". I got involved in the women's arm of the Socialist Party. I got support but became sick of it after a while. Doing politics here is drudgery. Toiling and slaving. (laughs) Nothing changes. I'm quite disillusioned and ready to quit politics and develop myself in new and different ways … It has greatly decreased but how. Being active- it's definitely gone down. I have to deal with myself first before changing the world. My interest is still great but these days I want to deal with art and culture before Swiss and Turkish politics. (Yıldız, Alevi Kurdish female, late thirties, unaffiliated, university graduate)

The disillusionment with politics and viewing the work associated with it as drudgery reflects this particular individual's journey through various facets of leftist activism in Switzerland, from immigrant issues to women's issues to a variety of political parties. For Yıldız, part of this new emphasis on art and culture involves a project to shoot a memoir film detailing her life experiences alongside the experiences of one of the pioneers of the Swiss feminist movement. She also noted later in her interview that because she was born as a woman, a Kurd, an Alevi, and disabled, she never felt the opportunity to choose how to define herself. The process she engages in now is an attempt to promote her own agency in defining who she is.

For others a more localized understanding of activism and identity developed through time. Ayşe is active in the local community board of her neighborhood in Geneva. Her concern is with the daily, "aesthetic aspects" of life which involves local involvement. While walking with her through her neighborhood, I mentioned how multicultural and interesting it was. On that point she challenged me to look deeper at the African immigrant men hanging out on the sidewalk and question why they were there, the type of travel they undertook to arrive in Switzerland, and the type of labor they were

179

involved in. Likewise, she critiqued the presence of trendy restaurants in the area as catering to only a certain class of people. She made clear that it was necessary to spend time looking deeper into what surrounds us in our immediate area. Such sentiments constitute a highly localized understanding of identity and activism but also issues of gentrification, changing racial demographics, and other issues relevant to neighborhood politics.

Another more localized understanding of belonging arose when talking about city culture, Zurich and Bern in particular. In the words of one refugee, "I'm from Zurich. I also have an identity as an immigrant. At the same time the Turkish side is still definitely there. My mom once said that I was Swiss before I even came here, though. I was always different." This statement represents a multi-faceted understanding of identity as being composed of an urban and immigrant identity while also tracing his critical disposition back to his time in Turkey. Yet another exile also drew upon Zurich when referring to himself as a "Zurich Turk". For them, their experiences as refugees, then residents, and finally citizens within the context of the city played a key role in directing the trajectories of their lives. These forms of local patriotism that arose during the interviews even reflected some of the very longstanding rivalries between Swiss cities.

> I feel Swiss- maybe they don't see me that way. Maybe I'm exaggerating but I'm happy. Nothing is perfect but I wouldn't go back for good, only for holiday. I have a certain type of local patriotism- I get upset when Zurich and Bern have a fight over something. I defend Bern. I grew up near a river so perhaps that's why I like Bern, with the Aare River. I don't like lakes- they are so still. I prefer the motion of the river. (Yavuz, Alevi Kurdish male, late forties, Marxist-Leninist movement and later leftist Kurdish movement member, high school graduate)

> I love living here though. When I leave Zurich I miss it. I know every street here. I

> know people. It's my village. I start to feel respect for Zurich even when I go to Basel. You start to internalize the city. (Can, Alevi Kurdish male, early forties, unaffiliated, elementary school graduate)

Yavuz's account not only draws on a localized understanding of citizenship based on city membership but also reveals a territorial and geographical concern by tying the river of Bern to the river of the village he grew up in. His identity is not only based on an urban dimension, but also on a transnational understanding of nature. Though he was in the process of gaining Swiss citizenship, Yavuz pointedly stated that he felt Swiss even if the Swiss did not see him that way. His very localized understanding of belonging highlights again the importance many refugees placed on identifying with the country they live in; interestingly though, the vast majority of refugees did not report feeling Swiss. Similarly, Can's intricate knowledge of Zurich's streets also constitutes a tie between him and the city. The "internalization" of the city as his "village" indicates how intimate understandings of city life can be in the identity formation process of someone whose origins stretch far away.

4.6. Conclusion

Memories of hostland and past activism have undoubtedly played an important role in the political socialization process of this group of refugees in Switzerland. While these participants continue to engage transnationally with events in Turkey and retain their core political values, in terms of political activism they are largely focused on enacting change within the hostland context of immigrant rights, environmentalism, cultural self-expression, and personal development. This is not an isolated finding. Research on

political activists in other contexts also shows that while people may grow distant from organizational politics and the political concerns of the 1968 generation, core political values and beliefs do not shift greatly (Braungart and Braungart, 1990; Teske, 1997). I argue in fact that while the process of identity formation is dynamic and ever-changing, it is also the notion of what is means to be a leftist that has shifted rather than basic worldview. All the refugees in this research still considered themselves leftist or socialist yet all expressed change through time in relation to their political identity.

I argue, therefore, that there is something that can be called a collective leftist identity based on diasporic experience for a number of reasons. First, it is true that many leftist refugees from Turkey were dispersed to multiple locations. This forced migration was also characterized by a degree of alienation from Turkey though ongoing relations with the homeland continued through time (Safran, 19991). Second, a large number of these refugees have engaged in "selective accommodation" (Clifford, 1994: 308) by incorporating aspects of hostland culture to their understandings of self (i.e. socializing with other Turkish and Kurdish refugees, attending *halk evi* and community centers) while establishing themselves as different through their status as immigrant or exile. In addition, through time the "teleology of return" to the homeland (Tambiah 2000, 172) that was present in the first couple of years of many exiles' experience in Switzerland has been replaced with a critical disposition towards the notion of return and towards political activism in the homeland. Finally, what distinguishes this group from other diasporic communities is the exilic nature of their experience. As exiled individuals, both their experience with Turkish state repression and the Swiss refugee resettlement system and shifting levels of political activism through time provide them with an

experience of forced migration different in nature from other forced migrants. This has

implications for further study and will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the following features of the refugee community studied in this thesis represent aspects of a leftist diasporic identity: memories of and criticism of past activism, shared contentious relations with the homeland and hostland states, and similar changes in identity and activism through time. Tensions over issues of gender, ethnicity, time of arrival in hostland, and socio-economic class remain within this group of individuals. Nonetheless, the shared characteristics stated above in many ways incorporate these tensions into the collective identity of a leftist diaspora. This concluding chapter will present a summary of the chapters that support these findings, ways of improving upon this research, and several areas of further research.

The fieldwork chapters have highlighted several important findings that support the possibility of a valid analytical category of leftist diasporic identity. First, an analysis of the legal process indicates that as activists coming largely from leftist or minority backgrounds, all participants had contentious relations with the Turkish state and were victims of state repression, though interviewee accounts support the notion that the Turkish state was institutionally harsher towards Kurds. The refugees' experience with the Swiss state varies in more categorical ways. The interviews strongly suggest that time of arrival played a large role in the experience with Swiss state institutions, with refugees coming in the 1990s experiencing a resettlement system more focused on controlling refugee lives. Increasing global migration patterns and Swiss economic circumstances appear to have played a key role in this increasingly controlling

resettlement system. For those refugees who came later, therefore, much of their changing notions of identity have been colored by this experience with the Swiss state. Nonetheless, the contentious relationship between the refugees and the homeland state has continued through time and has affected their collective identity in a manner similar to other exiled groups.

The findings of the fourth chapter have illustrated that the notion of what it is to be a leftist has shifted for nearly all the refugees. This is reflected in their social circle, relations with the homeland, and changes in political ideology and identity. All refugees continued to view themselves as leftists or socialist while nearly all experienced serious changes in their levels or types of activism. This chapter also found that refugees do engage transnationally in key ways: First, through avenues such as travel (when possible) and following news and developments in the homeland; and second, in a manner more focused on hostland incorporation of aspects of homeland leftist culture such as the Swiss *halk evi* institutions, centers like Mosaic, and socializing with other Turks and Kurds. I have argued that because of the possibility of "living Turkey" in Switzerland, exiled individuals are able to dismiss notions of permanent return and retain a critical disposition towards the homeland. In a similar way, though their political identity and activism have shifted into various spheres of interest, they share the very aspect of transformation from homeland-based to more localized understandings. All emphasized the importance of engaging with local issues in the hostland. In this sense, their perspective on hostland activism rather than homeland activism constitutes a more definitive aspect of their collective identity. This lies in contrast to other diasporic groups, whose homeland-based activism defines a large part of their collective identity.

185

As is apparent in both chapters, it is important to note the contention and difference within this group of people. Issues of gender, class, ethnicity, and time of arrival in the hostland arose during the course of the interviews. For many women their frustration with patriarchal practices of organizational politics in the homeland and sometimes in the hostland as well led to more feminist understandings of politics and activism. Likewise, for many refugees who arrived later in Switzerland, long prison terms in Turkey have affected their views towards others in the refugee community and organizational politics as well. Though many refugees shared experiences of discrimination regardless of educational background, university-educated refugees tended to be employed in more high-status, high-paying jobs in contrast to many who spent time in jail from a young age or were unable to continue their studies in Turkey or Switzerland. Similarly, those with Swiss citizenship are allowed much more access to the political system and the possibility to travel back to Turkey.

Perhaps most starkly, very clear points of tension appeared between Turkish and Kurdish refugees. Many Turkish refugees openly voiced disapproval of Kurdish nationalism and still others stated in more cloaked terms their uneasiness with Kurdish circles. The Kurds in this study represented a range of views on Kurdish nationalism, with some voicing a stronger Kurdish ethnic identity than leftist one and others stating the opposite. Even among those who professed ethnic nationalist views, most had grown distant from organizational circles through time. While in many ways the Kurdish transnational sphere in Europe is more dynamic and developed than the Turkish leftist

186

one, both Turks and Kurds in this study share both a critical disposition towards organizational and homeland politics and core leftist beliefs.

These aforementioned findings indicate that leftist ideology and belief have contributed to the construction of collective identity among the exiled community of Turks and Kurds in Switzerland. This collective leftist identity does not replace any form of ethnic, gender, or class-based identity but instead integrates it with all its tensions. In addition, this shared identity is arguably diasporic in nature and differs from other migrant groups from Turkey living in Switzerland. To take it a step further, many refugees in this study may very well share aspects of their collective identity with other exiled political activists from different national backgrounds. Further research into the possible analytic category of "diasporic leftist identity" could potentially qualify the findings of this thesis.

In fact, limitations of time and research scope undoubtedly affected the research undertaken in this thesis. It would be possible to strengthen this research by implementing a number of qualifications or additions. First, with more time it would be possible to speak with a broader range of refugees. In particular, it would allow for an equalization of the number of Turks and Kurds and women and men in addition to speaking with more individuals. In so doing, the central research question could be further qualified with sound empirical findings to support it. This could be accomplished by continuing the snowball sampling approach already started with this group of refugees and extending further into the refugee network. In fact, examining the network

187

itself could also be illuminating in understanding how issues such as gender, class and ethnic background, and time of arrival in hostland affect relations within the community.

Second, this research would also benefit from deeper ethnographic study. Though I was able to view many refugee workplaces, homes, and community centers, only a cursory view of those settings makes it difficult to do justice to the role that such spaces play in the everyday lives of the refugees. In terms of quotidian practices, examining more deeply the economic and familial lives of this community would help to better understand how their political activism and beliefs are integrated into and have shifted as a result of the more day-to-day concerns with getting by. Because this thesis is concerned primarily with identity and ideology, it is possible to overstate the role such issues play in the daily lives of these refugees. Ethnographic study would therefore enrich our understanding of how political belief is implemented in everyday life. In addition, a more nuanced mapping of the organizations many of these refugees were originally involved in while politically active in Turkey could also help to shed light on the ideological changes that have occurred through time in both homeland and hostland.

Third, while I have argued throughout this thesis that contention is part of any social movement or diasporic group, such a finding necessarily warrants further research. Though this group of refugees clearly shares certain collective experiences, perspectives, and even transformations, it is possible to qualify these similarities with a deeper investigation of the differences. In other words, the following question could be posed: At what point do divergences in identity or ideology problematize concluding the

188

existence of collective identity? Such an inquiry would benefit as well from a richer ethnographic study of the dynamics of this community.

During the course of research, it became apparent that there were gaps in the literature on topics related to the thesis. The process of researching demographic information for this thesis revealed that data on the numbers of political refugees from Turkey living in European countries was difficult to obtain. This was largely due to the way in which countries keep records of their refugee population. It is of course possible to make estimates based on the number of registered asylum-seekers and numbers of residents with refugee status, but they remain as estimates. Future researchers would benefit from demographic studies looking at the numbers of political refugees from Turkey living in Europe. Likewise, more in-depth research into the composition of these refugees by ethnic background, gender, age, and regions of origin in Turkey would also provide invaluable information. Similar research could also be conducted in Turkey in order to ascertain the numbers of people who left certain regions; the effects this had on their family, community, and movement; and the type of relations maintained from the perspective of the homeland.

There are additional areas where research is scarce. A comparative study, for example, on leftist activists who fled abroad and those who remained in Turkey would be useful in conceptualizing better the role political socialization in the hostland has played in regards to changes in political belief and activism. Likewise, looking at refugees who did return to Turkey from countries like Switzerland in comparison to those who remained would also be helpful. A more ambitious project would be a broader

189

comparative study of leftists who fled Turkey and leftists who fled repressive regimes in Chile, Brazil, or Argentina. Such research would also shed further light on the possibility of a shared diasporic or exilic identity based on political ideology. One definition of diaspora holds that the collective views on homeland and hostland must extend over more than one generation (Butler, 2001: 192). A study of refugee children (and perhaps their children) could also examine whether or not activist disposition is passed along to children or whether hostland socialization plays a more important role. Lastly, in this research all the Kurdish refugees I spoke with were also Alevi. A deeper study of the role of Alevi identity within both Turkish and Kurdish leftist circles both within Turkey and Europe would certainly be enlightening for those interested in studying social movements and diaspora.

Regardless of future research directions, it is clear that the political activists that fled to various parts of Europe form a distinct community of exiles. They share certain characteristics and even similar sources of contention that I argue warrant their inclusion into a type of sociological category of diaspora (Anthias, 1998: 565) that can be studied further. This group of individuals deserves further research, not only for the theoretical implications and potential contributions to scholarship, but also because of the importance of including previously marginalized voices within the contemporary discourse.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introductory: (write assigned name, job, place of origin, age, educational background)

1. Why did you become politically active?

2. Which parties or political movements did you belong to in Turkey?

3. Under what circumstances and when did you arrive in Switzerland?

4. How would you define your political beliefs?

Time in Switzerland

5. How did you find your first job/first house?

6. What do you do for a living in Switzerland? Does it vary greatly from your profession in Turkey?

7. Have your political views changed since your time in Turkey until now? If so, how? Why do you think they have changed?

8. Did you leave family behind in Turkey? Have you been a part of family reunification?

Views on Turkey

9. What types of changes did you want to see when you were politically active in Turkey?

10. How did you feel about leaving Turkey? Were you happy, anxious, sad, guilty, etc.? Do you still feel that way?

11. How much do you keep up with events in Turkey? Do you read newspapers, magazines, and websites? Do you talk often with friends or family there?

12. Is there a desire on your part to return semi-permanently or permanently?

13. Do you see Turkey differently now that you are here compared to when you were living there?

14. If you keep up with your former party/political movement, how has it changed?

Ethnic Identity

15. Who is part of your social community here? Is its make-up different from whom you socialized with in Turkey?

16. How much do you have in common, whether socially or politically, with other political refugees from Turkey (or other countries) across generations, ethnic groups, political ideology, etc.?

17. Are there any communities/groups of people with whom you feel uncomfortable?

Legal Status

18. What is your legal status in Switzerland and Turkey?

19. Can you visit Turkey and if so, how often do you go?

20. How many hours a week did/do you spend dealing with issues related to your residency?

21. Did/do you have to take off time from work to deal with it?

22. What has your interaction with lawyers, social workers, immigration officers, etc. in Switzerland been like?

23. If you have citizenship, do you feel Swiss? Is gaining citizenship important for

you?

Political Activism

24. Are you politically active here? If so, how does it vary from your experience in

Turkey? If not, why not?

25. Do you follow Swiss politics?

26. Do you follow Turkish politics?

27. How has your level and type of participation in politics (whether Swiss, Kurdish,

or Turkish) changed since you arrived?