

A TURNING POINT IN THE FORMATION OF THE KURDISH LEFT IN TURKEY:

THE REVOLUTIONARY EASTERN CULTURAL HEARTHS (1969 – 1971)

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A TURNING POINT IN THE FORMATION OF THE KURDISH LEFT IN TURKEY:

THE REVOLUTIONARY EASTERN CULTURAL HEARTHS (1969 – 1971)

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by

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“A Turning Point in the Formation of the Kurdish Left in Turkey: The Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (1969 – 1971),” a thesis prepared by Selin Yelezer in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in History degree from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Bogaziçi University.

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## ABSTRACT

An abstract of the Thesis of Selin Yeleser, for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History to be taken January 2011.

Title: A Turning Point in the Formation of the Kurdish Left in Turkey: The Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (1969 – 1971)

This thesis scrutinizes the initial step in the formation of an autonomous Kurdish left movement, the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths, following the social mobilization in Turkey in the late 1960s. The dissociation of the Kurdish left from Turkish left organizations was facilitated by the radicalization of social movements and the crisis in the Turkish left accompanied by the discontent with the propositions put forward by the official ideology. The influence of socialism shaped the general outlook of the organization while attention to ethnic problems increased gradually. This study argues that the Hearths were the first legal autonomous Kurdish organizations that brought socialism and the ethnic question together, founded on the basis of ethnic considerations by the leadership of the Kurdish youth having mostly socialist orientations. Considering the aspects to gather all Kurdish people regardless of their political affiliations and to take hold in daily lives of people, this study poses the question that whether the Hearths became the first ethnic-based mass organization with socialist orientations. Since the elaboration of the problems pertaining to the eastern parts of Turkey was mostly confined to economic terms in the period, this thesis states that the Hearths brought about the ethnic dimension of these problems. Albeit with the evident remnants with economic-led arguments inherited from the Turkish left, this study reveals the rising interest of the Hearths in Kurdish nationality, language, history and literature. Methodologically, the publications and the trial documents, accompanied by the interviews, constitute the primary sources of this study contents of which reveal the diverging path of the Kurdish left in organizational terms from the Turkish one. Though the trial process of the Hearths was regarded as the sole legacy upon the Kurdish movement in Turkey, this thesis, conceding its ultimate significance, revises the Hearths as the first organization to have departed organizationally from the Turkish left while retaining the juxtaposition of socialist and ethnic considerations.

## ÖZET

Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü'nde Yüksek Lisans Derecesi için Selin Yeleser tarafından Ocak 2011'de teslim edilen tezin özeti

Başlık: Türkiye'de Kürt Solunun Oluşumunda Bir Dönüm Noktası: Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları (1969 – 1971)

Bu tez 1960'ların sonunda yükselen sosyal hareketliliği takip eden dönemde özerk bir Kürt sol hareketinin oluşumundaki başlangıç adımını Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları üzerinden incelemektedir. Toplumsal mücadeledeki radikalleşme ve Türk solundaki kriz, resmî ideoloji dâhilinde öne sürülen düşüncelerden duyulan rahatsızlıkla birlikte Kürt solunun ayrılığını ilerletmekteydi. Sosyalizm etkisi örgütün genel görünümünü şekillendirirken etnik sorunlara yönelik ilgi de zamanla artmıştır. Bu çalışma DDKO'ların, çoğunlukla sosyalist eğilimli Kürt gençliği liderliği ile etnik görüşler temelinde sosyalizm ve etnik meseleyi bir araya getiren ilk legal özerk Kürt örgütü olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Bu tez, siyasi bağlardan bağımsız olarak tüm Kürt halkını toplamayı ve onların günlük yaşamlarında yer etmeyi amaçlayarak, DDKO'ların sosyalist eğilimli ilk etnik-temelli kitle örgütü olup olmadığı sorusunu öne sürmektedir. Türkiye'nin doğu bölgelerine ait sorunların ele alınışı bu dönemde çoğunlukla iktisadi terimlerle kısıtlandığından, bu tez DDKO'ların bu sorunların etnik boyutunu öne çıkardığını belirtmektedir. Türk solundan miras alınmış iktisat-odaklı argümanlardan oluşan aşikâr kalıntılara rağmen, bu çalışma, DDKO'ların Kürt milliyeti, dili, tarihi ve edebiyatı üzerinde artan ilgisini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Yöntemsel olarak, Ocakların yayınları ve dava belgeleri, mülâkatlar ile birlikte, bu çalışmanın birincil kaynaklarını oluşturmakta olup bunların içerikleri örgütsel açıdan Kürt solunun Türk solundan ayrışma yolunu ortaya çıkarmaktadır. DDKO'ların dava süreci Türkiye'deki Kürt hareketi üzerinde yegâne bir miras olarak addedilse de, bu tez, bunun nihaî öneminin hakkını vererek, DDKO'ları bir yandan sosyalist ve etnik görüşlerin birlikteliğini muhafaza ederek Türk solundan örgütleşme açısından ayrılan ilk örgüt olarak ele almaktadır.

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## PREFACE

This thesis scrutinizes the first step in the formation of an autonomous Kurdish left movement in Turkey which was brought about the organizational dissociation of the Kurdish youth following the foundation of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, DDKO*). During the 1960s while many Kurdish intellectuals and Kurdish young people were not attracted by the Kurdish right and they met with socialist ideas through organizing in the Workers' Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi, WPT*) and the Federation of Idea Clubs (*Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu, FIC*) and then in its successor the Revolutionary Youth (*Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu*), Kurdish nationalists and conservatives either participated in the mainstream right-wing political parties or illegal Kurdish parties. In this context, this study examines the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths as the organizational core of dissociation by Kurdish youth that were organized in the Turkish left organizations during the 1960s and accordingly the nucleus of the dissociation of the Kurdish left from the Turkish one that turned into a complete divorce between 1974 and 1980.

The 1960s provided a relative free atmosphere for the left and ethnic movements. The same decade also saw the Kurdish revival though it was not associated with this free atmosphere entirely. Evidently, the denial policies with respect to the Kurdish existence were intact. However, Kurds also benefited from the situation as they met socialism during the decade. Since the majority of the Kurdish youth that studied in universities as well as the Kurdish intellectuals expressed their concerns within socialism which they considered as a key to deal with both national and class exploitations.

As a whole, the course of the Kurdish movement of the 1960s within the borders of Turkish Republic was determined by its close relations both with Kurdish movements



in the Middle East and Turkish left movements and thus it did not have an autonomous character. Nonetheless, the Kurdish left movement entered a process of dissociation itself from these two dynamics in the late 1960s<sup>1</sup> by reasons of the radicalization of leftist and social movements, and the crisis in the Turkish left which became apparent especially in the split within the WPT. Additionally, people in the east were to undergo a significant mobilization in the late 1960s. Along with the developments in the Turkish left, the Eastern Meetings and the Commando Operations were also particular factors in this revival of the Kurdish consciousness. This thesis, therefore, examines the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths which were active between the years of 1969 and 1971 in the light of these historical developments.

This study demonstrates that the Kurds who came into contact with socialism within the Turkish socialist circles took the preliminary step to divorce from them in organizational terms following the foundation of the Hearths. However, it should be noted that there were Kurds organizing in the Turkish left even between the years 1974 and 1980. The complete divorce, which took place during these years, is beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore this study examines the Hearths as the first organizations to have departed organizationally from the Turkish left for various reasons by the members comprising the Kurdish intellectuals and youth that had been introduced to socialism during 1960s. The Hearths were, hence, the first legal autonomous Kurdish organizations that brought socialism and the ethnic question together, founded on the basis of ethnic considerations by the leadership of the Kurdish youth having mostly socialist orientations.

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<sup>1</sup> Hamit Bozarslan, "Türkiye'de Kürt Sol Hareketi," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Sol* vol. 8, Murat Gültekingil, ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), pp. 1175-1176.

Accordingly the question of what the main factors leading to this organizational dissociation were crucial. Following the rising mobilization in the country, the prevailing atmosphere of socialist ideas thus influenced the Kurds as well. However, the differentiation between the Socialist Revolution (*Sosyalist Devrim*, SR) and the National Democratic Revolution (*Milli Demokratik Devrim*, NDR), a turning point in the fragmentation within the Turkish left as well, was to sharpen in the late 1960s and the radicalization of socialist movements favored the latter, that is, the NDR. However, most of the Kurdish young militants within the Idea Clubs were distanced from the NDR thesis. In this context, this study states that the rise of the Kurdish left with its autonomous organizations also emerged from the turning point that shaped the subsequent Turkish left organizations. Apparently, the dead ends offered by these socialist theses on the Kurdish Question were one of the major factors that facilitated this divorce.

The 1960s marked also the ascendancy of rising ethnic questions, and justifiably the Kurdish youth were to realize the extent of the oppression of their people. The Hearths were established as organizations that took Kurdish ethnicity as a base predominantly by these socialist Kurdish young people who were discontent with their national question. However, they consisted not only of socialist segments of Kurdish people, but also included Kurdish people who were not socialist. This was because the Hearths did not have a rigid ideology but common targets concerning shared rights and demands of the Kurdish people. As a result, the Hearths, especially in the cities and towns of the eastern and south-eastern Anatolia, were actively supported by Kurdish peasants, artisans, mullahs, sheikhs, and other segments of the Kurdish people. It can be stated that the Hearths were on its way to become the first ethnic-based mass

organization shaped by socialist orientations. While highlighting the ethnic problems, considering the rise of ethnic dimension during the trial process of the DDKO defendants, the Hearths encompassed both right and left-wing portions of Kurdish society. The ethnic dimension was quite important since the discussions on the Kurdish Question mostly had been confined to economic interpretations within Turkish socialist circles. The Hearths challenged this interpretation through integrating the cultural aspects of the Question into the economic backwardness. In other words, while socialist-oriented explanations were retained and furthered, the emphases on the existence of the Kurds as a nation in general, and their language, culture and discrimination policies against them were elaborated specifically. Even though such an elaboration was not anew, its incorporation with socialist ideas by an autonomous Kurdish organization pertained to the Hearths.

The organizational structure of the Hearths was different from those of the organizations the Turkish left had until that time. In addition to their fundamental objectives to incorporate the different segments of the Kurdish people, they organized in a decentralized way and performed activity within the legal framework. Although there were some members of the Hearths who had relations with illegal Kurdish parties and adopted armed struggle as a political strategy, the leading cadre of the Hearths insisted on legality and peaceful strategies. This stance of the Hearths generally was criticized as being pacifist, but did not cause any decomposition within the Hearths. However, all of the interviewees I encountered speculated that if the Hearths had the chance to survive longer, there would have been some decomposition within their members on the basis of armed struggle versus peaceful strategies since it was a period witnessing the popularity of armed struggle among the youth. The leaders of the Hearths were against illegal

methods such as armed actions mainly in order not to experience official oppression. Yet, this does not mean that they did not support this method. Many of the members were in favor of and indeed were involved in armed struggle. What matters here is that the Hearths never got involved with any kind of illegal action in terms of organization. Because the experience of the suppression against the Kurds was present, therefore the ultimate aims were to prevent the Hearths from being closed down, to stand for Kurdish rights and to enhance the Kurdish culture.

In accordance with the conceptualization of this thesis, Chapter I discusses the historical background with a distinct emphasis on the developments that influenced Kurdish movements from the early Republican period to the late 1960s. Having presented the major developments that affected the Kurdish movement in Turkey, the chapter deals with the political and social atmosphere of the 1960s and the relations of Kurdish intellectuals and young people with the Turkish left in order to explain the conditions and factors which gave rise to the establishment of the Hearths. More specifically, the crisis in which the Turkish left found itself, and the increasing supremacy of the National Democratic Revolution thesis in the Revolutionary Youth organization are explained in detail. Accordingly, the political mobilization that took place in the east from 1967 onwards was one of the turning points that changed the current within Kurdish youth after the realization of differing social and ethnic considerations on the Kurdish Question.

Chapter II, the most fundamental part of this study, reveals details concerning the period leading towards the foundation of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths. The Hearths were established in order to defend the existence of the Kurdish nationality, language, history and literature; to give voice to the demands of the Kurdish people, and

performe activity in accordance with these ends. Together with the publications; several seminars, gatherings and demonstrations were organized in order to manufacture public opinion concerning these subjects. Along with the contributions of these activities, the Hearths were to become magnet organizations especially for Kurdish university students in Istanbul and Ankara, and for common Kurdish people in Diyarbakir, Silvan, Kozluk, Batman and Ergani. To a certain extent, it can be argued that the Hearths were to become a part of daily life in the eastern towns. Even though this fact is common in the literature, becoming a part of daily life was essentially restricted since the Hearths in the region were soon closed down following their foundations. The Hearths in the region, nonetheless, played a role in turning the organization into a body expanding beyond the student participation. Thus, this thesis claims that the Hearths were the first organizations with the objective of encompassing people from various segments with a view to defending the existence of Kurdish nationality and culture, and establishing a legal mass organization which had both socialist and ethnic tendencies at the same time. In other words, as cultural organizations, I reveal that the socialist-oriented policies were intermingled with ethnic considerations to raise a consciousness in the people for which the Hearth militants struggled.

Particularly while presenting the fundamental cleavage as one of the most frequent reasons underlying the existing underdevelopment of the eastern region, an equal place in their publications was reserved for advocating for the existence of the Kurdish people and their culture and languages. In a similar vein, while the activities highlight this argument, their emphases on social and cultural discrimination were repetitively utilized in effect to reach all segments of Kurdish society. Furthermore, the language employed in the publications seems to be sharper. On the other hand, the

Hearths did not refrain from either common socialist terminology or collaborating with the Turkish left organizations. In terms of their publications, the Hearths were the product of an organizational dissociation, but this dissociation did not turn its back on the Turkish left and its discourse.

While maintaining almost the identical paradigm with Turkish left on subjects such as imperialism, revolution, and working class struggle; the discussions were enhanced with concerns that aimed to improve the Kurdish culture, a subject that the Turkish left neglected to a great extent. The distinctive part was the priority of presenting the problems of the Kurdish people while retaining the socialist paradigm. As will be discussed in Chapter III, the rising ethnic elaboration was to supersede the socialist paradigm shaped mostly by economic terms in general, and backwardness in particular. However, publications indicate that the Hearths were not well equipped in terms of ideological and theoretical formulations.

The resulting inconsistencies actually made it difficult for me to classify the ideas of the Hearths as a whole. If fundamental ideas on certain subjects are excluded, there are several inconsistencies in publications which can be related to the relative intellectual inadequacy of the founding cadres. Hence we can consider the Hearths as the organizations of the Kurdish youth in which they trained themselves with respect to their own problems to build upon the certain formation they had brought from the Turkish left previously. The enhancement of these inconsistencies was a failure since the organization lasted only for a short duration. Rather, the Hearths preferred to challenge the counter-arguments and to highlight Kurdishness instead of compiling more sophisticated and coherent ideas. It might be plausible in the sense that as a first organization, the Hearths had to struggle against the official ideology and the Turkish

left that neglected the ethnic question considerably. Chapter II analyzes the discussions prior and right after the foundation of the Hearths both among Kurdish and Turkish left-wing cadres, and examines the charters, contents of publications and activities of the Hearths.

Chapter III elaborates on the trial process of the short-lived Hearths. This part is also relatively revisionist since the defense petitions retrospectively were attributed to the most outstanding development associated with the organization. That is, the existing literature on the Hearths is overwhelmingly, sometimes entirely, focused on the prison and adjudication process of the DDKO defendants and overstating the originality of the contents of political defenses. The political defenses are mostly presented as the political defenses which caused a radical rupture in the Kurdish history. This thesis acknowledges the historical significance of these political defenses in terms of being the first political defenses of Kurds made as groups with a decisive tone in the Turkish courts. Yet it claims that contents of these defenses were not as original or radical as the existing literature portrays. I arrived at this conclusion when I scrutinize the contents of the defenses of the DDKO defendants and compare them with both previous and other political defenses of the 1960s which also dealt with the Kurdish issue. Actually, the DDKO defenses have some common points with the Kemalist ideology, such as the role of Turkish military and Sunni-Islamic paradigm, which are substantially overlooked by the current literature. In addition, contrary to the defenses of the Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi*, RWPPT) members of the same period of time in which more radical arguments brought forward to Turkish court such as calling Kurdish people as the “Kurdish nation” and advocating the right to self-determination for them, the DDKO defendants demanded rights not on the basis of

group identity, but on the basis of Turkish Constitution and human rights. In this regard, this thesis claims that, contrary to the existing literature on the Hearths, rather than the contents of the DDKO defenses, the organizational divorce of Kurdish youth from Turkish left organizations, the decisive tone of the defendants in the courts and the role of decompositions among them on the formation of subsequent dissociations within the Kurdish movement are outstanding. In addition to the significance of the collective defense in the presence of the court, the defense petitions that they obliged the judicial authorities to read aloud also had significant remarks with respect to the studies on the Kurdish people. While the repeating references to the Constitution and thus retaining the legality issue, the socialist discourses that were equally dominant in the publications gave way significantly to ethnic elaborations. Considering the communication opportunities with the outer world, the ethnically supported statements became predominant in the defense petitions with scientific emphasis on Kurdish language, culture and history. Elaborations on the origins of the Kurds as extending to ancient Meds as well as statements of Kurdish language arguing its distinction from Turkish were significant developments that the defendants accomplished during their sentences in prison. Correspondingly the impending factionalization within the defendants can be regarded as the further enhancement of these discussions on Kurdish culture since they were rich enough to lead people to resort to different perspectives.

Methodologically, this thesis is descriptive in terms of giving an account of the first step of the dissociation of the Kurdish left from the Turkish left with wide-range base left-wing orientations on Kurdish ethnicity. Although the long descriptive parts might be a setback of this study, I consider them essential comprehending an insight into the organizational dissociation of the Hearths while shifting slightly to more ethnic



elaborations. I analyzed the organization of the Hearths as the first step in the formation of Kurdish left disassociating organizationally from the Turkish left, thus focused on the original position of the Hearths within the developments of the Kurdish movement. Nevertheless, since I perceive the foundation of the Hearths as a turning point, a considerable part of my thesis is formed by narrating the process of transformation of Kurdish political thought and movement which provide the historical context for the foundation of these independent Kurdish left-wing organizations. Therefore, I depict this historical context by using secondary literature on the history of the Kurdish movements and organizations in Turkey, relations of Kurdish intellectuals and young people with Turkish left and discussions on the idea of establishing autonomous Kurdish organizations by Kurdish socialist youth those previously organized together with Turkish left.

The second and third chapters, which are the most significant part of this thesis, are structured on the basis of the examination of primary documents such as bulletins, leaflets and announcements of the Hearths, indictments of the military court, the defense texts of the Hearth members and the reports of National Intelligence Service. Furthermore, memoirs, interviews with the founders of the Hearths compose the primary sources for those chapters. Thanks to analyzing these sources; the targets, intellectual accumulation, political view, organizational structure and activities of the Hearths, the prison process of the Hearth members and the contents of their political defenses will be introduced in order to reveal the originality of the Hearths. I think, especially memoirs and interviews are very useful in conceiving the constructed images of the members of the Hearths concerning the impacts of these organizations that had produced on

everyday life of common Kurdish people in addition to making a discourse analysis of the publications of the Hearths.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The everlasting discontent that has originated from the Kurdish Question encompasses the history of the Turkish Republic. Since this study tries to specify the significance of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths with their particular emphasis on the national question and its resolution within the socialist paradigm, this chapter discusses the fundamental developments that took place from the early Republican period to the 1970s. In this context, the previous Kurdish movements seem to retain an essential motive with a view to presenting insights into the materialization of an autonomous Kurdish organization.

Accordingly the first section of this chapter deals with the period prior to the military coup of 1960. The major outbreaks that took place in the early Republican era as well as the intact feudal structures and its relations with the governments of the period are discussed with a view to highlighting the emphasis on the existence of Kurdish discontent. In the period following the Coup usually indicates the relative liberalism that was entailed with the 1961 Constitution; however, the oppression on the national existence of the Kurds, if not denied entirely, was maintained. The rising mobilization throughout the country also offered an opportunity for the Kurds. Accordingly the familiarization of masses with socialist-oriented ideas had its impact on Kurdish students and intellectuals as well; hence they regarded socialist discourse more convenient for the resolution of the national question. The right-wing policies were relatively confined to a few circles and since their bases were constructed upon the large landowners, the lower class Kurdish youth that already suffered from the economic and social transformation

throughout the country did not give a significant chance to nationalist and conservative political bodies. The 1960s, therefore, witnessed the association of Kurdish intellectuals and youth with the Turkish left-wing circles. The result was the preference of the Kurdish intellectuals for the Workers' Party of Turkey and the preferences of the Kurdish youth for the Idea Clubs.

The second section of the chapter examines the increasing affiliation of the Kurds with socialism that however did indeed raise the consciousness of the Kurdish youth as they realized the extents of the backwardness of the eastern regions increasingly. Yet, the problem was not confined to economic terms. The very same youth commenced to be conscious about their national question in a period in which the Turkish left was undergoing a serious crisis. Correspondingly, the third and fourth sections of the chapter elaborate the reasons underlying this crisis with respect to the path from which the Kurdish youth disassociated themselves from the Turkish left in organizational terms. Consequently, the everlasting national discontent was to disassociate the Kurdish left from the Turkish left, since the Hearths, while retaining the revolutionary struggle ultimately, resorted to benefit from an autonomous organization. In doing so, they were to encompass not only the Kurdish socialist youth, but indeed the entire Kurdish youth as an expression for a more conscious nation. Following these preoccupations, the association between the Turkish and Kurdish lefts was to be replaced by the organizational dissociation.

## The Kurds in Turkey before 1961

The Republic of Turkey was proclaimed in 1923 at the end of the War for Independence in which Kurds took part along with Turks and other ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> During and right after this war, Mustafa Kemal, the founder of the Republic, and some of other leaders of the movement frequently mentioned their targets as to establish a state based on the equality and brotherhood of Turks and Kurds.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these kinds of statements, offering land and high governmental posts to some of Kurdish notables gave the new political system the appearance that Kurdish interests would be taken into consideration

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<sup>2</sup> For the fact that this was not a rupture, see Erik Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998), pp. 194-242.

<sup>3</sup> The words that Mustafa Kemal said in the assembly platform on 1 May 1920 are the ones that were referred by Kurds in order to legitimize themselves.

“Gentlemen, I would like to state a few points with the request of the issue not to repeat once again. What is the objective and People who constitute our supreme council here are not only Turks. Not Kurds, nor Circassians not Lazs. But it is a sincere gathering including all of them composed of Islamic elements. Therefore the ends in order to save the law, life, honour and fame of this supreme delegation is not merely confined to a single Islamic element. It belongs to a mass composed of Islamic elements. We all know that it is in this manner. One of the principles of the primary one that we always accepted while the border issue is assessed and determined is the national border which passes from the north of Alexandretta and then expands eastwards including Mosul, Sulaimaniyah, Kirkuk. Here, this is our national border. However, there are Kurds as well as Turks in the north of Kirkuk. We did not differentiate them. It is because: the nation that we are involved with its protection and defence is of course not composed of one element. It consists of various Islamic elements. Every Islamic element constituting this mass is our brother and our citizens sharing complete advantages. And in line with the first lines of the principles that we accepted again, being citizens these various Islamic elements are considerate of each other by mutual deference. And we repeated and confirmed that they are always considerate of each other's any kind of law, race, social and geographical law, and we all accepted these by sincerity. Therefore our benefits are common. The unity that we are determined to accomplish is not merely Turkish, not merely Kurdish, and not merely Circassian but an Islamic element mixed with all of them. I request this fact to be considered in this manner and not to lead to any misunderstanding.” *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1961), pp. 73-74. The words of Mustafa Kemal and of İsmet İnönü are the references to which Kurds resorted for legitimization. The purpose was to create a maneuvering within Kemalism, and the Hearths mostly defend everything mostly by referring to these words.

and therefore took the support of many Kurdish elites.<sup>4</sup> But soon after the establishment of the Republic, the Turkish government initiated a radical program of nation-building and the previous discourse about the equality of societies gave way to the dominance of the Turkish ethnicity and a Turkification (*Türkleştirme*) program towards non-Turkish groups, but especially to the namely Kurds, who constituted the largest non-Turkish ethnic group within the borders of the Republic was begun. As Bruinessen states, the existence of a distinct Kurdish identity was perceived as both a security threat and a threat to the self identity of the state.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, during the single-party era under the rule of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, RPP), in which any kind of opposition to the Kemalist regime was seen as a threat to the state integrity and severely restricted, the government was very repressive against Kurds and aimed at eliminating the Kurdish national identity as a whole. In accordance with this policy, since the mid-1920s not only the very word "Kurd", but all forms of manifestations of Kurdishness such as the Kurdish language, Kurdish names, Kurdish clothes and Kurdish folklore were banned and removed from the public sphere and Kurdish districts were militarized. Kurds were integrated into the political system only via setting aside their Kurdishness from the public sphere. In the new official historical doctrine, the Kurds were viewed to be of

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<sup>4</sup> David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement; Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society and the Modern State: Ethnic Nationalism versus Nation Building," in *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Nation-Building States: Collected Essays* (Istanbul: the Isis Press, 2000), p. 44.

Turkish origin and called “Mountain Turks”, whose native language was a corrupt Turkish dialect.<sup>6</sup>

This denial policy towards Kurds as a distinct group of people with their own distinct language and culture was the main characteristic of the official discourse of Turkey until the 1990s. In this sense, the indictments and decisions of military prosecutors in the DDKO case constituted one of the symbols of this official doctrine and defenses of the DDKO defendants constituted a crucial historical challenge to this doctrine in the Turkish courts.

As is widely accepted, Kurdish nationalism emerged against the central authority in this period, to a certain extent as a reaction to the impositions of central government control and its attempts to provide the political and cultural hegemony of Turks. Reaction to the imposition of the central government control came especially from Kurdish tribal leaders, religious sheiks, large land owners and peasantry who refused to legitimize the Turkish state, not because it was Turkish, but because it was a state that targeted at eliminating the traditional social order. Opposition to the hegemony of Turks was made up of reactions of secular nationalist intellectuals and military officers who rejected the Turkish state not because it was a state itself, but because it was Turkish.<sup>7</sup> These Kurdish nationalist intellectuals gathered together in the Kurdish political parties

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, “The Kurds in Turkey,” in *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Nation-Building States: Collected Essays* (Istanbul: the Isis Press, 2000), pp. 225-227.

<sup>7</sup> Hamit Bozarslan, “Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898–2000),” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Milliyetçilik* vol. 4, Tanıl Bora, ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003) pp. 848-849.

*Azadi* (Independence -1923)<sup>8</sup> and *Xoybun* (Stay Origin -1927),<sup>9</sup> which also played roles in the organizing the Sheikh Said Rebellion and Ağrı Rebellion, respectively. This latter Kurdish opposition did not have a social base among the Kurdish population and was restricted to the limited circles of nationalist intellectuals. Nonetheless it allied with the first opposition of the traditional segments of Kurdish society and therefore Kurdish movement of this period acquired its human sources from the traditional segments of Kurdish society. Accordingly Hamit Bozarslan argues that this alliance resulted in both tribalization of the Kurdish nationalist movement in terms of its social base and the nationalization of the tribal and religious Kurdish opposition to central authority.<sup>10</sup>

This character of the Kurdish opposition also marked the essence of the Kurdish uprisings of 1920s and 1930s in which nationalist claims and defense of religious and rural social organization existed together and tribes and religious brotherhood supplied the main human sources of this opposition.<sup>11</sup> The Sheikh Sait Rebellion (1925), Ağrı

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<sup>8</sup> *Azadi* was a clandestine Kurdish nationalist organization founded in 1923 by Kurdish nationalist intellectuals and army officers. The objectives of *Azadi* were threefold: liberating the Kurds from Turkish oppression, providing Kurds freedom and opportunity to develop their country, and getting British assistance. Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1989), p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> *Xoybun*, the most important opposition center during this period, had organized as a modern and secular party by a group of Kurdish intellectuals in exile in Syria and Lebanon. The objectives of *Xoybun* were to provide liberation of the Kurdistan and Kurds those located under the rule of Republic of Turkey, establish an independent Kurdistan within the natural and national borders and to maintain the struggle until the last Turkish soldier was expelled from the borders of Kurdistan. Rohat Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü ve Ağrı Ayaklanması* (Istanbul: Avesta, 1998), pp. 26-29.

<sup>10</sup> Bozarslan, “Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd,” pp. 848-849.

<sup>11</sup> There were eighteen uprisings in the Republic of Turkey; all except one out of them which occurred in Menemen, involved Kurds against the central authority between the years of 1924 and 1938. Resat Halli, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar 1924-1938* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Harp Dairesi Yayınları, 1972), quoted in Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması, 1923-1931* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1981), pp. 127-128.



Rebellion (1929 - 1930) and the Dersim Rebellion (1937 – 1938)<sup>12</sup> composed the most important rebellions among these rebellions and only in the Sheikh Sait and Ağrı Rebellions did Kurdish political parties, Azadi and Xoybun, take part respectively.<sup>13</sup>

The Kemalists perceived Islam and Islamic institutions as the greatest threats to the modernization project of Turkey and tried to replace Islamic culture with Western culture on the basis of nation via introducing several secular reforms and laws.<sup>14</sup> As Mesut Yeğen specifies, the response of the Turkish government to these uprisings took its shape from these modernizing and centralizing reforms that aimed at establishing a modern and secular nation state and society. Actually any opposition to the central authority was perceived as a reactionary movement aimed at the revitalization of the role of religion in society. Accordingly, the central authority mainly read these uprisings as having been induced by foreign powers and had reactionary and counter-revolutionist characters. While the Kurdish Question was identified with religion, banditry, and tribalism, the Turkish state was identified as modern, civilized and secular. As a result,

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Sheik Sait Rebellion, see Olson; and Bruinessen, *Agha, Sheikh and State: the Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1992), As Olson and Bruinessen argue, Sheik Sait Rebellion, in which this party had role to some extent, was not a purely religious uprising against Kemalist secularization policies but religious and nationalist motivations intertwined in the eyes of participated Kurds in this rebellion. For an analysis of all three revolts, see Kendal [Nezan], “Kurdistan in Turkey,” in *People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, Gerard Chaliand, ed. (London: Zed Press, 1980), pp. 61-68; and see Hamit Bozarslan, “Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919-1925),” in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, Abbas Vali, ed. (California: Mazda Publishers, 2003), pp. 163–190.

<sup>13</sup> Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), pp. 83-85.

<sup>14</sup> For the list of the secular reforms carried out in the first years of the Republic, see Binnaz Toprak, “Dinci Sağ,” in *Geçiş Sürecinde Türkiye*, eds. İrvin Cemil Schic and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1992 [2<sup>nd</sup> edition]), pp. 243-244.

the military suppression of the Kurdish movement was presented as civilizing.<sup>15</sup> As Mete Tunçay argues, in addition to the readings of these rebellions as reactionary and counter-revolutionary, the central government perceived the Turkish Republic as a bourgeois revolution and therefore also read these rebellions as the reactions of feudalism which was threatened by this “progressive movement.”<sup>16</sup> As will be discussed below, communists of that period also shared this perception with the Kemalists.

In accordance with these readings, the Turkish government put down these rebellions brutally and deported many Kurdish tribesmen and some entire tribes to western Turkey, while other ethnic groups (Laz, Circassians and refugees from the Balkans) were settled in the Kurdish areas as a result of the Law of Resettlement of 1934.<sup>17</sup> In addition, following the first major Kurdish uprising, that of Sheikh Sait, the Law on the Maintenance of Tranquility of 1925 was declared, Military Tribunals (*İstiklal Mahkemeleri*) were reestablished and any opposition to the government was suppressed harshly. Furthermore, the 1930s witnessed further emphasis on Turkish history, ethnicity and language. The Turkish History Thesis, which claimed that Turks migrated from Central Asia and spread civilization to the world during their migration, and the Sun – Language Theory which claimed that Turkish was the base of all

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<sup>15</sup> Mesut Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), pp. 127-134.

<sup>16</sup> Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek*, p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> The Law on Resettlement of 1934 was one of the most overt documents which shows that the deportations and resettlements were meant to stress the domination of the Turkish ethnicity and language. This Law divided Turkey society into three groups: those were of Turkish ethnicity and spoke Turkish, those did not speaking Turkish, but assumed to be belonging to Turkish culture, and those were neither belonged to Turkish culture nor spoke Turkish. İsmail Beşikçi states that this law was meant to assimilate the Kurdish people. For the discussion of this law and its implications, see İsmail Beşikçi, *Kürtlerin “Mecburi İskan”ı* (Ankara: Komal, 1977).

languages, formed the basis of the Turkish nationalism of the 1930s, which perceived Kurds as “mountain Turks”.<sup>18</sup>

Especially after the suppression of the Sheikh Sait Rebellion, the eradication of Kurdish identity from the political arena of Turkey as a goal became clearer. As Bozarslan writes, Kurdish nationalists of this period, especially those of Xoybun, had some common points with Kemalism in terms of their approach to the nation and civilization and challenged it with its own concepts. Accordingly, these Kurdish nationalists, as against the Kemalist discourse about Kurds, tried to present Kurds as “civilized” and Turks as “barbarian.”<sup>19</sup>

Here, it is important to deal with the approach of the Turkish left of 1920s and 1930s towards the Kurdish uprisings. The communists of this period shared the above-mentioned view points of the Kemalist regime regarding the Kurds and their uprisings.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, the main approach of the Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*, CPT) was likely to give the picture of the way the Turkish left of that period dealt with the Kurdish issue.<sup>21</sup> Leave aside the divergent voices within the CPT as

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<sup>18</sup> Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, pp. 276-278.

<sup>19</sup> Bozarslan, “Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd” pp. 849-850

<sup>20</sup> As Mesut Yeğen argues, the affinity of Turkish communists to Kemalists regarding Kurdish issue was mainly determined by strategic attitudes of Comintern towards Kemalist regime. See Mesut Yeğen, “Türkiye Solu ve Kürt Sorunu,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasal Düşünce Sol* vol. 8, Murat Gültekingil, ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), pp. 1208-1209.; Ragıp Zarakolu, “Komintern ve Türkiye,” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 6, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988), pp.1854-5; Doğu Perinçek, ed, *Komintern Belgelerinde Türkiye-3 Kürt Sorunu* (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1977).

<sup>21</sup> The approach of the *Kadro* writers to the Kurdish issue also is worth mentioning even though it is questionable to what extent they can be handled as representatives of the approach of the Turkish left of that period towards the Kurdish issue. Actually the approach of *Kadro* to this issue was the same of Kemalist regime. Similar with Kemalists, *Kadro* identified Kurds with reactionism and feudalism and therefore Kurdish issue with resistance of these characteristics of

Hikmet Kıvılcımlı,<sup>22</sup> the CPT read Sheikh Sait Rebellion as a resistance of religion and feudalism which was induced by foreign forces against modernity and capitalism.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the CPT read Dersim and Ağrı Rebellion as reactionary movements of Kurdish feudal elements against the Kemalist reforms and benefits of people.<sup>24</sup>

Following the suppression of the Dersim Rebellion by the Turkish military forces, the Kurdish movement in Turkey entered a silent period which lasted until the 1960s. While rebellious Kurds had been deported to western Turkey after the uprisings, the remaining Kurdish tribal and religious notables either had been co-opted with the central authority or cowed into submission. Some of the remaining tribal leaders co-

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Kurdish people. For the approach of Kadro, see Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, “Derebeyi ve Dersim,” *Kadro*, no. 6, (1932); and İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, “Şark Vilayetlerinde Derebeylik,” *Kadro*, no. 12, (1932).

<sup>22</sup> Hikmet Kıvılcımlı’s arguments about the Kurdish Question and Kurdish uprisings are worth mentioning since he constituted the most divergent voice within the CPT with respect to this issue. First of all, it should be mentioned that Kıvılcımlı held that the Kurds were a distinct nation, that the “Eastern Question” was an issue of Kurdish nationality, and that the Turkish bourgeoisie applied colonial methods in the Kurdistan. Kıvılcımlı stated that the Sheikh Sait Rebellion was reactionary both on the national and international levels since it was an uprising of religious tribal chieftains and collaborated with imperialism. Regarding the Ağrı Rebellion, Kıvılcımlı said that this rebellion was also reactionary in terms of its collaboration with imperialism, but it was a “progressive and revolutionary movement” in terms of being “a revolt of oppressed Kurdishness as a nation against Turkish bourgeoisie within the country.” Yeğen, “Türkiye Solu ve Kürt Sorunu,” p. 1213.

<sup>23</sup> The Sheik Sait Rebellion was dealt with in the weekly media organ of the CPT, the 6th and 7th numbers of *Orak Çekiç*. For the contents of related writing in *Orak Çekiç*, see Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye’de Sol Akımlar I 1908-1925* (Istanbul: BDS Yayınları, 2000), pp. 195-220.

<sup>24</sup> However, what was new in the reading of CPT about this rebellion different from that of the Kemalists was the presentation of this rebellion as a “liberty struggle of oppressed peasantry” against government policies and perceiving an ascending national consciousness among Kurds from the beginning of the nineteenth century. See Perinçek, *Komintern Belgelerinde Türkiye*, pp. 66-69; “İnkılap Yolu, Türkiye Komünist Fırkası Merkez Komitesi Organı, Temmuz – Ağustos 1930,” in Mete Tunçay *Türkiye’de Sol Akımlar 1925-1936 II* (Istanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1991), pp. 192-193.

opted with the RPP in this period not because of their ideological affiliation with the RPP, but because of either patronage relations or tribal competition.<sup>25</sup>

There were public demonstrations held by Kurds in 1945 during which many Kurds were arrested and 120 Kurdish tribal leaders were hanged right after. However, as McDowall writes, these demonstrations manifested the power of the central authority more than a living sentiment of Kurdishness.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, it should be indicated that even though Kurdish movement was marginalized and entered a silent period in terms of challenging the central authority via uprisings or other armed strategies, Kurdish nationalism did not disappear totally. In 1948, Musa Anter published a journal titled *Dicle Kaynağı* (Tigris Spring) with his friends from the *Dicle Talebe Yurdu* (Dicle Student Dormitory),<sup>27</sup> and in 1950 *Şarkın Sesi* (Voice of Orient) was published. These journals were published for a limited time period and mainly dealt with the underdeveloped situation of the east.<sup>28</sup>

A Kurdish nationalist historiography emerged during this period. Kurdish nationalist intellectuals aimed at preserving Kurdish culture via publication activities especially around journals such as *Rojî Nû* and *Ronahî* and memoirs. As Bozarslan

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<sup>25</sup> David McDowall, *Modern Kürt Tarihi* (Ankara: Doruk Yayıncılık, 2004), p. 528.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 525. Furthermore, 33 Kurdish villagers were executed by shooting by General Mustafa Muğlalı in Van in 1943.

<sup>27</sup> *Dicle Talebe Yurdu* founded in 1943 is worth mentioning here since, in the words of Musa Anter, it constituted the “first association” where many Kurdish students came together. Musa Anter, *Anılarım*, pp. 56 – 57. Mustafa Remzi Bucak, Yusuf Azizoğlu, Ziya Şerefhanoglu, Ali Karahan, Edip Karahan, Mustafa Ekinci, Enver Aytekin, Faik Bucak and Musa Anter were some of those who became significant figures in Kurdish history later, stayed in this dormitory. Mustafa Remzi Bucak, *Bir Kürt Aydınından İsmet İnönü’ye Mektup* (Istanbul: Doz Yayıncılık, 1991), p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Naci Kutlay, *Anılarım* (Istanbul: Avesta, 1998), pp. 61-62.

states, rather than questioning the Turkish nationalist historiography, Kurdish nationalist intellectuals applied to the same methodology and rewrote history from the perspective of the Kurds in which the victories, languages and fate of the Kurds were glorified and a distinct Kurdish history from Turkish history was featured.<sup>29</sup> Even though the circulation of these kinds of nationalist publications was very limited during this period, they played a crucial role in the Kurdish movement of 1960s and 1970s and composed the reference guides for a Kurdish nationalist discourse.<sup>30</sup>

Turkey experienced the transition from the single-party system to a multi-party system in 1946, but the rule of RPP continued until the victory of the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP), led by Adnan Menderes, in the first competitive multi-party election held in 1950. Contrary to the state control of the economy, Jacobin modernizing reforms especially against religion, economic policies that worsened the situation of peasantry especially during the Second World War<sup>31</sup>, and intolerance of any kinds of

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<sup>29</sup> Naci Kutlay mentions in his memoirs how he and some of his friends read Nuri Dersimi's book *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim* in 1953 with both fear and excitement. Kutlay, *Anılarım*, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> Bozarslan. "Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd," pp. 851-852.

<sup>31</sup> During the war period, the government seized a considerable part of the agricultural product under the market value and enforced heavy tax obligations on the peasantry. In addition to these policies, the decreases in the labor force, the number of working animals and agricultural inputs in agricultural production due to their use in the army and resulted in a decrease in the amount of cultivated lands, agricultural outputs and revenues. Furthermore, the rural population faced compulsory service for construction work and mining. These policies especially harmed the economic situation of small and middle land owner peasantry. Even though the Land Reform (*Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu*), which provided the provision of land to the landless peasantry and peasants with little lands with the Clause 17, was approved by the assembly in 1945 in order to remove dissatisfaction of small and middle peasantry and increase the agricultural outcome, this Clause 17 was abolished in the face of opposition of the large land owners. The support of the small land owner peasantry to the DP in 1950 general election was to some extent due to the single party government's behavior towards the peasantry during the Second World War. For relation of the RPP governments with peasantry during this war, see Şevket Pamuk, "İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında İşe Politikası ve Köylülük," pp. 183-

opposition during the single-party era, the DP mobilized masses, especially almost all segments of the peasantry, and came to power in 1950 through promising to provide economic and political liberalism, recovery in the economic situation of the peasantry and freedom of religion. The DP mainly took support from the countryside due to their discontent with the repressive applications of the single-party regime on religion and from the cities due to their discontent with state control of the economy. Furthermore, intellectuals also supported DP since they looked to DP governance to provide a freer political atmosphere.<sup>32</sup>

One of supporter groups of the DP was the Kurds. The preference of the Kurds for the DP is generally read as a reaction of the Kurds to the above-mentioned policies of the single-party regime of the RPP towards the Kurds which was grounded on the assimilation of the Kurds and the denial of their existence. In this vein, Nader Entessar holds that the Kurds voted overwhelmingly for the DP in reaction to the suppression of the Kurds by the Kemalist policies.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Azat Zana Gündoğan argues that the main force behind the Kurdish popular support of the DP was the repressive policies over the Kurdish population during the single-party era.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, as Ahmet Alış specifies in his thesis, it is more likely to presume that the Kurdish people voted for the

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198; and for discussions of the reasons of Land Reform, see Şevket Pamuk and Çağlar Keyder, “1945 Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu üzerine Tezler,” in *Osmanlıdan Cumhuriyete Küreselleşme, İktisat Politikaları ve Büyüme, Seçme Eserleri-II*, Şevket Pamuk (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008), pp. 199-213.

<sup>32</sup> Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), pp. 147-154.

<sup>33</sup> Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, p. 87.

<sup>34</sup> Azat Zana Gündoğan, “The Kurdish Political Mobilization in the 1960s: The Case of ‘the Eastern Meetings’” (MA Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2005), p. 80.

DP not because they were alienated from Kemalism, but because they were influenced by traditional Kurdish leaders who had been allowed to return from exile to their homes by the DP and also the populist policies of the DP regarding peasantry.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike the single-party regime of the RPP, the DP era had witnessed the relaxation of religious restrictions<sup>36</sup> and softening military repressions on the Kurdish regions. Instead of military repressions, the Menderes governments tried to control the region through co-opting with the Kurdish traditional leaders. A number of previously exiled Kurds with strong tribal backing allied with the DP, they controlled a large number of local votes and were elected to the Turkish Grand National Assembly (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*) and obtained cabinet seats.<sup>37</sup> This cooperation by the central government officials with favored Kurdish notables resulted in the reinforcement of their positions over the rest of the population. As Bruinessen states, the integration of Kurdish notables with the political parties and bureaucracy in this way did not eliminate but strengthened the tribal character of Kurdish society.<sup>38</sup> After the 1970s, radical Kurdish nationalists read this cooperation of tribesmen with political institutions as a “colonial” relation and accused the tribal elites for making possible to continuation of the “colonial exploitation” of Kurdistan by the Turkish state. But this reading in the context of colonialism became a matter of discussion in Turkey during the 1970s and

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<sup>35</sup> Ahmet Alış, “The Process of the Politicization of the Kurdish Identity in Turkey: The Kurds and the Turkish Labour Party (1961-1971)” (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Allowing the call to prayer (*ezan*) to be recited in Arabic, official radio broadcasting about the Koran, increasing the number of religious schools and state funds to the Religious Affairs Administration were some of executions of the DP governments regarding religion. Toprak, “Dinci Sağ,” p. 248.

<sup>37</sup> Van Bruinessen, “The Kurds in Turkey,” p. 227.

<sup>38</sup> van Bruinessen, “Kurdish Society,” p. 50.



therefore, as will be discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, the Hearths as organizations of the late 1960s and early 1970s did not read this cooperation using terms of colonialism. Instead, the Hearths put this cooperation within a broader context of the relation of Turkey with imperialism via naming big landowners as local collaborators of imperialism against which the Hearths struggled.

From the beginning of the 1950s Turkey witnessed a rapid urbanization as a result of the internal migration.<sup>39</sup> In addition to the migrated Kurds who became workers in cities, the number of Kurdish higher education students increased in the late 1950s when obtaining a higher education ceased to be a privilege of wealthy Kurdish family. As a result, the children of middle class and poor families also benefited from the higher education opportunities.<sup>40</sup> This migration and increased number of Kurdish students in metropolitan cities encouraged the emergence of the awareness of the Kurdish ethnic identity. This was due to increased contacts with other ethnic groups and different cultures. The Kurds in the metropolitan areas were exposed to similar humiliations and drew closer to each other in response to being marginalized by the Turks. This explains

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<sup>39</sup> The first four years of the DP government witnessed rapid economic growth especially based on agricultural development in which growth in the agriculture sector was more than other sectors until this economic panorama reversed after 1954. During this period, undeveloped state lands were distributed to farmers, a widespread mechanization was introduced to agriculture, agricultural credits and subsidies were increased, and the Korean War caused a rise in agricultural prices. As a result of these developments which were accompanied by favorable weather conditions, the amount of cultivated land, agricultural product and agricultural income was increased. Although, these policies enhanced the overall economic situation of all socio-economic groups and therefore the peasantry, intense mechanization of agriculture resulted in migration from the country to towns. Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908 – 2005* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2006), pp. 105-106.

<sup>40</sup> Hayri Şahin, “Kürt Solu: Doğuşu, Gelişimi ve Bugünü,” in *Kürt Solu, 2. Kitap*, Ali Koca, ed. (İstanbul: Gün Yayıncılık, 1999), p. 266.

why increasing interest in the Kurdish history and culture appeared and Kurdish journals were published in metropolitans not in Kurdistan.<sup>41</sup>

Accordingly, from the late 1950s Kurdish youth from the lower classes introduced to higher education opportunities and they realized or strengthened their ethnic identity while encountering a different culture. However, this increasing awareness of ethnic identity also was nourished by an economic dimension. In addition to being marginalized by the dominant Turks, Kurdish students from lower classes faced regional discrepancies between their region and the western parts of Turkey. As Naci Kutlay mentions in his memoirs, the discriminative governmental policies towards the eastern region of Turkey and underdeveloped situation of this region played a great role in fraternizing of Kurdish university students with each other and becoming more sensitive regarding these subjects.<sup>42</sup>

This awareness about their economically disadvantageous position can be seen as one of the underlying reasons for their affiliation with socialism and the Turkish left during the 1960s. This also explains why the foundations of the Hearths were laid by Kurdish university students studying in Ankara and Istanbul. In other words, one of the most important reasons why the Hearths were established by Kurdish university students that were studying in metropolitan cities was their increased contacts with other ethnic groups, which caused an increasing awareness among themselves about their own distinct ethnic identity and culture and their economically backward position as compared to the other ethnic groups.

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<sup>41</sup> Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society and the Modern," p. 52.

<sup>42</sup> Kutlay, *Anıların*, p. 38.

The Kurdish intellectuals that emerged in the late 1950s in the metropolitan cities became more aware of their ethnic identity also in the wake of international developments at the end of the 1950s. During this period, radio broadcasting from Cairo and Erivan in Kurdish spread in the region. However, the most influential international event that induced the ethnic awareness of these Kurdish intellectuals was the Iraqi military coup of 1958 and the return of Mustafa Barzani to the Iraq.<sup>43</sup> In 1958, royal government of Iraq was overthrown by a populist-leftist military coup d'état. Following this coup, the new leader, Abdul Karim Qassem, promised national rights to the Kurds and invited Barzani to Iraq from his exile in the Soviet Union and legalized the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (DPK-I), which had been a small illegal party. However, when Qassem failed to keep his promises, Barzani initiated a guerrilla war in 1961.<sup>44</sup>

The promises of Qassem, return of Barzani to Iraq and also the guerrilla war induced expectations and a rising Kurdish nationalism not only among Kurds in Iraq but also among Kurdish intellectuals and youth in Turkey. Actually, developments in Iraq had a great influence on the relations among Kurds and Turks in Turkey.<sup>45</sup> The politicization of the Kurds in Turkey owed a significant deal to this development and in the next decade it would lead to the formation of a similar political party in Turkey, the

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<sup>43</sup> McDowall, *Modern Kürt Tarihi*, p. 536.

<sup>44</sup> For a more detailed elaboration of the Barzani revolt, see Hamit Bozarslan, "Political Aspects of the Kurdish Problem in Contemporary Turkey," in *The Kurds: A Contemporary Review*, eds. Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 96-7; and Masud Barzani, *Mustafa Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement, 1931-1961* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp. 202-203.

<sup>45</sup> Naci Kutlay, "Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları ve Öncesi," *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 5 (2006), p. 159.

Democratic Party of Kurdistan-Turkey (*Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi*, DPK-T) which will be discussed below.

Cem Eroğul states that the 1958 military coup in Iraq created fear among the DP cadres about the possibility of a similar movement in Turkey and induced them to enhance their authoritarian policies in order to prevent this possibility.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, Avni Doğan, inspector of the First General Inspectorate in the 1940s, published a serial of articles in the daily *Vatan* (Motherland) in 1958. Doğan perceived the latest developments in Iraq as foreshadows of a rising Kurdism (*Kürtçülük*) and warned the government for the need to form “a common national atmosphere to defend national unity.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, in 1959, in the face of the killing of Turks by Kurds in Kirkuk, Niğde deputy Asım Eren overtly suggested taking revenge on the Kurds in Turkey, saying, “the Kurds have killed our brothers, what about killing the same amount of Kurds as they killed Turks. Are you ready to pay them back, with interest?”<sup>48</sup> Undoubtedly, these statements got serious reactions from the Kurdish students studying in Istanbul and Ankara.

With respect to Kurdish nationalism, as previously mentioned, it did not disappear during the DP era. In the same year as return of Barzani, Musa Anter and his colleagues published a daily Kurdish-oriented journal in Diyarbakir under the title of

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<sup>46</sup> Cem Eroğul, “Çok Partili Düzenin Kuruluşu: 1945-71,” in *Geçiş Sürecinde Türkiye*, eds. İrvin Cemil Schic and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak, (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1992 [2<sup>nd</sup> edition]), p. 131.

<sup>47</sup> Avni Doğan, “Tehlike Çanı,” *Vatan*, 19-23 November 1958, quoted in Gündoğan, “The Kurdish Political Mobilization,” p. 84.

<sup>48</sup> Asım Eren, Niğde Deputy, Quoted in “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler,” *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988), p. 2110.

*İleri Yurt* (Advanced Country). According to Bozarslan, the name of this journal represented the interest in leftist ideas and sympathy to the idea of Kurdishness. Thus it was one of early signs of leftist inclinations in the Kurdish movement.<sup>49</sup> In addition to the aforementioned emergence of Kurdish nationalist historiography and publications such as *İleri Yurt*; the Eastern Nights (*Doğu Geceleri*) and student picnics foreshadowed the beginning of a new phase in the Kurdish movement. During the 1950s, there were several eastern and south-eastern associations that arranged these nights in which folklore of all eastern and south-eastern towns was presented and “Nights of Towns” on which the folklore of related eastern towns was presented. The widespread participation of Kurdish students in these nights was provided and they drew closer to each other during these nights.<sup>50</sup> In other words, in the late 1950s, Kurdish students entered a process in which they reinvented their culture via festivals, picnics, and other types of gatherings. However, Kutlay writes that during these gatherings, discussions about the problems of the “east” and “easterners” were held, but that the roles of feudality or class concept were not discussed.<sup>51</sup> As discussed-below, these subjects became a matter of debate during the 1960s.

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<sup>49</sup> Bozarslan, “Türkiye’de Kürt Sol Hareketi,” p. 1175.

<sup>50</sup> Kutlay, *Anılarım*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64.

## The 27 May 1960 Military Coup d'état, the 1961 Constitution and the Kurds

At the end of the 1950s, Turkish economy entered in a process of crisis in which foreign exchange scarcity and inflation became serious problems. In addition to this economic crisis, the increasing anti-democratic executions of the DP government created dissatisfaction among the people and especially among intellectuals.<sup>52</sup> The civil and military bureaucrats, through taking the support of the big industrial capitalists who were uncomfortable with the populist policies of the DP, perceived adopting a planned economy in which industrialization via import substitution strategy was offered as a solution to this crisis. The DP government was overthrown on 27 May 1960 by a group of military officers who called themselves the National Unity Committee (*Milli Birlik Komitesi*, NUC) and organized out of the hierarchy of the Turkish military forces.<sup>53</sup> Following the military coup, martial law was declared, a temporary military government was formed and this government adopted a new constitution in referendum on 9 July 1961. The military government was replaced by a civil government through the general elections which were held according to proportional representation for the first time on

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<sup>52</sup> Although the DP came to power with the promise of providing a liberal political system, its policies soon became reversed and especially following its great victory in 1954 general elections which accompanied by sharply worsening economic conditions, the DP applied authoritarian policies more overtly. During this period, all kinds of opposition and critical stance were suppressed and leftists were no exception in this sense. In the cold war atmosphere, DP strongly took side with the West and especially approached leftist groups hostilely through an anti-communist discourse. Following the 1951 *Tevkifatı*, in which many people were arrested, any leftist movement suppressed by the DP. See Eroğul, "Çok Partili Düzenin Kuruluşu," pp. 120-133.

<sup>53</sup> For the coinciding interests of bureaucracy and industrial capital, see Keyder, *Türkiye'de Devlet ve Sınıflar*, pp. 175-181.

15 October 1961. This government was a coalition of the RPP and the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*, JP), which was the successor of the DP.<sup>54</sup>

The Turkish Constitution of 1961 has been regarded as the most liberal constitution in the history of the Republic of Turkey. It adopted the principle of a social state, gave a crucial part to social and economic rights and guaranteed fundamental individual rights and freedoms. University and radio autonomy also was provided, fundamental union rights were guaranteed, the right of unionization was given to all workers including civil servants, and the right to bargain collectively and to strike was given to workers. However, political parties were restricted with Article 57 of the Constitution.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code also banned the foundation of political parties which aimed at class domination and therefore were to oppress means over socialist organizations.<sup>56</sup> As will be discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, although they were not political parties, the Hearths were accused of being separatist organizations which also aimed at establishing proletarian dictatorship. In other words, even though the Constitution of 1961 granted several rights and liberties, the restrictive character of the Constitution regarding political parties revealed itself in the DDKO case.

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<sup>54</sup> Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, pp. 358-359.

<sup>55</sup> According to this article, “charters, programs, and activities [of political parties] have to be conformed with the democratic and laic republican principals that were grounded on human rights and freedoms and to the fundamental clause of the indivisibility of state with its territory and nation.” Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri “Senedi İttifaktan Günümüze”* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), p. 187.

<sup>56</sup> “27 Mayıs ve Yeni Siyasal Düzen,” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* vol. 6 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988), p. 1981.

The NUC presented the threat of foundation of a Kurdish state in eastern Turkey as one of the underlying reasons for the military coup and accused the DP for procuring Kurds to go out of control.<sup>57</sup> After the military coup of 1960, the deposed Prime Minister Adnan Menderes claimed that a number of traditional Kurdish leaders, who were not content with their increased powers, had been using their powers in order to achieve independence for the Kurdish provinces. In the face of this claim, the new military government arrested 485 influential Kurds in June 1960 and kept them detained in a camp in Sivas for several months. While the rest of them were released by governmental pardon, the 55 most influential of these detainees, all DP members except one of them, were sent into exile to western Turkey for two years. The reason of this attitude against Kurdish notables was presented by the military government as being aimed at diluting the influence of the aghas in eastern Anatolia.<sup>58</sup> As Bruinessen writes, this exile experience strengthened the Kurdish national sentiments of the detainees instead of eliminating them since many of them became influential actors of the later Kurdish movement.<sup>59</sup> Actually, these exiles returned to their homes with increased prestige among their fellow Kurds. Although the NUC presented these arrests and exiles as part of their struggle against feudal structure, this was not an effort to eliminate the feudal structures, but to suppress the Kurdish notables. As Faik Bucak, who was one of the 55

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<sup>57</sup> *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), p. 2112.

<sup>58</sup> “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol.7 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988), pp. 2112-2113.

<sup>59</sup> Martin Van Bruinessen, “The Kurds in Turkey,” in *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Nation-Building States: Collected Essays* (Istanbul: the Isis Press, 2000), p. 227; see also İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun Düzeni*, (Istanbul: E Yayınları, 1970), pp. 328-339.



exile Kurds, states only five of the exiled detainees were large land owners and therefore these exiles was not done to eliminate the feudal structures, but as those exiled were of Kurdish ethnicity.<sup>60</sup> This exile execution showed how the military government was sensitive about the Kurdish issue and perceived it as an important threat.

The 1961 Constitution brought about new rights and individual privileges to the people in the name of being citizens of the Republic, but it still denied the very existence of the Kurds. Actually, there was no sign of a change in the official discourse regarding the Kurds: denying the existence of the Kurds, their history and language continued to be one of the corner stones of new political order. The terms “Kurd” and “Kurdish” were taboo and Kurds were regarded as pure Turks whose native language was pure Turkish, but corrupted through receiving from Persian and Arabic. There are several manifestations of this character of the new order right after the military coup was staged. The second edition of the book of Mehmet Şerif Fırat, *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi* (The eastern provinces and the history of Varto) which claimed that Kurds were in fact Turks and that their language was Turkish, was published by the Turkish Ministry of Education in 1961. The President Cemal Gürsel wrote a foreword to this book affirming this view by arguing that the citizens living in eastern Turkey were Turks originally.<sup>61</sup>

What was more striking about Gürsel with respect to the Kurds in Turkey was his warning towards the eastern regions and the Kurds in the face of the possible impacts of conflict between Qassem and Barzani on Turkey. Gürsel said that “If the mountain

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<sup>60</sup> “27 Mayıs ve Yeni Siyasal Düzen,” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 6 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988), p. 1975.

<sup>61</sup>.See Mehmet Şerif Fırat, *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1961).

Turks do not keep quiet, the army will not hesitate to bomb their towns and villages to the ground. There will be such a bloodbath that they and their country will be washed away.”<sup>62</sup> The state campaign of *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş* (Citizen, Speak Turkish) was also conducted against minorities and therefore also the Kurds and their languages. Furthermore, the NUC started to change the names of Kurdish and Armenian villages, towns and persons into Turkish ones.<sup>63</sup> Another example of this attitude of the state towards the Kurds was the foundation of the Region Boarding Schools (*Bölge Yatılı Okulları*) especially in eastern and south-eastern Anatolian towns in order to assimilate the Kurds.<sup>64</sup> This last issue was also discussed thoroughly in the publications of the Hearths as a practice which aimed at the assimilation of the Kurds via infusing them with Turkish culture and language.

However, the Kurds also benefited from the liberal atmosphere of 1960s created by the 1961 Constitution. As known, the new Constitution expanded the scope of freedom of thought and press and the right to association, allowed people to form associations and publish without prior authorization.<sup>65</sup> Kurdish intellectuals also had new opportunities to express themselves, even though the word “Kurd” could not be used. In view of this relatively free atmosphere, in contrast to pre-coup era, several

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<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Ali Kemal Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds; A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 86.

<sup>63</sup> These changes was done according to Law no. 1587 that states “names which hurt public opinion and are not suitable for our national culture, moral values, traditions and customs shall be changed into Turkish ones.” Quoted in McDowall, *Modern Kürt Tarihi*, p. 537

<sup>64</sup> By the 1970, sixty boarding schools were founded in Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia and ten schools were in founded in the places where great number of Kurds was living. *Ibid.*, pp. 537-538.

<sup>65</sup> See Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri*, pp. 176-179.

bilingual Kurdish and Turkish journals which dealt with Kurdish history, culture and the economic backwardness of the eastern region of the country were published in the 1960s. The problems of Kurds and their region became a matter of discussion under the name of the “Eastern Question” by both Kurdish and Turkish intellectuals.<sup>66</sup> In addition to these journals, *Mem û Zîn* (Mem and Zin), a seventeenth-century epic poem of Ahmed-i Khani, which is seen as a national epic of Kurds, and a sixteenth century chronicle of the Kurdish emirate of Bitlis Sharaf al-Din Khan, *Sharafnama*, were translated into Turkish. In addition to these publications, towards the end of the 1960s, several books and articles by prominent Kurdish intellectuals such as Musa Anter, Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, Şükrü Yansıtman, Aşık İhsani, and the Turkish intellectual İsmail Beşikçi attracted the attention of the Kurdish youth to a great extent.<sup>67</sup>

As Bruinessen writes, until the end of the 1960s, the demands of Kurdish intellectuals were grounded on the economic development of eastern Turkey and the political and cultural rights on the basis of the Constitution. As is clear, these demands were rather modest. The demand for autonomy for Kurds was not a matter for discussion.<sup>68</sup> The issues of the economic development of the east and constitutional

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<sup>66</sup> As previously mentioned, *İleri Yurt* was already published in 1958 and it was followed in the 1960s by *Silvan'ın Sesi* (Voice of Silvan, 1962), *Dicle-Fırat* (Tigris and Euphrates, 1962), *Deng* (Voice, 1963), *Roja Newé* (New Day, 1963), *Roja Rast* (1963), *Deng' Taze* (1966), *Yeni Akış* (New Current, 1966), and *Doğu* (East, 1969). For a full list, see Malmisanij and Mahmud Levendi, *Li Kurdistana Bakur u li Tirkiyê Rojnamegeriya Kurdi (1908–1992)* (Ankara: Özge Yayıncılık, 1992).

<sup>67</sup> Bozarslan. “Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd,” p. 853.

<sup>68</sup> van Bruinessen, “Kurdish Society and the Modern State,” p. 60. Even though the Kurdish movement of that time had cultural and constitutional demands, there were also some Kurdish intellectuals who propounded political demands regarding the political status of Kurdish districts. Mustafa Remzi Bucak was one of those who advocated the establishment of federal Turkish and Kurdish governments. Bucak, *Bir Kürt Aydınundan*, p. 99.

rights for Kurds were also subjects which were voiced in the above-mentioned Kurdish journals. In addition to demands for the constitutional rights and economic investments in eastern Anatolia, adopting the Kurdish language as the language of radio, press and education constituted the main axes of the demands of the Kurdish movement during the 1960s.<sup>69</sup>

As demonstrated above, the military government perceived Kurdishness as a potential threat to the regime and this perception became concrete especially with the exile of 55 Kurds right after the military coup. In June 1963, 23 prominent Kurdish writers known as the 23ers (*23'ler*) also were arrested.<sup>70</sup> They were judged in the General Staff Court Martial and the journals *Dicle-Firat*, *Deng*, *Roja Newé*, and *Reya Rast* were banned. The 23ers were accused of being communist Kurds who aimed at establishing an independent Kurdish state on Turkish lands.<sup>71</sup> *İleri Yurt* had already been banned in September 1961 in the view of reactions from the Turkish press against nationalist poem of Musa Anter, *Kıml* (insect pest),<sup>72</sup> which had been published in 1959.<sup>73</sup> *Yeni Akış*, which aimed to provide a solution to the Eastern Question from a socialist view point and adhered to the constitution, also was banned after its fourth

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<sup>69</sup> See Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, *Doğu'nun Sorunları* (Ankara: Toplum, 1966).

<sup>70</sup> The arrest of these intellectuals was called the “23'ler Olayı” (Incident of the 23'ers). These 23 Kurds included Edip Karahan, owner and editor of *Dicle-Firat*; Doğan Kılıç Sıhhesenanlı, writer of *Barış Dünyası* and owner of *Roja Newé*; and Hasan Buluş editor of *Roja Newé*, writer Musa Anter, director Mehmet Serhat; owner Ergün Koyuncu; and editor Yasar Kaya of *Deng*; Ziya Serefhanoglu, owner of *Reya Rast*; Ali Anagür, Kemal Bingöllü, Fetullah Kakioglu, Mehmet Bilgin, Enver Aytakin and nine Kurds who were living in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Europe who were mainly students in Turkey. See “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler,” pp. 2126 -2127.

<sup>71</sup> “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler,” pp. 2126-2127.

<sup>72</sup> For the poem, see Musa Anter, *Kıml* (Istanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1962).

<sup>73</sup> McDowall, *Modern Kürt Tarihi*, p. 536.

volume in which several writings about the Eastern Question were collected. Mehmet Ali Aslan, Abbas İzol and Kemal Burkay also were arrested because of their writings in this journal.<sup>74</sup>

#### Affiliation between the Kurds and the Turkish Left

No matter how many symbols with respect to the ideas of Kurdishness marked the edges of the free atmosphere that the 1961 Constitution brought about, the Constitution, nonetheless, enabled an atmosphere in which any kind of idea could be discussed. In this relatively free atmosphere, socialist ideas spread and for the first time it was adopted by the masses in Turkey as well as by Kurdish youth and intellectuals. The predominant socialist ideals also had become very influential among Kurdish intellectuals and Kurdish university students, and accordingly they addressed socialism and its theses on the national question with which they realized the resolution of their national oppression. As Bozarslan argues, the leftist discourse of the 1960s, which was nourished by Marxist and Leninist ideology, provided the Kurdish movement to express itself with a new universal paradigm. Within this paradigm, the Kurdish movement perceived and presented itself as a movement of a suppressed nation whose fate was combined with the fates of the proletariat and peasantry.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Tarık Ziya Ekinci, “Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TİP) ve Kürt Sorunu,” in *Resmi Tarih Tartışmaları 6: Resmi Tarihte Kürt’ler*, İsmail Beşikçi, ed. (Ankara: Özgür Üniversite Kitaplığı, 2009), pp. 160-163.

<sup>75</sup> Bozarslan, “Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd,” pp. 853-854.

A majority of Kurdish intellectuals preferred to be affiliated with the Workers' Party of Turkey whereas the Kurdish youth preferred the Idea Clubs which supported the Party until it was transformed into Revolutionary Youth.<sup>76</sup> Even though at the beginning of the 1960s, neither the working class nor peasantry or youth showed any remarkable political and organizational mobilization in Turkey, the second half of the decade, they underwent a process in which various segments of society became rapidly politicized. In this period, socialist ideas spread rapidly among workers, peasants and youth and became popular, which in turn led these groups to radicalization in which they became important political actors. Accordingly, an important constituent of the social movement rising in the 1960s and radicalizing towards the end of the decade were university students. In such a period when massive demonstrations, strikes, and occupations at factories, universities and lands were an agenda of the country, respectively the Kurdish youth also took their place in this social opposition. As discussed above, poor Kurdish students found it easier to enter higher education institutions. Thus, the Kurdish youth that founded the Hearths in 1969 were these students who had become familiar with socialism in the WPT, the FIC, and the Revolutionary Youth, and participated actively in the radicalizing social movement in the late 1960s. Finally put their knowledge and experiences into the foundation of the Hearths.

Before examining the organizational meeting of the Kurds with the Turkish left that were expressed with the WPT, FIC and Revolutionary Youth and their secession from these organizations, evidently the Incident of the 49ers (*49'lar Olayı*) as the first indication in terms of left-wing ideas among Kurdish intellectuals and the influences of

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<sup>76</sup> Especially after the Incident of 23ers, the great majority of the Kurdish socialists started to join in the WPT. Ergun Aydınoglu, *Türkiye Solu (1960-1980)* (Istanbul: Versus, 2007), p. 335.

organizations which can be identified crudely as the “Kurdish right” in the Kurdish movement need to be elaborated briefly. Therefore, before elucidating the relations of the Kurds with the Turkish left organizations, these two significant developments need a general discussion.

### The Incident of the 49ers

The Incident of the 49ers can be seen as a symbol of the beginning of a new phase in the Kurdish movement in the political sense. In December 1959, fifty-two Kurdish intellectuals were arrested on the accusation of being involved in activities that aimed at establishing a communist Kurdistan and they were imprisoned in the Harbiye Military Prison in Istanbul. Since one of these prisoners, Emin Bartu died in the jail and two of them were judged without being imprisoned, they were called the “49ers”.<sup>77</sup> According to Naci Kutlay, who was one of the 49ers, the underlying reason for these arrests was the aim of the DP government to secure a US loan.<sup>78</sup> However, getting an American loan

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<sup>77</sup> These people were “Şevket Turan, Naci Kutlay, Ali Karahan, Koço Elbistan, Yavuz Çamlıbel, Mehmet Ali Dinler, Yusuf Kaçar, Nurettin Yılmaz, Ziya Şerefhanoglu, Medet Serhat, Hasan Akkuş, Örfi Akkoyunlu, Selim Kılıçoğlu, Sahabettin Septioğlu, Said Elçi, Said Kırmızıtoprak, Yaşar Kaya, Faik Savaş, Haydar Aksu, Ziya Acar, Fadıl Budak, Halil Demirel, Esat Cemiloğlu, Ferit Bilen, Mustafa Nuri Direkçigil, Fevzi Avsar, Necati Siyahkan, Hasan Ulus, Nazmi Balkas, Hüseyin Oğuz Üçok, Mehmet Nazım Çiğdem, Fevzi Kartal, Mehmet Aydemir, Abdurrahman Efem Dolak, Musa Anter, Canip Yıldırım, Emin Kotan, Ökkes Karadağ, Muhsin Savata, Turgut Akın, Sıtkı Elbistan, Serafettin Elçi, Mustafa Ramanlı, Mehmet Özer, Feyzullah Demirtas, Cezmi Balkas, Halil Yokus, İsmet Balkas, Said Bingöl, Mehmet Bilgin, Fethullah Kakioglu. Naci Kutlay, *49’lar Dosyası*, (Istanbul: Fırat, 1994), p.11. 28 of these people were students, and the rest were from different professions such as military officer, lawyer, journalist, merchants, etc. and only one of them was worker. See Naci Kutlay, “Kürt Aydınlanmacılığında ‘49’lar Olayı,”*İkinci Bilim ve Siyaset*, no.1 (2001), pp. 61-70.

<sup>78</sup> . The economy was in a severe regression period at that time, presenting Turkey as if it were under the threat of communism could be advantageous. Naci Kutlay, *21. Yüzyıla Girerken Kürtler* (Istanbul: Peri Yayınları, 2002), p. 533.

was not the sole intention of the DP government. As Gündoğan argues, in addition to this, the government aimed at suppressing the Kurdish activists in Istanbul, Ankara and Diyarbakir whose names had been determined by the Turkish National Intelligence Service.<sup>79</sup> In other words, there were no organizational affiliation among the 49ers; instead they were individual Kurdish intellectuals that were chosen by the intelligence service.<sup>80</sup>

According to Bozarslan, one of the initial signs of the formation of the Kurdish left in Turkey was observed among the 49ers during their detention process in Harbiye Military Prison.<sup>81</sup> In line with the conventional wisdom, the 49ers were divided into left-wing and right-wing groups and these two groups held discussions about subjects such as industry, agriculture, and education.<sup>82</sup> Even though this polarization was not sharp, the term “leftist” was to some extent ambiguous and some of the right-wing persons became leftists in the following years, a left-wing was roughly formed around the prisoners who identified themselves as “leftists” at that time. These were Canip Yıldırım, Naci Kutlay, Sait Kırmızıtoprak, Nazmi Balkaş, Musa Anter, Örfi Akkoyunlu and Hasan Akkuş.<sup>83</sup> Later on, while Sait Kırmızıtoprak (*Dr. Şıwan*) organized under the DPK-T and then founded the socialist Kurdistan Democratic Party in Turkey

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<sup>79</sup> Gündoğan, “The Kurdish Political Mobilization,” p. 87.

<sup>80</sup> Kutlay, “Devrimci Doğu Kültür,” p. 160.

<sup>81</sup> See Bozarslan, “Türkiye’de Kürt Sol Hareketi,” p. 1175; and Şahin, “Kürt Solu – Doğu, Gelişimi,” p. 271.

<sup>82</sup> Kutlay, *Anılarım*, p. 85.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84. See also Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım 1–2* (Istanbul: Doz Yayınları 1990), p. 167.



(*Türkiye’de Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi*, KDPT) and had influence on the Kurdish movement of the 1970s, the rest had important roles in the WPT and Kurdish movement itself. Not only were the socialist Kurdish cadres of the subsequent era, but also prominent Kurdish rightist figures such as Yusuf Azizoğlu, Ziya Şerefhanoglu, Sait Elçi, and Ali Karahan also were among the 49ers. As this study will show in Chapter II, intellectuals as Naci Kutlay and Canip Yıldırım who placed themselves in the left-wing among the 49ers played important roles also during the foundation processes of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths.

### A Kurdish Right?

Although many Kurdish intellectuals and Kurdish young people met with socialist ideas through organizing in the Workers’ Party of Turkey and the Federation of Idea Clubs and then in the Revolutionary Youth, non-socialist Kurdish groups were also influential on the Kurdish movement to some extent even though they neither gained a mass base among the Kurdish people nor Kurdish intellectuals. According to Kutlay, at the beginning of the 1960s Kurdish socialists were very small in number; specifically they consisted only of WPT Diyarbakir deputy Tarık Ziya Ekinici and of a small number of Kurdish university students. While their influence on the Kurdish people and movement was very limited, the Kurdish people and university students were affiliated to the rightist circles. Yusuf Azizoğlu, who became Minister of Health in the early 1960s and the party leader of New Turkey Party (*Yeni Türkiye Partisi*, NTP) in the late 1960s; Ziya Şerefhanoglu, independent senator of Bitlis; Ali Karahan, Hakkari deputy; and Seikh Sait’s grand son Abdül Melik Fırat were prominent names in Kurdish rightist circles.

These people were against any socialist ideas and regarded socialist Kurds as “traitors.” However, Kutlay states that these Kurdish rightists did not mention even the word “Kurd” and did not have concrete policies regarding Kurdish people.<sup>84</sup>

Another center of the Kurdish right was the Democratic Party of Kurdistan-Turkey, a clandestine party which was more influential on the Kurdish movement. In this regard, before examining the ideological and organizational impacts of the Turkish socialist parties and organizations on the Kurdish movement it is important to look at the NTP and DPK-T, which influenced Kurdish movement of that time.

The NTP was founded in 1961 and, similarly to the Justice Party, presented itself as a successor of the DP, but then failed to gain the former voter base of the DP. Yusuf Azizoğlu who became the party leader of the NTP in the late 1960s was a Kurd. He was also one of the exiled aghas who had been allowed to return home by the DP government and had left the DP with several other Kurds to form the Freedom Party (*Hürriyet Partisi*, FP) in 1955.<sup>85</sup> Azizoğlu became the Minister of Health in the 1961-1962 coalition government and during his ministry he provided a relatively great number of hospitals, health care centers and doctors in Kurdish districts. In addition to providing medical care opportunities, Azizoğlu contributed Kurdish cultural associations financially and because of this interest in Kurdish cities and organizations, he was accused of being regionalist and a “Kurdist” (*Kürtçü*) by Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata, the RPP Minister of the Interior.<sup>86</sup> Mümtaz Kotan, one of the most important founders of the

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<sup>84</sup> Kutlay, *Anılarım*, p. 110.

<sup>85</sup> McDowall, *Modern Kürt Tarihi*, p. 540.

<sup>86</sup> Ruşen Arslan, *Cim Karnunda Nokta: Anular* (Istanbul: Doz, 2006), p. 85.

Ankara DDKO, says that they, as future founding members of the Hearths, also had close relations with the NTP during preparatory works of the foundation of the Ankara DDKO and benefited from the financial help of Azizoglu.<sup>87</sup> Especially after 1965, the NTP brought the eastern region to the forefront in its propaganda, tried to ally with the Kurdish notables and aghas, and concentrated on the issue of the development of east.<sup>88</sup> However, the efforts of the NTP to secure the support of the Kurdish aghas were not successful. Even though the NTP gained almost its entire votes from Kurdish districts in 1965 general elections, votes for the NTP were very low in extent since the Kurdish aghas overwhelmingly voted for the Justice Party.<sup>89</sup>

As demonstrated in the previous section, the Barzani movement of 1961 had great influences on Kurds in Turkey. Kurdish nationalists such as Faik Bucak, Sait Elçi and Ömer Turan had close relations with the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party and established a KDP Coordination Committee in 1961 and founded the DPK-T in 1965.<sup>90</sup> According to Bozarslan, the DPK-T was the first Kurdish organization in Turkey since the Xoybun of 1930s. It was a conservative and culturally nationalist party and to some extent was an extension of Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq in Turkey. The DPK-T

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<sup>87</sup> Kotan also states that Azizoglu offered himself to be the leader of the youth branch of the NTP, but they rejected this proposition on behalf of establishing the Hearths. Kotan, "Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi Somut Bir Örnek: DDKO (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları)," *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 6 (2007), p. 35.

<sup>88</sup> The NTP concentrated on the east and its economic problems, but did not had any separatist claims. For the nationalism concept written in the party program of NTP, see Ferruh Bozbeyli, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partilerin Ekonomik ve Sosyal Görüşleri-Belgeler; Parti Programları* (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1969), p. 376.

<sup>89</sup> McDowall, *Modern Kürt Tarihi*, p. 540.

<sup>90</sup> The first general secretary of the DPK-T was Faik Bucak, but after he was murdered, Sait Elçi, who was one of the figures in the incidents of the 49ers and the 23ers became the leader of the party. Ferhat Aydın, "Türkiye-Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi," in *Kürt Dosyası*, Rafet Ballı (Istanbul, Cem Yayınevi, 1991), pp. 350-351.

mainly was organized in the countryside and its leaders came mainly from conservative Kurdish segments such as tribal and religious heads and their followers, artisans and traders.<sup>91</sup> However, the DPK-T, by virtue of its socialist-oriented members, especially Sait Kırmızıtoprak, generally coordinated with the Easterners Group (*Doğulular Grubu*) in the WPT and had important roles in organizing the Eastern Meetings.<sup>92</sup> As will be shown in the second chapter of this thesis, the DPK-T members also frequently visited to the Hearths and had relations with members of the Hearths.

According to the Party statute, the DPK-T adhered to the 1961 Constitution of Turkey and advocated the political, cultural and economic rights of the Kurds within the borders of the Republic of Turkey. Thus the DPK-T did not aim at secession but integration with the political system of Turkey via having equal rights with Turks. In accordance with the above-mentioned main axis of the demands of the Kurdish movement during the 1960s, the DPK-T demanded that the Kurds should be represented in the Turkish Grand National Assembly proportional to the ratio of their population, education in Kurdish language, and elimination of regional disparities between east and west.<sup>93</sup> In accordance with the socio-economic background of its leaders, the DPK-T did not have any demands regarding land reform. At this point, it is important to mention the

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<sup>91</sup> Bozarslan, “Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd,” pp. 854-855.

<sup>92</sup> İbrahim Güçlü states that the DPK-T was not founded with a strong cadre in qualitative and quantitative terms and that it could not acquire a base among the intellectuals and youth since the party was not able to benefit from legal working forms; and therefore, that performed joint activities with WPT as in the case of Eastern Meetings and even that some members of the DPK-T maintained their memberships in the WPT even after the DPK-T was founded. See İbrahim Güçlü, “DDKO: Türkiye’de Kürtlerin Siyasete Doğrudan Katılma Aracı ve Yeni Kürt Baharı’nın İlk Açık - Legal Kürt Örgütlenmesi,” in *Resmi Tarih Tartışmaları 6: Resmi Tarihte Kürtler*, İsmail Beşikçi, ed. (Ankara: Özgür Üniversite Kitaplığı, 2009), p. 238.

<sup>93</sup> Şakir Epözdemir, *Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi 1968/235 Antalya Davası Savunması* (İstanbul: Peri Yayınları, 2005), pp. 17-19; 24.

ideas of Dr. Sait Kırmızıtoprak, who was also a prominent figure in the incidents of the 49ers and 23ers. In contrast to the Sait Elçi, who was leader of the DPK-T after Faik Bucak was killed, Kırmızıtoprak wanted to adopt a socialist stance for the DPK-T. According to him not only the national question, but also other problems of Kurdish districts such as land and social inequalities were important and could only be resolved by a patriotic party under the leadership of Marxist-Leninists. As a result, Kırmızıtoprak broke away from the DPK-T and formed DPKT, an illegal socialist leaning party in 1969.<sup>94</sup>

#### Yön (1961 – 1967)

*Yön* (Direction), a weekly journal that had great impact on the agendas of the left-wing cadres of Turkey, was published between 1961 and 1967<sup>95</sup> and acted as “host” for the writings of intellectuals that had different ideological inclinations from leftist Kemalists to social democrats, and the former CPT cadres. Even though there were several inclinations among *Yön* writers, the harmonization of Kemalism with Marxism, perceiving a military coup as a sole realistic way for a quick transition to socialism and relying upon the leadership of civil and military intellectuals in the transformation of the country constituted the basic characteristic of this journal. Such an orientation, known as

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<sup>94</sup> Serhad Dicle, “Kürdistan Öncü İşçi Partisi,” in *Kürt Dosyası*, Rafet Ballı, ed. (Istanbul, Cem Yayınevi, 1991), p. 310.

<sup>95</sup> *Yön* was banned in 1963 for fourteen months by the Martial Law Command and ceased to be published in June 1967. Gökhan Atılgan, “Yön-Devrim Hareketi,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Sol* vol. 8, Murat Gültekingil, ed. (Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2007), p. 602.

*Yöncülük*, became the symbol of this inclination within the Turkish left-wing movement during the 1960s.<sup>96</sup>

As mentioned above, instead of relying upon the long-term organized movement of workers and the leadership of working class in the socialist movement, *Yön* relied upon a rapid and fundamental transformation of the country through a military coup under the leadership of civil and military intellectuals. In this sense, the insistence of the WPT on the leadership of working class in the struggle for socialism and perceiving this struggle within the borders of parliamentary system which will be discussed below was one of the issues that *Yön* movement criticized.

Developmentalism was one of the popular subjects discussed worldwide during the 1960s in an atmosphere where Soviet Union and several underdeveloped countries experienced “non-capitalist model of development” to a great extent successfully as an alternative way to the capitalist one.<sup>97</sup> *Yön* also regarded Turkey as an underdeveloped country and proposed this model of non-capitalist development with resorting to statist

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<sup>96</sup> See Gökhan Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar; Yön – Devrim Hareketi* (Istanbul: Tüstav, 2002). In addition to this central inclination of *Yön*, there was a social democratic inclination that did not become effective in *Yön* and a Marxist inclination which contributed to the prominent leaders of the WPT and the NDR movement in the subsequent years. Aydınoğlu, *Türkiye Solu*, pp. 77-78. The central inclination within *Yön* became more sharpened following the 1965 General Elections in which *Yön* writers expected a victory of a coalition government of the RPP and the WPT, but the Justice Party gained majority of the votes and formed the government. Following these elections, ideas of establishing close relations with military officers who were inclined to make a coup against the government and relying upon a rapid transition to socialism through a military coup instead of long term organizing efforts among the masses were adopted as a realistic way to establish a socialist order in Turkey. This orientation of *Yön* culminated in its permanent closure in 1967 and its place gave way to a new journal called *Devrim* (The Revolution) in 1969, which categorically advocated a rapid Kemalist top-down revolution through a military coup without referring to any Marxist rhetoric. Gökhan Atılğan, “Yön-Devrim Hareketi,” pp. 644-645.

<sup>97</sup> For a brief economic and political elaboration of “non-capitalist road” and its relations with *Kadro* journal in terms of developmentalism, see Keyder, *Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar*, p. 201.

economic policies for Turkey in effect to purvey transition to the socialist order.<sup>98</sup> In addition to the issue of development, several subjects such as working class, women rights, and social democracy were discussed in *Yön* in a relatively radical and profound way for the first time in Turkey. The Kurdish Question, called as “Eastern Question,” also was one of these subjects that were discussed in *Yön*.<sup>99</sup>

In accordance with preoccupation of *Yön* with the issue of developmentalism and its close relation with the Kemalist ideology, it approached the Eastern Question as if it was an outcome of regional backwardness that stemmed from the maintenance of the feudal structure and therefore it could be solved through satisfying regional development. However, along with the critics of the feudal structure and demands for a regional development for east, the ethno-cultural dimension of this question also was admitted by some of the *Yön* writers. Doğan Avcıoğlu, editorial writer of *Yön*, wrote one of the courageous articles about this question. While adopting the main stance of *Yön*, Avcıoğlu criticized the policy of forced assimilation and underlined the ethnic dimension of the Eastern Question.<sup>100</sup>

There also were more radical voices among the *Yön* writers in terms of revealing the ethnic dimension of the Question. Muzaffer İlhan Erdost was one of these writers who featured the social and ethnic dimensions of this question in a series of articles.<sup>101</sup> Sait Kırmızıtoprak was also one of the radical voices in *Yön*. Kırmızıtoprak advocated

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<sup>98</sup> See Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında*, pp. 85-100.

<sup>99</sup> Aydınöğlü, *Türkiye Solu*, p. 79.

<sup>100</sup> Yeğen, “Türkiye Solu ve Kürt Sorunu,” pp. 1215-1216.

<sup>101</sup> See Muzaffer İlhan Erdost, *Şemdinli Röportajı* (Ankara, Onur Yayınları, 1993).

the right of publication in the Kurdish language and challenged the assimilation policies against the Kurds. One of the crucial writings of Kırmızıtoprak in *Yön* was his reply to an article in *Barış Dünyası* (Peace World) <sup>102</sup> together with a group of Kurds in *Yön* under the title of “Doğulu Gençler Barış Dünyasına Cevap Veriyor: Doğu Davamız” (Eastern Youth Respond To Peace World: Our Eastern Question) in which the idea of satisfying national integrity through assimilation was criticized. Another significant article of Kırmızıtoprak in *Yön* was a reply to Avni Doğan’s warnings to the government about the possible impacts of the Barzani movement on the Kurds in Turkey in a journal called *Dünya*. <sup>103</sup> Kırmızıtoprak responded to Avni Doğan’s arguments with an article titled “Kimler İçin Çan Çalıyor?” (For whom does the bell toll?) in *Yön* on 14 September 1962. In this article, Kırmızıtoprak criticized the assimilation policies and advocated the equality of the nations as a solution for the Question. <sup>104</sup>

### The Kurds in the Workers’ Party of Turkey

With a nationalist and conservative body, the DPK-T that was founded in 1965 did not become a center of attraction for Kurdish intellectuals and youth. Accordingly I showed

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<sup>102</sup> *Barış Dünyası* started to be published in 1962 by Ahmet Hamdi Başar. It was one of the significant journal in which both the ideas of the regime and Kurdish intellectuals took part. However, the general stance of the journal about the Eastern Question was liberal in terms of confirming assimilation policies whilst advocating the right to speech and to write in Kurdish language and demanding development of eastern regions where Kurds constituted the majority of the population. Kırmızıtoprak and some of Kurdish intellectuals in *Yön* criticized this position of *Barış Dünyası* and entered into an argument regarding assimilationist approach of *Barış Dünyası*. See “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler,” pp. 2120-2121; Kutlay, *Anılarım*, pp. 129-131.

<sup>103</sup> In his writings in *Dünya*, Avni Doğan states that there was a concrete threat of establishing an autonomous Kurdish state in the territories of Turkey, Iraq and Iran in case of a victory of the Barzani movement in Iraq. “Sosyalizm ve Kürtler,” pp. 2121-2122.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*



how a group with a left-orientation emerged within the Kurdish intellectuals, called 49ers, immediately before the 1960s and that it was seen as the very first indication of the shift towards left-wing ideology among Kurds. Yet, these left-wing orientations remained vague in that period. After a couple of years, a great majority of Kurdish intellectuals and university students came into contact with a leftism that relatively had a more refined and clarified socialist content; and hence the Kurdish movement “walked along” with the Turkish left within and around the WPT until the first organizational dissociation that was materialized by the foundation of the Hearths.

Along with being the sole legal left-wing political party during the 1960s which determined the destiny of the leftist movement in Turkey largely and also influenced the political agenda of the country to some extent, the WPT became a “host” organization for Kurdish intellectuals. Therefore, the approach of WPT towards the Kurds and the Kurdish Question has great importance.

The WPT was founded on 13 February 1961 by 12 trade unionists. Following its foundation, the WPT founders searched for a chairman among intellectuals. As a result, Mehmet Ali Aybar, who was a socialist Marxist intellectual, became the chairman of the WPT in February 1962. The WPT was not founded as a socialist party and did not display considerable activities until the chairmanship of Aybar which commenced a new phase for the WPT. Following his chairmanship, the Party opened its doors to leftist intellectuals and developed a Marxist-socialist identity and thus transformed into an attraction center for socialist intellectuals.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Sadun Aren, *TİP Olayı (1961 – 1971)* (Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1993), pp. 33-44.

As will be discussed below, not only Turkish socialist intellectuals but also almost all of the Kurdish intellectuals showed great interest in the WPT and acted together in the Party under the name of the Easterners Group. It can be alleged that Kurdish socialist cadres were trained within and around this Party.<sup>106</sup> As Aydınöđlu points out, in terms of gathering together the unionists, leftist intellectuals, youth and Kurds under a single roof of a political party, and the number of wage workers<sup>107</sup> in the member composition of the Party, the WPT constituted a crucial step in the formation of a mass labor party in Turkey.<sup>108</sup> However, while the WPT constituted a coalition platform for leftist intellectuals who came from different political views, this heterogeneous character of the intellectuals brought about a crisis in the WPT that eventually rendered it nonfunctional to great extent, especially after 1966.<sup>109</sup>

One of the reasons for the interest of the Kurdish intellectuals in the WPT was the positive approach of the Party towards the Kurdish Question. This approach was first declared by Mehmet Ali Aybar in a speech given in Gaziantep in May 1963. Aybar referred to Kurds as “people who speak Kurdish,” criticized the discriminatory policies against them and emphasized the need to provide these people with their constitutional

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<sup>106</sup> Şahin, “Kürt Solu – Doğuşu, Gelişimi,” p. 272.

<sup>107</sup> In 1968, the percentage of wage workers in the overall number of WPT members was almost 44 per cent. For the professional distribution of WPT members, see Dođu Perinçek, “Türkiye İşçi Partisi Üyelerinin Sınıf Yapısı,” *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, no. 3 (January 1969), pp. 205-226; 210 quoted in Aydınöđlu, *Türkiye Solu*, p. 102.

<sup>108</sup> Aydınöđlu argues that the attempts of Türk-İş administrators together with *Yön* writers to organize a political party called *Çalışanlar Partisi* (Working People’s Party) was the sole obstacle in front of this opportunity for forming a mass labor party. Aydınöđlu, *Türkiye Solu*, p. 93. For the *Çalışanlar Partisi*, see Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında*, pp. 281-290.

<sup>109</sup> Artun Ünsal, *Umuttan Yalnızlığa. Türkiye İşçi Partisi (1961 – 1971)* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2002), p. 4.

rights and liberties as equal citizens of the Republic.<sup>110</sup> Even though this speech was very carefully worded, it was relatively radical in terms of using the word “Kurd” and criticizing the discriminatory policies against them in a public gathering by a leader of a legal political party in a political atmosphere even the very word “Kurd” was perceived as a threat to the state integrity and official discourse.<sup>111</sup> This speech gained the sympathy of the Kurdish intellectuals and mullahs for the WPT and it was followed by organizational efforts of the Party among the Kurds.

The WPT participated in the provincial elections of 1963 in 9 cities and 31 districts of these cities. Even though the WPT was not successful in terms of votes, these elections enabled the WPT to present its ideas to the public especially via radio speeches and to gain new members and supporters.<sup>112</sup> One of the important speeches of the WPT authorities regarding the Kurdish issue was made by Diyarbakir candidate of the WPT, Tarik Ziya Ekinici, who was the most influential Easterner (*Doğulu*) in the WPT and became the WPT Diyarbakir deputy in the National Assembly in the 1965 general elections. In his speech, Ekinici addressed the people as “My Eastern brothers,” criticized the role of aghas in the Eastern regions, and mentioned the land reform as one of the

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<sup>110</sup> This speech was made even the party program of the WPT was adopted and its content was almost the same as the below discussed part of the party program regarding the Kurdish Question. For the whole speech, see Nihat Sargın, *TİP’li Yıllar* (Istanbul: Felis Yayınları, 2001) pp. 166-167.

<sup>111</sup> Actually the cautious wording of the WPT with respect to the Kurdish Question was understandable since the first column of Article 89 of the Political Parties Law banned political parties to propound the existence of minorities on the basis of national or cultural differences. The WPT also was closed for violating this article.

<sup>112</sup> Sargın, *TİP’li Yıllar*, p. 186.

targets of the WPT which was actually materialized in the party program in the following year.<sup>113</sup>

Following the provincial elections, prominent young Kurdish mullahs and artisans also enrolled in the WPT and took part in organizing its district organizations. This interest of Kurdish notables was one of the most important factors behind the increasing support of the common Kurdish people for the WPT. The affiliation of Kurdish religious men with the WPT was especially important in terms of eliminating the image of the WPT among the Kurdish peasantry as an unreligious party that had been created by the rest of Kurdish traditional leaders.<sup>114</sup> Kurdish intellectuals that were members of the WPT also made efforts to diffuse the discourse of the Party on the Kurdish issue among the Kurdish people and get support from the region. The increasing support of the Kurds for the Party is clear in the distribution of registered WPT members on the basis of regions in which members from east and south-eastern regions constituted 12.57 % of overall WPT members.<sup>115</sup>

Actually, the Easterners Group constituted one of the fundamental elements of the Party administration of the WPT together with unionists and intellectuals.<sup>116</sup> The party program, which was adopted in the first Grand Congress in 1964 and remained in

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<sup>113</sup> For the whole text of Ekinci's radio speech, see Ekinci, "Türkiye İşçi Partisi," pp. 147-151.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., pp. 151-153.

<sup>115</sup> This is a study based on the record vouchers of the party members in May 1968. The rates for Marmara-Aegean- Mediterranean Regions were 62.91 %, for the central Anatolia region was 15.90 %, and Black Sea region was 8.62%. However, while the WPT members from the east and south-eastern regions ranked three in terms of their proportion among the overall WPT members, they ranked two in terms of intensity of regions among overall WPT members. *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, no. 3 (January 1969), in Aren, *TİP Olayı*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>116</sup> Ünsal, *Umuttan Yalnızlığa*, p. 4.

force until the WPT was closed down in 1971, reflected this character of the Party. Through this party program, the WPT was mainly manifested as a party which aimed at establishing a socialist order on the basis of Marxist principles within the framework of the Constitution and parliamentary democracy.<sup>117</sup>

With respect to the Kurdish Question, the party program dealt with the Eastern Question under the title of “Eastern Development” with similar words and cautiousness as those in Aybar’s speech in Gaziantep. While this program declared the interest of the WPT on the Kurdish Question, it adhered to the 1961 Constitution and its one of the corner stones, state indivisibility.<sup>118</sup> Regarding the Eastern Question, in the party program of the WPT, it was emphasized that Kurdish-speaking citizens were living in eastern and south-eastern provinces that constituted one of the most underdeveloped regions in Turkey and that they faced discriminatory practices due to their language. Providing these people with their constitutional rights and prioritizing the development of eastern regions were also presented as solutions to this question.<sup>119</sup> As will be

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<sup>117</sup> For the party program of the WPT, see Ferruh Bozbeyli, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partilerin Ekonomik ve Sosyal Görüşleri-Belgeler; Parti Programları* (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1969), pp. 241-367.

<sup>118</sup> Actually the WPT program as a whole adhered to the 1961 Constitution. As Aren states, this was due to Aybar’s reading of the Constitution. He perceived this constitution as it envisaged a socialist order and existence of the Party as a necessity for practicing the rights and liberties of given by this constitution. Aren, *TİP Olayı*, p. 61-62. For the role attributed to the WPT in terms of implementation of the Constitution, see Bozbeyli, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partilerin*, p. 280.

<sup>119</sup> “While the Workers’ Party of Turkey carries out the development of the country, one of the immediate and meticulous services will be [development of the East] [...] Public services in the region are almost non-existent. In parallel with the economic backwardness of the region, citizens here are backward in social and cultural terms. Furthermore, those who speak Kurdish or Arabic or those belong to the Alevi sect suffer from discrimination. These citizens of ours have paid their taxes to the state, shed their blood in the defense of the country and not spared their labor until today. In return, they have not been allowed to benefit from citizenship opportunities they already deserved. [...] Workers’ Party of Turkey that handles this Question in a realist way

discussed below, the approach of the WPT towards the Question especially with respect to the relation between regional development and the ethnic composition became clearer and more radical in the Fourth Congress of the Party held in 1970.

In addition to this formulization of the Kurdish Question, the subject of agrarian and land reform in the party program is also important in terms of revealing the overall approach of the Party towards the Question in its party program. The party program mainly proposed distribution of lands to landless and peasants without enough land and carrying out land reform and agrarian reform collectively on behalf of the poor peasants in a way so as to dilute the social and political power of large land owners over the peasantry and transform them into free producers.<sup>120</sup> As Aren argues, since the political and social power of large land owners over the peasantry were the most influential in the eastern regions, this land reform promise primarily was aimed at touching the Kurdish people.<sup>121</sup>

Aydınöglü regards the self-proclamation of the RPP as left-of-centre (*ortanın solu*) as an indicator of the prominence of the WPT in the political atmosphere of the country.<sup>122</sup> Against the left-wing shift of the RPP, the WPT participated in the 1965

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will treat these citizens of ours as complete citizens. [...] the Workers' Party of Turkey will save the Eastern and Southeastern cities from being an area of privation. Taking into the account that they were neglected until now, at the first speech, most of schools, factories, hospitals, libraries, theaters and roads will be opened in these cities. As stated in Article 3 of the Constitution, the Workers' Party of Turkey states that Turkey is an integral unit with its country and people and rejects any kind of separatism and regionalism." Ferruh Bozbeyli, *Parti Programları Birinci Kitap Birinci Cilt* (Istanbul: Ak Yayınları, 1970), pp. 324-325.

<sup>120</sup> Bozbeyli, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partilerin*, pp. 304-311

<sup>121</sup> Aren, *TİP Olayı*, p. 120.

<sup>122</sup> Aydınöglü, *Türkiye Solu*, p. 103.

general elections and gained 15 deputy seats<sup>123</sup> in the National Assembly with 2.83 % of votes thanks to the national remainder system which was adopted in the same year. The vote rate of the WPT increased in the 1966 and 1968 senate elections,<sup>124</sup> but decreased in the 1969 general elections especially due to intra-party conflicts which will be discussed below.<sup>125</sup> During these years, the WPT continued to keep the Kurdish Question on its agenda in accordance with what was envisaged in its party program.

In 1966, the Second Congress of the WPT was held and at this congress, the WPT was presented as the sole platform on which workers and socialist intellectuals could gather together in order to solve the problems of east.<sup>126</sup> In 1967, the relations of the Party with the Kurds became closer due to the Eastern Meetings. The WPT underlined its discourse on the Eastern Question also at the Third Congress in 1968. In the congress, it was emphasized that the Eastern Question could be solved only via taking account of psychosocial factors together with a radical economic change in the region.<sup>127</sup>

However the most radical decision in terms of the Eastern Question, which also led to the closure of the WPT, was taken during the Fourth Grand Congress of the WPT,

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<sup>123</sup> These deputies were Mehmet Ali Aybar, Behice Boran, Sadun Aren, Rıza Kuas, Muzaffer Karan, Yahya Kanpolat, Cemal Hakkı Selek, Adil Kurtel, Yunus Koçak, Şaban Erik, Yusuf Ziya Bahadınlı, Ali Karcı, Kemal Nebioğlu, Çetin Altan and Kurdish delegate Tarık Ziya Ekinci. However the number of the WPT deputies decreased to 14 due to the resignation of Muvazzaf Karan from the WPT.

<sup>124</sup> In these elections, the WPT was especially successful in the eastern region.

<sup>125</sup> Aren, *TİP Olayı*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>126</sup> Ünsal, *Umuttan Yalnızlığa...*, p. 8.

<sup>127</sup> Mehmet Ali Aybar, *TİP (Türkiye İşçi Partisi) Tarihi 1* (Istanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1988), p. 284.

which was held in 1970. This congress owed this radical character to the efforts of the members of the Hearths.<sup>128</sup> The radical character of the congress was due to the overt pronouncement of the existence of the Kurdish people in east and south-eastern Anatolia by a legal party and of assimilation policies towards them, explaining the reason for the underdeveloped situation of these regions not only as an outcome of the rule of capitalist uneven development, but also deliberate governmental policies due to the fact that the Kurds constituted the majority of the population of the regions. Therefore the Party perceived the Eastern Question not as an issue of regional development, but as an issue which stemmed from the chauvinist approach towards the Kurds. As Mesut Yeğen specifies, in spite of this character of the Fourth Congress of the WPT, this was also the congress at which the Kurds pulled away from the WPT.<sup>129</sup> The road to part organizational company of Kurdish socialists with Turkish left will be discussed below.

The decision taken in this congress was as follows:

The 4th Grand Congress of the Workers' Party of Turkey accepts and declares that the Eastern part of Turkey was inhabited by the Kurdish people; from the beginning, the fascist governments of the ruling class have been executing suppression, terror, and assimilation policies which occasionally took the character of bloody persecution activities; one of the fundamental reasons of the fact that the region where the Kurdish people live is underdeveloped, compared to the other regions of Turkey is the economic and social policies executed by the ruling class governments which take into

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<sup>128</sup> There had been discussions among members of the Hearths and the Easterners Group in the WPT on the subject of the content of the proposal that would be approved in the Fourth Congress. The members of the Hearths prepared a radical proposal, but the Easterners Group disaffirmed this proposal because of its radical character. However, in the end a new and more modest proposal but still in accordance with radical stance of the members of the Hearths was prepared and approved in the congress of the WPT under the name of "*Halklar Tasarısı*" (Proposal of Peoples). Kemal Burkay and Tarık Ziya Ekinci were two of the most influential Easterners that did not support this radical decision. Kotan argues that, some of DPKT supporters also had roles in determination of the radical character of this proposal. Kotan, "Tarihin Kararılması Eylemi," p. 51.

<sup>129</sup> Yeğen, "Türkiye Solu ve Kürt Sorunu," p. 1218.



consideration the fact that this region is inhabited by the Kurdish people, in addition to the unequal development law of capitalism; and thus, dealing with the “Eastern Problem” as a problem of regional development is nothing but an extension of the chauvinist views and attitudes of the ruling class governments; the struggle of the Kurdish people to benefit its constitutional citizenship rights and realize all of its democratic aspirations and demands is supported by our party which is a merciless enemy of all the fascist, suppressive, chauvinist-nationalist movements is an ordinary and obligatory revolutionary mission; Kurdish and Turkish socialists should work hand in hand within the party in order to integrate the struggle of the Kurdish people for expressing and improving its growing aspirations and demands and the struggle for the socialist revolution which is carried by the worker class and its pioneer organization, our party, in a single revolutionary wave; it is a fundamental and continuous cause of the party to provide the destruction of the racist-nationalist chauvinist-bourgeois ideology imposed against the Kurdish people, among the party members, socialists and all worker and labor masses; the party looks at the Kurdish problem through the perspective of the requirements for the struggle of worker class for the socialist revolution.<sup>130</sup>

### The Eastern Meetings

As the previous section demonstrates, the 1961 Constitution, albeit its exclusion of the Kurds, brought about a relatively free atmosphere from which the Kurds benefited. Having enjoyed the opportunities of the free atmosphere by means of several publication activities, the Kurdish intellectuals contributed to raising the consciousness of Kurdish people by elaborating their own problems in the name of the Eastern Question. As a result of the specific conditions of the period, some of the Kurdish intellectuals and students participated in the WPT and the FIC, and thus were introduced to socialism. This period also witnessed the revival of the Kurdish movement and furthermore the Eastern Meetings held in 1967 directly contributed to this revival by highlighting the problems of the Kurds and of the east and south-eastern regions where they constituted

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<sup>130</sup> For the original text in Turkish, see Aren, *TİP Olayı*, pp. 71-72. The translation is quoted by Gündoğan, “The Kurdish Political Mobilization,” pp. 94-95.

the majority. Almost in all of the memoirs of the members of the Hearths, they regard the Eastern Meetings as having been the essential factor paving the way for the establishment of the Hearths as left-oriented student organizations putting the ethnic basis forefront. These meetings were read in the context of raising the awareness of the Kurdish students of ethnic differences that led to increasing reaction against inequalities, of direct preoccupation with their own problems and thus consolidating their national senses. In this sense, the Eastern Meetings need to be examined as a significant aspect of the path leading to the formation of the Hearths, or in other words, of the organizational dissociation of the Kurdish students from the Turkish left organizations.

In addition to the 1961 Constitution which excluded the Kurds to a great extent and the economically and socially underdeveloped situation of the region, the oppressive stance of the state with respect to the publication activities of the Kurds, arrests and exiles conducted against the Kurdish intellectuals, speeches of the President Cemal Gürsel denying Kurds, and the threats of the RPP Niğde Deputy Asım Eren concerning the possible effects of the Barzani movement on the Kurds in Turkey were developments that ended up with the reaction of the Kurds. In short, all the developments discussed above can be said to have prepared the conditions of the mass meetings in the Kurdish provinces in 1967. In addition, the provocative writings which were humiliating and threatening the Kurds were another source causing further reaction among the Kurds.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Nihal Atsız wrote several articles in *Ötüken* targeting directly Kurds. In one of his articles in 1967, which is the one that attracted the greatest reaction, Atsız states that: “Kurds are neither Turk nor Turan. They are clearly Persian. The language they speak is degenerated, primitive Persian. So is their appearance. [...] What was “Kurd”? Will this crowd without state, culture, past and not having yet a common language be supposed to challenge Turks that founded a world empire? [...] They can go away as long as they want to remain being Kurds, to speak their primordial language composed of four or five thousand words, to establish a state. [...] Let them take leave without causing any trouble for the Turkish nation before they go

These essays were met with great reaction especially by Kurdish youth in big cities, and accordingly, Kurdish students retaliated by publishing a declaration with a signature of 19 Eastern High Education Association (*19 Dođulu Yüksek Tahsil Derneđi*) called “Who Dismisses Whom? Dare” (*Kim Kimi Kovuyor? Hodri Meydan*).<sup>132</sup>

Along with the reaction against the deliberate economic and social backwardness of eastern regions, the combination of reactions to the above-mentioned developments that humiliated the Kurds resulted in the Eastern Meetings which were held on a massive scale in several cities and towns of eastern regions.<sup>133</sup> Generally, the issues such as inter-

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extinct as well. To where? Wherever their eyes see, their hearts desire. Let them go to Iran, to India, to Barzani. Let them apply to the United Nations and request a fief in Africa. Let them learn from their Armenian cognates [*ırkdaş*] and come to their senses that the Turkish race is extremely patient, but that no one can stand against one like Kađan Arslan when he is pissed off.” Nihal Atsız, “Konuşmalar 1,” *Ötüken*, no. 10 (1967). For the full text of this essay, see Yaşar Karadođan, “Kürd Demokratik Mücadelesinde Bir Kilometre Taşı: 1967 – 1969 Dođu Mitingleri ve Kürd Uyanışı,” *BİR Araştırma İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 6 (2007), pp. 261-271. Another article leading to Kurdish reaction was an essay written in *Milli Yol* by İsmet Tümtürk, who was on trial with Atsız in the Racism and Turanism case in 1944. In this piece, Tümtürk states in a summarized way: “Gendarme, army troops pound a beat continuously and nothing changes. [...] Those lands are ours on the maps. Not in reality. Not only state orders but Turkishness are sham there. More accurately, it is almost non-existent. Those arid, steeply mountainous places do nothing but consume the money of the state. And it consumes nothing. Neither love, support nor force comes from them to the State. Yet, there is a remedy of this state. A remedy as influential as an edged sword, as clear and easy as Christopher Colombo’s egg. That is, settling Kazak and Kyrgyz immigrants there with their arms intact. For the improvement of our Roma citizens and to have beautiful [*insane güzeli*] citizens, it is necessary to have a more beautiful race and to raise the Turkish flag above the shoulders of this new race by breeding them with 50,000 backward Kurd’s beautiful girls living in Hakkari...” Nezir Şemmikanlı, “Geçmiş Olmadan Gelecek Olmaz!” *BİR Araştırma İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 6 (2007), p. 79.

<sup>132</sup> Briefly the declaration stated: “[...] Who exterminates whom? Who causes trouble for whom? And who dismisses whom? Since the ancient ages of history, there was and will be no force to dismiss those living on these lands from these lands. The ones to be dismissed in deed, are day dreamers aiming to clash peoples against each other. [...]” For the full text of the essay and the list of the signatory associations, see Şemmikanlı, “Geçmiş Olmadan Gelecek Olmaz!” pp. 80-81.

<sup>133</sup> Meetings were held in these locations, respectively: Silvan (13 August 1967), Diyarbakır (3 September 1967), Siverek (24 September 1967), Batman (8 October 1967), Tunceli (15 October 1967), Ağrı (22 October 1967), Ankara (18 November 1967). Karadođan, “Kürd Demokratik Mücadelesinde,” 274-279. For detailed information on the Eastern Meetings,

regional inequality, poverty and social and the economic backwardness of east and south-eastern regions were discussed, and the oppression policies directed at the region and humiliation of eastern people were criticized in these meetings.<sup>134</sup> In the organization of meetings, the WPT and the DPK-T played important roles; accordingly, the meetings turned into mass demonstrations with the mass participation of university students and Kurdish people from all ideological perspectives. While these meetings revoked a national awakening among the Kurds, they also led Kurds to integrate with leftist and socialist ideas contributing to an increase in the power of the WPT in the region.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, the meetings were represented to the public as “separatist” and “Kurdist” actions by the Justice Party government and the press.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, right-wing people, in retaliation to the meetings, organized an “Anatolia Ascendency Meeting” (*Anadolu Şahlanış Mitingi*) on 12 November 1967.<sup>137</sup>

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see İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Mitinglerinin Analizi (1967)* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1992); Gündoğan, “The Kurdish Political Mobilization.”

<sup>134</sup> What was written on banners and signs carried in meetings present an insight to the content of the meetings. Some of these slogans were as such: “Investment in the East,” “End to Oppression,” “We Want Freedom for the East,” “No One Can Dismiss Us from Here,” “We Want Factory, not Bazookas,” “The East is the Shame of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Turkey,” “Freedom to Live, Freedom to Read,” “We Want Human Dignity,” “Hakkari should be what Istanbul is,” “Factory in the West, Commando in the East.” Quoted in Hikmet Bozçalı, “DDKO’lu Siyasi Serüvenim,” *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 5 (2006), p. 206. As will be understood, thanks to slogans, the East and its problems were elaborated in the integrity of Turkey rather than a specific issue in these meetings.

<sup>135</sup> Kemal Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2001), p. 205. Meetings also became a power struggle between the WPT and DPK-T in effect to be backed by the rising Kurdish mobilization; yet the DPK-T members became disturbed by the fact that the WPT had its prominence over meetings and that national content in meetings were intertwined with class content. Şemmikanlı, “Geçmiş Olmadan Gelecek Olmaz!” pp. 79-80.

<sup>136</sup> Burkay, *Anılar Belgeler*, p. 205.

<sup>137</sup> Karadoğan, “Kürd Demokratik Mücadelesinde,” p. 279.

Therefore, the mass meetings held in 1967 marked its significance in terms of the national revival of the Kurds as well as its convergence of the left and socialist ideas. This character of the Eastern Meetings can be considered as a very important factor in the process leading to the foundation of the Hearths as left-wing organizations putting forward the ethnic identity. As the next section will show, this period also witnessed the point of no return for the Turkish left, which fragmented into a clearer orientation towards armed struggle and witnessed the ascendancy of the National Democratic Revolution movement from which Kurdish students became distanced. The state of the left in this period had a major impact on Kurdish students who consolidated their national senses especially thanks to the Eastern Meetings, but still sought resolutions of their problems in socialism, and hence contributed to the foundation of the Hearths. The next section, accordingly, will elaborate the crises which the Turkish left experienced and factors leading Kurdish students to break away from the Turkish left in organizational terms.

### The Crisis of the Turkish Left

While the Kurdish mobilization was to welcome socialist ideas, the Turkish left was on the verge of breaking apart. Accordingly, the Turkish left movement entered into a decomposition process starting from 1966. This process can be followed through analyzing the criticisms that were directed towards the WPT by the writers of *Yön*, discussions that were held in the WPT congress, and the emergence of the NDR

movement as an opposition to the WPT and adoption of the NDR theses by the youth.<sup>138</sup> The main decomposition points stemmed from different perceptions regarding the analysis of Turkey, the situations of the social classes and the power strategies among the advocates of the strategy of the Socialist Revolution and National Democratic Revolution. These political and ideological discussions that culminated in the decomposition within Turkish left occurred within and around the WPT. Even though the Kurdish Question was not a considerable source of this process, these discussions are significant since they paved the way not only for the decline of the left-wing movement itself, but also for the dissociation of the socialist Kurdish youth from the Idea Clubs and the establishment of the autonomous Kurdish organizations, the Hearths.

### The Crisis of the Workers' Party of Turkey

The WPT, from beginning to the end, advocated that capitalism was the dominant mode of production in Turkey and there were enough working masses to lead the socialist revolution in Turkey. Since the WPT perceived that Turkey had passed the bourgeois democratic revolution phase on a large scale, the next revolutionary phase was socialist revolution via parliamentary elections under the leadership of the working class. Furthermore, while perceiving socialism as the forthcoming revolutionary phase, the WPT unified the anti-imperialist struggle with the struggle for socialism.<sup>139</sup> These views of the WPT were first criticized by Doğan Avcıoğlu in an article titled “*TİP’e dair*”

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<sup>138</sup> Aydınöğlü, *Türkiye Solu*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>139</sup> Aren, *TİP Olayı*, p. 210.

(About the WPT), and following this article a series of theoretical and programmatic discussions was held in *Yön* under the name of “*TİP Tartışmaları*” (Discussions on WPT) in 1966 and 1967.<sup>140</sup> In these discussions, former CPT members Mihri Belli and his colleagues being in the first place took side with Avcıoğlu. Contrary to the above-mentioned perceptions of the Party, the *Yön* writers perceived Turkey as a country which had not completed the national democratic revolution phase and therefore proposed that not the socialist revolution, but the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle had to be prioritized. In other words, according to them socialist and anti-imperialist struggle could not be carried out at the same time. Furthermore, contrary to the insistence of the Party on the long-term struggle of the working class within the parliamentary system which was underpinned by consciousness-raising and organizing efforts among the masses, the *Yön* writers perceived this strategy as “unrealistic” and “loss of time” and therefore advocated a rapid change via a military coup under the leadership of a civil and military intellectual clique.<sup>141</sup> As will be discussed below, even though the WPT rule kept its silence with respect to the criticisms coming from the *Yön* writers, the criticisms were influential in terms of determining the agenda of the left-wing cadres and of the Party grassroots.

Another source for the decomposition of the Turkish left movement was the crisis in which WPT entered especially beginning from its Second Grand Congress, which was held in Malatya in 1966. During this congress, a considerable intra-party

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<sup>140</sup> Aydınoğlu, *Türkiye Solu*, p. 111.

<sup>141</sup> Çetin Yetkin, *Türkiye’de Soldaki Bölünmeler 1960 – 1970 (Tartışmalar- Nedenler – Çözüm Önerileri)* (Ankara: Toplum Yayınevi, 1970), pp. 142-144; 162-165.

opposition to the Party rule became concrete.<sup>142</sup> The political and theoretical discussions on the WPT that had started at *Yön* were influential in terms of determining the contents of the criticisms that were voiced against the Party rule under the chairmanship of Mehmet Ali Aybar.<sup>143</sup> However, the answer that the Party rule gave to the opposition was to ignore and hinder the theoretical discussions within the Party, and punish or discharge the critics, especially those influenced by the prominent leaders of the CPT tradition and the NDR movement. Even though this opposition to the Party rule was not homogenous, the NDR movement that had arisen around Mihri Belli, which will be discussed below, constituted the most influential current both within the WPT dissidents and also youth and therefore it became a target board of the Party rule.<sup>144</sup>

Even though the WPT rule kept its unity in the face of the ascending opposition of the NDR movement, it also experienced a split starting from 1968. The parties involved in this split were the chairman, Mehmet Ali Aybar, and Behice Boran and

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<sup>142</sup> Actually the WPT administration had also witnessed intra-party oppositions and were criticized for being anti-democratic, but these criticisms did not reach the dimension of undermining intra-party unity and making the WPT nonfunctional as a political Party after 1966. One of the intra-party controversial subjects from the First Congress of the WPT onwards was how the 53<sup>rd</sup> item of the charter of the WPT would be implemented. Seemingly, this item provided to make sure of the leadership of the working class in the Party through electing half of the officials in each Party organ to be either a paid-worker or those were in trade union administrations. The solution of the Party rule for the way of implementation of this item was bi-listed elections in which workers and trade unionists would be elected from a separate list by the others. This bi-listed enforcement of the 53<sup>rd</sup> item was criticized by the Party members as it would provide the dominance of unionists rather than workers since there was not a sufficient number of workers to be elected for the Party organs. However, the response of Party rule was to punish and dismiss the critics of this item. Aren, *TİP Olayı*, pp. 95-96; 208.

<sup>143</sup> As Aydınöğlü points out, the discussions held in *Yön* opened a new phase in which more sophisticated analysis were required from the WPT rule especially on the subjects that were discussed in *Yön*. In order to response this need, the WPT members that were influenced especially by older CPT members, Mihri Belli being in the first place, demanded a theoretical education for Party members. Aydınöğlü, *Türkiye Solu*, pp. 130-134.

<sup>144</sup> “Türkiye’de 1968,” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988), pp. 2076- 2078.



Sadun Aren, who formed the Labor Group (*Emek Grubu*) in May 1969 around a journal called *Emek*. Similar to the Party rule, this group also advocated socialist revolution as the main strategy for Turkey. However, one of the crucial diverging points between Aren and the Labor Group stemmed from Aybar's new socialism descriptions that he made after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.<sup>145</sup> Aybar criticized Soviet interventionism and recommended for Turkey to adopt neither a pro-American nor a pro-Soviet orientation but the national independence. However, his criticism went beyond a critique of Soviet bureaucratism and its interventionism and reached the dimension of a criticism of Marxism itself. According to Aybar, the occupation of Czechoslovakia was a result not only of Soviet bureaucratism, but of the concept of Marxist internationalism itself. In this context, he developed new concepts such as “*güler yüzlü sosyalizm*” (smiling face socialism), “*hürriyetçi sosyalizm*” (libertarian socialism), “*insan yüzlü sosyalizm*” (human faced socialism), “*Türkiye sosyalizmi*” (Turkey socialism) through condemning such basic principles of Marxism as internationalism and world revolution.<sup>146</sup>

Even though the Labor Group criticized this occupation in the beginning,<sup>147</sup> Aren and Boran changed their positions within the process and started to support the Soviet Union. According to them, Aybar's new socialism conceptualizations deviated from the

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<sup>145</sup> Czechoslovakia was occupied by the armies of the Warsaw Treaty Organization on 21 August 1968 due to the reforms of the Czechoslovakia Communist Party to liberalize the Party and the country from the Soviet Union. According to one of the WPT leaders, Nihat Sargın, not this occupation itself but Aybar's new socialism conceptualizations following this occupation gave way to a split within the WPT. Sargın, *TİP'li Yıllar*, vol. 2, p .660.

<sup>146</sup> Aydınoglu, *Türkiye Solu*, pp. 194-197.

<sup>147</sup> For Boran's early remarks on occupation that were similar to Aren's, see Sargın, *TİP'li Yıllar*, vol. 2, pp. 663-666.

principles of scientific socialism and were not the concepts of the Party, but were his own personal concepts. According to them, Aybar was trying to establish his personal rule over the Party through imposing his own decisions as if they were the official decisions of the Party.<sup>148</sup> As Aydınöđlu specifies, Aybar's new conceptualization on socialism was one of the sources that gave way to the dissociation of the youth from the WPT in a period when Marxist publications were starting to be translated into Turkish and read by the young cadres of the Party.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, according to Aydınöđlu, the reactions of the young cadres to the Aybar's new socialism perceptions were the main reason behind the changing approaches of the Labor Group on the occupation of Czechoslovakia.<sup>150</sup>

At this point, it is important to mention the approach of the NDR movement to the occupation. Contrary to the Aybar's approach, the NDR movement, which adopted the leadership of the Soviet Union in the international communist movement, evaluated the reforms of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia as counter-revolutionist and aimed at integrating the country to the imperialist bloc and therefore supported the intervention of Soviet Union into Czechoslovakia by force of Marxist internationalism.<sup>151</sup> In line with the NDR movement, the Labor Group also affiliated with the international communist movement under the leadership of the Soviet Union

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., pp. 680-681.

<sup>149</sup> For the publications translated, see Erkal Ünal, "Invited Sojourners: A Survey of the Translations into Turkish of Non-Fiction Left Books between 1960 and 1971," (MA Thesis, Bođaziçi University, 2006).

<sup>150</sup> Aydınöđlu, *Türkiye Solu*, pp. 205-206.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-201.

through parting company with Aybar on the grounds of the discussions about this occupation and therefore Aybar's new socialism concepts. However, this cleavage within the Party rule led to a more intense competition between the Labor Group and the NDR movement within the Party which culminated in the organizational victory of the Labor Group in the Fourth Grand Congress in 1970. However, no matter which group gained the Party administration, the Workers' Party of Turkey was damaged substantially by these intra-Party conflicts and turned into a politically ineffectual Party about to lose its support among the people.

With respect to the position of the Kurds in the intra-party conflicts, it can be said briefly that Kurdish delegates stayed out of the NDR movement,<sup>152</sup> a few of them took part in the Labor Group and the majority of them continued supporting the Party rule around Aybar.<sup>153</sup> Actually the Party rule continued to deal with the Kurdish Question increasingly in a radical way despite the ongoing intra-party conflicts. In the Fourth Congress, which was marked by intra-party conflicts and the victory of the Labor Group in the general headquarters of the WPT against Aybar and the NDR movement, this attitude of the Party rule continued and the aforementioned radical decisions concerning the Kurdish Question were taken.

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<sup>152</sup> Kurdish delegates Kemal Burkay, Naci Kutlay and Mehdi Zana submitted a proposal to the WPT Central Executive Committee in which they declared their adherence to the socialist revolution strategy and demanded a disciplinary proceeding for those who took part in the NDR movement. However their distant standing from the NDR movement is questionable in the view of the arguments about their contacts with the leader of the NDR movement Mihri Belli prior to the Fourth Congress in order to act together in this congress of WPT. For the argument about contacts with Kurdish delegates and Mihri Belli, see Sargın, *TİP'li Yıllar*, vol. 2, pp. 963-966.

<sup>153</sup> Kutlay, *21. Yüzyıla Girerken*, p. 255.

Despite the radical decisions regarding the Question, the Congress was also however the one at which the Easterners withdrew from the WPT. Even though Kemal Burkay, one of the prominent Kurdish delegates, voiced the adherence of the Easterners Group to the Party rule and its socialist revolution perspective against the NDR thesis as the main strategy for Turkey and also as the ultimate solution for the Kurdish Question, he underlined the discomfort of the Group about the anti-democratic actions of the Party rule against dissidents and demanded the Party administration to do a self-criticism. Furthermore, instead of supporting the Labor Group, the Easterners Group did not present candidates and used an affirmative vote in a body in this Congress.<sup>154</sup>

In short, the rising political mobilization of the left outpaced the smooth parliamentary means of the Workers' Party of Turkey. The antagonism that culminated with the Socialist Revolution thesis of the WPT vis-à-vis the National Democratic Revolution owed much to the stances of the Party, the NDR, emerging as a discontent, promised a short way to revolution satisfying the ascending mobilization of the youth in the Turkish socialist circles.

### The National Democratic Revolution Movement

As mentioned above, the NDR movement constituted the most influential faction within the WPT dissidents. The main demands of the NDR followers from the Party rule were the provision of theoretical education for Party members, a change in the Party administration and the reinstatement of the Party members who had been dismissed.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> For a brief summary of Burkay's speech, see Sargın, *TİP'li Yıllar*, pp. 967-973.

<sup>155</sup> Aydınöğlü, *Türkiye Solu*, p. 182.

Although, the WPT rule tried to purge the Party members who had been influenced by the thesis of NDR movement following the Second Grand Congress in 1966, the Party administration gradually lost its strength in the face of ascending opposition of pro-NDR members among the Party cadres. As the clearest manifestation of the strength of the NDR opposition in the WPT, the NDR supporters acquired the administration of the Istanbul Party organization and hold a meeting on the same days of the Fourth Grand Congress of the WPT in Ankara in order to form a new political party.<sup>156</sup>

However, let alone forming a party, several factions emerged within the NDR movement before and after this gathering. The NDR movement gathered around first *Türk Solu* journal (The Turkish Left) and then around *Aydınlık* journal (The Enlightenment), and was then divided into two factions under the name of *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* (The Socialist Journal Enlightenment, *ASD*) and *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* (Proleter Revolutionary Enlightenment, *PDA*) in January 1970. This decomposition within the NDR movement was followed by Mahir Çayan's and his colleagues' breaking away from the *ASD* and forming the Turkey People's Liberation Party (Front) (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi (Cephesi)*) and its journal *Kurtuluş* (The Liberation).<sup>157</sup>

Before analyzing the approaches of the NDR factions towards the Kurdish Question, it is vital to examine the main controversies between the NDR supporters and the WPT rule. Due to the existence of several factions within the NDR movement, it is useful to observe these controversies through analyzing Mihri Belli's brochure on the

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<sup>156</sup> Sargın, *TİP'li Yıllar*, pp. 976-977.

<sup>157</sup> Aren, *TİP Olayı*, pp. 221-222.

National Democratic Revolution.<sup>158</sup> In contrast to the Workers' Party of Turkey rule that clustered around Aybar and then Aren-Boran, which advocated socialist revolution by parliamentary means as a revolutionary strategy for Turkey, the NDR movement advocated that not a socialist revolution but a nationalist democratic revolution was the primary revolutionary phase for Turkey. This differentiation between the parties mainly resulted from their distinctive analyses on social, economic and cultural structure of Turkey. According to NDR thesis, Turkey was an underdeveloped agricultural country under the hegemony of American imperialism in which bourgeois democratic revolutions had not yet been completed and therefore feudalist remnants still existed and democratic traditions had not flourished in a full-fledged sense. Therefore, according to the NDR thesis, Turkey would reach the socialist revolution phase following the realization of the National Democratic Revolution in which the democratic struggle against feudalism and national struggle against imperialism would be accomplished first. In other words, while the WPT rule perceived anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggle as components of socialist revolution, the NDR movement abstracted anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggle from the struggle for socialism and prioritized the first ones.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, while the WPT advocated transition to socialism through elections and concentrated on the parliamentary affairs and election victories<sup>160</sup>, the NDR movement

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<sup>158</sup> Mihri Belli, *Milli Demokratik Devrim*, (Ankara: Şark Matbaası, 1970).

<sup>159</sup> See Belli, *Milli Demokratik Devrim*, pp. 20-21; 28-33.

<sup>160</sup> Following the 1965 general elections, the administrators of the WPT started to attach emphasis to gain election victories through becoming a leftist mass party especially on the basis of the votes of the peasants. As a result, it concentrated on parliamentary affairs and became interested in social movements with the object of gaining votes instead of leading the social movement. This strategy, called "parliamentarism," resulted in failure of the Party to connect with the workers and youth mobilization starting from 1968. Aydınoglu, *Türkiye Solu* pp. 122-127.

regarded transition to the socialism through parliamentary means as inadequate since they read the political order of Turkey as an anti-democratic order in which the determination of working class and peasantry in the political arena of the country was severely obstructed.<sup>161</sup> With respect to the class composition of the prospective revolution, in contrast to those advocating socialist revolution under the leadership of civil intellectuals and working class, the NDR movement granted priority to peasantry and civil-military intellectuals during the NDR phase.<sup>162</sup> The revolutionary character attributed to the military and civil bureaucracy can be seen as the most important aspect of the class composition of the revolutionary struggle in the NDR thesis differing significantly from of the Party rule. This was also one of the underlying reasons of why the Kurdish youth stood apart from the NDR movement substantially and formed their separate organizations, the Hearths.<sup>163</sup>

At this point it is important to look at Belli's remarks on the Kurdish Question even though they were not adopted by all pro-NDR factions entirely. In the brochure on the NDR theses, Belli also dealt with the Kurdish Question and pointed out that policies which denied the ethnical aspect of the Question were undermining both interests of Turkey and also the fraternity and unity of society.<sup>164</sup> However, along with advocating

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<sup>161</sup> Mihri Belli, "Milli Demokratik Devrim," in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988) p. 2144.

<sup>162</sup> In this brochure, the proletariat and semi-proletariat, poor peasantry, urban and village petit bourgeoisie and civil-military intellectual body and to some extent "national bourgeoisie" were depicted as components of "Revolutionary Powers" in Turkey. See Belli, *Milli Demokratik Devrim*, pp. 41-68.

<sup>163</sup> Güçlü, "DDKO: Türkiye'de Kürtlerin Siyasete Doğrudan Katılma Aracı," pp. 238-239.

<sup>164</sup> The original Turkish quotation follows: "*Kardeşliği tarih önünde sınavdan geçmiş Kürt halkının etnik özelliğini inkar eden faşizan bir politika, halkımızın gerçek birlik ve*

freedom for the Kurdish language and underlying the necessity of the elimination of the feudal structure, Belli remained distant from the idea of national self-determination of the Kurds through making a different interpretation of Leninist national self-determination principle. According to Belli, the right to national self-determination did not signify establishing a separate state in all circumstances and he perceived the realization of the NDR by the joint struggle of Turkey societies within the borders of *Misak-ı Milli* (National Pact) as a solution also valid for the Kurdish Question.<sup>165</sup>

As mentioned above, the NDR movement was divided into two groups under the names of ASD and PDA, and accordingly Mahir Çayan and his friends also formed another group through divorcing from the ASD. The approach of the latter group towards the Kurdish Question can be revealed from the letter titled *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergiye Açık Mektup* (An Open Letter to Socialist Journal Enlightenment) in which they criticized the aforementioned approach of Belli towards the Question. According to them, not only Belli's arguments which perceived the realization of the NDR within the borders of Misak-ı Milli as a single solution for the Kurdish Question in all conditions but also the approach offering the right for separation in all conditions as the single solution for Kurdish Question were a product of an anti-socialist and nationalist approach. According to Çayan, the time and the method of applying self determination

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*dayanışmasını baltalayan ve ancak yurdumuzun düşmanlarının ekmeğine yağ süren bir deve kuşu politikası olarak, Türkiye'nin çıkarlarına aykırıdır.” Belli, Milli Demokratik Devrim, p. 15.*

<sup>165</sup> Mihri Belli, “Millet Gerçeği,” quoted in Yeğen, “Türkiye Solu ve Kürt Sorunu,” p. 1219.



for Kurdish people on the basis of separation, autonomy, or federation etc., would be determined dialectically.<sup>166</sup>

The Revolutionist Worker Peasant Party of Turkey, founded by Doğu Perinçek, who was leader of the PDA current within the NDR movement, more specifically asserted “the right of self determination and, if they wish, establishing a separate state” for Kurds in its party program.<sup>167</sup> However, along with offering cultural rights for the Kurdish people and adopting the Leninist self-determination principle, the RWPPT perceived the solution for the Kurdish Question in the joint struggle of Turkey societies for the NDR against imperialism and feudalism. Also the prospective world proletarian revolution would determine the approach of the Party towards the Question. Accordingly, they declared that they would support the Kurdish movement as far as it was anti-imperialist and would strengthen the world proletarian revolution. In other words, their support for the Kurdish movement was conditional. Furthermore, the RWPPT advocated organizing of the Kurdish and Turkish people in the same class-based, economic, cultural and occupational organizations.<sup>168</sup>

However, this approach of the PDA and the RWPPT towards the Kurdish Question was criticized severely especially by Ibrahim Kaypakkaya, who thereafter parted ways with the RWPPT and formed the Communist Party of Turkey-Marxist Leninist (*Türkiye Kominist Partisi-Marksist Leninist*). With respect to the Kurdish

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<sup>166</sup> Mahir Çayan, *Toplu Yazılar*, quoted in Yeğen, “Türkiye Solu ve Kürt Sorunu,” pp. 1219-1220.

<sup>167</sup> Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi, *Belgeler* (Istanbul: Aydınlık Yayınları, 1975), p. 33.

<sup>168</sup> Yeğen, “Türkiye Solu ve Kürt Sorunu,” p. 1220.

Question, Kaypakkaya named the Kurds as a nation, and their movement as a national one which aimed at self-determination. While he advocated the acknowledgement of the right to form an autonomous state for the Kurds, he specified that any decision about self-determination should be taken on the basis of the shared decisions of the Kurdish nation, regardless of the benefits of the working class, peasantry or anti-imperialist struggle.<sup>169</sup> As is clear, unlike the conditional support of the RWPPT, Kaypakkaya supported the Kurdish national movement unconditionally.

### Coming of the Crossroad: The Revolutionary Youth

The rise of youth mobilization was first of all a result of disappointment with the constant references to parliamentary means. The great mobilization believed to have the driving force had been attributed to them by the NDR thesis. In this sense, the transformation and further fractionalization was evident. As Aydınöđlu indicates, Revolutionary Youth, an organization of university students, not only symbolized the last rise of the left movement in Turkey during the 1960s, but also a part of the decomposition process of the leftist movement.<sup>170</sup> Even though the NDR movement maintained its unity during the strong opposition it waged against the rule of the Workers' Party of Turkey and its socialist revolution thesis, the movement accordingly entered into a process of dissociation starting from 1970 that ended up with the PDA and

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<sup>169</sup> Hamit Bozarslan, "İbrahim Kaypakkaya," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Sol* vol. 8, Murat Güntekingil, ed. (Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2007), pp. 517-523; 520-522.

<sup>170</sup> Aydınöđlu, *Türkiye Solu*, p. 211.

the ASD and these dissociations followed further fragmentations within the movement. The factionalization of the left-wing movement that began within the WPT by the NDR movement and was followed by further dissociations also among the NDR movement itself, became a way of being for the Turkish left movement, in fact until today. In this context, Revolutionary Youth as a pro-NDR organization, and its prior organization called the FIC deserve to be analyzed here as the fundamental components of the leftist movement during 1960s in Turkey in which Kurdish university students also took part. The domination of the NDR thesis in the FIC through its transformation to the Revolutionary Youth was also one of the sources that opened the way for Kurdish socialist students to the organizational “divorce” from the Turkish left movement and to establish their own organizations, the Hearths.

Following the chairmanship of Aybar in the WPT in 1963, the WPT started to attract the attention of the youth who previously had sided with the RPP against the DP to a great extent. The FIC, a federation of left-wing youth organizations, was founded with the initiative of the WPT on 17 December 1965 by the socialist university students who were either members or sympathizers of the WPT.<sup>171</sup> The socialist youth that disintegrated among the competing ideas and organizations following 1969, organized together under the roof of the FIC and acted in line with the tendencies of the Party until that time.<sup>172</sup> However, in a period when the Party had started to concentrate on parliamentary affairs and election victories and had been weakened by intra-part

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<sup>171</sup> Kerem Ünüvar, “Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu (1965 – 1969),” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Sol* vol. 8, Murat Gültekingil, ed. (Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2007), pp. 821-823.

<sup>172</sup> Veysi Sarısözen, “Çeyrek Yüzyıl Önce Kurduğumuz Örgüt: FKF,” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988), p. 2071.

conflicts, the efforts of WPT at leading the mobilization of the youth though strictly controlling the FIC and its disapproval for the radical movements on the grounds that they would cause a “fascist junta”, hindered the development of the FIC among the socialist youth and were met with reactions from the FIC base. In other words, this situation of the FIC under the bureaucratic control of the Party went against the ascending inclination for radicalism among the youth, especially starting from 1968.<sup>173</sup>

1968 was also the year when official suppression by arrest and law-enforcement officers and also non-official chauvinist and reactionary violent actions towards the WPT members, socialist intellectuals, leaders and youth and their organizations were intensified. In the face of these growing assaults towards left-wing groups, the inability of the Party to offer any action-driven solutions against these assaults and the election victories of the Justice Party induced the youth to lose their belief in reaching socialism through parliamentary means. The NDR thesis, however, giving priority to action and also perceiving the Revolutionary Youth as one of the fundamental components in the leadership of the revolution, became more attractive for the youth in order to direct their ideas and activities. However, rather than the content of the NDR thesis, the clear attitudes of its leaders against official and non-official assaults were the principal source for the orientation of the youth towards the NDR movement.<sup>174</sup>

In parallel with the polarization within the WPT, contests among pro-SR and pro-NDR members also arose within the Idea Clubs in effect to acquire the FIC administration. Due to the success of the Club members with NDR orientation in

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<sup>173</sup> “Türkiye’de 1968,” p. 2081.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

organizing and leading the youth movement, the FIC increasingly came closer to the NDR thesis following the Third General Congress of the FIC, which was held in January 1969. After pro-NDR members came to the fore in the Congress, pro-SR and WPT supporters were exiled from the Clubs. Yet, the victory of the NDR thesis in the FIC administration took place at the Extraordinary Congress of the FIC in October 1969. The FIC was abolished and was renamed as Revolutionary Youth. Following the Congress, FIC members with pro-WPT orientations broke apart from Revolutionary Youth and this organization became an organization of pro-NDR youth.<sup>175</sup> Henceforth, a new period for youth and also the left movement started in which armed struggle of students and, more specifically, guerrilla war were introduced to the Turkish left movement as one of remarkable political agencies and also ways of revolutionary struggle, respectively. Revolutionary Youth condemned the WPT and the pro-WPT socialist youth for pacifism and concentrated on, and to a great extent achieved, leading not only the youth movement, but also the social movement as a whole.<sup>176</sup> In the face of this victory of the NDR thesis in the FIC, the SR-proponents founded the Socialist Youth Association (*Sosyalist Gençlik Derneği*, SYO), which defended the Party against the NDR thesis.<sup>177</sup>

From June 1968 to 12 March 1971, university students rapidly entered into a politicization process in which mass university boycotts and occupations, and anti-American protests organized mostly by the FIC and then Revolutionary Youth, became common events. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the Kurdish students that

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<sup>175</sup> Ünüvar, “Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu,” p. 828.

<sup>176</sup> Aydınöglü, *Türkiye Solu*, p. 216.

<sup>177</sup> Abdurrahman Atalay, “Türkiye’de İlk Yasal Komsomol, Sosyalist Gençlik Örgütü,” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988), p. 2146.

were organized in the Hearths also supported and to a great extent participated in these movements actively. However, the scope of the activities of these youth organizations went beyond the problems of students and they increasingly became interested in the problems and demands of workers and peasantry. This broadened political mission was loaded onto the youth especially because of the crisis into which the left-wing movement entered through the aforementioned decomposition process. As a massive organization of youth, Revolutionary Youth became the sole leading focus in the social movement in an atmosphere in which the WPT lacked the ability to establish a connection with social movement. It should also be mentioned that, on the face of this rising politicization of socialist youth, the assaults of fascist and reactionary groups which were supported by the government escalated the violent acts among youth and a conflict environment between left-wing and right-wing youth became a matter of fact for Turkey.<sup>178</sup>

This period witnessed not only the ascending politicization and mobilization of youth, but also an overall rise in the social movement. With respect to the labor movement, similar to youth movement, it took yet another turn towards politicization and radicalization from 1968 to 1971 in terms of organization styles and struggle means.<sup>179</sup> In this period, the most important development with respect to the organization of the workers was the foundation of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, DİSK*) on 13

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<sup>178</sup> “Kitlesele Mücadeleler ve DEV-GENÇ,” *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1988), pp. 2134-2135.

<sup>179</sup> Ergun Aydınoglu, “Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı: 1960 – 80 Bir Dönemin Otopsisı,” *Tartışma Defterleri*, no. 1 (October 1985), p. 29; 43.

February 1967 in order to enhance the relation of the WPT with the working class.<sup>180</sup> As DİSK became the magnet organization for the private sector employees in a short time, the number of trade unions and the overall rate of unionization rapidly increased following 1968. Furthermore, the number of legal and illegal strikes and the amount of workers who participated in these strikes dramatically increased and several factory occupations and boycotts took place after 1968.<sup>181</sup> The revolutionary youth and their organizations also took side with labor movement by supporting the strikes, boycotts, and factory occupations of workers. As will be seen in the next chapter, Kurdish students, both during their memberships in the FIC and then Revolutionary Youth and also following the foundation of the Hearths in 1969, were among these socialist students.

In addition to the youth and labor movement, the peasant movement in the provinces composed another component of the rising social movement in this period which made an overwhelming impression on public opinion. Thanks to several demonstrations, protest marches and land occupations, the peasantry, for the first time in the history of Republican Turkey, took its part in the ascending social movements. Correspondingly, with respect to the peasantry movement, the FIC and then Revolutionary Youth not only played supportive roles, but also took the lead in organizing several demonstrations and land occupations.<sup>182</sup> As Aydınöglu stresses, this

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<sup>180</sup> Yüksel Akkaya, “Düzen ve Kalkınma Kıskaçında İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık,” in *Neoliberalizmin Tahribatı: 2000’li yıllarda Türkiye 2*, Neşecan Balkan, Sungur Savran, eds. (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004), p. 147.

<sup>181</sup> Aydınöglu, “Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı: 1960 – 80,” pp. 29-30.

<sup>182</sup> “Kitleysel Mücadeleler ve DEV-GENÇ,” pp. 2136-2137.

peasantry movement both provided the Revolutionary Youth cadres with an opportunity to develop their political relations with the common people by means of participating and organizing their mobilization and also resulted in the glorification of the role of the peasantry in the revolutionary struggle as it was the “main power” in the composition of the revolutionary powers.<sup>183</sup> It should be mentioned that the peasantry was not represented as the main power of revolutionary struggle in the publications of the Hearths, but constituted only one of the most important revolutionary powers under the categorization of “working class and layers” in Turkey. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

Here, it is important to deal with the position of the Kurdish students in the face of the hegemony of the NDR thesis, which attributed pioneering role to the military and civil bureaucracy, within the FIC throughout its transformation into Revolutionary Youth. The Kurds simultaneously were affected by these outbreaks of the crisis within the leftist movement since the majority of the Kurdish intellectuals were affiliated with the WPT while the youth were affiliated with the Idea Clubs. Taking the support of Mehmet Ali Aybar, and indirectly the socialist revolution theses, the Kurdish youth were thus challenged by an opposition.

While there were Kurds who were proponents of the NDR theses, the majority remained distant to it. As the Revolutionary Youth increased the level of politicization without any hesitation to resort to armed struggle, the connection between the youth movement and the WPT was cut dramatically, except for the new youth organization of the Party, the Socialist Youth Organization, which was not as efficient as Revolutionary Youth. Correspondingly, the proponents of the SR within the Revolutionary Youth

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<sup>183</sup> Aydınöğlü, *Türkiye Solu*, p. 218.



organization were treated with hostility, and therefore it was not very wise for them to retain their position in these organizations. More importantly, there was no plausible reason for the Kurdish youth merely to observe these developments which were not relevant to their problems. If we add the national question that preoccupied minds of most of the Kurdish youth, the ongoing factionalization within Turkish left did not seem productive despite the declaration of “Proposal of Peoples” (*Halklar Tasarısı*) at the Fourth Grand Congress of the WPT in 1970. In other words, the discontent originating from the break down had no relevant consideration with respect to this facet of the socialist struggle, and the cracking structures of the Turkish left, thus, offered the Kurdish youth the opportunity to find their own ways.<sup>184</sup>

In short, the NDR theses and its prevailing hegemony in the Revolutionary Youth made it impossible for most of the Kurdish youth to stay in this organization. Of course, there were Kurds who not only favoured the NDR thesis, but also intentionally preferred to side with the Turkish left. Nonetheless, the Kurdish socialists did not alienate themselves from this factionalization, and ultimately the Kurdish youth, while maintaining their relationships with the WPT and the Revolutionary Youth in most cases, sought ways to resolve their fundamental preoccupations through establishing their own organizations, the Hearths. Once they had departed from the WPT and the Idea Clubs, the Kurdish youth movement “divorced” itself from the Turkish left in

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<sup>184</sup> For the position of the Kurdish militants in the face of crisis in which Turkish left founded itself and the increasing hegemony of the NDR thesis see Güçlü, “DDKO: Türkiye’de Kürtlerin Siyasete Doğrudan Katılma Aracı,” pp. 238-239; Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” pp. 32-34; Buran, “DDKO İlk Ulusalcı, Demokratik,” p. 88; Ümit Fırat, “Ümit Fırat ile DDKO Söyleşisi,” *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 5 (2006), p. 177; İhsan Aksoy, “DDKO’lar Öncesinden Günümüze Siyasetimiz,” *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 5 (2006), p. 192; Cemşit Bilek, “12 Mart 1971 Askeri Darbesi, Diğer Sivil Toplum Örgütleri Gibi DDKO’yu da Kapatırdı,” *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 5 (2006), pp. 236-238.

organizational terms and made efforts to encompass a greater majority of the Kurdish people with two fundamental objectives: socialism and the ethnic question.

## CHAPTER II

### STRUGGLE FOR REVOLUTION: THE CONTENTS OF PUBLICATIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE HEARTHHS

The 1960s was a decade of political mobilization throughout Turkey accompanied by the ascending socialist movements. The rise of the Kurdish-led movements was no exception in this sense. Given the developments that occurred in the 1960s, the so-called Eastern Question was released from the inner-circles of the Turkish left and was elaborated in a more detailed manner by the Kurdish socialists. It was apparent that the economic facets of the Question did not bring about any new insights with respect to the oppression against the Kurds. Questioning the stance of the state critically, the apparent results were nothing but the denial of the existence of the Kurdish people. In the atmosphere of the 1960s in which the university students were one of the major actors shaping the political agenda, this ignorance did not go unnoticed. Considering the Leninist principle on the right of nations to self-determination, the intellectuals and university students of the oppressed nation began to voice this in harmony with the socialist ideals.

Accordingly the economic-based explanations directed at the current problems of the region started to be replaced slowly by a shift aiming directly at the state. The demand for the national rights of the Kurds still was echoed in line with the socialist-oriented discourses. The foundation of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths to a great extent was a product of this consequence inspired by the mobilization across the country and in the east. Hence, in the late 1960s, the Kurdish youth and intellectuals initiated a discussion process about the subjects of possible political orders, organization

styles, and struggle strategies which would provide national rights to the Kurdish people who lived in Turkey. This discussion also reflected upon the DDKO publications and maintained until all the Hearths were closed down in 1971.

First, the foundation of a distinct legal Kurdish organization was not a development that was ever seen, and the discussions on the Eastern Question did not seem to bring productive resolutions vis-à-vis the desire for acquiring these national rights. While the fundamental issues of discontent paved the way for the foundation of the Hearths, the opposition against discrimination – if not oppression – led by the Kurdish people owed much to the socialist ideology. In this context, this chapter first elaborates the foundation process of the Hearths in detail and demonstrates the variations between those founded in the metropolitan areas and those founded in southeastern Anatolia. Having revealed that the composition of the members of the Hearths pertained to a variety of ideologies and that the essential bond holding the Hearths together was being Kurd in the crudest sense, the next section brings about the primary concerns of the organizations that were discussed repeatedly in the publications. Even though the organization was believed to be affiliated with socialism, questions or issues of discontent elaborated in the publications were superseded by the explicit oppression of Kurds which were materialized solely on their existences as a nation. Yet it should be stated immediately that the Hearths never retreated from its revolutionary ideals. Rather the discontent emanating from the acts of the Turkish state reached beyond mere economic terms and the latter were replaced by a shifting emphasis on culture. Accordingly the essential concern was to reach the people for whom the members of the Hearths struggled. Finally, the last section examines the ideals that were put forward in the publications by unveiling the details of the activities in which the Hearths were

involved in its active period not exceeding two years. These activities, albeit with this time-restriction, present insights with respect to the structure of the organization as well as the differentiation that was to take place between the metropolitan Hearths and those in Kurdistan.

### The Foundation Process of the Hearths

Prior to adopting the idea of establishing an autonomous organization based on the Kurdish ethnic identity which materialized with the Hearths, socialist Kurdish university students who had been organized especially in the WPT, FIC and later in Revolutionary Youth had long discussions on the idea of federating all the eastern cultural associations under the name of “Federation of Eastern Cultural Associations” (*Doğu Kültür Dernekleri Federasyonu*) in order to provide organizational dissociation of Kurdish youth from the Turkish left. Several meetings were held among these students concerning this idea and prospective charter, program and the founding members of this federation were determined.<sup>185</sup> In addition to these meetings, consultations with prominent Kurdish intellectuals and politicians regardless of their political, ideological

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<sup>185</sup> According to Naci Kutlay, the issue of organizing separately was not discussed thoroughly among the Kurdish activists neither in terms of their ability to meet the conditions of organization separately nor the idea of divorcing from the Turkish left itself. Instead Kutlay argues that this inclination towards organizing separately was adopted as a necessary and unavoidable outcome of social and political developments and those Hearths were founded both as a result of a conscious and also a spontaneous process. Kutlay, “Devrimci Doğu Kültür,” p. 165.

and social stance also were held.<sup>186</sup> Mümtaz Kotan, one of prominent founders of the Hearths, points out that while most of these intellectuals supported the idea of federating the existing eastern cultural associations, some of them either remained neutral or sharply objected.<sup>187</sup>

As a result of these meetings and consultations, the idea of federating all the eastern cultural associations was abandoned. According to Ümit Fırat, one of the reasons behind the abandonment of the idea of federation was the disharmony between the characters of those associations and the targets of Kurdish intellectuals and youth in that period of time. Those associations were established in several cities on the basis of the fellow townsman relations (*hemşehrilik*) of the Kurdish people, therefore grounded solely on being easterner and Kurd. As a consequence, not only Kurdish higher education students but also other segments of the Kurdish people such as artisans, merchants, workers, and intellectuals were members of these associations in several cities and towns. Fırat writes that after several meetings, these kinds of townsman relations were not seen as an adequate base for accomplishing the target of the Kurdish intellectuals and youth related to advocating and improving the Kurdish ethnic identity, language, and culture and self-determination right from a socialist point of view.<sup>188</sup>

Besides, as a result of the fact that these associations encompassed various segments of

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<sup>186</sup> Yusuf Azizoğlu, Şeyh Melik Fırat, Ali Rıza Bey, Sait Elçi, Sait Kırmızıtoprak, Musa Anter, Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Kasım Sever, Canıp Yıldırım, Kemal Burkay, Naci Kutlay, Feqi Hüseyin, Kaya Miştakhan, Şeyh Gıyasettin Emre, Emin Kotan, M. Ali Arslan, Tahsin Ekinci, Kasım Bey, Edip Karahan, Örfi Akkoyunlu, M. Ali Ermiş, Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, Medet Serhat, Yaşar Kaya and Necati Siyahkan were some of the intellectuals and politicians with whom the prospective founder members of Hearths had consulted. Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 37.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-38.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 35; Ümit Fırat, “Ümit Fırat ile DDKO Söyleşisi,” p. 183.

Kurdish society, it was difficult to come to an agreement among them and to obtain a judgment considering the idea of federating all these associations.<sup>189</sup> Consequently, instead of this idea of federation, the idea of establishing a new autonomous left-wing Kurdish youth organization which planned to encompass Kurdish young people regardless of ideological differences among them was adopted.

As will be shown below, the Hearths achieved this target of combining Kurdish young people who had different political affiliations within the Hearths. As the idea of federating all the existing eastern cultural associations was abandoned and that of establishing a new organization based on Kurdish ethnicity was adopted, Kurdish university students set a course for founding autonomous legal organizations first in the metropolitan cities of Ankara and Istanbul and then in the cities and towns of east and south-eastern Anatolia and if it would be possible it was planned to federate all the Hearths around a central authority. Mümtaz Kotan presents their aims as to become an organization which operated throughout Kurdistan.<sup>190</sup>

When the DPK-T was established in 1965 as a nationalist and conservative Kurdish autonomous organization, its establishment was not a matter of concern for Kurdish people. The main problem came into the picture when the Kurdish socialists who had been organized within Turkish left organizations decided to form their own organizations, the Hearths. The founders of the Hearths faced two kinds of opposite opinions to overcome with respect to the idea of establishment an autonomous Kurdish organization. One of them was the fear of the Kurdish people and intellectuals which

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<sup>189</sup> Semmikanli, "Geçmiş Olmadan Gelecek," p. 86.

<sup>190</sup> Kotan, "Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi," p. 41.

emanated from their memories of Kurdish nationalist movements that had been suppressed severely in Turkey before 1940. Due to this fear, the establishment of an autonomous legal Kurdish organization was perceived as a thread.<sup>191</sup> Nonetheless, the other opposing opinion was much more difficult to overcome for the founders of the Hearths. At the beginning, some members of Easterners Group in the WPT contested the foundation of an autonomous left-wing Kurdish organization by referring to Leninist and Stalinist terminology with reference to the joint organization of the working class.<sup>192</sup> They perceived the dissociation of the Kurdish left from Turkish left as a nationalistic fragmentation within working class which would thus deteriorate the working class struggle in Turkey.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, in memoirs of the founders of Hearths it is generally claimed that the members of the Easterners Group opposed the establishment of the Hearths especially in east and south-eastern Anatolia willing to prevent the Party strength from weakening in that region. Güçlü points out that Tarık Ziya Ekinci, who was Diyarbakir deputy of the WPT at that time, was one of the warmest advocates of this opposing attitude. However, this group discontinued its opposition in view of the inability of the Party to hinder the civil assaults towards the Kurdish people in the region and considered the establishment of the Hearths necessary. As an example of this

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<sup>191</sup> Güçlü, “DDKO: Türkiye’de Kürtlerin Siyasete,” pp. 245-246.

<sup>192</sup> Kotan argues that the WPT even wanted the Hearths to be closed. Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 42.

<sup>193</sup> İhsan Aksoy, “DDKO’lar Öncesinden Günümüze Siyasetimiz,” pp. 192-193. Kotan mentions an event considering this opposition against the Hearths. As Kotan mentions, after the foundation of the Istanbul DDKO, Yaşar Kaya, who was among the 49ers, came to the club house with his friends and criticized the Hearths as being nationalist organizations that would damage the power of the proletariat.



changing attitude, Ekinci took an important part in the establishment of the Hearths in the region and became one of the founding members of the Diyarbakir DDKO.<sup>194</sup>

Nonetheless, at this point, there were different points of view in relation to the necessity of establishing these organizations in Diyarbakir and thus in other places in the east. While Ekinci perceived the reason for the establishment of the Hearths in Diyarbakir as a necessity for Kurdish people to protect themselves from “fascist assaults,”<sup>195</sup> most of the remaining founding members of the Diyarbakir DDKO perceived its establishment as a milestone in the Kurdish political movement. According to Güçlü, these two conflicting viewpoints coexisted during the activities of both the Diyarbakir DDKO and the rest.<sup>196</sup> Regarding the relations of the WPT with the Hearths, Kutlay argues that while the Party representatives supported the Hearths in their targets and activities, the WPT rule neither opposed nor supported them explicitly.<sup>197</sup>

In the light of the processes mentioned above, the first Hearth was founded in Ankara in May 1969 pursuant to Association Law no. 3512. Its charter was published in *Medeniyet* journal on 24 May 1969. It should be mentioned that almost all gatherings held before and after the official foundation of the Ankara DDKO were followed by members of the National Intelligence Service, and tape recordings of several gatherings were cited as evidence against DDKO defendants.<sup>198</sup> Kotan states that being a Kurd

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<sup>194</sup> İbrahim Güçlü, *Hepimizin Sevgili Ağabeyi Edip Karahan* (Istanbul: Elma, 2005), p. 131.

<sup>195</sup> Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Devlet ve Ben* (Istanbul: Sarmal Yayınevi, 1995), p. 83.

<sup>196</sup> Güçlü, *Hepimizin Sevgili Ağabeyi*, p. 132.

<sup>197</sup> Kutlay, “Devrimci Doğu Kültür,” p. 167.

<sup>198</sup> The founding members of the Ankara DDKO were Daham Keleş, İbrahim Güçlü, Hikmet Buluttekin, Kemal Cengiz, Ahmet Kotan, Şerif Felekoğlu, Nusret Kılıçaslan, Abdullah

from Kurdistan was adopted as a principle for especially determining the founding members of the Hearths and it was satisfied to represent all eastern cities and also view points among the Kurdish people in the presence of each DDKO founder.<sup>199</sup>

In the first item of its charter, the Ankara DDKO was described as a youth association which did not deal with politics in accordance with Association Law. Being described as a youth association, the first membership requirement was specified as either to be a student in higher education or a graduate. Second, membership process for the Hearth was envisaged to be multi-phase in which one could be a “candidate member” through reasoned recommendation of at least three full members and gain full membership through reasoned conclusion of the managing committee at the end of six months continued candidate membership.<sup>200</sup> According to the statements of Fikret Şahin available in the records of the DDKO trials, a candidate membership process was due to prevent the entrance of police agents and fascists to the organizations and also to observe whether or not a certain candidate was hardworking, honest and capable enough to conduct research in different areas and also had a particular cultural accumulation.<sup>201</sup> During this six-month candidate membership process, even the daily lives of the

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Soysal, Ali Beyköylü, Salih Sıtkı, Mustafa Karacadağ, Nazmi Onuk, Halit Çetin Yalap, Mustafa Karacadağ, Yümnü Budak, Mümtaz Kotan, Mehmet Demir, Halil Dünder, Nuri Bingöl, İsa Geçit, Mehmet Sait Aktaş, İrfan Özen, Bedri Demir, and Faruk Aras. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, Diyarbakır ve Siirt İlleri Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı 1 Numaralı Askeri Mahkemesi, Diyarbakır, 11 December 1972, Esas No: 1972/34, Karar No: 1972/44, p. 124. For simplicity, the original source was not translated to English and, from here onwards it will be referred with only its first part.

<sup>199</sup> Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 41.

<sup>200</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 124-128.

<sup>201</sup> “Duruşma Tutanağı” (15.12.1971) in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1*, (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 90.

candidates were being monitored by Hearth members in order to be sure of reliance of candidates on the targets of the organizations. In these records, Güçlü mentions that in addition to monitoring the daily lives of candidate members, several seminars with titles such as “Primitive Society,” “Slaver Society,” “Imperialism,” “Dialectic Materialism,” and “Popular Culture, and Bourgeois Culture” were given to these prospective members in order to align them with the targets of the Hearths.<sup>202</sup>

In the Justified Decision of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths case it is argued that being an “Easterner” and a “revolutionist” were the two basic traits that a candidate member had to have in order to gain full membership. This argument was propounded by the court on the basis of the reasons introduced for affirming the full memberships of certain people in the membership approval forms of the Hearths. Indeed, in these forms, statements such as “He has an Easterner character. He has a revolutionist character. We guarantee that he will attend the organizational activities and fulfill the assigned duties. We offer him for membership” were available. According to the trial records of the Hearths, Ibrahim Güçlü explained that what the Hearths implied with the membership requirement “being an Easterner” was presuming an applicant as an Easterner if he/she accepted the existence of a different ethnic group, say Kurds, in east Anatolia who were suppressed and advocating the equality and fraternity of Turkish and Kurdish people. In the trial records, Yumnu Budak explained the membership requirement as “being revolutionist” as presuming an applicant was “revolutionist” if

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<sup>202</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 128-129.

he/she defended the equality of ethnic groups and challenged the domination of one ethnic group over others, say Turks on Kurds, from a Marxist point of view.<sup>203</sup>

In its charter, the objective of the Ankara DDKO was explained as providing solidarity among higher education students or graduates in order to improve the “revolutionary culture”, which was seen as the most important requirement in establishing an “advanced mode of production.” As will be shown in the subsequent chapter, the members of the Hearths generally meant a socialist mode of production by “advanced mode of production,” and “revolutionary culture” as culture which would provide transition to this mode of production. However, Abdurrahman Demir and Mümtaz Kotan emphasized that by “revolutionary culture,” “Kurdish culture” was implied and by “solidarity among higher education students and graduates,” “solidarity among Kurdish youth” was implied and, by “racist-chauvinist conditioning” discriminatory and oppressive policies against Kurds, were implied.<sup>204</sup> In addition, the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were referred in this charter on the basis of freedom of thought. It can be alleged that references to these two focal points were due to the insistence of the Hearths on legality and therefore to prevent possible constraints on the Hearths by the government. In the second item of its charter, these characters and objectives of the Ankara DDKO were presented as:

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<sup>203</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmi, pp. 130-132.

<sup>204</sup> Abdurrahman Demir, “Kürdistan’da DDKO’lar,” *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no 5 (2006), pp. 250-251; Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması,” pp. 44-45.

[It] is the organization, to improve and expand the Revolutionary Culture which is a significant element in transition to an advanced production method in Turkey, based on the solidarity, the mutual education and the unity in work and action between the youth and graduates of the higher education who reached the ability of scientific act and thought.

All members, not recognizing any other constraints apart from the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, believed in the freedom of thought.

Our organization, to reach its end, holds meetings and competitions, opens exhibitions, performs any kind of education and art activities not prohibited by laws.<sup>205</sup>

Following the official foundation of the Ankara DDKO, a task distribution within organization was carried out. A managing committee was formed and under the command of this committee several branches were authorized in specific fields of activity.<sup>206</sup> In the first news bulletin of the DDKO,<sup>207</sup> it was specified that these organizations would be administered by managing committees in accordance with the rule of democratic centralism and display activity within the legal framework in which these organizations were supposed to benefit all the opportunities of a democratic order.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, p. 125.

<sup>206</sup>The Chairman of the Managing Committee of the Ankara DDKO was Yumnü Budak. Other members of the committee were Kemal Cengiz, İbrahim Güçlü, and Mustafa Karacadağ. Ibid., p. 124; 129.

<sup>207</sup> Hearths had nine news bulletins. The dates of these bulletins are 25<sup>th</sup> March 1970, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1970, 30 May 1970, 3-15<sup>th</sup> July 1970, October 1970, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1970, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1970, 7<sup>th</sup> February 1971 and March 1971. These bulletins were prepared by the managing committees of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs and published via the approvals of these managing committees. Ibid., p. 222; 366.

<sup>208</sup> “DDKO Aylık Haber Bülteni: Eğitim ve Örgütlenme,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1*, (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 484.

There were two announcements of the Istanbul DDKO which dealt with the attitudes of Hearth members and organizational discipline. In the announcement, titled “To All Members,” (*Tüm Üyelere*) the importance of cooperation, seriousness and solidarity were indicated. Central discipline was depicted as the most important rule in organization. It was highlighted that members who fell outside of this central discipline would never be forgiven. Although this discipline would not hinder criticism and self-criticisms within the Hearths, it was emphasized that criticism regarding responsible people could only be given within established committees. Members were obliged to act professionally and to be in line with the decisions of committees. Furthermore, while they were advised to be militant, brave, honest, and alert, they also were expected to be coolheaded and patient towards problems. It also was emphasized that members were to establish close links with the grassroots of the Hearths, that is, “society.” In addition, the importance of forming short term “union of forces” with other “revolutionary forces” on specific issues was underlined.<sup>209</sup>

Accordingly, Güçlü asserts that although decisions related to the routine and daily activities of the Hearths were taken by the managing committees of each organization, these committees reached decisions via taking into account the propositions of the founders and members of the Hearths. Nonetheless, Güçlü points out

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<sup>209</sup> In another announcement of the Istanbul DDKO, the three principles of discipline were presented as “1- We should obey orders in our every behavior. 2- Do not take even a needle or a piece of yarn from the masses. 3- Submit all income to the authorities”. Besides these rules, Mao’s disciplinary rules were also written in this announcement in the form of eight articles: “1- Talk politely. 2- Pay for the things you buy. 3- Give back everything you borrow. 4- Pay for the damage you caused or compensate in another way. 5- Do not beat anyone and use bad language. 6- Do not damage products. 7- Do not be too familiar with women. 8- Do not mistreat prisoners.” Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları’na Ait Davanın Gerekeçeli Hükümü, pp. 374-376.

that while each organization was ruled by its managing committees in their daily activities such as publication, education and financial affairs, decisions related to so-called “fundamental subjects” were taken in the joint meetings of managing committees and “Councils of Science and Consultation” (*Bilim ve Danışma Kurulları*) which were composed of Kurdish intellectuals.<sup>210</sup> In other words, it would not be wrong to allege that the formal managing committees of these organizations were not fully authorized in every aspect of the administration of the Hearths.

Furthermore, Mümtaz Kotan and Ümit Fırat emphasized that there was a “secret upper-committee” which was more influential than the official managing committees in the foundation and management of the Hearths. It is argued that the formation of a secret upper-committee had been agreed on during the meetings held at the Ankara Economics Commercial Sciences Academy (*Ankara İktisadi Ticari İlimler Akademisi*) before the Ankara DDKO had been founded. Members of this so called upper-committee were the chairman of the Istanbul DDKO Necmettin Büyükkaya, the chairman of the Ankara DDKO Yümnü Budak, the founder members of the Ankara DDKO Mümtaz Kotan and Halit Çetin Yalap, and Ümit Fırat.<sup>211</sup> According to Fırat, this upper-committee did not constitute an illegal structuring within the management of these organizations, but was a result of abstaining from police pursuit and secret agency activities which thus contributed to satisfying more secure and dynamic conditions for the decision-making

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<sup>210</sup> Güçlü, “DDKO: Türkiye’de Kürtlerin Siyasete,” p. 254.

<sup>211</sup> Kotan names this committee as “upper illegal (semi/legal) organ” and argues that in this committee there was a specific task for each members on the basis of coordinating the relations with Istanbul DDKO, relations with Ankara DDKO, relations with other organizations and dealing with financial issues. Kotan argues that, he was responsible for working with and coordinating these four responsible people in their specific assigned positions. Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 27.

procedure. Fırat points out that all the principal decisions and even the chairmen and members of managing committees of subsequent Hearths were determined by this upper-committee.<sup>212</sup>

The main task of this committee was to found new Hearths, coordinate all of them and improve the relations between the Hearths and other organizations and prominent people.<sup>213</sup> As a result, Kotan writes that while the official managing committees were preoccupied with the daily activities of organizations, the members of this upper-committee predominantly dealt with organizational issues and partly took place in daily activities.<sup>214</sup> Apart from this upper committee, there were no illegal subgroups within the organizational structures of the Hearths. Yet, İhsan Aksoy argues that members of DPK-T and DPKT were visiting Hearths and trying to impose their thoughts on these organizations. However, Aksoy points out that the Hearths did not adopt armed struggle and violence as a way of political strategy and expelled people that adopted violence as a political strategy.<sup>215</sup> In addition to relations with illegal militants of the DPK-T and DPKT, Aksoy argues that the Hearths were provoked to resort to violent strategies by the agents of the National Intelligence Service.<sup>216</sup> Similarly, Ali

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<sup>212</sup> Fırat, “Ümit Fırat ile DDKO,” p. 182.

<sup>213</sup> According to Kotan, relations with Diyarbakir were of utmost importance for them since Diyarbakir was seen as a center which would enable Hearths to gain ground. Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 37.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>215</sup> While officially this stance against violent strategies was adopted by the Hearths, Sait Pektaş reports that writing in red paint on the wall of Istanbul DDKO declared that “We sing the best song with gun.” (“*Biz en güzel türküyü silahla söyleriz.*”) See Sait Pektaş, “Kürt Aydınlanması ve DDKO Gerçeği,” *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 7 (2007), p. 278.

<sup>216</sup> Aksoy, “DDKO’lar Öncesinden Günümüze,” pp. 192-193.



Beyköylü states that they advocated a legal struggle in order to raise the awareness of the Kurdish people and of their economic situations and therefore were against illegal strategies.<sup>217</sup> However, the Hearths were argued to have been founded legally and although their members insisted on maintaining their activities within the legal framework, their activities exceeded legality in a short time.<sup>218</sup> Kotan relates that while especially the DPK-T and, on a limited scale, the DPKT supporters were trying to influence the Ankara DDKO, the DPKT supporters who were also members of the Istanbul DDKO were trying to be influential in this organization.<sup>219</sup> In this sense, though the organization paid special attention to remain within the boundaries of legality, such a development was impeded severely by both the acts of the intelligence service and the affiliation demands stemming from the illegal organizations. Furthermore, the proposed targets of the Hearths were not supposed to go beyond references including the Constitution as well as the Universal Human Rights, yet the gradual radicalization of the social movements made it inevitable to remain free of such strategies. Correspondingly, as Hikmet Bozçalı and Sait Pektaş report, there was even an offer for incorporating of

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<sup>217</sup> Ali Beyköylü, “Koma Azadixwazen Kurdistane: Hodri Meydan,” *BÎR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi* (5) (2006) pp. 201-202. In the same vein, Nusret Kılınçaslan states that the militants approached the Kurdish Question from a “separatist and racist” point of view; in other words, perceived solution for this question beyond advocating democratic rights for the Kurdish people within the borders of Turkey were suspended from organizations as a disciplinary punishment. Nusret Kılınçaslan, “Cumhuriyet Döneminde Kurulan İlk Kürt Legal Örgütü: DDKO,” *BÎR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 6 (2007), p. 117.

<sup>218</sup> Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 39.

<sup>219</sup> Kotan describes one of the events the happened in the local building of the Ankara DDKO which can be read as the attitudes of the DPK-T towards the DDKOs in the initial phases of the establishment of the DDKOs. According to Kotan, a group of DPK-T supporters came to the local building of the Ankara DDKO and pulled down the picture of Lenin and hung a picture of Barzani on the wall. Hereupon Kotan hung Lenin’s picture again and hung Barzani’s picture *a little bit below* that of Lenin’s via referring to laws such as the cause of having abstained from Barzani’s picture until that time. Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi” p. 42.

the Hearths into the future guerilla warfare which would led by Deniz Gezmiş.<sup>220</sup> According to Güçlü, all these interventions of other organizations, parties and people in the Hearths had damaged the consensus that had been established among these organizations around their charters, but did not harm their organizational unity.<sup>221</sup>

The second Hearth was founded in Istanbul in May 1969 with the same charter as that of the Ankara DDKO. Its charter was published in *Türk Solu (Turkish Left)* journal.<sup>222</sup> The charter of the Istanbul DDKO, however, underwent a partial change considering the items related to objectives, membership conditions and temporary provisions in its second ordinary congress held on 11 April 1971. In this congress, the objectives of the Istanbul DDKO were formulized as:

[The Association] pursues to improve and expand revolutionary culture of our peoples which is a significant element in transition to an advanced production method, to hold cultural and social activities to meet the democratic aspirations and demands, to prevail a human

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<sup>220</sup> In the same vein, it was argued that Gezmiş and his friends met with Bozçalı and proposed this offer, but Bozçalı refused this offer by specifying that the Hearths as legal youth organizations did not approve of this kind of a strategy and also the conditions were not suitable for such warfare. See Bozçalı, “DDKO’lu Siyasi Serüvenim,” pp. 219-220; and Pektaş “Kürt Aydınlanması ve DDKO,” p. 268.

<sup>221</sup> Güçlü, *Hepimizin Sevgili Ağabeyi*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>222</sup> The founding members were Hikmet Bozçalı, Mehmet Can, Ali Haydar Emre, Leyla Ejder, Mehmet Tüysüz, Kadir Akgüneş, Sabri ünlü, İbrahim Önen, Ömer Bakal, Mahmut Kılıç, Ali Buran, Aydın Yümlü, M. Ali Aslan, Aziz Yılmaz, Necmettin Büyükkaya, Sait Bozgan, Mustafa Doğan Özbay, Fazlı Can, Ahmet Zeki Okçuoğlu, Salih Kaynak, Mehmet Balamir, Sait Pektaş, Agah Uyanık, Şakir Elçi, Ali Yılmaz Balkaş, Kadri Çağlı, Hüseyin Özkan, İbrahim Yüksekaya, and İlhami Yaban. The Managing Committee of the Istanbul DDKO was formed in a meeting held by the founder members on 24 May 1969. According to decisions taken at this meeting, the Chairman of the Managing Committee of the Istanbul DDKO was Necmettin Büyükkaya, the scribe was Şakir Elçi, the accountant was Ali Yılmaz Balkaş, members were Mahmut Kılıç and Hikmet Bozçalı, and associate members were İlhami Yaban and Fevzi Yardımcı. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 351; 355. Furthermore, Hikmet Bozçalı mentions that members of the Council of Science and Consultation of the Istanbul DDKO were Mehmet Emin Bozarıslan, Ferit Öngören and Musa Anter. Bozçalı, “DDKO’lu Siyasi Serüvenim,” p. 213.

dignity based, socially constituted understanding against Racist – Chauvinist, all antidemocratic tendencies and pressures.

All members not recognizing any other constraints apart from the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, believe in the freedom of thought.

To attain the end of our organization, [it] holds meetings and competitions, opens exhibitions and performs any kind of education and art activities.<sup>223</sup>

Considering these amendments to the charter related to the objectives of the Istanbul DDKO it was clear that the emphasis on the solidarity among higher education students or graduates was superseded by the emphasis on improving the “revolutionary culture of the people;” in other words, the “revolutionary culture of the Kurdish people.” Furthermore, by including the need to eliminate racist and chauvinist conceptions, they meant to imply the mission of the Hearths as an organization which aimed at introducing and criticizing peculiarly the oppressive actions towards the Kurdish people.

In conformity with these changes, the membership requirements of the Istanbul DDKO also were changed. According to these changes, being a higher education student or graduate was no longer a compulsory condition. Accordingly, any citizen of the Turkish Republic older than 18 years old who adopted the objectives of the Hearth was approved to be suitable for candidacy.<sup>224</sup> The shift, albeit minor in significance at that point, was the preliminary motion of the evolution of the organization in the sense that the initial-structure of the organization, i.e., an association in which the majority was composed of “literate” students, would be replaced by a wider base of Kurdish people. As the education requirements were abandoned, the emphasis on the oppression of the

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<sup>223</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, p. 352

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

Kurds by means of cultural rights was to shape the short-lived future of the Hearth and to disassociate itself from the rest of the Turkish socialist organizations.

The center of the Istanbul DDKO was specified on purpose as Istanbul in order not to show this organization legally as an agency of the Ankara DDKO. This also was the case for the rest of the Hearths. In other words, even though all the Hearths were founded with the same objectives and almost with the same charters, they were demonstrated legally as autonomous organizations. According to most of the founding members, this decentralized model of organization was due to the anxiety of the founders of the Hearths to prevent the risk of complete abolition of all the Hearths by the government at the same time.<sup>225</sup> Furthermore, Cemşit Bilek and İbrahim Güçlü state that organizing in a decentralized way also was because of the desire of the founders to make visible the free will of each Hearth.<sup>226</sup> However, when the aforementioned effective role of “secret upper-committee” in decision making processes of each organization is taken into account, this argument, though it may have played a role, does not seem to have been so influential in organizing in a decentralized way.

In accordance with the above-mentioned plans of the founders that were made before the establishment of the first Hearth in Ankara about federating all prospective Hearths, the eighteenth item of the charter of Ankara DDKO mentions the possibility of forming a federation or an association together with the organizations which embraced

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<sup>225</sup> Güçlü, “DDKO: Türkiye’de Kürtlerin Siyasete,” pp. 250-251.

<sup>226</sup> Cemşit Bilek, “12 Mart 1971 Askeri Darbesi,”), p. 131; Güçlü, *Hepimizin Sevgili Ağabeyi*, p. 131.

the same targets with the Hearths.<sup>227</sup> The Istanbul DDKO adopted this item as well and authorized its managing committee on the subject of this prospective federation.<sup>228</sup> In conformity with their charters, in the first news bulletin of the Hearths, the target of establishing autonomous organizations further in cities other than Istanbul and Ankara and federating all of them under the name of the “Federation of Eastern Cultural Hearths” was emphasized. A federation was seen not only as an organizational model which would purvey coordination among each hearth, but also as a model which would facilitate the establishment of closer links to the common people via more effective activities.<sup>229</sup> Hikmet Bozçalı states that the leaders of the Hearths decided to federate all of the Hearths, as will be examined below, after foundation of the Hearths in several other cities and towns of eastern and south-eastern Anatolia. Even though there were some steps for establishing the Hearths in other towns and cities, this idea of founding further Hearths and then federating all of them could not be achieved since the Memorandum of 12<sup>th</sup> March was staged and the Hearths were closed down.<sup>230</sup>

Following the foundation of the Hearths in Ankara and Istanbul, crucial efforts were made in order to found others in the cities and towns of eastern and south-eastern Anatolia. According to İsmail Beşikçi, there was an escalating demand coming from the people of eastern and south-eastern Anatolian towns and cities in the direction of

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<sup>227</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 129.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>229</sup> “D.D.K.O Aylık Haber Bülteni,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), pp. 481-482.

<sup>230</sup> Bozçalı, “DDKO’lu Siyasi Serüvenim,” pp. 213-214.

founding new hearths in those places.<sup>231</sup> It should be mentioned that while the founders and members of Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs were predominantly socialist Kurdish university students and they were influential on the determination of the managing committees of other Hearths; traditional Kurdish nationalists also took part in both foundation process of the Hearths that were founded in the region and in their activities.<sup>232</sup> The differentiation of ideologies in this sense as well as educational backgrounds would be among the ultimate distinctions addressing the units established in the big cities and in the region. Despite these contested differences, the holding bond would emerge as being Kurd regardless of the places where the each Hearth was established.

In this sense, the first Hearth in this region was the one founded in a district of Diyarbakir, Ergani, on 13 November 1970.<sup>233</sup> The charter of the Ergani DDKO, published in a local journal named *Ufuk* (The Horizon), was almost the same as the charters of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs. However, different from them, the Ergani DDKO was not defined as a youth association. Instead, in its first item of the charter, the Ergani DDKO was defined only as an association which was founded in accordance

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<sup>231</sup> İsmail Beşikçi, “Hapisteki DDKO; Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları,” *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 5 (2006), p. 98.

<sup>232</sup> Kutlay, “Devrimci Doğu Kültür,” p. 167.

<sup>233</sup> Founding members were Ömer Kan, Mehmet Emin Tektaş, Kemal Vural, Mustafa Gör, and Mehmet Sağlamoğlu. The managing committee of the Ergani DDKO was formed in its first general meeting on 13 December 1970. The chairman of this committee was Ömer Kan, the accountant was Kemal Vural, the secretary was Mehmet Emin Tektaş, the members were Mustafa Gök, Ahmet Erçelik, and the associate members were Mehmet Sağlamoğlu and Cevat Kılıçkap. Right along with this managing committee, a supervisory committee also was formed. Therefore, it can be alleged that specialization in the administration of these organizations gradually increased. The Chairman of this Supervisory Committee was Yaşar Şengül, the member was Hasan Ergün, and the associate member was Hasan Çakır. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 412-414.

with the Associations Law. Establishing close relations between the youth and the common people was emphasized in its charter. According to the third item of the charter of the Ergani DDKO, which dealt with membership conditions, anybody who fulfilled the requirements of the Associations Law and at least had completed high school education would be able to apply for membership. However, it was specified that the education requirement could be waived by a decision of the managing committee. Therefore, as in the case of the Istanbul DDKO, no membership requirement was available for the Ergani DDKO. According to the second item of its charter, the character and objectives of the Ergani DDKO were presented as:

[It] is an organization based on unity in work and action aiming to learn and expand the Revolutionary Culture which is a significant element in the transition to an advanced production method, aspiring to solidarity among the youth, and the youth and the people, and mutual education.

All members not recognizing any other constraints apart from the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, believed in the freedom of thought.

To attain the end of our association, [it] holds meetings and competitions, opens exhibitions, performs any kind of education and art activities.<sup>234</sup>

The second Hearth in south-eastern Anatolia was founded in a district of Diyarbakir, Silvan, on 9 December 1970. Its charter was published on 14 December 1970 in *Ufuk*.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p. 412.

<sup>235</sup> The Founding members of the Silvan DDKO were Bahri Evliyaoğlu, Mahmut Okutucu, Muhterem Biçimli, Vedat Erkaçmaz, Akif Işık, Abdülkerim Ceyhan, Yusuf Kılıçer, Mahmut Yeşil, Cüneyt Ceyhan, Zeki Bozarlan, and Fikri Müjdecî. The chairman of the managing committee of the Silvan DDKO was Mahmut Okutucu, the accountant was Muhterem Biçimli, the scribe was Zeki Bozarlan, the members were Bahri Evliyaoğlu and Vedat Erkaçmaz and the associated members were Fikri Müjdecî and Süleyman Yaz. As in the case in the Ergani DDKO, the Silvan DDKO also formed a supervisory committee that was to be accompanied by an honor committee. Yusuf Kılıçer, Mehmet Tanrikulu, Kemal Kayduk were the members and Kemal Oto was the associate member of this Supervisory Committee. The members of the Honour Committee were composed of three members, Ahmet Uyandı, Recep Ölçer, Mahmut Tuğrul, and two associate members named Mehmet Kızılay and Mehmet Yücel.

Similar to the Ergani DDKO, the Silvan DDKO was not defined as a youth association on the basis of its charter. Actually, none of the Hearths founded in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia was defined as a youth association. In conformity with this character, education was not required to become a member of the Silvan DDKO and according to the third item of its charter, anyone who believed in “Cultural Revolution” could apply for membership.<sup>236</sup> Correspondingly, the Silvan DDKO accepted the objectives Ankara DDKO but replaced “solidarity among higher education youth and graduates” with “solidarity among the Silvan people.” In the second item of its charter objectives of the Silvan DDKO were described as:

To materialize the improvement and expansion of the Revolutionary Culture, which is a significant element in the transition to an advanced production method in Turkey in Silvan the people of which reached the ability of scientific act, [it] is an organization pursuing to materialize the solidarity of these people by means of mutual education and by unity in work and action.

All members not recognizing any constraints apart from the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights believed in the freedom of thought. To attain the end of our association, [it] holds meetings and competitions, opens exhibitions, performs any kind of education and art activities.<sup>237</sup>

Another Hearth in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia was founded on 28 December 1970 in a district of Siirt called Kozluk. Its charter was published in a local journal

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Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 431-433.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 432.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p. 431.



named *Raman Postası* on 5 January 1971.<sup>238</sup> It should be indicated that an opening ceremony was held for the Kozluk DDKO and people from villages, near districts and cities attended this ceremony. In this ceremony, largely supported by the local people, problems and demands of Kurdish people were discussed.<sup>239</sup> It should also be highlighted that mullahs (*Melle*) and young people who had religious educations (*Fegi*) also attended this ceremony and made speeches in Kurdish. The speech of Melle Ebdullayê Xerzi, who was eighty years old and a member of the Kozluk DDKO, had a

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<sup>238</sup> The founding members of the Kozluk DDKO were Mehmet Şirin Baltaş, Alaattin Batlaş, Abdi Dizmen, Yusuf Güzel, Mehmet İnal, Halil Kaneş, Abduselam Basutçu, İrfan Bozgil, M. Tahir Birlik, A. Halim Dinler, Mehmet Asker and Nasır Bağ. The Kozluk DDKO was closed down before its first congress, during which members of its managing committee were to be officially elected. However, as far as is known from its founding application, the Kozluk DDKO was administered by a managing committee the chairman of which was Abdusselam Basutçu, the secretary was Mehmet Şirin Baltaş, the accountant was M. Tahir Birlik, the members were Alaattin Balkaş and Halil Kanaş, and the associate members were Nasır Bağ and Mehmet İnal. As in the case of the Ergani and Silvan DDKOs, the Kozluk DDKO also had supervisory and honor committees. Ali Akın, Mehmet İnal, and Bahri Yalçın were the members and Yusuf Güzel was the associate member of the Supervisory Committee. Alaattin Baltaş, Ali Akın, and Abdülkudüs Batlaş were the members and Mehmet Bozgil and M. Şirin Batlaş were the associate members of the Honor Committee of Kozluk DDKO. Ibid., pp. 458-460.

<sup>239</sup> The WPT managing committee sent telegram to this meeting in order to congratulate the foundation of the Kozluk DDKO. In this telegram the importance of the Hearths in the Kurdish movement was highlighted. Specifically it was stated in this telegram that “The state of incorporation of one of the new organizations to the Hearths which have strengthened the improvement revolutionary struggle of Kurdish people indicates how our struggle has accelerated. It is delivering a blow to the cruels and capital owners everyday. We congratulate you heartily since you made stronger this blows. Damn cruels, damn capital owners, long the live fraternity of Turks-Kurds, the peasantry, all of the world societies that are fighting.” (“*Kürt halkının gelişen devrimci mücadelesine güç katmış olan ocaklarımıza bir yenisinin daha eklenmiş olması, mücadelemizin ne kadar hızlanmış olduğunu göstermektedir. Zalimlere ve sermaye sahiplerine her gün darbe inmektedir. Bu darbeleri güçlendirdiğiniz için sizi candan kutlarız. Kahrolsun zalimler, kahrolsun sermayedarlar, yaşasın Kürt-Türk kardeşliği, yaşasın köylüler, yaşasın kavga veren tüm dünya halkları.*”) Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 213 – 214. Controversially, Hikmet Bozçalı argues that this telegram was sent by the Istanbul DDKO. See Bozçalı, “DDKO’lu Siyasi Serüvenim,” p. 218.

special impact on the people.<sup>240</sup> He gave his speech in Kurdish and maintained that, “It is our right to gather together in order to quit cruelties, and be released from poverty.” (*Zülimkarlığa paydos diyebilmek için, fakirlikten kurtulmak için toplanmak hakkımızdır.*)<sup>241</sup>

Similar to the membership conditions of the Ergani and Silvan DDKOs, no education requirements were compulsory for applying to the Kozluk DDKO. According to the third item of its charter, anyone who believed in “Human Rights and Cultural Revolution” could apply for membership.<sup>242</sup> The character and objectives of the Kozluk DDKO described in its charter were also the same as those of the Ergani and Silvan DDKOs. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in the charter of the Kozluk DDKO it was promised to not to be “separatist.” This statement can be read as the case underlying the acknowledgement of the Hearths of the official borders of the Turkish Republic in order to make provisions against any possible constraints on the Hearths in a gradually radicalizing political environment. In the second item of its charter, the character and objectives of the Kozluk DDKO were described as:

To materialize the improvement and expansion of the Revolutionary Culture, which is a significant element in the transition to an advanced production method in Turkey in the Kozluk people who reached the maturity of the fact of scientific act, [it] is an organization pursuing to materialize the solidarity of these people

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<sup>240</sup> Thereafter, Melle Anbullah Herzi was tortured in the district governorship building and was displayed to the public in order to intimidate the people. It is argued that this was due to Herzi’s speech at the opening ceremony of the Kozluk DDKO. “DDKO Yayın Bülteni 9,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), pp. 575-576.

<sup>241</sup> Kutlay, “Devrimci Doğu Kültür,” p. 166. Apart from the speech in Kurdish, this instance was also significant to demonstrate the “popular support” that the very same DDKOs lacked in the cities. In the same vein, the recognition in these regions persisted longer without any doubt.

<sup>242</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, p. 459.

by means of mutual education, unity, coalescence, cooperation and by unity in action.

To reach this end, the Association conducts social, economic and cultural research and activities. Also the association undertakes to be unifying, not dispersive; familiarizing not factionalizing.

All members, not recognizing a constraint apart from the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, believed in the freedom of thought. To reach the end of our association, [it] holds meetings and competitions, opens exhibitions, performs any kind of education and art activities not prohibited by laws.<sup>243</sup>

Another Hearth was founded in Diyarbakir on 6 January 1971.<sup>244</sup> The membership conditions for the Diyarbakir DDKO were no different than the previous Hearths that had been founded in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia. Simply there were no education restrictions. The Diyarbakir DDKO defined its character and objectives in its second item of the charter. They were almost identical to those of the other Hearths. Nonetheless, references to specific Constitutional provisions and especially to Misak-ı Milli set the charter of the Diyarbakir DDKO apart from the former charters. Just as in the case of the charter of the Kozluk DDKO about the promise not to be “separatist,” this statement can be read as referring to official discourses in order to make provision against possible constraints on the Hearths. However, a vague proposition was proposed for Misak-ı Milli: “a social ingredient Misak-ı Milli based on humanist values.” In the

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., p. 458-459.

<sup>244</sup> The founding members of the Diyarbakir DDKO were Yusuf Ekinci, Süleyman Çelik, Fikri Gürbüz Yıldızhan, Ömer Çetin, Mehdi Zana, Nazım Sönmez, Abdurrahman Uçatman, İlhan Arslan, Vedat Hayrullahoğlu, Gıyasettin Ayas, Halit Ayçiçek, Hasan Yılmaz, Hüseyin Alten, Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Naci Kutlay, Sadun Kılıç, and Mehmet Canpolat. The chairman of the managing committee of the Diyarbakir DDKO was Ömer Çetin, the secretary was İlhan Arslan, the accountant was Gıyasettin Ayas, and the members were Halit Ayçiçeği, Yusuf Ekinci, Naci Kutlay, Süleyman Çelik, and Fikri Gürbüz Yıldızhan. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 480-481.

second item of its charter, the character and objectives of the Diyarbakir DDKO were described as follows:

The Association, in the light of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by the initial principles and Article 3, inspired by Articles 12 and 20, pursues the aims to defend Human Rights and Freedoms, to sustain and improve culture of our peoples in a revolutionary manner, to hold cultural and social activities to meet the democratic aspirations and demands, to prevail a humanistic based and a socially constituted National Pact understanding against the racist-chauvinist and anti-democratic tendencies.<sup>245</sup>

The last Hearth was founded in Batman on 18 January 1971. Its charter was the same as that of the charter of Kozluk DDKO and thus it also promised not to be involved with the term “separatist.”<sup>246</sup> The repetitive statements of not being “separatist” while maintaining a vague term for “national unity” were seemingly the specific features pertaining to the Hearths that were established in the east. Even though it did not mean that the ones in the west had hesitated to express such a claim, it can be alleged that these statements were crucial for the Hearths in the east in effect to hinder the possible “labeling” attributed to their organizations.

There was a further important difference between the Hearths founded in the cities and in the region regarding the social backgrounds of their founders and members. In accordance with their charters in which they were defined as youth associations and laid down higher education as a compulsory condition for membership, most of the founders and members of the Istanbul and Ankara DDKOs were Kurdish intellectuals and university students. Although most of the members of these two organizations

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., p. 480.

<sup>246</sup> The founding members of the Batman DDKO were Mehmet Yıldız, Ubeydullah Aydın, Sabri Yıldız, Mehmet Durmaz, and Sabahattin Saygılı. The chairman of its managing committee was Mehmet Yıldız, the accountant Ubeydullah Aydın and the members were Mehmet Durmaz, Sabri Yılmaz and Sabahattin Saygılı. Ibid., p. 514; 517.

belonged to wealthy feudal families, socialist-leaning people were the majority among them. As a result, they criticized feudal structures and values from a socialist ideological standpoint. Actually, most of the founding members of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs were also members of the WPT and the FIC. On the contrary, the Hearths in Ergani, Silvan, Kozluk, Diyarbakir, and Batman, which were not described as youth associations and had no membership condition in their charters considering education, encompassed almost all segments of the local Kurdish people including Kurdish intellectuals, university and high school students, mullahs, artisans, and workers. Nationalist-leaning members made up a high percentage in these Hearths.<sup>247</sup> Nevertheless, Ali Buran, who was one of founders of the Istanbul DDKO, emphasized that while the WPT members were highly influential in the management of these organizations which had been established in this region, more patriotic discourses were present among the members of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKO. Buran states that the members of the Istanbul DDKO were much closer to the nationalist Kurds such as Musa Anter, Sait Elçi, Sait Kırmızıtoprak than the socialist leaning WPT members.<sup>248</sup> All in all, it can be argued that the Hearths were not directed by any other organizations or parties, but only were influenced by them to some extent in connection with the presence of the Hearth members that had affiliations with these organizations and parties.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Güçlü, “DDKO: Türkiye’de Kürtlerin Siyasete,” pp. 251-253. See also Bilek, “12 Mart 1971 Askeri Darbesi,” pp. 239 – 240; Fırat, “Ümit Fırat ile DDKO,” p. 183.

<sup>248</sup> Ali Buran, “DDKO İlk Ulusalçı, Demokratik ve Ayrı Örgütlenmeyi Hedefleyen Kürt Demokratik Gençlik Örgütüydü”, *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no 6 (2007), p. 87; 98.

<sup>249</sup> To see The DDKOs position towards other organizations, parties and their leaders see Pektaş, “Kürt Aydınlanması ve DDKO,” p. 272.

As will be seen clearly in the next part in which the publications and activities of the Hearths are examined, the above-mentioned character of the Hearths which enabled them to have members from almost all segments of the Kurdish people from not only right-wing affiliations but also from socialist, liberal and nationalist ideological standpoints was a result of the absence of a rigid ideology of the Hearths. Militants that advocate the NDR and that advocate the SR were altogether organized within the Hearths.<sup>250</sup> The emphasis based on being Kurdish was not a new phenomenon but rather an accumulated evolution. That is, whereas the Hearths welcomed members from various classes or segments of the Kurdish people, the essential distinction was being Kurdish. In this sense, the Hearths were one step further ahead of the organization structures of the previous generations based on fellow townsmanship.<sup>251</sup> What the Hearths attempted to undertake and at which they mostly succeeded was to gather many different Kurdish people of all classes and ideological perspectives within the same socialist leaning organizations. In other words, while the Hearths encompassed such nationalist, liberal and socialist Kurdish people within their organizational structures, they had a distinct socialist appearance since the main leading cadres responsible for the

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<sup>250</sup> Revolutionary Youth Association (*Devrimci Öğrenci Birliği*) which encompassed militants who advocated the NDR thesis was one of the organizations in which some of DDKO militants such as Necmettin Buyukkaya, Hikmet Bozçalı and Mehmet Demir participated.

<sup>251</sup> The expansion of fellow townsmanship largely was associated with the heritage of the past of the Kurdish movements and the inclusion of various kinds of Easterner people with different ideologies within the Hearths was a product of this development. In short, what the DDKO accomplished was to incorporate these people into its structure regardless of their differing world views. For the distinct emphasis on fellow townsmanship, see Alış, "The Process of the Politicization," p. 114.

discourses and activities were mainly socialist-oriented militants, and the majority of the members of the Hearths were socialist.<sup>252</sup>

Ümit Fırat presents the reason why people from different political tendencies gathered together within these organizations as being Kurd and subsequently having been otherized by the existing political order because of this feature.<sup>253</sup> Correspondingly, Kotan writes that even though the leftist members were the majority of members of the Hearths, the Hearths became “common platforms” of Kurdish people who adopted national self-determinacy as the sole basis regardless of their ideological standpoints. He states that because of this character of the Hearths it was difficult to direct these organizations and to create a common stance among members who had different ideological affiliations. He emphasizes further that, while the leaders of the Hearths sought to reconcile the splits among the members of the Hearths, especially the DPK-T and the WPT had impacts on the Hearths with a view to deepening these splits.<sup>254</sup>

Yet it should be mentioned that different ideological affiliations among the members did not deteriorate the organizational unity of the Hearths since there was a strong consensus among members, which especially had been created and strengthened by the leaders on the basis of the charters and targets of the Hearths. Actually, advocating and improving the democratic rights of the Kurdish people and their culture was the primary concern of the Hearths and therefore it provided a basis for such a consensus among members, which resulted in postponing any problems other than the

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<sup>252</sup> Aksoy, “DDKO’lar Öncesinden Günümüze,” p. 192.

<sup>253</sup> Fırat, “Ümit Fırat ile DDKO,” p. 182.

<sup>254</sup> Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 36.

problems of Kurdish people as a whole.<sup>255</sup> However, Aksoy and Kutlay states that if the Hearths had had a chance to survive longer, there would have been some decompositions within the organizations on the basis of armed struggle versus peaceful strategies upon the development of the gradually radicalizing social movement in Turkey.<sup>256</sup> Actually, as will be shown below, the military prosecutor also divided the DDKO defendants into two camps, those who advocated the establishment of Kurdistan and those who approved the borders of the Republic of Turkey. However, contrary to the military judge, it does not seem plausible to regard these developments as straightforwardly confined to the antagonism between two camps. The retrospective interpretation of the developments in general or the obscure desires associated with the Hearths in particular, hinders the actual developments that took place in a period of a mere two years. In other words, I state that elaborating the desires of the members of the Hearths and their defense statements given to Turkish courts are not useful in evaluating the two-year activity of the Hearths. Therefore, in this study, I prefer to examine especially the contents of the activities and publications of the Hearths regardless of the

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<sup>255</sup> At this point, it is important to mention İbrahim Güçlü's classification of members of the Hearths on the basis of their thoughts about the possible means of providing the Kurdish people with democratic rights. There were three different stands about this issue: the first one was advocating the establishment of a separate state. The second one was advocating federating Turkey and the last one was procuring language and cultural rights for Kurds within the existing Turkish state. Güçlü states that although none of these thoughts were adopted as formal ideals of Hearths, most of members perceived the last way as insufficient and therefore desired to resort to either the first way or the second. Ali Buran also says that they desired to establish a Kurdish state. Buran, "DDKO İlk Ulusalı, Demokratik," p. 96.

<sup>256</sup> Naci Kutlay, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 4 December 2009; and İhsan Aksoy, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 5 December 2009.



mentioned so-called desires of Hearth members, which seems improvable, if not retrospectively elaborated.<sup>257</sup>

### The Contents of DDKO Publications

The Hearths founded in the metropolitan cities and especially in the south-eastern region brought about a lively political movement following their establishments. The Hearths managed to conduct a great deal of publication activity in a very short period of time. This effort was not confined merely to publication but also encompassed the distribution of these publications to many organizations and state authorities. This publication activity was also significant from another standpoint. That is, the short-life of the organization does not seem to conclude clear-cut conclusions concerning the nature of the organization. Accordingly the contents of the publications may reveal this complicated picture. While the “fundamental split” was elucidated with the economic terms that were affiliated with the rest of the left-wing organizations in the period, there was, however, a growing place reserved for the other questions which were not explainable by mere economic factors. In this sense this section portrays an essential insight with a view to demonstrate the preoccupation of the militants of the Hearths since the publications continued to be inspired by socialist terminology – indeed the “revolutionary” seizure of power was never abandoned – and to reveal the oppression of the Kurds via cultural terms. In short, the resolutions with respect to the ever-lasting

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<sup>257</sup> For this “assumed” desire among the members of the DDKO, see Güçlü, *Hepimizin Sevgili Ağabeyi*, p. 133; Buran, “DDKO İlk Ulusalı,” p. 96.

Questions were no longer dealt with in simple economic terms, but were accompanied by demands for cultural rights that directly accused the state.

Accordingly, it did not take very long for the government to become aware of this intense publication activity, and consequently many of the publications were confiscated by the authorities to be followed by criminal prosecutions. The monthly bulletin of the Hearths, however, dealt with the daily events and subjects that preoccupied the minds of the militants of the Hearths. As this section elaborates the most repetitive and significant ones largely discussed in the publications were the fundamental cleavage that the Turkish societies were supposed to challenge, the struggle for the recognition of the Kurdish existence in general and of Kurdish language in particular, and the regional disparities. The resolutions suggested by the Hearths were providing the revolutionary solitary that were supposed to bond the two societies, recognizing of the existence of the Kurdish ethnicity and providing Kurds their constitutional rights, reaching people as well as siding with them and, expectedly, realizing the revolution that was deemed to be the ultimate resolution to end all the problems in Turkey that were frequently elaborated in the DDKO publications.

### The Fundamental Split in Turkey

The inevitable determination of the state of the Republic was evident in the DDKO-led publications. In this context, the economic determinism had common aspects as much as it could have with the rest of the socialist organizations though this economic orientation, which can be argued to have retained its shallow character, would be superseded by a more profound cultural emphasis. In such a setting, the Hearths

described the Republic of Turkey as “an agricultural country which is semi-dependent on imperialism.” From this point of view, the Hearths argued that American imperialism had been exploiting Turkey via cooperating three segments in Turkish society: the domestic bourgeoisie, called the “comprador bourgeoisie” by the Hearths; the big landowners; and the “big bureaucrats.” Although no analysis regarding the “comprador bourgeoisie” is available in the publications of the Hearths, some shallow analyses on the characters of big landowners and the so-called big bureaucrats are present.<sup>258</sup>

In the First Term General Meeting Draft of the Ankara DDKO, the so-called Founding Declaration of the Hearths, it was remarked that big landownership had subsisted in Turkey within “unprogressive” relations. However, no interpretation was made of in this document or the rest. It was only emphasized that the big landowners who were depicted as local bodies alienated from the Kurdish people, resisted land reform together with the comprador bourgeoisie, big bureaucrats and imperialism in order to maintain their own interests. In this declaration, especially poor and landless peasants, who were said to be exploited by big landowners, traders and money lenders, were seen as the most integral part of the working masses since they composed the biggest part of the working population in Turkey in that period of the time.<sup>259</sup>

The Hearths inscribed two main characters to the “big bureaucrats” as the third social segment in Turkey collaborating with American imperialism: Jacobinism and chauvinism. However, these attributed characters were mentioned in the publications of the Hearths in terms of the predominant relations between the bureaucracy and the

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<sup>258</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Birinci Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 616.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 615-616.

Kurdish people. Accordingly, these “big bureaucrats” were depicted as a body that always looked down on and took a stand against people, especially against the Kurdish people because of their ethnic identity, and exercised their own authority with repressive methods.<sup>260</sup>

As mentioned above, the peasants were seen by the Hearths as the most integral part of the working masses in Turkey due to its great share in the working population. However, in the context of the struggle against the so-called local collaborators of American imperialism – the comprador bourgeoisie, big landowners and big bureaucrats – the Hearths located the “working class and layers” as the most important section in Turkey. In the Founding Declaration of the Hearths, elements of “working class and layers” were listed specifically as “workers, landless peasants or peasants with little land, public servants with low-income, craftsmen, artisans, and some parts of petit bourgeoisie etc.”<sup>261</sup>

Despite the fact that the Hearths mentioned a wide range of people in society as components of the “working class and layers,” who were expected to fight against the so-called local collaborators of imperialism, the co-struggle of workers and peasants was emphasized as the fundamental struggle in the publications of the Hearths. In this Founding Declaration, the main split in Turkey was shown as one between these two main camps of society, American imperialism and its so-called collaborators encompassing big landowners, big bureaucrats, and comprador bourgeoisies were on the one side and the “working class and layers” were on the other side. It was emphasized

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 617.

that the conflicts between these two sides were essential in the formation of other conflicts in Turkey.<sup>262</sup>

In a leaflet titled as “Why are We against Imperialism?” (*Emperyalizme Neden Karşıyız?*) the Hearths presented the main targets of imperialism as “suppressing national liberation movements in underdeveloped countries, mastering the world economy, and overthrowing socialist governments.” It was further argued that imperialism sought to achieve these objectives through the instruments of its local collaborators in each underdeveloped country. Regarding national liberation movements, it was propounded that imperialism and its local collaborators abused the sentiments of religion and nationality in order to alienate “suppressed societies” from “nationalist and democratic segments which would provide liberation of people” and therefore prevent them from being organized and awakened. In other words, with respect to Turkey, it was argued that the Kurdish people as one of the suppressed groups in Turkey, had been alienated from their leaders and from the ideal of national liberation due to integrating themselves to the official discourse on Turkish nationalism and Sunni-Islam belief as a result of the endeavors of imperialism, the big bureaucrats, the comprador bourgeoisie, and big landowners. What was underlined further in this leaflet was that not only the common Kurdish people but also the revolutionary people in Turkey were under the influence of these official discourses. At the end of the leaflet, all the revolutionary people were called to struggle against imperialism and its collaborators and to support national liberation movements.<sup>263</sup> Similarly, in the Founding Declaration of the DDKO,

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., pp. 615-617.

<sup>263</sup> “Emperyalizme Niçin Karşıyız,” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü,” pp. 251- 252.

it was stated that the Hearths would wage a holistic struggle against imperialism and its local collaborators at the same time.<sup>264</sup>

### The Existence of the Kurdish People, Language and Culture

The strict polarization of Turkish society shaped by terms borrowed from socialist ideology was enhanced when the direction of the struggle was at the same time directed at making a “denied” nation visible. In the Founding Declaration of the Hearths, the structure of the population of Turkey was presented as multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural, contrary to the official discourse that claimed a single nation, single language and single culture, all of which were constructed upon the Turkish ethnicity. In this declaration, it basically was advocated that although the existence of the Kurdish ethnicity in Turkey was ignored and the Kurds were exposed to assimilation policies, they were one of the several ethnic groups in Turkey whose existence should be accepted as a sociologic fact.<sup>265</sup> It should be indicated that in their founding declaration, charters, bulletins, and in the most of the leaflets, the Hearths brought forth the existence of Kurdish people in Turkey not as a reason for demanding autonomy but only for procuring the recognition of the existence of the Kurdish people and their culture in Turkey.

As Mumtaz Kotan emphasizes, this stance of the Hearths was a result of the fact that the Kurdish movement in Turkey was in its initial phase, to borrow his term the

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<sup>264</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Birinci Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” p. 628.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., p. 625.

Kurdish movement within the borders of Turkish Republic was like an “embryo.” Therefore, the mission of the Hearths was to promote the recognition of the existence of Kurdish society in Turkey, improve Kurdish culture, and raise the awareness of the Kurdish people. Kotan rightly states that in a political and social order in which even the existence of Kurdish society was denied, the Hearths should not have adopted radical discourses. According to him, such a radical stance would be a “betrayal of the Kurdish people” since these kinds of discourses would cause the annihilation of the Hearths and thus hinder the further progress of the Kurdish movement in Turkey.<sup>266</sup> In accordance with this priority of the Hearths in promoting the recognition of the existence of the Kurdish ethnicity within the borders of the Turkish Republic, emphasis on the “wholeness of Turkey” was situated in the Founding Declaration of the DDKO. In this declaration, the existence of Kurdish people, the Kurdish language and culture were represented as such:

- There is a Kurdish society within the wholeness of Turkey.
- Kurdish language is one of the languages spoken in Turkey. (Approximately 4.5 million)<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> In Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 117.

<sup>267</sup> In the fifth news bulletin of the Hearths, it was demonstrated that the native language of people who did not know or speak Turkish was recorded as Turkish on the census sheets. It was asserted that this was due to either timidity of the people to announce their actual native language, or the deliberate direction of the census taker or the falsifications of records. In this bulletin, people were warned to give true statements especially regarding questions about language in the future census and the Kurdish intellectuals were called to mount a campaign in order to make the people conscious of this matter. It was presented as a “historical task” of the Kurdish intellectuals and the Hearths. “DDKO Yayın Bülteni 5,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 526. In the sixth news bulletin of the Hearths this matter of the data reliability of the population census considering especially the native language of the people was discussed within the context of the population census taken on 25 October 1970. In this bulletin, it was declared that statistical results of this census, which still had not been announced, would not be reliable due to the irregular practices both before and during the census. In order to exemplify these irregular practices, it was asserted that, in the courses in which census takers were trained on the methods of census, they were directed to

- This existence created a specific cultural unity in the country.
- Kurdish people get together around a common market in east and south-eastern Anatolia.”<sup>268</sup>

The speeches of Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish Constitution of 1961 and the Conference and Treaty of Lausanne were included in declarations as references in order to legitimize the idea of the existence of different ethnic groups, and therefore Kurdish society, in Turkey with equal rights to those of the majority.<sup>269</sup> By referring to Mustafa Kemal’s speeches, other than justifying the multiethnic character of society, the Kurdish ethnicity was represented as one of the ethnic groups that had participated in the Turkish War of Independence and thus was one of the original founding groups of the Turkish Republic. The role of the Kurdish people in the Turkish War of Independence also was mentioned in a leaflet pertaining to the Istanbul DDKO called “To the Societies of Turkey” (*Türkiye Halklarına*). In this leaflet, it was highlighted that the Turkish War of

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answer the question regarding native language as “Turkish” without exception. It was argued that this kind of practice was prevalent everywhere in Turkey, but more common in eastern Anatolia. In addition, it seems to be that these kinds of irregular practices were aimed at not all ethnic groups in Turkey but especially the Kurdish people. “DDKO Yayın Bülteni 6”, in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), pp. 540-541.

<sup>268</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” pp. 626- 627.

<sup>269</sup> Mustafa Kemal’s speeches that were referred to by the Hearths are stated as follows: “...Gentlemen, this border is not merely a border drawn by military considerations. It’s the national border. It was determined to become the national border. Yet it should not be imagined that, there is only one kind of nation constituting Islamic elements. Within this border, there are Turks, there are Circassians, and there are Kurds and other Islamic elements. Thus this border is the national border of the brother nations who live in a mingled way and had unified all of their intentions by all means. (All are brothers, all are Islams voices.) There is a great voice in the article that determines this border issue. Furthermore all privileges pertaining to each Islamic element living within the border of this country in terms of their environment, their traditions and their races were accepted and approved mutually and sincerely.”

“National sovereignty is born from natural law, by necessary affairs, and is acquired by shedding blood. It acquired triumph and victory by the struggle of the Turkish and Kurdish nations.” For a similar speech, see note 4, above.



Independence had been won through a joint struggle of all societies of Turkey and was a model for independence wars of other societies.<sup>270</sup> On the basis of these references, the Hearths criticized the hegemonic state of the Turkish ethnicity in the political and economic life of Turkey and saw this fact as an obstacle to realizing a “real democracy” in Turkey. It was alleged that a real democracy would be realized only through satisfying the equal participation of all the founding ethnic groups and also workers in the administrative units of Turkey. In addition, the “free will” of each ethnic group for togetherness was depicted as a *sine qua non* for realizing a real democracy.<sup>271</sup> Even though the term “free will” does connote the self-determination right for ethnic groups, it implies for the Hearths the necessity of convincing all the ethnic groups to live within the borders of the Turkish Republic voluntarily rather than enforcing them with repressive methods. In line with the arguments of this study, the recognition of the Kurdish people was more important than any other demands associated with autonomy in a conjuncture that did not even acknowledge the recognition of a nation in the first place. The free will was, thus, nothing but the desire to live equally within the borders of the Republic.

Yet even the existence of the Kurdish language was denied. Accordingly in the Founding Declaration, the sentence of İsmet İnönü at the Lausanne Conference “Kurds, those living in Turkey speak a different language” was also mentioned by the Hearths in

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<sup>270</sup> However, in this leaflet it was also argued that Turkey had returned to the conditions of the year 1919 due to the new exploitation methods of imperialism and its local collaborators. Therefore, the people of Turkey are called to struggle together once again against imperialism. “Türkiye Halklarına,” (17 March 1970) in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 371.

<sup>271</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Birinci Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” p. 624.

order to prove the existence of the Kurdish people in Turkey with a distinct language. In addition, Article 4 Clause 39 of the Treaty of Lausanne also was referred in order to advocate the right to speak Kurdish in Turkey.<sup>272</sup> The necessity to provide equality among different ethnic groups was also justified by the Hearths through referring to Article 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey of 1961.<sup>273</sup> All in all, the prohibitions and punishments of the administrations of the Turkish Republic regarding the usage of languages of ethnic groups were criticized on the basis of their contradictions with the speeches of Mustafa Kemal and İsmet İnönü and the specific items of the Lausanne Treaty, and the Constitution.<sup>274</sup>

Correspondingly, in the same declaration, the assimilation and oppression policies towards ethnic groups, their cultures and languages were said to be as the principal causes of the ethnic conflicts and uprisings in Turkey. These policies were evaluated as a strategy of imperialism and its local collaborators, who aimed to “sew the seeds of discord” among societies in order to maintain their own exploitations of those societies. At this point, the Hearths invited intellectuals and revolutionist people to contend with this strategy through advocating the equality of societies. In this regard, the target of the Hearths was defined to achieve the equality and fraternity of societies

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<sup>272</sup> According to this clause, “There will not be any restriction imposed on any subject of Turkey to use any language freely either in his private and commercial relations or in religious publications and any other publications and or in general public.” In “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Birinci Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” p. 624.

<sup>273</sup> According to this item, “All individuals are equal before the law with no discrimination on the grounds of language, race, color, sex, political persuasion, philosophical belief, religion and sect.” Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri*, p. 174.

<sup>274</sup> See “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Birinci Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” pp. 622- 625.

within the borders of the Turkish Republic through the joint struggle of Turkish society as a whole against the mentioned strategy of imperialism and its local collaborators.<sup>275</sup>

Having identified the fundamental impediment to the recognition of the existence of the Kurdish people and language, it can be seen that the explanations accusing the State had shifted to a less economic orientation. Even though the fundamental Marxist point of view was retained, the demands of the Hearths were to criticize the policies of the State directly by means of the very constitutional rights. The revolutionary struggle was believed to require an equal representation of two nations, and it was all that the Hearths had asked for during that period.

#### The Importance of the Revolutionary Solidarity

The insistence on the joint struggle of the societies of Turkey reveals that even though the Hearths symbolized the organizational dissociation of the Kurdish leftist elements from the Turkish left organizations and therefore it was a milestone in the formation of the Kurdish left, the Hearths still perceived the realization of its targets regarding establishing the equality of societies as it was an integral part of the overall revolutionary struggle in Turkey. In other words, the organizational disintegration among the Turkish and Kurdish left was expected to be accompanied by a collective struggle of Turkish and Kurdish revolutionists. Actually, the necessity of providing the revolutionary solidarity with other organizations in Turkey which were supposed to adopt the same strategies as the Hearths was acknowledged as one of the guidelines of

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid. pp. 625-626.

the Hearths in the Founding Declaration and the members of the Hearths were advised to approve the successful and reified strategies of other left-wing organizations.<sup>276</sup>

The importance of the joint struggle of the Turkish and Kurdish peoples was emphasized in several other publications of the Hearths as the only way to make a revolution in Turkey possible. For instance, in the seventh news bulletin of the Hearths, it was argued that the struggle against American imperialism, its local collaborators, reactionism, and oppression policies on societies would be succeeded only via the joint struggle of societies.<sup>277</sup> Similarly, at the gathering held by the prospective founders of the Hearths on 5 May 1969 prior to the foundation of the Ankara DDKO, Mumtaz Kotan declared that they, as Kurdish Marxist students, did not aim at bringing about a separation within the socialist movement in Turkey via the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish left organization. Instead, they intended to fulfill their mission as an autonomous Kurdish left organization within the larger revolutionary movement in Turkey in which they would act in concert with other revolutionary organizations. Furthermore, Kotan highlighted that any expression that perceives the foundation of an autonomous Kurdish organization as “separatism within the revolutionary struggle in Turkey” should be defeated by the Hearths.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Ali Buran, who was one of the founder members of the Istanbul DDKO, emphasizes that the character of the future relations of the Hearths with the Turkish left composed one of the questions that were discussed thoroughly during the foundation process of the Istanbul DDKO. He says that at the end of these discussions, it was decided to retain solidarity with the Turkish left as far as possible, but without making any concessions regarding the Kurdish national issue. Buran, “DDKO İlk Ulusal, Demokratik,” p. 98.

<sup>277</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Yayın Bülteni 7,” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, p. 552.

<sup>278</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 113-114.

In this wholeness of revolutionary action in Turkey, the Hearths perceived its task as educating the Kurdish youth in the social, economic and cultural issues of Kurdish society and eliminating the chauvinist nationalism and assimilation policies in Turkey. Indeed, as it will be discussed thoroughly in the subsequent part that deals with the organizational activities of the Hearths, the Hearths made a point of establishing revolutionary solidarity with other left-wing organizations especially in order to make use of their experience for strengthening the Kurdish political movement in Turkey. As indications of this revolutionary solidarity, the Hearths published several joint declarations and held joint public demonstrations together with the Turkish left organizations and institutions and attended some of their gatherings.

It can be alleged that although there were contrasting ideas among the members of the Hearths, Mumtaz Kotan's speech should be seen as representative of the main perception of the Hearths since he was one of the founders who had been in charge of the administration of the organization from the beginning. The Hearths not contravened only the pretensions about themselves to be separatist within the left movement in Turkey; they also criticized the fragmentations within the left-wing movement in Turkey on the basis of the perceptions and activities. They argued that these fragmentations hindered the possible realization of a "Socialist Theory" in Turkey since it damaged the wholeness of "Revolutionary Action."<sup>279</sup> Even though the joint struggle was regarded as being united with the Turkish left, the fundamental preoccupations of the two wings were to be demarcated as the stipulations of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths shifted towards the cultural aspects of the oppression against Kurdish people. As the previous section emphasized, the advocacy of the existence of a nation in terms of

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

cultural aspects, the following section offers another differentiation point with respect to the agenda of the Turkish left. Evidently, the collaboration was maintained with the Turkish organizations, but at the same time the emphases tended to shift.

#### Criticisms on the Discrimination Practices against East and South-eastern Anatolia

The Hearths gave an important place in their publications, conferences and speeches at public demonstrations on the subject of regional disparities in Turkey and thus the economic, social and cultural backwardness of eastern and south-eastern Anatolia. The Hearths perceived the possible economic, social and cultural development of these regions as a facilitating factor in enabling the Kurdish people to raise the level of awareness of their ethnic identity. From this point of view, it was argued that the backwardness of east and south-eastern regions was due to the deliberate policies of governmental units since the Kurdish people constituted the majority of the population in these regions. In this regard, the comparisons of regions regarding the amount of public and private investments, shares in the national income distribution, and especially disparities between regions regarding education and medical services composed the subjects which were mostly discussed in the publications of the Hearths. The Hearths attributed great importance to these kinds of comparisons between regions in order to inform the Kurdish people about the discriminatory practices of the Turkish government against Kurdish people. Accordingly, the Hearths declared that they would bring

revolutionary consciousness to Kurdish people through revealing these kinds of contradictions between Kurdish people and units of state.<sup>280</sup>

In the first news bulletin of the Hearths, it was stressed that one of the factors effective in the regional backwardness of eastern and south-eastern Anatolia was the prohibitions on Kurdish people against using their own native language. It was argued that because of the fact that Kurdish language was not allowed to be spoken or written, employees had difficulties in using the means of production and this situation caused delays, high consumption rates and failures in production and hindered the technological development in these regions.<sup>281</sup> It again was demonstrated in this bulletin that American imperialism and its so-called local collaborators were inclined to preserve this underdeveloped situation of the region in order to maintain their own interests.<sup>282</sup>

In the Founding Declaration of the Hearths, it was stated that the existence of the Kurdish people in Turkey was not only a matter of ethnicity but also a matter of class relations. In other words, ethnicity and class belongings overlapped regarding Kurdish society in Turkey. It was further argued that “class conflicts in Turkey mainly take root from obvious conflicts between the ethnic groups.” In this sense, it was highlighted that Kurdish ethnicity corresponded to the lower class in Turkey due to deliberate policies towards east and south-eastern Anatolia. Therefore, it was argued that the

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<sup>280</sup> “Önemle Duyurulur,” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 264-265.

<sup>281</sup> According to the tape records of the Turkish National Intelligence Service, in a seminar of the Ankara DDKO titled “Language in Marxism,” one of the members argued that the prohibition of the Kurdish language not only underpinned the underdevelopment of these regions, but also hindered possible developments within Kurdish culture. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 179-180.

<sup>282</sup> “DDKO Aylık Haber Bülteni: Eğitim ve Örgütlenme 1,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 480.

underdeveloped situation of the region could not be understood by only economic terms since the Hearths read this situation as a consequence of the discriminatory approach of the Turkish state towards the Kurdish ethnicity.<sup>283</sup>

Regarding the hegemonic classes in Turkey, the Hearths argued that these classes were composed largely of Turks and members of minority groups who had integrated with hegemonic classes via renouncing their ethnic identities. One of these minority groups often mentioned in the publications of the Hearths was the Kurdish big landowners. It was demonstrated that these landowners become collaborators with the hegemonic classes via adopting capitalistic methods on their lands, and acquiring the franchises of domestic and foreign companies. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that they also had been culturally assimilated and had broken their connections with the Kurdish people through receiving education in Turkish and other languages.<sup>284</sup> In other words, the main reason for the alienation of the Kurdish big landowners from the Kurdish people was shown especially as the official language of education.

The Hearths said that even trade, travel, thought and speech freedoms in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia were not available. In its second news bulletin it was emphasized that as a consequence of the absence of these freedoms in this region, the capital of the Eastern businessmen flowed to western Anatolia and this flight of capital was followed by the flight of Eastern labor force to the same area. Therefore the Kurdish people, who were perceived by the Hearths as to have fallen outside of the production

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<sup>283</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” p. 625.

<sup>284</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” p. 625; 627.



sphere, faced severe economic downturns as a result of this economic situation.<sup>285</sup> In addition to this capital flight, it was criticized that all industrial plants and infrastructural investments had accumulated in cities as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa, and Adana, and almost all private investments, and a 3:1 ratio of public investments, had been made in western Anatolia.<sup>286</sup>

Correspondingly the disparities between the regions in terms of education constituted one of the subjects which the Hearths often dealt with in their publications. In its fifth news bulletin, it was demonstrated that there were crucial disparities between regions in terms of access to education opportunities and also the quality of education. The absence of primary and secondary schools in many villages, the scarcity in the number of classroom and branch teachers in eastern and south-eastern Anatolian schools, the low amount of public expenditure on education, and the limited number of students from these regions who entered university were often discussed by the Hearths in order to show the inequalities between regions considering education.<sup>287</sup> However, it

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<sup>285</sup> “DDKO Aylık Haber Bülteni 2,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1*. (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 493.

<sup>286</sup> “DDKO Haber Bülteni 1,” In *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1*. (Ankara: Komal, 1975), pp. 479-480.

<sup>287</sup> Inequalities between Kurdish and Turkish students regarding the university entrance exam were often mentioned in the bulletins and leaflets of the Hearths. In one of these leaflets it was argued that university entrance exam was contrary to the principal of equality of the Constitution since high school students in the east enter the same exam as students in the west although they did not have similar education opportunities. It was emphasized that students from the east would not be able to enter university as a result of this education policy. “Our high school fellows” (1 June 1970), in “Justified Decision of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths Case” by Command of Diyarbakir Martial 1<sup>st</sup> numbered Military Court, p. 258. In order to show the failure of students that were educated in east and south-eastern Anatolian high schools at entering universities, the Hearths gave statistical information: while 22.5 % of students who entered to Istanbul University in 1964 were from Istanbul, 10 % were from central Anatolia and 5 % from the east and south-east Anatolia. “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” p. 626.

should be underlined that the main source of disparities between regions in this matter was highlighted in the DDKO publications as the legal obligation regarding a single language in the education system. The Hearths asserted that primary schools in Eastern Anatolia resembled a preparation phase for primary school education since students in east and south-eastern region only were able to learn Turkish language during this education period. As a result of this situation, Kurdish students were depicted at a disadvantage to the Turkish students from the beginning.<sup>288</sup>

Since the Hearths perceived the main source of disparities in the education system to be the language of education more than crude economic underdevelopment, it offered a “revolutionist education system” in which linguistic and cultural autonomy for the so-called “poor public body” was to be secured.<sup>289</sup> In a joint declaration of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs with the Union of Primary School Teachers (*İlkokul Öğretmenleri Sendikası*) and Ankara Workers Club (*Ankara İşçi Birliği*), it was stated that the existing education system was arranged according to the interests of the hegemonic classes and that inequalities in the education system could not be eliminated through reforming. Rather, these inequalities only could be eliminated through the establishment of the rule of the working masses in which economic, social and cultural issues would be solved on behalf of the working masses. It was argued that solutions other than this would only deepen disparities between the social classes in Turkey in favor of the hegemonic classes. This declaration ended with a challenge to cultural imperialism and a request for a “revolutionary education system” in which the autonomy

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<sup>288</sup> “DDKO Yayın Bülteni,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), pp. 527-528.

<sup>289</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” p. 626.

of language and culture would be provided for the masses.<sup>290</sup> As seen, the demands regarding education system introduced by the Hearths were highly radical for that period of time. In addition, the desire of the Hearths for the establishment of the rule of the working masses can be traced by virtue of the question of education since they refer to this desired rule as also the sole key of the educational problems.

Disparities between regions and the backward situation of eastern and south-eastern Anatolia concerning health services constituted the second subject most frequently mentioned in the publications of the Hearths. The organization said that as a result of inadequate health services, especially the shortage of medical devices and doctors, incidence of illnesses such as leprosy, enteric fever, measles, and hepatitis continued to rise in these regions. Just as in the education policies, it was claimed that the Turkish government deliberately did not develop a health policy to eliminate the differences between regions regarding health services.<sup>291</sup> Here again, it was argued that the underdeveloped situation of these regions was due to the unwillingness of the hegemonic classes for the awakening of the Kurdish people.<sup>292</sup>

The shortage in the number of doctors serving in east was one of the subjects frequently repeated in the publications of the Hearths. In the fourth news bulletin, it was stated that doctors did not want to serve in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia due to the reluctance of the government to pay them higher wages for the very reason that they

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<sup>290</sup> “Üniversiteye Giriş Sınavları Anayasaya Aykırıdır,” (10 July 1970) in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 260-261.

<sup>291</sup> “DDKO Yayın Bülteni 7,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 551.

<sup>292</sup> “Halkımıza, Diyarbakir Tıp Fakültesi Dekanı İstifa Etti,” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 252-253.

served in the east. Considering this issue, a bill about one-year compulsory service in the east for the final class students of medicine faculties was discussed. However, the aim of this bill was understood by the Hearths as providing the eastern Anatolian people with inexperienced medicine students to be used as “guinea pigs.” In response to this bill, Hearths asked the government to appoint professional doctors to these regions with higher wages.<sup>293</sup> Similarly, the Hearths evaluated the news about prospective birth control methods in eastern regions<sup>294</sup> as a reflection of a deliberate policy which planned to be implemented only in eastern Anatolia with a view to slowing down the high rates of birth among the Kurds, who composed the majority of the population of the region.<sup>295</sup>

Regarding the backwardness of east and south-eastern Anatolia, the contents of the publications of the Hearths founded in these regions become of vital importance. In this sense, there are two leaflets from the Ergani DDKO titled “Announcement” (*Duyuru*) and “To Our People” (*Halkımıza*) which mainly dealt with the underdeveloped situation of the region.<sup>296</sup> These leaflets especially focused on the bad conditions in Ergani and regarded the problems about education and health facilities as the most urgent ones. According to these leaflets, the political power had treated the eastern people like “step children” and “had left this region to its own fate.” Considering health

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<sup>293</sup> “DDKO Yayın Bülteni 4,” *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 517.

<sup>294</sup> In the 7 June 1970 dated issue of *Gunaydın*, it was announced that a policy of birth control was going to be initiated in eastern Anatolia. In order to carry out this policy a committee had visited the region and introduced some birth control methods to the woman.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 516.

<sup>296</sup> See “Duyuru,” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 415; “Halkımıza”, in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 416.

care services, it was demonstrated that there were no doctors in Ergani. However, the problems regarding the high school of the district received much more focus in these leaflets. In the first leaflet, it was declared that the Ergani DDKO would demand doctors and teachers and would hold meetings and protests in order to express the demands of the district. The second leaflet shows that the Ergani DDKO arranged a boycott to warn the authorities since they had not satisfied the demands of the Ergani DDKO on the education system. They reproached the authorities for their unwillingness to satisfy the expectations of the Kurdish people by saying as “in any case, we do not demand any of them. Because we know that we are step-children and admit that they are luxuries for us. Actually, these are our natural rights...”<sup>297</sup>

Although no leaflets from the Kozluk DDKO are available, there are two letters written by this organization to Selahattin Oran, who was the Siirt deputy of the New Turkey Party, and Ahmet Insel Birincioglu, who was the minister of TEKEL, about the underdeveloped situation of Kozluk. It should be indicated that these letters are exceptional in respect to their moderate tone and their approach towards the government. In the first letter, “love and respect” to Oran was mentioned and moral and material support for the Kozluk DDKO was requested. It was stressed that regardless of which political party he belonged, the desires of Oran and the Kozluk DDKO were the same. In the second letter, a visit by the Customs Minister to Kozluk was appreciated and perceived as a step towards finding a remedy by the government to the backwardness of the east. In this letter, the minister of TEKEL also was asked to establish a tobacco

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<sup>297</sup> “Duyuru,” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 415; “Halkımıza”, in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü,, p. 416.

enterprise in Kozluk.<sup>298</sup> However, it should be mentioned that unlike these two letters written by the members of the Kozluk DDKO, the Hearths generally made radical statements regarding the official discrimination practices against east and south-eastern regions and the Kurdish people.

The events that occurred in Tunceli in August 1969, known as the “Tunceli Events,”<sup>299</sup> should be mentioned in order to reveal the radical stance of the Hearths regarding official discrimination practices against the region and the Kurdish people. The Hearths evaluated the prohibition on the Theatre of People’s Performers (*Halk Oyuncuları Tiyatrosu*) as proof of the discrimination policies against the east, which was assumed to stem from the “step-children” treatment of the government towards Kurdish people due to their ethnic identity. The Istanbul DDKO published a press release about these events in a menacing tongue, declaring that “unless Turkish society makes a sound [give reaction] against these kinds of different and arbitrary behaviors, assuming that our lives are in danger, we as the children of those who were discriminated against, will drop out universities and run to join our brothers who are in caves. If we die, we will die there.”<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 465-466.

<sup>299</sup> In view of prohibition faced “Halk Oyuncuları Tiyatrosu” in staging the drama named as “Pir Sultan Abdal” in Tunceli, several events took place and two people were killed, seven people were wounded by security forces as a result of these events.

<sup>300</sup> “Türkiye halkı, bu farklı ve keyfi davranışlara ses çıkarmazsa, güvenliğimizi tehlikede sayacağımızdan, farklı muamele görenlerin evlâtları olarak üniversiteleri bırakıp, mağaradaki kardeşlerimizin yanına koşacağız. Öleceksek orada ölelim.” “Türkiye Halkına,” Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, p. 367. The statements of the Hearths about an event that occurred in a district of Hakkari, Beytüşşebap, on 21 September 1970 also can be given as an example of the radical tone. In the sixth news bulletin of the Hearths, the district governor of Beytüşşebap was called a “fascist governor” and held responsible for the death of two innocent Kurdish villagers. It was declared that this kind of

Although the Hearths focused on the backward situation of east and south-eastern Anatolia in their publications, in the Founding Declaration of the DDKO it was argued that not only the east and south-eastern Anatolia, but also central Anatolia, Thrace and the Black Sea regions were underdeveloped. However, it was highlighted that east and south-eastern Anatolia were the most underdeveloped regions where capitalistic and feudal relations of production coexisted in agriculture. The peasants of these regions, most often Kurdish peasants, were said to be both oppressed by the big landowners and the bureaucratic mechanism of the state. It was demonstrated that the bureaucracy suppressed these peasants simply because of their native language, Kurdish. In addition to pressures stemming from bureaucracy and landowners, it was said that security of life and property were absent in these regions because of threat of bandits, pressures from the gendarmerie and blood feuds. In line with the leaflets mentioned above, the Kurdish people were also called “so-called citizens” of the Turkish Republic.<sup>301</sup> It was written that despite the democratic character of the 1961 Constitution, the Eastern people lived in “primitive” conditions in which they were deprived of land, proper housing facilities

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treatment of Kurdish people, which was interpreted as an example of political prosecution against them, deepened the anger of the Kurdish people against the domination of the Turkish nation. “DDKO Yayın Bülteni 6,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975) pp. 539-540. The Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs also published a leaflet about this event. In this leaflet, it was alleged that there were many other official authorities who had made a forays into the villages and applied pressure on the Kurdish villagers. “Beytüşşebap’ta (Hakkari) Yasalar ve İnsan Onuru Ayaklar Altında,” (10 October 1970) in *Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları’na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü*, p. 268. In addition to these bulletin and leaflet mentioning this event, the Ankara DDKO also sent a text on 9 October 1970 to the Ministry of the Interior, the Governorship of Hakkari, and the press about this event in Beytüşşebap. These events were protested as being regional pressures of “undutiful” administrations against the eastern people, the Kurdish people, who had already been assumed to be left to their fate. *Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları’na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü*, p. 280.

<sup>301</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Tasarısı,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975) p. 627.

and food.<sup>302</sup> Furthermore, it was emphasized that these people also were deprived of the ability to improve their own culture and were kept in ignorance deliberately.<sup>303</sup> In the view of this panorama, the Kurdish people were depicted as a group who were struggling in order to gain merely their “constitutional democratic rights”, which was assumed by the Hearths that Kurds had never had before.<sup>304</sup>

The legal terms put forward here were beyond the moderate tones that could be attributed to a youth or cultural association. Having criticized the harsh discrimination against the eastern regions radically, the struggle was no longer merely an economic one. Underdevelopment in this sense was present also in other parts of the country, but the severe restrictions, if not total ignorance, on education or health that lead to the very same underdevelopment was largely confined to the east and south-eastern regions. What the militants of the Hearths dared to expose was nothing but the truth and to eliminate it by revolutionary means.

### The Roles of Intellectuals in Revolutionary Struggle and the Missions of the Hearths

The Hearths were organizations which rested upon the power and the will of people. In the Founding Declaration of the Hearths two kinds of views considering the role of

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<sup>302</sup> Considering this state of living conditions a leaflet titled “Will you still be silent?” (*Daha Susacak mısınız?*) were distributed in June 1969 upon the occasion of Hunger Meeting held in Hakkari. In this leaflet, the government was criticized for abandoning the peasants alone in bad living conditions in which housing, education and land facilities were insufficient. Furthermore, it is stated that “all cells of existing order were decayed”. “Daha Susacak mısınız?” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 248.

<sup>303</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Tasarısı,” in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975) p. 627.

<sup>304</sup> “Türkiye Halklarına,” p. 372.



intellectuals were cited. One of them was the view called “Jacobin,” in which intellectuals perceived themselves as the rescuers of ignorant people incapable of self-liberation. According to this view, the intellectuals would come to power and alter the established order for the people, despite the will of people. In this declaration, the Jacobin view was criticized on the basis of its assumed results in hindering the national liberation movements and postponing the establishment of a new order which would be in favor of the public interest. The second view elaborated in this declaration in terms of the role of intellectuals was the view which perceived the role of the intellectuals as to raise awareness of the people and help them in forming an organized struggle to overthrow the existing order and establish the rule of the workers. The Hearths attached importance to “the social ideas of the public”<sup>305</sup> and advocated that only intellectuals could reveal and determine these social ideals. In this sense, it was argued that intellectuals played a crucial part in the anti-imperialist and socialist struggle of the people.<sup>306</sup>

This declaration defined the characteristics of a “real intellectual” as follows:

An intellectual can be called revolutionary and an intellectual in the literal sense as long as he/she perceives himself/herself not as a rescuer of the people but as a common man, admits that populist character would be gained only through not before or beyond the public but by ranking among the public, believing that revolution will not be achieved by intellectuals in the name of the public but will

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<sup>305</sup> Kotan specifies that “social ideals of people” could be known thoroughly via understanding, representing and advocating the language, culture and history of Kurdish people and their victories and defeats. Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 57.

<sup>306</sup>“Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Tasarısı,” pp. 620-621.

be achieved by the workers, and knowing that his/her task is only to help public to raise its awareness and its organization.<sup>307</sup>

The Hearths evidently adopted the second view regarding the role of intellectuals in revolutionary struggle and applied this view to their mission in Kurdish society. At this point, the meaning of the term “people” for the Hearths should be introduced:

“[...] a big insuppressible mass to whom everything is promised but nothing is given, who has been deceived and betrayed, who wants its country to be more proud, generation by generation acknowledged grievance and betrayal, and eventually wants justice.”<sup>308</sup>

In accordance with this explanation, the founders of the Hearths described themselves as the children of a despised and suppressed society who combined their personal emancipation with the liberation of society that lived in an underdeveloped and poor region, in short, the children of Kurdish society. They advocated that while the masses, say the Kurdish people, would secure their liberation via their own struggle, the founders of the Hearths, as Kurdish youth, would help them organize and become self-aware through establishing strong bonds with them, especially with the workers and peasants who were seen by the Hearths as the indispensable segments in the revolutionary struggle.<sup>309</sup> In this declaration, the targets of the Hearths were described as to struggle

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<sup>307</sup> “Aydın kendisini bir kurtarıcı olarak değil halktan biri olarak gördüğü, halkın önünde ve dışında değil, içinde yoğrulmakla halkçı nitelik kazanacağını kabul ettiği ve devrimin halk adına kendisinin değil, emekçi halkın bizzat yapacağına inandığı, görevinin halkın bilinçlenmesini ve örgütlenmesinde yardımcılık olduğunu bildiği sürece gerçekten devrimci, gerçekten aydın olur.” “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Tasarısı,” p. 621.

<sup>308</sup> “Halk denince kendisine her şeyin vaat edilip, hiçbir şey verilmemiş olan herkesin aldattığı ve ihanet ettiği, vatanın daha mağrur daha onurlu olmasını isteyen, nesil nesil üstüne haksızlıkla ihaneti tanıyıp, nihayet adaleti bilmek isteyen o baskıya gelmez büyük kitleyi anlıyoruz.” Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> In the First General Meeting Draft of the DDKO and in other declarations and publications, the Hearths stressed this mission about raising the awareness of the public. For

for the elimination of the exploitation of the masses, the disparities between regions, and the restraints on the subjects of race, language and religion in Turkey.<sup>310</sup>

In this Founding Declaration, six points which can be read as the guidelines of the Hearths in their struggle were listed under the title of “Our Mission.” The first guideline was about building “revolutionary solidarity” with other organizations in Turkey, as mentioned above. The second and the third guidelines were about establishing close relations with the masses and helping them in organizing and awakening. On this matter, university students were advised to stay away from Jacobins in order not to be alienated from the masses. Anarchism also was mentioned as a political current which Kurdish youth were supposed to avoid. Furthermore, the youth were warned to act in a manner which would not cause uneasiness among the masses. The fourth guideline was about the importance of conducting scientific research. The Hearths was argued to reveal the problems of the masses in a scientific way and produce scientific solutions. At this point, the mission of the Hearths was presented as both theorizing the problems of the masses and taking sides with them in their fight for “bread and independence.” In the fifth guideline, in accordance with the acceptance of the fundamental role of the workers and peasants in the revolutionary struggle and thus the importance of establishing close relations with the common people, the necessity of interrelation with workers and poor peasants in which the youth also would make use of

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example, in the seventh news bulletin, the mission of the Hearths was presented as raising the awareness of the masses for the sake of establishing a democratic government of Turkey societies. “DDKO Yayın Bülteni 7,” p. 548. In the eight news bulletin, the Hearths also was described as an element of the struggle of oppressed societies and that the mission of the Hearths was raising the awareness of the poor public. “DDKO Yayın Bülteni 8,” *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 565.

<sup>310</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Tasarısı,” p. 628.

the thoughts of workers and peasants was mentioned. The last guideline was about one of the subjects against which the Hearths struggled seriously: eliminating the so-called chauvinist conditioning regarding nation and nationalism in Turkey. It was argued that these concepts should be revealed in accordance with the “world view of the working masses.”<sup>311</sup> In other words, it was implied that the Hearths would make effort for redefining the concepts of “nation” and “nationalism” from a socialist point of view, which was assumed by the Hearths to be the most appropriate world view for the working masses.

In the Founding Declaration of the DDKO, Kurdish intellectuals were stated to be much closer to the public thanks to their personal experiences with the types of exploitation, suppression, insults and inequalities which the Kurdish people were supposed to have experienced for years. As a result of this assumed position, the Kurdish intellectuals were seen to be much more inclined to take part in the struggle of the masses against the so-called exploitative, suppressive and unequal order. It also was stated that concepts such as nationalism, which the regime tried to indoctrinate people with especially through its education system, were less effective on the Kurdish intellectuals. According to the Hearths the signs of “chauvin nationalism” were effective within the socialist movement in Turkey and it hindered the adequate improvement of revolutionary movements and engendered decompositions within Turkey societies.<sup>312</sup> In

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> With respect to the signs of “Chauvin nationalism” within the socialist movement, the events that had occurred during feasts in Site and Kadirga Dormitories during which singing Kurdish folk songs got reactions from Turkish socialists were described by the Hearths. On this basis, the Istanbul DDKO warned its “revolutionary brother in arms” against possible fragmentations in the revolutionary struggle on the basis of nationalism and invited them to a joint struggle against these kinds of reflections of “chauvinist nationalism” within the

this regard, the role of the Kurdish people and intellectuals who were perceived to be less influenced by “chauvin nationalism” in the revolutionary movement was underlined. It was written that the Kurdish people and intellectuals should throw their weight in the revolutionary movement of the people in order to eliminate the impacts of intellectuals who were seen as being under the influence of this nationalism.<sup>313</sup>

In the first news bulletin and working report of the Hearths, which were published immediately after the foundation of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs, the role of the youth in the revolutionary struggle of people was undertaken thoroughly. Since the Hearths were defined in their charters as organizations aiming at improving and expanding the revolutionary culture of the people, it was indicated that educating young cadres who would reach the common people, improve and expand their revolutionary culture and transform this culture into a hegemonic one, and raise organized struggle of people were crucial missions for the Hearths. It was proposed that the Hearths had been established to satisfy this need to educate young cadres for the above-mentioned ends.<sup>314</sup>

The Hearths were demonstrated to form a “revolutionary core” and a revolutionary cadre around this core through the specialization of each member in his field. It was planned to compose a theoretically and practically “equipped leader corps” grounded on this revolutionary cadre, which would acquainted closely with the social

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revolutionary struggle. “Devrimci Kardeşlerimize,” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 370.

<sup>313</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Tasarısı,” pp. 621-622.

<sup>314</sup> Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Çalışma Raporu,” *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Davaya Dosyası 1*. (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 586.

ideas of public both theoretically and practically.<sup>315</sup> In the first news bulletin of the Hearths, this cadre was believed to be derived only from universities. In addition, it was demonstrated that organization of the Hearths was supposed to be narrow-scoped because of the fact that it was not possible them to encompass all the disadvantageous groups of societies at first hand. In addition, the social segments which constituted the grossroots of the Hearths were described as being “unstable”. As a result of this it was argued that in order to create a long-term and resistant social movement, the Hearths should be a permanent “organization of leaders.”<sup>316</sup>

Although the Hearths were supposed to be “organizations of leaders” which composed of young revolutionary cadres, it was argued that such an organization would become meaningful only if it took part in the struggle of the workers on the way to political power. This point of view originated from the fact that the youth were not a social class in themselves which has their own class interests and the target for political power and also originated from the conceptions of the Hearths regarding the role of intellectuals, youth and common people in the revolutionary movement.<sup>317</sup> In terms of the role of the youth in the revolutionary movement, the youth were believed to have significant tasks in raising the awareness of the workers and their organizations in the light of revolutionary theory. It was emphasized that the youth were the most dynamic, integral part of the political movement of the workers of that period. However, it was emphasized that youth could not determine the course and targets of the revolutionary

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> “DDKO Aylık Haber Bülteni: Eğitim ve Örgütlenme 1,” pp. 481-482.

<sup>317</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Çalışma Raporu,” p. 586.

struggle of workers for political power. Instead, the working class would be the subject of this struggle and the youth would take part as supporters in this revolutionary movement.<sup>318</sup>

The members of the Hearths actively participated in the student movements in the cities. However, since student movements were generally limited in the sense of their scope of activities which mainly were about universities, it was stressed that the main thing to be done by the youth was to create awareness in society via getting in contact with the common people. Accordingly, the Ankara DDKO published a leaflet titled as “Announcing in a Vital Way” (*Önemle Duyurulur*) on 10 June 1970 in which detailed the preferred way of propaganda in order to carry “revolutionary consciousness” to the people. Members were advised to determine the correct target groups for propagation in the first place. Thereafter, they were advised to express to the people the necessity of organizational activities, targets, mission and the operation style of the Hearths, and to explain the conflicts between the Eastern people and bureaucracy and executives, the basic rights and liberties of people granted by the Constitution, and the reasons for the backwardness of East broadly.<sup>319</sup> These subjects would be explained to the people via exemplifying with the everyday experiences of these people in an “understandable language.”<sup>320</sup> While interacting with the people, the young cadres were recommended

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<sup>318</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Tasarısı,” p. 629.

<sup>319</sup> In a leaflet of the Istanbul DDKO titled “Dear Member,” the importance of organized struggle was underlined. Kurdish people were depicted as people who were assimilated and obliged to live in the economically and socially underdeveloped conditions. It was highlighted that under these conditions, struggle of Kurdish people against these situations would only be meaningful if it were organized. “Sayın Üyemiz,” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, p. 369.

<sup>320</sup> “Önemle Duyurulur,” pp. 264-265.

not to frighten them with protests. Instead, protests and prospective revolution were proposed to be inclusive of whole parts of the lives of common people. In this sense, it was emphasized that “impatient” activists would not be permitted to take part in the Hearths.<sup>321</sup> In conformity with this approach, in the first news bulletin of the Hearths, the expected character traits of the Hearth members were described as confident, dauntless, brave, and honest people who were always prudent, patient and calm.<sup>322</sup>

In the same bulletin, it was explained that the more cadres of an organization establish close relationships with society the larger this organization would last and would become a necessity for the daily life of the people. Since establishing close relations with society was of prime importance it was declared that activities should not only be in conformity with theoretical principles, but also, and what was more important, with the given conditions and demands of society. Therefore, it was emphasized that data acquired from the notables of society necessarily should be taken into consideration during the process of generating the policies and strategies of the Hearths and determining attitudes of its members. In this way, the Hearths were to integrate with the public and its notables. For that purpose, a research survey would be prepared by the education branch and sent to members of the Hearths in order to get information about the socio-cultural situation and demands of the people. This information aspired to prevent the Hearths from acting in a manner contradictory to the ideals and values of people and to enable them to be integrated with the public.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> “Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları I. Dönem Genel Kurul Karar Tasarısı,” p. 630.

<sup>322</sup> “DDKO Aylık Haber Bülteni: Eğitim ve Örgütlenme 1,” p. 484.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., pp. 482-483.



### The Key of the Situation and Characteristics of the Targeted Order

In the Founding Declaration of the DDKO, it was emphasized that the liberation of societies could only be secured via overthrowing the existing order and establishing the rule of the “oppressed class and layers.” This revolutionary act would take aim at the emancipation of the masses from exploitation, oppression, ill-treatment, hunger and unemployment. Accordingly, as mentioned above, Turkey was divided into two main uncompromising camps: the working class and layers, called “revolutionary classes”, who would struggle in order to overthrow the existing order radically; and imperialism and its collaborators, who side with the maintenance of the existing order.<sup>324</sup> Below-mentioned characteristics of the targeted order reinforced the statement of this thesis, which perceives the importance of the Hearths in the Kurdish political movement as the first step in the formation of an autonomous Kurdish left movement in which socialism and ethnic considerations came together within the same legal organization for the first time in Turkey.

The Founding Declaration presented the characteristics of the targeted order as:

The ruler which would be founded as a consequence of the political, economic and ideological struggle of the conscious and organized masses would be the own rule of the masses in which citizens [would not be] discriminated against because of their race, language, religion etc., the establishment of heavy industry [would be realized], economic, social and cultural issues would be arranged in a style in which everyone would improve his/her talents equally, inequalities among regions would be removed and a new order would be founded.”<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p. 630.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

This prospective order generally was described as “a democratic governance of the societies of Turkey” in the publications of the Hearths. Accordingly, in a leaflet of the Istanbul DDKO, all revolutionists were called to participate in “revolutionary opposition of people under the leadership of the working class for a revolutionary democratic rule of the people which would purvey popular sovereignty in real terms.” It was stated that it would be a betrayal to the society if one advocated achieving popular sovereignty by any other classes of society than working class.<sup>326</sup> Furthermore, in the seventh news bulletin of the Hearths, it was argued that the organizations would struggle against fascism and American imperialism and that this revolutionary struggle would continue until the working masses overthrew the rule of the “local compradors of American imperialism, big landowners and money lenders” and established their own rule.<sup>327</sup>

Consequently, the contents produced by the Hearths combined socialist terms as well as those attributable to nationalism. In the same vein, the elaboration largely relied on economic as well as cultural grounds. For an oppressed society, what the publications of the Hearths wanted was to struggle for the recognition of Kurdish society along with their basic rights as granted by the Constitution. Yet in a political atmosphere in which the word “Kurd” was said with hesitation, the demands that were interpreted in this section seem quite radical. Accordingly the demands were deemed achievable with the sole revolutionary course for which the revolutionary solidarity was seen as a necessity. Not necessarily associated with this solidarity with the remainder of Turkish left-wing

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<sup>326</sup> “Silvan Olayları,” in Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 367-368.

<sup>327</sup> “DDKO Yayın Bülteni 7,” pp. 548-549.

organizations, the activities of the Hearths were involved largely with the demands and the problems of the Kurdish people, instead of simply cultural activities.

### The Activities of the Hearths

While each charter of the Hearths was discussed above in this study under the subtitle of “The Foundation Process of the Hearths” it was seen that all the Hearths gave a crucial place in their charters to the aim of displaying activities such as holding meetings, lectures, and seminars, opening exhibitions and performing any kinds of educational activities in order to reach their targets.<sup>328</sup> Actually, it should be submitted that the Hearths displayed considerable activities in this sense and gave voice to the problems and demands of the Kurds and shaped public opinion considering the issues which were on a large scale intrinsic to the Kurdish people in Turkey. Different from the other youth organizations of that period, the activities of the Hearths were directed mainly at discriminative and oppressive policies, especially the Commando Operations, against the Kurdish people those who were living in the east and south-east Anatolia.

In other words, I argue that the Hearths did not operate on the scale of Turkey, but Kurdistan. Their activities became more concerned with the issues related to east and the Kurdish people especially after the Eastern Meetings. However, information about the contents of these activities of the Hearths, especially of the Hearths established in the towns and cities of the south-eastern region, is very limited. In this regard, the first news

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<sup>328</sup> Mümtaz Kotan mentions that overwhelmingly discussed subjects in the lectures and seminars held by Hearths were as follows: “games of imperialism in the Middle East,” “grassroots movements,” “popular culture and bourgeois culture,” “idealism and materialism,” “socio-economic situation of Eastern societies,” “language issue in Marxism,” etc. Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 46.

bulletin of the DDKO which overwhelmingly focused on the educational and organizational activities of the Ankara DDKO, records of the Turkish National Intelligence Service and some of the publications of the Hearths composed the three main sources for this study in effect to reveal the character of the activities of the Hearths.

Regarding the activities of the Ankara DDKO, it can be alleged that in comparison to the rest of the Hearths, the activities were arranged in a relatively professional manner since they were organized through eight branches which were administered by the above-mentioned unofficial “upper-committee” and the formal managing committee of the organization. These branches, names of which give ideas about the activities of the Ankara DDKO, were organization, propaganda, communication, publication, education, folklore, archives, and library. Not only the organization branch, but also the propaganda, communication and publication branches were altogether authorized in the subjects of organizations. These three branches performed their duties under the supervision of chief of the organization branch.<sup>329</sup>

As was discussed above, the Hearths attributed great importance to the issues of training young cadres and establishing close relations with the public. Regarding these two issues, the education branch played an important role. Actually, education was portrayed as the “most dynamic activity style” in the publications of the Hearths. However, despite the fact that educating cadres was seen as one of the primary objects

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<sup>329</sup> Similarly, the chief of the education branch was in charge of supervising the folklore, archives and library branches. In the case of matters which were beyond the limits of the operations of the education branches, the education branch constituted a Committee of Operation Branches under the chairmanship of the chief of the organization branch and arranged joint meetings. “DDKO Aylık Haber Bülteni: Eğitim ve Örgütlenme 1,” pp. 587-588.

of the Hearths, there were two other objects of this branch: “educating others” and “workouts of science board.” “Educating others” obviously meant raising the awareness of the public via education and therefore was linked closely to one of the main political objects of the organization, raising the awareness of the people. Holding meetings, conducting research on scientific subjects, organizing seminars and lectures in order to both educate cadres and “others” and thus shaping public opinion in accordance with the targets of the Hearths were described as the basic tasks of this branch.<sup>330</sup>

In accordance with these objects of the education branch, seminars and lectures were given by the members of the Hearths in Ankara DDKO in order to educate its members. Attendance at these seminars was compulsory for all members. Most of the organizational activities of the Ankara DDKO were followed by the Turkish National Intelligence Service and thus the contents and attendants of several seminars and lectures are available in the intelligence service records. As far as is known from these records, the titles of these seminars were “Idealism and Materialism,” “Surplus Value,” “the Language Issue in Marxism,” “Popular Culture and Bourgeois Culture,” “Socialism,” “Fascism,” “Critics of Capitalist Economy,” “Ottoman Social Structure,” “The Asian Mode of Production,” “Feudal – Slavery Society.” In addition to these seminars, others titled “The Question of Language” and “The Question of Nation” were also given in Ankara DDKO with the attendance of members of the Istanbul DDKO.<sup>331</sup> In addition to these seminars given by members of the Hearths, lectures were also given at the Ankara DDKO by intellectuals who were not members. Common people also

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid., p. 483.

<sup>331</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 175-178.

were invited to these lectures in accordance with the mission of the education branch regarding “educating others.” As far as is known, the titles of these lectures were “Eastern Society” by Ismail Beşikçi, “Issues about Organization and the East” by Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, and “Games of Imperialism in the Middle East,” “Constitution and Political Liberty” by Adil Özkol, an assistant at the Ankara Law Faculty, “Analysis of Class and Grades” given by the assistant Kurthan Fişek, “Imperialism” given by the assistant Yusuf Yalçınoğlu, “Fascism” given by the assistant Cem Eroğul, and “Feudalism” and “Organization.”<sup>332</sup>

The Istanbul DDKO also gave several seminars. However, since the organizational activities of this organization could not be followed by the National Intelligence Service, there is no information about the contents of its seminars or lectures.<sup>333</sup> Yet, the titles of some of seminars and lectures given in this organization were listed in the intelligence records on the basis of documents acquired in searches carried out at the Istanbul DDKO. According to this list, titles of seminars which were given by this organization were “Dialectic and Historical Materialism,” “Marxist Philosophic Materialism,”<sup>334</sup> “Archaic – Feudal – Slave Society,” and “Capitalist

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<sup>332</sup> See Ibid., pp. 186-187.

<sup>333</sup> The Istanbul DDKO made a great effort in order to hinder the entrance of intelligence agents to the organization. In addition, leaders of this organization did not keep books contained the names of members and gave each member only a specific number. In virtue of this insistence of the management of the Istanbul DDKO on secrecy, information about its members could not be cited as evidence against the Istanbul DDKO defendants during the court martial. Mehmet Vural, “Kuzey Kürdistan’da DDKO’lu Olmak,” *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 6 (2007), p. 109.

<sup>334</sup> Sait Pektaş, who was a member of the Istanbul DDKO, mentions that he also gave a lecture with the name “Idealism and Materialism,” even though he was a devout person and had not adopted Marxism. He says that Hikmet Bozçalı and Necmettin Büyükkaya made great efforts in order to infuse materialism into the ideas of Pektaş and this lecture given by Pektaş served this end. This anecdote exemplifies how different viewpoints and beliefs gathered

Society.”<sup>335</sup> Furthermore, Mehmet Emin Bozarıslan, Çetin Özek and Ferit Öngören gave lectures at the Istanbul DDKO on the subjects of “Ummahism and Middle East,” “Fascism” and “Eastern Anatolia”, respectively. In addition to these lectures and seminars, the Istanbul DDKO held a three-day long exhibition about the Commando Operations in which several photos and writings were exhibited to the people and other revolutionary organizations.<sup>336</sup> Necmettin Büyükkaya, who was the first chairman of the Istanbul DDKO, said that they also gave research work to the members who went to their towns during the summer holidays of universities but they had not been able to make proper research due to their insufficient intellectual capacity.<sup>337</sup> Actually, Necmettin Büyükkaya frequently complained about the situation of the Hearth members. He emphasized that the shortage of the members who were theoretically and financially equipped and knew their native language, Kurdish, and also other languages was the primarily obstacle to the further development of the Hearths as organizations.<sup>338</sup>

Regarding publication activities, the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs produced considerable volumes although their organizational activities lasted only two years. As mentioned before, these two organizations published nine news bulletins which were published almost once in a month. In addition to these bulletins, several leaflets, announcements and public releases about events which directly were related to the left

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together within the same organization, in the Hearths. Pektaş “Kürt Aydınlanması ve DDKO,” pp. 277-278.

<sup>335</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 360-361.

<sup>336</sup> Bozçalı, “DDKO’lu Siyasi Serüvenim,” pp. 217-218.

<sup>337</sup> Necmettin Büyükkaya, *Kalemimden Sayfalar* (İstanbul: Vate Yayınları, 2008), p. 186.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

movement and the Kurdish people were published by these organizations. As far as is understood from the list of posters and banners of the Ankara DDKO in the intelligence service records, the posters that were published by Ankara DDKO mainly were focused on satirizing fascism and calling people to revolutionary struggle against it. The contents of its banners were distinctively about the disadvantageous situations of the Kurdish people. Banners available in these records are “Commando: Do not kill the Kurdish Nation...”, “Oppressed race – oppressed society. Kurds, continue struggle...”, “Kurdish Nation [,] speak – write – read in Kurdish.”<sup>339</sup>

According to the list available in the intelligence service records, the contents of the posters that were published by the Istanbul DDKO mainly focused on imperialism, fascism, Commando Operations, assimilation policies, the fraternity and equality of societies, the importance of the joint struggle of societies against imperialism, Middle Eastern liberation movements, and the expectations regarding overthrowing the existing order and establishing the rule of the workers.<sup>340</sup> However, it should be emphasized that Commando Operations which had been undertaken in the Eastern towns of Turkey between the years 1969 and 1970 made up the biggest portion of articles in the publication of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs. Contrary to the official discourse about the Commando Operations, which claimed that these operations were done in order to control situations that damaged the public order such as arms trafficking, highway

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<sup>339</sup> “*Komando; Kürt Ulusunu Öldürme...*” “*Ezilen Irk – Ezilen Toplum. Kürtler Mücadeleye Devam...*” “*Kürt Ulusu Kürtçe Konuş – Yaz – Oku*” Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekeçeli Hükmü, p. 274.

<sup>340</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 373-374.



robbery, and the possession of unregistered firearms,<sup>341</sup> the Hearths categorically rejected this official discourse and advocated that the main reason of these operations was to suppress the ascending awareness and struggle of the Kurdish people.<sup>342</sup> It should be mentioned that, in addition to hanging banners and publishing bulletins, leaflets and making announcements about the Commando Operations, some of DDKO militants went to region to investigate the course of Operations and sent a telegram to the President Cevdet Sunay in which a detailed result of this investigation was cited on 15 May 1970. Following this telegram, the Commando Operations was brought into question in the Turkish Grand National Assembly especially on the ground of Mehmet Ali Aybar's speech in the Assembly. Actually, the Operations were brought to political and public agenda by means of above-mentioned efforts of the members of the Hearths.<sup>343</sup>

Regarding public demonstrations, members of the Hearths both attended and took part in the organization of the Eastern Meetings following the foundation of the first Hearth in Ankara, and organized several marches and demonstrations either together with other left-wing organizations or on their own. In this context, the members actively attended meetings held in 1969, such as "The Fight against Imperialism," held in Gaziantep; "The Fight against Unemployment, Famine and Imperialism," held in Malatya; "Protest against the Draft for Protecting Liberation and the Order of

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<sup>341</sup> See Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>342</sup> See "Türkiye Halklarına," p. 254.

<sup>343</sup> See Ümit Fırat, "Ümit Fırat ile DDKO Söyleşisi," p. 181; Kotan, "Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi," p. 56; Yılmaz Çamlıbel, *Kervan Yürüyor Anılar* (Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 2005), p. 238.

Constitution,” held in Diyarbakir; and “The Fight against Unemployment,” held in Ağrı.<sup>344</sup> Furthermore, according to National Intelligence Service reports, the founding members of the Hearths also actively participated in, gave speeches and sent telegrams to the “Hunger Meeting” in Hilvan on 27 July 1969, to the meeting held in Siverek on 2 August 1969, in Lice on 24 August 1969, and the Havar Meeting, held in Suruç on 12 July 1969.<sup>345</sup> Apart from these meetings, the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs organized a protest march and public demonstration against Tunceli Events and furthermore the members of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs attended the demonstration “Respect to Constitution Pace” which was organized by the Union of University Assistants (*Üniversite Asistanları Birliği, ÜNAS*), and Revolutionary Youth on 1 June of 1970.<sup>346</sup> With respect to their joint activities with other revolutionary organizations, the Hearths collaborated with the WPT, Revolutionary Youth, the Socialist Youth Association, the Teacher’s Union of Turkey (*Türkiye Öğretmenler Sendikası, TÖS*), the DİSK, the Union of University Assistants, etc. As Bozçalı states the militants of the Hearths actively took part in the social movements as members of a youth organizations and attended

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<sup>344</sup> Kotan, “Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi,” p. 53.

<sup>345</sup> The Chairman of the Istanbul DDKO, Necmettin Büyükkaya, sent a telegram in the name of the Istanbul DDKO to the meeting that was held in Hilvan. In this telegram, Büyükkaya said that “We sincerely greet our brothers from Hilvan and their revolutionary essence who voiced famine, the misery of the Eastern people who have been the target of the gendarmerie gunstock of bureaucracy, humiliated because of their language and being Kurd for many years. We believe that the only way to the liberation of our people is to the fight against fascists and cruel people. We as the Istanbul DDKO announce that we are always ready for struggle with Hilvan people, who have been a crushed part of the East. Victory is always of nations.” Ali Yılmaz Balkaş, who was one of the members of the Istanbul DDKO, also sent a telegram to the meeting that was held in Lice. In this telegram Balkaş said that “The liberation of our people will be possible only via a fight against bureaucracy and its collaborators, hegemonic classes.” Quoted in Bozçalı, “DDKO’lu Siyasi Serüvenim,” pp. 217-218.

<sup>346</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, p.199; 203; 205; 211; 220.

university boycotts, supported the strikes, land and factory occupations of workers and civil servants, and the movements in the shantytowns.<sup>347</sup>

Contrary to the regular and multi-directional activities of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs which materialized with the operations of several branches, publication activities, number of seminars, lectures, and public demonstrations that were held; as far as is known, the activities of the Hearths founded in south-eastern Anatolia were irregular. This situation of the Hearths founded in Ergani, Silvan, Kozluk, Diyarbakir and Batman could have been due to their very short-term operation period. In terms of the publication activities of these organizations, only two leaflets are available. One of them is the leaflet of Ergani DDKO about regional disparities, education and health, which was discussed above, and the other was the leaflet of the Diyarbakir DDKO about the Commando Operations.<sup>348</sup> Similarly, there were two public demonstrations held by the Kozluk and Batman DDKOs which were held with respect to the foundation of these two organizations.<sup>349</sup>

It should be emphasized that the Hearths founded in the cities and towns of south-eastern Anatolia were supported actively by Kurdish peasants, artisans, mullahs, sheikhs, and other Kurdish people. In other words, the Hearths became popularized after they were established in this region, especially in Diyarbakir.<sup>350</sup> As mentioned above, while the founders and members of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs were petit-

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<sup>347</sup> Bozçalı, "DDKO'lu Siyasi Serüvenim," p. 219.

<sup>348</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 482-483.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., pp. 461-462; p. 517.

<sup>350</sup> İhsan Aksoy, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 5 December 2009.

bourgeois Kurdish youth who had come to the cities for higher education, the Hearths that were established in the region encompassed several parts of Kurdish society and were to become an initial phase for the broad-based organizations among the Kurdish people. In this sense, this thesis claims that the Hearths constituted the core for legal mass organization in Turkey with the Kurdish ethnic base. It should be added that there was a common inclination among founders and members of the Hearths with respect to evaluate the impacts of the Hearths on the everyday lives of the Kurdish people. In the many memoirs I have read, I observed that the Hearths were perceived as organizations which reached the common Kurdish people through activities such as meetings, protests, seminars and publications and became places where the Kurdish people convey their problems and demands. In other words, they generally were seen to be entrenched in the everyday life of the Kurdish people. Furthermore, it is generally emphasized that although the Hearths were youth organizations, they operated and were respected as a political party concerned with the democratic rights of the Kurdish people and overstepped both the Kurdish nationalist parties and the WPT in terms of their activities in voicing the problems and demands of the Kurdish people. This argument was maintained by Cemşit Bilek, who stated that the members of the Hearths established close relations with the common Kurdish people especially through their visits to several villages in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia in order to investigate the outcomes of the Commando Operations. Bilek further argues that these visits of the members to the villages both resulted in publicizing the Hearths to the common Kurdish people and also getting their support.<sup>351</sup> Kutlay accordingly perceived the relations of the Hearths with

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<sup>351</sup> Cemşit Bilek, “12 Mart 1971 Askeri Darbesi,” p. 238. For the claim that Hearths became increasingly popular among the Kurdish people, see Yılmaz Çamlıbel, *Kervan Yürüyor*

the people on the issue of the Commando Operations as if these organizations acted not like youth organizations but like political parties.<sup>352</sup> Similarly, Abdurrahman Demir evaluated all the activities of the Hearths as “enabling all the people those from Kurdistan to be aware of his/her self.”<sup>353</sup> However, in a letter dated 1971, Necmettin Büyükkaya stated that the interests and trust in the Hearths especially in the villages and towns were considerable, even though it fell short of the expectations of the Hearth members. Büyükkaya emphasized that especially the peasantry, who were seen as “reactionary,” sought an organization that would protect them against any threat, but the Hearths were unable to provide this feature due to “impossibilities.”<sup>354</sup>

This chapter elaborated the fundamental questions preoccupying the minds of the Kurdish intellectuals and youth organized under the roof of the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths. The two-tailed organization, in the west and in the east, maintained its struggle with a view to overcome the fundamental discontentment that the Kurdish people had experienced. Even though this organization had slight differences in terms of acquiring recognition in the eye of the public, the priority of the organization differed from the rest of the socialist-organizations in Turkey. In the same vein, the popular support for the Hearths brought about the first legal organization based on the Kurdish identity with socialist tendencies. In two years, the Hearths maintained a “distinct” voice in effect to stand against the oppression directed at the Kurdish people with a socialist-oriented terminology. In this sense, the publications as well as the activities of the

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*Anılar*, pp. 284-288.

<sup>352</sup> Kutlay, “Devrimci Doğu Kültür,” pp.166-167.

<sup>353</sup> Demir, “Kürdistan’da DDKO’lar,” pp. 250-251.

<sup>354</sup> Büyükkaya, *Kalemimden Sayfalar*, p. 39-40.

Hearths seem to indicate the differentiation of the agenda of the Kurdish socialist from the agenda of the Turkish left. As the next chapter demonstrates, this shift would not have the chance to survive as all of the Hearths were closed down in 1971.

## CHAPTER III

### DEFENDING THE KURDISH ETHNICITY: THE HEARTHES ON TRIAL

All the people who were charged with the Kurdism were gathered together in the Military Prison of the Martial Law Command of Diyarbakir and Siirt Districts in the aftermath of the 12 March 1971 Memorandum. The activities of the Hearths supposedly were suspended and the cases were brought to the military court. The members of the Hearths were charged with serious political crimes. This chapter will examine the indictments levied by the military court while highlighting the most significant collective defenses of the Hearths. Evidently the official discourse in the early 1970s did not favor even the term “Kurd” and that is what the militants-*cum*-defendants of the Hearths had accomplished in terms of defending the Kurdish Question in the court collectively. Despite the fact that the defendants had been very careful about legality as observed in the previous chapter and were not entirely groundbreaking in terms of the history of the Kurdish movements, the collective feature of the defenses and the attitude of the members in the court were distinctive. The references to the Constitution and human rights were retained in these defenses and thus undermined any kind of demands associated with the collective existence of the Kurds.<sup>355</sup> In this context, a conceptualization of the court defenses of the Kurdish organizations becomes crucial with a view to specifying the distinct place of the Hearths vis-à-vis the other Kurdish political organizations as well as the Turkish ones.

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<sup>355</sup> Cemil Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması ve Kürtlerde Siyasi Savunma Geleneği* (Istanbul: Vate Yayınları, 2007), p. 197.

Before discussing the particular aspects of the trial process in general and the indictments, and the collective defenses in particular, there are a couple of aspects that would contribute to the comprehension of the nature of defenses pertaining to the Hearths in this chapter. In this sense, Gündoğan states the criteria in effect to determine the specific position of the Hearths with respect to the Kurdish movement in particular, and the socialist movement in general as such: “the level of dissociation from the dominant state official ideology, or the level of development in the ability to assume the Kurdish national question outside the unity and integrity of the state, or the comprehension attitudes of defendants with respect to the legitimacy of the court that judge them and the accordance in effect to construct a discourse for a national movement.”<sup>356</sup> These criteria lead directly to the question of whether the Hearths were confined to the arguments of the nation-state in spite of their autonomous organization within the Turkish left. In other words, the question that the organizational dissociation led to a practical dissociation with the concepts of the Turkish left seems very important in effect to comprehending the Hearths as a turning point in the emergence of the Kurdish left.

In accordance with these questions, this chapter firstly will elaborate the indictments that were put forward by the military court. These indictments are essential since they offer the official view of the period with respect to the conceptions related to the Kurdish Question. Accordingly, in the second section of this chapter, the two collective defense petitions of the Hearth members will be discussed. In these defense texts, the topics such as the peculiarities of the Kurdish language as well as the preliminary attempts to construct a Kurdish nationalist historiography were presented to

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<sup>356</sup> Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması*, pp. 134-135.



the court with a view to prove the existence of the Kurds scientifically. The increasing ethnic elaboration was evident despite its lack of support with the “collective identity of Kurds.” Seemingly, it was the period in which ethnicity started to be voiced along with economic terms.<sup>357</sup> It was one of the most solid dissociation cases represented in these defenses although the references lacked the crucial claim that these rights were due to the mere existence of the Kurds as a nation, rather than the Constitutional rights. Correspondingly, the last section demonstrates the final sayings in the trial process while demonstrating the non-persuasion of the very same military court with respect to the defense petitions. Even though these defense petitions were considered not entirely rich, it is apparent that the legality-based Kurdish struggle owed much to such a sophisticated elaboration.<sup>358</sup> Therefore, the contents of the defenses of the DDKO defendants and their attitudes during the adjudication process can be seen as an examination of the Kurdish militants in terms of their approach to the Kurdish Question and determined their positions within Kurdish movement after 1974. Furthermore, the defense petitions are rich enough to observe the conceptualizations of the Hearth militants of the notions as state, nation, nationality, culture, etc. More importantly, the contents of the petitions reveal the points which Kurdish militants shared with not only the Turkish left but also official discourse.

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<sup>357</sup> The Kurdish movement was to turn into a more ethnically-explained form in the 1960s. Yet, as ethnicity gradually was emerging within the Kurdish movements, the economic dimensions were still remained important. Alış, “The Process of the Politicization,” pp. 87-88.

<sup>358</sup> It should be stated that the relative weakness of these defenses was due to the trials of other Kurdish or Kurdish-related organizations. Whereas the Hearths maintained socialism as the guiding ideology, it is very surprising that the explanations of the defendants had no references to self determination right of their nations, a building block for Leninism. That is why this study argues that the trial process similarly was confined to the very same legality concern. The positions of other organizations will be discussed further in the last section of this chapter.

## The Indictments of the Military Prosecutor

The head office buildings of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs and the houses of the leaders of the Hearths were raided by police on 16 October 1970. In these raids, some members of the Hearths were taken into custody and a trial was begun against some members of the Ankara DDKO in the Ankara 3<sup>rd</sup> High Criminal Court. However, following the 12 March 1971 Memorandum, military commissions came into office in accordance with the martial law that was declared in eleven cities<sup>359</sup> on 26 April 1971 and thereupon the Ankara 3<sup>rd</sup> High Criminal Court took the decision of lack of jurisdiction for the DDKO case and delivered it to the Martial Law Command of Diyarbakir and Siirt Districts. As a result, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Numbered Martial Court that was established upon the command of the martial law, the action of closing against the Hearths and several civil law suits with eighteen separate indictments were brought against ninety-two founding persons, leaders and members of the Istanbul, Ankara, Diyarbakir, Ergani, Kozluk, Silvan and Batman DDKOs and also against the people who were claimed to have had relations with the Hearths. Later, all civil law suits that were pursued on the basis of these eighteen separate indictments against the DDKO defendants were unified and prosecuted all together due to the assertion of the military prosecutors about the existence of an illegal unity among these organizations and their members on the basis of targets, adherences and actions.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> These cities were İstanbul, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Zonguldak, İzmir, Eskişehir, Ankara, Adana, Hatay, Diyarbakir and Siirt.

<sup>360</sup> For the indictment texts and the names of the defendants of each indictment, see Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 15-28.

The subject of the first indictment was about Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs and it was brought against 21 people including Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Canip Yıldırım, Musa Anter, and Mehmet Emin Bozarıslan, who were not affiliated with these organizations.<sup>361</sup> Among the eighteen separate indictments, the first indictment is noteworthy by virtue of both the assertions of the military prosecutor about the Kurdish ethnicity, language and history and also collective responses of some of the DDKO defendants to this indictment. Before examining the content of this indictment, it is important to present how this trial was described by the military court and which offences were charged against these 21 defendants. In this indictment, the military prosecutor described the DDKO case as follows:

The gist of the action of this case that opened in the high court, became a subject which was abused for personal and political aims by some adventurers who emerged from time to time as a result of provocation, stimulation and the help of some domestic and foreign secret entities [and] destroy the unity of State and break the peace and silence of our Nation.

[This case] is the case of a handful adventurous people who turned their back on Atatürk's principles [and] sought to ruin and divide the unified order that was composed of people who are collateral, shed blood through fighting shoulder to shoulder in the same lands, for the sake of identical purposes, sharing a common ideal, faith, culture, dreams, and religion.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> During proceedings in which this first indictment was read, this lawsuit about the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs was called by the military prosecutor the "lawsuit of Fikret Şahin and his 20 colleagues." The defendants of this indictment were Fikret Şahin, Nusret Kılıçaslan, Mümtaz Kotan, Sabri Çepik, Zeki Kaya, İhsan Yavuztürk, İbrahim Güçlü, Yümnü Budak, Nezir Şemmikanlı, Faruk Aras, Ali Beyköylü, Mehmet Demir, İsa Geçit, Ferit Uzun, Hasan Acar, Niyazi Dönmez, İhsan Aksoy and as Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Canip Yıldırım, Musa Anter and Mehmet Emin Bozarıslan as mentioned above. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 15.

<sup>362</sup> "Yüksek mahkemede açılan bu davanın esası, memleket iç ve dışındaki bazı gizli teşekküllerin, tahrik, teşvik ve yardımları neticesi zaman zaman ortaya çıkan Devletin birliğini, Milletimizin huzur ve sükutunu bozan bazı maceraperestlerin şahsi ve siyasi emellerine alet ettiği bir konu halini almıştır. Aynı kökten gelen, asırlarca aynı topraklar üzerinde, aynı gayeler uğruna, omuz omuza savaşarak kan dökmüş, ülkü, kader, hars, gaye ve din birliğine sahip insanların meydana getirdiği bu birleşik düzeni bozmak ve bölmek isteyen, Atatürk ilkelerine sırt

This case brought to the High Court is the case of a group of adventurous people who do not adopt Atatürk's principles, and endeavor in order to antagonize brothers against each other, even kill, divide and pull to pieces the country, destroy and undermine the national sentiments and unity.<sup>363</sup>

In this indictment, the offences charged against the DDKO defendants were formulized as follows:

- Committing crime directed at abating the stability of the state and destroying its unity or separating some part of lands under the sovereignty of state from the state administration,
- Resorting to establishing an organization in order to annihilate or weakening national sentiments via race consideration, establishing, regulating and conducting their operations, leading them in these respects.
- Making propaganda in order to annihilate and weaken national sentiments,
- Entering an organization directed towards the annihilation and weakening national sentiments.
- Contravention the Law of Associations no. 3512.<sup>364</sup>

Regarding the assertions of the military prosecutor about the Kurdish ethnicity, language and history, it can be propounded that this indictment was a sample of the official discourse of that day. The existence of the Kurds as a separate group and their distinct language was denied and the Kurdish people were presented as being of the same race as the Turks. Accordingly, the main argument of this indictment about the origin of the Kurdish people was that these people were originally members of Turani tribe that

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*çeviren bir avuç macera perest insanların davasıdır.*” Diyarbakır Siirt İleri Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı Mahkemesi Askeri Savcılığı 23.10.1971 tarih ve 1974/144-100 sayılı İddianamesi, in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası 1* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 16. From here onwards, the indictment in question will be employed with only its date and number in Turkish for simplicity.

<sup>363</sup> “Yüksek Mahkemeye sürülen bu dava, kardeşi kardeşe düşman etmek, hatta öldürmek, memleketi bölüp parçalamak, milli duygu ve birliği yıkmak, zayıflatmak gayretleri içinde olan, Atatürk ilkelerini benimsemeyen bir grup hayalperest insanların davasıdır.” Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

migrated from Central Asia.<sup>365</sup> Since Kurds were claimed to be full-blooded Turks, it also was claimed that their native language, Kurdish, was a dialect of pure Turkish which had transformed into the current day Kurdish language in consequence of borrowings from the Arabic, Persian and Armenian languages. Based on these alleged borrowings, the Kurdish language was presented not as a language, but as a pile of words which had been formed through acquisitions from other languages and therefore had never existed in history as a distinct language of a nation. It furthermore was argued that the roots of most of the words that were known as Kurdish were Turkish and their paragoges were either Arabic or Farsi. More specifically, through referring to a dictionary published in St. Petersburg, it was alleged that the existing Kurdish language had only 30 Kurdish words and the rest of the vocabulary used in this language were composed of 3080 Turkish, 2000 new Arabic, 1030 new Farsi, 1240 old Farsi, 370 Pehlevi, 220 Armenian and 100 Chaldean words. The Kurdish language was also presented as an underdeveloped language in which almost no verb inflection was available.<sup>366</sup> In addition to the similarities between the Kurdish and Turkish languages with respect to word structures, sentence structure in Kurdish was also dealt with in this indictment in order to prove the arguments about the origin of the Kurdish language. In this regard, it was argued that the order of sentence structure in Kurdish was identical to that of the Turkish language.<sup>367</sup> These arguments about the origin of the Kurdish people,

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<sup>365</sup> 23.10.1971 tarih ve 1974/144-100 sayılı İddianame, pp. 16-18.

<sup>366</sup> In response to the claim of the military prosecutor about the nonexistence of verb inflection in Kurdish, this language was presented in the 167-page long defense text as one of the most developed languages considering verb inflection, "Temyiz Lahiyası," in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 195.

<sup>367</sup> 23.10.1971 tarih ve 1974/144-100 sayılı İddianame, pp. 18-22.

language and history are important due to contents of the collective responses of the DDKO defendants. As will be shown, the DDKO defendants gave a crucial part in their collective defenses in reply to these arguments of the military prosecutor in detail.

Although each Hearth had been founded legally as autonomous body, the military prosecutor asserted that there were connections and cooperation among these organizations in terms of their members and activities, and therefore these organizations were claimed to be integrated with each other illegally.<sup>368</sup> In addition to the alleged illegality on the basis of the organizational structure, it was emphasized that these organizations, apart from their formal objectives written in their charters, had some extra-charter illegal targets, in other words they were dual-purpose organizations. These alleged extra-charter targets of the Hearths were presented by the military prosecutor as follows: Training militants who believed in Kurdistan for leadership positions of the future Kurdish nationalist movement, raising the awareness of the people through seminars and alienating them from the existing state through propagating discriminatory practices towards them in order to ensure the Kurdish people to take part in the struggle for independence, convincing the Kurdish people in the efforts of the Hearths for providing their rights and in resolving the Kurdish problem; procuring the recognition of the existence of a separate Kurdish race and providing the establishment of an

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<sup>368</sup> The military prosecutor grounded these assertions about the structure of the Hearths on the claims such as the sameness in the charters, the ethnic background of members, entitling all organizations with the terms “revolutionary” and “east”, distributing the bulletins, leaflets and announcements of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKO in east and south-eastern regions by the members of the Hearths, being in touch and cooperation with the members of other Hearths, attending and giving speeches at opening ceremonies of other Hearths, exchanging ideas with members of the other Hearths, fund-raising for collective activities, and having the same illegal targets. 23.10.1971 tarih ve 1974/144-100 sayılı İddianame, p. 26.

independent Kurdish state, and finally training authors for an “Eastern printing and journalism incorporated company.”<sup>369</sup>

These alleged secret objectives of the Hearths were interpreted by the military prosecutor as if they were directed at the aim of regionalism and destroying the political and national integrity of the country. Regarding accusations on the basis of regionalism, it also was propounded that the terms “East” and “Revolutionary” had been added to the name of these organizations in order to attract people from east and south-eastern Anatolia who adopted ultra-leftist thoughts, and therefore these organizations were also presented as being both regionalist and ultra-leftist in terms of their alleged membership requirements. The military prosecutor also interpreted the term “revolutionary culture” that appeared in all of the charters of the Hearths as aiming to realize cultural revolution in which the “unprogressive” capitalist culture would be replaced by more “progressive” ones.<sup>370</sup> As the next section will demonstrate, the DDKO defendants responded to all these accusations about the organizational structure and purposes of the Hearths in detail and explained the meaning of the above-mentioned terms that appeared in the charters of these organizations.

The accusations of the military prosecutor towards the DDKO defendants on the basis of their organizational and personal activities and relations with other

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<sup>369</sup> This company was established in Diyarbakir by nationalist and socialist Kurds in order to publish a daily newspaper which would deal especially with the issues regarding the Kurdish people. The founder committee of this enterprise was composed of members of the WPT and DPK-T. Arslan points out that being a joint enterprise of socialist and nationalist Kurds and gathering them together were the most important features of this company. Although several Kurdish intellectuals purchased shares in this company, this company shut down when many of its founders and shareholder were imprisoned as a result of the 12 March Memorandum. Ruşen Arslan, “Kürt Legal Hareketinin Tairhsel Gelişimi.” *BÎR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi*, no. 5 (2006); and Kutlay, “Devrimci Doğu Kültür,” p. 18.

<sup>370</sup> 23.10.1971 tarih ve 1974/144-100 sayılı İddianame, pp. 26-28.

organizations were also remarkable. The attendance and speeches of the DDKO defendants at twelve meetings held in several cities and towns of east and south-eastern Anatolia in 1967 and 1969 were evaluated as aiming at inculcating the people with the left-wing ideology and consciousness of Kurdistan and therefore were cited as evidence against the DDKO defendants despite the fact that most of these meetings had been held before the Hearths had been founded. In the same vein, the Eastern Nights which had been organized between February 1969 and April 1970 were claimed to have been arranged under the leadership of the Hearths, and it was alleged that the issue of establishing an independent Kurdish state had been discussed and therefore these nights were also cited as evidence against the DDKO defendants.<sup>371</sup> The alleged relations, joint targets and activities of the DDKO defendants with the WPT, Revolutionary Youth and people living abroad also were cited as evidence against them by the military prosecutor. Mainly, the Hearths were shown as subsidiary organs of the WPT and in operational coordination with Revolutionary Youth in the direction of overthrowing the

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-34. In the 167-page long defense text, the DDKO defendants criticized the character of these Eastern Nights as having been degenerate entertainments which were alienated from the cultural values of the people and aimed at entertaining the bourgeoisie. It was also indicated that the character of the Eastern Nights was completely dissimilar to that of the Hearths targets since the Hearths placed great emphasis on establishing relations with the people and improving their culture. Although the Hearths had tried to alter this character of the Eastern Nights, they had failed. Contrary to these nights, the DDKO defendants named as admitting their responsibilities for the exhibitions that were organized at universities and DDKO clubhouses as “real culture and folklore exhibitions.” “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 243. In the second petition, although the character of these nights was not criticized, it also was indicated that members of the Hearths did not have leadership positions in arranging these nights. “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 26 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (23 December 1971), in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Dava Dosyası I* (Ankara: Komal, 1975), p. 314. Similar to the Indictments, the references to two defense texts will be given in Turkish for simplicity. On the other hand the dates given in parentheses are the dates when the petitions are submitted to the military court. Though the order and dates of petitions invite confusion, I quoted the dates as written in the document considering the possibility of mistyping.



constitutional order.<sup>372</sup> Considering the alleged relations of the Hearths with people living abroad, it was postulated that the Hearths had coordinated with workers and students that went to Europe, received ultra- leftist and Kurdist publications and letters from them, had been subsidized by people and organizations located in foreign countries, made contacts with Barzani and raised money and stuffs from the Eastern people in order to convey to the Barzani administration.<sup>373</sup> The activities of the Hearths, especially those of the Ankara DDKO, were followed by the National Intelligence Service and the speeches given at gatherings, seminars and conferences held before and after the official foundation of the Ankara DDKO were mentioned in this indictment as proof of the offences charged against the DDKO defendants. In the rest of this first indictment, the joint activities of the Istanbul and Ankara DDKOs such as publications, fund-raising, and public demonstrations especially those condemning the Commando Operations also were examined and these activities were presented somehow for the sake of so-called ideal of Kurdistan and the purposes of alienating the people from the Turkish state through the propagation of communism and Kurdism. Furthermore, documents and materials seized in police searches, personal activities of the DDKO defendants which were asserted to be criminal acts, and some specific parts of

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<sup>372</sup> In order to prove the close relations between the Hearths, the WPT and Revolutionary Youth, the adoption of the Hearth members of the decision taken in the fourth General Assembly of the WPT and publication and distribution of this decision as leaflets and other leaflets of the WPT and Revolutionary Youth by the Hearth members in the east and south-eastern districts, correspondences between the Hearths and WPT representatives, membership positions of the WPT representatives and Revolutionary Youth members in the Hearths and their attendance and speeches given at the gatherings of the Hearths and joint demonstrations of the WPT, Revolutionary Youth and the Hearths were cited as evidence.

<sup>373</sup> 23.10.1971 tarih ve 1974/144-100 sayılı İddianame, pp. 29-39.

publications of the Hearths which were asserted to be criminal according to the Turkish Penal Code were examined in detail.<sup>374</sup>

Consequently, all the activities of the Hearths were evaluated by the military prosecutor as procuring the recognition of the existence of a people other than Turks in Turkey via labeling so-called Turkish citizens living in the East as “Kurds,” weakening and annihilating the Turkish national sentiments and replacing it with Kurdishness by arousing Kurdish national sentiments and consciousness, destroying national unity and solidarity and ultimately aiming at establishing an independent Kurdistan which would encompass the Eastern cities of Turkey. Considering the arguments and evidences about the writings, speeches and activities of the Hearth members, the military prosecutor claimed that the Hearths had violated Articles 125, 141, 142, 159 and 312 of the Turkish Penal Code and Clauses 9/A and B of the Associations Law through going beyond their goals written in their charters and pursuing secret regionalist targets.<sup>375</sup> As a result, the

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<sup>374</sup> As a result of this examination of the publications in this indictment, the Hearths were charged with several crimes according to the Turkish Penal Code. These crimes were stated as such: violating Article 142/3 via making racial discrimination by raising the claim, in defiance of Article 3 of the Constitution, that Eastern people in Turkey were Kurds and making propaganda for weakening and annihilating the national sentiments of Eastern citizens; violating Article 159 via defaming, deriding and degrading the legal personality of the government and security forces of the state; violating Article 312 via praising actions which were counted as offences according to the law and provoking people to break the law; violating Article 142/1 via making propaganda directed towards establishing the domination of one social class over other social classes; violating Article 142/4 via praising the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which introduced the domination and dictatorship of the working class; violating Articles 146, 147, 141 and 142 via forming organizations which took the establishment of communist regime as a goal; violating Article 141/4 via organizing organizations in order to weaken and annihilate national sentiments, destroying the unity of state and taking some parts of the land of the state from the administration of the state. 23.10.1971 tarih ve 1974/144-100 sayılı İddianame, pp. 39-67.

<sup>375</sup> Although the Martial Law Command of Diyarbakir – Siirt Districts demanded an investigation of all the Hearths according to Article 125 of the Turkish Penal Code, the prosecution of the Hearths according to this article was cancelled. In respect of the accusation against the Hearths, this article specified that “one who commits an act which directed towards transferring either whole or some part of lands to the rule of a foreign country or abating the

termination of these organizations and penalizing of their managing committees and members were demanded.<sup>376</sup>

In addition to the first indictment presented regarding the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs, the second indictment of the military prosecutor among above-mentioned eighteen separate indictments against the Hearths also deserves to be mentioned since this indictment dealt with the rest of the Hearths as a whole. Accordingly, it dealt with the legal situations of the Diyarbakir, Silvan, Kozluk, Ergani and Batman DDKOs and brought against 46 people including some people who were not members of these organizations.<sup>377</sup> Different from the first indictment, the military prosecutor divided the defendants of these Hearths into three main groups; common citizens who had been provoked, WPT members who had participated in the so-called illegal operations of some of the WPT representatives, and those who had adopted a certain ideology, i.e.

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stability of state or destroying the unity of the country or separating some part of lands which under the sovereignty of state from the state administration ... would be punished.” The underlying reason for relinquishing the charge of the Hearths with the above-mentioned crimes was due to the fact that according to this article the existence of already committed crimes in practical terms was necessary and the Hearths had not put their alleged ideas about establishing Kurdistan into action. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, pp. 99-100.

<sup>376</sup> 23.10.1971 tarih ve 1974/144-100 sayılı İddianame, pp. 69-71.

<sup>377</sup> During the hearings, the military prosecutor called trials about these organizations “trials about Mehdi Zana and his forty-five colleagues.” The defendants in this trial were: M. Mehdi Zana, Ruşen Arslan, Edip Karahan, Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Naci Kutlay, Yusuf Ekinci, Tahsin Ekinci, Zülküf Bilgin, Abdülhamit Karakoç, Nazım Sönmez, Kemal Burkay, Niyazi Tatlıcı, Süleyman Çelik, Halit Ayçiçek, Abdurrahman Uçaman, Mehmet Nuri Sarmaşık, Ahmet Melik, Sabri Yıldız, Ubeydullah Aydın, Kasım Kahraman, Mehmet Yıldız, Ferruh Ozaner, Abdurrahman Dürre, Vedat Erkaçmaz, Yusuf Kılıçer, Akif Işık, Bahri Evliyaoğlu, Zeki Bozarslan, Fikri Müjdecı, Mehmet Sözer, Mehmet Gemici, Mustafa Düşüneklı, Ömer Kan, Abdurrahman Demir, Mehmet Emin Tektaş, İbrahim Erbatur, Ahmet Özdemir, Abdüsselam Basutçu, İrfan Bozgil, Mehmet Şirin Baltaş, Necmettin Şad, Hikmet Basutçu, Ahmet Eren, Abdullah Begik, Fikret Şahin. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, p. 20. As already seen, Fikret Şahin and Tarık Ziya Ekinci were tried by court martial for both the first and this second indictment about the Hearths. Furthermore, the military prosecutor found it unnecessary to serve proceedings about some of the DDKO defendants of this trial.

communist and Kurdist, and had intensified their activities for the sake of these ideologies in recent years.<sup>378</sup> As with the first indictment, in this second indictment the charges brought against the above-mentioned DDKO defendants were formulized as follow:

- Resorting to establishing an organization in order to annihilate or weaken national sentiments on the basis of race, establishing, regulating and conducting their operations, leading them in these respects.
- Under no circumstances making propaganda with race consideration in order to annihilate and weaken national sentiments,
- Deriding and degrading the forces of the military and security forces of the state,
- Openly praising actions which were considered offences according to the law and provoking people to break the law or provoking certain classes of society to hate and hostility in a dangerous way for the security of the public.<sup>379</sup>

Correspondingly, the prosecution about the Hearths according to Article 125 of the Turkish Penal Code was cancelled and similar to the indictments about the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs, demands were made to judge the Hearths according to Articles 141, 142, 159 and 312 of the Turkish Penal Code and to terminate these organizations since they were claimed to be dual-purposed organizations which went beyond the targets written in their charters and were engaged in politics to reach their alleged regionalist targets.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> “Duruşma Tutanağı,” (17.01.1972) in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, p. 372.

<sup>379</sup> “Diyarbakır-Siirt İlleri Sıkı Yönetim Komutanlığı Askeri Savcılığı, “İddianame ve Kovuşturmaya Yer Olmadığına Dair Karar,” (14.12.1971) in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, p. 375.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378; pp. 392-393.

However, what is striking about this second indictment as distinct from the first one was the social background of the DDKO defendants in this indictment. The twenty-one DDKO defendants that were judged with the first indictment which dealt with the legal status of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs were either university students or graduate. In the second indictment, in addition to university students and graduates who had careers as lawyers, doctors, teachers, university assistants, and civil servants, people from several age and occupational groups with different educational backgrounds such as secondary and high school students, illiterate people, primary, secondary and high school graduates were tried altogether with the same accusations by the court martial. As far as is written in these indictments and in the justified decision of the DDKO case, among the tried people there were tailors, municipal workers, typographers, drivers, junk dealers, watch sellers, butchers, electricians, muftis, preachers, village imams, craftsmen, drapers, hairdressers, keepers of coffeehouses, tinkers, bakers, cooperative members, petition writers, farmers, mullahs, trade unionists, and grocers. As is clear, this second indictment dealt with the legal situations of the Hearths founded in east and south-eastern cities and towns of Turkey revealed the dissimilarity between the Hearths in the metropolitan and in east and south-eastern regions on the basis of their membership compositions.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> See Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gereğçeli Hükümü, pp. 3-15; and "İddianame ve Kovuşturmayaya Yer Olmadığına Dair Karar," pp. 379-380; 386-392.

## The Collective Responses of the DDKO Defendants

As the remarks quoted in the previous section reveal, the first indictment was noteworthy for both the assertions of the military prosecutor about the Kurdish ethnicity, language and history and also the collective responses of the DDKO defendants to this indictment in groups. In the fourth trial of the Ankara and Istanbul DDKO case, one of the defendants, Fikret Şahin, refused to make a verbal self-defense especially about the alleged secret targets of the Hearths charged against the DDKO defendants in the first indictment. Accordingly, Şahin demanded from the judicial authority to be allowed to read a 167-page long petition which had been signed by İbrahim Güçlü, Mümtaz Kotan, Nezir Şemmikanlı, Yümnü Budak, Ali Beyköylü, and Fikret Şahin to be submitted to the military court on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1971 in substitution for their verbal self-defenses.<sup>382</sup> It should be mentioned that, one of the lawyers of the DDKO defendants, Şerafettin Kaya, mentioned in one of the trials that this text was “a petition which was in the position of response of the whole Eastern Anatolian people.”<sup>383</sup>

Although the military court accepted this demand and started to read this petition during the trials, it sometimes intervened in the reading of the petition and continued to question Fikret Şahin verbally. Hereupon, both defendants and defense lawyers asked the court to read the petition without interruption and to question the defendants after the petition had been read. However, the prosecutors overruled this claim and decided

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<sup>382</sup> Tarık Ziya Ekinci and the lawyer of defendant Canip Yıldırım told the court that Tarık Ziya Ekinci, Musa Anter, Canip Yıldırım and Mehmet Emin Bozarslan did not have relations with the Ankara DDKO and therefore were not involved in this written collective response. “Duruşma tutanağı, (15.12.1971) in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>383</sup> “Duruşma Tutanağı,” (16.12.1971) in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, p. 103.

unanimously to question the defendants verbally first and then read the rest of the petition. The above-mentioned signatories refused to answer any questions before petition was read as a collective response to the indictment of the military prosecutor. In view of these refusals, the judicial authority continued to read rest of the petition.<sup>384</sup>

In the same manner with as this first group of DDKO defendants, nine other DDKO defendants of the first indictment, Nusret Kılınçaslan, Sabri Çepik, Zeki Kaya, Faruk Aras, Ferit Uzun, Hasan Acar, Niyazi Dönmez, İhsan Aksoy and İhsan Yavuztürk, submitted a 26-page long petition to the court on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1971 in response to the accusations against them and refused to answer any questions before this text was read by the court.<sup>385</sup> These collective defenses had historical significance in terms of being the first political defenses made as groups with a decisive tone in the Turkish courts and their impact on subsequent Kurdish movements. This decisive manner of the DDKO defendants also was crucial since they maintained this stance through the judgement process.

Even though it is difficult to acknowledge the facts through memoirs,<sup>386</sup> it is necessary to reserve a place for the discussions held in the Diyarbakir Military Prison about the possible contents of the defenses before these collective responses were prepared. According to Güçlü, regarding this issue there were two positions among the DDKO defendants. The first position was composed of defendants that wanted to defend

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<sup>384</sup> “Duruşma Tutanağı,” (15/17.12.1971) in *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, pp. 95-107.

<sup>385</sup> Rest of the DDKO defendants made self-defenses about their ideas and activities.

<sup>386</sup> Ruşen Arslan perceives the narrations about the imprisonment process in Diyarbakir Military Prison “as full of speculations.” Arslan, *Cim Karnında Nokta*, p. 162.

the objectives of the Hearths, and therefore the democratic rights of the Kurdish people and the existence of their language, culture and history in military court radically. They perceived this kind of defense as an important milestone in the Kurdish movement. According to Güçlü, the proponents of this manner also were those who advocated the right for Kurdish people to organize separately from the Turkish left. The second position was composed of defendants that were doubtful about how to make a defense and who were against making such defenses in the former character via alleging that this kind of defense would be disadvantageous to both the Kurdish people as a whole and the defendants. Güçlü states that this last manner was overwhelmingly adopted by the DDKO defendants who were also members of the WPT such as Tarık Ziya Ekinçi, Canip Yıldırım, Musa Anter, Mehdi Zana and Naci Kutlay.<sup>387</sup> Beşikçi argues that the proponents of this position were referred to the concept of “internationalism” versus “nationalism” and “natural assimilation” versus “forced assimilation” in order to justify their stances.<sup>388</sup>

Nonetheless, at the end of several discussions about the possible contents of DDKO defenses, the idea of advocating the existence of a Kurdish people with a distinct language and culture and that of also collectively advocating the organizational targets of the Hearths won out among the Ankara and Istanbul DDKO defendants. As a result,

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<sup>387</sup> Güçlü, *Hepimizin Sevgili Ağabeyi*, pp. 145-146.

<sup>388</sup> Beşikçi argues that even some leaders and members of the Diyarbakir, Silvan, Batman, Ergani and Kozluk DDKOs were frequently advised by some of the DDKO lawyers and leaders to give statements to the prosecutor in which the Hearths were presented as organizations which had been founded in order to read newspapers, teach illiterate people how to read and write etc. in order to avoid imprisonment. Actually, as will be shown below, some defendants of the Ergani and Silvan DDKOs gave defenses in this direction. Beşikçi, “Hapisteki DDKO,” pp. 111-116.



intense study of Kurdish history, language, literature and culture begun in Diyarbakir Military Prison in order to prepare political defenses against the indictments of the military prosecutor. However, this process witnessed a breakdown among the DDKO defendants that culminated in the formation of two groups within the defendants of the first indictment.

The first group, which formed among the signatories of the 167-page long collective petition, was called *Ocak Komünü* (Commune of Hearth). Mümtaz Kotan, who was a member of this group, argues that this commune was marginalized in the prison especially after submitting their collective defenses, but then received the support of many other defendants.<sup>389</sup> However, this factionalism among the DDKO defendants continued during and after proceedings and therefore the DDKO defendants did not give a collective defense as a whole. Actually, the below-mentioned two separate collective defense petitions and the following 489- and 202-page long collective defenses with respect to the accusations were the outcomes of this split among the DDKO defendants.

A limited number of the DDKO defendants of Ergani, Silvan, Kozluk, Diyarbakir and Batman DDKOs participated in these two groups, but generally avoided from them. The DDKO defendants that were also WPT members also retained their neutrality.<sup>390</sup> Ruşen Arslan, who was a lawyer of the DDKO defendants but then became

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<sup>389</sup> Kotan says that the DPKT detainees explicitly supported this commune during the prison process. He writes that even Şivan sent a letter to the DDKO defendants and financially supported them. The DPKT supported this commune in the preparation of the 167- and 489-page long collective defense petitions through the medium of lawyers Şerafettin Kaya and Ruşen Arslan. The DPK-T also maintained their relations with the Hearths during the prison process but their support of the DDKO defendants was not as organized as that of the DPKT. For Mümtaz Kotan's letter to Yaşar Karadoğan, see Yaşar Karadoğan, "Her Zaman Cesur, Her Zaman Şair, Her Zaman Kavgacı bir Dava Adamı ya da Tarih Şifrecisi Olarak Orhan Kotan," *BİR Araştırma ve İnceleme Dergisi* no.7 (2007), p. 108.

<sup>390</sup> Kutlay, "Devrimci Doğu Kültür," pp. 165-168.

a defendant of the second DDKO indictment, says these groupings among the DDKO defendants show that the relations between these two groups had already broken down. Arslan says that, lawyer Şerafettin Kaya and Arslan himself sought to reconcile the DDKO defendants but failed due to their assumed closeness to the first group of DDKO defendants.<sup>391</sup> However, what mattered in this phase of the trial process was not merely the emergence of these factions, but that the collective resistance against the judicial authority including the refusal of verbal questionings and the reading of collective defenses which was a milestone in the tradition of Kurdish movements.<sup>392</sup> In the same vein, the factionalism among Ankara and Istanbul DDKO defendants can be seen as the roots of the groupings in the socialist Kurdish movement of the 1970s as the Society-Liberation (*Komal-Rızgari*) and the Liberation Road (*Özgürlük Yolu*).<sup>393</sup>

Before examining the contents of these two collective defense petitions, it is necessary to mention statements of some of the DDKO defendants in the trials. In his questioning, Fikret Şahin propounded that they, as DDKO defendants, advocated that there were different groups such as Turks, Kurds, Laz, and Circassian in Turkey and

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<sup>391</sup> Arslan, *Cim Karnında Nokta*, pp. 160-161.

<sup>392</sup> Gündoğan underlines the importance of a common accumulation of knowledge despite the factionalization. Although he evidently seems to have underestimated the significance of the two factions, it is apparent that the attitudes of the both groups were crucial since they superseded the former traditions by means of a collective struggle in the courtroom. Trying to reconcile the distance between the two factions, Gündoğan further claims that the reasons for groupings were either personal or ideological. Contrarily he admits that the differences on ideological approaches and action courses between the Commune of Hearth and the second group sometimes undermined the working conditions for both groups. Yet, the very ideological differences were to end up with two factions in the late 1970s. Nonetheless, considering the period spent in the prison, the same common accumulation would be evident in the similarities of defense petitions below albeit with the distinct factionalization. Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması*, p. 184.

<sup>393</sup> Beşikçi, “Hapisteki DDKO,” p. 127.

desired all of these societies to live fraternally within the borders of Misak-ı Milli and did not seek to establish an independent state for one of these groups. Furthermore, through differentiating the state from the government he emphasized that they, as members of the Hearths, did not operate against the state but against the Justice Party government.<sup>394</sup> While these emphases on the Misak-ı Milli borders and operating against the government stemmed from the motivation to avoid heavy penalties, it can also be read as an indicator of the characteristics of the Hearths as being core organizations which first and foremost aimed at procuring the recognition of the existence of the Kurdish people as a distinct group and improving their culture within the borders of the Republic of Turkey rather than establishing a separate Kurdish state.

In this context, the main arguments of the defense petitions would bring up no different conclusions. Pronouncing the very words “Kurds” or “Kurdish people” were not exclusive to the defendants of the Hearths. The essential point underlying these statements as well as defense petitions was that it appertained to the references of the Constitution or human rights. Thus, referring to Eastern people as “Kurds” – though it was a brave act of the defendants – was not groundbreaking since the demands for which the struggle had been waged were not associated with Kurds as a collective identity. This case is clarified by Gündoğan brilliantly:

In a period when the word “Kurd” was prohibited and had been replaced with “East”, pronouncing the name of the fact directly in legal platforms, or in short, calling Kurds, was a brave challenge; but claiming that Kurds were a “people” was nothing new. In either the Case of the 49ers or other trials in the 1960s Kurds had been mentioned as Kurds. Similarly in the defenses of the DPK-T Case, the “Kurdish nation” was mentioned and it was stated in terms of the rights of the Kurds. Furthermore, Kurdish intellectuals mentioned Kurds had been a nation since the 1900s. Lastly, even the Turkish leftists with whom

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<sup>394</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükmü, p. 37.

members of the Hearths were in close relations used “nation/country” while identifying Kurds.<sup>395</sup>

As seen, the main argument was confined to the existence of Kurds as a separate nation within the borders of Turkey. Moreover, Şahin called Turks and Kurds as they were “societies” and Lazs and Circassians as they were “ethnic groups” in Turkey and did not mention any non-Muslim groups that had lived in Turkey.<sup>396</sup> Actually, participation in the Turkish War of Independence was mentioned frequently in both the publications of the Hearths and also defenses of the DDKO defendants, and Kurds were presented as one of founding groups of the Republic of Turkey. Accordingly, presenting the Kurds as one of the societies in Turkey together with the Turks, and calling the other groups as ethnic groups can be taken as an indicator how the Hearths perceived the position of the Kurdish people in comparison to the rest of the minority groups in Turkey. Its connotations with respect to Orthodox Islamic belief along with a slight disfavor against the non-Muslim elements was indeed one of the continuations that it shared with the official ideology from which the ideologues of the Hearths failed to disassociate.<sup>397</sup>

One final statement that is worth mentioning was made by İbrahim Güçlü during trials. İbrahim Güçlü, one of the signatories of the first collective defense text, asserted that he himself refused to be judged for the crime of making propaganda in order to weaken and annihilate national sentiments with race consideration. He proposed that

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<sup>395</sup> There is an apparent difficulty with respect to notate Turkish words such as *millet*, or *nation*. In this quote, the word “people” stands for *halk*, while “nation” stands for *millet*. Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması*, p. 191.

<sup>396</sup> “Duruşma Tutanağı,” (15.12.1971), pp. 91-92.

<sup>397</sup> The evaluations of the DDKO defendants about non-Muslim groups of people will be discussed later.

revolutionaries could not be racist and therefore instead of charging the DDKO defendants for this crime, they should be judged for being revolutionaries.<sup>398</sup> As previously discussed, the Hearths were umbrella organizations which encompassed people from different ideological standpoints. This objection of Güçlü can be read as a sample of the DDKO defendants whose socialist inclinations outweighed their ethnic considerations. However, as it will be shown later, in each following phases of jurisdiction, the contents of the collective defenses of the DDKO defendants gradually became more concerned with the ethnic dimension of the accusations than revolutionism.

#### The 167-Page Long Defense Petition

The 167-page long petition titled “Response Text to the Indictment” (*İddianameye Cevap Metni*) started with questioning the legitimacy of the military commission that had been granted the authority to rule the DDKO case. Actually all of the objections about this issue which came up with this text were voiced during the proceedings of this case both by the defendants and their lawyers.<sup>399</sup> These objections about the legitimacy

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid., p. 91; 97.

<sup>399</sup> In this petition, it was stated mainly that the establishment of the military commission was unconstitutional, it was not independent and its members did not have the legal guaranty of judges since they had been appointed by the Ministry of National Defense and Prime Minister, this commission was against the principle of natural judge since judges of this commission had been appointed after the alleged crimes had been committed, and there was a lack of jurisdiction and venue of this commission regarding the offenses charged against the DDKO defendants. With respect to the last two objections, in this response it was argued that the court of jurisdiction for the DDKO case was Ankara 3<sup>rd</sup> High Criminal Court and the natural judges of this case were supposed to be from this court. Furthermore, a Constitutional Court decision for the allegations of defendants about the constitutionality and independence of the military court

of the court were one of the characteristics of political defenses which the DDKO defenses had stated earlier.

The main part of this defense text was allocated to a detailed reply to the claims of the military prosecutor about the origin, history and language of the Kurdish people. In line with the discussion above, the military prosecutor had alleged that the Kurds were of the same race as the Turks, and that their native language had been pure Turkish, but had been transformed into the present day Kurdish language which was not perceived as a distinct language. In this defense text, these claims were declared to be unscientific and therefore the existence of Kurdish ethnicity, culture and language were advocated as a scientific and objective reality in Turkey by means of a near scientific manner. Having advocated for the existence of the Kurds as a distinct group of people; their situations and the roles in the historical developments from 2000 BC to 1970s were handled in detail in the same text. Actually it can be alleged that the roles of the Kurds in specific historical events and time periods were emphasized especially in this text not only to prove the existence of the Kurdish people from time out of mind, but also that this narration can be perceived as an undertaking to rewrite history in the face of the Turkish courts from the view point of the Kurdish people.<sup>400</sup>

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was demanded. See “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 113-129.

<sup>400</sup> Accordingly, roles of the Kurds during the first five years of Hejire, in the administration of the Ottoman Empire and relations between the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Empire and the Mameluk Sultanate, their heroism in the Persian military and their struggle against the Arabs and in the military of Karakoyunlus, roles in relations of the Ottoman Empire with the Armenian people and in the Turkish National War of Independence etc. were underlined as strategic and important roles of the Kurds in the history. See “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 140-160.

In addition to this narration of history, the speeches of İsmet İnönü and Lord Curzon at the Lausanne Conference, and the speeches and writings of Mustafa Kemal were also referred to in the text with a view to legitimizing the existence of the Kurdish people via official discourses and documents.<sup>401</sup> As the existence of the Kurds as a separate group from BC 2000 onwards was advanced in detail, it was argued that, contrary to the claim of the military prosecutor about the origins of the Kurdish people, Kurds were a native population of Anatolia that had lived around Lake Van before the Turks came to Anatolia. From this point of view, the ancestors of the Kurds were claimed to have been the Meds and therefore the Kurds were presented as an Aryan tribe. Thereby, it was concluded that the existence of a distinct Kurdish group in east and south-eastern regions of Turkey was a scientific and sociologic fact.<sup>402</sup>

The arguments related to the existence of Kurdish people in Turkey as a distinct group of people were correlated in this text with the arguments about the existence of a distinct Kurdish language, the assimilation policies and the underdeveloped situation of eastern Anatolia. Regarding the arguments about the Kurdish language and assimilation policies towards this language, it was argued that, contrary to the claims of the military prosecutor, the native language of the Kurds was Kurdish and the lack of the possibility of education, publication and radio in the Kurdish language was the embodiment of the

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<sup>401</sup> For these speeches see Ibid., pp. 157-167. Furthermore, the existence of the title of “Kurds” in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* that had been published by the Ministry of Education, offering a choice as “people whose native language is Kurdish” in the native languages part in the population censuses conducted by the State Institute of Statistic and Article 3 of Constitution of 1961 that to be accepted the existence of other languages in Turkey through indicating that the “official language is Turkish” were also mentioned in this text as official proof of the existence of the Kurdish people and their language in Turkey. Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>402</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 141-144.

assimilation policies towards this language in Turkey. Yet, it was emphasized that the Kurdish language did resist the assimilation policies and maintained its existence in Turkey because of its argued strong grammar, syntax and vocabulary structure. In other words, the DDKO defendants responded to the claims of the military persecutor about the Kurdish language, such as it being an underdeveloped language which had only around thirty words without a considerable grammar structure, through featuring Kurdish as a very developed and rich language. Actually, the DDKO defendants advocated the existence of a distinct Kurdish language by comparing it with and even emphasizing the superiorities of Kurdish over the Turkish language. Accordingly, several Kurdish dictionaries and also a dictionary published by the Turkish Language Agency were referred to in this text in effect to demonstrate the largeness of the vocabulary of Kurdish as opposed to that of the Turkish language.<sup>403</sup>

In response to the allegations of the military prosecutor that the Kurdish language was a corrupt dialect of Turkish, the defendants stated that the Kurdish language was an Indo-European language and was different from the Turkish language in terms of its alphabet, pronunciation, word and sentence structure, nouns, etc.<sup>404</sup> Furthermore, by

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<sup>403</sup> Accordingly, it was argued that although there were Kurdish dictionaries published by Kurdology Institutes of Universities of Leningrad and Sorbonne with thirty-five thousands and seventy-five thousands vocabularies, there were only twenty-nine thousands words in the dictionary of the Turkish Language Agency. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that only three thousands of these words belonged to Turkish and others were either partially or wholly gathered from other languages. However, different from the conclusions arrived at during the first indictment about the Kurdish language, it was propounded that it was still a living language despite this situation of the Turkish language. In the same vein, in response to the claims of the military prosecutor, gathering from other languages was not seen as a factor which vitiated the distinctness of the Kurdish language and the Kurdish language was depicted as a language which had its advanced vocabulary and grammar structure. *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, pp. 181-183.

<sup>404</sup> It should be added that the characteristics of the Kurdish language and its differences from Turkish were examined in this text in a manner of giving grammar lesson to the Turkish



means of referring to several Kurdish poets, Kurdish journals and magazines, the Kurdish language was presented as a fertile language in a literary sense.<sup>405</sup> As the development level of the Kurdish language was presented in this way, the right to speak and write in Kurdish language was based on human rights, the rule of law and Articles 10 and 14 of the 1961 Turkish Constitution.<sup>406</sup> In accordance with these articles, the right to speak and write in ones native language was perceived as the minimum requirement for improving material and spiritual existence of an individual. Hence, the prohibitions on the Kurdish language were evaluated as a violation of the Constitution, which perceived to be resulted in the inability of the Kurdish people to improve themselves materially and spiritually. From this point of view, advocating the existence of the Kurdish people and being active with a view to improving the Kurdish language, literature, culture and history, in other words, the alleged mission of the Hearths, were propounded as acts of advocating the constitutional democratic rights of the Kurdish people and corresponding with human rights and science.<sup>407</sup>

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courts to counter the allegations of the military prosecutor about this subject. See “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 186-199.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., pp. 199-200.

<sup>406</sup> According to these articles, “every individual shall enjoy the right to seek to improve himself materially and spiritually, and have the benefit of personal freedom.” and “every individual is entitled, in virtue of his existences as a human being, to fundamental rights and freedoms, which cannot be usurped, transferred, or relinquished. The state shall remove all political, economic, and social obstacles that restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual in such a way as to be irreconcilable with the principles embodied in the rule of law, individual well-being and social justice. The State prepares the conditions required for the development of the material and spiritual existence of individual.” See Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri*, pp. 173-174.

<sup>407</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 156-167; and “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 265-272.

In this defense petition, the state was defined from a Marxist point of view as a mean for the domination of the dominant classes and a configuration of inter-class struggles. It was argued that in addition to using control mechanisms such as police, prison and courts, the Turkish state resorted to ideological state apparatuses such as education, media organs, radio, etc against the Kurdish people in order to eliminate the Kurdish language, which was perceived as one of the traits of being a nation, and assimilate these people via imposing its hegemonic ideology with the Turkish language. These assimilation policies towards the Kurdish language were perceived as an integral part of the economic backwardness the Kurdish people endured. Accordingly, the causes underlying the assimilation policies against the Kurdish language and culture were evaluated as both for facilitating the economic exploitation of the Kurdish people and annihilating Kurdish nation as a whole. What is striking here is that, while the “oppressed Turkish society” had been perceived as an ally of the Kurdish people in the struggle against imperialism, high bureaucrats and comprador bourgeois throughout the publications of the Hearths, here they were seen as an ally of the Turkish state in executing assimilation practices against the Kurds.<sup>408</sup> Even though it is not possible to generalize within such restricted content, the question to which this statement leads is crucial. Yet, the dissociation from the Turkish oppressed class reveals great insight with respect to the base upon which the Hearths were constructed.

In terms of the relation between native language and production, in line with the publications of the Hearths, the abolition of the restrictions on the Kurdish language and culture was presented as necessary for both the regional development of eastern Anatolia

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<sup>408</sup> “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 178-181

and the realization of the ideals of Turkey about economic development.<sup>409</sup> Actually, advocating specific rights for the Kurdish people had been located within a broader context of development of the Republic of Turkey as a whole in most of the publications of the Hearths and also in the entire defense texts. Correspondingly, it was briefly emphasized that denying the existence of a distinct Kurdish society in Turkey with a distinct language, tradition, culture and history was not only contrary to science, but also to the socio-economic conditions of Turkey and its further development and progress.<sup>410</sup>

As known, the Marxist theory of history perceives society as determined by material conditions and describes six successive stages of history: primitive communism, slave society, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and communism. In accordance with this theory, the DDKO defendants identified these first six stages as inevitable stages of history and attributed different cultural formations to each of these stages as reflections of their material conditions. From this perspective of history, in this defense text, the DDKO defendants argued that Turkey was economically and politically dependant on American imperialism and had a social structure that included feudal structures and relations. It was argued that as a result of these material conditions, the culture that prevailed in Turkey was even behind the cultural level of capitalism since the main characteristics of this culture were regarded to be the reactionary, religious “madrassa culture.” However, it was indicated that more progressive cultural forms were

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<sup>409</sup> Ibid., pp. 201-203.

<sup>410</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 159-161, Ibid., pp. 268-270.

then available in Turkey since Turkey was perceived to have advanced to capitalism and eliminated the above-mentioned reactionary and religious culture.<sup>411</sup>

Though the backward state of the economy and discriminative policies were perceived as the two main characteristics of an underdeveloped economy, and the main characteristic of the relations of production in Turkey was defined in this text as underdeveloped capitalism, the situation of eastern Anatolia was described as to be in a transition from feudal structure to capitalism, which was shaped in accordance with this characteristic of the relations of production in Turkey. From a Marxist perspective, this transition was interpreted as an unavoidable historical development which would occur both on behalf of the dominant classes and also the masses. Considering the impact of this transformation on the masses, it was indicated that the values of the feudal structure would be replaced unavoidably by more “progressive and democratic” values in which investigations into Kurdish literature, language, culture and history would be improved. In other words, it was argued that increasing interest in researching these subjects was the inevitable ending of the transition from feudalism to capitalism which would unearth and improve the Kurdish culture. From this point of view, the official discourse on the underdeveloped situation of eastern Anatolia that perceived the feudal structure and its values as the underlying causes of this situation was criticized since the above-mentioned unavoidable improvement of Kurdish culture in consequence of the elimination of the feudal values of the superstructure was argued to be hindered by the Turkish administrative units. According to this text, instead of eliminating the feudal structure and bearing the consequences of the transition to capitalism such as the improvement of the Kurdish culture, the Turkish bureaucracy preferred to collaborate

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid., pp. 156-167; and “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 234-235.

with the feudal lords at the expense of social development. This policy preference was perceived as one of the most important underlying causes of the underdeveloped position of the east. Although the reason for this policy of preference towards the east was shown as the “contradiction between bureaucracy and people [of this region],” contrary to the publications of the Hearths, the difference between east and west were not read explicitly as it was due to the deliberate policies of the bureaucracy because of the ethnic composition of this region. The one exception was the argument that declared that the Kurdish people were humiliated due to their ethnicity. Instead, while it was indicated that a great part of the population of this region was Kurds, no direct connection was established with this ethnic composition and the underdeveloped situation of this region that was embodied by capital flow from this region to the west, low amounts of public and private investments, high rates of literacy, etc.<sup>412</sup>

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that, contrary to the publications of the Hearths, inequalities between classes regardless of their ethnicity was mentioned partly in this defense text. Although direct relations between ethnicity and underdevelopment may not have been established in this text due to the desire to avoid heavy penalties, it should be mentioned that this part of the petition that was allocated to the issue of economic inequalities and regional disparities was not allocated much space and also not prepared in as sophisticated way as was in the publications of the Hearths that were examined in the previous chapter. The DDKO defendants preferred to allocate a great part of this text to the demonstration of the existence of the Kurdish people, language, and history to the Turkish court instead of focusing on regional disparities or the poor

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<sup>412</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 156-167; “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 169-174.

situation of the Eastern people. This can be read as evidence for the argument of this study about the gradually increasing concentration of DDKO defendants on the ethnic dimension of the Question during the adjudication process.

In this defense text, the ascending concerns of the petit bourgeois intellectuals in investigating the Kurdish culture, literature, language and history were presented as an inevitable result of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Accordingly, the reason for founding the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs was presented as meeting these concerns of the petit bourgeois Kurdish intellectuals. In addition to this presented mission of the Hearths, these two organizations also were identified as organizations of petit bourgeois university students which aimed at shaping social developments on behalf of the working masses from a revolutionist perspective, challenging the so-called fascistic actions against the Kurdish people and providing equality, fraternity and freedom for all societies in Turkey. Furthermore, the foundation of the Hearths was depicted as a form of resistance to the policies that they evaluated to be aimed at hindering Kurdish peasants from becoming conscious about their problems and democratic rights.<sup>413</sup>

As the previous chapter demonstrates, the current situation of Turkey and the characteristics of the targeted order were dealt with in the publications of the Hearths thoroughly. A relatively small part of this defense text also was allocated to the solutions that were brought forward by the DDKO defendants for the political, economic, social and ideological problems of Turkey. According to this text, the political problems of Turkey could not be solved by the administration of the hegemonic classes that were alleged to be collaborating with imperialism. Rather, it was argued that the political

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<sup>413</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 156-167; “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 228-231.

problems of Turkey could be solved only by governments based on the masses. With respect to ideological problems, it also was indicated that the ideological problems of Turkey could be solved via taking measures on behalf of the masses and providing their voices in the administrative units of the country. With respect to the economic problems of Turkey, it was propounded that it was a matter of development that could be solved only by transition to a planned economy and by the elimination of exploitation. In accordance with the main concerns of the Hearths about procuring the recognition of the Kurdish ethnicity, sociological problems of the country were proposed to be solved through acknowledging the equality and fraternity of the people. In this text, it was argued that unless these problems were solved, Turkey would not be able to recover itself from the underdevelopment situation and become a social, democratic, secular, constitutional state which would abide with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The contradiction, however, should be underlined here in terms of addressing revolution as the only solution to be confined still to universal terms. In the same vein the recovery of the country was maintained as the dominant resolution, but references still addressed legal structures that were supposed to be overthrown in the very first place. These offered solutions of each problem also were argued to be in conformity with the unity and solidarity of the country and nation, but in contradiction with the interests of imperialism and hegemonic classes.<sup>414</sup>

It should be mentioned that the Hearths were presented in this text as organizations which aimed at releasing the country from underdevelopment, not at dividing it. However, in the first indictment, the Hearths were charged with Kurdism and

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<sup>414</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 156-167; “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 206-208.

defined it as an ideology mainly based on the aim of establishing an independent Kurdish state. Nevertheless, the military prosecutor had divided people who were perceived to be Kurdist into two main groups: “Nationalists” who wanted to establish an independent nationalist Kurdistan, and “ultra-leftists” who desired to overthrow the existing order through a worker-peasant revolution and establish a Soviet-style Kurdistan.<sup>415</sup> The military prosecutor accused the Hearths of trying to undermine the trust of the people in the state and weaken its authority in order to realize this “dream of Kurdistan” through communist activities. Arming the people illegally was demonstrated as one of the activities of the Hearths which the prosecutor portrayed as a preparation for Kurdistan that they dreamed to establish in the future by members of the Hearths.<sup>416</sup> In response to this perception of the military prosecutor about Kurdism, in this defense text it was argued that neither the Kurdish people who were even not allowed to speak their native language nor the people who preoccupied with the problems of these people could be “racist.” Accordingly, it was advocated that the Kurdish people were struggling not to realize the “ideal of Kurdistan” as was alleged in the first indictment but struggling for acquiring their democratic and constitutional rights within the borders of Turkey.<sup>417</sup> Indeed it should be mentioned that not only in the defenses of the DDKO defendants but also in the publications of the Hearths it had always been emphasized that the sphere of action of the Hearths was subject to borders of the Republic of Turkey and its Constitution.

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<sup>415</sup> *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, p. 23.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>417</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 156-167, “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 204-205.



In the first indictment, the primary element of the state was shown as the nation, and specifically the Turkish nation was presented as the constructive component of the Turkish state.<sup>418</sup> As mentioned above, the DDKO defendants adopted the Marxist theory of state and therefore in response to the state perception of the military prosecutor which excluded the social classes, the DDKO defendants defined the Turkish state as a means of domination of the dominant classes which integrated to capital. From this point of view, it was argued that a nation could not be the primary element of a state since a nation itself was composed of several classes, layers and groups. However, the ethnic dimension of the Turkish state beyond its class configuration was emphasized at the same time and it was stated that constructive components of the Turkish state came into “existence with the Turkish and Kurdish people, etc.”<sup>419</sup> Although this part of the text had some vague assertions, basically it can be alleged that the DDKO defendants criticized not only the definition of the military prosecutor about the constructive component of Turkish state as the Turkish nation via adding the Kurdish nation to this definition, but also adopted a Marxist ideological stand via unearthing the social class dimension under the concept of a nation.

In the first indictment, in addition to the above-mentioned state definition, Turkish nationalism was said to have adopted a “national racism,” which was defined as idealistic, progressive and unitary on the basis of the shared culture and destiny of its

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<sup>418</sup> *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, p. 24.

<sup>419</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 156-167, “Temyiz Lahiyası,” “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), p. 210.

people.<sup>420</sup> However, this notion of “national racism” was evaluated in this text as a representation of the so-called fascistic mentality of the military prosecutor and of the dominant classes in which Turkish nationalism was grounded on the superiority of the Turkish race. Therefore it was argued that the national unity in Turkey was grounded not on the principle of unity in language, tradition and goals but on race.<sup>421</sup> In other words, the DDKO defendants directed the accusations of racism from themselves to the Turkish state in the name of the indictment of the military prosecutor.

With respect to racism, in this text, members of the Hearths argued that they had not adopted a racist stance which advocated the superiority of the Kurdish race and culture, therefore argued that Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code were not applicable to the their case. On the contrary, they held that there was an “explicit racism” in Turkey which was grounded on the superiority and domination of the Turkish race over other societies and especially grounded on the humiliation of the Kurdish people. It was indicated that the Kurdish people could not be racist in terms of the characteristics of racism considering the superiority and domination of one ethnicity since they even did not have the opportunities to speak and improve their native language and therefore had only advocated their constitutional rights against this act of racism in Turkey. Hence, it was argued that the Hearths demanded for the Kurdish people to take advantage of public rights equally in accordance with the principle of

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<sup>420</sup> *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, Dava Dosyası I*, p. 24.

<sup>421</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 156-167, “Temyiz Lahiyası,” p. 211.

equality in the Turkish Constitution and thus could not be judged for the weakening or invalidation of public rights via race consideration.<sup>422</sup>

Considering Kurds and Turks equal in terms of benefiting from constitutional rights was perceived as the sine qua non for realizing social integrity in Turkey. This would be for the benefit of each social group and advocating the equality and fraternity of societies was called “real patriotism.” From this point of view, it was argued that not the Hearths but hegemonic classes in Turkey were racist and separatist. Denying the existence of the Kurdish people in Turkey, the assimilation policies, the so-called unlawful searches and Commando Operations which were alleged to be carried out only in eastern Anatolia, and prohibitions on speaking and writing in the Kurdish language were given as examples of the so-called separatist and racist activities of the hegemonic classes. Accordingly, providing the fraternity and equality of societies was perceived as the sole way to establish social integrity in Turkey and assimilation policies were perceived as harming this integrity.<sup>423</sup>

Challenging the assimilation policies and advocating for the right to speak and write in native language were described as promoting science, human rights, the rule of the law and the Turkish Constitution. The assimilation policies in Turkey against the Kurdish people and their language were read specifically as contraventions to Articles 10, 12, 14 of the Turkish Constitution, and the decisions taken in the United Nation Commission of the Human Rights and European Commission of Human Rights about assimilation policies and ethnic groups. It was argued that despite these articles of the

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<sup>422</sup> “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 261-265.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., pp. 265-269.

Turkish Constitution and decisions of the aforementioned international communities, the Kurds in Turkey were respected as citizens and benefited from public services as far as they were alienated from their culture and became assimilated; otherwise, they faced political repression and could not benefit from their citizenship rights. Therefore, advocating the existence of the Kurdish people in Turkey and improving their culture were considered not to be offences but as advocating human rights and the rule of the law.<sup>424</sup>

As mentioned above, the military prosecutor alleged that all the members of the Hearths were connected to each other in terms of activities, members and charters, that they had some beyond-charter separatist targets, that they were regionalist since they added the term “eastern” to the name of their organizations and enrolled only people from eastern and south-eastern Anatolia, that they engaged in politics and adopted the purpose of alienating people from the Turkish state by means of propagation of communism and Kurdism. The DDKO defendants denied all of these allegations and declared that there were no organic relations among the organizations, the organizations had been founded and operated in accordance with the Constitution and the Law of Association, and had not adopted extra-charter separatist targets, and initiated revolutionary people regardless of their birthplaces. Furthermore, it was emphasized that struggling for power was a matter for political parties not for youth organizations and therefore the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs as “organizations of petit bourgeois university students” had not engaged in politics in the sense of struggling for power. At this point, it is necessary to present how the DDKO defendants explained certain terms

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<sup>424</sup> See “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 156-167, “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 269-270.

written in the charters of the Hearths that were evaluated as being signs of communist and Kurdist by the military prosecutor. In this text, “being a revolutionary” was described as being open to change and progression, and siding with development and independence. “Being an organization of revolutionary youth” was described as being concerned about the problems of the oppressed and exploited working masses and peasants and demanding the political power to solve these problems and the problems of the youth on behalf of these social groups, and also support efforts to release the country from exploitation and poverty. In other words, while engaging politics in terms of struggling for power was refused by the defendants, they advocated that these organizations had been concerned about political and economic situation of the country, the problems and demands of the working masses, peasantry and the Kurdish people. Furthermore they propounded that they objected to fascism, reactionism, so-called racist and chauvinist preconditions, imperialism and its local collaborators.<sup>425</sup>

It is important to mention that in each trial all the DDKO defendants referred to the second item of the charters of the Hearths in response to the questions of the military judges about the targets and activities of these organizations. However, what is striking is that while some of them interpreted this item as it had been written in charters as aiming at improving revolutionary culture in order to facilitate transition to a more progressive mode of production and at resisting so-called racist and chauvinist considerations, some of the defendants suggested that this item aimed at providing the acculturation of the Eastern people who spent time in coffee houses, helping them to gain reading habit and teaching how to read and write to those who were illiterate. Some

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<sup>425</sup> See “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 156-167, “Temyiz Lahiyası,” pp. 230-235.

of the members of the Ergani and Silvan DDKO defended the Hearths on the basis of these latter arguments.<sup>426</sup> The differing interpretation of “revolutionary culture” seems vital with a view to tracing the aspects that the defendants had attributed to the Hearths. Apparently, while the former explicitly was to favor advancement in the social conditions of the people that interested the Hearths, the latter one was strangely devoid of political aspects and yet relegated to mere educational services. İbrahim Güçlü argues that these kinds of defenses were prevalent among the defendants of the second indictment which dealt with the Hearths that had been established in the region, especially due to their intellectual inadequacy.<sup>427</sup> It is, however, doubtful that inadequacy was the actual reason here for it was the region most in need of the elimination of this inadequacy at the first place. Hence, backing down on the aspects attributed to “revolutionary culture” might be associated with those who wanted to avoid from a heavy sentence.

The military prosecutor presented the Hearths as organizations with its connections to the WPT, Revolutionary Youth and people living abroad and cited these alleged relations as evidence against the defendants. As shown in the previous chapter, the necessity of providing the short-dated revolutionary solidarity on specific issues with other organizations which were supposed to have adopted the same strategies with the Hearths was accepted as one of the guidelines and was put into practice by members of

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<sup>426</sup> See Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 37-39; p. 422; 446.

<sup>427</sup> In this regard, the role that Edip Karahan played, who was also one of defendants of this indictment before all eighteen indictments were unified, was important. Edip Karahan had a radical attitude towards military court and advocated both Hearths as organizations and also democratic rights of Kurdish people almost similar with other two groups of DDKO defendants. For examination of the content of Karahan's defense, see Güçlü, *Hepimizin Sevgili Ağabeyi*, pp. 147-155.

the Hearths. In accordance with this stance of the Hearths, the Hearths were located within the so-called “revolutionary and democratic front” in Turkey and the solidarity and collaboration of the Hearths with other revolutionary and democratic organizations were advocated by the defendants in this defense text. Furthermore, the WPT was seen as an important entity within this front and therefore, although the accusation of the military prosecutor towards the Hearths of being subsidiary organs of WPT was disaffirmed by the DDKO defendants, their collaboration with the WPT on specific issues was presented as a legal and natural cooperation. With respect to the relations with the Revolutionary Youth, it was admitted that the Hearths had short-winded common actions with this organization in terms of their fundamental concerns about universities, and also their concerns outside of school. Specifically, it was indicated that the Hearths acted not only in concert with the WPT and Revolutionary Youth, but also with other organizations such as Socialist Youth Organization, Union of University Assistants, and Teacher’s Union Turkey on subjects such as university autonomy, the issue of private schools, fascistic pressures, and activities of the government. Publishing joint declarations with these organizations about these subjects and organizing a demonstration against the Tunceli Events were mentioned as examples of this solidarity of the Hearths with these organizations in this text. However, it was emphasized that this solidarity did not harm the autonomy of the Hearths neither in their decision making process nor in implementing the decisions that were taken. In the context of the alleged relations of the Hearths with people living abroad, the defendants claimed that the military prosecutor did not have adequate evidence to prove any illegal relations of the Hearths with people abroad.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> See “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25

One of the accusations the military prosecutor made deserves to be discussed separately as it shows the perceptions of the defendants about non-Muslims in Turkey. As mentioned above, making contact with Barzani and raising money and goods from the Eastern people in order to give them to the Barzani administration were cited as evidence against the DDKO defendants. In the 167-page long defense petition this issue was dealt with from an anti non-Muslim perspective. It was propounded that while Kurdish peasants in Turkey had been arrested and tortured on the accusations of contacting and subsidizing the Barzani administration, the Turkish governments had overlooked the exploitation of the Turkish economy by the Greek and Jewish people settled in the big cities of Turkey, and their fund transfers to the Cypriot Greece and Israel, respectively.<sup>429</sup> Furthermore, the publication ban on the Kurdish language was criticized by comparing the liberties of the press given to other languages in Turkey and especially the number of magazines and journals published in Armenian was cited in the text.<sup>430</sup> However, this comparison does not seem as to be an appreciation of the publication liberties given to languages other than Turkish, instead it seems to be “otherizing” non-Muslims and their languages.

In this sense, it was argued that the defenses more likely pertained to the Sunni-Islam paradigm. Non-Muslim hostility was most apparent in economic terms. And this hostility was the default stance of the period. Both the socialist ideas with nationalist aspirations on the Turkish side and the nationalist assessments on the Kurdish side

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December 1971), pp. 243-261.

<sup>429</sup> See “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 174-175.

<sup>430</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 157.



somehow regarded non-Muslims as enemies of Turkish capital accumulation. Referring to the discontent that the defendants had with Mıgırđıç Sellefyan, Gündođan elucidates this stance clearly when he states that “perceiving and presenting this Armenian citizen as the symbol of exploitation in Turkey rather than greater capitalists and rent-seekers, reflects also the anti-Armenian cultural background of the authors.”<sup>431</sup>

Similarly, the DDKO defendants recognized and legitimized the right of military forces to intervene into civil governments. In the 167-page long petition the reason for 12 March Memorandum was shown as formalizing the demands of revolutionary and democratic forces against imperialism, its collaborators, fascism and reactionism. It was argued that the Turkish armed forces had been obliged to stage this coup in order to release the country from the crisis induced by the hegemonic classes and the Justice Party. From this point of view, the target of this military coup was depicted as to overcome the economic and political deadlocks of country that had been produced by Justice Party government and to establish democratic order. Although the underlying reason for this military coup was shown in this way, and consequently no connections were established between the social movements of the 1960s and the military intervention, it was admitted that the content of this intervention changed after it was staged.<sup>432</sup>

Similarly, in the 26-page long petition which will be examined below, the Memorandum was evaluated as evidence of the conflicting attitudes of the Justice Party

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<sup>431</sup> He justifiably locates the source of this stance to have originated from the Turkish leftists. For further details on this subject, see Gündođan, *Kawa Davası Savunması*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>432</sup> See “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluđundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 220-221.

regarding the Constitution. In other words, the Turkish military ascribed a rightful role to protect the Constitution by the DDKO defendants.<sup>433</sup> Accordingly, the 27 May 1960 Military Coup was interpreted as a progressive coup which provided democratic rights and freedoms, such as the freedom of thought, association and press via the 1961 Constitution.<sup>434</sup> These stances of the DDKO defendants reveals the fact that Kurdish socialist those even chose to organize separately share the same view points with respect to the above-mentioned fundamental issues with the overall Turkish leftist circles of that period.

Lastly, the character of the Turkish War of Independence according to the defendants should be mentioned here. In the above-mentioned 167-page long petition, the Turkish War of Independence was described as having been a “revolutionary struggle” and an “anti-imperialist war” against the foreign forces which had colonized the Ottoman Empire. While this alleged character of the Turkish War of Independence was appreciated by this text, its conciliation with feudal structures was criticized.<sup>435</sup> However, as will be discussed in the next section, this alleged anti-imperialist character of the Turkish War was criticized by the DDKO defendants in the following phases of the case.

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<sup>433</sup> See Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>434</sup> See Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>435</sup> See Ibid., p. 156 -157; 167; 224.

### The 26-Page Long Defense Petition

In the same manner as the first group of the DDKO defendants, Nusret Kılınçaslan, Sabri Çepik, Zeki Kaya, Faruk Aras, Ferit Uzun, Hasan Acar, Niyazi Dönmez, İhsan Aksoy and İhsan Yavuztürk also formed a group and submitted a 26-page long petition to the court in the place of individual verbal statements and refused to answer any questions before this text was read by the military court. This second group of DDKO defendants described this case as follows: “this case is the case of patriotic and revolutionary intellectuals who, in the effort to fulfill the historical duty which was loaded by underdevelopment in an underdeveloped country, advocate the unity of the country and a happy Turkey grounded on the fraternity of societies that have lived on the same lands for centuries.”<sup>436</sup> As will be shown, the notion of a “happy Turkey” on the basis of the fraternity of societies was emphasized in this defense petition throughout.

As in the first defense petition, in this petition the existence of the Kurdish people as a distinct group in Turkey was presented as a historical and sociologic fact. It was propounded that five million Kurdish people lived in the east and south-eastern regions of Turkey with their distinct language, culture, and history. In order to justify the existence of the Kurdish people as a distinct group in Turkey, official and non-official books and documents and especially the speeches of Mustafa Kemal and İsmet İnönü were also referred to in this petition. Furthermore, through reference to Mustafa Kemal’s speeches mentioning the Kurdish people with equal rights to those of Turks, it was

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<sup>436</sup> “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 26 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (23 December 1971), p. 305.

argued that the military prosecutor wanted to judge Mustafa Kemal with this DDKO case since it was argued that the Hearths also advocated the equality of societies.<sup>437</sup>

With respect to the origins of the Kurds, it was argued that, contrary to the allegations of the military prosecutor, the Kurds were not a Turani but an Aryan tribe which had had important roles in specific time periods and historical events. The Turkish War of Independence was one of the events mentioned in this text and the Kurds were depicted as one of the primary components of the Republic of Turkey since they had participated in this war. Furthermore, “national racism,” which was alleged by the military prosecutor to be the characteristic of Turkish nationalism, was also criticized in this text as a notion of nationalism in Turkey that alleged to harm the fraternity and equality of societies and sharpened exploitation on them.<sup>438</sup> It was emphasized that the Kurdish people had been humiliated and oppressed because of their native language and culture, and deprived of the possibilities for improving their culture and language. These kinds of attitudes towards Kurdish people were evaluated as attitudes which not only harmed the fraternity and equality of societies, but also engendered further social crisis. Regarding the economic backwardness of east and south-eastern Anatolia, the underdeveloped situation was not explicitly presented as a result of the deliberate policies of the Turkish governments but as of “wrong economic and social policies.”<sup>439</sup>

In this petition, advocating a “progressive” and “happy” Turkey that would be grounded on the fraternity and equality of societies was described as the underlying reason for the establishment of the Ankara DDKO. Actually, it should be mentioned

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<sup>437</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 306 – 309.

<sup>438</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 305-309.

<sup>439</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

that, unlike the first petition, being from Turkey (*Türkiyeli*) and patriotic in terms of advocating the integrity of the country on the basis of the fraternity and equality of societies was emphasized in this text frequently. It was argued that, in accordance with this mentioned mission, the Hearths had opposed the oppressive and discriminative policies of the Justice Party government and also of “utilitarian circles” towards the working masses and societies and resisted the state of despising people because of their culture, language and race. In response to the allegations of the military prosecutor about the so-called beyond-charter targets of the Hearths, it was argued that the Hearths had maintained their activities pursuant to the Constitution, laws and their charters, and established connection with other revolutionary and democratic organizations, such as the Revolutionary Youth and the WPT within the legal framework. Considering the “progressive mode of production” and “revolutionary culture” which were written in the charters of all the Hearths, contrary to the previous petition, socialism and the corresponded cultural formation were not explicitly indicated in this text as more progressive than the capitalist mode of production and its culture. Instead, it was specified that “progressive mode of production” connoted the transition to the better and more modern economic and social conditions and “revolutionary culture” also was connoted consciousness which would determine this transition.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> See “İddianameye Cevap olarak” 26 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (23 December 1971), pp. 309-314.

## The End of a Period

The Martial Law Command of Diyarbakir and Siirt Districts sustained none of the objections raised during the several phases of the adjudication by the DDKO defendants and their lawyers regarding the unconstitutionality of the military courts, their dependency on Commandership, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Defense, the lack of legal guarantee of military judges, the contradiction of the DDKO case to the principle of a natural judge, the lack of jurisdiction and venue of military court in the DDKO case, the invalidity of the tape recordings, reports and testimonies of the National Intelligence Service and the demands of the defendants for recusation of the judges.<sup>441</sup> Furthermore, the military court evaluated the attitudes and speeches of the defendants which took aim at the court board as a whole and its members personally as attitudes and speeches which stemmed from the discredit of the defendants of the members of the court board because of alleged inability of these members to be fair because of their class positions and the so-called intention of the DDKO defendants of discrediting the court and its decisions in the eyes of Eastern people, revolutionary people, organizations and the world.<sup>442</sup>

In the opinion as to the accusation of DDKO case, similar to the indictments of the military prosecutors about the DDKO defendants, the Hearths were presented as if they had been subsidiary organs of the WPT which had engaged in politics and carried

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<sup>441</sup> Although each objection was determined by the military court during the proceedings, a detailed explanation about the answers of the military court to these objections is available in the justified decision of the DDKO case. See Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 28-35.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., p. 311.

out separatist actions under the control of the Party. The aforementioned allegation of the military prosecutors regarding the origin of the Kurdish people and the so-called beyond-charter illegal targets of the Hearths also were repeated in this phase of the case and therefore the Hearths were accused of naming originally Turkish people as Kurds<sup>443</sup> and raising the awareness of Kurdishness among them in order to establish a separate Kurdistan. It was argued that Hearths had prepared leadership cadres, operated illegally and made connections to other so-called ultra-leftist local organizations and Kurdish organizations abroad in order to realize this Kurdistan ideal.<sup>444</sup>

As shown in the first indictment, the primary element of the state was shown as a nation and specifically the Turkish nation was presented as the constructive component of the Turkish state and “national racism” was shown as characteristic of Turkish nationalism. In this phase of the case, on the contrary to these conceptions about state, nation and Turkish nationalism, not the Turkish nation but community, specific lands, governance, organization and independence were presented as elements of the state, and it was argued that racism was not a characteristic of Turkish nationalism.<sup>445</sup> Furthermore, a nation was described as “a community composed of people living in a certain country, desiring to live together because of unity of race, language, history, law,

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<sup>443</sup> Considering the existence of a distinct group of people as the Kurds, references of the DDKO defendants to the speeches of Mustafa Kemal and İsmet İnönü were evaluated in this phase of the case as distortion of these speeches and it was argued that neither Mustafa Kemal nor İsmet İnönü had mentioned the existence of the Kurds. Similarly, *Encyclopedia of Islam* which was mentioned by the DDKO defendants as one of official documents in which the existence of Kurds was recognized also was criticized as a book which aimed at dividing the Turkish nation. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 49.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-51.

tradition and customs, physical and mental similarities, and unity in economic requirements and feeling different from other individuals on the basis of features of civilization that they created.”<sup>446</sup>

In the opinion as the accusation of DDKO case, the permanent closure of the Hearths was demanded due to their alleged engagement in politics through illegal targets and activities in the direction of regionalism and racism. In response to this opinion, some of the defendants again submitted collective defense petitions in two groups in the place of their verbal defenses. In addition to five signatories of 167-page long petition, Fikret Şahin, İbrahim Güçlü, Mümtaz Kotan, Ali Beyköylü and Yümnü Budak, members of the first group, were Ali Yılmaz Balkaş, Battal Bate, Mahmut Kılıç and they submitted a 489-page long defense petition on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1972. Members of the second group, who were signed the 26-page long petition, were İhsan Yavuztürk, Faruk Aras, Niyazi Dönmez, İhsan Aksoy, Zeki Kaya and Nusret Kılınçarslan and they also submitted a 202-page long defense petition in the same day. In addition to these two groups, the lawyer of some of the DDKO defendants, Şerafettin Kaya, also submitted an 88-page long defense petition. According to Ruşen Arslan, the lawyers of the Hearths were influential in publicizing these political defenses of the defendants. Arslan says that the DDKO lawyers were copying political defenses and transmitting these copies to people outside of the prisons.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> “*Muayyen bir ülkede yaşayan, ırk, dil, tarih, yasa, gelenek ve adetlerin birliği fizik ve benzeri fikri benzerlikler, iktisadi ihtiyaçlardaki birlik sebepleriyle birlikte yaşama hususunda arzu duyan ve meydana getirdikleri medeniyetin özellikleri nisbetinde kendilerini diğer fertlerden farklı hisseden insanlardan müteşekkil topluluk.*” Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>447</sup> Arslan, *Cim Karnında Nokta*, p. 156.



The first defense petition was almost a more detailed version of the above-discussed 167-page long petition with the same subjects and arguments. In terms of the assimilation policies towards the Kurdish language, it was argued that the Turkish governments had resorted to several assimilation methods and strangled this language in terms of social, cultural and technological improvements for political reasons. On the other hand, the distinctness of Kurdish language from Turkish in terms of its linguistic family to which it belonged, grammar and vocabulary structures, also was represented particularly in this phase of the case. The Kurdish language was depicted as a rich and improved language which had existed for all eternity. Considering “culture,” it was defined as the “spiritual formation of way of living of a society” and it was emphasized that although Turkish culture was a brother culture, Kurdish culture was totally different in terms of history, traditions, customs, folklore, eating and housing habits, family types, education, law, fine arts, types of helping each other, occupations, means of transportation and intercommunication.<sup>448</sup> What was different from the previous two defense petitions, in the 489-page and 202-page long petitions, the historical and current situations of the Kurdish people living in Iraq, Syria and Iran and their culture were also dealt with in addition to the historical and current situations of the Kurdish people in Turkey.<sup>449</sup>

In the 489-page long petition it was emphasized more overtly that the Turkish government resorted to so-called outdated practices on the Kurdish people such as denying their existence as a distinct group of people living in the eastern parts of Turkey

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<sup>448</sup> See Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 51-53.

<sup>449</sup> See Ibid., pp. 54; 58.

with their own history, culture and language and destroying them via assimilating and carrying out genocide as a government policy.<sup>450</sup> At this point, it is important to mention the evaluation of the DDKO defendants about the Kurdish uprisings in Turkey between 1923 and 1938. In the first indictment of the military prosecutor, the Sheikh Said, Ağrı and Dersim uprisings were interpreted as religiously motivated movements which had occurred as the result of external influences. Contrary to this claim, in the 167-page long petition it was argued that religion could not be seen as the sole underlying reason for the Kurdish uprisings from 1924 to 1938. While abolition of the caliphate was stated as one of the reasons for the Sheikh Said Rebellion, contradictions between the bureaucracy and the Kurdish people, interventions of the central authority to the feudal structure of eastern Anatolia and the motivation of insistence against chauvinist and racist discourses and executions were evaluated as reasons underlying Kurdish rebellions of that period.<sup>451</sup> In this phase of the DDKO case, these uprisings were called nationalist uprisings that had occurred in Kurdistan in protest of the oppression and Turkification policies carried out on the Kurdish people. More specifically, it was argued that the official ideology of the Turkish Republic had been “racist-chauvinist” from its foundation to the present and this case was presented as a sample of the official ideology which aimed at restraining and withholding the democratic and revolutionary rights and freedoms of the Kurdish people.<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>450</sup> See Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>451</sup> See İddianameye Cevap olarak” 167 Sayfa Uzunluğundaki Savunma Metni (25 December 1971), pp. 166-167.

<sup>452</sup> See Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 52-54.

Similar to the previous petitions, in this petition the state was described as a means of domination of the hegemonic classes and nation was described as a unity that had come into existence historically on the basis of the unity of language, land, economy, culture and spirit. Nationalism also was described as glorifying state in order to hide the exploitation of the bourgeoisie. Regarding Turkish nationalism, it was described as an ideological mask that was used by Turkish bourgeoisie to exploit and assimilate the Kurdish people and this attributed character of Turkish nationalism was argued to be contradictory to the ideas of Mustafa Kemal.<sup>453</sup>

At this point, the evaluations of the defendants about Kemalism are striking. In this petition, Kemalism was categorized as “classical Kemalism,” “Kemalism in terms of economic policy of state control,” “*Kadrocu* Kemalism,” and “*Yöncü* Kemalism.”<sup>454</sup> It was argued that Mustafa Kemal could never shed light on the views of the DDKO defendants due to the changing government policy towards the Kurdish people from advocating the unity and solidarity of Kurdish and Turkish people during the War of Independence to assimilation and genocide policies towards Kurds after the declaration of the Republic. Furthermore, Kemalism was criticized in terms of its economic policies and relations to the world economy. In this context, it was propounded that the members of the Hearths could not be Kemalist since Kemalism was perceived to be grounded on capitalist economy and imperialism. From this point of view, Turkey was described as an underdeveloped country dependant on American imperialism, and the eastern and south-eastern regions of the country were described as regions ignored by the Turkish

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<sup>453</sup> See Ibid., pp. 54-55.

<sup>454</sup> There are only names in the justified decision, no explanations.

government in every respect.<sup>455</sup> As seen clearly, in contrast to the previous petitions in which the anti-imperialist character of the Turkish War of Independence was emphasized, in this petition the dependence on imperialism was grounded on the political preference of the Kemalist ideology.

Since racism and nationalism were criticized in this way, it was emphasized that, far from being racist, the DDKO defendants were against racism and advocated the equality, fraternity, unity and solidarity of Turkish and Kurdish societies. The underlying reason for the formation of the Hearths was presented in this petition as gathering those people concerned with the “Eastern Question” together in order to direct and systematize the democratic and constitutional struggle of the Kurdish people. The Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs were specifically described as youth organizations founded and operated in accordance with the Constitution in order to deal with the problems of Turkey as a whole, the democratic demands of the Kurdish people particularly and the demand for revolutionary solutions to these problems from the government together with the working masses and the peasantry. Similar to the previous two petitions, denying the existence of the Kurdish people as a distinct group of people with a different language, culture and history was presented as against science and the benefits of Turkey. Elaborating these benefits, it was argued that recognition of the existence of the Kurdish people was one of the requirements for realizing progress and development of Turkey. Actually, this defense petition ends with the beliefs of the defendants in realizing such a developed Turkey grounded on the equality and fraternity of societies.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 53; 56.

<sup>456</sup> See Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 55-57.

As far as is known from the summary available in the Justified Decision of the DDKO Case, the second collective defense petition had almost the same content and arguments as the 489-page long petition. In this petition, the concepts of nation, nationality, nationalism, race, fascism and imperialism were defined, the historical roles and situations of the Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Iraq and the Kurdish movement in the Middle East were examined. Furthermore, the accusations against the DDKO defendants also were answered in detail and the mission of the Hearths was described as struggling for the equality and fraternity of societies. Similar to these two petitions, lawyer Şerafettin Kaya<sup>457</sup> also submitted an 88-page long petition with almost the same contents and arguments as the previous defense petitions. In this petition, the borders of Misak-ı Milli and the fraternity of the Turkish and Kurdish people within the borders as citizens were emphasized. In accordance with the previous collective petitions, it also was argued that introducing the existence of Kurdish people, language and culture, advocating their right to speak their native language and condemning discriminative policies could not be evaluated as annihilating or weakening national sentiments, rather the official ideology was supposed to be judged for being racist in terms of advocating the superiority of the Turkish nation.<sup>458</sup> What is striking here is that in this 88-page long defense text, names of the some of the DDKO defendants were written without their

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<sup>457</sup>Şerafettin Kaya was the defense counsel of these DDKO defendants: Mümtaz Kotan, Nezir Şemmikanlı, İbrahim Güçlü, Sabri Çepik, Fikret Şahin, Yümnü Budak, Ömer Kan, Mehmet Tektaş, Ahmet Özdemir, Abdurrahman Demir, İbrahim Erbatur, Mehmet Gemici, Yusuf Kılıçer, Vedat Erkaçmaz, Zeki Bozarıslan, Bahri Evliyaoğlu, Akif Işık, Fikri Müjdecı, İsa Geçit, Mehmet Sözer, Mehmet Okçuoğlu, Eyüp Alacabey, Tayyar Alaca, Mustafa Düşünceli, Ahmet Eren, Niyazi Tatlıcı, Edip Karahan, Abdullah Begik, Mahmut Kılıç, Şehmuz Arslan, Ömer Bakal, and Ruşen Aslan. Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, Ek Liste (Additional List): 4, p. 579.

<sup>458</sup> See Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 58- 59.

consent. According to Cemşit Bilek, while some of these defendants were pleased with this situation, most of them withdrew from this political defense. Bilek was one of the DDKO defendants who did not give his political defense. He said that they were advised and even forced for not to give political defenses in order to avoid from being penalized.<sup>459</sup> Although the reasons underlying the withdrawal from giving a political defense for each defendant cannot be unearthed, it can be alleged that an explanation such as that of Bilek's tries to show a political behavior, which was not approved by Kurdish militants, as an involuntary behavior of subjects and burden others with the responsibility of such a historical behavior.

In the Justified Decision of the DDKO case, these last defenses of the DDKO defendants were evaluated as they were inclined to handle and accept the offenses charged against them in terms of the ideology of Kurdistan instead of communism. It was argued by the military prosecutor that this was due to both hindering their targets and operations toward establishing a communist order since this was a more serious crime according to the Turkish Penal Code and also for attracting the interest of the Turkish and world public opinion and especially of Turkish left movement to the Kurdish issue via the speeches of the defendants in front of the Turkish courts.<sup>460</sup>

In the Justified Decision of the DDKO case, the arguments of the military prosecutor in the aforementioned indictments about the origin of the Kurdish people and Kurdish language were repeated. Once again, the Kurds were presented as a Turani tribe that had migrated from Central Asia, one whose native language was pure Turkish but

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<sup>459</sup> Bilek, "12 Mart 1971 Askeri Darbesi," p. 241.

<sup>460</sup> See Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, p. 311.

had turned into Kurdish as a result of interrelations with other cultures. Kurdism was described as objecting national and territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic via labeling some Turkish citizens as Kurds and aiming at establishing a separate Kurdish state. It was argued that people who adopted this so-called Kurdist ideology resorted to scientific socialism as a strategy for realizing their ultimate ideal, a separate Kurdistan. From this point of view, the targets of the Hearths were evaluated in terms of both the ideologies of Kurdism and communism. Therefore, these organizations were accused of transmitting a revolutionary and nationalist consciousness to the Kurdish people in order to establish a separate Kurdish state.<sup>461</sup>

In the Justified Decision of the DDKO case, the legal status of each Hearth was examined separately. It was argued that the Hearths had adopted Marxist-Leninist theory, especially with respect to the national self-determination, and aimed at practicing the theory of scientific socialism in Turkey. It was propounded that the Ankara and Istanbul DDKOs maintained close relationships for this end with the WPT, Revolutionary Youth, SYO, TÖS, DİSK, ÜNAS, the Association for Struggling against Unemployment and Expensiveness (*İşsizlik ve Pahalılıkla Mücadele Derneği*) and also abroad youth and worker organizations, Kurdish people and organizations. Considering the alleged targets of the Ankara, Istanbul, Silvan and Diyarbakir DDKOs, it was emphasized that these organizations had two kinds of targets: first establishing a communist order by means of raising the awareness of the workers, peasants and masses under the leadership of an educated leading cadre and solving Kurdish ethnic problem within this order; secondly familiarizing the Eastern people with the nationalization process and getting them democratic rights. From this point of view, the military court

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<sup>461</sup> See Ibid., pp. 79-90.

divided the defendants of these organizations mainly into two groups on the basis of whether they had aimed to solve the ethnic problem via establishing a communist order in Turkey or they had only aimed at raising the ethnic awareness of the Eastern people via educating them and gaining some democratic rights for them since they believed that establishing a communist order was perceived as a remote possibility for Turkey for that period of time.<sup>462</sup>

However, the Batman, Kozluk and Ergani DDKOs were not charged with the offense of aiming at establishing communist order and solving ethnic problem within this order. Thus, these organizations only were charged with adopting the target of leading the Eastern people into the nationalization process and getting democratic rights for them within the legal framework of the Republic of Turkey. In other words, it was argued that these Hearths had not dealt with the issue of the desired political order in Turkey in which the liberation of Kurdish people would be acquired. Therefore, the defendants of these organizations were judged only regarding the so-called separatist aims and operations. More specifically, it was argued that the Ergani, Kozluk and Batman DDKOs could not be revolutionary due to temporal constraints and the intellectual inadequacy of their leading cadres and thus they had an only nationalist character.<sup>463</sup>

Even though the “revolutionary” aspirations were replaced with a more rational adjustment with references to the Constitution, they need to be assessed in general terms with a view to locating the significance of the Hearths in the dissociation period of the

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<sup>462</sup> See Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 307-312; 384-387; 446-448; 496-498.

<sup>463</sup> See Ibid., pp. 421-423; 468-470; 522-524.



Kurdish socialists from the Turkish left. Accordingly, no matter how much these defense texts were overrated, they still had significant remarks as well as continuations with respect to the rupture from the Turkish left. As the selected parts of defense petitions reveal, there was no sophisticated interpretation of the Kurdish Question as expected. It cannot be denied, however, that the preparations of these documents in the prison marked the emergence of further elaborative studies of the Kurdish nation in a disassociated manner despite the scarcity of the resources.<sup>464</sup>

In this context, a preliminary comparison with the Kurdish movements in its historical stages and with other organizations in terms of the Kurdish Question seems to contribute to specify the point that the Hearths stood more clearly. First, the trial process of the Hearths might be compared to the trials of the 49ers in a rough sense. In conformity with the theoretical approach of this study, the Hearths demanded the recognition of the existence of the Kurds. The DDKO case was more advanced than the case of the 49ers in the sense that the latter did not acknowledge a distinct organizational structure. The prominent 49 people lacked such a structural organization in that period, therefore failed to put forward the rights emanating from the fact of the Kurds being a

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<sup>464</sup> The importance of this “common accumulation” will be discussed in the forthcoming pages. Nevertheless it should be added that this commonality was not confined to DDKO defendants; keeping the fact that almost every Kurdist defendant was sentenced in this prison in mind, the contributions were enriched by Musa Anter, Naci Kutlay from the Case of 49ers, Edip Karahan from the Case of 23ers and similar relatively prominent persons such as Tarik Ziya Ekinçi, Kemal Burkay and Mehmet Emin Bozarıslan, Canip Yıldırım and İsmail Beşikçi. Hence, while the contents of these texts seemed not intellectually satisfactory, they had however a more ultimate end once almost every person involved with the Kurdish Question was locked up in the prison. The common accumulation included also this aspect that in turn would lead to fractionalization and sophistication in the Kurdish socialist movement. For the contributions of Beşikçi on the DDKO case, see Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması*, p. 186-187; and also, Beşikçi, “Hapisteki DDKO.”

distinct entity.<sup>465</sup> In the same vein, the Hearths, albeit with their short-lived autonomous organization, still claimed these rights in the same manner instead of the recognition of the Kurds as a collective identity.<sup>466</sup> Following the historical significance of the DDKO case, the difference in this sense had been put forward by the DPK-T or by Şakir Epözdemir in particular. As a nationalist-conservative and the first illegal party established in Turkish Kurdistan, the Party leaders failed to disassociate themselves from the official discourse since they had confined their ideals to the boundaries of the Republic. The reference to the Constitution was evidently identical, yet the DPK-T leaders addressed the Kurdish nation as a separate entity, a fact that the Hearths chose not to or failed to accomplish.<sup>467</sup>

A preliminary comparison with the DPK-T reveals that the Party maintained its defense with the argument recognizing Kurds as a distinct entity and, hence the subsequent demands for Kurdish people were based on this recognition.<sup>468</sup> Furthermore, the references to federation as a resolution of the Question demonstrate the sophistication of the political arguments. Accordingly Kurdistan was considered a

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<sup>465</sup> Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması*, p. 162.

<sup>466</sup> It should be noted that the Incident of 49ers was on an advancing course compared to the early Republican Kurdish movements. The “submission” attributed to those who struggled in the early Republican period was replaced with rather a solid defense thanks to the 49ers. In a similar context, the Incident of 23ers was identical to that of the 49ers. These two trials lacked an organizational structure on which defendants could base their defenses. And the Hearths accomplished exactly this fact. For the Incident of 23ers interpretation; see Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması*, p. 163.

<sup>467</sup> Discussion of the DPK-T defenses in a detailed manner is beyond the scope of this chapter; it is why only its relation with Hearths is elaborated here. *Ibid.*, pp.171-172.

<sup>468</sup> It should be remarked that the defense in question is the one that was executed in 1968. The case aftermath of the Military Coup predominantly nullified the one in 1968 and the latter case remained as a “deviance” in the past.

“colony” by Epözdemir. Thanks to this political formation of the question, the case of the Kurdish Question went significantly beyond the official discourse of the period. Even though the obligation to remain true to the charter of the Party existed, Epözdemir, despite the theoretical setbacks, elaborated further the Question which can be evaluated as the underpinnings for unveiling a nation in front of the Turkish courts. While breaking new ground, the DPK-T leaders however were still inflicted with official discourse, a common aspect that they shared with the Hearths.<sup>469</sup> The party that accomplished a relatively radical statement on the subject, however, resorted to an initial position in the very period in which the Hearths were charged by the military court.<sup>470</sup>

Another party whose case was executed in the same court was the Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey, which surprisingly had furthering declarations with respect to the Kurdish Question. Though the Party was to turn into a pro-army nationalist socialist party in the forthcoming years, in the same court, the Party explicitly favored the right of nations to self-determination. According to them, this right encompassed both recognition of the Kurds as a distinct nation and granted them the right to cede from the Republic with a view to establishing an independent state.<sup>471</sup> It was very contradictory. The radical tone of the Party with respect to defending these rights revealed also the emerging attention that the Turkish left paid to the Kurdish comrades. When compared to the Hearths, it was still contradictory that the Hearths remained in a less radical position. Though the self-determination discussion was

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<sup>469</sup> For a brief elaboration on the ‘transition’ of Kurdish movements, see Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması* , pp. 172-174; and for the defense of the Party in 1968, see Epözdemir, *Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi*.

<sup>470</sup> Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması* , p. 203.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid*, p. 205.

beyond the scope of this chapter, it was evident that the dissociation of the Hearths from the Turkish left found its equivalent terms on the Turkish side. In other words, the Hearths might be argued to pave the way for the dissociation from the Turkish socialist movement. Yet it was apparent that the Hearths were willing to operate within the national boundaries of the Republic.

Having compared the trial process with respect to historical cases as well as the very current ones in the same court, it would not be wrong to argue that the defenses of the DDKO defendants were not that radical, but more importantly their activities and publications had put forward were more remarkable in terms of organizational dissociation within the socialist movement initiated by the Hearths. It should be stressed that the Hearths built a social group consciousness for the mass for which they struggled, and in the early 1970s this was one of the “musts” for further demands. Accordingly, the publications and activities exposing the discrimination policies both in terms of cultural and economic terms, contributing to the developments of the masses seemed crucial. Hence, the relative insignificance of the defenses should be taken into account with the previous activities that the Hearths boldly dared. The dissociation from the Turkish left was still in progress and there were critical major setbacks in the defense texts presented by the defendants. Considering the case in this manner also contributes to revise the retrospectively overrated attributions of the defense texts. In the same vein, the emergence of the Kurdish left, despite its dissociation, had still fundamental common aspects with the Turkish left as well as the official discourse. Nonetheless, as Gündoğan holds, it was important that all these objections in these defenses were carried on behalf

of an establishment, the Hearths, which intentionally preferred to be organized separately.<sup>472</sup>

The trial process was in the first place a workshop for the Kurdish intellectuals when they were heavily involved with examination and research on subjects associated with Kurds. As Gündoğan states, these studies also were supported with legal publications from outside. In the same vein, the findings or declarations or copies of defense texts were communicated beyond the prison walls, and the defense sessions were transformed into a more interactive activity. What is striking here is that the studies constituted the “inputs” for the Hearth defendants to be utilized in the forthcoming years. As demonstrated above, the DPK-T militants had not been involved in such a comprehensive activity, but rather preferred to defend the Party for their sakes.<sup>473</sup> The findings, their transmittance to outer spheres, hence, enabled to the formation of a more popular Kurdish socialist movement. The defendants who obliged the judicial authorities to read the texts were in this sense crucial since the read parts were to reach the emerging supporters of the Hearths and it goes without saying that this circumstance also posed a threat to the State as well.

Along with the utilization of this research and findings as well as their undeniable contribution to later Kurdish organizations, the transitory period of dissociation from the Turkish left still had remnants of official ideology in implicit terms. As demonstrated in the previous section, the role that DDKO defendants

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<sup>472</sup> Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması* , p. 192.

<sup>473</sup> Gündoğan emphasizes the significance of these differences as he states: “Because the resistance and the speeches [by DDKO defendants] in the courts were not confined to the walls as in the case of the DPK-T that was held in Antalya two years ago, rather they were transmitted outside by means of lawyers and were distributed covertly outside.” Ibid.

attributed to the army during the execution of the military intervention was quite contradictory. That is, the very military forces that actually carried out the operations in the region in the previous years were ascribed a justified role with a view to preserving the Constitution. Though it may be claimed that this was indeed intended in effect to avoid from heavy penalties, the attribution to which the army was entitled by the DDKO defendants indicates the ongoing official discourse that was maintained within the Kurdish and Turkish left. On the other hand, the Kemalist discourse covertly was maintained with these statements for the role that the army was supposed to intervene in social crises was one of the building stones of this ideology. Contrastingly, as the statements above indicate, the very same DDKO defendants rejected being Kemalists since they considered this ideology to be based on a capitalist economy and imperialism.

The remnants of the dominant paradigm were also repetitive in the case of the Sunni-Islam paradigm that was elucidated by the DDKO defendants with a significant hostility towards the non-Muslim elements of the Republic. Lastly and most importantly, as a continuation of the official paradigm, the Hearths failed to demand a distinct unit for Kurdish people even though they succeeded in the organizational dissociation in the first place. The dissociation during this transition process still retained the ideas of the dominant paradigm and was thus confined to the national boundaries of the Republic.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Accordingly the distinction between the people (*halk*) and the nation (*millet*) seems contradictory for the defendants preferred the latter. Yet, the question remains: Why did the DDKO defendants identify Kurds as people instead of a nation? The defendants who undertook to analyze the State with the Marxist theory must have known the crucial difference. This question, despite its importance, largely was associated with the moderate tone of the defendants while maintaining the legal references. Yet, Gündoğan indicates that these words might be considered interchangeable in the defense petitions. Gündoğan, *Kawa Davası Savunması*, pp. 198-199.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, this did not only pertain to the Hearths but was a general characteristic of the Kurdish movement of that period.

Following these general remarks about the natures of the defense texts, it can be argued that the defenses of the defendants were not sophisticated or radical compared to equivalent defenses. In line with the main thesis of this study, the trial process cannot be regarded as the sole determinant of the conclusions regarding this organization. The legality concern that was apparent in the activities and publications of the Hearths were maintained during the trials; but the research activities in the prison led the defendants directly to get involved in the Question directly. These findings, no matter how unsophisticated they were, were gathered and compiled in a manner to be used as “inputs” for the socialist Kurdish movement. This was essential with respect to the tradition. Accordingly, it would not be wrong to claim that the sentence periods in the prison contributed to the physical actualization of a disassociated Kurdish left. The Hearths, in this sense, struggled for an autonomous action on the behalf of the Kurdish left, and demonstrating and revealing the general aspects that would be an integral part of the future policies to be forwarded against ethnic discriminations what the Hearths accomplished during this transitory period. As demonstrated in this chapter, the fractionalization and the sophistication of the discussions were direct results of this transition. In the aftermath of the dissociation, there were common remnants of the official ideology that they shared with not only Turkish leftists, but also Kurdish nationalists and these remnants were due to the inconsistencies peculiar to the transition period.

Consequently, the members of the Hearths did not escape their doom as the military court found these defendants guilty as communists and Kurdist, and all the

Hearths were sentenced with Articles 1 and 4 of the 141<sup>st</sup> item of the Turkish Penal Code and all of the Hearths were permanently closed down in accordance with the Association Law no. 3512 and the 1<sup>st</sup> Clause of Article 45 of Organizations Law no. 1630. The Hearths were charged with the following offenses: “[founding] associations directed towards establishing the domination of one social class over other social classes or the annihilation of one social classes or overthrowing any basic economic or social regulations established in the country; aiming at abolishing constitutional public rights partially or completely via race consideration or annihilating or weakening national sentiments” and operating in order to reach these ends and cooperating with other ultra-left-wing organizations.<sup>475</sup>

As mentioned above, the DDKO defendants were divided into two groups and the judgment about each DDKO defendant was performed on the basis of reference either to communist ideals or “enlightening” people in the East. As a result while some of the DDKO defendants were acquitted, most of them were charged with heavy sentences from one year to sixteen years and also banishments for different lengths of time.<sup>476</sup> All of these prisoners were transferred to the Diyarbakir Closed Prison and kept

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<sup>475</sup> Ankara ve İstanbul Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları'na Ait Davanın Gerekçeli Hükümü, pp. 540-542.

<sup>476</sup> It should be mentioned that some members of “*Ocak Komünü*” (Commune of Hearth) who were also signatories of the above-mentioned 489-page long collective defense petition, Fikret Şahin, Mümtaz Kotan, İbrahim Güçlü, Battal Bate, Mahmut Kılınç, Ali Yılmaz Balkaş, Yümnü Budak and Ali Beyköylü went for an appeal about the justified decision of the DDKO lawsuit. Although the appellate brief is not available, as far as is known from Mümtaz Kotan, this brief was dated 11 September 1973 and composed of 510 pages. In addition to the subjects and arguments those were dealt in the previous defense petitions regarding the existence of Kurdish people, language and culture, assimilation policies and fraternity and equality of societies, in this appellate brief the justified decision was argued to be political not judicial and several issues about the adjudication such as qualification of the evidences, irregularities regarding arrestments and execution of right of defense, etc. were criticized and motion to set aside judgments regarding 88 subjects was demanded. Furthermore, the scientific terms which



there until the general amnesty in 1974. Both the trial period and the sentences in the prison, however, were to lead to a more refined and consistent Kurdish left movement in the forthcoming years. The historical role that the Hearths played in this complete dissociation was crucial.

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were used in this appellate brief were explained in 11 pages and a 5-page bibliography was written. These features show how the DDKO defendants were persistent in making detailed scientific defenses in each phases of adjudication. See Kotan, "Tarihin Karartılması Eylemi," pp. 74-75.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The rise of political mobilization in the 1960s affected both the Turkish and Kurdish socialists. This politicization was confined not merely to the left-wing ideology but it also was accompanied by ethnic movements in general and the Kurdish one in particular. The discontent concerning the official ideology that had suppressed the existence of the Kurdish people and the accompanying reflections that it had upon the Turkish left was one of the major reasons underlying the organizational dissociation of the Kurdish left from the Turkish left organizations.

In this context, this study located the particular place of Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths within the formation of the autonomous Kurdish left movement. Since the literature attributed great emphasis on the trial process of the Hearths in a retrospective manner, I argued that the significance of the Hearths was not merely confined to the trial process, but included the publications and activities that only lasted for two years. Rather, I demonstrated that the foundation of the Hearths was a milestone in terms of the rupture that it accomplished along with its organizational dissociation from the Turkish left organizations. As this dissociation was initiated by the Hearths and evidently not a completed process, the inconsistencies and contradictions were apparent mostly in the trial process. Having revised the overstated comments with respect to the role attributed to the Hearths, I underlined the bare importance of the organization as a legal entity aspiring to encompass a wide range of Kurdish society.

This ethnic emphasis on being Kurd was in a sense a reaction to the Turkish left that did not significantly get beyond either offering economic-led discussions on the

Kurdish Question or postponing the Question to the aftermath of the prospective revolution. As a novelty of this study, the elaborations on Kurdish culture were demonstrated to have been integrated into the socialist paradigm. Of course, these ethnic dimensions were discussed largely and studied by the Turkish left organizations and furthermore were granted with the right of the nations to self-determination. Yet, the importance of the Hearths was exactly on this point. Being influenced by the crises in the Turkish left as well as the ascending Kurdish mobilization in the east, I tried to demonstrate that the Hearths attempted to raise an ethnic and socialist consciousness for the Kurdish people within their autonomous organizations. It would be clarified by the fact that the Hearths mostly were occupied with questions with regards to socialism and the National Question. Accordingly the cultural activities as well as the publications they conducted served to this integrated objective. The nature of the organization also indicates the possible discontent that the leaders of the Hearths had, for the Hearths were supposed to cover a wide range of Kurdish society.

The spatial differentiation between the Hearths that were founded in the western and eastern parts of the Republic was a product of this consideration. The Hearths in the cities were led by university students whereas the ones in the region were composed of a more varying stratum of the Kurdish people. This two-tailed approach might show the recognition of the organizations in the eyes of the Kurdish people in the east. Even though the two-year period does not allow generalizing an argument claiming that they were supported by the Kurdish public on an undefined basis, this structure, still, accounts for the importance of the Hearths among the Kurdish people. Even if legitimacy was not ensured, it was evident that the activities and publications of the Hearths were significant within the process of creating an ethnic consciousness for the

Kurds. In an atmosphere where the Kurds were denied officially, what the Hearths accomplished, thus, indicates the significance of the forthcoming autonomous Kurdish movements.

In accordance with the ethnic considerations experienced by the Kurdish youth as well as people, the contents of the publications underlined the severe importance of this facet of the Question. In the same vein, socialism adopted as a key instrument with a view to resolve the Question was elaborated mostly. However, a distinction must be made here. Even though the contents reserved for socialism and the national question had almost equal places in the publications, the socialist arguments and explanations were not sophisticated. These were actually products of the 1960s that were also shared by the Turkish left. The rupture from the Kemalist ideology also was to emerge gradually, but its remnants inflicted the Hearth militants as well.

It does not however mean that their socialist discourse was purported. Quite the contrary, the Hearths found the ultimate solution in the path leading to the revolution. Despite the misconceptions, the Hearths shared the ideal of the revolution with its Turkish counterparts, only with the difference of autonomous organization with an ethnic base. There were still contradictions with respect to the organization, since an organization calling for a revolution made equal efforts to remain legal. Even though it can be explained, with respect to the trials, that it was because of the fear of severe sentences, it was also evident in the publications with references to the Constitution and the human rights. Of course, the past experiences of oppression might be regarded as precautions to refrain from complete closure, but I believe that this also was attributed to uncertainties in the minds of the militants of the Hearths. They had succeeded in establishing an autonomous organization and thus aimed at divorcing from the Turkish

left, but the initiation of dissociation did not bring about solid statements. The differentiating views on “revolutionary culture” during the trials demonstrate this case. Compared to the Turkish organizations and Kurdish nationalist parties, this failure or deliberate attitude was one of the major questions that this study asked since it was beyond the scope of this study.

The ethnic dimensions superseded those of the socialist ones especially during the trial process. These defense petitions, regarded mostly as the most important aspect of the Hearths, reserved an increasing portion for ethnic elaborations. Not dismissing the revolutionary course at all, these statements were significant in terms of the increasing insights they presented into Kurdish culture. As a novelty of this study, I demonstrated the ethnic aspect of the Hearths whose militants increasingly enhanced the sophistication levels of these defenses. On the other hand, the effects of the immediate organizational association were apparent in these stages. I think one of the most important parts of this study was that it unveiled the particular cases that were still largely affected by the official ideology. In other words, though the organizational dissociation was materialized the preoccupations of the very founding members of the Hearths were still confined to the effects of the official ideology, that is Kemalism. Obviously, it indicates the transitional process of the autonomous Kurdish left that was initiated by the Hearths and shows that the step for dissociation was not a complete rupture.

Rather, the collective defenses of the defendants and their radical language in their publications seem more important than the assumed significance of the defense texts with respect to the Kurdish Question. Accordingly, the period that the DDKO defendants spent in prison was equivalently important since the punishment brought the DDKO defendants together and helped them enhance the elaborations with respect to

socialism and the National Question, two aspects with which the Hearths were mostly involved. Hence this study demonstrated that the organizational divorce initiated by the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths was to become more sophisticated in the post-1974 period with a view to carrying out the complete dissociation.

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