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POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN TURKEY IN THE 1970S: THE CASE OF THE
KAHRAMANMARAŞ INCIDENTS

by

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Title: Political Mobilization in Turkey in the 1970s:
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This thesis examines the low-intensity civil war in Turkey in the 1970s by exploring the background of the conflicts and massacres that occurred in Kahramanmaraş on 22-25 December 1978. The emergence of radical left/socialist movements was witnessed along with the rise of a workers' movement, peasant struggles and student opposition from the mid-1960s onwards. The extreme rightist movement that organised itself as an anti-communist reaction to that rise and became a mass movement in the mid-1970s in parallel to the search for alternatives among the parts of the population that lived in central and eastern Anatolia who were bothered by the cultural modernization and economic expropriation of the capitalist modernization. This thesis discusses the Kahramanmaraş Incidents by analysing the effects of this division on the both national and local levels. Emphasizing the political side of this division separates this work from essentialist approaches that perceive the events only as a religious and ethnic conflict by removing the events from the context of the 1970s. The second aim of the thesis is to cast light upon the traumatic effects of the efforts of the power holders for the loss of memory after the 12 September coup d'état, by following the traces of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents in the collective memory. The traumatization of the collective memory, while it has sought to erase the radical alternatives of the 1970s from popular memory, has also had the effect of increasing the risk that Turkish society will face events similar to the ones in Kahramanmaraş once more. Therefore, this thesis carries out the idea of an intervention into the traumatized social memory through an analysis of the political struggles in the 1970s on both the national and regional levels.

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**Başlık: 1970'ler Türkiye'sinde Politik Mobilizasyon:
Kahramanmaraş Olayları Örneği**

Bu tez 22-25 Aralık 1978 tarihinde Kahramanmaraş'ta meydana gelen çatışma ve katliamların arka planını araştırmak yoluyla Türkiye'nin 1970'li yıllarda yaşadığı düşük yoğunluklu iç savaşı incelemek amacını taşımaktadır. 1960'ların ortalarından itibaren işçi hareketinin, köylü mücadelelerinin ve öğrenci muhalefetinin yükselişiyle birlikte radikal sol/ sosyalist hareketlerin de ortaya çıkışına tanık olundu. Bu yükselişe karşı anti-komünist bir tepki hareketi olarak örgütlenen aşırı sağcı hareket ise özellikle İç ve Orta Anadolu'da yaşayan ve kapitalist modernleşmenin ekonomik alanda mülksüzleştirici, kültürel alanda modernleştirici etkilerinden rahatsızlık duyan kesimlerin alternatif arayışına paralel olarak gelişti ve 1970'lerin ortalarında bir kitle hareketi haline geldi. Bu tez, Kahramanmaraş Olayları'nı bu saflaşmanın hem ulusal hem de yerel düzeydeki etkilerini incelemek yoluyla tartışmaktadır. Saflaşmanın "politik" yönünü vurgulaması bu çalışmayı bu olayları 1970'lerin bağlamından koparıp sadece dini ve etnik kimlik çatışması olarak ele alan özcü yaklaşımlardan ayırmaktadır. Tezin ikinci amacı Kahramanmaraş Olayları'nın toplumsal bellekteki izlerini sürerek 12 Eylül darbesinde sonra iktidar sahipleri tarafından yürütülen belleksizleştirme çabalarını kolektif hafızadaki travmatik etkilerini açığa çıkartmaktır. Kolektif belleğin travmaya uğratılması 1970'lerin radikal alternatiflerinin hafızalardan silinmesine yol açtığı gibi, Türkiye toplumunun Kahramanmaraş'takine benzer olaylarla karşı karşıya kalma riskini artırıcı etki yapmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu tez 1970'lerdeki politik mücadeleleri ulusal ve bölgesel düzeyde inceleme yoluyla travmaya uğratılan toplumsal belleğe müdahale etme kaygısı taşımaktadır.

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PREFACE

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter One deals with the theoretical and historical background of fascism, both in the global and local contexts. By referring to Harry Harootunian's conceptualization of the fascist phenomenon of the interwar period via underlining its declared goal of "overcoming" the alienating effects of capitalist modernization, this chapter argues that the Turkish version of fascism of the 1970s can be evaluated as a movement whose power lay in its interpretation of a similar mission which set its objective as providing an alternative to capitalist modernization in both the economic and cultural realms. Second, the chapter emphasizes the importance of remembering the destructive effects of fascism by refreshing the memory of fascist mass mobilizations in the late 1970s since the same movement has the potential to recur in today's context by adopting its ideology to today's circumstances. In this sense, the function of remembering the past means to make an intervention in the present situation to form sensitivity against any possibility of the rise of fascism.

Chapter Two examines the low-intensity civil war conditions endured by Turkish society from 1968 to 1980. It begins with an evaluation of the whole period on the national scale. After that, this epoch is analysed within the local context of Kahramanmaraş. The rise of the struggles of the peasants, workers and students *vis-a-vis* the rise of the radical left is examined. Also the relationship between the radical leftist movement and the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Republican People's Party, RPP) in the national and local context helps us to see the specificity of the RPP in that period, and consequently makes clear why the RPP was among the major enemies of

the fascist movement, in both of these contexts, throughout the period. In this discussion, the role and influence of the Alevi identity within the Turkish left is examined. The second part of the chapter looks at the Turkish right's loss of unity and its effects on the political climate in the 1970s. Three major actors are investigated: the center-right represented by the *Adalet Partisi* (Justice Party, JP), the Islamist movement represented by the *Milli Selamet Partisi* (National Salvation Party, NSP) and the *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (Nationalist Action Party, NAP) which represented somehow a kind of a political mixture of Islamism and Turkism, which gave way to the making of a Turkish version of fascism. The role of the NAP is stressed more than that of the other actors since it had the most active part of the low-intensity civil war with the radical left. For this reason, a detailed study of the *ülküci* movement is given.

Chapter Three looks at the dynamic of the transformation of this low-intensity civil war conditions into an open civil war. A detailed account of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents is given from first hand and secondary sources. This chapter seeks to explain why this event must be understood as a “disaster” in the Benjaminian sense.

Chapter Four takes up another essential issue of the period: the politicization of the state employees due to the political warfare. This discussion examines the conceptualisation of the state as a contested terrain of political struggles. The main argument is the possibility of the transformation of the state organs into spheres of political warfare. By emphasizing the power of the political left not only in the areas in which it was powerful traditionally, such as the teachers' unions, but also in the coercive apparatuses of the state as seen in the example of the Pol-Der (*Polis Derneği*, Police Association), the study underlines the possibilities of the collapse of the state's capacity to govern. This issue is discussed via the elaboration of the examples from the Kahramanmaraş Incidents.

Chapter Five looks at the Kahramanmaraş Incidents in the collective memory. It explains why and how this historical event has been erased from the collective memory. As seen further, the rewriting of this event has turned into a struggle over collective memory, so far, the fascist political subjects are winning this struggle.

Chapter Six concludes the paper. In this chapter, a return is made to the discussion in the Preface. Concepts such as capitalism, modernism and fascism are discussed in the light of the remembrance of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents. It discusses the actuality of Benjamin's "Fire Alarm," which underlines the disastrous nature of capitalism, and the place of this alarm in today's history writing.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE UNAVOIDABLE ACTUALITY OF FASCISM¹

When the Socialist Reich Party (SRP), a successor of the Nazi Party, won eleven percent of the votes in the state elections of West Germany in May 1951, the world was shocked. The ghost of fascism, which was believed to have disappeared seven years earlier with the death of Adolf Hitler, had reappeared. A party which openly expressed its “admiration for Hitler and his regime” and “propagated a typically Nazi doctrine”² had achieved a notable success when the political climate seemed cool for such a success. A worldwide consensus on fascism’s peculiarity to be the major source of all wickedness existed with the self-confident belief that it could not emerge again. Political analysts and intellectuals had declared the victory of Western democracy over fascism and the uninterrupted path of West Germany to prosperity and freedom. Thus, the reappearance of fascist (or National Socialist) politics with popular support challenged the reliability of their comfortable, so-called scientific analyses claiming the impossibility of the return of fascism.

Nevertheless, the success of the SRP was not enough for social scientists to evaluate the phenomenon of fascism as an “actual phenomenon” or a “living reality” concerning not only the German people, but every society as well. For them, a national court’s decision was enough to reject its actuality. They did not bother with

¹ This title is inspired by the title of Harry D. Harootian’s article “The Unavoidable ‘Actuality’ of Everyday Life,” in *History’s Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 1-23.

² Richard S. Cromwell, “Rightist Extremism in Postwar West Germany,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (June 1964), p. 286.

the trouble of discussing fascism in their “present” time thanks to the German Federal Constitutional Court’s decision proscribing the SRP in October 1952.³ Thus, up to now, looking at fascism as a nostalgic concept believed to be something that concerned only the Italian and German cases of the interwar period has been the mainstream intellectual position on the question of fascism. A huge literature about the experience of fascism has been produced; however, little work has been done to connect the narrative about this experience with the current social and political circumstances. Thus, most of the works have been produced with the aim of building up a more detailed narrative of fascism. In consequence, the only motive behind studying fascism becomes academic professionalism since there is no problematic concerning the present.

The objective of this study is to go beyond discussing the phenomenon of fascism as a thing concerning only these experiences. With the help of the study of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents, a fascist mass mobilization (more specifically, massacre) experienced by Turkish society in the context of the civil-war conditions of the 1970s, I examine fascism as an actual phenomenon which exists in different contexts in different societies.

This study has a second aim related to the first one: to call attention to the point that fascism has the capacity to emerge in the present context and that the consequences of any tendency to (re)turn to fascism will produce destructive results. In this respect, writing on a historical event such as the Kahramanmaraş Incidents must be understood as an endeavour to examine a sphere within Republican history to make a meaningful intervention into the present situation. The concrete conditions that necessitate the evaluation of this historical experience are clear to anyone who is aware of the real social and political situation in Turkey. A short glance at the 1990s

³ Ibid., p. 287.

reveals that Turkish society is not immune to fascism. The appearance of a new Pan-Turkist tendency combined with the ultra-nationalist reactions to Kurdish separatism led by the PKK (Workers' Party of Kurdistan) made the political climate much more vulnerable to fascist political interventions. In that period, a social atmosphere, which has been described as "pop-nationalism" by Can Kozanoğlu⁴ provided the social base for a possible rise of fascism. Different social locations, which are traditionally described as conflicting public spheres by sociologists such as pop music concerts, football stadiums, and mosques, were affected by the same strong nationalist sentiment. Thus, the explosion of these sentiments in a crisis conjuncture, both economically and politically, made the politics of fascism a preferable alternative. The rise of the Nationalist Action Party from the beginning of the 1990s to its electoral victory in the parliamentary elections of 18 April 1999 was a reflection of this rise of fascism from society to politics. Thus, to remember the political practice of fascism in the 1970s is not only to provide a detailed narrative of the 1970s, but also to connect them to the current political struggles in the present. In short, combining the past and present, to understand the past not only as the past but also as an indivisible part of the now, is a major task with which this study aims to deal.

To begin with, the first task of this study is to avoid the simplistic/modernist analyses of fascism outside Western countries which are based on the "late-development" rhetoric. In this understanding, temporality is "always measured from one, base time line since, it was believed, true time was kept by the modern West."⁵ As Harry Harootunian observes, many historical and scientific accounts "depended upon the category of 'late developer'" to explain the turn of non-Western countries to

⁴ Can Kozanoğlu, *Pop Çağı Ateşi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1995).

⁵ Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. xvi.

fascism by “aping the experience of Germany and Italy, yet contrasted to France and England, which supposedly had developed mature, liberal and democratic institutions because modernization had taken place earlier and over a longer period of time.” Nevertheless, none of these accounts can explain why “virtually every country in the West...experienced either a fascist movement or powerful intellectual and cultural impulses that clearly displaced recognizable characteristics associated with fascism.”⁶

This point is very significant for the case study at hand. Thinkers of both Marxist and non-Marxist origin explain the fascist mass mobilizations of the late 1970s such as the Kahramanmaraş Incidents by depending on the same modernist view. They explain these events as “reactionary” uprisings against the Alevis, who were seen as representatives of a modern, open-minded life style. In these accounts, the economic rise of the Alevis and their increasing visibility in the public sphere (stemming from their migration from the villages to the cities and the upward mobility of Alevis because of their giving great importance to education and to becoming state employees) activated its counter-tendency within the Sunni Muslim community in the forms of religious hatred against the Alevi sect. Additionally, the religious opposition to modernization from the beginning of the Republican period was exploited by the NAP’s discourse, which emphasized religious identity and targeted the Alevis as their enemies. Ömer Laçiner, in an article about the fascist movement in the 1970s proposes that the *ülküci*⁷ movement used violence as a

⁶ Ibid., p. xi.

⁷ *Ülkücülük* is the name of the Nationalist Action Party’s doctrine. Many translate this term to English as “idealism” because “*ülkü*” means “ideal.” However, this translation will lead the reader to confuse “*ülküçülük*” with “idealism,” as a well known philosophic term. For this reason, I will use the original Turkish form of this term through this study. On the other hand, “*ülkü*” symbolizes the target of the NAP supporters, the build up of an ideal Turkish society and the establishment of the unity of Turks throughout the world etc.

means of politics since it had no choice but to activate the petty bourgeois and rural segments of central and eastern Anatolia for its own political purposes because it knew that those segments of society (who were its power bases) would be dissolved by the incorporation of the region into capitalism.⁸ His schema is similar to that of the “modernizing strategy,” which assumes that “capitalism...will eventually lead to even development within society, the establishment of an even ground sometime in the indeterminate future.”⁹ However, his argument does not explain why the *ülküçü* movement was able to attract support in this region after more than twenty-five years. To put it another way, how much time must society wait for economic development to overcome the problem of fascism? Is there an ideal level of development at which the popular support to fascism become untenable?

Of course, the answer is no. This does not mean that “development” is an unnecessary concept for understanding fascism. We still need to use this concept, however, with turning it inside out. At this point, Harootunian suggests emphasizing the unevenness *within* societies rather than focusing “almost exclusively on the unevenness *between* societies as the marker of relative development.”¹⁰ The point of departure of this viewpoint is that the belief of a normal and balanced state of capitalism, “whose promise would finally be reached in the indeterminate future,” is a “fiction.”¹¹

In this respect, unevenness is an inescapable component of capitalism: “Part of the price paid for the continual expansion is the production of permanent unevenness, permanent imbalance between various sectors of the social formations, the process

⁸ Ömer Laçiner, “Malatya Olayı: Türkiye’de Faşist Hareketin Yapısı ve Gelişimi” *Birikim* no. 39, (May 1978), p. 17.

⁹ Harootunian, p. xv.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

by which some areas must be sacrificed for the development of others, such as the countryside for the city..., the colony for the metropole, or even one city for another.”¹² Related to this fact, the “coexistence of the place between precapitalist pasts that had not yet disappeared with capitalism...industrialization in an indeterminate present being lived in large numbers of people in the cities, and finally an unenvisaged future” stems from is a normal consequence of capitalist development.¹³

In transcending the “lived unevenness and clashed temporalities,”¹⁴ “memory of a prior time and lived experience” becomes a useful instrument. As Harootunian argues, it provides the material for the production of an image of national culture which is devoid of all results of unevenness. Thus, “the life of the nation is portrayed as fully achieved and enduring, decisively formed before the transformations of capitalist modernization” in this belief. He concludes:

While this recourse to memory appeared to privilege the content of a cultural imaginary, it really disclosed that the problem faced by modernism was one of form and representation...The present was seen as the foreground, often as the place where the traditions were being crushed, provoking a crisis in the communication of experience itself, in memory and the operation of the very possibility of historical recall.¹⁵

This representational crisis is the main source of fascist mobilization. It lies behind the search for an “essentialized and exceptionalistic culture” which has the capability to resist historical change.¹⁶ For overcoming the “division, disunity, and fragmentation that contemporary society was experiencing,” a spiritual endeavour

¹² Ibid., p. xv.

¹³ Ibid., p. xviii.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. xxiv.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. xxv.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

seeks “to eternalize forces in a fixed ‘spirit,’ ‘essence,’ and ‘existence’” and “appealing to myth and national poetics and aestheticism” becomes a response to the crisis.¹⁷ The Italian fascist intellectual Dino Grandi proposes that fascism was a denial of “mechanical materialism” and a reference to a “new spiritual consciousness.” For Grandi, the spiritual problem was resolved by fascism. It was “the victory of a ‘transcendental and ethical conception’ of life over a debased and narrow materialism that understood private and social life only as the arena of conflicting economic and personal interests.”¹⁸ In short, fascism is an endeavour to “reject the modern and its spiritual distortions that prompted to call for an overcoming.”¹⁹ In that sense, fascism claims to pose an alternative to modernism and capitalism’s excesses. It asserts to preserve capitalism without its costs such as class struggle, alienation, insecurity, and unevenness in cultural and economic realms.²⁰

In the evaluation of the *ülküçü* movement’s popular support in the conditions of the late 1970s civil war, this movement’s similar emphasis on the need to overcome the alienating effects of capitalism must be underlined. The increasing urbanization process, merged with the enhanced integration of the countryside into the national economy following the 1950s, was a significant element behind the fascist

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33. As Stanley Payne observes, “Fascist culture made a strong appeal to the past and simultaneously to the creation of a new race of heroes, even though in practice most of its national and racial values were based on bourgeois and traditional morality. A major aspect of fascist technique was to actualize these concepts through new forms of public aesthetics and liturgy.” Stanley Payne *A History of Fascism 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p. 451.

¹⁸ A. James Gregor, *Interpretations of Fascism* (New Jersey: University of California, Berkeley, General Learning Press, 1974), pp. 40, 41.

¹⁹ Harootunian, p. 37. “The ideal of overcoming...is an overwhelming desire to bring an end to reliance on Western industrial life, with its laws of endless specialization and division, as the preparatory move to envisaging a time for restoring cultural wholeness. Ridding Japanese society of fragmentation and alienation, not to forget the loss of fixed meaning resulting from unrelieved reification (capitalist social abstraction), it was believed, secure an identity sufficiently different from the modern West capable of rescuing the race from homogenization promised by cultural colonization.” *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

movement's popular support. This kind of a dramatic dislocation "within the old economic and social relations" helps to create a mass reaction which helped the fascist movement to create its mass support.²¹ The fascist movement began to establish a relationship with this mass. It used a combination of a religious and nationalistic discourse, claiming to provide an alternative to modernity (with a hostile discourse against the Western life-style) and even to capitalism. In this strategy, the fascist movement intervened into the everyday lives of the people of in the countryside in order to prove the possibility of its alternative everydayness. As seen in examples such as cutting the long hair of young men, prohibiting young women from wearing mini skirts, and enforcing the fast (*oruç tutmak*) during Ramadan were common ways of the violent interventions into everydayness by the fascist movement in Kahramanmaraş in the 1960s and 1970s. These were clear examples of the "politicization of culture"²² by the fascist movement.

Moreover, the *ülkücü* movement criticized the sickness stemming from the modernization attempts of Turkey since the Tanzimat era in the mid-nineteenth century. It was not very different from the Japan's version of "modernists against modernity,"²³ who criticized the Meiji period throughout the interwar period "as a part of a larger assault on European bourgeois civilization."²⁴ As an early conclusion, the Turkish fascist movement must be analysed via reference to other fascist movements' experiences since their task was similar: to make the masses see themselves as the only alternative to capitalism's destructive effects, its unevenness, its economic and

²¹ Emre Arslan *The Role and Influence of "Nationalist Action Party" in Turkish Political Life* (MA Thesis, Ankara: Institute of Social Sciences of Bilkent University, 1999), p. 20.

²² Harootunian, p. xv.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

social instability and its alienation. Therefore, there is no need to evaluate Turkish fascism by referring to the so-called special circumstances of Oriental societies. We need to abstain from the West-East dichotomy in studies on fascism since it leads us to overlook the *relationship between capitalism and fascism* and, consequently, to develop essentialist understandings of the so-called “late development” discourse.

After this early conclusion, we need to discuss this relationship. At this point, we must ask these questions: Is fascism capable of overcoming these consequences of capitalism? or to put it another way: Is there a possibility of “capitalism without capitalism,” as Slavoj Žižek puts it?²⁵ The answer must be sought in the relationship between capitalist modernity and fascism. Harootunian underlines the fact that “despite its obvious tactic to divert its struggle against liberalism,” fascism “bypassed the social structure basic to liberalism and was largely in accord to it.” Contrary to its claim of opposing the “central features of Western liberal society such as urbanization, industrialization, liberal education, rationalist materialism, individualism,”²⁶ fascism is “far from constituting an external opposite and thus opponent of liberal democracy” since “it derives its force and reluctance from liberal democracy’s internal antagonisms,”²⁷ as mentioned above.²⁸ Harootunian confirms Žižek’s argument, evaluating “fascism as a kind of inherent self-negation of capitalism” for the reason that “when confronted with prospects of its own failure and

²⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁶ Payne, p. 456.

²⁷ Harootunian, p. xxix.

²⁸ Nicos Poulantzas goes one step further when analysing the ideological relationship between fascism and liberalism in the rise of Nazism: “In Germany, there was collusion between very different ideological sub-systems, but here the relationship between the traditional ‘liberal nationalist’ ideology of the bourgeoisie and fascist ideology is much clearer: ‘the seeds of fascism’ can be seen in ‘liberal’ ideology. This is the more important because bourgeois theories of fascism, relying on the complexity of the German case, hold that there is some irreconcilable antagonism between ‘liberal ideology’ and ‘fascist ideology.’” Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship* (London: Verso, 1979), p. 128.

impending dissolution, capitalism must negate itself from 'within' if it is to survive, which means pass into fascism."²⁹ Therefore, since "both modernism and fascism attacked the problems raised by capitalism at the level of representation" and "tried to resolve the aporias of representation raised by capitalism rather than call into question the structural conditions that produced these doubts" do not pose an alternative to capitalism. As Harootunian argues, the critique of modernity in this sense is "simply a strategic and ideological misrecognition at the representational level of a system driven by the reproduction of capital accumulation."³⁰

Accordingly, anyone discussing fascism today must underline the fact that fascism cannot be criticized without the critique of capitalism and modernism. For this reason, the fascist movement in Turkey in the 1970s must be put in the context of the class struggle of that period. This study is an attempt to do this, contrary to other attempts analysing the rise of fascism as a product of the economic and cultural "backwardness" depending upon the "late development" analysis. In this sense, Nicos Poulantzas' argument that, "fascism can only be explained by reference to concrete situation of the class struggle, as it cannot be reduced to any inevitable need of the 'economic' development of capitalism"³¹ sheds light on task of this paper to understand the fascist movement in the 1970s.

In this sense, "it is impossible to discuss fascism without discussing the working class"³² and political organizations which are assumed to have spoken on behalf of it, no matter how and to what extent they achieved this objective. This is why this study emphasizes the "civil war conditions" as a means of class struggle in the 1970s. In

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 414.

³¹ Poulantzas, p. 39.

³² Ibid, p. 12.

that period, the working class had a certain degree of power in struggling against the existing order. It was not restricted to the economic realm. Moreover, it had a powerful tendency to act against the basic institutions of the social order.³³ Consequently, the working class movement gained an anti-systemic character with the help of the radical left's political interventions.³⁴

In addition, the erosion of the center-right within the rightist bloc, as seen in the decreasing hegemony of the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*) and the rise of the Islamist and fascist political movements, was the other side of the political scene in the 1970s. This did not occur in a vacuum. The radicalization of society reinforced more radical alternatives, not only on the left, but also on the political right. Thus, as will be seen in the following chapters, the Nationalist Action Party as a fascist mass movement responded to this complex crisis situation by depending on a very complex strategy. At first, the party tried to mobilize the masses against the "communist threat" with its paramilitary organizations. In this sense, it tried to prove its capacity to protect the nation and the existing order. Against the rise of the radical left, the party implemented a political strategy for gaining political power by creating "a state of effective civil war situation within Turkey and inspire a right-wing coup that would be to their benefit."³⁵ However, protecting the existing bourgeois order was not a legitimate aim for the masses. Thus, the *ülküci* movement, like other fascist mass movements, used a discourse which equated and rejected both capitalism and communism with modernity. In this sense, "capitalism without capitalism" is a

³³ The very best example was the successful resistance against the *Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri* (State Security Courts) in 1976.

³⁴ In this point, I should underline the fact that unfinished splits within political organizations damaged the unity of the radical left in that period. Wrong political tactics combined with political sectarianism weakened these organizations at the end of the 1970s. Thus, I do not exaggerate the role of the radical left. On the other hand, this political line as a whole had a certain degree of hegemony within society in that period, as will be seen in the following parts of this study.

³⁵ Arslan, p. 53.

meaningful conceptualisation of the *ülkücü* discourse.

Returning to the context of Kahramanmaraş, it is possible to observe both sides of the class struggle described above. The rising peasant struggle in the rural areas achieved its peak in the 1970s. Land occupations and clashes with the security forces were ordinary events in the region during the period under discussion. Additionally, the radical left, with its success at intervention into the struggles, became an actual radical alternative to the existing order. This was combined with the struggles in the city centers (which developed later than in the rural areas) on the basis of the workers and students' struggles and provided the leftist side of the civil war conditions. As opposed to this, the fascist movement, with its double-edged political program (including a powerful defence of the order with a sharp anti-communist propaganda *vis-a-vis* anti-modern ideological critique), led the anti-communist reaction. Cultural critique and religious hostility against Alevis (with an ethnic reference stressing their "Kurdishness") were its political tools in the ongoing class struggle. As will be argued later, the struggle took the form of an open civil war on 22-25 December 1978 and changed the direction of the 1970s conjuncture into two main alternatives: open civil war and or a military intervention. Thus, the coup d'état on 12 September 1980 was not the only alternative.

However, the relationship between capitalism and fascism is not a key that can be used only in the analysis of fascism in concrete conjunctures of class struggle. It is related to a more important problematic which this study addresses: the meaning of writing on history today. Our discussion must begin a critique of the modernist/historicist understanding of history. Nadir Özbek writes that, in this understanding, "the comprehension of the past stands as a central element...which will make the explanation of the present and thus, the construction of the future possible. A linear understanding of time being shaped in the line of the past, present

and future, and the historical subjects emphasized by a narrative constituted in this framework.”³⁶ In line with this outlook, historicism, Robert Beiner writes, “is based on the idea of progress.”³⁷ Contrary to this faith in progress, for Walter Benjamin,

For the exploited classes of history on the other hand, history is debris, a heap of ruins, a plunder area. It is not a collection which is composed of a series of stories that progress by giving birth to another. It is not the conjugation of the past and the present, but it is the termination of the expectations of the past by one story exhausting another and making it be forgotten and itself be the only.³⁸

Related to this rejection of progressivism, Löwy notes, “catastrophe is progress, progress is catastrophe. Catastrophe is the continuousness of history. Consequently the assimilation between catastrophe and progress beyond all has an historical meaning: From the perspective of the exploited, the past is nothing but a series of permanent catastrophic defeats.”³⁹ Consequently, the oppressed has no reason to view the present as a transition. Benjamin “recommends an understanding of today and time which is built on the concept of today which is not a transition, in

³⁶ “Bu tarih anlayışında geçmişin anlaşılması, bugünün açıklanmasını ve dolayısıyla geleceğin kurulmasını mümkün kılacak temel bir unsur olarak yer alır. Geçmiş, bugün ve gelecek hattında şekillenen çizgisel bir zaman kavrayışı ve bu çerçevede oluşturulan anlatının ön plana çıkardığı tarihsel özneler...Böylesi bir zaman ve tarihsel özne anlayışı, söz konusu tarihsel öznelerin, geçmiş kurmuş, bugünü kurmakta ve geleceğin de kurucusu olarak tasavvur edilmesini mümkün kılacaktır. Böylesi bir anlatı aracılığıyla geleneğe sahip çıkanlar, bir yandan bugünkü iktidarlarını pekiştirmekte ve diğer yandan da geleceği ipotek altına almaya çabalamaktadırlar.” [English translation mine from Turkish original]. Nadir Özbek, “Alternatif Tarih Tahayyülleri: Siyaset, İdeoloji ve Osmanlı-Türkiye Tarihi,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 98 (Fall 2003), p. 234.

³⁷ Robert Beiner, “Walter Benjamin’s Philosophy of History” *Political Theory*, no. 3 (August 1984), p. 427.

³⁸ “Tarih’in ezilen sınıfları içinse tarih bir enkaz, bir yıkıntılar yığını, bir talan alanıdır. Bir dizi öykünün birbirini doğurarak bugüne doğru ilerlediği bir birikim değil, geçmişin bugüne kavuşması değil, bir öykünün başka öyküleri tüketerek, unutturup yok ederek kendini tek kılması, geçmişin beklentilerinin yok edilmesidir.” [English translation mine from Turkish original]. Nurdan Gürbilek, “Sunuş” in Walter Benjamin, *Son Bakışta Aşk*. trans by Nurdan Gürbilek (İstanbul: Metis, 2001), p. 34.

³⁹ “Felaket ilerlemedir, ilerleme felakettir. Felaket tarihin sürekliliğidir’ gözleminde bulunur. Böylece, ilerleme ile felaket arasındaki özümleme her şeyden önce tarihsel bir anlam taşır: Ezilenlerin bakış açısından, geçmiş bitimsiz bir felaketli yenilgiler dizisinden başka şey değildir.” [English translation mine from Turkish original]. Michael Löwy, *Dünyayı Değiştirmek Üzerine*, trans by Yavuz Alogan (İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 1999), p. 223.

which time rests and by which it is being taken upon.”⁴⁰ In line with this, his conception of historical practice underlines “memory, repetition, and the necessity of political intervention; its primary purpose was to free history from representation, nostalgia, and the spurious effort to reaffirm the identity of the past continuously with the present.”⁴¹

At this point, the significance of saving the past becomes clearer. Bringing “together shards and fragments of experience into a constellation” or simply “to make the fragments whole again” is the task of the historical materialist.⁴² By doing this, “the past was made to supply imaginative resources for illuminating the poetry of the future.”⁴³ Remembrance is a central concept used by Benjamin in defining this operation. For him, “by wresting an experience from the past for quite specific political effects,” the historical materialist historian translates the original moment in its “afterlife” and gives the same event “a different meaning that would be mobilized in the contemporary historical conjuncture.”⁴⁴ This is the point where remembrance is translated into historical action. At that point, “struggle against time becomes a definite moment against governing.”⁴⁵

On the other hand, the historical materialist historian does not have much time to do this. For historicism, “the truth will not run away from us,” thus “there is no urgency to historical reflection, for the facts will always be there waiting for us,

⁴⁰ Özbek, p. 235.

⁴¹ Harootunian, “The Benjamin Effect: Modernism, Repetition, and the Path to Different Cultural Imaginaries” in Michael P. Steinberg (ed), *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 67.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 65; also Beiner, p. 424.

⁴³ Harootunian, “The Benjamin Effect,” p. 66.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67, 71.

⁴⁵ “*Zamana karşı mücadele hükmetmeye karşı kesin bir moment haline gelir.*” Löwy, p. 186.

whenever we find time or impulse for contemplation.” This, Benjamin argues, “marks the exact point where historical materialism cuts through historicism.”⁴⁶ From this point of view, he proposes to perceive “the precariousness of the past,” which gives historical reflection “the urgency lacked by historicism.” The task is seizing “hold of a memory as it fleshes up at a moment of danger.”⁴⁷

Hence, the question must be answered: Is fascism a danger today? Fascism is one of the dangers of the “disaster of progress,” according to Benjamin. It was not an “accident” or an “exceptional situation;” on the contrary, as mentioned above, it is among the consequences of capitalist development. Today it is a serious problem threatening not only the so-called “late developing” countries, but also for most of the well-developed countries. Looking at these examples only confirms the direct relationship of capitalist modernization and fascism.⁴⁸ In consequence, historians like Perry Anderson, who defines the effort to address “renewed dangers of fascism” as a “lazy experience,” misses seeing “the complex relationship between fascism and

⁴⁶ Beiner, p. 427.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ To discuss the contemporary extreme rightist and fascist groups is beyond the scope of this study. However, quoting an observation from a powerful study on extreme right and racism in France will make clear to understand contemporary fascism as a consequence of contemporary capitalism: “Some causes of the FN’s [Front Nationale-National Front] popular support must be underlined immediately: In recent years, the West and also France is in the process of an economic remodernization, reconstruction and reindustrialization. Together with the satisfied people of this process, there are some people who were not accounted for by the process and thus become unemployed and new poor. The FN tries to win the support of the people who react against modernization and fear from change and up to now, it has been successful in this. People who have lost their jobs, small producers who were bankrupted by new industrialists who use new technologies, small craftsmen, small industrialists find solution in the FN’s ‘trustworthy,’ nationalist discourse. All French people whose incomes have fallen because of the decreasing profit rates take shelter in the discourse of the FN and its leader.” *“FN’nin seçmen tarafından tutulmasında birkaç noktanın altı hemen çizilmeli: Batı ve bu arada Fransa, son yıllarda, ekonomik bağlamda yeniden bir ‘modernleşme’, ‘yeniden yapılanma’, ‘yeniden sanayileşme’ sürecinde. Bunun ‘mutluları’ yanında, ‘sokağa attıkları, hesaba almadıkları’ ve ‘yeni yoksulları’ var. ‘Modernleşme’ye tepki gösterenleri ve ‘değişim’den korkanları FN kendi çevresinde toplamaya çalışıyor. Ve bu konuda şimdiye kadar ‘başarılıdır.’..İşlerini yitiren işçiler, son derece gelişmiş yeni ‘makinaları’ kullanan yeni sanayicilerin iflasa sürüklediği küçük üreticiler, küçük sanatçılar, küçük sanayiciler FN’nin ... ‘güven verici’, milliyetçi söyleminde dertlerine çare buluyorlar gibi. Kar yüzdelerinin düşüş eğilimi göstermesi sonucu gelirleri azalan...bütün Fransızlar FN’nin ve liderinin söylemine sığınıyorlar.” M. Şehmus Güzel *Fransa’da Aşırı Sağ ve Irkçılık* (İstanbul: Belge, 1995), p. 14.*

modernism” and ideologically disarms us against fascism.⁴⁹

In this sense, returning to the experience of the 1970s to realize fascism as an “actual danger” is the main motive behind this study. The Kahramanmaraş Massacre is a reasonable topic because not only was it “the most notorious case”⁵⁰ in the 1970s civil war conditions, but because also it provides every possible means to make whole the fragments coming from the experience of the 1970s. It should be noted that “even the dead are not safe from the enemy who never ceases to be victorious, and therefore historiography is an unremitting struggle on behalf of the dead.”⁵¹ In this study, the actors who seem to be “dead,” namely, the peasants struggling against landowners, workers fighting for their rights, students taking action for freedom and even the policemen trying to cooperate with the oppressed will unite again in the context of a small Anatolian city and prove the existence of another alternative.

Overall, this study contributes to remember Turkey in the 1970s in the service of an actual discussion on capitalism, modernism and fascism because of the fact that it is critical to discuss these problems in the present, when the unavoidable actuality of fascism survives.

⁴⁹ Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. xxviii.

⁵⁰ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey A Modern History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1993), p. 277.

⁵¹ Beiner, p. 427.

CHAPTER 2
THE POLITICS OF THE LOW-INTENSITY CIVIL WAR:
KAHRAMANMARAŞ IN THE 1970s

The background of the political developments in the 1970s can be found in the socio-economic change that began in the 1950s. It is a very well known fact that Turkey improved its relations with the Western World after the Second World War. During the Cold War era, it sided with the capitalist bloc against the “communist threat” regarded to be coming from the Soviet Union. Turkey’s membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 after its entrance to Korean War in 1950 was a turning point since the country showed its willingness to be a part of the West.

In addition to these developments in Turkey’s international relations, Turkey changed its economic policy based on etatism to one of a liberal free market economy. As Pamuk and Owen show, in terms of both economic policy and performance, “the true turning point came in 1947 when the Republican People’s Party decided to set aside the etatist third-five year plan, which had been prepared during the previous summer, and began to move in the direction of greater reliance on private capital and greater emphasis on agriculture.”⁵²

In the political realm, the Turkish bourgeoisie’s enlargement of its sphere of influence against the state accompanied the former development. The foundation of

⁵² Şevket Pamuk, Roger Owen, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1998), p. 106.

the Democrat Party in 1946 was a consequence of this aim in the political area. The rapid development of capitalism and the strengthening of the bourgeoisie marked the DP era between 1950 and 1960. Of course, the balance of payment crisis of the mid-1950s, which ended “the experimental move towards a more open economy,”⁵³ and the import substituting industrialization policies in the 1960s and 1970s can be regarded as a shift to a more controlled and interventionist economic approach, it seems wrong to claim that these policies prevented the development of the Turkish bourgeoisie. On the contrary, as Pamuk and Owen stress, “large industrialists and even the international agencies, most notably the OECD,” supported the idea of development planning.⁵⁴ In short, the bourgeoisie developed its power throughout era.

This process, namely the rapid development of capitalism, produced two important results, which are also very important for our topic. The first one was the rapid development of the working class in Turkey. The development of this class meant the development of class struggle, as seen between the mid-1960s to 1980.⁵⁵ This process directly affected the radical left’s appearance to the political scene in the same era. Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları writes that, “helped by the 1961 Constitution, these same factors caused a growth in the size as well as the activism of the working class, and a wide-ranging transformation of the political scene, even in rural areas. The increased politicization of the oppressed classes, the spread of revolutionary

⁵³ Ibid., p. 109.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 111.

⁵⁵For more information about the social and economic developments between 1960 and 1980, see Sungur Savran, *Türkiye’de Sınıf Mücadeleleri Cilt 1 (1919-1980)* (İstanbul: Kardelen, 1992), pp. 97-124; Feroz Ahmad *Modern Türkiye’nin Oluşumu* (trans). Yavuz Alogan (İstanbul: Kaynak, 1999), pp. 147-213.

ideas among the youth, and the quick passage from theory to practice, shook the foundations of bourgeois rule.”⁵⁶

The second important result was the incorporation of Anatolia to capitalism. As Ağaoğulları comments, “the social mutation that occurred during the following years has been qualified by one anthropologist as ‘the most irreversible transformation in Anatolia since Neolithic period.’ Indeed, the rapid economic development brought about major societal changes: the advent of industrialization reduced the share of agriculture in domestic production, driving society out of stagnation and increasing social mobility as well as urbanization.”⁵⁷ This transformation drove the middle classes of Anatolia into an economic crisis accompanied with a socio-cultural crisis.

Ağaoğulları summarizes this process,

Urban and rural traditional petty bourgeois producers and self-employed small businessmen, who lost their livelihood as their skills and functions were rendered obsolete by the changing social structure, were becoming disgruntled. Large segments of the population were brought face to face with brand new worlds by virtue of geographic mobility and the developing mass communication media-particularly television-experiencing an incessant cultural shock and maladjustment. Moreover, they fell prey to insecurity and feelings of isolation as they witnessed the changing values of society.⁵⁸

These circumstances paved the way to a break in the economic and political alliance of every part of the bourgeoisie under the hegemony of center right politics from the foundation of the Democrat Party in the late 1960s; and led to the formation of Islamic and fascist political lines which rose to the surface in the 1970s. In the following sections, this chapter discusses these two political consequences of

⁵⁶ Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları, “The Ultrationalist Right,” in *Turkey in Transition New Perspectives*, İrvin C. Schink and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (eds). (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 1987), p. 192.

⁵⁷ Ağaoğulları, p. 192.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

capitalist development, namely the rise of the radical left and extreme right. As will be shown below, the Kahramanmaraş event is discussed from the perspective which views the event as the peak point of the civil war between radical leftist and fascist alternatives.

Looking at the context of the 1970s, it is easy to observe that Turkey underwent a strong degree of politicization, which had not seen before that period, related first to the rise of radical leftist politics from the mid-1960s to the coup on 12 September 1980. This period was marked by both parliamentary and non-parliamentary radical politics implemented by means of the direct political involvement of the masses. Strikes, factory occupations, and student demonstrations were widespread. Additionally, the activities of the civil servants' organizations and the actions of the associations, which included profession unions (like the Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects of Turkey (*Türkiye Mimar ve Mühendis Odaları Birliği*, or TMMOB) and the Union of Bar Associations of Turkey (*Türkiye Barolar Birliği*) to women organizations such as the Progressive Womens' Association (*İlerici Kadınlar Derneği*, or İKD), determined the political agenda. These activities mentioned were an indivisible part of the daily life for more than ten years. The rise of the workers and students' mass activities and their increasing influence on the political area, namely the rise of the socialist movement, dominated politics throughout that era. However, this domination did not affect the parliament, except for the success of the *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* (Workers Party of Turkey, or WPT) in the 1965 elections with 3.4 percent of the votes and fifteen deputies. On the other hand, its power was great in the everyday life, in factories, universities, high schools and streets. As an early conclusion, the ongoing political struggle brought the success of the streets over the parliament.

The first rise of the leftist movements between mid-1960s to 1971 could not be stopped by the military intervention on 12 March 1971. In spite of the great suppression implemented against the Turkish left, such as the close of the WPT and the Revolutionary Youth Association (*Devrimci Gençlik Derneği*, or *Dev-Genç*) and operations against the illegal armed organizations and the suppression of the mass organizations such as the Teachers Union of Turkey (*Türkiye Öğretmenler Sendikası*) did not produce the results that the generals sought. On the other hand, the 12 March era produced a result which significantly affected the period between 1974 and 1980: the rise of political violence. First, the number of illegal armed leftist groups rose due to their objective to organize the resistance against the military rule after 12 March 1971⁵⁹ and to the rising trend of the division of the leftist groups along political lines and strategies. Additionally, the rise of the fascist resistance using the methods of violent attacks in the places of daily life, especially in the schools and streets, brought onto the agenda of the radical left the problem of an active armed struggle against the *ülkücü* forces.

Of course, the rise of the *ülkücü* movement cannot be understood only as anti-communist resistance against the left. It was more than a reactionary movement of para-military forces training in camps established throughout Turkey. The movement gained a mass character under the leadership of the Nationalist Action Party in the mid-1970s. This development changed the direction of the political rise of the left since the radical left found itself in a civil war with the *ülkücü* movement rather than

⁵⁹ People's Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu-THKO*), People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi THKP-C*) and Workers and Peasants Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu-TİKKO*) were the three main illegal armed groups of the period between 1970 and 1972. The first two were inspired by the Latin American guerilla war experiences. The latter followed the Maoist interpretation of "people's war" as a strategy. At this point, it should be noted that these groups faced the military intervention when they were trying to establish their organizational structure. In other words, these groups did not finish the process of foundation. After 12 March, these three groups were divided and dozens of new groups emerged.

with the state. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Turkish left gave most of its energy to the struggle against the *ülkücü* movement rather than to the struggle against the bourgeoisie and the state. On the other hand, this argument does not mean that the radical left did not represent an alternative to the ongoing system; however, the *ülkücü* resistance was successful enough to decrease its power of manifestation as an alternative to the capitalist system.⁶⁰

At this point, we must make the second step in the periodization of the era. The period between 1974 and 1980 was the era of a low intensity civil war between the *ülküçüs* and the leftists. The first stage of the war (1974-1978) was marked by armed clashes, the intensity of which escalated day by day. The foundation of the Republican People's Party government by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit in January 1978 marked the beginning of the second era. The NAP, which had become aware of the fact that it was not able to take power by elections or by infiltration of the state apparatus decided to implement a double-sided "civil-war" strategy which aimed to take power with a right-wing coup or with an open war. From this time on, armed struggle against the leftist forces aimed to increase political tension via methods such as organizing massacres or mobilizing the Sunni Muslim masses in central and

⁶⁰ Especially in the second half of the 1970s, the struggle against the *ülkücü* movement became the top agenda of all socialist groups in Turkey. When these groups tried to concentrate on mounting political campaigns concerning the immediate problems of the whole society (such as workers and peasants' demands for new rights, educational reform for the students and demand for Turkey's split from the NATO etc.), they faced fascist armed attacks during the campaigns. Consequently, the "struggle against fascism" became the only agenda of the left towards the end of the period. Interestingly enough, in the regions where the *ülkücü* movement was not able to pose an effective threat, socialist groups could find the chance to concretize an alternative to existing order. For instance, when Fikri Sönmez, who was supported by the *Dev-Yol* (*Devrimci Yol*-Revolutionary Path), was elected as the mayor of Fatsa, an eastern Black Sea town, he led the establishment of people's committees in the district. These committees functioned as the mechanism solving every problem of the town with the participation of the people and because of this, they had the potential to transform into self-government organs. This experience was suppressed by the army because of the fact that the experience seemed to be a promising alternative for other parts of the country. For detailed information on this experience, see Oğuzhan Müftüoğlu, *12 Eylül ve Türkiye Gerçeği* (İstanbul: Bireşim), pp.355-366. On the other hand, the *ülkücü* movement's negative effect to the radical left's level of manifestation of an alternative explains only the period before 12 September 1980. To explain why the radical left is unsuccessful from 12 September until today needs a detailed discussion of the ideological and political problems in the present context.

eastern Anatolia against the Alevis and leftist forces. The massive uprising in Kahramanmaraş on 22-25 December was the peak of an ongoing wave of violence. Additionally, the Kahramanmaraş Incidents marked a breaking point, since the declaration of martial law in thirteen cities put Turkey onto the path of the 12 September coup. Interestingly enough, the only alternative to the 12 September 1980 coup was the starting of a full-fledged civil war in Turkey. The coup was organized as opposed to this alternative.

For understanding the Kahramanmaraş Incidents, elaborating the dimensions of the ongoing political polarization in Turkey and in Maraş is necessary because the event was a part of the political polarization between the left and right. The massacre perpetrated by mobs under the leadership of a fascist organization in Maraş was an attempt to solve this problem on behalf of a fascist political project. Additionally, this elaboration can delineate the existence of a different probability in the way of Turkey might have developed different from the 12 September coup, such as a full-fledged civil war in view of the fact that the activities of the different political sides caused a four day long open war in Kahramanmaraş.

The Politics of the Radical Left

The radical leftist movement is a good place to start since the rise of this movement was the most important local political reality of the day. As mentioned above, there were three dimensions of the rise of the left in the national context. The first was the rise of a workers' movement that was independent from the state. As we know, the state had a certain degree of control over the trade unions since the biggest trade union Türk-İş (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, or Confederation of

the Trade Unions) had been in line with the politics of the peaceful relationship of the workers and the bourgeoisie since its foundation in 1952. However, the foundation of DİSK (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, or the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions) in 1967 challenged the existing forms of trade unionism in Turkey. DİSK defined its platform as class struggle. It represented militant trade unionism based on this principle. In addition, the trade unionism of the public workers, as seen in the example of the Teachers Union of Turkey (*Türkiye Öğretmenler Sendikası*, TÖS) and its continuation after 12 September, namely the Association of All Teachers Unity and Solidarity (*Tüm Öğretmenler Birlik ve Dayanışma Derneği*, TÖB-DER) was very effective. In addition, some significant professional organizations such as the TMMOB accepted a radical political line based on the conception of class struggle.

The second important dimension was the leftist movement's dominant position in the universities. After 1968, the student movement gained an anti-systemic political character. In spite of the rightist resistance, the rise of the movement continued and protected its mass character. In 1974, the student movement began to reorganize in the universities and destroy the anti-democratic atmosphere in the universities brought by the 12 March military regime. However, the movement lost its unity due to the increasing division within the leftist movement. In that period, every socialist organization founded its own youth organization. However, except for some “fortresses” of the *ülküçü* movement, the leftists protected their control in most of the universities in the big cities.

Third, the rise of the leftist political organizations could not be stopped despite the ongoing divisions in the left and the state suppression. Nearly every organization had a certain mass character. However, some of them, such as Dev-Yol (*Devrimci Yol*, Revolutionary Path) and the illegal *Türkiye Komünist Partisi* (Communist Party

of Turkey, CPT) can be regarded as the most powerful ones. Many organizations were able to achieve a significant degree of power in some areas.⁶¹

The Radical Left in Kahramanmaraş

Kahramanmaraş had very specific circumstances within the rise of the left. At first, different from the western parts of Turkey, the leftist movement in Kahramanmaraş had a rural character. Second, the sectarian and ethnic identities had a specific relationship with socialist thought similar with those in other cities of central and eastern Anatolia. Last, the most powerful organizations that were able to exert influence on the masses were the ones that did not have the same degree of power in other parts of Turkey. These three points must not be forgotten when putting Kahramanmaraş in the general trend of the rise of the left throughout Turkey.

To start with the last point mentioned above, political organizations, is suitable. The existence of these bodies is a key point for understanding the nature of the ongoing struggles in the rural and urban areas in Maraş because they had close links with the social and political atmosphere of the region. As an example, the voice of

⁶¹Four main ideological lines affected the socialist ideology in Turkey. The first line was rooted in the THKP-C tradition, which developed under the influence of the populist guerilla movements in Latin America. Dev-Yol was the most important representative of this line. However, the group did not interpret this line as it was. The group's main strategy was to form liberated regions in the district in the process of anti-fascist struggle. The second line was the USSR type of socialism. Communist Party of Turkey, Socialist Workers Party of Turkey and Workers Party of Turkey (its second term after 12 March) represented this line. They interpreted the USSR's policy of "peaceful coexistence of socialism and capitalism" and its class conciliatory nature to political tactics such as the establishment of "progressive democracies" in capitalist countries in Turkish context. Especially the first one's tactic to ally with the Republican People's Party in every area opened the way for the RPP to spread its influence in labour movement. The third one was Maoism and the last one, pro-Albanian line, was a consequence of the split within Maoist movement internationally (We go into the details of these last two in this chapter). Thus, it seems that all sectors of the socialist movement were rooted in Stalinism's different paths. Although a more critical and intellectual perspective mostly inspired from the Althusserian theoretical line was represented by *Birikim* journal from 1975, however this line was not influential. Last, it seems that the most important characteristic of Turkish socialism was the absence of the Trotskyist line, which had considerable influence in Europe, Latin America and in some Asian countries such as India and Pakistan. This movement began to organize in the late 1970s; however it remained the weakest part of Turkish socialist movement.

the villagers and workers in Pazarcık or on the Elbistan plains or examples from the everyday struggles of the leftist students in the city center of Kahramanmaraş found place in the periodicals of these organizations. For this reason, describing the leftist organizations without any exaggeration of their role in the daily life practices is a must.

Looking at the leftist groups in Kahramanmaraş clearly shows that the most powerful ones, such as the *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (People's Emancipation), *Devrimci Halkın Birliği* (Revolutionary People's Unity), *Halkın Yolu* (People's Path) and *Türkiye İşçi Köylü Partisi* (Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey) had their ideological and political roots in Maoism. A former Maoist writer, Aydın Çubukçu, states that Maoism responded to the "revolutionary spirit" of the day. For Çubukçu, the ideological standpoint of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that emphasized the "objective and historical conditions" was considered as unattractive and didactic; on the other hand, China and Mao Zeodong's theses, which underlined "subjective action," seemed young, optimistic, and provocative. Concepts such as praxis, experience, and creative initiative were in line with the voluntarist/vanguardist understanding of most of the young people in the universities.⁶² Çubukçu states that even the people who did not define themselves as "Maoist" had sympathy for Mao Zeodong and every leftist student wanted a "people's war."⁶³

Although the concept of the "people's struggle" against imperialism and feudalism is central in Maoism, it is not only about that. The famous theory of Mao known as the "Three Worlds Theory" (TWT) was a significant part of the discussions

⁶²Aydın Çubukçu, "Türkiye'de Maoçuluk Üzerine Bazı Gözlemler" *Praksis*, no. 6 (Spring 2002), p. 60, 61.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

between the leftist organizations in Turkey, as in the rest of the world. In Maoism, the world is the scene of an ongoing conflict between three camps, the imperialist camp, including the United States' imperialism and the Soviet Union's "social imperialism;" the eastern and western parts of Europe; and the oppressed nations. For Mao, these nations must be united under the flag of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) "true socialism."⁶⁴ However, Maoist groups translated this theory into their own languages. In their discourse, the US, the Soviet Union, and China were three worlds. In line with the CPC, the Soviet Union was "social imperialist" and China represented socialism. However, towards the mid-1970s, this theory lost its so-called radicalism and became an ideology legitimizing CPC's cooperation with imperialism. In this sense, Maoism lost its "revolutionary spirit" which especially attracted the 1968-generation throughout the world. On the other hand, it maintained as an effective ideological standpoint on the international level.

The TWT was the point of departure of the *Türkiye İşçi Köylü Partisi*, which had been known before the establishment of the party as *Aydınlık* (Enlightenment). Its members took this name from their periodical before 12 March, namely *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* (Proletarian Revolutionary Enlightenment). After their release from prison with the expansion of the Law of Dismissal in 1974, they began to publish a weekly periodical called *Aydınlık*. After its closure by the authorities in 1975, they began to publish *Halkın Sesi* (The People's Voice). It was published until March 1978, when the group began to publish a daily newspaper called *Aydınlık*.⁶⁵ The group published the newspaper until the 12 September 1980 coup.

⁶⁴Sungur Savran, "Alternatif Küreselleşme mi, Proleter Enternasyonalizmi mi?: İmparatorluğa Reddiye," *Praksis* no. 7 (Summer 2002), p. 247, 248.

⁶⁵"Kitlesele Mücadeleler ve Sosyalist Hareket" in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* vol. 7 (İstanbul: İletişim, 1989), (ed) Ertuğrul Kürkçü, p. 2268.

From the 1970s on, the supporters of *Aydınlık* began to interpret the thoughts of the CPC. For them, the Soviet Union was governed by "new Tsars" and it was the first enemy of the people of the world. Accepting the TWT brought the position of *Aydınlık* into accepting a very different political line including the recommendation to make an alliance with the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.⁶⁶ A typical example of this political vision was *Aydınlık*'s proposition that Turkey send the Fifth Army to the Soviet Border since this group claimed that Turkey was under threat of Soviet occupation.⁶⁷

Additionally, *Aydınlık* had very important political views that made it different from the general standpoint of the other leftist groups. This was its political strategy, to build an alliance of workers and bourgeoisie against imperialism. As Doğu Perinçek argued, "Similar to the oppressed world, anarchy and division within the people of a country play into the hand of the imperialists. Whose boss provokes the people, consisting of the worker, the peasant, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie and up to now, whose boss has it been?"⁶⁸ For Perinçek, the majority of the capitalist class in Turkey, namely the national bourgeoisie, must be the ally of the revolutionaries.⁶⁹ Inferring from this class analysis, it viewed Kemalism as a progressive national ideology. The left-Kemalists were the allies of *Aydınlık* in the

⁶⁶ Çubukçu, p. 60. For the *Türkiye İşçi Köylü Partisi*, the actual duty of the party was "realizing and strengthening a peace alliance in which all countries including the U.S.A which support peace including find place against Soviet Union's attempts at expansion." "*Sovyetler Birliği'nin yayılma çabalarına karşı, ABD dahil dünyanın barıştan yana olan bütün ülkelerinin içinde yer aldığı mümkün olan en geniş barış cephesini gerçekleştirmek ve güçlendirmektir.*" *Türkiye İşçi Köylü Partisi'nin Siyasi Çizgisi-Merkez Komitesi Raporu Tüzük Program* (Ankara: TİKP Yayınları, 1980), p. 23.

⁶⁷ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, p. 2269. Fifth Army was the unit of the Turkish Armed Forces that has the duty to protect the Aegean Region from Greece.

⁶⁸ "Ezilen dünya içinde olduğu gibi, bir ülkenin halkı içindeki kargaşalık ve bölünme de her zaman emperyalistlerin ekmeğine yağ surer. İşçiden, köylüden, küçük burjuvazi ve milli sermaye sahiplerinden oluşan halkı kırdırmak kimin işidir, bugüne karşı kimin işi olmuştur?" Doğu Perinçek *Anarşinin Kaynağı ve Devrimci Siyaset* (İstanbul: Aydınlık, 1978), p. 19.

⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 41.

struggle for the “national democratic revolution” against imperialism and its agent, the comprador bourgeoisie. For Çubukçu, that meant, “completing the Kemalist revolution.”⁷⁰ Consequently, Aydınlık criticized Kurdish organizations for following a separatist line and finally helping the Soviet Union’s plans to divide Turkey. Additionally, they accused radical leftist groups of being the servants of Soviet social imperialism.⁷¹ They described pro-Sovietic groups such as the Communist Party of Turkey, the Workers Party of Turkey and the Socialist Workers Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi*, TSİP) as “pseudo-left.”⁷² Moreover, they described all other legal and illegal leftist groups that did not take side with them as “pseudo left,” even if the groups described themselves as Maoist. Moreover, the group considered armed leftist groups terrorists, similar to fascist armed groups such as the Army of Liberation of Enslaved Turks (*Esir Türkleri Kurtarma Ordusu*, or ETKO).⁷³ For these reasons, nearly all the other radical leftist groups tried to isolate this group since they considered it an agent of the Turkish state and its members as “the Maoists

⁷⁰ Çubukçu, p. 59.

⁷¹ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, p. 2269.

⁷² A specific example is TİKP’s analysis of the Communist Party of Turkey: “İ. Bilen’s clique is pseudo socialist; in reality it is fascist. Their ‘socialism’ is like Hitler’s national socialism.” “İ. Bilen kligi, lafta sosyalist, fakat gerçekte faşisttir. Onların ‘sosyalistliği,’ Hitler’in nasyonal sosyalistliği gibidir.” *Türkiye İşçi Köylü Partisi’nin...*, p. 72.

⁷³ A famous representative of the TİKP, Doğan Yurdakul, argued in a conference on the problem of anarchy in Turkey that “40,000 rifles being transported into Turkey from our south border and there is not any explanation why these are being transported into Turkey and where they go. It is known that the Russiaists in Samandağ are doing arms smuggling from Lebanon to Turkey. What are the aims of the people who transfer these arms? Their targets are very clear. When it is looked in the destinations where the arms go, if it is understood that these go to the anarchist armies such as the ETKO, TİKKO and Acilci; the fact that their targets are causing strife among people and making reactionary chaos is revealed.” “Güney sınırımızdan 40.000 tane tüfek sokuluyor Türkiye’ye ve bunların niçin Türkiye’ye sokulduğu, nereye gittiği konusunda hiçbir açıklama yok. Samandağ’daki Rusyacıların, Lübnan’dan Türkiye’ye silah kaçakçılığı yaptıkları biliniyor. Bu silahları Türkiye’ye sokanların amacı nedir? Bunların amaçları çok açık. Silahların nereye gittiğine bakıldığı zaman, TİKKO, ETKO, Acilci gibi başıbozuk ordulara gittiği görüldüğü zaman amaçlarının halkı kırdırmak, gerici kargaşalık çıkarmak olduğu açıkça ortaya çıkıyor.” “Türkiye’de Anarşi”-Aydınlık gazetesinin düzenlediği açık oturum (İstanbul: Aydınlık, 1979), p. 51. In this discourse, illegal armed organizations, whether they had a rightist or leftist origin were the anarchist enemies of the Turkish people.

of the CIA.”⁷⁴ However, as will be shown in the following with the example of Mehmet Çetin, many sincere individuals who wanted to struggle against the existing order joined this movement without regarding the leftist criticism of *Aydınlık*. Thus, this group was able to survive throughout the period under the umbrella of a legal party, namely the Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey, founded on 29 January 1978 under the leadership of Doğu Perinçek. It represented the CPC’s official line in Turkey.

Another group, named the *Halkın Yolu* (People’s Path), had its roots in a movement known as the People’s Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi*). A group split from the movement that published the periodical *Militan Gençlik* (Militant Youth), accepted Maoism, and then began to build an organization. They took the name People’s Path from the periodical published after Militant Youth, *Halkın Yolu*. The group proposed “a new type of democratic people revolution” which could destroy the so-called “semi-feudal, semi-colonial” structure of Turkey.⁷⁵ The group gained prestige thanks to their resistance in the 1 May District in Ümraniye against the destruction of the shantytowns in 1977.⁷⁶ However, the group could not protect its unity and the majority of its members, including its leaders, participated in the TİKP in 1978 due to the party’s effective propaganda on the Three Worlds Theory.⁷⁷

On the other hand, the TWT did not influence other groups in the Maoist movement. One of them, known as the *Devrimci Halkın Birliği*, has a certain

⁷⁴ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, p. 2271; *Türkiye İşçi Köylü Partisi’nin...*, p. 126.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2248.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

importance since the group was organized in the region under study here, including Kahramanmaraş, Tunceli, Malatya, İskenderun and Elazığ.⁷⁸ The group did not accept TWT since they claimed that it paved the way for the reconciliation of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. After a while, they declared that they accepted the thoughts of Enver Hoca (the president of Albania and the leader of the Party of Labor of Albania, PLA). In addition, the group was totally against Kemalism on the grounds that it was against the workers and Kurdish people. They tried to implement a guerrilla war in the region mentioned.

Lastly, *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (The People's Emancipation) was organized in the region. The existence of the group is very important for the case at hand since it was the first well-organized group both in the rural and urban areas of Kahramanmaraş. They had roots in the THKO. At the beginning of 1976, this group had a significant degree of power in the student movement in Ankara. Moreover, the group was powerful in Çukurova, Tokat, Çorum, İstanbul, İzmir, Gaziantep, Niğde and Kayseri in the mid-1970s. It began to publish the journal *Halkın Kurtuluşu* at the beginning of 1976.

In the ideological/political field, it declared itself as Maoist without accepting the TWT. Even though they were largely in accordance with this theory on the identification of the Soviet Union with the concept of "social-imperialism," according to their viewpoint, the TWT had no relationship with Mao's ideas. This rejection of the TWT brought the group into a position different that of *Aydınlık*. Like the *Devrimci Halkın Birliği*, the group accepted an irreconcilable political line against the state and Kemalism. The group accepted the right of self-determination for Kurds.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 2281.

In the end, *Halkın Kurtuluşu*'s claim that it defended the "true Maoism" did not last long since they began to criticize the Chinese regime and some of the principles of Maoism. When the debate between the PLA and CPC reached a critical point, it chose the side of the PLA and alleged Maoism to be a revisionist, class reconciliatory ideology. Additionally, the group developed its international relations with Enver Hocaist parties in Germany, Denmark, Spain, Canada, Peru and Portugal. The group gained the official recognition of the PLA thanks to these relations.⁷⁹ That recognition affected the militants of other pro-Albanian groups in Turkey; and finally it achieved a place among the well-organized leftist groups such as the Dev-Yol and the Communist Party of Turkey.

After this review of the ideological/political lines of the radical leftist organizations in Kahramanmaraş, returning to the mass struggles is suitable since radical leftist activity could not be examined via abstracting it from the social struggles. As mentioned, Kahramanmaraş, similar with other parts of Turkey, witnessed social and political struggles. The masses were the main agents of these. Therefore, looking at these struggles is a necessity.

Life in the Rural Areas of Kahramanmaraş

The first place to look is the rural areas. The structure of land ownership determined the economic and social structure of these regions. The problems stemming from the regime of ownership of the lands was the most important on the agenda of the region during the era. The unequal distribution of the lands was the main problem. A major *ülküçü* from Maraş describes the economic structure of the rural areas:

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 2273.

The unequal distribution of land is the main reason for the inequality of the socio-economic structure. Otherwise, all kinds of agriculture from cotton to sugar beets, from viniculture to vegetable production, from wheat to all kinds of legume products and to the production of red pepper that is known worldwide, can be made. Today, Maraş with its six plains, including the Pazarcık plain, the Elbistan, Afşin and Göksun plains, which have been irrigated in every unit by Kartalkaya Dam, the construction was finished after 1965, has the production capacity that can be the base of agricultural industry. However, these fruitful plains are in the hands of a few big landowners. On the one side, families with tens of thousands of acres of land, on the other side, our brave people who have not got one unit of land or a planted tree are suffocated in the marsh of poverty. Connected to that, a few landowners, both of Alevi and Sunni ones, live in luxury; on the other side, hundreds of thousands work in the cotton fields for a living two months a year if they can find any jobs. They search for bread in the boiling heat.⁸⁰

The same observer describes the working conditions of the day-laborers working in the cotton fields in 1970s Kahramanmaraş:

Maybe they are oppressed all around the world. Maybe the destitute people sharing poverty are mostly cotton workmen. They descend from the mountain villages from the beginning of May for work. They pitch their small tents near the cotton fields... In those times, their tents were made from rags. A family with ten members lived in a four meter-square tent for many months... These destitute people with no rights to live like individuals have no social rights. They spend their lives under obligation to the cotton aghas. No authority to decide their wages exists yet. The wages given to them are decided primitively by a few aghas. Their daily wages are not enough for eating three meals.⁸¹

⁸⁰ "Toprak dağılımındaki adaletsizlik, sosyo-ekonomik yapıdaki dengesizliğin temel sebebidir. Yoksa, pamuktan şeker pancarına, bağcılıktan sebzeçiliğe, buğdaydan bakliyat türlerinin hepsi ve dünyaca ünlü kırmızı biberciliğe kadar her türlü tarım yapılmaktadır. Bugün Maraş, altı ovası, 1965'ten sonrar yapımı tamamlanan Kartalkaya Barajı ile her karışı sulanan Pazarcık ovası, Elbistan, Afşin ve Göksun ovaları, tarıma dayalı sanayinin temelini oluşturacak üretim kapasitesine sahiptir. Fakat bu münbit ovalar belirli toprak ağalarının elinde bulunmaktadır. Bir tarafta onbinlerce dönüm araziye hakim sülaleler ve zadeler.. diğer tarafta, bir karış toprağı, bir dikili ağacı bulunmayan sefalet bataklığında boğulan yiğit insanımız... Buna bağlı olarak, alevisi sünnesi ile bir avuç toprak ağası sefa sürerken; bir yanda yüzbinler, senede iki ay, pamuk tarlalarında iş bulabilirlerse "boğaz tokluğuna" çalışır.. Ekmek arar sarı sığağın altında." Ökkeş Şendiller, Kahramanmaraş Olaylarının Perde Arkası (Ankara: Doğuş, 1989), p. 25.

⁸¹ Dünyanın her yerinde eziliyorlar belki.. tarım işinde çalışıp sefalet bölüşen garipler belki de en fazla, pamuk ırgatlarıdır. Dağ köylerinde mayıs başlarından inerler yazıya. Pamuk tarlalarının başına küçük çadırlarını kurarlar.(..) O zaman çadırları bezden olurdu. On kişilik aile aylarca dört metre çadırda barınırdı (..) İnsan gibi yaşama hakkına sahip olmayan bu gariplerin hiçbir sosyal hakkı yoktur. Hayatları borçlu geçer toprak ağalarına. Ücretlerini tespit edecek bir merci hala yoktur. Verilen ücret ise, ilkel bir şekilde birkaç ağa tarafından tespit edilir. Bir günlük ücretleri ise bir insanın üç öğün karnını doyurmaz." Ibid., p. 26.

As mentioned, the unequal distribution of land was the main source of conflict on the plains of Maraş. The incorporation of the rural lands into the capitalist economy from the 1950s did not solve the problem of land distribution. It only doubled the existing problem. First, the mechanization of agriculture decreased the number of people necessary to work in the lands. It increased unemployment in the rural sector. Additionally, the development of rural capitalism expanded the conflict between the big landowners and peasants with the addition of the conflict between immigrant day laborers and landowners cooperating with agricultural firms. In Pazarcık, thousands of poor peasant families from regions such as Tetirli, Velolar, Nacar and Narlı came in the seasons of hoeing and cotton picking to the lands owned by the Koçdağlar, Kadioğlu, and Emiroğlu families. They could find jobs for only three months a year. People, known as *elçi* (envoy) or *çavuş* (guard) acted as the intermediaries doing the mediation between the aghas and the day laborers and peasants. The intensification of the mechanization of agriculture decreased the working time of these laborers and increased unemployment year by year.⁸² This affected the living conditions of the day laborers. A day laborer from the Etirli village of Pazarcık said, “Our *elçi*, who is at the same time our headman, brought us here. In winter, our *elçi* gives us 7-8 thousand liras. However, this money is used up by the middle of winter. Because of our debt to the *elçi*, we work in the places where they show us. The name of our agha is Kadioğlu. When the agha comes to the land, he does not talk with us. He goes back after talking with the *elçi*.”⁸³ The same system of mediation existed in other villages. For example, a labourer from Kazanlıpınar

⁸² *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (121), 7 August 1978.

⁸³ “Bizi buraya aynı zamanda köyümüzün muhtarı olan elçimiz getirdi. Elçi bize kışın 7-8 bin lira borç para verir. Fakat aldığımız borç para kış ortasında biter. Elçiye borçlu olduğumuz için onun gösterdiği yerde çalışmak zorunda kalıyoruz. Ağamızın ismi Kadioğlu’dur. Ağa tarlaya geldiği zaman bizimle hiç konuşmaz. Elçi ile konuşacaklarını konuştuğundan sonra çekip gider.” *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (136), 20 November 1978.

spoke, “The *çavuş* brought twenty-five people from our village by bus. He distributed 10-15 liras taken from the agha to us.”⁸⁴ The laborers from Karaağaç village said much the same: “The *çavuş* found jobs for us. We came here by the agha’s car.”⁸⁵

Additionally, the laborers faced extraordinary kinds of exploitation. They worked between ten and twelve hours a day. Despite their hard work, they did not know their wages until the end of their job. Since the laborers did not have any trade union, they did not have any power to bargain for higher wages.⁸⁶ The laborers spoke, “Supposedly agha will give us fifty liras, but he has not made a promissory note. We do not believe that he will give us fifty liras. He said he will give what the big aghas give. The *çavuş* should make a promissory note, but he has not made one. We go along with the *çavuş* and work just so.”⁸⁷ Another man from Tetirli village spoke, “We do not even know for how many liras we pick cotton. We are here for more than two weeks. However, we do not know our wages. The agha will give us what he wants. We do not have any right to object.”⁸⁸ At the end of the work, the wages received did not meet their basic needs: “This wage does not allow us to survive. Life has become so expensive... How do fortyfive-fifty liras provide subsistence? One meter of the cheapest cloth is thirty liras; tomatoes are five or six

⁸⁴ “*Çavuş bizim köyden 25 kişiyi bir kamyonla doldurarak buraya getirdi. Çavuş bizi buraya getirirken ağadan aldığı 10-15 bin liralık avansı bizlere dağıttı.*” *ibid.*

⁸⁵ “*Çavuş bize işi buldu, biz de çalışıyoruz. Buraya ağanın motoruyla geldik.*” *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (69), 15 August 1977.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, (121) 7 August 1978.

⁸⁷ “*Ağa sözde bize 50 lira verecek, ama senet filan yapılmadı. 50 lira vereceğine de inanmıyoruz. Büyük ağalar ne verirse biz de onu veririz diyorlar. Çavuşun senet yapması gerekiyordu, ama yapılmadı. Biz de çavuşa uyduk, çalışıyoruz öylece.*” *ibid* (69), 15 August 1978.

⁸⁸ “*Pamuğun kilosunu kaç liraya topladığımızdan henüz haberimiz yoktur. Buraya geleli iki haftayı aşkın bir zaman oldu. Fakat ücretimizin ne olduğunu bilmiyoruz. Ağanın canı kaçtan isterse onu verir. Hiçbir itiraz hakkımız yoktur.*” *ibid* (136), 20 November 1978.

liras. Tea can not be found; if it can be, it is very expensive.”⁸⁹ A farm laborer working in Pazarcık-Fanfas said that with 2,200 liras he could not buy basic goods such as sugar, tea, wheat and flour for his family of seven people.⁹⁰

As Gün Zileli writes, the relationship between the usurer-merchant (*tefecitüccar*) sectors of the towns and city and the middle and small peasantry constituted another side of the exploitation in the rural areas of Kahramanmaraş in the 1970s. The usurer-merchants traded in agriculture chemicals and agricultural tools. They had factories processing the cotton gin. According to Zileli, whilst the aghas exploited only the day laborers and poor peasantry, the usurer-merchants exploited the entire peasantry. Zileli argues that the relationship between the usurer-merchants and the cotton producing peasantry in Pazarcık was very similar to the relationship of the usurer-merchants and tobacco producing peasantry in the Aegean region. In these cases, “peasants became dependent on usurers, who gave them loans at high interests. Thus, they sold their products to the usurer-merchants at low prices and again, for this reason, they were compelled to borrow money from them. Thus, the vicious circle continued.”⁹¹

Moreover, the problems faced by the people were not restricted to those rooted in exploitation. Some others arose from primitive living conditions due to the absence of infrastructure. As an example, the system of transmission of water to the working areas was primitive. Many people could not find clean water because of this. The majority of the laborers used water that carried sewage from Pazarcık.⁹² Because

⁸⁹ “Bu ücret bizi geçindirmiyor. Hayat çok pahalı (..) 45-50 liraya ne geçim çıkar ki? En ehven bezin metresi 30 lira, domates 5-6 lira, çay ise ya hiç bulunmuyor ya da çok pahalı.” *ibid* (69), 15 August 1977.

⁹⁰ *ibid.* (78), 17 October 1977.

⁹¹ Gün Zileli, *Havariler (1972-1983)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), p. 209, 210.

⁹² *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (69), 15 August 1977.

of this, people struggled hard to find clean water from the canals, and many people died while trying to extract water from those places. For instance, a woman from Nizip (a county of Gaziantep), who had traveled for seasonal work to the Pazarcık Plain, fell into the canal on 11 June 1979.⁹³ Clean water was also a major source of conflict between the people and the landowners. For example, a villager from the Çokyaşar village of Pazarcık spoke about the agha's trick of changing the direction of the water so it would flow in front of his house. When the peasants refused the agha's plan, the agha demanded the help of the gendarmerie. As the peasants spoke, the agha complained about the provocation of communist militants who agitated the people against him. However, the peasants prevented the arrest of six people who were accused by the agha of being "communists." In the end, the people won the struggle and the agha was unable to have the water flow in front of his house.⁹⁴ In addition, in some cases, the people blamed the aghas for the absence of water, electricity and roads.⁹⁵

Another problem was the pressure of the big landowners. Different forms of exploitation were strengthened via excessive kinds of arbitrary force. As seen in the case of Çiçekli village in Elbistan, the aghas could take the harvests of the peasants by force. A peasant said he cried to them "Give me my harvest!"; however, the servants of the aghas showed their weapons to him and then took his harvest.⁹⁶

An extraordinary case was seen in a family scandal. When the daughter of a powerful family, the Tümerler (known as the family of the Fillo Aghas), ran away from home on 1 January 1978, the aghas, cooperating with the authorities, showed

⁹³ *İbid.* (166), 9 July 1979.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *İbid.* (63), 4 July 1977.

⁹⁶ *İbid.* (78), 17 October 1977.

greater violence against the leftists. As a radical leftist periodical states, the daughter of the family, Bedriye Tümer, was a person “who accepted revolutionary thoughts and was a reader of proletarian revolutionary publications. Besides, she was arrested and imprisoned since she had participated in the struggle against fascists when she was in the last year of the high school.”⁹⁷ From the viewpoint of *Halkın Kurtuluşu*, her family pressured her because of her insistence on participating in radical leftist activities:

We too, sometimes heard that because of her political thoughts her family pressured our friend Bedriye continuously. Her following of revolutionary publications was prevented; even her leaving the house was prohibited because of this. Again, for this reason, her family did not let her go to university despite the fact that she had passed the university entrance examination.⁹⁸

After that, the story of her escape began. Subsequently Bedriye’s family started searching by shouting, “Revolutionaries have abducted our daughter and stolen our gold!” Then, according to the periodical, her family, cooperating with their servants and official authorities such as police officers and the gendarmeries, attacked the leftists in the center of Pazarcık and tortured them.⁹⁹ This example is significant since all of the actors in Maraş played important roles in the event. The leftists could be actors affecting even the young members of landowner families. They were a part in a family scandal since Bedriye Tümer was seen as a revolutionary. Besides, the rich families evaluated the event as both a problem of their family and a political problem. In the end, the state intervened to help a landowning family.

⁹⁷ “(..) devrimci düşünceyi benimsemiş proleter devrimci yayınların okuyucusu bir arkadaştır. Hatta lise son sınıfta iken okulda faşistlere karşı verilen mücadele içinde bir ara tutuklanarak hapse de girmişti.” Ibid. (92), 23 January 1978.

⁹⁸ “Bedriye arkadaşın siyasi düşüncelerinden ötürü ailesi tarafından sürekli baskı altında tutulduğunu biz de yer yer duyuyorduk. Devrimci yayınları izlemesi engelleniyor, hatta bu amaçla evden dışarı çıkmasına bile müsaade edilmeyerek adeta hapsediliyordu. Yine bu amaçla imtihanları kazandığı halde üniversiteye dahigönderilmedi.” ibid.

⁹⁹ ibid.

The pressure from big landowners could be turned on the respected villagers. For instance, the headman of Sivricehöyük village was under pressure since he was regarded as being in cooperation with leftists in the region. The supporters of *Halkın Kurtuluşu* stated that when leftist agitation graffiti had been seen and placards had appeared, aghas had blamed it on the chief and had had him tortured by the police. As a result, the headman of had been arrested several times.¹⁰⁰

However, none of this pressure from the big landowners and state authorities could prevent the development of a strong peasant and agricultural workers struggle against exploitation and repression. The land occupations that began in the late 1960s were the main form of peasant resistance in the rural areas of Maraş.¹⁰¹ Zileli explains why the peasants were occupying the lands on the Pazarcık plain:

The contradiction between the big landowners and poor and medium peasantry was different from the contradiction of the landowners and day laborers. This relationship was more than relationship between the exploiters and the exploited; it was a contradiction between the owners of vast lands and people who did not have much land. For the reason that peasants, who were under the heavy exploitation of the usurer-merchants, were aware that the only way to break this dependency was the break-up of the capitalist system based on money, they turned into a relatively “accessible” target for overcoming their present situation. This was taking the lands from the big landowners. This was a more practical way since the relations of landownership did not depend on “exact” criteria like the monetary relations. You could not deny your debt to merchants; however, all of you could unite and occupy some parts of the *agha*’s land and claim the ownership of those lands. It was not even clear that the *agha* really had the title deed to that land. Even if he had, during the trials about the ownership of the old title deeds, peasants cultivated these lands and at least they recovered their standard of living. These circumstances made the land occupations rational for “moderate” peasants and encouraged the occupations.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. (168), 23 July 1979.

¹⁰¹ Şendiler, p. 28; Hamza Alparslan, “Kahramanmaraş 1978-1980,” *Hergün*, 28 August 1980.

¹⁰² “Ovadaki toprak ağalarıyla yoksul ve orta köylüler arasındaki çelişki, toprak ağalarıyla tarım işçileri arasındaki çelişkidenden farklı nitelikteydi. Bu, sömüren ve sömürülen ilişkisinden çok, geniş topraklara sahip olanla, yeterince toprağa sahip olmayanlar arasındaki çelişkiydi. Tefeci- tüccarın ağır sömürüsü altındaki köylüler, bu bağımlılığı kırmanın, ancak paraya dayanan capitalist sistemin yıkılmasıyla mümkün olduğunu bildiklerinden, içinde buldukları durumdan kurtulmak için nispeten daha ulaşılır bir hedefe yönelmişlerdi: Toprak ağalarının topraklarını ele geçirmek. Bu daha kolay bir hedefti; çünkü toprak ilişkileri, para ilişkileri kadar “şaşmaz” ölçülere tabi değildi. Tüccara

This practicality and rationality caused the spread of land occupations in the region. In August 1970, peasants from the Köskenli, Aslanbey, Zeyneppınar, Pilo and Dedeler villages of Pazarcık occupied the lands of the aghas and clashed with gendarmeries. In Maksutuşağı village, peasants prevented the entry of landowners and gendarmeries into the village. In addition, they forced additional units of gendarme coming from Maraş and Pazarcık to turn back. In Emiroğlu village, peasants occupied the lands of Hacı Ömer Agha. Women peasants tore the epaulets of the major of gendarmeries off, saying to him, "You are serving the oppressors." They prevented the governor, prosecutor and *kaymakam* (head official of a district) of Maraş from entering the village.¹⁰³

The power of the rural struggle reached its peak in the second half of the 1970s. Land occupations and clashes with the security forces had become ordinary events in the rural areas. For instance, a local newspaper reported an incident of a land occupation in Pazarcık on 20 May 1976: "Yesterday the criminals who occupied the land of Mehmet Kızılar...,by cultivating it at night, were arrested and brought to justice."¹⁰⁴ In addition, massive peasant demonstrations with the participation of leftist groups increased the level of politicization in the rural areas. For example, the peasants of Cimikanlı Obası, Soflu Uşağı, Maksut Uşağı, Pulyanlı, Urumoğlu, Çınarlı, Yeni Oba, Karahasanlar, Söğütlü and Yarbaşı villages celebrated 1 May 1977 with mass demonstrations attended by 1,500 people in Davutlar and

borcumuzu inkar edemezsiniz, ama köycek birleşip ağanın topraklarının bir kısmını işgal edebilir ve bu toprakların size ait olduğunu iddia edebilirsiniz. Ağanın bu toprakların tapusuna gerçekten sahip olup olmadığı bile belli değildi. Olsa bile, yıllarca sürecektir eski tapuların ispatlanması davaları sırasında, köylü fiilen toprakları işler, hiç değilse biraz belini doğrulturdu. İşte bölgedeki toprak işgallerini teşvik eden, "hesap adamı" köylüler için işgal eylemlerini mantuki kılan buydu." Zileli, p. 210.

¹⁰³ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, p. 2152.

¹⁰⁴ "...Mehmet Kızılar'in arazisini zorla gece sürmek suretiyle işgal eden suçlular yakalanarak adalete teslim edilmiştir." *Kahramanmaraş Postası*, 20 Mayıs 1976.

Karahasanlar villages. The association of the peasants of Davutlar Village organized the meetings; in addition, the existence of radical leftist groups was evident in these meetings.¹⁰⁵ Like these meetings, on 28 October 1978, the Peasant Union of Davutlar Village (*Davutlar Köyü Köylü Birliği*) and the Culture Association of Pazarcık (*Pazarcık Kültür Derneği*) organized a meeting against the draft law of a new Agricultural Working Law. Two thousand and one hundred people participated in the meeting, shouting slogans such as “Damn the reactionary working law!” “Damn the social treason agreement!” and “Death to fascism, freedom to the people!”¹⁰⁶

The peasant struggles created their local heroes in the region. Mehmet Çetin was one of them. He was from Demirciler village in Pazarcık. As Zileli shows, Çetin’s story can be read as the transformation of the banditry tradition into a socialist struggle in the local context of Pazarcık in the 1970s. As Zileli notes, “For his roots in banditry, he was keen on arms. He did not walk around without a gun...He was madly courageous.”¹⁰⁷ He participated in every struggle against the landowners in Pazarcık. For this reason, the *aghas* did everything to prevent his struggle. Fikret Otyam wrote that in 1973, they found a man to kill Çetin. One day, he came to Çetin’s house, saying that he was an arms trader. His aim was to kill Çetin, but once he met Çetin, he changed his mind. As Otyam reports, in 1974,

¹⁰⁵ One important point from this meeting is the influence of Maoist groups. A speaker stated the importance of the struggle against fascist dictatorship’s “revisionist” and “social-fascist” tricks. Additionally the people cried the slogan “Damn fascism and social-fascism!” *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (57), 23 May 1977. The concept of “social-fascism” was used by Maoist groups throughout the world the same as the concept of “social-imperialism” that alleged the USSR and the pro-Soviet groups in the world as fascist.

¹⁰⁶ “*Kahrolsun gerici çalışma yasaı!*” “*Kahrolsun toplumsal ihanet anlaşması!*” “*Faşizme ölüm, halka hürriyet!*” Ibid. (136), 20 November 1978. Same point mentioned in the footnote above is also evident in this meeting too. “Death to fascism, freedom to the people!” was a slogan of *Halkın Kurtuluşu*. Additionally, the composition of the three speakers who spoke in the meeting explains the effects of radical leftist interference. These three were the Peasant Union of Davutlar Village, the Culture Association of Pazarcık and *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (ibid). In the organizational process of that activity, this group organized conferences in Pazarcık, Narlı, Dehliz, the village of Filo Agha and İncirli Village. Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Zileli, pp. 211, 212.

“some people came to Demirciler. They were very young. They were talking nicely about interesting things. Mehmet heard these revolutionary people.”¹⁰⁸ Then, “he dedicated his life to revolutionary struggle.”¹⁰⁹ He joined the *Aydınlık* movement. As Zileli states, due to the effort of people like Çetin, about ten villages became a base of the *Aydınlık* movement in Maraş. Çetin participated in the land occupations in Salmanıpak and Emiroğlu villages in that period and became a well-known peasant leader. When the movement established the Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey in January 1978, Çetin was elected as a member of the party assembly.¹¹⁰ However, the state authorities disapproved of his political activities in the region. Zileli writes that on 26 May 1978,

A bandit roaming in the mountains like him came to his house. For Mehmet Çetin, hosting a guest like him was a sign of bravery and a debt of honour. Nevertheless, not everyone in the village was as hospitable as Mehmet Çetin. Someone told the gendarmeries that a bandit was spending the night in Mehmet Çetin’s house. Towards morning, gendarmeries descended on the house and arrested Mehmet Çetin’s guest. However, a person like Mehmet Çetin was not able to bear this kind of treatment. When they were leaving, he attacked the gendarmeries to distract their attention and let his guest escape. He was killed just over there by the order of the sergeant commanding the gendarmerie team.¹¹¹

On 28 July 1978, a big meeting was organized by the Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey in Demirciler village. The party leader, Perinçek, declared that they would not turn from Çetin’s way and would continue to struggle against the

¹⁰⁸ “Bir takım insanlar gelir Demircilere, gepegenç insanlar, dilleri bir hoş, anlattıkları... Memed dinler bunları, devrimcileri.” Fikret Otyam, “Eğer bizi sual eden olursa-17” *Cumhuriyet*, 1 December 1978.

¹⁰⁹ “Kendisini tamamen devrimci mücadeleye adamıştı.” Zileli, p. 212.

¹¹⁰ Otyam, *ibid.*

¹¹¹ “...Kendisi gibi dağlarda dolaşan bir eşkıya onun evine konuk iner. Mehmet Çetin için onu en iyi şekilde ağırlamak bir mertlik, bir namus borcudur. Ne var ki, köyde yaşayan herkes Mehmet Çetin kadar konuksever değildir. Köyden biri, jandarmaya Mehmet Çetin’in evinde bir eşkıyanın konakladığını ihbar eder. Jandarma sabaha doğru evi basar ve Mehmet Çetin’in konuğunu yakalar. Bu, Mehmet Çetin gibi birinin hazmedebileceği bir şey değildir. Tutuklanmış götürülürken, jandarmalara saldırıp dikkati üzerine çekerek konuğunun kaçmasını sağlamaya çalışır, jandarma timinin başındaki gedikli çavuşun emriyle anında, oracıkta öldürülür.” Zileli, p. 312.

landownership system and gendarmerie oppression.¹¹² More examples can be found to prove the fact that peasants were the actors in direct radical leftist demonstrations. Commemoration ceremonies for the deaths of leftist militants had great importance in the region. The leftist groups used them as a sign of their power and of the weakness of the state. Many examples can be found of these rituals. For example, *Halkın Kurtuluşu* reported a few ceremonies organized on 8-9 June 1977 in a village of Maraş (its name is not mentioned) commemorating the first anniversary of the deaths of two militants who had died in an armed clash with the security forces in Gaziantep in 1976.¹¹³ On 6 May 1978, approximately 500 people from Davutlar, Demirciler, and Yarbaşı villages organized a memorial ceremony in the Söğütlü village of Pazarcık in remembrance of the executions of Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Hüseyin İnan on 6 May 1971.¹¹⁴ Approximately three hundred people attended the ceremony in Sekizçayır Village of Afşin on 9 June 1978 in commemoration of two militants who had died in Gaziantep.¹¹⁵

To sum up, the rural areas of Kahramanmaraş witnessed a strong degree of politicization. The struggles of the peasants and agricultural laborers concurring with radical leftist (mostly Maoist) political organizations clashed directly with the agents of the existing order.

¹¹² *Aydınlık*, 29 July 1978.

¹¹³ *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (62), 27 June 1977.

¹¹⁴ *İbid* (110), 22 May 1978.

¹¹⁵ *İbid* (115), 26 June 1978.

Struggles in the Urban Areas

Central and eastern Anatolia were included late in the process of industrialization. However, from the 1950s on, these regions were incorporated into the capitalist market economy at a faster tempo. Larger investments such as energy production projects like the Afşin-Elbistan Thermal Plant, and the Kartalkaya Dam were large enough to provide employment for thousands of workers in the region on the periphery of Kahramanmaraş. Additionally, investments in the textile industry, such as factories producing cotton gins and thread in the city center of Kahramanmaraş, began to change the nature of the economic structure of this small Anatolian city to a large degree. Some sectors providing the infrastructure for the new era, like construction, were in a phase of development. Last, the existence of small production facilities side by side with the new sectors must not be forgotten.

The existence of these sectors cannot be thought of without considering the living conditions of the people who worked in these facilities. It is evident that the living conditions of different sections of the working class must be evaluated along with the rural struggles in order to understand the background of the existing civil war conditions of the day. In this analysis, the different actors, such as the trade unions, radical leftist organizations and their counterparts, such as the rightist political actors and the state apparatus (especially the coercive apparatus), must be put in their place.

It is appropriate to begin with the peripheral areas of Maraş. Again, Pazarcık provides many examples of the living conditions of the workers in the infrastructural sector and small production facilities. These workers did not cut their bonds with their rural roots. They worked in the urban areas because they could not meet their

needs in their villages. Interestingly enough, the same system of mediation was working for the urban sectors similar to the rural areas. *Çavuş* (guards) found temporary jobs in the counties of Maraş for the people coming from the villages. Like their relatives working in the rural areas, these people were in a great struggle for subsistence. A group of construction workers in Pazarcık said:

We do not have a definite and permanent job. We work where we can find jobs; sometimes we go very far to fill our stomachs. A *çavuş* who came to our village in spring said he would find jobs for us. Afterwards, we understood that he was an *elçi* providing workers for bosses. We accepted his proposal since we had no choice. However, when we started to work, we realized that the working conditions the *çavuş* spoke of did not fit reality. We worked for ten hours and received 190 liras. We had neither a union nor insurance. We lived together in dormitories with many insects, including bedbugs. The bread they gave us was at least five days old. We, eighteen friends, demanded a wage increase. They did not give us one. Our boss dismissed us. We saw one of our friends off to find jobs for us in Burdur. A servant of our boss, Ahmet Çelik, phoned the boss of our new job and told him not to employ us. For this reason, we were not employed there.¹¹⁶

An apprentice from Pazarcık wrote similar things about construction workers:

I'm living in Pazarcık county in Kahramanmaraş. I am a child of a poor family. My father works for 80 liras...I am working in a lathe workshop in Antep. I have been working in this workshop for five years. I go to work at seven o'clock in the morning. They employ us until ten or eleven o'clock at night. I have neither insurance nor life or job security. I am doing the most difficult work in the workshop. Despite the existence of a one and a half hour-long lunches break, they give only a half hour to me. When I go to work five minutes late, they curse me and hit me. In these circumstances, I earn 250 liras a week.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ "Bizim belli, sürekli bir işimiz yok. Nerede iş bulursak çalışıyor, karnımızı doyurabilmek için bazen çok uzaklara gitmek zorunda kalıyoruz. Baharda köyümüze gelen bir "çavuş" bize iş bulacağını söyledi. Patronlara işçi sağlayan elçi olduğunu daha sonra anladık. Bize iş koşullarını anlattı. Başka çaremiz yoktu; kabul ettik. İşe başladığımızda, çavuşun bize belirttiği iş koşullarının gerçeğe uymadığını gördük. 10 saat çalışıyor, 190 lira ücret alıyoruz. Sendika, sigorta yoktu. Tahtakurusu dahil her türlü haşaratın bulunduğu koşullarda barınıyorduk. Bize verilen ekmekler asgari beş günlüktü. 18 arkadaş, ücretimize zam istedik. Vermediler. Patron bizi işten attı. Bir arkadaşımızı Burdur'a bize iş bulmaya gönderdik. Bizim patrona uşaklık yapan Ahmet Çelik, yeni işyeri patronuna telefon ederek bizim işe alınmamızın sakıncalı olacağını bildirmiş. Bu yüzden oraya da alınmadık." *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (139), 11 December 1978.

¹¹⁷ "Ben Kahramanmaraş'ın Pazarcık ilçesinde oturuyorum. Fakir aile çocuğuyum. Babam 80 liraya amelelik yapıyor (..) Antep'te bir torna atölyesinde çalışıyorum. 5 seneden beri bu atölyede çalışıyorum, sabahları saat 7'de işe gidiyorum, gece saat 10-11'e kadar çalıştırıyorlar ve sigortalı değilim, can ve iş güvenliğim yok. Atölyede en zor işi ben yapıyorum, öğlenleri birbuçuk saat yemek istirahati varken ancak yarım saat veriyorlar. Beş dakika işe geç gittim mi hemen küfürlerle

In response to these circumstances, trade unionism, especially left-wing trade unionism rose in the region. As an example, among four thousand construction workers who had worked on the Afşin-Elbistan Thermal Plant since 1974, three unions, namely Tes-İş (a member union of Confederation of Trade Unions of Turkey, *Türk-İş*), *Bes-İş* (the union of *Hür-İş*) and *Tek-Ges-İş* (branch of DİSK) were working. The left-wing union DİSK had a certain degree of power since it had had the right to make labor contract in the Electricity Institution of Turkey in the powerhouse since 1975.¹¹⁸ In the city center, workers from Sümerbank and some branches of the municipality joined the leftist trade unions, especially from the beginning of 1978 because of the relaxation of the situation for the leftist community in Kahramanmaraş, the same as in the other parts of the country.¹¹⁹

In addition, a specific case of trade unionism in Maraş delineates the existence of a strong wave of left-wing unionism in the city center. The Pişkinler Yarn Factory was among the biggest factories in the city. At the beginning, *Türk-İş* had had the right to make job agreements in the factory. However, circumstances changed and an "ülkü" trade union, the Textiles Workers Union of Turkey (*Türkiye Mensucat İşçileri Sendikası-Türk Mensucat-İş*), which was a member of the Confederation of Nationalist Workers' Unions (*Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, MİSK*) took that right from the TEKSİF (*Türkiye Tekstil Örne ve Giyim Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası-Textile, Knitting and Clothing Industry Workers' Union of Turkey, a*

karşılışıyorum, dövülüyorum. Bu durum karşılığında 250 lira haftalık alıyorum." Halkın Kurtuluşu Yolunda Gençlik, 1 June 1977.

¹¹⁸ Halkın Kurtuluşu (170), 6 August 1979. Similar with the other sectors, Maoist fractions claimed that DİSK was in the side of the bosses in the powerhouse. In addition, *Halkın Kurtuluşu* alleged the *Devrimci Halkın Birliği* as being in line with "social fascists" since DHB was not based its activities totally against the DİSK in the region. Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Erbil Tuşalp, "Bir Yıl Sonra Maraş: Acılı Göç..-2," *Cumhuriyet*, 27 December 1979.

member of Türk-İş) in April 1976. The union's representative in Kahramanmaraş, Nusret Köse, stated on 14 April 1976 that MİSK had given a good lesson to the trade unionists from the TEKSİF and other hollow unionist understandings that had gambled over the labor of the workers for two months.¹²⁰

However, the workers changed their thoughts about the MİSK's trade unionism when it did not help them to improve their working conditions. In 1978, the average wage of the factory workers was 2,100 liras. The majority of the workers earned the minimum wage. Additionally, the MİSK had failed to make good on its promise to provide an annual premium equal to three wages. Workers could only receive a 368 lira premium in a year. In addition, the workers claimed that the MİSK had failed to keep its promise to provide food and fuel help to the workers.¹²¹ For these reasons, the power of the MİSK waned. The Textile Union (*Tekstil Sendikası*, a branch of the DİSK) began to organize in the factory. When the workers took the initiative to transfer from MİSK to DİSK, a hard struggle began in the factory. The employer, A. Pişkin, dismissed eighteen workers in August 1978 since they had assaulted the representative of MİSK. In response to this, the workers started a resistance movement. When Pişkin's second attempt, the dismissal of the leaders of the resistance, did not succeed, he terminated the labour contracts of 381 workers. However, the court of justice decided on the return of the workers to their jobs. In response, the boss employed twenty men, who had been found through the help of the headman of Şerefoğlu village, as security guards and workers.¹²² However, the

¹²⁰ *Kahramanmaraş Postası*, 15 Nisan 1976.

¹²¹ *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (120), 31 July 1978.

¹²² The first department of the Kahramanmaraş Police Directorate reported on 25 September 1978 that rightist groups employed as workers and some people coming from the villages and having no relationship with factory working were sheltered in a union of the MİSK. According to that report, some local leaders of the Justice Party and the Nationalist Action Party were continuing their activities by putting pressure on the workers and provoking Alevi-Sunni dichotomy in the city. Muzaffer İlhan

workers managed to convince three of them that they were not their enemies. A group of people, including the ex-trade unionists from MİSK, TEKSİF managers, NAP members, the *Ülkücü Öğretmenler Birliği Derneği* (Association of the *Ülkücü* Teachers Union) and the *Ülkücü Gençlik Derneği* (*Ülkücü* Youth Association, IYA) attacked the offices of the Textile Union and a clash broke out between the two groups. Additionally, the MİSK members told the families of the women workers that the communist trade unionists of DİSK were immoral and would ruin the morality of their daughters. However, the women workers did not resign from the union.¹²³ In sum, the conflict around DİSK's organization in Pişkinler Yarn Factory went on unresolved and constituted an important part of the political struggle in the center of Kahramanmaraş.

Conflicts in the High Schools

Other places that witnessed the rise of the left were schools. There was no university in the city in those years. The high schools were the places of conflict. One important point must be mentioned before describing the events in the high schools. Different from the end of the 1960s (1968 marked the rise of the student movement around the world) and the early years of the 1970s, there was no student movement independent from the organizations of radical leftist groups in the last years of the decade. Accelerating divisions and splits within socialist groups marked the end of an independent student movement. Although different socialist groups built alliances in the schools, especially against the *ülküçüs*, in general, socialist

Erdost, *Faşizm ve Türkiye 1977-1980* (Ankara: Onur, 1995), p. 218, 219.

¹²³ *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (131), 16 October 1978.

groups established their own youth organizations. Especially in small Anatolian cities, the great threat posed by the *ülkücü* organizations forced leftist students to take part in these kinds of organizations, and they also constituted an active element in the radical leftist organizations. In this atmosphere, rather than an independent and united student movement, "circles" around the socialist organizations emerged.¹²⁴

In Maraş, the most effective youth organization of this kind was the Maraş Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Association (*Maraş Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik Derneği*, MYDGD). It was an alliance of three Maoist groups, namely *Halkın Kurtuluşu*, *Devrimci Halkın Yolu* (Revolutionary People's Path, a group split from the group called *Halkın Yolu*, People's Path) and *Halkın Birliği*.¹²⁵ On 4 May 1978, a radical leftist periodical reported that MYDGD had been founded. It wrote, "We, the friends from *Halkın Birliği* and *Halkın Kurtuluşu* are together in the administrative council of the association. Our association will lead the struggle for independence and democracy of worker, peasant and student youth... Against imperialism, social-imperialism and fascist dictatorship, MYDGD will unite the people's youth in the struggle and lead it."¹²⁶

However, the alliance of these two groups did not last long. When the supporters of *Halkın Kurtuluşu* decided to make MYDGD a member of the Federation of the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth (*Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik*

¹²⁴I think this is mostly related to the need for security from idealist groups in Anatolian cities that were under the political power of the political right. In these places, being an element of a socialist group meant a relative security from rightist influence. On the other hand, in a much more relaxed atmosphere such as in the Faculty of Political Science of Ankara University, which was under the control of the radical left, some students managed to remain as independent leftists. These people could be active in the Democratic High Education Association of Ankara without being members of a socialist group. For a specific example, see Soner Yalçın, *Teşkilatın İki Silahşörü* (İstanbul: Doğan, 2003), p. 185. In my opinion, to become a socialist in this kind environment was a consequence of an intellectual process. Conversely, the radical leftist organizational line was mostly developed because of a "defensive" reaction to right-wing political domination in Anatolian cities during the 1970s.

¹²⁵Both of them rejected Maoism and participated to pro-Albanian camp in the period of 1979-1980.

¹²⁶*Halkın Kurtuluşu Yolunda Devrimci Gençlik*, 4 May 1978.

Federasyonu, YDGF) which was under its control, the supporters of the two groups, namely the *Devrimci Halkın Yolu* and *Halkın Birliđi*, rejected this proposal. In spite of their resistance, *Halkın Kurtuluđu* insisted and MYDGD became a member of YDGF.¹²⁷ From this time on, the association existed as a legal branch of that group with the much more passive participation of the other two groups. Despite these problems within the association, it is arguable that MYDGD served as a platform of these three organizations from April 1978 until the time of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents.

MYDGD soon began to intervene in the political situation in Maraş. Its members started a campaign to organize among the apprentices and assistant masters. A periodical reported that some bosses reacted to them by shouting, "Communists are distributing pamphlets!" and provoked some workers against them. Consequently, they assaulted two MYDGD members.¹²⁸ On 19 November 1978, the Elbistan Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Association organized a seminar on "The True Struggle of the Youth against Fascism," which was attended by 200 people.¹²⁹

As mentioned above, high schools were the places of conflict. From the mid-1970s to the date of the Kahramanmaraş incidents, many demonstrations and clashes took place in the city and its peripheral areas. Three examples can delineate the existence of high tension in the schools. On 6 May 1976, a local newspaper, *Kahramanmaraş Postası* (the Kahramanmaraş Post), stated that the ideological debates that had started in the high schools had turned into violence. In this critical situation, the governor of Kahramanmaraş organized a press conference and said:

¹²⁷Ibid., 4 September 1978.

¹²⁸Ibid., 18 September 1978.

¹²⁹ *Halkın Kurtuluđu Yolunda Devrimci Gençlik*, 11 December 1978.

We are the sons of this country. All of us have children in the high schools and universities. Of course, it is possible to stop these activities. Nothing can remain unsolved with our cooperation and unity. Recently in the assembly of the governors, the governor of Gaziantep said, "No event occurs in your city, Kahramanmaraş." We will protect the survival of peace in our country...and we will do our duty. I am also sure that our teachers will fulfill their responsibilities to our children. Our elders and prayer leaders must strive to sustain effectiveness in the mosques.¹³⁰

However, these calls to bring peace to the schools did not succeed. Two examples are enough to prove this. One of them was from Pazarcık. When a leftist student of the Pazarcık High School, Duran Uğraş, was dismissed from school, students organized a protest against the decision. For two days, students held demonstrations, not only in the yard of the high school, but also in the streets of Pazarcık. They shouted slogans such as "Long live our struggle for a democratic high school!" "Take our dismissed friends back!" "Free our friends!" and "Death to fascism, freedom to the people!" When some of them were arrested by the police, others organized a demonstration in front of the court of justice. The authorities demanded extra police officers and gendarmeries from the city center of Maraş. Subsequently, clashes took place between students and the security forces. The high school director, Halil Arık, announced from the loudspeakers of the municipality that parents were to come to the school to discuss their children's cases. However, the discussions did not put an end to the events. A few days later, when some students began selling *Halkın Kurtuluşu* in front of the high school, civil police officers tried

¹³⁰"Bizler de bu memleketin evlatlarıyız. Hepimizin de yüksek öğrenimde, orta öğrenimde çocuklarımız vardır. Bu eylemlerin sona ermesi elbette mümkündür. Hep beraber el ele vererek birlik ve beraberlikle çözümlenemeyeceğimiz hiçbir şey yoktur. Geçenlerde valiler toplantısında Gaziantep valisi "Sizin Kahraman Maraş'ta hiçbir hadise yok" demişlerdi. Huzur ve tesanüdü bütün olan memleketimizde huzurun bozulmasına mücadele etmeyeceğiz, görevimizi yapacağız. Bizim memleketimiz komşu vilayetlerden farklıdır. Öğretmenlerimizin de çocuklarımıza gereken etkinliği göstereceğinden eminim. Yaşlıların da din adamlarının da camilerde gereken etkinliğin temini için çaba sarfetmeleri şarttır." Kahramanmaraş Postası, 6 May 1976.

to stop them. Then a clash took place between these students and the police. A student selling papers was seriously wounded.¹³¹

Another example is from the city center. On 20 March 1978, a group of students of the Maraş High School of Commerce (*Ticaret Lisesi*) held a demonstration protesting the killing of seven leftist students of the İstanbul University in Beyazıt Square four days earlier. They cried, "Freedom to education, life security!" and "We will account for 16 March!" They ignored the warnings of the school director and marched to the Yörük Selim district, which was known as an Alevi and leftist place.¹³² On 3 November 1978, eighteen leftist and rightist students who clashed at the Kahramanmaraş High School were arrested.¹³³

As seen above, both the rural and urban areas included the dynamics of political polarization that could turn into much more direct forms of political conflict, namely the war. In the next part, the relationship between the Alevi identity and radical leftist politics is analysed.

The Alevi Identity and the Radical Left

There is a general belief that the left has disproportionate support among the Alevis than among Sunni Muslims. In the political climate of the 1970s, the right-wing political actors conceived the Alevis as embodying a "communist threat." To understand the extreme dimensions of this outlook on the political orientation of the Alevis, it is appropriate to look at a circular distributed in Sivas on 22 September

¹³¹ *Halkın Kurtuluşu Yolunda Gençlik*, 4 April 1977.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 3 April 1978.

¹³³ *Politika*, 4 November 1978.

1978 with the signature of the Muslim Youth (*Müslüman Gençlik*) organization¹³⁴: "Beware, Alevi! Do not be used as an instrument; take lessons from history. Once upon a time, you used to utter, 'Shah, Shah' [a reference to the Alevi/ Kızılbaş support for Shah İsmail, the Safavid leader in the early sixteenth century]. Now it is not towards the Shah, but towards communism that you are heading."¹³⁵

A detailed discussion of Aleviism as a religious/sectarian issue is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, to understand why Aleviism is affiliated with the left, or in other words, why Alevi are much more prone to leftist propaganda, we must consider two fundamental reasons related with the origins of Aleviism from a historical perspective.

The first of these two is the pre-Islamic roots of Aleviism.¹³⁶ An Alevi writer from Afşin (a district of Maraş), Haşim Kutlu, proposes that Aleviism is a continuation of Zoroastrian belief,¹³⁷ the unity of God and nature. In this understanding, the individual is the only source of belief. It rejects the meaning of the *Kelime-i Şehadet* (the Muslim declaration that there is no God but Allah). According to Kutlu, for this reason, Aleviism is not an Islamic sect. Alevi try to show their belief as an Islamic sect since they have sought protection from total destruction by Muslims throughout history. This is the exterior (*zahir*) attitude of

¹³⁴Emma Sinclair Webb proposes that this group of people using the name of "Muslim Youth" seems to have been affiliated with the local branch of the Nationalist Action Party. Emma Sinclair Webb, "Sectarian Violence, the Alevi Minority and the Left: Kahramanmaraş 1978." Unpublished article, p. 1.

¹³⁵"*Aleviler Dikkat! Alet olmayın. Tarihi göz önünde bulundurun, bir zamanlar (Şah, Şah...) diyordunuz. Şimdi Şaha değil komünizme gidiyorsunuz. Bu gidişinizi mutlaka engelleyeceğiz.*" Zeki Coşkun *Aleviler, Sünniler ve... Öteki Sivas* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1995), p. 289.

¹³⁶ While the local population or the Alevi themselves have not known about this phenomenon, I felt I needed to include this for its importance for the Alevi belief system as it is manifested even today.

¹³⁷Haşim Kutlu *Alevi Kimliğini Tartışmak* (İstanbul: Belge, 1997), p. 23.

Aleviism. On the other hand, an interior (*batın*) manner which cannot be considered Islamic has existed to the present.¹³⁸

Second, the heritage of Alevi uprisings in the period of Ottoman Empire, such as the Şahkulu Rebellion (1510), the Nur Ali Rebellion (1512), and the Ottoman reaction of declaring the *Kızılbaş* community as anti-Islamic and the massacre of forty thousand Alevi in 1514, and the hanging of Pir Sultan Abdal (in the seventeenth century, the exact date is not known) are considered both by the Alevi and the central authorities to be reasons why the Alevi are the opponents of the state. I use the term "state" rather than the Ottoman Empire, because, except for the first years of the Kemalist single-party regime, the Republic of Turkey has accepted the Sunni version of Islam as an element of unification in its attempt to create a Turkish national identity. After the closure of the Hacı Bektaş Veli Dervish Convent and other Alevi lodges in 1925, only mosques remained as legitimate prayer places. The Department of Religious Affairs, which is bound to the Hanefiite of Sunni Islamic heritage, became the only religious authority.¹³⁹ This attitude towards the Alevi resulted in their alienation from the Turkish state.

The factors mentioned above affected the relationship of the Alevi and the left. At first, the un-Islamic or pre-Islamic origin of Alevi culture was an important factor since the Alevi did not have anti-communist understandings stemming from a religious base. As a community alienated from society for the reason that they were considered atheists (*zındık*) despite the fact that they did not considered themselves as such, the Alevi did not develop a religious antipathy to the left, which was also accused of being atheist. As Emma Sinclair Webb observes in her conversations with

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 42.

¹³⁹Fazıl Hüsnü Erdem, "Alevilik sorunu üzerine bazı düşünce ve öneriler," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 90 (Fall 2001), pp. 191-193.

former activists (of non-Alevi background) from the 1970s left, these people recall that "as activists they commanded a certain respect or were at least more likely to encounter a level of tolerance in Alevi villages than they would in many Sunni villages."¹⁴⁰ Faik Bulut states that the leftists' defence of the Alevis, even from their Sunni families that had antipathy to the Alevis, produced sympathy among the Alevis. As a proof for Webb's observation, he writes the radical leftists gave much importance to the Alevi villages in the region including those of Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya and Tunceli.¹⁴¹

In the left's attempt to organize within the Alevis, the second factor mentioned above was useful. As Martin van Bruinessen argues, the far-left evaluates the uprisings in the Ottoman period as "proto-communist" movements.¹⁴² In other words, "by grafting a class analysis onto earlier centuries of *Kızılbaş* oppression and heterodox peasant uprisings that on occasion met with violent sanction from the Ottoman state, the group is sometimes envisioned" by socialist groups "as the repository of a proto-socialism centuries before the advent of socialism and Marxism."¹⁴³

In short, socialist circles recognize the Alevis as the allies of socialism.¹⁴⁴ They use certain elements of Alevi culture as tools for the struggle. For example, from 1968 onwards, some Alevi folk songs such as "*Gelin canlar bir olalım*" (Come on

¹⁴⁰Webb, p. 1.

¹⁴¹Faik Bulut *Ali'siz Alevilik-İslamda Özgürlük Arayışı-1* (İstanbul: Berfin, 1998), p. 9, 10.

¹⁴²Martin van Bruinessen *Türklük, Kürtlük, Alevilik-Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleleri* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), p. 120.

¹⁴³Webb, p. 3, 4. Bulut underlines that some leftist/socialist give examples of essentialism in the Alevi question by claiming that "In essence, Alevism is socialism; at least it is a product of a socialist culture and practice." ("*Alevilik özünde sosyalizmdir, en azından sosyalizan bir kültür ve uygulamanın ürünüdür*"). Bulut, p. 29.

¹⁴⁴Ibid. Bruinessen, p. 120.

fellows, unite), "*Dönen dönsün ben dönmem yolumdan*" (Let he who turns, I will not turn from my way) were played at demonstrations and the funerals of leftists.¹⁴⁵ Some intellectuals in the circle of the Workers Party of Turkey established the *Aşıklar Derneği* (Association of the Troubadours) to give voice to the class struggle with the poems of Pir Sultan Abdal.¹⁴⁶ Consequently, some Alevi concepts gained new meanings. *Enelhak* ("I am god," the statement for which Mansur-al Hallaj, who has a special place in Alevi tradition, was condemned to death) was turned into *Emek-Hak* (Labor-Right) and Pir Sultan's "Love of God" (*Hak aşkı*) was reinterpreted as the struggle for gaining rights (*hak*). Leftist musicians like Ruhi Su, Zülfü Livaneli, Rahmi Saltuk and Sadık Gürbüz performed the poems of Pir Sultan. Selda Bağcan and Cem Karaca performed these poems in the form of "pop-folk" and spread them among the masses. In the socialist literature of the day, Pir Sultan was put into the basic patterns of novels and poems.¹⁴⁷

At this point, it is necessary to touch upon a question about the relationship of Aleviism and the radical left. Many people argue that this relationship was determined by the dominant role of Aleviism. Put another way, the Alevis primarily identify themselves as Alevis rather than as leftist. Thus, the radical left was able to obtain support in accordance with its closeness with the Alevi identity. In this argument, the political content of the socialist ideology meant nothing without its interference in Alevi culture. Related to this argument, Şerif Mardin proposes that the left used some concepts of the Alevi belief system in a dishonest manner.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵Cemal Şener, Miyase Ilknur *Şeriat ve Alevilik-Kırklar Meclisi'nden Günümüze Alevi Örgütlenmesi* (İstanbul: Ant, 1995), p. 130.

¹⁴⁶Coşkun, p. 105.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 106, 107.

¹⁴⁸Şerif Mardin *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1993), p. 125.

Mardin is correct in underlining the fact that Marxists used concepts derived from Alevi belief. I do not want to discuss the Marxists' level of honesty in detail here. What is important for our topic is that Mardin does not address in which process the Marxists related with the Alevis. Thus, Mardin does not see the role of the social struggles summarized above in the politicization of the Alevi people. His schema falls into the trap of culturalism, which does not consider the mutual role of the culture and socio-political struggles in the 1960s and 1970s. Against this essentialistic culturalism, Gün Zileli proposes that the role of the socio-political struggles is dominant in the relationship between the Alevis and the left. From his observations from the rural areas of Kahramanmaraş, he clearly puts the relationship between Aleviism and socialism in its place:

In that period, the Alevi identity was not one which was brought to the fore by the people of the region, as the rising value was that of being revolutionary, similar to the rest of the country. I remember no one being proud of the Alevi identity. Of course, many elements of Alevi culture were articulated as being revolutionary; in fact, what was being Alevi and being revolutionary was mixed. Yet, still the identity that came to the fore and was a source of pride was that of being revolutionary. The young people of the region did not care about the ancient Alevi traditions and they even mocked them. The Alevi *dedes* lost a great deal of respect. Since they lived as guests in the villages, the young people saw them as exploiters and their advice was mocked. The interest in *cem* ceremonies decreased greatly, especially among the revolutionaries.¹⁴⁹

In my opinion, the political adventure of the *Türkiye Birlik Partisi* (Unity Party of Turkey, UPT) from being an Alevi party to a socialist organization affirms Zileli's argument. The party was the first political organization established on the Alevi

¹⁴⁹“O dönemde, bütün ülkede olduğu gibi, yükselen değer devrimcilik olduğundan, Alevi kimliği bölge halkı açısından öne çıkarılan bir kimlik değildi. Kimsenin Aleviliğiyle övündüğünü hatırlamıyorum. Elbette Alevi kültürünün birçok ögesi devrimciliğe eklenmiş, hatta neyin Alevilik, neyin devrimcilik olduğu birbirine karışmıştı, ama yine de önde gelen övünülecek kimlik devrimcilikti. Bölgenin devrimci gençleri, kadim Alevi geleneklerini takmıyor, hatta alaya alıyorlardı. Alevi dedeleri büyük itibar kaybına uğramışlardı. Alevi dedeleri, köylerde konuk kalarak geçimlerini sağladıkları için, devrimci gençler tarafından “sömürücü” olarak görülüyor, Alevi inancı yönündeki telkinleri alaya alınıyordu. Özellikle devrimci kesimde, cem ayinlerine ilgi son derece azalmıştı.” Zileli, p. 210, 211.

identity. Founded on 17 October 1966, the symbol of the party was a lion, a reference to Caliph Ali's nickname "the lion of God." The party was founded by some wealthy Alevi families¹⁵⁰ in a much more relaxed political atmosphere for Alevi since the power of the Democrat Party, which had depended on the votes from Sunni Islamic areas, had been removed by the military on 27 May 1960. However, the party had been unable to break the hegemony of the RPP among the Alevi community. The UPT took 2.8% in the 1969 elections, 1.1% in 1973 and 0.4% in 1978.¹⁵¹

On the other hand, the party lost its feature of being an organization of the upper classes because of the Republican People's Party hegemony among them. Thus, the UPT began to define its political program as "revolutionary left." These words are from its booklet prepared for the elections in 1973: "The UPT is a revolutionary political party. It characteristically differs from bourgeois parties that defend the capitalist relations of production in our society. Moreover, it differs from social democrat parties, which in essence do not reject the capitalist mode of production, but attempt to survive it via reformist implementations."¹⁵² In the elections in 1973, famous figures of the WPT like Mehmet Ali Aybar and Cenan Bıçakçı were the deputy candidates of the UPT. The leaders of the UPT, Mustafa Timisi and Mehmet Ali Aybar, declared that their aim was to carry the socialist struggle into the Grand National Assembly.¹⁵³

It would appear that the role of the party between 1973 and 1980 was to provide a legal platform for different political groups, which also used some local

¹⁵⁰Erdoğan Teziç *100 Soruda Siyasi Partiler* (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1976), p. 336.

¹⁵¹Coşkun, pp. 278-286.

¹⁵²Şener, İlknur, p. 72.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 75.

branches of the RPP for the same reason: to be protected from fascist attacks and to organize under a legal party. For this reason, the Alevi youth who were active in different radical leftist groups used the local branches of the UPT.¹⁵⁴ For example, the following declaration of the General Council of the Youth Branches of Elazığ UPT had no difference from Maoist discourse: "Salute to the youth from universities and high schools who struggle against fascism and social-fascism via the exalted ideology of the proletariat."¹⁵⁵ Last, the party's mission was to prevent the participation of Sunni Muslims in attacks against Alevis and leftists, especially in central and eastern Anatolia. To reach this aim, the party encouraged the fellowship of Alevis and Sunnis as summarized in the slogan in 1977 saying, "Alevis and Sunnis be united! Damn the fascists!"¹⁵⁶

Returning to the context of Kahramanmaraş, it seems that the terms "Alevi" and "leftist" meant the same there as in other regions. The Yörük Selim district, which was an Alevi place, was the center of the left in the city. In the other districts in which the Alevis did not constitute the majority of the population, the left was unable to establish a political hegemony as in Yörük Selim District. While the leftists were able to found a district association called the Culture and Mutual Aid Association of the Yörük Selim District (*Yörük Selim Mahallesi Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği*)¹⁵⁷ in a safe haven of the Alevis, they failed to establish a

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁵⁵*Halkın Kurtuluşu Yolunda Gençlik*, 23 May 1977.

¹⁵⁶"Alevi Sünni bir olsun faşistler kahrolsun" (*Türkiye Birlik Partisi Gençlik Kolları*, 1977) *Milli Kütüphane Arşivi* (Archive of National Library), code number: AF1977 DD 88.

¹⁵⁷This news is a good sample of the activities of the Culture and Mutual Aid Association of the Yörük Selim District: "We, as the sympathizers of People's Emancipation, organized a meeting on 30 March in the Culture and Cooperation Association of the Yörük Selim District and made tribute to the marries of Kızıldere. Friends from People's Unity, People's Path, People's Voice and Revolutionary Youth also participated to the meeting. After the ceremony of respect, one revolutionary gave a speech on behalf of *Halkın Kurtuluşu*. Our friend made a short evaluation of the past in his speech.

similar kind of hegemony in the areas that had a Sunni majority. *Devrimci Halkın Birliđi* sums up this situation by stating that the majority of Sunni laborers followed the fascists during the Kahramanmaraş Massacre.¹⁵⁸

The Role of the Republican People's Party

The last point in the discussion of the left is the role of the RPP. Briefly, two elements of the political position of the RPP affected the process of political polarization in Turkey. The first one was the affiliation of the party with the Alevis and the second was the party's new political orientation towards the left via the acceptance of the "left of center" politics proposed by Bülent Ecevit.

The first element mentioned above was not very important in every corner of the country. As opposed to this, the party's affiliation with the Alevis affected the political atmosphere of central and eastern Anatolian cities such as Çorum, Sivas, Malatya, Kahramanmaraş, Elazığ and Erzurum. These cities experienced Alevi-Sunni animosity and its political consequences. In this region, the position of the RPP was affected by the National Action Party's threat to both the Alevis and the RPP supporters as "communists." Accordingly, the RPP's affiliation with the Alevis had a defensive character. The RPP could easily secure the support of the Alevis with its defence of them. In Lütfi Kaleli's novel *Kardeşlerin Kini* (Hate of the Brothers),

After that, friends from *Halkın Birliđi*, *Halkın Sesi*, *Devrimci Gençlik* and *Halkın Yolu* spoke in order. While we come to the critiques, the tongs of the fascist dictatorship, the policemen broke up our association and brought 59 people to the police station." "*Biz Kahramanmaraşlı Halkın Kurtuluşu sempatanları olarak 30 Mart'ta Yörük Selim Mahallesi Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneđi'nde bir toplantı düzenledik ve Kızıldere şehitlerini andık. Toplantıya Halkın Birliđi, Halkın Yolu, Halkın Sesi ve Devrimci Gençlik'ten arkadaşlar da katıldılar. Devrim şehitleri için yapılan saygı duruşundan sonrabir devrimci Halkın Kurtuluşu adına bir konuşma yaptı. Arkadaş konuşmasında geçmişin kısa bir değerlendirmesini yaptı. Daha sonra Halkın Birliđi, Halkın Sesi, Devrimci Gençlik ve Halkın Yolu'ndan arkadaşlar sırayla konuştular. Eleştirilere geçileceđi sırada faşist diktatörlüğün maşaları polisler derneđi basarak içerideki 59 kişiyi karakola götürdüler."* *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (54), 25 April 1977.

¹⁵⁸*Devrimci Halkın Birliđi*, 27 December 1979.

the author gives a typical Alevi reaction to the RPP. The conversation of Uncle Mustafa, an old Alevi supporter of the RPP, and his nephew Latif, who claims that the RPP uses Alevis as instrument, makes it easy to understand why the affiliation existed:

A ship loaded with cheese will not go with talk. Look, let's talk about the speech of Deniz Baykal [famous RPP spokesman, today he is the president of the party] That's a real speech, boy. I call it talking...By saying, "Yezid, who killed Hüseyin in Karbala, is a damn fascist!" he made that radio sing like a bird...Latif Coşkun was at loss. Without thinking:

- Deniz Baykal picked his time and made investment; Uncle Mustafa, he said.

- Call it investment, my boy. He refreshed our hearts; think about it. If you know how to talk like that, talk and make investment, my boy.¹⁵⁹

The second point is related to the RPP's turn to "left of center" or "democratic left" policies. These consequences of the policies could not be evaluated within the borders of a single geography as in the first one; however, an analysis of "left of center" can complete the first point by delineating why the RPP was able to obtain the support of the people who were not of Alevi origin. This point can also prove that the Kahramanmaraş Incidents were not simply a bloody struggle stemming from the politicization of sectarian identities.

From the second part of the 1950s onwards, the RPP began to defend some demands similar to those of "social democracy" as opposed to their earlier platform which did not problematized the socio-economic problems of the dominated classes, and began to consider the working class that had become a mass and the poor

¹⁵⁹"Lafla peynir gemisi yürümez ki yeğenim. Ha bak, Deniz Baykal'ın konuşmasını dersen o başka (..) Brn konuşma diye işte ona derim(..) "Kerbela'da Hüseyin'i şehit edenler neyse bunlar da odur" diye bangır bangır öttürdü radyoyu(..) Latif Coşkun ne diyeceğini kestiremedi birden. Boş bulunup:-Deniz Baykal zamanı iyi değerlendirip yatırım yaptı Mustafa Dayı, dedi. -Sen yatırım de yeğenim. Yürek soğuttu ya, sen ona bak. Hem, sen de söz bilirdin, sen de öyle konuşaydın da, tek yatırım yapaydın yeğenim." Lütfi Kaleli *Kardeşlerin Kini* (İstanbul: Suda, 1976), p. 19, 20. In addition, columnist Fikret Otyam, in one of his articles in 1978, gave one of his reader's letters as an example of the nature of the RPP-Alevi relationship. In that letter, his Alevi reader underlined the fact that the RPP could sustain its power and effectiveness due to the Alevi support. Fikret Otyam, "Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri'ne Merhaba" *Cumhuriyet*, 16 September 1978 in Otyam *Hu Dost Can Cana* (İstanbul: Günizi, 2002), p. 179.

peasantry. When the party failed after the 27 March 1960 coup, some elements within the party began to propose a somehow more complete amalgam of these social democratic demands.¹⁶⁰ The success of the WPT in 1965 elections accelerated the process of left-right division within the RPP since the left-wing of the party insisted on the threat posed by the WPT to the political life of the RPP. If the RPP could not turn itself to more left-wing policies, the WPT and other radical leftist organizations could be the only alternative to the right represented by the Justice Party. The leader of the party, İsmet İnönü, tried to remain "impartial" in the left-right division within the party between 1965 and 1970.

Nevertheless, 12 March 1971 opened a new era for the party since the political circumstances forced İnönü to take sides with either the left or the right wing of the party. The position of the RPP towards the military intervention reshaped the conflict in the RPP. While the general secretary of the party, Bülent Ecevit, resigned from his post in protest of the military intervention, İsmet İnönü supported and the RPP gave ministers to Nihat Erim's cabinet. However, the Fifth Extraordinary Congress of the RPP, which met on 5 May 1972, resulted in the victory of the left-wing side of the RPP. On 8 May, İsmet İnönü resigned from the presidency and Ecevit was elected as the president of the party on 14 May. The new period of the RPP, marked by the "center of left" formula, began.

Between 1972 and 1980, the RPP, under the leadership of Ecevit, used a populist discourse. Necmi Erdoğan describes populism as a discourse that defines the social/political sphere on the axis of the antagonistic relationship between the popular sectors and the dominant sectors, or between the people and the power bloc. It sought to hegemonize the social/political sphere for its aim to start mass

¹⁶⁰"Ortanın Solu" in *Sosyalizm ve Sosyal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7, p. 2200.

mobilization and then change the existing order by calling out to the people and articulating popular ideologies, traditions and symbols in itself. For populism, a homogeneous, impermeable contradiction between the people and its enemies determine the political sphere. It prefers to see "people" immune from inherent divisions and contradictions. Thus, it idolizes and exalts the "people."¹⁶¹

As Erdoğan argues, Ecevit's discourse in the 1970s defined the social/political sphere as the terrain of the struggle between the "people" and others who could not be defined within the realm of this category. In Ecevit's discourse, the "people" consisted of peasants, workers, civil servants and artisans who lived by their own labour. They were the dominated and oppressed sectors of society. The "others" were the mediators, usurers, big landowners, monopoly capital, and other "non-productive" and privileged sectors which exploited the "people," and governed the country.¹⁶² Additionally, Erdoğan stresses that, despite his anti-Marxist and anti-communist attitude, Ecevit used some Marxist concepts such as "relations of production," "structure-superstructure," and "dominant classes." Furthermore, he set his goals as a "democratic people's revolution" and "people's power."¹⁶³ However, Erdoğan specifically compares Ecevit's RPP with *Dev-Yol's* radical discourse and underlines their similarities. It appears that RPP's discourse had similarities with all radical leftist groups.¹⁶⁴

On the other hand, Ecevit's political line was fundamentally different from radical leftist/socialist politics. First, opposite to the radical left's affiliation to

¹⁶¹Necmi Erdoğan, " 'Demokratik Soldan Devrimci Yol'a: 1970'lerde Sol Popülizm Üzerine Notlar," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 78, Fall 1998, p. 25.

¹⁶²Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁶³Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁶⁴Erdoğan correctly argues that Mao's analysis of contradiction is an important root of leftist populism (ibid., p.26). A careful elaboration of Maoist and pro-Albanian groups will indicate that same similarities can be found between the conceptual categories of the RPP and these groups.

Marxist/Leninist ideology, his line specifically emphasized indigenously, and emphasized Turkey's original circumstances. Because of his preference for excluding the RPP from social democracy with roots in Marxism, he used the term "democratic left." For Ecevit, the RPP's leftism was not inspired by other leftist movements or doctrines; it had its roots in Turkish culture.¹⁶⁵ According to this understanding, Turkish society had been intolerant of the state's dictatorship and wealth's dictatorship throughout its history. In consequence, it would be impossible to convince Turkish society to accept a state dictatorship or a dictatorship of capital. Therefore, the democratic left (or left of the center) was the only solution to Turkey's problems with its harmony of tradition, history, and the social and cultural life of Turkish society.¹⁶⁶

Second, the RPP's claim to change the existing order was very different from the radical leftist projects. Erdoğan wrote:

Ecevit's populism's coming into being, that is to say, the transformation of "RPP as the state's party" to "the RPP as the people's party," is reinforced by radical leftist/socialist opposition. In Turkey, the same as in other places, social democracy or the democratic left functioned to soften, erode and deflect demands and reactions that were able to radicalize or tended to radicalize by articulating these demands in its discourse. To say it another way, the RPP's "change of order" and "people's power" program aimed to both represent and limit these demands by proposing a non-radical way of solution to democratic peoples' opposition.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ibid., p. 30.

¹⁶⁶Emin Alper, "Milliyetçilik-Modernleşme Geriliminde " 'Ortanın Solu' ve Ecevit", *Toplum ve Bilim* no. 93, (Summer 2002), p. 121.

¹⁶⁷"Ecevit popülizminin ortaya çıkışı, yani 'devlet partisi CHP'nin 'halk partisi CHP'ye dönüşmesi, radikal sol/sosyalist muhalefetten beslenmiştir. Sosyal demokrasi ya da demokratik sol, başka yerlerde olduğu gibi, Türkiye'de de, radikalleşebilecek ya da radikalleşme eğilimi gösteren talep ve tepkileri kendi söylemine eklemeyerek yumuşatma, eritme, soğurma işlevini üstlenmiştir. Yani CHP'nin 'düzen değişikliği' ve 'halk iktidarı' programı demokratik halk muhalefetine radikal sol olmayan bir çözüm yolu önerirken, hem bu taleplere seslenmiş ve hemde bu talepleri sınırlamak istemiştir." Erdoğan, p. 34.

Returning to the influence of the RPP in Kahramanmaraş, if we look at the election results, we see that the RPP doubled its votes within four years due to the turn to "democratic left" policies with Ecevit's leadership. The RPP increased its votes from 17.6 percent (in 1969) to 32.9 in 1973. The 1973 elections' importance is that the RPP became the first party in Kahramanmaraş since the 1957 elections. The elections on 5 June 1977 were a certain victory for the RPP, as in Turkey in general, since it took 36.4 percent of the votes in the city.¹⁶⁸

Two reasons for the RPP's rise, namely its affiliation with the Alevis and its turn to more radical policies, are easily seen in the local context. Initially, it is obvious that the Alevi community supported the RPP at a rate disproportionate to that of the Sunnis. The existence of different sectarian and ethnic identities in the city was a certain factor in the increasing interest in politics.¹⁶⁹ An observer from Kahramanmaraş before the 1977 elections wrote that the first agenda of the RPP's city branch was the order of the Alevi candidates in the RPP's list of deputy candidates.¹⁷⁰ An authority of the local party branch, Mehmet Taşkesen, underlined the fact that RPP had to be careful to put the Alevi and Sunni candidates in an equal order because of the fact that one side's anger at the party would decrease the votes. In the end, the RPP put the Alevis at the top of its list. A pharmacist, Oğuz Söğütli; a judge, Hüseyin Doğan; and a landowner, Memiş Özdal were three of the first four deputy candidates of the RPP. Additionally, everyone stressed the importance of two counties that had a certain number of Alevi population, Pazarcık and Elbistan, as the power sources of the RPP victory.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸*Yurt Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Anadolu, 1981), vol. 8, pp. 5672, 5673.

¹⁶⁹*Cumhuriyet Seçim-77* (İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar, 1977), p. 110.

¹⁷⁰Engin Karadeniz, "Kahramanmaraş," in *Cumhuriyet Seçim-77*, p. 102.

The RPP's success cannot be explained only by the Alevi support since some local leaders of the RPP were not Alevis. Additionally, the Alevi population could not have been enough for a success like thirty-six percent. As Engin Karadeniz noted, approximately half of the RPP's vote came from Sunni people.¹⁷² For this reason, it is necessary to ask why the Sunnis voted for the RPP rather than the right-wing parties that emphasized their Sunni Muslim identity. The answer can be found in the ongoing radicalization of the masses in the city. As mentioned above, social struggles in the rural and urban areas were increasing in the 1970s.¹⁷³ One consequence of these struggles was the strengthening of the left-wing RPP supporters within the cadres of the party's local branch.

Mehmet Taşkesen was the most famous of this kind of person. From a Sunni family, he had a bakery in the city center and was among the city's well-known people. He defined himself as a revolutionary¹⁷⁴ and was a former militant of the Workers' Party of Turkey.¹⁷⁵ In 1978, he was the president of the local branch of the Textile Union and of DİSK. In addition, he was a member of the administrative council of the local branch of the RPP.¹⁷⁶ With these features, as many interviewees mention, he was the best known figure of the RPP in the city with his radicalism and militancy. Thus, Taşkesen and his supporters represented a more radical attitude than that of Ecevit.

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Many *ülkücüs* propose that Ecevit's slogan "Land to its cultivators, water to its users" (*Toprak işleyenin, Su kullananın*) inspired the land occupations in Kahramanmaraş. See Hamza Alparslan, "CHP iktidarı döneminde K.Maraş'ta sol büyük bir güç haline geldi" in Kahramanmaraş 1978-1980, *Hergün*, 28 August 1980.

¹⁷⁴Birand, Bila, and Akar, p. 101.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 103.

In this atmosphere in the local branch of the party, radical leftist political groups were developing their relationship with the RPP's supporters. For example, when a representative of *Halkın Kurtuluşu*, Hüseyin Sayılır, applied to the RPP to become a deputy candidate, the party rejected his candidacy.¹⁷⁷ However, the group did not cease to organize within RPP supporters. For instance, in June 1977, a clash took place between the police and people who were selling *Halkın Kurtuluşu* at the RPP meeting.¹⁷⁸ In short, it is possible to say that the RPP's support was a product of its "democratic left" policies and their interpretation by more radical agents within its local branch due to the influence of the radical left's existence.

Last, it must be mentioned here that the establishment of the RPP government helped the people who declared themselves to be "leftist" in Maraş. The balance of power suddenly changed in the city. Mehmet Taşkesen's words put the RPP's influence in its place: "Before, they had beaten these people for being communists. They came to me. I said, "You rascal, do not be beaten, you beat them too. Three of you, five of you, come together and beat them." After that, they began to fight."¹⁷⁹ For him, the result was a relative relaxation:

The general political choice of the center of Maraş was right-wing. The fall down of the Front Government brought developments that had not been predicted. The NAP militants in the schools were cleaned in a certain sense. In the Pişkin Yarn Factory, we organized 400 workers in our union who had been NAP militants. Other workers in the private sector and workers of Sümerbank and the municipality began to unite in revolutionary trade unions. That is to say, factories and schools became the nightmares of the right.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷*Halkın Kurtuluşu* (57), 23 May 1977.

¹⁷⁸The periodical proposed that the "social fascists" (meaning pro-Soviet communists) denounced them to the police. The tone of the report showed the worsening relations between different socialist groups. See *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (60), 13 May 1977.

¹⁷⁹"Önceden bunları sokakta kıştırıp dövüyorlar. Komünist diye. Bunlar bana geliyor. Dövülmeyin lan dedim. Siz de onları dövün. Üçünüz, beşiniz biraraya gelin, onları dövün. Bundan sonra onlar dövmeye başladılar." Birand, p. 101.

¹⁸⁰"Maraş merkezinin genel siyasal tercihi sağdaydı. Cephe hükümetinin yıkılması hiç beklenmeyen gelişmelere getirdi. Okullardaki MHP militanları bir ölçüde temizlendi. Pişkinler İptik Fabrikası'nda,

Summing up, the radical leftist alternative was gaining power in the region from the villages to the urban centers. This rise took place *vis-a-vis* the RPP's new political orientation, which itself developed as a response to this alternative. Consequently, left-wing politics took on a complex character since the radical alternative and the RPP conflicted with each other and at the same time allied against the right. In addition, the Alevi influence within the left made the political scene much more complicated since this identity gained political meaning in the period. However, it is clear that this analysis emphasized the importance of the politics of social struggles rather than sectarian or ethnic identity politics since evaluating the left only by its affiliation with the Alevis prevents us from understanding the significance of the social struggles in the left's rise; and consequently paves the way to an essentialist and simplistic view of the political conflict in the region in the 1970s.

The Other Side of the Civil War: The Right in Kahramanmaraş

This part of the chapter examines the place of the rightist groups in the low-intensity civil war conditions in Turkey and, of course, in Kahramanmaraş. For this reason, specifically three actors, namely the Justice Party, the National Salvation Party, and the Nationalist Action Party, are discussed. Here, it is suitable to note that I do not intend to give a detailed account of the political lines of these three actors. I aim to discuss the role of these actors in the 1970s.

Related to this aim, this chapter does not give equal weight to the political

MHP militanı olarak kullanılan 400 işçiyi sendikamızda örgütlemeyi başardık. Özel kesimdeki diğer işçiler, Sümerbank ve Belediye işçileri de devrimci sendikalarda toplanmaya başladılar. Yani fabrikalar ve okullar sağın korkulu rüyası haline geldi. Erbil Tuşalp, "Bir Yıl Sonra Maraş-Acılı Göç-2," *Cumhuriyet*, 27 December 1979.

practice of each actor; as opposed to this, it gives importance to these actors in accordance with their power in the civil war. Obviously, this kind of power cannot be measured by looking at the ballot boxes. It is necessary to look at the places in daily life which became the battlegrounds of the civil war. In consequence, this chapter gives more weight to the NAP, which was nothing in the ballot-box compared to the JP which won at least one-third of the votes in that era; because the latter had no strategy to mobilize the masses in the conditions of civil war as the former had.¹⁸¹

The NSP position was stuck between these two since the party could not choose its main political platform during the 1970s. One segment of the party (especially the upper ranks, who had close links with the Anatolian middle bourgeoisie) chose to take power through elections; on the other hand, the party had a radical wing that was inspired by the militant Islamist movements of the Middle East and chose to be active in the streets. However, the party management could not respond to these different attitudes and did not choose a consistent path. Consequently, in this chapter, the NSP had a bigger place than that of the JP and less than than the NAP in terms of its propensity to mobilize the masses.

After this methodological explanation, the content of this part must be summarized. First, a short look at the capability of the center-right to represent the various segments of the bourgeoisie will help the reader to form of an opinion both about the peculiarity of this political movement in Turkish political life and the consequences of its loss of this representational capacity. The loss of its capability to

¹⁸¹ An interesting article written after the Kahramanmaraş Incidents underlines this fact very briefly: “The NAP is not a serious rival to the JP in the platform of the elections. On the other hand, if the platform is ‘movement,’ especially complex movements such as massacre or civil war, the JP is nothing compared to the NAP. This was clearly seen in Malatya, Sivas and Kahramanmaraş.” “MHP, AP için seçimler düzeyinde önemli bir rakip değildir. Seçimler platformunda MHP AP için bir tehlike sayılamaz. Ama eğer platform ‘hareket’ ise, özellikle katliam hareketleri, içsavaş gibi karmaşık hareketler platformu ise bu kez AP, MHP karşısında neredeyse bir hiçtir. Malatya’da, Sivas’da, Kahramanmaraş’da açıkça görülmüştür bu.” “Maraş’dan sonra...?” *Birikim* no. 46-47, (January 1979), p. 38.

represent all segments of the bourgeoisie stemming from the socio-economic change following the 1950s meant the destruction of the alliance of the big bourgeoisie, which was settled mostly in western parts of Turkey, and the middle and petty bourgeois segments, mostly settled in Anatolia. After this destruction, the JP was regarded mostly as the representative of the big bourgeoisie. Thus, this part underlined this development and its effects to the political life.

The first effect, as will be shown later, was the rise of the Islamic politics from the establishment of the *Milli Nizam Partisi* (Natural Order Party, NOP) and after 1972, under the leadership of its successor, the NSP. This movement represented the middle and petty bourgeois segments of society, who could not find effective ways for upward mobility. Thus, this segments found Islam as a tool of opposition to the “existing order” of class relations; however, without criticizing the structural base of capitalism.

The second effect was the late product of the same process. It was the formation of a fascist movement under the leadership of the NAP. In the 1970s, the party was a channel of representation of the “younger and lumpen sectors of the petty bourgeoisie,”¹⁸² who felt the destructive results of the newly emerging capitalism in the central and eastern parts of Anatolia. Hence, the NAP, by using anti-capitalist and anti-communist discourses concurrently, recruited these sectors in its paramilitary organizations such as the *Ülkü Ocakları Derneği* (Association of Hearths of Ideal, AHI) and *Ülkücü Gençlik Derneği* (Idealist Youth Association, IYA). As will be seen in the following pages, the effective use of both anti-capitalist discourse and anti-modernist critique was promising for these sectors for opening a way to overcome the alienating effects of capitalist modernization. This promise materialized in the attacks against the so-called “enemies of Muslim Turks,” namely

¹⁸² Arslan, p. 53.

the radical left, Alevis, the RPP supporters.

Nevertheless, attacking them was not enough to eliminate the enemies because of the fact that neither the mass opposition of the working class and other oppressed sectors nor the radical left could be defeated by armed attacks. Thus, the *ülkücü* movement accepted a consistent program at the beginning of 1978 to take on the leadership of the rightist masses in its massive attacks against the enemies and, in the end, reinforcing the army to organize a right-wing coup that would ally with that movement. Thus, the Kahramanmaraş Massacre was the peak point of that strategy. After this summary of this part, we can evaluate the right-wing political actors systematically.

Center-Right Politics: The Justice Party Experience in the 1970s

The formation of the center-right political line in Turkish political life was directly related to the strengthening of the bourgeois class and its efforts to take the control of the economic system from the state bureaucracy. Ahmet Yaşar Sarıbay cites the *İktisat Kongresi* (Economy Congress) that met in November 1948 in İstanbul as proof of this effort. The bourgeois class' demand to manage the economy without the intervention of the state came to light during the congress. The demand of moving to multi-party rule was a complementary of the first one, which aimed to reflect the strength of the bourgeoisie to the political system. Thus, the DP's coming to power was the result of these two demands of the bourgeoisie.¹⁸³

Throughout the DP era, all sectors of the bourgeois class, including the middle and petty bourgeois segments of the countryside, shared in the economic

¹⁸³ Ahmet Yaşar Sarıbay *Türkiye'de Modernleşme Din ve Parti Politikası "MSP Örnek Olayı"* (İstanbul: Alan, 1980), p. 91, 92.

development. The rapid development of the national market allowed these sectors to accumulate capital. As Sarıbay notes, the interlude of 1954-1958 was a time of relative prosperity for small industrialists and the small commercial sectors.¹⁸⁴ However, despite the fact that the position of these sectors was more favorable in the DP era than in previous times, they were unable to obtain economic encouragement from the state as the monopoly capitalist sectors had in the DP era. They were not able to activate their funds since they lacked large investment areas and the support of credit mechanisms. On the other hand, monopoly capital was able to spread into every newly emerging investment area and proved able to survive its traditional relationship with the state. In short, “the meaning of this situation for the dominant classes of the countryside was permanent relative underdevelopment.”¹⁸⁵

Because of this situation, the alliance of all bourgeois classes under the umbrella of the DP began to depreciate in the late 1950s. However, this process was interrupted by the military intervention of 27 May 1960, which toppled the DP. After the short period of military rule, the center-right reunited itself under the JP and came to power again in 1965. The era of the JP is significant since the development of capitalism continued rapidly and produced important structural results during the period. In this era, the JP, which “accommodated big landowners and entrepreneur classes” such as the industrial bourgeoisie and commercial bourgeoisie, felt an increasing tension between different parts of the bourgeoisie.¹⁸⁶ Thus, the middle and petty bourgeois classes of the countryside, who criticized the leadership of the JP for protecting only the monopoly sectors, began to search for an alternative political leadership which would meet their demands.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁸⁵ “Maraş’dan Sonra...?”, p. 61.

¹⁸⁶ Sarıbay, p. 96.

This search for a political alternative came to the surface in May 1969 when Necmettin Erbakan was elected president of the *Türkiye Odalar Birliği* (Union of Chambers of Turkey) with the support of the medium and small capitalists against the big bourgeoisie. However, the İstanbul and İzmir branches of the Union of Chambers, which were under the control of the big industrial and commercial sectors, reacted against his presidency and finally, the minister of commerce of the JP cabinet did not recognize his presidency. Erbakan was dissociated from the management of the Chamber of Unions. In the same year, the JP rejected his application for deputy candidate.

These two events marked a turning point in the political alliance of all fractions of the bourgeoisie, which had been established from the late 1940s. The twenty year old political alliance broke down in 1969. From this time to 12 September 1980, the JP was mostly accepted as the representative of the big bourgeoisie. On the other hand, while the JP represented the interests of this class, it tried to regain the support of the other sectors that had stopped supporting the party, especially in the second half of the 1970s. The establishment of the Nationalist Front governments¹⁸⁷ was not only a necessity stemming from the electoral results; it was also a political tactic of the JP for achieving this aim through the establishment of a nationalist and anti-leftist front.

The political practice of the center-right was greatly influenced by this concern. Returning to the context of Maraş in the 1970s will give us a hint about this political line. In Maraş, the JP authorities made every possible effort to ally with the supporters of the NSP and the NAP. As will be seen in Chapter Four, the Justice Party members' discourse about the leftist/communist "threat" embodied in Maraş

¹⁸⁷ The first Nationalist Front government survived from 31 March 1975 to 21 June 1977. The second was in charge from 21 July 1977 to 31 December 1977. The participants of these coalitions were the JP, NSP, NAP and *Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi* (Republican Reliance Party, RRP).

was not very different from that of the others. Of course, this kind of politics had a practical meaning which transcended the borders of discourse. For example, in 1978, when a strike began in the factory of A. Pişkin, who was at the same time a well-known figure of the JP in Maraş, *ülküci* paramilitary forces helped him suppress it. Of course, this cooperation functioned mutually. As seen in the example of the infiltration of the NSP and NAP activists into the state cadres, the JP did not do anything to prevent the infiltrations due to its need to secure the help of the mass support of these organizations. Last, as will be shown clearly in Chapter Two, the JP's local authorities did nothing to prevent the massacres of the fascists in Maraş between 22 and 25 December 1978.¹⁸⁸

The Adventure of Political Islam in the 1970s

Returning to the loss of the center-right's hegemony within the other class factions, Erbakan's election as an independent deputy in Konya in the 1969 elections was important since it hastened the establishment of a new party that could represent the interests of small and medium Anatolian capitalists. The National Order Party was established on 26 January 1970. When the party was closed after 12 March 1971 for its "anti-secular" political attitude, the National Salvation Party was founded on 11 October 1972. The NSP represented this political line until 12 September. This movement was an attempt to respond to two interrelated problems, the first of which

¹⁸⁸ After a short time, this alliance began to be a source of crisis within the JP. The political cadres who had close links with big bourgeoisie of Western parts of Turkey such as İstanbul and İzmir began to criticize the party's close relationship with the NSP and the NAP. They accused the NSP of being against Kemalism and secularism. Also, as Ağaogulları stresses, some parts of the bourgeoisie "were perturbed by fascist activities during the second Nationalist Front government" and they criticized Süleyman Demirel's policy *vis-a-vis* the NAP. He also underlines the fact that in the late 1977, some JP senators and deputies proposed that the JP's mass support was "sliding toward" the NAP, "and that the former risked being devoured by the latter." Ağaogulları, p. 201.

was to find a stable ground for the medium and small capital owners in the new era of capitalist development. The second problem was how to overcome the effects of capitalist modernization in daily life. The party tried to respond these issues with its Islamic policy.

To start with the first, the NSP claimed that it represented the alternative to the existing order, which was marked by capitalist modernization. In this sense, Islamic politics were not very different from the fascist discourse of the NAP, as will be described later. Like the NAP's discourse, the NSP discourse, without even criticizing the private ownership at the heart of the capitalist system, "attempted to establish an interesting cultural symbiosis between industrialization and culture by offering Islam as a psychological mechanism to ease the burden of rapid industrialization." Therefore, it "argued that Turkey would accomplish industrial growth without, however, passing through the traumas brought about by the capitalist model, with its inherent materialism."¹⁸⁹ In this sense, Harootunian's reference to Zizek's argument of "capitalism without capitalism"¹⁹⁰ is also valid for political Islam, as for fascism. Erbakan's argument about Islamic economic system gave a Turkish version of "capitalism without capitalism":

Islam has a specific economic system. This economic system is neither Eastern nor Western. Because Islam has two wings, materiality and morality always go parallel. Hence, in Islam there is always both materiality and always, everywhere, in a manner never to separate, there is morality. The economic system of Islam is always grateful to materiality. Every one has possessions and everyone's possessions belong to him, and they are innocent. Islam also makes room for profit and benefit. A Muslim is charged with working, producing and becoming an economically advantageous element. With this point of view, Islam seems familiar to the Western style. However, the Islamic system is not totally the capitalism of the West. The greatest difference is that a Muslim does not squander... He is charged with using it in beneficial fields. The Western man does not have such a principle... Hence, the

¹⁸⁹ Binnaz Toprak, "The Religious Right" in *Turkey in Transition...*, p.228.

¹⁹⁰ Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. xxix.

Islamic system, by abolishing the disadvantageous aspect of the Western system and by utilizing the moral powers within the framework of its own measures finds the opportunity to establish the high aims that capitalism can not reach.¹⁹¹

In accordance with this program, the NSP defended somehow what Binnaz Toprak terms a “retraditionalization in socio-cultural life along Islamic principles.”¹⁹² It was related to the fear of the effects of capitalist modernization such as the atomization of the individual, and alienation. As opposed to these effects, the NSP hoped that “the Islamic emphasis on a close community based on brotherhood and mutual help would eliminate the atomized individuals of mass industrial society. In this context, the party spokesman tried especially to appeal to the ‘little man’ seemingly caught between big industry and organized labor.”¹⁹³ Thus, the restoration of Islamic values in public life was a result of the search to overcome modernity’s effects in daily life.

The NSP’s entrance into politics with the political line summarized above posed a great challenge to center-right, which failed to show its willingness to represent the middle and petty bourgeois classes of Anatolia despite its declarations to be nationalist-conservative (*milliyetçi muhafazakar*). In the 1973 elections, the

¹⁹¹ “Müslümanlığın kendine has mütakamil bir iktisadi sistemi mevcuttur. Bu iktisadi sistem ne Doğudaki sistemdir, ne de Batıdaki sistem. Çünkü Müslümanlık iki kanatlıdır, daima maddiyatla maneviyatı birbirine paralel yürütmüştür. Bundan dolayı Müslümanlıkta hem maddiyat vardır, hem de bununla beraber her zaman her yerde hiç ayrılmayacak şekilde bir de maneviyat vardır. Müslümanlığın iktisadi sistemi maddiyata hürmetkardır. Herkesin malı mülkü vardır ve herkesin malı mülkü kendisine aittir, masumdur...Müslümanlık aynı zamanda kara ve kazanmaya da büyük yer vermiştir...Müslümanlık behemehal çalışmak, bir istihsal yapmak ve iktisadi bakımdan faydalı bir unsur olmakla görevlidir. Bu bakımdan Müslümanlık adeta batı tarzına benziyor gibi geliyor...Ama Müslümanlık sistemi Batının kapitalizm sisteminin tam kendisi değildir. Aradaki büyük fark şuradadır:...Müslüman israf yapamaz...kazandığını mutlaka hayırlı bir sahaya harcamakla görevlidir. Batıdaki insanın böyle bir prensibi yoktur...Bu bakımdan İslam sistemi Batı rejiminin mahzurlu taraflarını ortadan kaldırıp, kapitalizmin erişemediği ulvi gayeye kendi ölçüleriyle manevi kuvvetlerden faydalanarak ihdas etmek imkanını bulmuş bir sistemdir.” Necmettin Erbakan *Milli Görüş* (İstanbul: 1975), p. 149, 150 quoted in Sarıbay, p. 124.

¹⁹² Toprak, p. 227.

¹⁹³ *İbid.*, p. 229.

party achieved a significant success by taking 11.8 percent of votes in Turkey. Of course, its major success depended on the votes coming from the region including Kahramanmaraş.¹⁹⁴ The party took 26.7 percent of the votes in the city and became the second party after the RPP. Of course, this success was achieved mostly due to the votes coming from the people who had voted for the JP in the 1969 elections.

However, the NSP's hegemony in the region did not last long since a new political actor began to rise in the same region that attracted a significant part of the NSP's mass support in the period between 1973 and 1980. This actor was the *ülküçü* movement. As mentioned above, the NAP necessitates a detailed analysis since its method of mobilizing the masses as an active part of the civil war against the radical left was very different from those of the other rightist actors. Of course, our research topic cannot be analyzed without considering this fact. Many official documents confirm the involvement of this movement in the bloody attacks in Maraş. For instance, after an investigation of the events, the General Commandership of the Gendarmerie (*Jandarma Genel Komutanlığı*) reported that there was "a common belief that the *ülküçü* militants backing the Nationalist Action Party started the incidents and sustained their active roles throughout the events."¹⁹⁵ From this perspective, examining the *ülküçü* movement gains extra importance for understanding the whole topic. Thus, explaining the reasons why the people supported this movement and how the movement mobilized this support into a political project become the key points of this study.

¹⁹⁴ For instance, the NSP took 27.8 percent in Elazığ, 21.7 in Çorum, 19.9 in Malatya, 25.7 in Sivas in 1973 elections. Sarıbay, pp. 172, 175.

¹⁹⁵ "Olayları başlatanların Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi yanlısı *ülküçü* militanların olduğu ve olaylar süresince bunların aktif rollerini sürdürdüğü kanısı yaygındır." Kenan Evren *Kenan Evren'in Anıları* (İstanbul: Milliyet, 1990), p. 233.

The Mass Support of the *Ülkücü* Movement in the 1970s

To start with the first point, the source of the mass dynamic of the *ülkücü* movement, we need to return to the problem of the representation of the reaction of the middle and small capital owners to capitalist development and its modern way of life. As mentioned above, Islamic politics arose because of this development and took a considerable mass under its hegemony. However, the crisis of these classes was much more complex than a struggle against the monopoly capital's hegemony and their modern standpoint. Hence, there was an extra problem that needed to be overcome by these classes. This was the rise of the Alevi middle classes in the same region, which made the relationship between these classes much more complex and produced a difficult socio-political problem known as Alevi-Sunni hostility.

At this point, an objection can be raised that the Alevi-Sunni animosity was not a new problem and thus cannot be explained by economic reasons since it was originally a cultural/religious problem. This claim stems from the viewpoint that sees the problem only as a problem of pre-modernity that provides the atmosphere to religious (or sectarian) problems which could only be solved by finishing modernization and secularization.¹⁹⁶ However, this general outlook fails to see the fact that the Alevi-Sunni problem of the 1970s was very different from that of the previous periods. Even an official document, which can be regarded as one of the most interesting official texts published in Republican history, namely the "Trial Indictment of the Kahramanmaraş Social Incidents" (*İddianame-Kahramanmaraş Toplumsal Olayları*), defines it as a modern problem stemming from the incorporation of capitalism into the areas where the Sunni and Alevi population lived

¹⁹⁶ For an example of this kind of simplistic analysis, see *ibid.*, p. 231.

together following the 1950s.¹⁹⁷

Before this process, the Sunnis “were gaining an advantageous position, consequently dominating the economic life of the region. Commercial and craft works and the majority of the productive lands and pastures were in the hands of the Sunnis, especially in the hands of Sunni big and medium capital owners.”¹⁹⁸ After the incorporation of capitalism, some parts of these sectors tried to transform their position upwards, and as seen in the case of the NSP, competition for economic and political interests with the monopoly capital of the western parts of Turkey. These sectors hoped to gain more interest and adapt to the conditions of the newly emerging capitalism.

On the other hand, this process produced its losers, too. As Emre Arslan stresses, “one of the most important features of the 1970s was the increase in the number of less but bigger firms. In this period, “the number of plants in which 10-19 and 20-49 people worked decreased. Small capitalists in Anatolia saw that this new development threatened their future.”¹⁹⁹

Related to this point, the trial indictment evaluated the rise of the Alevi small and medium capitalists due to the development of capitalism in the region as the second source of crisis in the socio-economic realm. For instance, the draining of the marshy places in the villages of Pazarcık and the construction of the Kartalkaya Dam in 1972 provided the means to irrigate new lands and allowed the farmers two or three crops a year. Cotton sowing developed in the region. Thus, some parts of the Alevi population, especially the upper classes of the Alevi peasantry, developed their economic wealth. Of course, the agricultural sector was not enough to develop

¹⁹⁷ *İddianame-Kahramanmaraş Toplumsal Olayları* (Ankara: Gnkur Basımevi, 1979), p. 98, 99.

¹⁹⁸ Laçiner, “Malatya Olayı..”, p. 15.

¹⁹⁹ Arslan, p. 52.

their wealth; they began to make investments in the textile industry and commerce.²⁰⁰ In addition, the rise of the Alevi population from the late 1950s was explained in the trial indictment by reference to this economic development.²⁰¹

A second aspect of the rise of the Alevis can be found in their increasing visibility in the central and local bureaucracy. As Zeki Coşkun argues, because of the fact that the Alevi population had not the necessary means of subsistence, they were more “enthusiastic about the services like education, work and culture which

²⁰⁰ H. Nedim Şahhüseyinoğlu, *Yakın Tarihimizde Kitleli Katliamlar-Malatya, K.Maraş, Çorum, Sivas Katliamların içyüzüne dönük bir inceleme* (Ankara: Ayyıldız, 1999), p. 86. Interestingly enough, a very important official document like the trial indictment of the Kahramanmaraş event has not attracted much consideration. The document does not restrict itself to a legal evaluation of the punishments done during the event. On the contrary, it goes beyond the scope of a trial indictment and investigates the socio-economic dimensions of the Alevi-Sunni conflict and its effects in the political realm. With these features, the document, which was written by the military prosecutors, is one of the best sources to understand different aspects of the civil war in the 1970s Turkey. However, at the time, the document was evaluated only as an attempt to confuse the consciousness of the workers by the bourgeois regime. For instance, a socialist periodical criticizes the document by saying that “To whom the Kartalkaya Dam brought wealth is known by the people of the region. The Kartalkaya Dam increased the wealth of the Alevi and Sunni landowners and capitalists. This is the truth. The trial indictment consciously hides this truth. The claim that the Kartalkaya Dam brought provided wealth to the Alevi and Sunni laborers is a viciously produced lie.” “*Kartalkaya Barajının kimlere refah getirdiği çevre halkı tarafından bilinmektedir. Kartalkaya Barajı Alevi ve Sünni toprak ağalarının ve patronların zenginliğine zenginlik katmıştır. Gerçek olan budur. İddianame bu gerçeği bilinçle gizlemektedir. Kartalkaya Barajının alevi ve Sünni emekçilere refah getirdiği iddiası alçakça uydurulmuş bir yalandır.*” *Devrimci Halkın Birliği*, 27 December 1979, p. 3. Of course, the wealth was not distributed evenly between the different classes, who had clashing interests. However, to know this fact does not necessarily make the reader despise the value of the document. Despite its argument falling into the trap of blindness to class struggle (or to read it as confusion), the document truly addresses the socio-economic consequences of the incorporation of capitalism to the region.

²⁰¹ *İddianame*, p. 99. *Devrimci Halkın Birliği* criticized the trial indictment for distorting the realities about the problem of migration. It wrote, “The trial indictment viciously perverts the reason of the migration from the rural areas to the cities. According to the trial indictment, the reasons for the migration of Alevis to the cities were their ownership of productive lands and achievement of economic prosperity. Nevertheless, the realities are the opposite of this argument. In general, the reason of the migration from countryside to the city is class differentiation in the rural areas. Poor people who have lost everything and can not survive in the rural areas due to the development of capitalism in the rural areas migrate to the cities to find jobs.” “*İddianame ülkedeki kırdan şehre göç olayının nedenini de alçakça tersyüz etmektedir. İddianameye göre, Alevilerin şehre taşınmasının nedeni verimli arazilere sahip olmaları ve ekonomik refaha kavuşmalarıdır. Oysa gerçekler bu iddianın taban tabana zıddıdır. Genel olarak kırdan şehre göçün temelinde yatan sebep kırdaki sınıf farklılaşmasıdır. Kırdaki kapitalizmin gelişmesiyle her şeyini kaybeden ve kır koşullarında geçimini sağlaması mümkün olmayan kır yoksulları artık kendilerine yeni iş sahaları aramaktalar ve şehre göçmektedirler.*” (ibid., p. 3). It is impossible to reject the fact that the main cause of the migration of Alevis was their impoverished living conditions in the rural areas. Of course, it was a general problem that affected both of Alevi and Sunni people. The establishment of the Yörük Selim District was a consequence of this mass migration to Kahramanmaraş. On the other hand, *Devrimci Halkın Birliği* failed to see that a significant part of the Alevi population (not the majority, of course) settled in the city not out of impoverishment. They invested in the newly developed sectors in industry and commerce.

were provided by the Republic than the Sunni sectors,²⁰² who were active in economic activities due to their superiority in the ownership of capital. Moreover, Coşkun underlines the fact that their feelings of exclusion and position of being minorities strengthened the cooperation among them. Consequently, the new cadres who were in charge in the local administration mostly considered benefiting their own districts more than other ones. In addition, they provided possibilities of employment to their own people.²⁰³ Briefly put, the visibility of the Alevis in both economic and social life increased due to the significant changes in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Turkish Version of Fascist Ideology

In response to this situation, namely the decline of the Sunni middle classes and the rise of the visibility of the Alevis, the *ülküçü* movement proposed a double-edged political program that put forward a *pseudo* “anti-capitalism” in the economic realm and “anti-modernism” in the cultural realm. Hostility towards Alevis was a part of that critique. Its anti-communism, which determined its armed activities during the whole era, did not constitute an independent ideological standpoint; however, it can only be understood as a part of this doubled-edged ideological critique, which was transformed into politics by the militant fascist cadres of the movement. That is why we need to take a detailed look at these two ideological answers.

²⁰² Coşkun, p. 268, 269.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 270, 271.

Anti-Capitalism

Daniel Guérin, in his classic study on the Italian and German experiences of fascism, argues that the most important ability of fascist ideology is its claim to be anti-capitalist without seriously attacking capitalism.²⁰⁴ Moreover, it is possible to argue that the main reason of the massive support of fascist ideology in different historical experiences was its ability to represent itself as an anti-capitalist political force.²⁰⁵ Any explanation of fascism based only on its anti-communist standpoint does not elucidate why the people do not choose other bourgeois parties to suppress communism or simply leave the duty of fighting communism to the state. In addition, it does not explain why thousands of fascist militants throughout the world ventured the extraordinary risks of being anti-communist fighters. It is clear that defending the existing capitalist order is not a good ideal in which to believe for anyone. In this sense, fascists constitute no exception.

Fascist movements found their mass support in the middle classes who felt the threat of proletarianization, as seen in Italian and German cases of the interwar period.²⁰⁶ As Poulantzas argues, these sectors were sandwiched between the bourgeoisie and the working class:

At the economic level, the small-scale producer and the small-scale owner are close both to the bourgeoisie (through ownership) and to the proletariat, the small-scale owner himself being the actual owner. They are also opposed to both the bourgeoisie, which progressively crushes them economically, and to the proletariat, as they fear proletarianization and fiercely attached to small property.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Daniel Guérin *Faşizm ve Büyük Sermaye* (Fascism and Big Capital), translated by Bülent Tanör (İstanbul: Suda, 1975), p. 115.

²⁰⁵ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2, p. 794.

²⁰⁶ In this sense, this part of the middle classes could be influenced by socialist ideology and politics since they began to join the working class in the conjunctural crisis of capitalism. *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Poulantzas, p. 241.

Returning to the case of central and eastern Anatolia, the same kind proletarianization “threat” existed in the 1970s. As Bora and Can write,

The traditional propertied classes of central and eastern Anatolian cities began to lose their stability due to the capitalization process, which accelerated in the 1970s. The big bourgeoisie gave no respite to local capitalists with the development of capitalism. This made the survival of the relative balance of power between the classes in the region difficult.²⁰⁸

Consequently, “the craftsmen and artisans, small industry and a section of tradesmen whose economic activity was brought to an end in the process of capitalization were not as ‘lucky’” as those who were able to adopt the capitalist development, who accepted the NSP’s more peaceful program concerning competition with the monopoly sectors. In short, “these segments perceived the threat of proletarianization and pretty rapidly becoming propertyless.”²⁰⁹

As Guérin shows, the crisis of the middle and petty bourgeois sectors in the times of crisis of capitalism does not stem from their exploited labour; it is because of the organized structure of competition and credit mechanisms. Thus, their reaction to capitalism generally does not aim at the socialization of production. Rather, they demand a kind of capitalism without having “extremities in the areas of expansion, credit and speculation.” This means a “self-regulated capitalism.”²¹⁰ In accordance

²⁰⁸ “Orta ve Doğu Anadolu illerinde bütün geleneksel mülk sahibi sınıflar, 70’lerde ivme kazanan kapitalistleşme süreci içinde ekonomik-toplumsal istikrarlarını yitirmeye başlamışlardı. Gelişen kapitalistleşmeyle birlikte, büyük burjuvazinin bu bölgedeki ‘yerli’ sermayenin soluk alacağı alanı giderek kısıtlaması; buralardaki sınıflar arasında mevcut buluna göreli dengenin ayakta kalmasını güçleştiriyordu.” Tanıl Bora, Kemal Can, *Devlet Ocak Dergah-12 Eylül’den 1990’lara Ülkücü Hareket* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1999), p. 85, 86.

²⁰⁹ “Oysa, iktisadi faaliyetleri kapitalistleşme süreci içinde geçersizleşen zanaatkarlar, küçük sanayi ve bir kısım ticaret erbabı, aynı “şansa” sahip değildi. Bu kesimler oldukça hızlı bir mülksüzleşme, proleterleşme tehdidini hissediyorlardı.” Ibid., p. 86.

²¹⁰ Guérin, p. 62. For instance, an *ülkü* writer, Ethem Pazarcı criticized the Turkish banking system with a nationalist tone: “As an unavoidable consequence of capitalism, the funds which are collected from the people and some institutions are transferred to a few people and firms, and thus are wasted.

with this outlook, the fascist style of anti-capitalism does not put into question the “consistent imaginary of capitalism,” which is “the economic subject’s free ownership and control of private property and the politically and legally guaranteed security of these rights;” thus it was only a *pseudo* anti-capitalism.²¹¹ On the other hand, the logic of this anti-capitalism makes a clear distinction between property ownership and capitalism. Accordingly, “‘property is the direct projection of the individuals on matter, it is a basic human attribute’, whilst capitalism, which has gradually ‘replaced this property of the individual with the property of capital’” must be eliminated.²¹² As in the other fascist movements, the *ülkücü* movement advocated private property ownership. The leader of the party, Alparslan Türkeş announced that the party defended property; however, its view was different from that of capitalism.²¹³

Furthermore, a famous leader of the *ülkücü* youth, Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu, wrote:

Another issue is that the Marxist-Socialist system base itself is property antagonism. According to this understanding, private property leads to the exploitation of men by men. Hence, it should be abolished. As property belongs to the state, theft and exploitation would end. It is clear that this understanding is very unscientific and contrary to realities. Defending this point of view is the result of not perceiving the difference between property ownership and its abuse. Whereas in lieu of confiscating the property from the property owners, society should be dominated by a moral understanding of using property in a manner

More important than this, in today’s Turkey in which theft is legitimized, everyone knows how the banking credits are used. The Turkish economy, which depends on consumption and thus is weak, is exhausting its sources in an unproductive way with its banking system. In other words, a fund which is national in terms of its source is not national in terms of its usage and is used to make a few capitalists richer.” *“Kapitalizmin kaçınılmaz bir sonucu olarak, halktan ve çeşitli kurumlardan düşük faizlerle toplanan bu fon bir avuç ferdin veya şirketin emrine verilerek üretime hemen hiç katkısı olmadan...israf edilmektedir. Daha önemlisi hırsızlığın meşrulaştığı Türkiye’de banka kredilerinin nasıl kullanıldığını bilmeyen kalmamıştır. Tüketime dayanan, cılız Türkiye ekonomisi, bankacılığıyla da kendi kaynaklarını en verimsiz yollarla tüketmektedir. Başka bir deyişle kaynağı itibarıyla milli olan bu fon, kullanılış itibarıyla gayri-milli olup bir kaç kapitalisti daha zengin etmeye yaramaktadır.”* Ethem Pazarıcı, “Dünü ve Bugünü ile Bankacılık” *Genç Arkadaş* (1), 15 December 1976.

²¹¹ Harootunian, “Beyond Containment: The Postwar Genealogy of Fascism and Tosaka Jun’s Prewar Critique of Capitalism,” available [online] at <http://law.rikkyo.ac.jp/npa/020401.htm>

²¹² Zeev Sternhell, “Fascist Ideology” in *Fascism A Reader’s Guide*, edited by Walter Laqueur (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Pres, 1976), p. 357.

²¹³ Alparslan Türkeş, *Yeni Ufuklara Doğru* (İstanbul: Kamer, 1995), p.65, quoted in Arslan, p. 107.

appropriate to the national interests.²¹⁴

From this point of view, there is no need for class struggle to achieve this target. In this respect, the middle classes' belief in a general interest of society that is above all class interests is central in this anti-capitalism. "This explains why they were against all kinds of class struggle, no matter it was directed against the proletariat from the bourgeoisie or from the proletariat against the bourgeoisie," Guérin writes.²¹⁵ The fascist style of politics was largely in accordance with this hostility to class struggle. Another *ülkücü* youth leader, Burhan Kavuncu, stated that the struggle of the *ülkücü* youth was not a class struggle.²¹⁶ An article published in *Genç Arkadaş* proposed, "the contradiction of the monopoly capital with the NAP and the NSP was not a class contradiction."²¹⁷ Last, Yazıcıoğlu's approach to "class struggle" gives a typical example of *ülkücü* understanding. He argued that the Marxist socialist system, by carrying the issue too far, formed a philosophy that depended on history and handled history as a class struggle that consisted of interest conflicts. As a starting point, it took an abstract working class. Consequently, the Marxist-socialist system just from its beginning, carried a character that disintegrated national unity since society did not consist of only the working class. For Yazıcıoğlu, workers constituted only one segment of society, just like the other segments of society. Thus, by basing

²¹⁴ "Marksist-sosyalist sistemin üzerine kurulduğu diğer bir temel ise mülkiyet düşmanlığıdır. Bu anlayışa göre özel mülkiyet insanın insan tarafından sömürülmesine yol açmaktadır. Bu sebeple de ortadan kaldırılması gerekir. Mülkiyetin devlete ait olması ile hırsızlık ve sömürü son bulacaktır. Böyle bir anlayışın tamamen ilim dışı ve gerçeklere aykırı olduğu ortadadır...Böyle bir görüşü savunmak mülk sahibi olmakla mülkü kötüye kullanmak arasında farkı ayırdedememenin bir sonucudur. Halbuki mülk sahiplerinin elinden mülklerini almak yerine, mülkün milli menfaatlere uygun olarak kullanılmasını öğretecek bir ahlak anlayışını topluma hakim kılmak gerekir." Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu, "Sistem Tartışmaları-2" *Genç Arkadaş* (2), 1 January 1977, p. 9.

²¹⁵ "...İster burjuvaziden proletaryaya, ister proletaryadan burjuvaziye yönelmiş olsun, sınıf mücadelesinin her türlüüne karşı olmalarını açıklar." Guérin, p. 64.

²¹⁶ Burhan Kavuncu, "Çok Uluslu Şirketler ve Ülkücü Hareket" *Genç Arkadaş* (6), 2 May 1977.

²¹⁷ "Tekelci kapitalizm CHP'yi neden tercih etti," *Genç Arkadaş* (7), 1 July 1977, p. 12.

itself on only one of these segments, Marxism would go for the total destruction of the other segments by terminating “national unity”.²¹⁸

Consequently, fascism proposes a system which promises to protect the capital ownership without any class conflict. “Because of its ‘economic isolation’...and because of its economic closeness to both bourgeoisie and proletariat,” writes Poulantzas, “the petty bourgeoisie believes in ‘neutral’ State above classes. It expects from the state to nurture it and arrest its decline.”²¹⁹ Thus, fascist corporatism provides a solution to their search for a “neutral” state. A kind of fascist corporatism like other fascist movements took place in the program of the NAP in a response to the petty bourgeoisie’s search for “national unity” and “social peace.”²²⁰

Another character of fascist anti-capitalism lies in the fact that it targets international finance-capital rather than the national bourgeoisie. In this sense, “anti-capitalism and chauvinism, national liberation and social liberation were confused.”²²¹

As the leader of the left wing of the Nazi Party, Gregor Strasser wrote:

To see German industry and the German economy in the hands of international finance capital, is the end of any possibility of social revolution, is the end of any dream of a socialist Germany... We national socialists have recognized the fact that there is a link...between the national freedom of our people and the economic liberation of the German working class. German socialism will be possible and durable when Germany is free.²²²

²¹⁸ Yazıcıoğlu, p. 9.

²¹⁹ Poulantzas, p. 241. A similar emphasis on the importance of the slogan of “neutral” state can be found in Guérin, p. 65.

²²⁰ Kemal Can states that Alparslan Türkeş’s fascist corporatism was based on the belief that the Turkish nation was composed of six social sectors. These were peasants, workers, business class, civil servants, guilds and tradesmen, and self-employed people. In Türkeş’s program of fascist corporatism, all these sectors established their own corporations and compulsory saving funds. The national sector (*milli sektör*), which will establish the nationalist-socialist (*milliyetçi-toplumcu*) order, would be formed with the unification of these corporations and funds. Kemal Can, “Ülkücü Hareketin İdeolojisi,” in Tanıl Bora (ed.), *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt-4 Milliyetçilik* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), p. 685.

²²¹ Guérin, p. 65, 66.

²²² Poulantzas, p. 190.

Additionally, Nazism made speculations about an international plot organized by Jewish capital, freemasons and international financiers against the German nation.²²³ In this sense, its anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism had a nationalist and xenophobic character. The *ülkücü* movement's anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism had the same characteristics. An *ülkücü* writer wrote these words in 1974:

Jewish capital and multi-national companies are the means of oppression of international capitalism, which means Jewish finance. In any country, if a national attempt that would cause consequences that were against capitalism, colonialists, by using foreign companies, would start an economic crisis within that country and would attempt to prevent that country from making its national rush. We can find numerous examples of that in Turkish history and even the in last five or ten years.²²⁴

In addition, the *ülkücü* type of anti-capitalism that reflected the fear and panic of the petty bourgeois class of central and eastern Anatolia did not only see Jewish capital or multinational countries as its enemies. Moreover, they regarded the Alevis as the same as foreigners. Its anti-Alevi standpoint targeted the Alevis as others who came from the villages and mountains and upset their comfort. Bora and Can add more details to the reasons why the Alevis were seen as strangers and why the reactions against them grew during the 1970s:

Were susceptible to place the responsibility of the economic crisis on the Alevis, which they saw as low in social-religious-cultural aspects and marginal. Most of the Alevi population that immigrated to the cities with the Republican period (an important part of them immigrated in the capitalization process of the 1970s) were anyhow reckoned as "immigrant/foreigners." The differences between the religious beliefs and customs and the Alevis' position of national "minority," contained the potential of turning this alienation into mistreatment and them into

²²³ Sternhell, p. 323.

²²⁴ "Yabancı sermaye ve çok uluslu şirketler, Yahudi maliyesi demek olan milletlerarası kapitalizmin baskı aracıdır. Herhangi bir ülke, kapitalizm aleyhine neticeler doğurabilecek bir milli teşebbüse geçtiği anda, sömürgeci ülkeler yabancı sermayeli şirketleri kullanarak o ülkede iktisadi bir kriz başlatacak ve yerleştikleri ülkenin milli atılımlar yapmasını önlemeye çalışacaklardır. Türk tarihinde, hatta tarihimizin son beş-on yılı içinde sayısız örnekleri vardır bunun..." Necdet Sevinç Tutanak (İstanbul: Oymak, exact date of publication unknown, probably 1975), p. 23, 24.

the enemy. Because the Alevis were traditionally relatively backward in capital accumulation, they tended to get included in the bureaucracy and the working class. Nevertheless, in the 1970s, at least from the point of view of the traditional middle classes, these occupations became stable “careers.” This fact also supported a specific reaction against Alevis. In towns and villages Alevis that were occupied with small production, trades etc. were seen as rivals. Moreover, this had an increasing affect on the reaction.²²⁵

In her novel about the Kahramanmaraş Massacre, İnci Aral tells about this reactive psychology. For Aral, the people who participated in the massacre of Alevis saw this as a solution to their poverty:

In the mosque, a hodja [religious teacher] is speaking as if he has lost himself. The same thing is being talked about in the streets, in the stores and coffee houses. Their [Alevis’s] farms and stores will be allocated to you; only we should get rid of them. Only their children graduate from school. They become *kaymakam* [head official of a province] and judges...For the sake of God and religion, we should terminate them...Why were they poor? Because of them.²²⁶

In conclusion, as Ağaoğulları puts it, the “poor and oppressed sectors of the Turkish and Sunni majority were stirred against” the Alevis and “this not only led the creation of an ultranationalist (even fascist) mass movement,” as observed in the case of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents, “but it also obscured the true causes of and the

²²⁵ “...iktisadi bunalımın “sorumluluğunu”, toplumsal-dini-kültürel bakımdan aşağı ve marjinal saydığı Aleviler üzerine yıkmaya yatkındı. Çoğunluğu kentlere ve kasabalara Cumhuriyet dönemiyle birlikte kırılık, dağlık yörelerden gelmiş olan (önemli bir kısmı da 70’lerdeki kapitalistleşme süreciyle buralara göçen) Alevi nüfusu zaten bir anlamda “göçmen/yabancı” sayılıyordu. Dini inanıştaki ve örfteki farklılıklar ve Aleviliğin ulusal “azınlık” konumu, bu yabancılaştırmanın, horlamaya, giderek düşman saymaya dönüşmesi potansiyelini içeriyordu. Sermaye birikimi bakımından geleneksel olarak nispeten geri konumda bulunan Alevilerin öteden beri yöneldikleri bürokratlığın ve işçiliğin 70’lerde azından geleneksel orta sınıfların gözünde-görece istikrarlı ve yükselen “kariyerler” görünümüne sahip olması; Alevilere karşı belirli bir tepkiyi besliyordu. O kentte, kasabada Aleviler arasında küçük üretim, ticaret vb... işlerle uğraşan “rakipler” bulunması, bu tepkiyi arttırıcı etki yapabiliyordu.” Bora and Can, p. 86.

²²⁶ “ Bir hoca kendini yitirmiş, coşkun ama uykuda gibi konuşup duruyor camide. Sokak aralarında, dükkanların kuytu köşelerinde, kahvelerde hep aynı şey konuşuluyor. Tarlaları, dükkanları size dağıtılacak, iş ki kurtulalım bunlardan diyorlar. Okullardan hep onların çocukları çıkıyor, vali oluyor, yargıç olup başımıza dikiliyor, diyorlar. Git gide bileniyor hınc. Din için, Tanrı adına yok etmeli onları. O bu yaşa dek böyle bir ayırımın bilincinde olmamıştı, ama bilenler anlatıyorlardı işte. Niye hep yoksuldu, beti bereketi kalmamıştı memleketin? Onlar yüzünden.” İnci Aral, *Kıran Resimleri* (İstanbul: Can, 2000), p. 73.

identity responsible for the misery of these sectors.”²²⁷

The Struggle against Modernity

It seems that the most important success of the *ülküçü* movement was its combination of fascist type anti-capitalism and an anti-modernist discourse. As will be discussed below, its anti-modernism provides the means to mobilize masses against its enemies, which were defined as the representatives of the modern way of life. For the *ülküçüs* and the masses mobilized by them, the main motivation of the armed struggle against the socialists, the Alevi population, and the RPP supporters was these enemies' so-called immorality, atheism and Westernism. Hence, it is obvious that the *ülküçü* movement's supporters mostly regarded the civil war in the 1970s as a cultural war, a war between the Westernists and the Turkist/Islamists. Thus, it is a must to concentrate on how that was perceived and practiced by the fascists of that period.

The first step in analyzing the *ülküçü* perception of cultural war is to show against whom the war was waged. In other words, it is necessary to identify what was responsible for Turkey's socio-economic problems in the *ülküçü* discourse. Similar to the Japanese fascism of the pre-war period, the “sickness of Westernization,”²²⁸ which was believed to be the main source of the spiritual crisis of society, was the main cause of all problems. As Harootunian observes, Japanese fascism evaluated the Meiji period as the source of “cultural disorder that had marked Japan,” which lay “in the production of an unequal power relationship between Japan and the West.”²²⁹ According to Japanese fascism, its main duty was "redressing" this unevenness by

²²⁷ Ağaoğulları, p. 197.

²²⁸ Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 35.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

"restoring cultural wholeness" of Japanese society, which had been broken by modernity.²³⁰

It could be said that Turkish fascism developed a similar approach to Turkish history. Interestingly enough, as in the Japanese critique of the Meiji era, the *Tanzimat* era was criticized by the *ülküçü* literature for its appeal to Westernization, which enslaved Turkey to the West. For example, an *ülküçü* writer, Muhammed Nezih, wrote:

How did Turkey come to this point? The writers who have honour of opinion write that the tragedy of the Turk has continued for nearly 150 years. If you ask an absolute date from them they would say 1839. Really, 1839 and the years accompanying it is the period in which the Turk receded from his own values and soul that had made him a standart bearer... The Tanzimat was a beginning, an idea and life style. It was alienation, decay, a betrayal... In the last 150-200 years we have been living tanzimat, we at the moment are still living it. Moreover, who knows how long will we live it? That state of mind first moved away from Islam's essence, and then found itself in the embrace of the West.²³¹

Despite the leadership of the NAP's Kemalist line, the majority of the *ülküçü* movement criticized Kemalism since it claimed that Kemalism continued the Westernist line of the Tanzimat. According to Nezih, in the beginning of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, Kemalism "gave signs of returning to the essential characteristics of the Turkish nation. However, when the regime achieved stability, it totally rejected this heritage. Thus, the image in the first era was only a tactic implemented for the establishment of Kemalism."²³² Another *ülküçü*, Vedat

²³⁰Ibid., p. 45, 51.

²³¹ "Türkiye bu günlere nasıl geldi?...Fikir namusu taşıyan kalem erbabı Türk'ün Dramı'nın (yuvarlak hesap) 150 seneden beri devam ettiğini yazarlar. Onlardan illa belli bir tarih isterseniz, 1839 derler. Gerçekten de 1839 ve ona tekadüm eden yıllar Türk'ün "Vaoluş-Yaradılış Hikmeti"ne, kendi öz kıymetlerine, O'nu...bayrakdar kılan ruhtan uzaklaştığı, yabancılaştığı, koptuğu devirlerdir. Tanzimat...bir başlangıç, bir düşünce ve hayat tarzıdır. Bir yabancılaşmadır, bir ufunettir, bir ihanettir, bir zilletir...Son 150-200 senedir hep Tanzimat'ı yaşadık, yaşıyoruz ve daha kimbilir ne kadar yaşayacağız. O kafa evvela İslam'ın özünden uzaklaştı...kendisini Batı'nın kucağında buluverdi!" Muhammed Nezih, "14 Ekim Seçimleri ve!..." *Nizam-ı Alem* (2), 12 October 1979, p. 3.

Bilgin, criticized all of the Kemalist reforms for having deepened the alienation that Turkish society faced:

Yet what we did not do to bring the thing named civilization? Did we not expel the 600-year Ottomans from the land? Did we not bring Latin alphabet to our schools? Did we not make the call to prayer Turkish? Did we not make an attire revolution? Did we not chase the ones wearing *kalpak* with police? Did we not say that women are slaves, and in order to free them haven't we directed them to sex parties and brothels? Haven't we attacked the places where we found two clogs and a rosary, for the reason to find a reactionary rise again? Haven't we never supported concrete bulk and Coco-cola companies? No, no... We did all. Nevertheless, at the end it did not bring any goodness to us, "civilization" did not serve us.... There is another side of the story. As it also endeavored to civilize us, the crisis increased and dilemmas became deeper. Until the pro-civilized "intellectuals," fell in love with this, our people were living in peace and harmony. But after that, the peace disappeared.²³³

Consequently, modernization and Westernization were regarded as the sources of the degeneration of Turkish society as well as of the underdevelopment of the Turkish economy:

Actually, the crisis and the bloody events we lived through are the natural consequences of historical development. The most important factor in the power balance in history and the establisher of the Islamic system, Turkish society began to be backward during the last couple of centuries and half-century before by refusing all its historical heritage and became aimless, unassertive and only caring about cozying up to West. As an outcome of the rubber stamp and imitating implications of nearly a half century, the system of Turkey gained a character of a typical under-developped capitalist country. Exploitation is the dominant color of this system. Historical Turkish society became a

²³²"aslına dönüş verdiği, bu tür emareler gösterdiği halde, bilahare ayakları (maddi manada) yere bastıktan, palazlandıktan sonra topyekun 'inkar fırtınası'na yakalanmıştır. Yani...suret-i haktan gözükmeye sırf Kemalizme ulaşmak için tezgahlanmıştır." Ibid.

²³³"Oysa neler yapmadık ki medeniyet denilen şeyi getirmek için? Altı yüzyıllık Osmanlıyı mı kovmadık ülkesinden? Latin harflerini mi sokmadık mekteplerimize? Ezanı mı Türkçe okutmadık? Kılık, kıyafet, şapka devrimlerini mi yapmadık? Kalpak örtenleri, sarık saranları mı kovalatmadık polise? Kadınlar köle deyip, onları özgür kılmak için seks partilerine, fuhuş yuvalarına mı sürmedik? Bir çift takunya, bir tespih bulduğumuz yerleri mi basmadık İrtica hortluyor diye?...Beton yığınlarını, Coca Cola şirketlerini mi eksik ettik? Hayır, hayır. Hepsini yaptık, ettik. Fakat neticede iyilik getirmedik, yaramadı bize "medeniyet"... İşin bir diğer yönü daha var. O da biz "medenileşmek" için çırpındıkça bunalımlar artmış, çımazlarımızın derinleşmiş olmasıdır. Medeniyet yanlısı "aydın" taifesinin, bu sevdaya tutulduğu yıllara kadar insanımızla iç içe yaşayan huzur ve mutluluk, işin kara sevdaya dönüşmesinden sonra uçup gitti." Vedat Bilgin, "Türkiye'de Yabancılaşma" *Genç Arkadaş* (9), 5 November 1977.

degenerated society with the spread of materialist values.²³⁴

As observed above, the critique of modernization and Westernization was the point of departure of the *ülkücü* discourse. Thus, it is important to answer the question of whether the movement had a solution to the problem. It seems that the answer to this question will shed light on the methods and means that were used by Turkish fascism for overcoming the sickness of modernization and Westernization. For this reason, to concentrate on the issue whether the *ülküçüs* proposed a solution will help us to explain why that movement used violent methods to achieve its targets.

If we look at the Japanese example, the fascist solution "was to return to 'Oriental religious' practice, which through its own conception of 'freedom,' vastly different from the freedom of the Western individualism...supplied an awareness of 'subjective nothingness' capable of redirecting people back to a disposition where they would voluntarily 'dissolve the self and serve the public.' It was this effort to reject the modern and its spiritual distortions that prompted the call for an overcoming."²³⁵ Similar to this, in the Turkish case, Naci Bostancı, who was among the most articulate intellectual figures of the *ülkücü* movement, defined its solution by returning to Islamic religious practice, which promised an alternative order in which man voluntarily dissolves the self by "enslaving his existence" to Islamic order.²³⁶

At this point, it is necessary to take a brief look at the political shift of the fascist

²³⁴"Esasında geçirdiğimiz bunalımlar, meydana gelen kanlı olaylar, tarihi gelişimin tabii sonuçlarıdır. Tarihteki kuvvet dengesinin en önemli unsuru ve evrensel İslam nizamının müessisi olan Türk toplumu bir kaç yüzyıldır gerilemeye başlamış ve yarım asır önce bütün tarihi mirasını reddederek iddiasız, gayesiz, sadece battıya yaranma sevdasında olan bir toplum haline gelmiştir. Yarım asırlık şahsiyetsiz ve taklitçi uygulama neticesinde Türkiye'nin düzeni, tipik bir az gelişmiş ülke kapitalizmi niteliğini kazanmıştır. Sömürü ve istismar bu düzenin hakim rengidir. Tarihi Türk toplumu, materyalist değer hükümlerinin yaygınlaşması ile dejenere bir toplum haline gelmiştir." Gençlik Emperyalizmin Çemberini Kıracak!" *Genç Arkadaş* (1), 15 December 1976.

²³⁵Harootunian, p. 37.

²³⁶Naci Bostancı, "İdeolojik Bütünlük," *Genç Arkadaş* (13), 3 March 1978, p. 2.

movement from a secular attitude to Islamism between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s to historicize the Islamization process of Turkish fascism. Emre Arslan argues that the ultranationalist intelligentsia of the 1950s and 1960s were unable to connect with and mobilize the masses because of their elitist and antireligious character.²³⁷ Thus, using an Islamic discourse seemed a promising way to overcome this difficulty in mobilizing the masses and indeed, as Jacob Landau proposed when Alparslan Türkeş and his friends took power in the *Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi* (Republican Peasant Nation Party-RPNP) in 1965, they turned the party to an Islamist line.²³⁸ In my opinion, this is only partially true because of the fact that the RPNP did not emphasize much of the Islamic side of the doctrine in this period. Turkist extreme-nationalism was the main ideological motive of the party and Türkeş declared that the party defended secularism. In addition, the ultranationalist intelligentsia seemed to maintain its power to a certain extent. However, when political Islam became a major actor in Turkish political life from the foundation of the National Order Party in 1970 and continued to sustain its influence in the following years under the National Salvation Party's leadership, the *ülküçü* movement began to define its political line with Islam. In its competition with the NSP, Turkish fascism proposed a combination of Turkism and Islamism that was theorized by Seyyid Ahmet Arvasi's Turkish-

²³⁷Arslan, p. 41.

²³⁸Jacob Landau *Türkiye'de Aşırı Akımlar-1960 sonrası Sosyal ve Siyasal Çekişmeler* (Ankara: Turhan, 1978), p. 381. A right-wing novelist, Mustafa Miyasoğlu, in *Dönemeç* (Curve in the Road) discusses the problems stemming from capitalist modernization by describing its effects in a central Anatolian city, Kayseri. One of the main characters of this novel, Mehmet Ziver, examines the problem of the *ülküçü* movement as not understanding the importance of religion in making politics. Ziver thinks that, "Our nation lost its head when someone talks about religious faith...The people around the colonel [Alparslan Türkeş] do not know this characteristic of the nation well...We cannot find supporters even in İstanbul if Mr. Dündar [Dündar Taşer-second man of the *ülküçü* movement until his death in 1972] did not exist. When he talks about Ottomanism, things change; everybody listens to him as meek as a lamb." "*Bizim millet, din iman dedin mi, aklını fikrini kaptırır...Albayın çevresindekiler milletin bu tarafını iyi bilmiyor.Şu Dündar Bey olmasa, İstanbul'da bile az taraftar buluruz...Adam Osmanlılık deyince, akan sular duruyor, herkes kuzu kesiliyor.*" Mustafa Miyasoğlu, *Dönemeç* (İstanbul: Ötügen, 1996), p. 201. It seems that the Islamization of fascist movement aimed to solve the problem defined by Miyasoğlu.

Islamic Ideal (*Türk-İslam Ülküsü*).

Consequently, the *ülküçü* movement was transformed into a kind of Islamist movement in the mid-1970s. Many examples of this tendency can be found in the *ülküçü* literature of the 1970s. For instance, *Nizam-ı Alem*, a periodical which defined itself as in line with Arvasi's Turkish-Islamic Ideal, wrote: "We are the warriors of the Islamic order based on the principles of *vahiy* [divine inspirations; God's revelation], which is above all human orders."²³⁹

It could be said that the Turkish-Islamic discourse stemmed from "the intention to substitute" a nationalist and religious interpretation for "an actual understanding of the real problems of the present." Harootunian's emphasis on the fascist attempt "to resolve contemporary labour problems by explicating Buddhist classics" in the Japanese context appears very meaningful in the Turkish context, too. As Harootunian argues, "this interpretative move inevitably led to...a 'conceptual category system' that posits a remote ideal belonging to a past whenever there is the demand for interpretation in the present."²⁴⁰ Turning to the Turkish context, in the *ülküçü* literature, the Turkish-Islamic past also appears to have provided every means to finding a solution to the contemporary problems of the period. The only solution was a total restoration of the Muslim Turkish tradition. Harootunian stresses that all "restorationist forms invariably rested their claims to authority and authenticity on the presumption of a timeless patriarchal system as the most basic unit of "national life" that had changelessly endured the long period since the beginning of the race."²⁴¹ This emphasis on the ancient order's patriarchal aspect is worth note. For example,

²³⁹ "Bütün beşeri nizamların üstünde vahy esaslarına dayanan İslam nizamının temsilcileri ve savaşçılarıyız." *Nizam-ı Alem* (2), 12 September 1979.

²⁴⁰ Harootunian, "Beyond Containment..."

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

Mehmet Doğan proposed that the patriarchal state was the Turkish nation's source of power.²⁴² Additionally, similar to Japanese fascism, the *ülküçü*s proposed that the only way to solve the problems of the workers was the revival of Islam.²⁴³ To summarize, the fascist movement promised a return to the "Golden Age" of the Muslim Turks, including its patriarchal order, and a solution to labour problems as a safe haven for the masses, who felt the destructive effects of capitalist modernization. In this sense, it claimed to offer an alternative different from that of socialism.

Yet one question remains unanswered: To whom could the task of the revival of the Turkish-Islamic Ideal be entrusted? What was the means to achieve the final solution? In my opinion, the main difference of the fascist movement from the Islamic political line of the NSP lay in this answer. Different from the NSP's more peaceful methods for retraditionalizing public life along Islamic lines, the fascist movement followed the method of intervening into daily life by violent means and destroying all of the "alien" elements in public life.

The region which included central Anatolia, the western parts of eastern Anatolia and the areas north of Çukurova, was the main target of the *ülküçü* intervention into daily life practices since the *ülküçü* movement thought that this region included the purest elements of the Muslim Turkish nation which had been able to escape from the Westernist/modernist degeneration. In my opinion, Ökkeş Şendiller's description of life in the city center of Kahramanmaraş is one of the best examples of this outlook. In Şendiller's narrative of Kahramanmaraş, a hope to find an "essentialized and exceptionalistic" Turkish-Islamic culture "capable of resisting the

²⁴²Mehmet Doğan, "Türk'ün Güç Kaynağı: Devlet Baba Geleneği," *Genç Arkadaş* (2), 1 January 1977, p. 10.

²⁴³"Müslümanlar ücrete değil faize düşmandırlar," *Nizam-ı Alem* (2), 12 September 1979.

historical change”²⁴⁴ brought by modernity is obvious:

To know Maraş, it is necessary to be awake during the morning *ezan*. This enchanted call, the voice of the hodjas, can awaken a person in a dead sleep. Surely, this is similar in every part of the motherland and other Muslim places. But here you can inhale this air at close range. It is the food of the soul. The souls of the people of Maraş are washed in this divine spring five times a day. In each house, lamps begin to be lit. This means preparation for namaz. This naive people walk to mosques in prayer. Up to now, it was impossible to distort this lovely scene. Furthermore, this was getting better. The faithful people responded to every action against this faithful spirit. Moreover, the people did not tend to be a part of cosmopolitanization.²⁴⁵

Related to this claim of purity, the fascist movement's militant cadres perceived the political struggle as a "cultural war" directed against anyone who posed a threat to this purity. Its practice depended on the motivation for "preserving public morality" against modern and cosmopolitan elements to "overcome the division, disunity, and fragmentation that contemporary society was experiencing."²⁴⁶ A pamphlet distributed in Maraş, under the signature of *Ateş Gençlik* (Fire Youth)²⁴⁷ on 13 November 1969, is a good example of what I mean to address by using concepts such as "cultural war" or "intervening in everyday life." At the top of the circular, it was announced that the main reason for the social and economic crisis experienced by Turkey was society's

²⁴⁴ Harootunian *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 44.

²⁴⁵ “İnsanın Maraş'ı tanınması için bir sabah ezanı uyanık olması yeter bence... Ruhlara işleyen o ulvi davetin muezzinlerin yanık sedaları ile insanı ölüm uykusundan kaldırdığı hemen fark edilir. Elbette her vatan parçasında ve islam diyarında da öyledir. Ama insan bu havayı burada daha yakından teneffüs eyler. Seher vakti teneffüs edilen bu hava ruhların gıdasıdır. Ruhları bu iman pınarında, her beş vakit yıkanan Maraş'lı, bu huzur içinde Türk'ün bütün hasletlerine ve İslam olan herşeye bağlıdır. İşte Türk'ün bağlı olduğu değerlerin kaynağı burcu burcu iman kokan, bu havadır. Tan yeri ağarır, minarelerden yankılanan ve ruhların temizlendiği ulvi daveti dinlerken, evlerde tek tek yanan lambalar.. Bu, sabah namazına hazırlıktır. Kolları yarıya kadar sıvanmış nur yüzlü insanların, dualar mırıldanarak camiye doğru akışı.. Bu manzarayı bozmak bugüne kadar mümkün olmamıştır. Tam aksine bu iman ehli, her geçen gün daha da gençleşmekte, daha da zinde bir ruh kazanmaktadır. Bu iman pınarından temizlenmiş, yıkanmış mübarek havayı silmeye yönelik her hareket mutlaka tepki görmüş, rağbet bulmamıştır. Yine planlı olan kozmopolitleşmeye de rağbet edilmemiştir.” Şendiller, p. 18, 19.

²⁴⁶ Harootunian *Overcome by Modernity*, p. 30.

²⁴⁷ The fascist movement used these kinds of signatures to prevent itself from legal responsibility. In reality, the youth branches of the fascist movement's local branches prepared these kinds of materials.

rejection of its national tradition and customs, and, consequently, its fall into moral degeneration. The pamphlet continues with a warning against those who did not obey the rules during the month of Ramadan: "We, the youth of fire, say 'stop' to this situation. We warn our women and daughters, who have become loose and shameless adopting themselves to fashion, which is no more than a Western trend of degeneration. From this time on, we will burn the legs of women wearing mini-skirts with acid. Also, we wage war against those who do not observe the fast."²⁴⁸

In my opinion, the pamphlet surely targeted the Alevi population, first because of the fact that Alevis do not fast during Ramadan. In addition, radical leftist elements can be regarded as the target because of their un-Islamic lifestyle. The mini-skirt issue targets everyone who was identified as modernist, westernist or cosmopolitan, including the first two and the RPP supporting Sunnis, and a small part of the Justice Party voters whose lifestyle was not found to be Islamic enough. Another event happened on 12 February 1974 (Liberation Day of Maraş, commemorating its liberation from French occupation on 12 February 1921²⁴⁹) attracted somehow a nation-wide interest in Kahramanmaraş. When people gathered for the official ceremony marking the anniversary of the Day of Liberation about 9:00, some people began to harass the long haired students with provocative words. About 10:00, the harassment increased when the people gathered for the ceremony also turned against the long haired students. Then, about 11:00, the people attacked the long haired students and beat them. After that, they took the students to a barbershop and cut their

²⁴⁸ Turhan Feyzioğlu, *Fırtınalı Yıllarda Ülkücü Hareket* (İstanbul: Ozan, 2000), p. 612, 613.

²⁴⁹The name of the city, Maraş, was changed to Kahramanmaraş, which meant "Hero Maraş" on 12 February 1973 because of the city's heroic resistance to the French occupation. Sütçü İmam, a religious man of Maraş, started the resistance in the city and even today he is a well-known national figure there.

hair by force.²⁵⁰ The security forces did nothing to stop this attack, which took place at an official ceremony attended by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Internal Affairs. This confirms the political content of these interventions since the local branch of the RPP criticized the attack and demanded an effective investigation into who was responsible for it.²⁵¹ In short, it is obvious that the fascist movement had become a real mass movement by succeeding in presenting its struggle as a cultural war against all modernist and westernist subjects. Thus, it seems clear that it successfully channelled the reactions against the consequences of capitalist development into a cultural reaction against modernity rather than against the capitalist structure.

The rise of the radical left must be evaluated as another component of the fascist cultural war. As Arslan writes, “with the rise of the communist movements, fascistic ideas became much more effective in political life, and their political position became more than a current; they became movements.”²⁵² Against the communist threat, the *ülküçü* movement used a double-edged defensive. The first side was based on the claim that communism was a materialist ideology equal to atheism and immorality.²⁵³ The second argument claimed that capitalism and communism were essentially the same. In the *ülküçü* periodicals, many examples of this double-edged anti-communism can be found. For instance, Seyyid Ahmet Arvasi argued that materialist culture wore the masks of capitalism and communism in different circumstances. Thus, both capitalism and communism evaluate the individual in terms of his place in the production process. In short, they only see the individual as a tool for economic

²⁵⁰Hasan Duyar, “12 Şubat Olayı,” *Kahramanmaraş Postası*, 18 February 1974.

²⁵¹*Kahramanmaraş Postası*, 15 February 1974.

²⁵²Arslan, p. 99.

²⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 100.

activity.²⁵⁴ In accordance with this view, communism was defined as the twin of capitalism. Both meant oppression and violence.²⁵⁵ An imprisoned militant's letter sheds light on the cultural content of the motivation for the anti-communist struggle. The letter argues that all alien ideologies formed a united front against the *ülkücü* youth. It defined this *pseudo* front as the "army of misbelief" (*küfür ordusu*), which means an anti-Islamic alliance.²⁵⁶ A Turkist-Islamist, Derviş Edip, declared that, "it is only Islam which can destroy communism, which is the most aggressive and brutal form of blasphemy."²⁵⁷ A. Tevfik Ozan went one step further in his article *Çağdaş Küffar* (Modern Unbelievers). Ozan wrote that his friends, who were also *ülkücü*, had discussed the divisions of the communist factions and their ideological standpoints for more than one hour. After that, Ozan wrote: "I became bored when I saw and scrutinized the newspapers and journals of these unbelievers in the archive of *Genç Arkadaş*. Their blasphemy is their common characteristic." After this definition of all leftist fractions, Ozan proposed the *Bakara* sura of the Quran, which says, "Kill where you find them," which must have been the main reference of the *ülkücü* youth against the radical left.²⁵⁸ In short, Islamic motivation was the main source of the *ülkücü* side of the low-intensity civil war in Turkey in the 1970s.

²⁵⁴Seyyid Ahmet Arvasi, *Milletlerin İtibarı* (İstanbul: Burak, 1996), p. 94.

²⁵⁵Latif Salkım, "Kurşuna Dizilen Umutlar," *Genç Arkadaş* (13), 3 March 1978, p. 7.

²⁵⁶Erdoğan Çelikkemir, "Sürgün" *Genç Arkadaş* (new season-5) 31 December 1979, p. 15.

²⁵⁷"*Küfrün en saldırganı, en canavarcası olan komünizm illetini insanlık tarihinden silecek olan İslam'dır.*" Derviş Edip, "Hicri 1400'de Komünizm ile İslam karşı karşıya gelecek!.." *Nizam-ı Alem* (2), 12 October 1979, p. 4.

²⁵⁸A. Tevfik Ozan, "Çağdaş Küffar" *Genç Arkadaş* (new season-4), 8 January 1979.

Fascist Mass Mobilizations in the 1970s:

The Political Climate before the Kahramanmaraş Incidents

The general elections held on 5 June 1977 proved that the NAP had enlarged its mass support due to the votes coming from the NSP's block. A statistical comparison of the NAP and NSP's votes in the 1973 and 1977 elections shows that the former took half of the votes of the latter in central and eastern Anatolia. For instance, in Erzincan, NSP decreased from 16.1 to 5.9 percent and the NAP votes increased from 4.6 to 19.0 percent. In Elazığ, the NSP votes decreased from 27.8 to 14.0 percent and NAP increased from 4.2 to 18.7 percent. In Kahramanmaraş, the NSP, which took 26.7 percent of the votes in 1973 decreased its to 15.1 percent in 1977. The NAP enlarged its electoral support from 5.5 percent in 1973 to 15.5 percent in 1977.²⁵⁹

Of course, this support was not enough for the fascist movement to take power. However, it seems that the electoral success in the region reshaped the NAP's "civil war" strategy. The party decided to follow the path to mobilize all religious-nationalist opposition against the RPP government in 1978. Of course, the fascist movement did not only use the method of mobilizing masses in the 1970s, it had different methods of waging war against the "communist threat" and the RPP, such as organizing assassinations and massacres of these forces throughout the country. In this part of the chapter, I will take a brief look at the main part of its civil war strategy, namely the violent fascist mass mobilizations in the region defined by Ömer Laçiner as the Çorum-Gaziantep-Erzurum triangle, where the Sunni-Alevi and Turkish-Kurdish animosities were intense and accompanied the ongoing struggle between the radical left and the *ülküçü* movement. The NAP waged the war against the radical left and its

²⁵⁹ Sarıbay, p. 165, 166, Ağaoğulları, p. 202.

potential allies such as the Alevi population and RPP supporters on an Islamic line defined by Derviş and Ozan above.

Although, the NAP employed similar activities to mobilize the masses against these forces before 1978, it did not implement them as part of a consistent strategy.²⁶⁰ The opening of this strategy was a large-scale fascist mass mobilizations in Malatya in April 1978. Hamid Fendođlu, a political figure who had been elected mayor within the coalition of the JP, NSP and NAP, was killed with his bride and grandchildren when he opened a bomb packet on 17 April 1978. In response to this attack, more than ten thousand people who attended his funeral started a large-scale attack in the city shouting "Muslim Turkey!" "Revenge for Hamido!" "Ecevit the murderer!" and "Death to communists!" They destroyed the offices of the RPP, TÖB-DER and leftist local newspapers. They ruined stores owned by Alevis. In addition, they targeted places they regarded as un-Islamic, such as restaurants, stores selling alcohol, and newspaper wholesalers. After that, a major attacked started against the Alevi districts. The clashes continued until 20 April. In the end, eight people died, 100 were wounded. Nine hundred and sixty workplaces and houses were ruined.²⁶¹

Following these large-scale incidents in Malatya, similar events took place in Sivas on 3-4 September 1978. When an old Alevi man tried to stop two children who came from Alevi and Sunni families from quarrelling in the street, about twenty fascist militants surrounded him. Then this event turned into a street fight. Two women who interfered in the quarrel were killed. Fabricated accounts, such as "the communist Alevis have bombed Alibaba Mosque" spread throughout the city. After

²⁶⁰ For instance, on 2 February 1975, the right-wing militants attacked a "Protest against Fascism" meeting organized by the democratic mass organizations in Malatya. On 15-16 February, thousands of people ruined the TÖB-DER, RPP offices and the stores owned by Alevis. On 18-20 January 1976, the party led similar massive attacks in Pazarcık/Kahramanmaraş.

²⁶¹Şahhtüseyinođlu, pp. 50-68.

that, a major attack started in Sivas targeting the municipal building (because the mayor was a RPP member), the stores owned by Alevis and RPP supporters, and Alevi districts such as Alibaba, Aydoğan and Çiçekli. The people living in these districts resisted the attacks. At the end of the day, five people were killed, including fascist militants, and fifty wounded. In the following day, the people who gathered in the mosques for the funerals of the fascist militants started to march, shouting “Communists and *Kızılbaş* [Alevis] killed our brothers!” Thousands of people attacked the same targets, shouting “Muslim Turkey!” “Death to communists!”, “Sivas will be the grave of the unbelievers!” In addition, some other un-Islamic places, including the local brothel, were ruined. Nine people were killed and about one hundred wounded.²⁶²

What was happening in Kahramanmaraş in that period? It seems that the attacks against the leftist forces intensified day by day from the time of the establishment of the RPP government in January 1978. After that time, an armed campaign was started against the left in the city. On 16 January 1978, the house of İsmail Ünlü, the deputy manager of the *Sanat Okulu* (Art School), was bombed. On 19 January 1978, fascists bombed the workplace of a known leftist. On 4 March, the house of the *Cumhuriyet Savcısı* (attorney general of the Republic), Celal Nuri, was bombed. On 14 March, a leftist teacher's house and Akın Coffee house, which was known as a leftist and Alevi place, was bombed. On 26 March 1978, the office of TÛM-TİS (*Türkiye Motorlu Taşıt İşçileri Sendikası*, Motorized Vehicle Workers' Union of Turkey) was bombed.

The assassination of Sabri Özkan, an Alevi *dede*, on 3 April 1978 by fascists was an important provocation. His funeral was the same that for the two leftist

²⁶²Coşkun, pp. 294-298.

teachers later on 22 December 1978, which set off the massacre in the city. A crowd of 5,000 people gathered at Özkan's funeral shouting anti-fascist slogans. The leftist community made a display of power by touring the city in a convoy, shouting slogans. They came close to the NAP building, but did not attack it. On 13 April, the RPP office was bombed.

A fiasco within the fascist organization stopped the bombings for six months. When two militants were arrested before a bombing on 16 April 1978, the existence of an illegal armed group came to light. The name of the group was the Army of Liberation for the Enslaved Turks (*Esir Türkleri Kurtarma Ordusu*, ETKO). On the same day, a major provocation planned to take place in Pazarcık failed. A postal service worker opened a package addressed to Alevi landowner and well-known RPP member Memiş Özdal, and died when the bomb it contained exploded. Interestingly enough, it sent from the same time and place as a package opened by Hamid Fendoğlu in Malatya. The security forces found a link between ETKO and the bomb package and other bombings in Maraş. Then *Büyük Ülkü Derneği* (Great Ideal Association, the local branch of the *ülküçü* youth) was closed down. The bombings stopped until that set at the Çiçek Cinema on 19 December 1978.²⁶³

However, the *ülküçü* movement's activities did not stop since the rise of the workers and peasants movements continued. The frequency of student demonstrations and radical leftist activity continued to rise in this period. Thus, its counterpart could not stop even in the absence of a legal youth branch. It seems that the most important fascist effort was to make the Sunni community believe that the mosques of Maraş were under threat by the communists. A news item published in an *ülküçü* newspaper

²⁶³The petition of the advocates Ali Kalan, Emcet Olcaytu and Barış Yiğit to "Adana-Kahramanmaraş-Gaziantep ve Adıyaman İleri Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı Askeri Mahkemesi Kıdemli Hakimliği," file number:1979/401, p. 1, 2.

on 9 July 1978 is a very good example of the fascist strategy in Maraş. The article said, “Leftists have burned the Beyazıt Mosque in Kahramanmaraş.” It reported that the security forces had arrested young people who had been distributing a pamphlet criticizing that attack after Friday *namaz*. The news continued, by saying, “The people blamed the security forces, who had arrested nationalist young people criticizing the attack rather than the leftists who are against religion.”²⁶⁴ In the same month, clashes between the workers of the Pişkinler Yarn Factory and fascists began. As mentioned above, the strike in the factory increased the tension in the city until December 1978.²⁶⁵ As can be seen, Kahramanmaraş had the potential for large-scale incidents. The low-intensity civil war was thus able to escalate into a larger war in the city.

The civil war situation in the 1970s can be summarized by underlining two features of the socialist movement in Turkey. First, was its success during the 1960s and 1970s, at intervening in the major social struggles such as labor movement, peasant struggles, and student opposition groups. This success gave socialists the advantage of transforming these struggles into an anti-capitalist struggle. In other words, “the rift between the ruled and the rulers in Turkish society had never been so clear as in this period.”²⁶⁶ This achievement of the socialist movement differentiates this era from other ones in modern Turkish history.

The second point, based on the failure of the socialist movement to organize among petty bourgeois classes in central and eastern Anatolia, was also crushed by big capital in the same period. This was the main cause of the failure of the socialist movement to prevent the rise of a fascist mass movement towards the second half of

²⁶⁴ *Ortadoğu*, 9 Temmuz 1978.

²⁶⁵ For the case of Pişkinler Factory, see pages 46- 48.

²⁶⁶ “Türkiye toplumunun ‘yönetilen sınıfları’ ile ‘yöneten sınıfları’ arasındaki kopukluk hiçbir zaman bu dönemdeki gibi belirgin olmamıştır.” *Birikim*, no. 32, October 1977, p. 3.

the 1970s. Consequently, the fascist movement was able to accomplish its mission, which is described by Poulantzas as having addressed the anti-capitalist reaction of these classes while serving the benefits of the big bourgeoisie by waging war against the socialist movement. This movement used two main ideological and political tools, namely anti-capitalist demagogy and anti-communist propaganda, in order to accomplish its mission in that period. Religious and national animosities were revitalized in the service of this mission. These animosities did not constitute an independent social and political content in that period; they were determined by the civil war conditions, which can be summarized in the two points mentioned above. Thus, this chapter placed the political atmosphere of Kahramanmaraş before the massacre within the trajectory of the civil war in Turkey rather than analysing it via an essentialistic and simplistic outlook based on the clash of different identities in an isolated environment.

CHAPTER 3

CIVIL WAR IN KAHRAMANMARAŞ

Because no other explanation can tell us more about the reality of what happened in Kahramanmaraş in the last days of 1978, this chapter gives a total account of the bloody days between 19 and 25 December 1978. All issues discussed in this thesis find their right place and true explanation within this account. However, more than this, this account can be read as an academic approach calling attention to the Turkish version of fascism in the studies of world fascism. This argument does not imply that all actions in the incidents were directed by a strict fascist leading cadre; as will be seen below, the Kahramanmaraş Social Incidents had a specific element of spontaneity. However, the *ülkücü* movement's role and its influence in that civil conflict, from ideological elements and mobilization strategies to personal attitudes, is enough for it to be considered within the most influential fascist movements of the twentieth century.

Opening Bell: 19-21 December

On 19 December 1978, at 20:00, 857 people settled in to watch a Cüneyt Arkın film called "When Will the Sun Rise?" (*Güneş ne zaman doğacak?*) in Çiçek Cinema in Kahramanmaraş.²⁶⁷ The topic of the film was the "enslaved Turks" who had taken shelter in Turkey from the USSR and then were returned by Turkey. At the end of

²⁶⁷The total number of people in cinema can be found in Adana-Kahramanmaraş-Gaziantep-Adıyaman-Hatay İleri Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı 1 Numaralı Askeri Mahkemesi, Kahramanmaraş Olayları Gerekçeli Kararı, Esas: 1980/92, Karar: 1980/250, p. 289.

the film, the Russian soldiers killed the Turks.²⁶⁸ In those days, this film had political meaning, as evidenced by the fact that screenings were organized by *ülkücü* organizations throughout Turkey. In Kahramanmaraş, the film was brought and shown by the local branch of the Idealist Youth Association (IYA). From the very first day (16 December), the right-wing citizens of Kahramanmaraş had shown great interest in the film and tickets had been hard to find. IYA members were stationed at the doors to search people who came with packets, bags, or who looked suspicious since the cinemas showing the film were considered to be under threat. As on the other nights, on 19 December, IYA members were selling copies of periodicals such as *Genç Arkadaş* (Young Friend), *Hasret* (Longing) and *Liseli Genç* (Young High School Student). The film thus was watched in the atmosphere of an *ülkücü* demonstration. In some emotional parts of the film, people in the audience shouted slogans such as "Muslim Turkey!" "The victory is Islam's even if our blood flows!" "Government, the murderer!" (a slogan addressing the RPP government's activities), "Communists to Moscow!" and "Führer Türkes!"²⁶⁹

At 20:45, a low-impact bomb exploded in the building, wounding seven. A man seen running from the cinema made two police officers suspicious. They caught him near the Ulu Mosque and put him in the PTT building.²⁷⁰ Back at the cinema,

²⁶⁸"'Güneş ne zaman doğacak?' ibretle seyredildi", *Ortadoğu*, 24 July 1978.

²⁶⁹"Müslüman Türkiye!", "Kanımız aksa da zafer İslamın!", "Katil iktidar!", "Komünistler Moskova'ya!", "Başbuğ Türkes." *İddianame*, p. 103, 104.

²⁷⁰The name of the suspect was Salman İlıksoy. After the police investigation, he was found not guilty (ibid, p. 102). But the idealists insisted that İlıksoy was guilty. They accused him of being a member of Doğu Perinçek's group. Referring to the Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey meeting in Demirciler village on 28 July 1978, Türkmenoğlu continued: "Also a young man named Salman İlıksoy was at the meeting. He, too, was listening to Doğu Perinçek. This young man was from Demirci and he did not have much land. Doğu Perinçek's speech affected him and then he became a leftist. On the night of 20 December 1978, Çiçek Cinema was bombed. The communist who threw the bomb was Salman İlıksoy. He came even from Demirciler village and did his duty of revolution that had given to him." "*Mitingde Salman İlıksoy adında bir genç de vardı. O da Doğu Perinçek'i dinliyordu. Bu genç Demirciliydi ve toprağı azdı. Doğu Perinçek'in konuşmaları ona tesir etti ve o da solcu oldu. 20 Aralık 1978 Çiçek Sineması bombalanır. Bombayı atan komünist Salman İlıksoy'dur.*

approximately 300 people went out into the streets and began to march, shouting "Muslim Turkey!" and "The victory is Islam's even if our blood flows!" They stoned the RPP building, and the PTT building, where the bombing suspect was being held. The crowd was dispersed only with police intervention.²⁷¹ Although the events ended for that night, the tension was increasing in the city.

The next day, Akın Kırathanesi, a coffee house owned by Derviş Akın in Yeni Mahalle (New District), a place frequented by Alevis and leftists, was bombed and some people wounded.²⁷² This was seen as a response from the *ülkücüs*. Still, no real provocation had been organized at this point.

It came in the following day. On 21 December 1978, two leftist (and members of TÖB-DER) teachers from Kahramanmaraş Vocational High School (*Endüstri Meslek Lisesi*), Hacı Çolak and Mustafa Yüzbaşıoğlu, were killed on their way home from work. The same night, a group of leftists tried to take revenge on the men they suspected. About 18:50, they came to the house of Güngör Gençay, a judo teacher, and cried, "Fascist Güngör, come out!" When they learned that Gençay was not in the house, they blew it up with dynamite.²⁷³ The leftist community began to organize a massive funeral for the teachers in response to the attack.²⁷⁴

Ta Demirciler Köyü'nden kalkıp gelmiş ve kendisine verilen devrim görevini yerine getirmiştir." Türkmenoğlu, "Aydınlık'ın telaşı," *Hergün*, 2 January 1979.

²⁷¹ *İddianame*, p. 102; *Gerekçeli Karar*, p. 85.

²⁷² *Gerekçeli Karar*, p. 311.

²⁷³ *İddianame*, p. 108.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

The Great Battle: 22 December

The next day saw the start of open civil war in the city. In the beginning, things were relatively calm. 140 soldiers and policemen (their total number is unknown) surrounded a crowd of approximately 5,000 people, including members of TÖB-DER, supporters of the leftist groups, and students of the Vocational High School, who were preparing to march to Ulu Mosque for the funeral prayer. The policemen and gendarme searched the people attending the funeral and took stones and cudgels from them. They also prevented people from writing slogans on the walls.²⁷⁵ After a one minute silence for the dead teachers in front of the Vocational High School, the crowd began to march to the Ulu Mosque, shouting “Hacıs, Mustafas do not die!”²⁷⁶ “Hoşt, Hoşt, dogs, what does the motherland want from you?”, “Türkeş the murderer!” and “Find the killers, make them pay for this!”²⁷⁷

While the demonstration proceeded, other people were trying to prevent the entrance of the funeral procession into the mosque. A shoeblack, Ömer Şengün, was one of them. As the procession approached the PTT building, which was near the mosque, he began to shout to the people within the mosque who had gathered to perform the Friday *namaz*,²⁷⁸ and to the people around the mosque, who were waiting for the teachers' funeral to prevent its entrance: “The communists are coming! The communists are burning the Ulu Mosque! The military is with us! Why

²⁷⁵*Gerekçeli Karar*, p. 292.

²⁷⁶“Hacılar, Mustafalar ölmez!” *Ibid.*, p. 387.

²⁷⁷“Hoşt, hoşt köpekler, vatan sizden ne bekler?”, “Katil Türkeş”, “Katiller bulunsun, hesap sorulsun!” *İddianame*, p. 109.

²⁷⁸It is traditionally performed with the participation of all members of religious community (*cemaat*) on Fridays in Muslim countries.

do you stop? Don't you have a spot of religion? They are taking our religion! March! Let's kill the communists!"²⁷⁹

An estimated 10,000 people converged on the mosque, shouting "Communists to Moscow!", "Muslim Turkey!", "Government, the murderer, Ecevit, the murderer!" (*Katil iktidar, katil Ecevit!*), and "Communists' burial services can not be performed!" (*Komünistlerin cenaze namazı kılınmaz!*). A witness writes, "When people came around the Ulu Mosque and the Municipality, everything was thrown, including armchairs and briquettes from apartments, bullets and stones from the castle, and clogs from the mosque."²⁸⁰ The leftists could not stop this attack, nor could the police or soldiers. The people who had gathered for the teachers' funeral left the coffins in the street and began to go back to Yörük Selim district. However, a counter-group surrounded them. Only when members of POL-DER (*Polis Derneği*, Police Association) cut through the encirclement were the people able to continue to Yörük Selim.²⁸¹ On the way, the windows of some rightists' shops were broken.²⁸² Back at the Ulu Mosque, one man within the group around the mosque was killed by a bullet shot from a military vehicle carrying the people escaping from the attack.²⁸³ This increased the rage of the crowd against the leftists. While the leftist groups were leaving, the crowd struggled against the police. They burned a police car and a *Devlet Su İşleri's* (State Hydraulic Works) minibus in front of the mosque. They also

²⁷⁹"Komünistler geliyor! Komünistler Ulu Cami'yi yakıyor! Ordu bizimle beraber! Neden duruyorsunuz, sizde din iman yok mu? Din elden gidiyor! Yürüyün, komünistleri öldürelim!" Ibid., p. 381.

²⁸⁰"Ulucami ve Belediye civarına gelindiğinde kitenin üzerine apartmanlardan sandalyeler, briketler, kaleden taşlar silahlar, camiden takunyalara varıncaya kadar herşey atıldı." Ahmet Can, "Maraş Katliamının 25. Yıldönümü!," *İşçi Mücadelesi* no. 10, (January-February 2004), p. 51.

²⁸¹ibid. Even today, the witnesses remember the policemen with thanksgiving because they believe that if that encirclement had been overcome, most of the people, that means thousands of people, would have been killed.

²⁸²*Gerekçeli Karar*, p. 293.

²⁸³ *İddianame*, p. 111.

broke the Gölbaşı Gendarmerie Commando Squadron's trucks, devastated the shop of the brother of the killed teacher, Mustafa Yüzbaşıoğlu, and attacked the assistant chief of police, Hüsnü Işıklı, wounding him on the head, and smashing his car's windows. Three fire trucks that had come to put out the fires in the burning cars were prevented by the demonstrators. The military assistance squadron under the command of first lieutenant Zekai Çetiner, dispersed the crowd gathered in front of Kahramanmaraş castle.²⁸⁴ Then the mass marched to Cyprus Square and set fire to the buildings of the RPP, TİKP, DİSK, the Textile Union, TÖB-DER, POL-DER, and the Directorate of Healthcare Duties (*Sağlık İşleri Müdürlüğü*).²⁸⁵ They also burned and looted the shops owned by Alevi and leftists. They cried "Muslim Turkey!", "Nationalist Turkey!" and "Death to the communists!" While preventing the fire brigade's trucks in the square, they cried, "For the sake of God, shoot!" (*Allah için vurun!*). After the great battle around the Ulu Mosque and Kahramanmaraş Castle, now it was time to seek and destroy enemies. At 17:00, about one hundred people agreed that they had found the enemy, Mehmet Taşkesen.²⁸⁶ Taşkesen watched events unfold from his friend's shop. When the atmosphere seemed to have become calm, Taşkesen set out for his home in the Mağaralı district. However, people began to run into him. As Taşkesen narrates,

Maraş Post office. A great crowd had gathered at that corner. Fifty, sixty, one hundred people, I can not count, were there. While I was going upwards, a voice behind me cried "Taşkesen!" After his cry, the entire crowd followed. I said, "Let's get out here!" We quickened our pace. I looked and saw that they were closing in on us. For us, it was not proper to escape fast, as we were revolutionaries. Revolutionaries never run away. Revolutionaries don't fear. I was a trade union leader. I was a well known man. "They chased Taşkesen near the castle!" "This shame is enough for me," I said. It damaged my honor. A worker said, "They are drawing

²⁸⁴ *Gerekçeli Karar*, p. 293.

²⁸⁵ Şahhüseynoğlu, p. 97.

²⁸⁶ For information about Taşkesen's political career, see pp. 66, 67.

nearer, brother" to me. In reality, I did not go out without gun at that time. People were being killed from the right or left throughout Turkey. The people who did the shooting were unknown. At once I turned, they stopped for a moment. I took up the gun. Suddenly everybody was running away leaving their sticks and shoes, hats behind.²⁸⁷

Thereupon Taşkesen ran. He entered a house and closed its door. Before long, the military police came to the house. A crowd gathered to watch. The police and military police dispersed the crowd, saying, "Taşkesen does not go around without a gun. He will shoot one of you; it is a pity if he does so. Be serious."²⁸⁸ Despite the general conviction that the violence had stopped, it continued into the night. At 20:00, an estimated 300 *ülkücüs* gathered and marched into Cyprus Square, shouting, "Nationalist Turkey!" and "Damn the communists!" Like before, they devastated shops owned by Alevis and leftists.

At this point, a question can be asked: How did the people distinguish between shops owned by the leftists and Alevis and those owned by rightists and Sunnis? It is a legitimate question since the Alevis and Sunnis did not have separate economic lives in the city. Their businesses were side by side and not specifically different in appearance. Although it is possible to argue that the attackers knew the owners because they lived in the same city, which was not very large, the truth of the matter is that Sunni and rightist business owners in Maraş did not trust in chance. They wrote on their shop windows the letters MHP (NAP) or drew *üç hilal*, the three

²⁸⁷ "Maraş Postanesi. O köşede büyük bir kalabalık birikmiş. 50-60-100 kişi saymıyorum ki yani kelle orada. Ben yukarı çıkınca arkadan bir ses, 'Taşkesen' diye bağırmağa başladı. Bağırınca o kalabalık olduğu gibi peşime takıldı... 'Biraz uzaklaşalım' dedim. Adımlarımızı hızlandırdık. Baktım arayı kapatıyorlar. Lombur lombur kaçmak da bize yakışmaz. Sözüm ona devrimciyiz. Devrimci kaçmaz. Devrimci korkmaz. Sendika lideriyiz. Tanınan bir adamız... Taşkesen'i kale dibinde kovalamışlar. Bu ayıp bile bize yeter diyorum. Yani ben kendim kabadayılığımıza yediremiyorum. İşçi dedi ki, 'Yaklaşıyorlar abi' dedi. O sefer tabii o aşamada silahsız da gezmiyoruz işin gerçeği. Sağdan vuruluyor, soldan vuruluyor. Yani Türkiye'nin genelinde. Kim vurduğu da belli değil. Hemen ben döndüm, dönünce de biraz duraladı kalabalık. Tabancayı çektim. Ellerindeki değneği atan, ayakkabısı çıkan, şapkası düşen hesabı yok." Birand, p. 104.

²⁸⁸ "Taşkesen silahsız gezmez, birinizi vurur yazık olur, temkinli olun." *Gereğeli Karar*, p. 395.

crescent symbol of the NAP. According to *Gerekçeli Hüküm*, the extreme rightist groups did not touch these shops and businesses. Even if "one of the two shops that were side by side was owned by a person who had a right-wing opinion, they took the goods out of the leftist's shop and burned them, and they tried not to damage the rightist's shop."²⁸⁹

Subsequent to these events, some of the people who had returned to Yörük Selim decided to take revenge for the attack on the funeral procession. For example, one group went to the house of a man who was known as an *ülkücü*. They cried, "Fascist Erol, come out!" but they could not find him. Another group killed Hamza Yıldız and Memili Bakıcı in the Mağaralı district.²⁹⁰ In the end, Kahramanmaraş's right had three dead.

During that night, hurried preparations were made for the next day's fight. Fascist agitators tried to incite people to a large-scale attack by saying that all Sunnis would be targets of Alevis and communists, who were planning to start a large-scale armed attack. Thousands of people sought anything that could be used as a weapon.²⁹¹

23 December: A Massive Uprising

The court records following the events in Kahramanmaraş describe them as the beginning of a "civil war," and in some cases an "armed rebellion" targeting the government forces.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ "Yan yana bulunan iki dükkandan biri sağ görüşlüye ait ise, bitişikteki sol görüşlüye ait dükkandaki malları dışarıya çıkarıp yakarak tahrip etmişler ve sağ görüşlü kişinin dükkanına ve malına zarar vermemeye çalışmışlardır." Ibid., p. 293.

²⁹⁰ *İddianame*, p. 111.

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁹² Ibid.

At approximately 8:00, the day began with announcements made from the loudspeakers of the municipality and the mosques by the NAP and IYA, calling people to attend the funerals of the three “martyrs.”²⁹³ At 10:30, governor Tahsin Soylu, worried about how things might develop, declared that the population was forbidden to go out in the streets. However, the state no longer had the ability to reinforce its authority. The municipality officers rejected the policemen who went there to announce the governor’s decision. The calls for the funerals continued. Then the military took action. When Captain Bülent Engin arrived to reinforce the municipality officers, the officers replied, “The mayor is sleeping now. We can’t make announcements without his orders.” Engin insisted that the mayor’s order was not necessary and that if they did not start to announce the governor’s prohibition, he would arrest all of the municipality workers. After that, the announcements began.²⁹⁴

However, it was too late. An estimated 15,000 people started to march down Uzunoluk Street, shouting, “Damn the communists!”, “We do not leave our friends’ blood on the floor, we will render account!” Like the day before, they looted and burned shops. They took rifles from the gun shops.²⁹⁵ Their aim was to enter Yörük Selim. Soldiers were waiting for them in front of the Uğrak Pastry shop at the intersection of Uzunoluk and Işık Streets. The commander, Captain Timur Şen told the crowd that he would order his soldiers to shoot if they did not stop. But the crowd insisted they be allowed to go into Yörük Selim district, saying “The army does not matter to us, let us go onwards!” After a short lull, the group approached the barricade once more. Captain Şen refused them passage. As *Gerekçeli Hüküm* reports, though hundreds of people left that group, about four or five thousand waited

²⁹³ *İbid.*, p. 148.

²⁹⁴ *Gerekçeli Karar*, p. 173.

²⁹⁵ *İbid.*, p. 265.

there until dark. When Şen asked, “Why did you bring your children with you? If we shoot you, they will be crushed in the panic.” Three leaders within the group replied: “They are people serving their cause. They serve their cause at this age.”²⁹⁶ At 21:00, the crowd finally dispersed. While these events were taking place, the district of Yörük Selim was under heavy armed attack. The mob, armed with guns and dynamite, was unable to break the leftists in the district. Many of the attackers died (their total number is unknown) and, unable to occupy the district, they were forced to turn back.²⁹⁷

The people living on the outskirts of Yörük Selim were not lucky as those in the middle of the district. They came under an onslaught of violence the likes of which had never been seen in Republican history. An eyewitness, Hüseyin Ün, narrates:

We live in the house at the corner of Balkaya Street. On Saturday, 23 December 1978, the sound of guns and yells came from in front of the hospital. We came out in front of our house and looked. A crowd, with guns and tools for attack in their hands, were coming towards us. We threw stones so they would not come close. They shot at us. We escaped into our house. At that time, soldiers came and removed the attackers. The soldiers went at noon. The attackers, who saw the soldiers’ depart, came back to the district. They shot at our house with automatic rifles. They entered to the house and lined us up and then shot. Kamil Gülşen, Zeynep Ün and Yusuf Lakap were killed. They left Şakir and me since they thought we were dead.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ İbid., p. 299.

²⁹⁷ İbid., p. 186.

²⁹⁸ “Çamlık Caddesi Balkaya Sokağı'nın başında evde oturuyoruz. 23.12.1978 Cumartesi günü hastanenin önünden silah sesleri ve bağırtilar geldi. Evin önüne çıktık ve baktık. Ellerinde silah ve çeşitli saldırı malzemesi bulunan kalabalık bir grup bize doğru geliyordu. Gelen grubu evimize yaklaştırmamak için taş attık. Onlar da silahla bize ateş ettiler. Kaçarak evin içine girdik. O sırada askerler geldi, saldırganları uzaklaştırdılar. Öğle zamanıydı, askerler gitti. Askerlerin gittiğini gören saldırgan grup tekrar mahalleye daldı. Evimizi otomatik silahla taradılar. Eve girdiler, sopalarla bizi dövdüler; sonra bizleri sıraya dizdiler. Kamil Gülşen, Zeynep Gül ve Yusuf Lakap öldürüldüler. Beni ve Şakir'i öldü diye oraya bıraktılar. Yaralıydık, askerler geldi ve bizi hastaneye götürdüler.” İbid.

Mahmut Duman, a man from Çeşme Street in Yörük Selim, speaks: “When we looked from the window, we saw a huge crowd with sticks, hatchets in their hands. They were yelling. They had set some of the houses up the street from our house on fire. Flames were rising from their windows.”²⁹⁹ Signs of a spontaneous, uncoordinated movement can be seen in his words. Presumably one of his acquaintances was in the crowd: “They surrounded our house. One of them was yelling ‘Do not touch the people in this house!’”³⁰⁰ Nevertheless, they came back after a short time:

After that, about 12 o’clock, they shot from outside. About twenty-five or thirty people set alight bottles filled with oil and threw them in through the window. The house began to burn. They forced open the door and came inside. Wooden sticks, axes and guns were in their hands. They took us outside the house. We put our hands above our heads. Just then they shot us. My son, Mehmet Duman, died. In addition, we were wounded.³⁰¹

Violence spread throughout the city. In Serintepe, at about 8:00, a crowd, arriving in trucks and minibuses, gathered in front of Murat Demir’s grocery shop. Men called for more participants by yelling from the roofs of the houses, “People who have guns, knives, *tahras* (a kind of knife), do not stop, let’s kill and clean our country of the Alevis!”³⁰² Then the crowd began to march to the north side of the district, which was known as an Alevi place, shouting slogans such as “He who loves his God and Prophet, walk!”, “Kill the communist Alevis!”, “Do not let the Alevis

²⁹⁹ “Pencereden baktığımızda büyük bir kalabalık gördük; ellerinde sopa, satır gibi cisimler vardı. Bağırıyorlardı. Bizim evin üst tarafında bulunan birkaç evi yakmışlardı. Evlerin penceresinden alevler yükseliyordu.” İbid.

³⁰⁰ “Bizim evi sardılar, biri ‘Bu evdekilere dokunmayın’ diye bağırıyordu.” İbid.

³⁰¹ “Daha sonra, tahminen saat 12.00 sıralarıydı. Dışarıdan evimize silahla ateş edildi. Sokakta 25-30 kişi gaz doldurdukları şişeleri ateşleyerek pencereden içeriye attılar. İçerisi alev aldı. Bir grup da kapıyı zorladı ve kırarak içeriye girdi. Ellerinde tahta, nacak, silah vardı. Bizi evden dışarı çıkardılar, ellerimizi başımızın üstünde tuttuk. Bu sırada bize ateş ettiler. Oğlum Mehmet Duman öldü. Biz de yaralandık.” İbid.

³⁰² “Evinde silahı, bıçağı, tahrası olan durmasın, alevileri öldürelim, memleketten temizleyelim.” İbid, p. 305.

live! He who kills them will go to heaven!", "Damn the communists!", "Death to Alevi!", "Muslim Turkey!", "Communists to Moscow!", "Long live Türkiye!"³⁰³ They carried long-range guns and weapons such as axes and sledgehammers. They split into two groups as they approached Yörük Selim. However, as with the other attackers, they were unable to enter the district. They attacked the people on the outskirts of the district and then went on to Serintepe. Their arrival meant death for the Alevi and leftists in Serintepe.

In Serintepe, the shouting mob made reference to another feature of their prey, namely their ethnic origin. In the interviews with some of the people of Alevi origin, they identify the Sunni Muslims of Maraş by their ethnic origin, saying "They, the Turks." The trial indictment supports this fact. An attacker is alleged to have shown Alevi houses in Serintepe to other collaborators, saying, "These are the Kurdish houses."³⁰⁴ Ömer Ejderha, who was among the collaborators, went to Hanifi İşbilir's house and asked if there were any Alevi in the house. He left after İşbilir replied, "This is a Turkish house."³⁰⁵ Murat Bozkurt narrates,

We were in Imam Ergönül's house. They surrounded the house and broke its windows. After that, they went to another place. However, not more than a few minutes later, they came back. They attacked the house and tried to drill through the roof. They set rags on fire and threw them into the house. They threw explosives. Fires broke out inside the house. We, including women and children, were trying to protect ourselves with yelling. Another group tried to pull up the door.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ "Allahını seven, peygamberini seven yürüsün", "Komünist Alevileri öldürün", "Alevileri yaşatmayın, bunları öldüren cennetlik olur", "Kahrolsun komünistler", "Alevilere ölüm", "Müslüman Türkiye", "Komünistler Moskova'ya", "Yaşasın Türkiye." ibid, p. 305.

³⁰⁴ İddianame, p. 119.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 156, 157.

³⁰⁶ "Evin etrafını sardılar. Taşlarla camlarını kırdılar. Sonra başka tarafa doğru bağıarak gittiler. Aradan bir kaç dakika geçmemiştir ki, tekrar geldiler. Eve hücum ederek, evin tavanını deliciyle delmeye çalıştılar. Evin içine, gaza batırılmış bez parçalarını ateşleyerek atıyorlardı. Pencereden patlayıcı madde attılar. Evin içini alevler sardı. Kadın, çocuk bağıarak korunmaya çalışıyorlardı. Başka bir grup da demir kapıyı sökmeye çalışıyordu.." Gereçeli Karar, p. 194.

The attackers gained entrance to the house:

They began to hit us with sharp tools like sticks, axes and swords. We were covered in our own blood. They were cursing and insulting us. Our appeals echoed around us. On the one hand, burning house and furniture, and on the other, injuries and flowing blood, raised the hair on our necks. They lined us up and fired with guns. They killed Imam, Hüseyin, and Güllü Ergönül, and Hacı Bektaş Bozkurt and Mahmut Ünal. Some of us were wounded badly.³⁰⁷

Another witness, Hatun Köse speaks:

They began to march. They were yelling "Don't stop, from five to ninety years old, don't stop, kill the communist Alevis, he who kills them will go to heaven. Damn the communists, long live Türkeş!" They walked to Yörük Selim. After a short time, they turned back. They were giving orders such as "Shoot, break, kill!" They attacked Alevi houses, and began to burn and vandalize them. Also a group was shooting at windows. We took shelter in Mehmet Polat's out of fear. They also attacked the house in which we took shelter. They smashed the windows with stones and sticks. They continuously yelled "Shoot the communist Alevis!" They put an axe to the throat of Mehmet Ali Güner, who was 80 years old, who was sitting in front of Mehmet Polat's house. They asked him "Are you a Muslim or not?" At that time, soldiers came and removed the crowd. Soldiers stood guard in front of the houses. When the news that the attackers were marching to the arsenal came, soldiers ran to there. When the soldiers went, the attackers shot up and down. Bullets were whizzing above the houses. We escaped by crawling on the ground from our fear of death. At that time, Hüseyin Kilit and Hatice Temiz were wounded by bullets. We passed Mağaralı stream by crawling and squatting down on our heels. We reached Molla Tabak's house with great difficulty. At that moment, Hüseyin Baz and his wife, Fatma Baz, who were entering the house, were shot dead. Also Fatma Baz's small baby in her arms, Yılmaz, who was six months old, was killed.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ "Bizlere sopa, nacak, kılıç gibi kesici aletlerle vurmaya başladılar. Her tarafımız kan içindeydi. Küfür ve hakaret ediyorlardı. Yalvarmalarımız çevrede yankılanıyordu. Bir yanda yanan ev ve eşyalar, bir yandan yaralılar ve akan kanlar tüyleri ürpertiyordu. Bizi sıraya dizdiler, silahla ateş ettiler. İmam, Hüseyin, Güllü Ergönül ile Hacı Bektaş Bozkurt ve Mahmut Ünal'ı öldürdüler. Birkaçımız da ağır yaralandık." ibid.

³⁰⁸ "Topluca yürüyüşe geçtiler. 'Durmayın, 5 yaşından 90 yaşına kadar durmayın, Komünist Alevileri öldürün, kim bunları öldürürse cennelik olacaktır. Kahrolsun Komünistler, Yaşasın Türkeş diye bağıryorlardı. Yörük Selim Mahallesi'ne doğru yürüdüler. Çok sürmedi, geri döndüler. 'Vurun, kırın, öldürün' diye emir veriyorlardı. Alevilerin evlerine saldırdılar, yakmaya, tahrip etmeye başladılar. Bir grup da ellerindeki silahlarla pencerelerden içeriye ateş ediyorlardı. Biz de korkumuzdan Mehmet Polat'ın evine sığındık. Sığındığımız bu eve de saldırdılar. Taş ve sopalarla pencereleri kırdılar. 'Vurun komünist Alevilere' diye sürekli bağıryorlardı. Mehmet Polat'ın kapısının önünde oturan Mehmet Ali Güner'in boynuna tahrayı dayadılar. 'Müslüman mısın, değil misin?' diye soruyorlardı. Bu sırada askerler yetişt, saldırganları uzaklaştırdılar. Askerler sıra halinde evlerin önünde nöbet tuttular. O sırada saldırganların cephaneliğe doğru yürüdükleri haberi gelince, askerler oraya doğru koşarak gittiler. Askerler gidince saldırganlar, gruplar halinde aşağıdan ve yukarıdan silahla ateş ettiler. Evlerin üzerinde kurşunlar vızır vızır gidiyordu. Can korkusuyla yerlerde sürünerek kaçmaya

The same kinds of tragedies were experienced in other districts of Maraş. The district of Yusufklar was one of them. Naciye and Habibe Ünver described the massacre of the members of their family:

First, they pillaged our house. They took and burnt our furniture. A group of attackers raided the house in which we were hiding. We locked the door from inside. They shot at the door and the lock. Mehmet Ünver, who was inside was wounded in the forehead by a bullet. They broke down the door and entered the room. They took the men and left. They cried in the street "He who loves god, attack!" They began to beat with stones, sticks and axes. They killed Malik Ünver. At the moment, Mehmet and his wife Döndü Ünver were trying to escape and hide in our neighbor Nebahat Albez's home. The attackers ran up behind them, took both these two and brought them to Malik's dead body. At the same time, Mehmet and his wife, Döndü, yelled "Kill both of us!" At first, they beat both with stones and sticks, and then they killed them with a gun.³⁰⁹

Ismail Yılmaz told the story of his family's massacre:

On Saturday 23 December 1978, about 10:00, a group attacked our house, shouting "Beat the red communists! It is wrong for them to live!" They beat us with sticks, we were wounded in several places. They attacked my father, my mother, Hatice, and my brother, Hüseyin Yılmaz. My father, mother and brother begged them, "Don't kill us!" I escaped from there and went to hospital. I passed the night there. They treated my wounds. On the next day, when I returned home, I saw the corpses of my father, mother and brother in front of our home's door. They had cut my father's fingers and poured his blood into a cauldron. They had cut my mother's head in places with a briquette, her face was unrecognizable. They had burnt our house and furniture. Everything was utterly ruined.³¹⁰

çalışıyorduk. Bu sırada Hüseyin Kilit ile Hatice Temiz atılan kurşunlarla yaralandılar. Sürünerek, çömelerek Mağaralı Deresi'ni geçtik. Mola Tabak'ın evine zor bela yetişerek içeri girdik. Bu sırada içeri girmekte olan Hüseyin Baz ve karısı Fatma Baz vurularak öldürüldü. Fatma Baz'ın kucağındaki küçük çocuğu 6 aylık Yılmaz da kurşunla vurularak öldürüldü." Gereğçeli Karar, p. 194.

³⁰⁹ "Önce evimizi yağmaladılar, eşyalarımızı dışarı çıkararak yaktılar. Bir grup saldırgan da saklandığımız evi bastı. Saklandığımız odanın kapısını içerden kilitlemiştik, kapının kilidini ve kapıyı taradılar. İçerde bulunan Mehmet Ünver alınından kurşunla yaralandı. Kapıyı kırdılar, odaya daldılar. İçerde bulunan erkekleri alıp dışarıya çıkardılar. Yol üzerinde 'Allahını seven vursun' diye bağırıyorlardı. Topluca taş, sopa ve balta ile vurmaya başladılar. Malik Ünver'i öldürdüler. Bu sırada Mehmet ve karısı Döndü Ünver, kaçarak karşıdaki komşumuz Nebahat Albez'in evine sığınmaya çalışıyorlardı. Arkasından koşan saldırganlar her ikisini de yakalayarak, öldürdükleri Malik'in cenazesinin yanına götürdüler. Bu arada Mehmet ve karısı Döndü 'Her ikimizi birden öldürün' diye bağırıyorlardı. Her ikisine önce sopa ve taşla vurdular, sonra silahla öldürdüler." Ibid., p. 198.

³¹⁰ "23.12.1978 Cumartesi günü, saat 10.00 sıralarında bir grup 'Vurun kızıl komünistlere, bunlara yaşamak haramdır' diye evimize saldırdılar. Sopalarla vurdular, muhtelif yerlerimizden yaralandık. Babam Ali, annem Hatice, ağabeyim Hüseyin Yılmaz'a saldırdılar. Babam, anam ve ağabeyim 'Bizi öldürmeyin' diye çok yalvardılar. Dereden kaçarak hastaneye yetiştim. Bir gün yatım, yaralarımı sarıldılar, ertesi gün hastaneden çıkıp eve gittiğimde annemin, babamın ve ağabeyimin cesetlerini

The attackers challenged Alevi to recite the *salavat* (a formula calling for God's benediction of the Prophet Muhammad during prayer or in times of peril in the Arabic language). Those who were able to recite the *salavat* were set free. An Alevi woman, Fatma Şengül told how an armed mob asked their doormanman “Are there any Alevi in this house? If there are any, give them to us. If you don’t, we’ll burn your house.” But her doorman, said no.³¹¹ However, as in the other attacks, they mob came back later and they took Şengül with them to the Green Mosque (*Yeşil Cami*) and demanded that she recite the *salavat*. After her recitation, they released her. After she returned home, another group showed up and the scene was repeated. She was forced to recite the *salavat*. Those who could not recite the prayer were punished. For example, Ali Akıncı, an old man who lived in the same district, despite his insistence that he was a Muslim, was put to death when he could not recite the *salavat* in Arabic.³¹²

In Yeni Mahalle, the attackers identified themselves with a mixture of sectarian and political hostility. First, they killed Süleyman Metin and set his corpse on fire. Then they forced his two daughters to walk with them through the streets and endure gross sexual harassment such as having their pajamas pulled off and being exhibited to people while being groped. While this was happening, the crowd, which included women, yelled, “Let their roots disappear from this country! Harlots, prostitutes!

evimizin kapısının önünde gördüm. Babamın parmaklarını kesmişlerdi, kanını da bir kazanın içine akıtmuşlardı. Annemin kafasını briketle parçalamışlardı, yüzü tanınmıyordu. Evimizi, eşyalarımızı da yakmışlardı. Her şey kül olmuştu.” Ibid., p. 199.

³¹¹Conversely, in some cases neighborhood did not result in friendship. In Sakarya District, Naime Baltacı showed her Alevi neighbors' houses to attacking crowd. *Gerekçeli Karar*, p. 208.

³¹²Ibid., p. 202.

Ecevit would come and save you if he could! What can we do with Alevis like you? Communists!"³¹³

The long day in Kahramanmaraş resulted in more than thirty deaths. The night brought no silence to the city. Armed attacks targeted to break the resistance in Yörük Selim continued all night.

24-25 December: Unstoppable Incidents

On 24 December, news of the violence travelled throughout Turkey. The country was in shock. The newspapers' headlines reflect the atmosphere of the day. *Cumhuriyet's* lead headline was "Rightist Terror Continued in Kahramanmaraş, 31 People Dead, 65 of 150 Wounded Badly."³¹⁴ *Tercüman's* headline was to the point: "Civil War in K. Maraş."³¹⁵ However, the news did not stop the bloodshed. Security forces did not step in to restore order.³¹⁶ The killing continued on 24 December.

On this day, another large district of the city, Namık Kemal, became the main target. As in the previous examples, the attackers accused the Alevis of supporting the RPP. To be a supporter of *Karaoğlan* (Black Boy, Bülent Ecevit's nickname, in

³¹³"*Bunların kökünün sonu gelsin, kahpeler, orospular, Ecevit gelsin sizi kurtarsın, sizin gibi Alevisi biz ne yapacağız, komünistler.*" Ibid., p. 210.

³¹⁴"Kahramanmaraş'ta sağ terör sürdü-31 kişi öldü, 150 yaralının 65'i ağır," *Cumhuriyet*, 24 December 1978.

³¹⁵"K.Maraş'ta iç savaş," *Tercüman*, 24 December 1978.

³¹⁶Ten years after the Kahramanmaraş Massacre, prime minister of that period, Bülent Ecevit made an allusion to tell that reinforcing the RPP government to declare the Martial Law was behind the passivity of the security: "...In the beginning of the incidents, army troops in Kahramanmaraş could not provide enough support we waited for them to control the situation and suppress the events before much blood was shed. They gave the impression that they did not have means to do this." Then Ecevit proposed that it was not true: "After the declaration of Martial Law, it was seen that army troops in Kahramanmaraş had the power to achieve this." "*Olayların başında, Kahramanmaraş'daki askeri birlikler, durumun kontrol altına alınabilmesi ve fazla kan dökülmeden olayların bastırılabilmesi için kendilerinden beklediğimiz katkıyı yapamamışlardı. Buna olanakları bulunmadığı izlenimini vermişlerdi. Sıkıyönetim ilanının hemen ardından ise, Kahramanmaraş'daki askeri birliklerin gücünün bunu başarabilecek düzeyde olduğu görüldü.*" *Tempo* (56), 25-31 December 1989, p. 13.

reference to his black hair and eyes. Also a sign of his acceptance as a member of the people) meant death in Maraş. Maviş Toklu described the beginning of the day, "About 10:00, a group of attackers led by our district's headman (*muhtar*), Mehmet Yemşen, and Fevzi Görkam were yelling "God, God, we'll extirpate the communists! Old or younger, crush the communists' heads!"³¹⁷ Then she concludes:

They took my husband, Kalender, out to the garden. Then I ran out with them. I begged the headman, saying "Please do not do this! Don't kill my husband! Do not leave my children without their father!" The head man turned to me and said: "Bring your children, *Karaoğlan* will feed them. I will kill your husband as a sacrifice to *Karaoğlan*." When I asked, "Who is *Karaoğlan*?" he replied "Ecevit." They tortured my husband to death in front of me. While they were killing him, I was embracing him. Blood covered my clothing. When I said, "Come on, headman, please don't, what are you doing?" He replied, "We baked, we baked, communists come and both eat." Meanwhile, they surrounded my brother, Hüseyin Toklu's house, which was near ours and took him out. Again, I begged head man. I was crying "You've killed my husband; for once, don't kill my brother." But the headman said, "I am killing Hüseyin, too, as a sacrifice to *Karaoğlan*. This year we'll sacrifice in the name of *Karaoğlan*, the day of Bayram has come" (a reference to the Muslim Festival of Sacrifice) and they tortured my brother to death.³¹⁸

The same day, violence spread to the villages of Kahramanmaraş. For example, Mustafa Acıncıklı was killed in Yusufçacıllı village, which was near the city.³¹⁹ When an Alevi minibus driver, Mitat Bozkurt, could not enter the city, he asked to spend the night at the Shell Oil station near the city of a Sunni worker, Süleyman Kırkgeçit. He said openly that he was an Alevi and he needed help. Kırkgeçit said he could

³¹⁷ "Saat 10.00 sıralarında mahallemizin muhtarı Mehmet Yemşen ile Fevzi Görkam'ın başında bulunduğu saldırgan bir grup, 'Allah, Allah, Komünistlerin kökünü kazıyacağız, büyük-küçük demeyin komünistlerin kafasını ezin' diye bağırıyordu." Ibid., p. 251.

³¹⁸ "Odada oturan kocamı (Kalender) alıp bahçeye çıkardılar. Ben de arkalarından koşarak çıktım. Muhtara, 'Aman etmeyin eylemeyin, kocamı öldürmeyin, çoluk-çocuğumu meydanda komayın' diye çok yalvardım. Muhtar bana dönerek, 'Çocuklarını götür, Karaoğlan beslesin, kocamı Karaoğlan'ın yoluna kurban kesiyorum' dedi. 'Karaoğlan kim?' diye sorduğumda, 'Ecevit' diye cevap verdi. Kocamı, gözlerimin önünde işkence ederek öldürdüler. Öldürülürken kocama sarıldım, üstüm başım hep kan oldu. 'Aman muhtar etme eyleme, sen ne ediyorsun?' dediğimde, 'Pişirdik, pişirdik, komünistler gelsinler, hep yesinler' dedi. Saldırganlar, bu defa yakınımızda oturan kardeşim Hüseyin Toklu'yu getirmek için evinin etrafını sardılar ve kardeşimi içeriden çıkardılar. Yine muhtara yalvardım yakardım. 'Kocamı öldürdün, bari kardeşimi öldürme diye yalvarıyordum. Muhtar ise, 'Hüseyin'i de Karaoğlan yoluna kurban ediyorum. Biz Karaoğlan yoluna bu sene kurban keseceğiz, bayram günü gelmiş' dedi ve kardeşim Hüseyin'i işkence ederek öldürdüler." Ibid., p. 251.

³¹⁹ Ibid., p. 281.

spend the Saturday night there. On the next day (24 December), a Sunni taxi driver who came to the station saw Bozkurt and said to Kırkgeçit "Are you hiding Alevi here?" Then he went to the road and stopped a tractor filled with people, saying, "Where are you going? There is an Alevi here. Come and let's kill him!" The people in the tractor decided to check whether Bozkurt was circumcised in order to understand if he was a Muslim or not. "When the victim was found to be circumcised, one of the attackers turn(ed) to the others and said, 'They circumcise you in the army. Don't believe that this one is Muslim.'"³²⁰ So they killed Bozkurt. Many attacks like this took place on that day.

Conversely, in the rural areas, Alevi who heard of the massacres in Kahramanmaraş tried to take revenge on Sunnis. There is no information about whether or not the supporters of the radical left in Maraş were among them; however a careful look reveals that the places in which these revenge violence took place were the same as those where the rural struggle discussed earlier when evaluating the low intensity civil war before the massacre. Pazarcık's Emiroğlu village was among these places. A group of peasants from Sarierik village set fire to Pakdiller and Sarikatipler farms (large farms owned by Sunnis).³²¹ On 25 December, the revenge continued. Some Sunni and rightists' houses in Emiroğlu village were attacked. Houses were burned. Osman Andız and Hasan Şako, two Sunnis from Akdemir village, when unable to enter Maraş, went to an Alevi village called Çiğili, where they were stopped by Alevi there. Şako was beaten and Andız was killed.³²²

³²⁰*İddianame*, p. 163, Webb, p. 15. Webb evaluates this event in the following words: "It might also be suggested that This impulse of some of the attackers to discover whether victims are circumcised or not provides a link with the general smearing tactic and rumor that surfaces from time to time under different circumstances among rightist circles to discover an Armenian hand behind efforts to divide nation. Beyond that, the practice was clearly intended to humiliate the victim." Ibid.

³²¹*Gerekçeli Karar*, p. 333.

³²²Ibid., p. 283, 333.

At the end of the day, the violence subsided as the state began to bring the city under control with the support of extra army units.³²³ This was in accordance with the RPP government's proposal to declare Martial Law in thirteen cities, including Kahramanmaraş, because of the potential of the spread of the civil war to the rest of Turkey. According to official documents, the three days resulted 111 deaths and over 1,000 wounded. 552 businesses, 289 houses, and eight vehicles were burned.³²⁴

26 December: Martial Law

On 26 December 1978, the Grand National Assembly decided to declare Martial Law for two months in thirteen cities, including Adana, Ankara, Bingöl, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Kars, Malatya, Sivas, Urfa, and, of course, Kahramanmaraş. All of the parties in parliament, even those that were sworn enemies, agreed on the decision. However, only one political actor can be evaluated as having acted successfully: The Nationalist Action Party. For the preceding three months, the party had demanded the declaration of Martial Law, and in the end, got it. In general, Turkey entered into a process in which the army became an increasingly active body, until its final intervention to take power twenty-one months later.

³²³On the other hand, some interviewees propose that harassing fires between Yörük Selim District and other parts of the city continued after 25 December.

³²⁴Şahhüseynoğlu, p. 171. However, many sources, both leftist and rightist ones, argue that the official information does not reflect the realities. For them, the casualties were more than official numbers. Interestingly and ironically enough, an idealist periodical proposed that more than four hundred people had died in the Kahramanmaraş Incidents. *Genç Arkadaş* (4) 8 January 1979.

In this chapter, an account of the Kahramanmaraş Massacre was given. Effort was made to tell of the events in the words of eyewitnesses. The accounts must not be read simply as a narrative of events. Their main function is to illustrate the discussion about the main issues of Turkish politics in the 1970s, such as mass sectarian conflict, ethnic hostility, and mass mobilization.

Initially, it is obvious that the religious (or sectarian) dimension was an effective factor in the mobilization of the masses. People of every age, from babies to the elderly, were the targets of sectarian hostility. Orthodox Islamic motivation can be found easily in every part of the incidents. Interestingly enough, in most of the events, ethnic divisions shaped the sectarian dimensions. Of course, as Webb notes, "there were Alevis and Sunnis of both ethnic groups living in the region," "while 'Turkish' contradicts the presumption of being 'Alevi', 'Kurdish' is taken to signify 'Alevi'³²⁵ in the context of Kahramanmaraş. Thus, it is not possible to "regard these slippages as the annoying 'mistakes'³²⁶ of the people of Maraş. How ethnic and religious identities formed a special interrelationship in the 1970s must be considered.

On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that this ethnic-religious identity gained new meaning in the 1970s in accordance with general social and political struggles. Therefore identities were evaluated as signs of political partisanship and thus took on modern forms. As seen above, targeting Alevis was legitimated by the people because of the perceived Alevi support of communism or of Ecevit's Republican People's Party. Hence, religion and/or ethnicity are equated with politics in this case. In that sense, the Kahramanmaraş Massacre must not be understood as an Alevi/Sunni conflict. Rather than falling into this trap of simplicity, it is important

³²⁵Webb, p. 15.

³²⁶Ibid.

to locate the event in its proper place, within a framework of the larger conflict which was ongoing throughout Turkey.

Additionally, the mass participation in and armed resistance to the bloody massacres shocked Turkey. Related to this fact, the Kahramanmaraş Incidents enable us to see that military intervention on 12 September 1980 was not a natural result brought about by the flow of events. Conversely, despite the declaration of Martial Law, when and where an open civil war might erupt began to be discussed publicly especially after the Kahramanmaraş Incidents.³²⁷ In sum, the Kahramanmaraş Incidents, by showing the real dynamics of the transformation of a low intensity civil conflict into an open and full-fledged civil war, requires a special interest in Turkish history because it represents the last step before the civil war.

³²⁷A typical example of the discussion about the dynamics of an open civil war in Turkey is an article titled "After Maraş...?" (Maraş'tan Sonra...?) in *Birikim* journal. "Maraş'tan Sonra...?", pp. 32-63.

CHAPTER 4

“COMMUNIST POLICE!” THE STATE IN THE 1970s TURKEY

The main characteristic of the 1970s was the division of the state apparatus in terms of political polarization. This was obvious, exactly, from the period of the first Nationalist Front government. From this era on, state officers no longer felt bound to the *raison d'etat* of the state, namely being impartial in their practices. Thus, the cadres of the state apparatus were divided into their ideological and political camps and in the end, the state was split.³²⁸ Two main factors affected the process of the division of the state apparatus. The first was the appointment to ministry posts of members of the Nationalist Action Party and the National Salvation Party. These appointments had the aim of occupying the positions that were seen as strategic by these parties. As a result, these appointed officers were not bound to the hierarchy of the state but to the hierarchy of their parties.³²⁹ The second factor was the effect of the ongoing political polarization to the state cadres naturally. This factor produced the same result: "the officer did not listen to his chief but to the political authority to which he was bound. The mechanism worked in this way from the postmen who worked in the PTT (Postal Service) to the customs officials, the police officers and the judges."³³⁰

The division of the state apparatus is among the most important factors to be considered in the evaluation of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents. The state apparatus as

³²⁸"Maraş'tan sonra...?", p. 56.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 56.

³³⁰ "Memur amirinin değil, bağlandığı politik otoritenin emrini dinlemeye başladı. PTT'de çalışan posta memurundan gümrük ya da polis memuruna, yargıcına kadar böyle işlemeye başladı mekanizma." ibid., p. 57.

a whole, from its ideological apparatus (the teachers and other officers who worked in the National Education system) to its coercive apparatus (the soldiers and the police officers), and even the officers working in the infrastructural areas (such as the personnel of the Road Water Electricity Organization [*Yol Su Elektrik Teşkilatı*], Directorate of Forestry [*Orman Müdürlüğü*], and Postal Service [*PTT*], were at the heart of this event, not as the professionals of the state duties, but as the competing sides of the warfare in the Kahramanmaraş streets. Thus, not only the personnel of these institutions, but also the institutions themselves are at the center of the discussions about what actually happened in Maraş.

In order to understand the role of the state in the Kahramanmaraş Incidents, the historical context of the period defined by the establishment of the Republican People's Party government headed by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit must be remembered. The RPP government meant a certain relaxation for the leftist officers who had been under heavy pressure during the period of the Nationalist Front governments. The most powerful leftist employee organizations, namely the the Association of All Teachers Unity and Solidarity (*Tüm Öğretmenler Birleşme ve Dayanışma Derneği*, TÖB-DER) and the Police Association (*Polis Derneği*, POL-DER) regained the possibility of reorganizing in a much more comfortable atmosphere. In addition, the appointments made by the RPP weakened the rightist establishment and gave the leftist civil servants an extra advantage. This new process for the leftist civil servants affected the regions that saw political warfare in an extraordinary way as the sectarian division among the Alevi and Sunni communities was due to the disadvantageous position of the Alevi and leftist civil servants in these

regions. In Kahramanmaraş, the RPP supporters of Alevi origin and radical leftists began to take over the posts of the rightist civil servants.³³¹

The reaction to the leftist civil servants' organizations can be regarded as the first move of the rightist opposition against the RPP government. The RPP was accused by the three main political parties, who drew their support from the Sunni majority of central and eastern Anatolia, namely the National Salvation Party, the Nationalist Action Party and the Justice Party, of welcoming the communists and Alevis, who were organized in TÖB-DER, POL-DER and some other unions. Many examples can be found in the rightist press showing the reactions of each of these three parties. For example, the columnist of the NSP's newspaper *Milli Gazete* (National Newspaper), Mansur Moğol, argued that the existing government (RPP) "was guided by the gossip and the politics of TÖB-DER and POL-DER and surrendered to them."³³² The NSP's criticism was not restricted to the TÖB-DER and POL-DER. For instance, *Milli Gazete* criticized the Institute for Mineral Scrutiny and Search (*Maden Tetkik Arama Enstitüsü*) for sending five buses filled with the institution's employees to attend the funeral of the victims of the Bahçelievler Massacre with. It was noted that this action, which had been organized by Professor Nezihi Canitez (president of the MTA) had evoked reactions in the public.³³³

The most severe critic of the leftist employees' organizations was the NAP. The NAP's periodical, *Devlet* (State), claimed that the state apparatus, filled with Marxists with RPP sponsorship, was against the nationalists.³³⁴ Additionally, after

³³¹ Birand, Bila, Akar, p. 101

³³² "Nitekim mevcut hükümet de TÖB-DER'le POL-DER'in dedikodularını ve politikasını rehber edinmiş ve onlara teslim olmuştur." Mansur Moğol, *Milli Gazete*, 6 October 1978.

³³³ *Milli Gazete*, 12 October 1978.

³³⁴ *Devlet* 6, p.7.

the Incidents in Malatya (17-19 April 1978), *Devlet* proposed that the organizations that occupied the state (POL-DER and TÖB-DER) had provoked the Alevis against the Sunnis in that city.³³⁵ Seven months before the Kahramanmaraş Incidents, the NAP deputy of Kahramanmaraş, Mehmet Yusuf Özbaş, declared that if anarchy were to emerge in Kahramanmaraş, the only reason would be "a handful of corrupt people and the people who have the garments of state employees that give them this chance."³³⁶

The criticism of the Justice Party was no different. The leader of the party, Süleyman Demirel, claimed that "Töb-Der, Pol-Der and DİSK were governing the state."³³⁷ According to the vice president of the party, Kemal Doğan, the RPP had not appointed members of the RPP or leftists to important posts, but that people who had been found guilty of being extreme leftist or separatist had been appointed to these positions in Maraş.³³⁸ The mayor of the city (a member of the JP), Ahmet Uncu, declared that all of the state institutions and the police organization were filled with extreme leftists. For Uncu, the state officials, who must be neutral, had provoked the Alevi citizens, who constituted only 10,000 of the total population of 170,000. The body responsible for this was the RPP, "who gives all the initiatives to TÖB-DER, POL-DER and Mehmet Taşkesen's team."³³⁹

As seen, the most common targets of the rightists within the state apparatus were the teachers and the police. We can begin with the first one, the teachers. As in the rest of Turkey, in Kahramanmaraş, teachers' unionism had begun with the

³³⁵ *Devlet* 1, p. 4.

³³⁶ "Kahramanmaraş'ta ne yapılmak isteniyor?" *Hergün*, 2 May 1978.

³³⁷ "TÖB-DER, POL-DER ve DİSK devleti yönetiyor." *Devlet*, 9, p. 22, 23.

³³⁸ Hamza Alparslan, "Kahramanmaraş 1978-1980" *Hergün*, 29 August 1980.

³³⁹ "Bütün ipleri TÖB-DER'e, POL-DER'e ve Mehmet Taşkesen'in ekibine.." "Kahramanmaraş Olayları nedir, ne değildir?" *Tercüman*, 1 January 1979.

establishment of the Teachers Union of Turkey (*Türkiye Öğretmenler Sendikası-TÖS*). The office of the Governor of Kahramanmaraş reported some supposed secret activities of forty-nine former TÖS members to the Ministry of National Education on 14 December 1976. According to that report, these teachers were:

a. supporting the occupation of titled lands, b. acting against the Turkish Armed Forces, c. provoking Alevi-Sunni animosity d. encouraging separatism by changing the oath of the primary school students from "I'm Turkish, I'm righteous" to "I'm Kurdish, I'm righteous", e. founding secret associations and even enlisting people under the age of twenty as members of these associations, and f. training Turkish children as tools for their ideology by leaving them uneducated.³⁴⁰

The paranoid tone of this report and its evaluation by the newspaper *Hergün* (Everyday), an NAP supporter, indicates the strong fear and reaction to the teachers' unionist movement by the rightist front, including the state officials and the political organizations, especially NAP.³⁴¹

The organized movement of the leftist teachers continued with the foundation of TÖB-DER. This union was among the most well organized, best known leftist organizations in Turkey, defining its political platform as progressive, democratic and patriotic. It included all of the radical leftist political groups and also an important part of the teachers who supported Bülent Ecevit's RPP. The pro-Soviet political line, which was mostly represented by the illegal Communist Party of Turkey, controlled the core of the organization.³⁴² On the other hand, anti-Soviet

³⁴⁰ "a) Halkın tapulu arazilerini işgal ettirmek, toprak yürüyüşünü desteklemek b) Türk silahlı kuvvetleri aleyhinde bulunmak c) Alevi-Sünni ayrımı yapmak d) İlkokul öğrencilerine 'Türküm, doğrudum' yerine 'Kürdüm, doğrudum' şeklinde ant söyleyerek bölücülük yapmak d) Gizli dernekler kurmak ve 20 yaşından küçük olanları bile bu derneklere almak e) Türk çocuklarını bilgisiz yetiştirmek suretiyle kendi ideolojilerine daha kolay alet edilir hale getirmek." Hamza Alparslan, "Kahramanmaraş 1978-1980," *Hergün*, 28 August 1980.

³⁴¹ More evidence for the hostility against the TÖS came from NAP supporter *Töre Devlet* Publications. A book published by it proposed that the TÖS was an illegal Marxist-Leninist organization. In addition, the book accused the TÖS of cooperating the communists who organized with Mahir Çayan's group. Moreover, it claimed that the ones who abducted an airplane to liberate Deniz Gezmiş were TÖS members. *TÖS Dosyası-2* (Ankara: Töre Devlet Yayınevi, 1973), p. 31.

organizations such as the Maoists and the Enver Hocaists remained with the TÖB-DER insisting on organizing within TÖB-DER since it was the most powerful and effective civil servants organization in Turkey, and because there was no alternative to it.

In the general election held on 5 June 1977, TÖB-DER supported the so-called “democratic forces” against the Nationalist Front parties. For TÖB-DER, the most important thing was preventing the rise of fascism. Its slogan was “5 Haziran’da faşizme geçit yok!”(No passage to fascism on June 5!)³⁴³ While it did not openly support the RPP, the “democratic forces” rhetoric meant no other than the RPP.³⁴⁴ Thus, the RPP victory was welcomed by TÖB-DER as “a victory of the democratic forces,” and it underlined the significance of TÖB-DER’s support of the RPP in the victory of the RPP.³⁴⁵ Additionally, TÖB-DER stated that its members demanded the establishment of a democratic government because there was an immediate need to prevent the establishment of a new Nationalist Front government by “reactionary-

³⁴² These words make clear the pro-Soviet line of TÖB-DER: “The same tendency is strengthening in our country like an avalanche in spite of all plots of the capital, all prohibitions, suppressions, 12 Marches, tortures, exiles. What kind of development is this? Of course, it is a healthy and organized development that stems from the economic and democratic demands of the great masses and it is against the lines that were not seen as being in the ‘left’ by us such as counter-revolutionist Maoism firstly; also gauchism, anarchism and Trotskyism.” “*Aynı eğilim ülkemizde de sermayenin tüm tuzaklarına rağmen, tüm yasaklara ve baskılara, 12 Mart’lara, işkencelere, kıyımlara, sürgünlere rağmen bir çığ gibi büyümektedir. Nasıl bir büyüme bu? Artık kesinlikle ‘sol’ içinde görmediğimiz, karşı devrimci çizgideki maoculuk başta olmak üzere, goşizme, anarşizme, troçkizme...karşı.*” “5 Haziran’da faşizme geçit yok!”, *TÖB-DER-Tüm Öğretmenler Birleşme ve Dayanışma Derneği Konya Şubesi Yayın Organı*, 27 May 1977, 1, p. 4). In addition, TÖB-DER states demands such as “splitting from NATO and CENTO and offensive blocks, cleaning our land from foreign military bases, forming a democratic and progressive system and building a government that takes side with the people.” (NATO’dan, SENTO’dan, saldırganlık bloklarından çıkmak, topraklarımızı yabancı üslerden temizlemek, ülkemizde demokratik, ilerici bir dozen, halktan yana bir hükümet kurmak). *ibid.*, p. 4. This rhetoric is in line with the Communist Party of Turkey. Also it used the concepts like ‘peaceful coexistence’, which is only used by the pro-Soviet parties throughout the world. *ibid.*, p. 4).

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ “The probabilities for working with the social democrats who have leftist lines strengthening within themselves is getting better” “*Aralarında sol akımların belirginleştiği sosyal demokratlarla çalışma koşulları da iyileşiyor.*” *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ “Teachers who are members of TÖB-DER, who fight undauntedly to overthrow the public enemy MC (Milliyetçi Cephe-Nationalist Front-BG) and replace it with a democratic government, have a significant share in this victory.” “İstemlerimiz,” *TÖB-DER-Tüm Öğretmenler Birleşme ve Dayanışma Derneği Konya Şubesi Yayın Organı*, 15 June 1977.

fascist forces.” For TÖB-DER, the success of the progressive, democratic forces must be concretized by founding a “democratic government” which would be able to hinder fascism supported by comprador-monopoly capital, give breath to progressive forces, develop economic, democratic and political rights and freedoms.³⁴⁶

The rise of this association in Kahramanmaraş in accordance with those in the rest of the country in the RPP era turned the strong reactions of the rightist public into a full-fledged political campaign against this association. For example, the discussions between the pro-Soviet factions and the Maoists in the general congress of TÖB-DER were used to prove the union's servitude to external forces. Vice-president of the NAP, Sadi Somuncuoğlu, argued that there were three groups in the TÖB-DER congress: "The supporters of Russia, the pro-Chinese group and the RPP group allying with a different communist group. There is no group supporting Turkey among these three groups."³⁴⁷ He continued that each of them condemned the others as the servants of Russia or China. While none of them denied these condemnations, they insisted on accusing the others of servitude. The national education system as a whole was surrendered to these groups by a governmental decree by Bülent Ecevit.³⁴⁸

As seen above, the teachers' associations were at the heart of the rightist campaign. All teachers were accused of diabolic characteristics such as being leftist, communist, atheist or Alevi. Thus the personal stories of leftist teachers found place in rightist newspapers. In each case, a leftist teacher was described as being the exact opposite of an ideal Muslim, both culturally and politically. In addition, each was

³⁴⁶ “Seçimi Demokratik Güçler Kazandı Demokratik Bir İktidar Mutlaka Kurulmalıdır!” *TÖB-DER-Tüm Öğretmenler Birleşme ve Dayanışma Derneği Konya Şubesi Yayın Organı*, 15 June 1977.

³⁴⁷ “Rusya yanlıları, Çin yanlısı grup, bir başka komünist grupla ittifak yapan CHP grubu. Bu üç grup arasında Türkiye yanlısı olan grup yoktur.” *Devlet* (7), October 1978, p. 22.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

considered an important cultural and political actor who could have determined the outcome of the incidents. As an example, the fact that one of the founders of the Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey in Kahramanmaraş city was a teacher was found to be very important by *Hergün*. It was written that if a teacher could legally participate in the foundation of a radical leftist party, there would be many of them in the activities of illegal associations and parties in Kahramanmaraş.³⁴⁹ Tamer Özdemir, a writer for the right-wing newspaper *Tercüman*, wrote that Aziz Paksu, geography teacher at the Kahramanmaraş Institute of Education, had given religion lessons in the period before the Kahramanmaraş Incidents and had made atheist propaganda in the classroom. Özdemir alleged that Aksu had told his students that "If there is a god, draw a picture of it and we can see what it is like," and then asked them in an examination to prove the existence of God. According to Özdemir, another leftist teacher of the Institute of Education, Hacı Aygün, had shown his gun to his students and said, "Even if you graduate from school, you will not cease to catch the fascists in the villages where you'll go."³⁵⁰

Interestingly enough, the event that triggered the Kahramanmaraş Massacre was the assassination of two leftist teachers who were employed at the Kahramanmaraş Vocational High School (Endüstri Meslek Lisesi) Mehmet Yüzbaşıoğlu and Hacı Çolak on 21 December 1978. On the next day, their funeral, organized by TÖB-DER and other leftist organizations, was attacked near Ulu Mosque by 10,000 people. In short, teachers were at the heart of the political warfare in Kahramanmaraş.

³⁴⁹ "Öğretmenler parti kurucusu olarak görev alıyorlardı," *Hergün*, 21 January 1979.

³⁵⁰ "Eğer varsa Allah'ın resmini çizin de görelim nasılmış," "Mezun olsanız bile gideceğiniz köylerde faşistlerin yakasını bırakmayacaksınız." Tamer Özdemir, "Kahramanmaraş'ta kanayan yara," *Tercüman*, 13 January 1979.

The second target was the police. There is obviously a strong positive correlation between the politicization of society and the organizational tendencies of the police. This is mostly related to the fact that unionism within the state's security apparatus is fundamentally different from the establishment of unions (or associations) in other sectors since the state needs the police to suppress the others' movements when necessary. Thus no state regards the unions organizing among its security forces positively and tries to prevent it. In reality, only a strong social (and/or political) mobilization spreading throughout all levels of society could force the people of the security apparatus to organize legally. In these cases, these people working in the security apparatus could accept the extraordinary risks of their activities.

Police unionism in Britain is a good example of this phenomenon. During the Manchester cotton dispute of 1853, the policemen of Manchester organized a strike "for a wage increase for officers and men on grounds of equality with Liverpool."³⁵¹ Despite the fact that "there was no march but an 'ostentatiously dignified assembly' of 170 striking constables," the strike "led to a rapid breakdown of social discipline in Manchester. Blackleg police were attacked and non-striking officers were assaulted."³⁵² This strike and other actions that followed after led the English state "to see their men as employees, not servants. The police were in fact the first in the public sector to organize a union." In 1918, when a Police Bill outlawing the union came before the Parliament, they tried to organize a nationwide strike. However, the strike "went unsupported by organized labour and was marked by half-cock strikes in London and Birmingham, where there were brutal clashes between pickets and

³⁵¹ Nigel Fielding, *The Police and Social Conflict-Rhetoric and Reality* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: The Athlone Press, 1991), p. 62.

³⁵² Ibid.

blacklegs, and by mob violence, looting and arson in Liverpool and Birkenhead." Nigel Fielding emphasizes the social and political context of those days for understanding the "meaning" of police unionism: "The context for the Government was one of a likely continuance of the war for a further year, industrial unrest throughout Britain, a police mutiny and effective control of Whitehall, the troops aiding the civil power being young, wounded and sympathetic to the strikers. Lloyd-George conceded the union's demands with a crucial exception. Years later he told a policeman 'this country was nearer to Bolshevism that day than at any time since'"³⁵³

While police unionism developed in the British context as a follow-up to of trade unionism, some other types of organizations emerged as the representation of the internal conflict within the security forces. The black officer organizations in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s United States are good examples of this type of organizational movement. This movement was the product of the rise of the black movement in the US. In the 1960s, racial discrimination against black people shaped the political agenda of the US. The majority of the black people (especially people from the lower classes) were mobilized throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This mobilization affected the police organization. As Juris and Feuille write, some organizations, "like the New York City Guardians, founded in 1949, evolved from social-fraternal organizations of black policemen into 'racial rights' organizations...Other associations were founded in recent years explicitly to deal with racially based grievances."³⁵⁴ Local black officer organizations were eventually unified under the National Black Police Association chartered in Chicago in 1972.

Additionally, the black officers' organizational movement produced a reaction among white officers. Juris and Feuille write that "relations between the majority,

³⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 64.

³⁵⁴ Hervey A. Juris, Peter Feuille, *Police Unionism* (Massachusetts: Lexington, 1973), p. 165.

white dominated unions and the black officer associations were strained. A white interviewee in one city characterized relations between the union and the black association as a 'stand-off- we've got our guns pointed to each other, and each is waiting for the other to make the next move.' White policemen appear to be resentful of the black officer associations because these groups have emerged as the vehicles for institutionalized black protest."³⁵⁵ In short, the Black Movement in the U.S. in its heyday influenced even the security organization and brought the ongoing political polarization into the center of the organization itself.

In the Turkish experience, the political struggle within the police organization was rooted in a more critical situation. In the 1970s, the struggle within the police organization was part of the ongoing low-intensity civil war environment. As in the American experience, it was based on a popular political issue, but while the American example had an ethnic and cultural element, the Turkish example originated from political-ideological reasons. Of course, police unionism did not have a specific political orientation at the beginning.

To understand the transformation of the police associations, we must remember the history of police associations in Turkey. The first association, the Association of the People from Orta (k) (*Orta (k)lılar Derneği*) was founded in 1970. Its name derived from a course designated to train chief officers in the Police Organization. According to its first regulation, only police chiefs could be members. After some time, the association passed a new regulation providing the other police officers the right to be members. Moreover, the association renamed itself as the *Polis Derneği* (Police Association).³⁵⁶ In her memoirs, titled *Sakıncalı Kadın Polis* (Unwelcome

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 173.

³⁵⁶ Sırtkı Öner, *Halkın Polisi, Pol-Der Anıları* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), p. 34.

Woman Police), Nurhan Varlı states that in those years, the Police Association aimed to protect the social rights of the policemen:

We were POL-DER members. My father was, for a while, the president of POL-DER. He was active in the union. We were the first to become members of POL-DER. We did not have any political aims or thoughts for the POL-DER membership since POL-DER was founded to protect the social rights of the police. We became members of POL-DER because of a conviction that our rights could be defended.³⁵⁷

The press organ of the union, *Pol-Der*, published many articles underlining POL-DER's existence as a professional organization. In the first volume of *Pol-Der*, D. Birol suggested that POL-DER did not support any political ideology and did not have any aim to challenge the rulers for any reason. All of the activities of POL-DER were meant to achieve better working conditions for police officers.³⁵⁸ These words indicate that POL-DER initially followed the trade unionist style of police unions in Britain and the U.S.

Furthermore, İsmet Hoşça suggested that their objective was to develop the efficiency mechanism of the state mechanism: "We believe that freedom to unionize does not affect the mechanism of the state negatively. On the contrary this mechanism can work more efficiently and be effective."³⁵⁹ For Hoşça, the achievement of such an efficiency would improve the state's ability to govern: "In this way, an unbreakable tie will emerge between the rulers and the ruled."³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ "Bizler POL-DER'liydik. Babam POL-DER'de bir dönem başkanlık da yaptı. Dernekte faaldi. Bizler POL-DER'e ilk üye olanlardandık. POL-DER'e üye olmakla herhangi bir siyasal amaç ve düşüncemiz yoktu. Çünkü POL-DER polis memurlarının sosyal haklarını koruyup kollamak amacıyla kurulmuştu. Biz de bir polis olarak haklarımızın savunulacağı, sahip çıkılacağı düşüncesiyle POL-DER'e üye olmuştuk." Çetin Yiğenoğlu (ed) *Sakıncalı Kadın Polis Nurhan Varlı'nın Anıları* (İstanbul: Çağdaş, 1995), p. 41.

³⁵⁸ D. Birol, "Kıvançlıyız," *Pol-Der* (1), October 1975.

³⁵⁹ "Sendikal özgürlüğün sanılacağı gibi Devlet mekanizmasını işverimi açısından olumsuz yönde etkilemeyeceği, aksine bu mekanizmanın daha verimli çalışacağı ve etkin olacağı inancındayız." İsmet Hoşça, "Özgürlükler Üzerine," *Pol-Der* (1), October 1975.

Additionally, POL-DER denied the allegations that it was a political organization. Kazım Ulusoy, the president of the POL-DER, underlined the impartiality of POL-DER:

For this reason, our associations' activities and initiatives and our relationship with the rulers must be understood as the signs of social and occupational development. Associations cannot exist in the domain of separatist groups, as some unconscious rulers claim and fear. It is suitable to describe those who claim the opposite and reject the neutrality of the police as defeatists and plotters. Against all understandings and attitudes, I want to declare to the people of the Police Organization: that personal sympathy and personal thoughts and social and occupational orientations are different concepts. Associations aim to reflect the developmental, social, cultural and occupational problems of the people whom they have the right to represent in a legal and objective way. This understanding has always been prevalent and will surely remain the same.³⁶¹

However, contrary to these claims of neutrality, as with the New York City Guardians, POL-DER evolved from a social rights organization into a leftist democratic mass organization. The General Congress of the Police Association, held on 17 May 1975, was a turning point in this process. During the congress, a new administrative council which included well-known policemen who were "labelled" by the rightist press as "communists," was elected. Kazım Ulusoy, İsmet Hoşça, and Sıtkı Öner rejected the rightist organization within the police organization.³⁶² In the second congress of the POL-DER on 12 June 1976, all of the contradictions came to

³⁶⁰ "Böylelikle yönetenler ile yönetilenler arasında sağlam ve sarsılmaz bir bağ teşekkül edecek." Ibid., p. 3.

³⁶¹ "Bu nedenle, derneklerimizin faaliyet ve girişimleri ile, yöneticilerle kurulan ilişkilerimiz toplumsal ve mesleki gelişimin işaretleri olarak benimsenmelidir. Bilinçsiz yöneticilerin korktuğu ve vasıflandırdığı gibi, dernekler bölücü cereyanların etkisi ve güdümünde olamaz. Bunun aksini savunanları ve polisin tarafsızlığını kabul etmeyenleri bozguncu ve bölücü olarak işaretlemek yerinde olur. Tüm anlayış ve tutumlara karşı Emniyet Teşkilatı bireylerine duyurmak isterim: Kişisel sempati ve kişisel görüş ile, toplum ve mesleki yönelim ayrı ayrı kavramlardır. Dernekler, temsil yetkisini aldıkları kişilerin kalkınma, sosyal, kültürel ve mesleki sorunlarını kanuni ve objektif olarak yanıtmakla görevlidirler. Bu anlayış her zaman böyle olmuş, böyle devam edecektir." Kazım Ulusoy, "Polisde Dernekler," *Pol-Der* (1), October 1975.

³⁶² The association decided to take the name POL-DER during this congress. "POL-DER" is the abbreviation of "Police Association." (Sıtkı Öner, "Emniyet Örgütü ve POL-DER", *Pol-Der* (5, 6, 7). After 1975, all the people including the ones who do not know its real name called it as "POL-DER."

the surface. A group of people, including police officers and students who wore Grey Wolf and NAP rosettes, came to the congress hall and shouted nationalist slogans. Former Minister of Internal Affairs, Faruk Sükan (Justice Party member), addressed the audience with the following: "Do not hand this association over to the leftists!"³⁶³ However, the existing management was re-elected, with Kazım Ulusoy as president and Sıtkı Öner as secretary general.³⁶⁴ After that, the rightist police officers resigned from POL-DER and founded POL-BİR (*Polis Birliği Derneği*, the Association of Police Union). Nurhan Varlı sums up the process:

However, after a while, things started to go haywire. Its direction was changed and it took on a political content. This was mostly due to the attitude of the rightist structure within the police organization. After their failed attempt to get hold of the POL-DER, rightist cops founded POL-BİR. Thus the organization, which had been founded to protect the social rights of the police, took on political character.³⁶⁵

This transformation took place quite rapidly. Even in the first issues of the journal *Pol-Der*, some opposing claims that were not represented within the state apparatus began to be declared. For example, Kazım Ulusoy spoke on the right not to obey some orders:

In personal or social incidents or in politically motivated incidents, the police must only take the measures ordered by the laws and do the necessary practices. In addition, the police are bound to implement the orders that are seen as necessary by the government. However, this does not necessarily mean obeying all of the orders and behaviours of the political power. In the law system accepted by our constitution, the political power's orders can not be implemented in some cases.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Öner, *Halkın Polisi*, p. 42, 43.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 43, 44.

³⁶⁵ "Ancak sonradan olay çarpıtıldı. Yönü değişti, siyasi içerik kazandı. Bu da polis teşkilatı içindeki sağ yapılanmanın tutumu yüzünden oldu. Sağcı polisler POL-DER'i ele geçiremeyince POL-BİR'i kurdular. Böylece polisin safça sosyal haklarının korunup kollanması amacıyla kurulan örgütler siyasi nitelik kazandı." Yiğenoğlu, p. 41.

³⁶⁶ "Bu bakımdan bireysel veya toplumsal adli olaylarda, siyasal amaçlı olaylarda, polis yalnızca yasaların emrettiği tedbirleri almalı ve işlemleri yapmalıdır. Bu arada hükümetin gerekli gördüğü tedbirleri yerine getirmekle de yükümlüdür. Bu, görevlilerin siyasal iktidarın her türlü emir ve davranışlarına karşı boyun eğmeleri gerektiği anlamına gelmemelidir. Anayasamızın Kabul ettiği hukuk düzeni içerisinde siyasal iktidarın emirlerini de yerine getiremeyebilir." Kazım Ulusoy,

These words, no doubt, targeted the Nationalist Front government between 1975 and 1977. As a leftist employee organization, POL-DER reacted to the government's orders which aimed at suppressing the workers' movement and leftist organizations. Moreover, the members of POL-DER did not want to be a supporter of the *ülküçü* forces in the universities.³⁶⁷ Sıtkı Öner states that POL-DER members did not attack the leftist students' demonstrations. As a result, the leftist students preferred to organize their demonstrations when the police officers of POL-DER were on duty.³⁶⁸ In sum, if the NF's orders are evaluated as an open war against the left, POL-DER represented police officers who did not want to fight on the side of the right:

When words like "strike," "boycott," or "shantytown" are pronounced, "police" comes to mind. For this reason, the political circles that take their power from the upper classes use the police as a legal tool for the benefit of these classes; in other words, they use the people against the people. But it is impossible to imagine the unlawful conduct of the police –the majority of whom have the problem of existence- against his brothers, such as students or workers- who are their neighbours from the shantytowns. In such cases, the upper posts that have the right to direct the police own the fault and the misdeed... We believe that the police must be the protectors of the progressive and emancipating forces rather than those of the reactionary and conservatives and also it must be an institution that has the acceptance and respect of the people.³⁶⁹

"Emniyet Görevlilerinin Siyasal Tarafsızlığı," *Pol-Der* (3) December 1975.

³⁶⁷ In the third issue of *Pol-Der*, one of Örsan Öymen's (a columnist of *Milliyet* newspaper) articles took part. In this article, Öymen announced that the *ülküçü* was supported by the policemen in a fight against leftist students. Örsan Öymen, "Polis" *Pol-Der* (3), December 1975. For another example, see "Komandolar bir polisi dövdü," *Pol-Der* (5,6,7).

³⁶⁸ Öner, *Halkın Polisi*, p. 83.

³⁶⁹ "Bir grev, boykot veya gecekondü sözü geçince, akla hemen 'polis' gelir olmuştur. Çünkü, egemen sınıflara sırtını dayamış olan politik çevreler, polisi, bu sınıfın yararına 'yasal maşa' gibi, daha genel bir ifade ile, halkı halka karşı kullanagelmışlerdir. Oysa çoğunluğu yaşam ve geçim sıkıntısı içerisinde olan polisin, kardeşleri olan öğrencilerimize ve gecekondü komşusu olan işçilerimize yasa dışı davranışlarını düşünmek bile olanaksızdır. Bu tür tutumlarda kusur ve suç, polise yön verme yetkisi olan üst makamlardır... Siyasal iktidar olduğunda partilerin, polisi kendinden gösterme ve kılma çabası, bu örgüt üzerinde hiç de iyi etkiler yaratmamaktadır. Yansızlık ve layıklık çizgisi üzerinde görev yapmak durumunda olan güvenlik örgütünün, komandolar ve imamhatiplerin aralarına alınmak istendiğinde göstermiş olduğu tepki, bunun en açık örneğidir... Bu örneği vermekten amaç, polis örgütünün, faşizan bir baskı kurmak eğiliminde olanlarla, sömürü düzeninin devamını isteyenlere ne kadar itibar edeceğini göstermek içindir... Polisin her ülkede gerici ve tutucu değil, ilerici ve özgürlükçü güçlerin koruyucusu ve halkın da benimseyip saygı duyduğu bir kuruluş olması gereğine inanıyor.." Gürbüz Atabek (ex-chief of police of İzmir), "Halkın Polisi Olmak," *Pol-*

As mentioned above, after the foundation of the RPP government in early 1978, the rightist political parties began to attack the leftist employee organizations. POL-DER was a major target in this campaign because of the fact that "the revolutionaries could confront the fascists not only in the streets but also in the security apparatus of the state," as Emre Arslan writes.³⁷⁰

As opposed to this leftist struggle within the security apparatus, the rightist-nationalist front brought to the agenda the "unfair" practices of the police officers who were members of the POL-DER. For example, on October 16, 1978, *Milli Gazete* (the newspaper of the National Salvation Party) wrote: "300 students who did not enter the classrooms due to the absence of life security and freedom of education at Atatürk High School were beaten and tormented by POL-DER members."³⁷¹ Another example came from Batman: "Yesterday police officers who are members of POL-DER took Islamist young people from the coffee house to the police station and tortured them."³⁷²

Of course, NAP led the major campaign against POL-DER. It carried out the campaign with two main tools, namely by controlling POL-BIR and carrying out a press campaign against POL-DER. Throughout 1978, NAP's newspapers *Hergün* and *Ortadoğu* and its periodicals, such as *Genç Arkadaş* and *Devlet*, gave news about torture practiced by POL-DER members against the nationalist youth. For example, in

Der (3), December 1975.

³⁷⁰ Emre Arslan, "Faşizmin Siyaseti: MHP'nin iktidar bloğu karşısında değişen strateji ve konumları," *Praksis*, no. 5, (2002), p. 310.

³⁷¹ "Atatürk Lisesi'nde can emniyeti ve okuma hürriyeti bulunmaması sebebiyle derslere girmeyen 300 öğrenci, POL-DER'li polisler tarafından coplanmış, tartaklanmıştır." "Elazığ Atatürk Lisesi'nde can güvenliği kalmadı," *Milli Gazete*, 16 October 1978.

³⁷² "Geçtiğimiz gün POL-DER'li polisler kahvede bulunan islamcı gençlerden bazılarını karakola götürerek işkence yapmışlardır." "Batman'da Pol-Der'liler kahve basıyor," *Milli Gazete*, 28 October 1978.

the first volume of *Devlet*, the headline of an interview with Alparslan Türkeş was "We Will Hold the Torturers Responsible."³⁷³ In the second volume of the same periodical, an interview with the president of POL-BİR, Cemil Ceylan, appeared with allegations against POL-DER:

A pseudo police association called POL-DER unintentionally tells about the unity within the organization. Contrary to this, if we look at their pamphlets and press organs, it is seen easily that it does not have any interest in the police, in the problems of the police, but on the other hand, it does serve an ideology that is prohibited by law; it is the slave of a party and it is destructive and separatist. An organization which commemorates the "martyr of the revolution" in its general congresses, speaks the same with *Bizim Radyo* (Our Radio; radio station of the illegal Communist Party of Turkey) and the Communist Party of Turkey calls the police of the state the police of the people, tries to play with the dignity of the police, does not have the right to make statements for the police.³⁷⁴

On 17 December 1978 (two days before the bombing of Çiçek Cinema), a sentence from Alparslan Türkeş's message to the Kahramanmaraş Congress of the NAP was *Hergün's* headline: "Those Who See the Cries of Tortures as Cries of Happiness Will Render Account of This."³⁷⁵

In the context of Kahramanmaraş, the police officers who acted against NAP were condemned as torturers, as will be seen in the case of ETKO Trial. On April 16, 1978, the Police Directorate announced that members of two previously unknown radical nationalist illegal armed organizations, the ETKO (*Esir Türkleri Kurtarma Ordusu*, The Army of the Liberation of Enslaved Turks) and TYK (*Türk Yıldırım*

³⁷³ "İşkencecilerden hesap soracağız"(A talk with Türkeş), *Devlet* no. 1, (April-May 1978), p. 16, 17.

³⁷⁴ "POL-DER isimli sözde polis derneği de poliste birlikten beraberlikten ağzının kenarı ile bahsediyor. Fakat bildirilerine, yayın organlarına bakıldığında aslında polisle, polislikle uzaktan ve yakından alakasının olmadığı kanunlarla yasaklanan bir ideolojinin uşaklığını yaptığı, siyasi parti kölesi olduğu, yıkıcı, bölücü olduğu açıkça görülür. Şehit polisler dururken genel kurullarında "Devrim Şehitleri" adına saygı duruşunda duran Bizim Radyo ve Türkiye Komünist Partisinin ağzıyla demeçler veren, Devletin polisine Halkın polisi diyen, polisin haysiyeti ve şerefi ile oynamaya çalışan bir kuruluş polis adına demeç vermeye yetkili değildir." "Polis Devletin Polisidir" (interview with the president of the POL-BİR, Cemil Ceylan), *Devlet* no. 2, (July 1978), p. 17.

³⁷⁵ "İşkence çılgınlıklarını "mutluluk feryadı" görenler hesap verecek," *Hergün*, 17 December 1978.

Komandoları, Turkish Lightning Commandos) had been arrested in Kahramanmaraş. The accused were not strangers to the people of Maraş: one of them was Ökkeş Kenger (who became popular eight months later as the first defendant in the Trial of the Kahramanmaraş Social Incidents) and the other, Edip Özbaş (son of the NAP Kahramanmaraş deputy Mehmet Yusuf Özbaş). They were charged with the bombings in Kahramanmaraş, which had been organized to provoke the Alevi and leftist circles and the RPP.³⁷⁶ The defendants in these trials claimed that the communist police officers had tortured them and organized conspiracies with the aim of condemning them as members of illegal organizations. One defendant in this trial, Şahin Bora, who was fourteen years old at the time, wrote that the president of the Kahramanmaraş POL-DER, Celal Ergün, and some ten officers had plotted conspiracy against him and the other twenty-six *ülkücüs*.³⁷⁷

In addition, the members of POL-DER were accused of initiating the violence in the Kahramanmaraş Incidents. *Hergün* condemned POL-DER members: “On the night of December 21-22, the rightist citizens of Kahramanmaraş could not sleep because of fear. Especially, the occupation of Yörük Selim district by the militants gave way to great fears. All through the night, the transportation of weapons and militants to the district continued. In those actions, POL-DER members, in other words Özyaydınlı’s police, led and secured the transactions.”³⁷⁸ Moreover, *Hergün*

³⁷⁶ The petition of the advocates Ali Kalan, Emcet Olcaytu and Barış Yiğit to “Adana-Kahramanmaraş-Gaziantep ve Adıyaman İlleri Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı Askeri Mahkemesi Kıdemli Hakimliği” file number:1979/401, p. 5.

³⁷⁷ Türkmenoğlu, “Kahramanmaraş’tan Kanlı Maraş’a,” *Hergün*, 20 January 1979.

³⁷⁸ “21-22 Aralık gecesi, Kahramanmaraş’ta sağ görüşlü yurttaşlar sabaha kadar korkudan uyuyamadılar. Özellikle Yörük Selim Mahallesi’nde her tarafın militanlar tarafından işgal ettirilmesi büyük endişelere yol açtı. Gece boyunca dab u mahalleye silah ve cephane nakli ilea dam biriktirme eylemi devam etti. Bu eylemlerde POL-DER üyesi, diğer deyimle Özyaydınlı’nın polisteri başı çektiler ve nakil işlemlerinde adeta güvenliği sağladılar.” Alparslan, “Kahramanmaraş 1978-1980- 6”, *Hergün*, 2 September 1980.

condemned POL-DER members for organizing along with TÖB-DER the funeral of the two leftist teachers on 22 December 1978.

As a result, the Sunni masses attacked the security forces throughout the incidents in Kahramanmaraş. According to the trial indictment (*İddianame*), on 22 December, one of the leaders of the group that attacked the Namık Kemal district, Mirza Doğan, exhorted those around him by shouting, "Shoot the leftists! If the police stop you, shoot the police; if the soldiers stop you, turn and shoot them, too!"³⁷⁹ That night, about 300 *ülküçüs* held a demonstration, shouting slogans such as "Nationalist Turkey!", "Damn the communists!"³⁸⁰ These were typical slogans of the fascist movement in the 1970s. In addition to these classic slogans, the demonstrators shouted one that had not been heard before: "Communist police!"³⁸¹ This slogan reflected the hostility towards the police and the belief that all that the policemen were doing was protecting the communists. As a consequence, police officers who were allied with the communists and the Alevis were attacked. Police cars were set on fire.³⁸² On 23 December, an *imam* (prayer leader) standing on an official vehicle of the Technical Department of Kahramanmaraş Municipality, agitated people with the following words: "My Muslim brothers, do not dread, just hit and destroy! Worthless communist policemen have tortured your children! Muslim Turkey's, Kahramanmaraş's, heroic children, take our revenge on the communists!"³⁸³ On the same day, S. Sığırgüden (one of the defendants from the Mağaralı district) demanded

³⁷⁹ *İddianame*, p. 142.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ "Müslüman kardeşlerim, durmayın vurun kırın. Allahsız komünist polisler çocuklarınıza işkence ettiler. Kahramanmaraş'ın kahraman çocukları, acımızı komünistlere komayın." Suat Parlar, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Gizli Devlet* (İstanbul: Spartaküs, 1996), p. 355.

police officer Mehmet Poyraz's gun. When Poyraz refused, Sığırgüden forced him to fire at the Alevis and leftists gathering in the next street. Again Poyraz refused. Then, according to the *İddianame*, Duran Köşk cried "Shoot!" and M. Fuat Şerement, a former policeman³⁸⁴ said, "I want the head of a policeman; there are no good or bad policemen; shoot!" The police officer was then attacked and seriously wounded.³⁸⁵ Interestingly enough, the man who had said, "There are no good or bad police" (M. F. Şerement) was protected by the police officers who were members of POL-BİR!³⁸⁶

The accusations against the POL-DER members did not stop once the events were over. An aggressive campaign was continued during the investigation and the trial. Hasan Fehmi Güneş became the Minister of Internal Affairs after the resignation of İrfan Özaydanlı. An investigation committee was founded under the presidency of Kazım Ulusoy, who was also the president of the POL-DER. Ökkeş Kenger criticized Hasan Fehmi Güneş for saying the following to police officers: "If he does not speak like a man, do the necessary things."³⁸⁷ In addition, Kenger claimed that POL-DER members had tortured him for accepting all of the accusations against him.³⁸⁸ Hamza Alparıslan claims to have collected 227 different letters telling the stories of torture from people arrested in Kahramanmaraş. He states that Hasan Fehmi Güneş, Kazım Ulusoy, Hüseyin Büyükbeyazıt, Korkut

³⁸⁴ Advocate Hayri Balta's petition of reply to "Ankara 10. Asliye Mahkemesi," file number: 1995/529, p. 25.

³⁸⁵ *İddianame*, p. 150.

³⁸⁶ "Polisin iyisi kötüsü olmaz, vurun!" *ibid.*, p. 107.

³⁸⁷ "Adam gibi konuşmazsa gerekeni yapın." Alparıslan, "Kahramanmaraş 1978-1980," *Hergün*, 7 September 1980.

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*

Zeybekoğlu, Kamuran Korkmaz, Hüseyin Salmanoğlu and other people were responsible for the torture practiced with the purpose of blaming innocent people.³⁸⁹

In the accounts of the incidents, the division of the state organs is not only a cause, but also a factor affecting the direction that the events would take. The interference of the state officers had direct influence on the “fate” of the people since the people organizing the assaults against the Alevis and leftists and the ones who resisted were employees of the same state apparatus that was supposed to act impartially. Some people whose duty was to protect the people under attack were on the offenders’ side. An Alevi citizen expressed the following on 17 January 1979:

In the morning at 07:30, the commander of the infantry battalion which came to protect our quarter, Major K. Gündüz, and Captain A. Kamil Bilgutay told us to return to home and they moved the inhabitants of our district into the houses. After that, Captain Kamil made the soldiers get in the car and went to the meet crowd gathering on the slope. He supervised the distribution of the weapons to the crowd.³⁹⁰

Nevertheless, some officers were fighting alongside the leftist groups. For example, the director of the *Yol Su Elektrik* (Road Water Electricity), Fevzi Onaç and his colleagues, were condemned for directing the attacks against Pak-Tuz Factory and Eser Bulgur Factory, which were being used by the rightist groups, and shooting at the districts controlled by rightist groups.³⁹¹

More evidence of the participation of the leftist employees came from the Justice Party deputies’ demand for the removal of the directors of the Police, PTT, YSE, Forestry, National Education, High Schools, Education Institutes, Technical

³⁸⁹ Alparslan, "Kahramanmaraş 1978-1980," *Hergün*, 7 September 1980. Ökkeş Kenger underlines the Alevi identity of a policeman: "An Alevi police, Hüseyin Salmanoğlu-from Köprübaşı Village in Pazarcık county who works in the Police Organization tortured me. That man annihilated me." *ibid.*

³⁹⁰ "Sabah saat 07:30'da mahallemizi korumak için gelen piyade taburunun başındaki binbaşı Kemal Gündüz ve Yüzbaşı A. Kemal Bilgutay bize 'Siz içeri girin, sizing emniyetiniz sağlanmıştır' diyerek biz mahalle sakinlerini evlerimize tıkadıktan sonar, Yüzbaşı Kamil askeri arabaya binerek yamaç dağda toplanmış kalabalığın yanına gidip kalabalığın yanındaki sivil araçtan indirilen askeri malzemelerin dağıtılmasına nezaret etti." Şahhüseyinoğlu, p. 142.

³⁹¹ *İddianame*, p. 141.

High School, and High School of Commerce since “the people see them as the cause and instigator of the incidents.”³⁹² As mentioned above, the leftist teachers and police officers and other civil servants were the targets of the fascists in the incidents.

If we look at the relationship with the crowd led by the fascists and the army, it is possible to observe a different behaviour towards the army in order to pacify the soldiers who tried to prevent the event. The army was welcomed at the beginning by the crowd with such slogans as, “The Army is with us!” After some time, however, the people declared that the Turkish army could be regarded as “communist” if it did not cooperate with them. When they did not see any cooperation, as seen above in the petition of an Alevi citizen, they cried, “Communist soldier!”³⁹³ Interestingly enough, there was some truth in their slogan. The lower ranking officers were divided along political lines. Erbil Tuşalp sees this division as the only explanation of “why the army waited to make the coup until 12 September 1980. “The right-left division had reached a critical point within the lower ranking officers. If the army is too fast to take over, it is feared that an internal struggle might arise with the participation of the young officers.”³⁹⁴ Thus, it seems clear that this political cleavage showed itself in the protests against the massacres in Kahramanmaraş. The students of the *Harbiye* (War Academy) spontaneously protested the massacre before watching a movie at the academy; they held a minute of silence for the victims of the massacre and then shouted anti-fascist slogans.³⁹⁵

Returning to the political context after the Kahramanmaraş Incidents which was determined by the declaration of martial law, it seems clear that the ongoing

³⁹² Selim Yalçiner, “Maraş’ın Dört Günü-3,” *Cumhuriyet*, 30 December 1978.

³⁹³ Şahhüseyinoğlu, p. 133.

³⁹⁴ Erbil Tuşalp, *Eylül İmparatorluğu* (Ankara: Bilgi, 1988), p. 36.

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 38.

political conflict within the state organs did not stop by the martial law. The most dramatic examples of this struggle were seen after the Kahramanmaraş Incidents. As is known, Adana became the scene of political violence in 1979, mostly due to the fact that the trial of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents was held there. Uğur Mumcu wrote the following on 29 September 1979: "Of course, there is a very important reason why the attacks from the rightist terrorists became intense in Adana. The terrorists established their headquarters in this city with their shooting powers since the trial about the Kahramanmaraş Massacre which has political and historical significance is being held in Adana."³⁹⁶ In that context, many attacks both from the right and left were observed. Chief Commander of the Sixth Army Corps and Commander of the Martial Law in Adana, Kahramanmaraş, Adıyaman, Gaziantep, Hatay and Mersin, Nevzat Bölügiray, described the situation in Adana as a civil war and stated that the declaration of martial law could not stop it. He stated that the police in Adana had taken different sides in the struggles in the streets and each side viewed the other as its enemy. Bölügiray gave some examples about how the police officers communicated with each other:

- Here is the center! An armed conflict is reported in ...Street. Teams 315, 320, go to the place where the event is taking place immediately.
- You, fascist dog! How could you become a man and give orders? (..)
- Corrupt communist bastard...³⁹⁷

During another event under martial law, police teams were sent out to a district to suppress a battle between leftist and rightist groups. When the authorities were

³⁹⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 29 September 1979, quoted by Nevzat Bölügiray, *Sokaktaki Asker, Bir Sıkıyönetim Komutanının 12 Eylül Öncesi Anıları* (Milliyet Yayınları, 1989), p. 117.

³⁹⁷ "Burası merkez, .. Mahallesi'nde silahlı çatışma çıkmış. 315, 320. ekipler derhal mahalleye gidin. – Sen faşist kopek, ne zaman adam oldun da emir veriyorsun? – Satılmış komünist piçi!" Bölügiray, p. 34, 35.

unable to get news from these teams, the soldiers sent out to the district reported that the policemen were in a quarrel with each other.³⁹⁸

The assassination Cevat Yurdakul,³⁹⁹ the chief of police in Adana, on 28 September 1979, was the climax. On 28 and 29 September, the policemen of Adana quitted working despite orders from the Martial Law Command.⁴⁰⁰ They shouted such slogans such as "Down with martial law!" and "Long live the revolutionaries!"⁴⁰¹ In reality, the rules of the martial law were bypassed by 300 leftist police officers of Adana with the cooperation of thousands of people protesting Yurdakul's death.⁴⁰²

In sum, the example provided by the Kahramanmaraş Incidents delineates the fact that in times of strong political polarization, the state can become a contested terrain for the ongoing conflict. The Turkish case is no exception. As seen above, all institutions of the state apparatus, including the police and the military, took sides in the conflict throughout the 1970s. The Kahramanmaraş Incidents are significant here

³⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

³⁹⁹ Yurdakul was a POL-DER member. As Sıtkı Öner states, Cevat Yurdakul's term was the best in POL-DER's organization. He captured more than 50 armed activists, including the idealists and leftists. On 31 August 1979, NAP Gaziantep deputy Cengiz Gökçek and Sivas Deputy Ali Gürbüz declared that Cevat Yurdakul sided with the leftists. They declared, "If Yurdakul resigns or escapes abroad; he can not escape from our hands." (Öner, p. 117).

⁴⁰⁰ Bölügiray, p. 103; Öner, p. 118.

⁴⁰¹ Bölügiray, p. 103.

⁴⁰² A radical leftist periodical reports the events: "This assassination was responded to with disgust and hatred. Patriotic policemen from POL-DER resisted by quitting their jobs. The anger of the masses grew. As a response to that situation, proletarian revolutionaries and patriotic revolutionaries organized a demonstration to transform the anger into an anti-fascist struggle. They supported the resistance of the policemen who gathered for a funeral ceremony." "*Bu cinayet şehirde kin ve nefretle karşılandı. POL-DER'li yurtsever polisler işi bırakarak direnişe geçtiler. Kitlenin öfkesi kabardı. Bu durum üzerine proleter devrimciler ve yurtsever devrimciler kitlelerin bu tepkisini anti-faşist bir mücadeleye dönüştürmek için bir gösteri düzenlediler. Cenaze töreni için..toplanan direnişçi polislerin direnişini desteklediler.*" *Devrimci Halkın Birliği*, 19 October 1979).

since the political polarization turned into a full-fledged civil war in the city between 23-25 December and because these Incidents present clear examples of the issue.

Initially, the radical leftist organizations were strong even within the police organization as seen in the example of POL-DER. Besides, a strong leftist tendency was evident among military students and young officers. These Incidents were not born in a vacuum; since the social and political context made it possible. The rise of social struggles *vis a vis* the radical left affected even the security forces.

Second, the rise of the left from the 1960s and 1970s went hand in hand with the rise of the rightist extremism and fascism. The fascist movement under the leadership of the NAP founded many mass organizations in opposition to the leftists, such as MİSK (*Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, Confederation of Nationalist Trade Unions) against DİSK, Ülkü-Bir against TÖB-DER, and POL-BİR against the POL-DER. These organizations, especially the ones that organized within the public sector, became effective anti-communist organizations. Their ongoing challenge of the leftist organizations led them to emphasize their leftist/anti-fascist ideological orientation much more strongly than the times when they organized to improve their members' socio-economic conditions.

Accordingly, the state lost its so-called impartiality and effectiveness. The authorities started to impose strong measures against the organizations, which were believed to be responsible for this situation.⁴⁰³ However, it was too late. If we grasp the meaning of the examples provided by the Kahramanmaraş Incidents, it is easy to understand the fact that these measures had no chance to yield the expected results.

⁴⁰³ The Martial Law Command of Ankara closed four police associations including the POL-DER and POL-BİR on 26 January 1979 (*Cumhuriyet*, 27 January 1979). It is comparable with the Police Act of Britain, which was accepted in 1919. "The Act set up the Police Advisory Council and the Police Federation. The latter was expressly forbidden to join the TUC. It was illegal for police to join any union having the object of influencing pay, pensions or conditions of any force...It is an offence if a policeman calls or attends any unauthorized meeting about matters concerning the force." Fielding, p. 66.

In reality, the Kahramanmaraş Incidents merely rang the opening bell of a larger civil war in which the state employees seemed to take sides in a more direct manner.



CHAPTER 5
AGAINST FORGETTING

It is not that I don't have worries that these events could happen again, I do!

Hüseyin Doğan⁴⁰⁴

In one of his articles about the relationship between collective memory and politics, Ahmet Oktay argues that, “even a superficial remembering of the events that Turkey witnessed since the 12 March can make us grasp how imagination of freedom, equality, and justice have been oppressed and suppressed.”⁴⁰⁵ For Oktay, the ability to remember these events necessitates “saving tradition and the past” from the hegemony of the dominant classes. This is the only way to “catch the destructive elements in the archaic material”⁴⁰⁶ which could be used for an emancipatory reason.

The objective of this chapter is to show how Turkish society has lost its “ability” to remember these events through an investigation of the struggle of hegemony over the collective memory of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents. By relating the political processes with the construction of collective memory, it evaluates Turkish society’s loss of the ability to remember as a direct consequence of the military rule after 1980. In other words, it is possible to argue that the success of 12 September to weaken the emancipatory potential of Turkish society went hand in

⁴⁰⁴ “*Yeniden bu olalar yaşanabilir diye endişelerim yok değil, var!*” *Yeni Gündem* (38), 23-29 November 1986, p. 12. Hüseyin Doğan is a former Republican People’s Party deputy of Kahramanmaraş. He was also the advocate of the victims of the massacre during the Kahramanmaraş Incidents Trial. These words were taken from a talk with Doğan in *Yeni Gündem* journal.

⁴⁰⁵ “*Türkiye’nin 12 Mart’tan bu yana yaşadığı, tanıdığı olduğu olayları yüzeyden bir anımsama bile, özgürlük, eşitlik ve adalet imgelerinin nasıl baskılandığını ve bastırıldığını kavramamızı sağlar.*” Ahmet Oktay, “Mücadele Alanı Olarak Geçmiş” *Birikim*, no. 73, (May 1995), p. 45.

⁴⁰⁶ *İbid.*, p. 50.

hand with its success first in turning round every important event that happened from 12 March, by distorting their content, and last, in achieving the target of allowing the people to forget the past. The Kahramanmaraş Incident is the best example of this process. Moreover, this event's adventure in collective memory can be read as the story of the fascist movement's rebirth in the late-1980s related to its achievement in rewriting the same period.

As will be shown below, all attempts at interpreting the event are parts of a political struggle in Turkey. As observed above in the massive demonstrations protesting the massacre in Maraş by the alliance of the democratic mass organizations and left-wing groups, both after the event and on its first anniversary in December 1979, and the *ülküci* movement's press campaign to deny its responsibility for the pogroms against the Alevis and leftists are the main examples of this reality. As will be shown below by the examples of large-scale anti-fascist protests and the evaluation of the event by the trial indictment prepared by military prosecutors which underlines the responsibility of fascist groups on the Kahramanmaraş Massacre, the leftist/socialist forces had the hegemony in determining public opinion until the 12 September coup. However, if we look at the words of Hüseyin Doğan, mentioned above, and the political success of the right-wing actors in Kahramanmaraş in the 1980s and 1990s, which is investigated in the following pages, the struggle over the collective memory ended with the victory of the right-wing political actors who took side with the attackers in the Kahramanmaraş streets on 22-25 December 1978 and the actors who used the event as a means of seizing power on 12 September 1980. They have used a combination of methods including rewriting the account of events according to their rightist ideology and allowing the people to "forget" the events. These methods constitute a struggle over the collective memory. Thus, with a reflection on the struggle from

today's viewpoint, it seems that this has succeeded. Contrary to these attempts, this study can be read as an endeavor to "remember" the past and write history for the current political atmosphere. It is an attempt to set forth a historical account contrary to victors' texts which serve their own interests.

The Place of the Event in the Collective Memory before 12 September 1980

From the very early period, after the Kahramanmaraş Incidents have been a good example confirming the arguments that writing on a historical event is also a political activity. No place for any kind of objectivism or impartiality was able to exist for this event. As will shown below, every argument has been used as a political tool, especially before the coup on 12 September 1980. Before investigating how the event has been portrayed, we need to remember the wave of protest after the event since it is the best way to understand the left-wing hegemony in the struggle of affecting public opinion before the military takeover. Leftist groups, political parties and democratic organizations held mass rallies protesting the massacres in Kahramanmaraş in every city in Turkey. Despite the declaration of Martial Law, large-scale protests took place. DİSK organized the biggest one, calling workers to stop working and observe five minutes of silence to condemn fascism on 5 January 1979. More than one hundred thousand people, including members of organizations such as TÖB-DER, and TMMOB, and high school and university students participated in this protest.⁴⁰⁷

In addition, a great deal of effort was expended telling the people that one of the bloodiest massacres in world history had happened in Kahramanmaraş. This

⁴⁰⁷*Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7, p. 2299.

campaign transcended the borders of Turkey. An interesting example was a five-day hunger strike undertaken by nine Turkish students in New York to announce that the Kahramanmaraş Incidents were not a religious/sectarian conflict, but a fascist massacre.⁴⁰⁸ The first anniversary of the incidents showed that the Kahramanmaraş Massacre was going to be an important date remembered by the public for many years. Despite the extraordinary pressures on democratic mass organizations, thousands of people participated in protests on the first anniversary. The most important action was organized by TÖB-DER on 24 December 1979. Berna Yergün writes, the teachers throughout the country participated in the 24 December Teachers' Boycott condemning fascism.⁴⁰⁹ In sum, it is no exaggeration that the Kahramanmaraş Massacre had a place in the collective memory because democratic and leftist community gave great importance to the event in the struggle for hegemony in Turkey.

In response to the leftists and democratic institutions' attempts at hegemony, all rightist actors tried to prove that the Kahramanmaraş Incidents had been the consequence of communist propaganda that had support from the RPP. Of course, the *ülküçü* movement led the rightist propaganda. The headline of *Hergün* on 25 December 1978 read, "Communists Started Fratricidal War in K. Maraş."⁴¹⁰ On 27 December, it gave place to the Idealist Youth Association's allegations against the left and the RPP of provoking the Alevis against the Sunnis.⁴¹¹ On 28 December, *Hergün* carried headlines such as "K. Maraş Incident Was the Left's Plan" and "Liars

⁴⁰⁸ *Savaş Yolu*, 8 January 1979.

⁴⁰⁹ Berna Yergün, *Impacts of TÖB-DER as a Democratic Mass Organization on the Democratization Process in Turkey*, Master thesis, Ankara: Middle East Technical University, 2001, p. 40.

⁴¹⁰ "Komünistler kardeş savaşını K. Maraş'ta başlattı," *Hergün*, 25 December 1978.

⁴¹¹ "ÜGD Maraş Olayları'nın içyüzünü açıkladı," *Hergün*, 27 December 1978.

and Slanderers Must Be Embarrassed.”⁴¹² *Hergün* reported on a press conference held by three NAP parliamentary deputies in its headlines the next day. It wrote, "A Leftist Newspaper Directed the K. Maraş Massacre," an allegation laying all blame on *Aydınlık* newspaper.⁴¹³

On the other hand, the right-wing newspaper *Tercüman*, which was known to support the Justice Party, but also included on its staff writers such as Ahmet Kabaklı who were known as NAP supporters, published a three part series titled "Kahramanmaraş Incidents: What Is and What Is Not?" (*Kahramanmaraş Olayları: Nedir, ne değildir?*) in the week after the massacre. Webb writes that the series "systematically turn(ed) round every event, largely by conspiratorial inference and the resort to unsubstantiated rumor, to lay the blame for the whole massacre on 'Alevi citizens', communist militant agitators among them and, finally in the last analysis on the government itself." In sum, as Webb puts it, the account "reads almost as a MHP or ÜGD version of events."⁴¹⁴

In the following section, I will present various kinds of proof demonstrating what may have constituted a general perspective on the K.Maraş events, including their being seen as having been carried out by fascist elements. Initially, trial indictment of the Military Prosecutor's Office of the Martial Law Commandership of Adana-K.Maraş-G.Antep and Urfa can be read as a proof of this argument. Despite the army's struggle against socialist groups and the radical left's counter politics such as "No to Martial Law" campaigns, this document was not in line with the claims of the *ülkücü* and other rightist cadres, who clearly declared their support of the martial law. Of course, stemming from the *raison d'état* of the state, it tried to lay significant

⁴¹²"K.Maraş olayları sol'un tertibidir," "Yalan, İftira Üreticiler Utansın," *Hergün*, 28 December 1978.

⁴¹³"K.Maraş Katliamını sol bir gazete yönlendirdi," *Hergün*, 29 December 1978.

⁴¹⁴Webb, p. 11.

blame on the main enemy of the state who posed a serious threat to its existence by trying to mobilize the masses against the capitalist order, the radical leftist forces. For this reason, the trial indictment tried to find a leftist responsible in Maraş by noting some provocational behavior among leftist elements, such as encouraging the teachers and students of the Vocational High School to attend the funerals of two leftist teachers, insulting Sunni Muslims by saying things like "Mohammed's bastards" during the clash in front of the Ulu Mosque, or attacking some rightist people.⁴¹⁵

Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the trial indictment found that the *ülküçü* elements had the main responsibility for the massacre where it gave the account of the event. In every event, the document gave detailed information showing the participation of *ülküçü* elements in the massacres targeting Alevi and leftists. In the final analysis, it wholly blamed the *ülküçü* movement for the massacres. Thus, it is possible to argue that the document is a sign of a consensus on the content of the event. What is obvious in this picture is the left's success in the struggle for hegemony in the public debate before the start of the hearings of the trial. To say it another way, the military prosecutors did not dare to present the leftist and Alevi as the main parties responsible for the bloody events in Maraş in the first period as it was able to do in the early 1980s since this kind of an attitude could open the way of a more severe political campaign from the democratic mass organizations and the left. Thus, in accordance with the aim of the martial law to decrease the tension in Turkey, the trial indictment followed the method of blaming the perpetrators of the massacre more than the left. On the other hand, it did not forget to blame the leftist elements for its concern to present the left to impartial masses as a source of anarchy

⁴¹⁵*İddianame*, p. 108-111.

in Turkey. The trial began on 4 June 1979. With its 804 witnesses, this court case was the most crowded of any in the history of the Republic to that date. It lasted 400 days. In the end, on 8 May 1980, the Military Court of Justice's Decision with Statement of Reasons confirmed the public's general opinion underlining the extreme right's responsibility in the massacres by punishing the defendants with twenty-nine death sentences, seven life imprisonments, and 321 imprisonments.⁴¹⁶

In the same year, two significant attempts to evaluate the event were seen. Interestingly enough, both came from the *ülkücü* movement. One was the first book published to specifically deal with the event. The author of the book was a well-known political actor, Mehmet Yusuf Özbaş, deputy of the NAP at that time. In his book titled "A City in Which the Criminals Strong White is Shown as Black; Black is White" (*Suçlunun Güçlü Ak'ın Kara Kara'nın Ak Gösterildiği İl*)⁴¹⁷, he engaged in a specific rewriting of the event. Looking at the event from an *ülkücü* perspective, he put the incidents within a large context of a conspiracy against the Turks. For Özbaş, there were five factors behind the event: the Christian West's missionary attempts, the Greeks' Megali Idea, Armenian nationalism, Moscow's attempts at irredentism and its push to warm waters by controlling the İstanbul Strait, and lastly Zionism. Leftism and secessionism were the products of these five troubles.

Looking as far as Greeks, Armenians, Russians and Jews in an environment in which they had no role whatsoever, Özbaş's narrative is among the best examples of extreme nationalist paranoia. According to Özbaş, the factors mentioned above are seen as links in the chain of events. To prove this, he goes back to the nineteenth century, to the arrival of the first missionaries (who were "modern crusaders,"

⁴¹⁶*Gerekçeli Karar*, p. 335, 336. In this decision, the Military Court of Justice evaluated the crying of idealist slogans by masses throughout the incidents as significant proof. The statistical data of the trial is taken from Şahhüseynoğlu, p. 175.

⁴¹⁷ Mehmet Yusuf Özbaş, *Hışım Suçlunun Güçlü, Ak'ın Kara, Kara'nın Ak Gösterdiği İl Kahramanmaraş 1978 Olayları'nın Perde Arkası* (Ankara: Emel, 1980).

according to him) to the Ottoman territories in 1826. According to Özbaş, after this, the Armenian rebellions started as a result of the missionaries' provocations. For Özbaş, there was a clear parallel between the incidents in the Zeytin and Andırın regions of Maraş, namely the clashes between Turks and Armenians in the 1830s, and the Kahramanmaraş Incidents in 1978. This so-called parallelism is used in the service of his paranoid narrative that changes the story and lays blame on the Armenians. Özbaş stated that an “anarchist” who was killed and could not be identified in the course of K. Maraş Incidents was an Armenian, and in the same period, the militants who came to town set up camp in Cancık cave to the northwest of Maraş, which was well known by the Armenians. According to Özbaş, these were great evidence of the role of the left and secessionism progressing in accordance of Armenian nationalism in the incidents.⁴¹⁸

In the next step, Özbaş returns to the last period of the Ottoman Empire. He discovers a second parallelism with Tsarist Russia's support of national uprisings in the Balkans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the USSR's support of some leftist groups in Turkey. He argues that in order to realize their long held goal of reaching the Mediterranean Sea, the Soviet Union was trying to open a corridor from the Soviet border to southeast Turkey via supporting Kurdish and Alevi secessionism in the region, including Maraş.⁴¹⁹ He does not go in details about the so-called Jewish and Greek involvement in the event.

Related to these claims, Özbaş's book rejects any ethno-religious factor as a cause of the event. As mentioned before, the role of ethnicity is observable in the political dichotomy in Maraş. Even the official documents address this fact, as shown in Chapter 2 and 3. As opposed to this, the book, without any proof, proposes that the

⁴¹⁸ Özbaş, p. 17-20.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 17, 18.

leftists tried to provoke ethnic hostility although they were unable to achieve.⁴²⁰ Second, it proposes that the Alevi-Sunni animosity was not the true cause of the event. The book argues that the Kahramanmaraş event was a political conflict, giving examples of the participation of many Sunni leftists in the clashes. However, the writer uses this reality to turn round the event via his claim that no sectarian agitation was used in the attempt at mobilizing the people of Maraş against others. Consequently, the answer to the question of why Alevis made up the majority of the casualties is simply a comedy: "the more deaths of Alevis compared to Sunnis depends on the fact that the Alevi militants utilized them from them for their goals and used them as shields in their conflict with the police forces."⁴²¹ Thus, it simply denies all of the personal statements and official records about sectarian hostility against the Alevis.

In short, the book not only repeats the claims that had been published before in the rightist press, namely putting the "imagined" reality in place of the actual reality which could be found in the statements of the people who had lost their relatives during the event. What is interesting in Özbaş's work is his evaluation of the "imagined" in a wider framework of the so-called history of conspiracies against Turks that stretched from the late Ottoman era to the late 1970s. In this sense, he bases his claims on a specific understanding of history. Özbaş's book can be evaluated as the first serious attempt to construct a collective memory about the Kahramanmaraş event which was alternative to the left-wing theses. Because of this, this study is important especially for future generations, who do not have personal

⁴²⁰Ibid., p. 19. In Özbaş's rejection of the ethnic hostility as a factor of the event, he evaluates Kurdish speaking rightist defendants as valuable proof. Of course, it is a well-known fact that some segments of the Kurdish Sunni Muslims supported the rightist/idealist forces in some events in the region. An extreme example of this fact is the NAP's electoral success in Bingöl in the 1979 municipality elections.

⁴²¹ibid.

knowledge of the event and will read it in the form of a history text. In short, Özbaş responded to the actual need to construct a collective memory from the immediate present (only after a year) by reevaluating much of the content of the event. In this sense, his attempt is historically significant.

The second attempt to rewrite the event was totally a response to the Military Court's decision, which condemned the *ülküçüs* and the NAP. Hamza Alparslan, in an extensive series of articles in *Hergün*, stated that many of the sentences were unjust. However, despite his rejection of the decision he implemented a new method of relating the event by use of the Decision with Statement of Reasons. In his account, while the decisions of punishment against rightist defendants were not correct, some parts of the document such as the rebuff of the RPP's demand that the court start an inquiry against the NAP were correct. For this reason, Alparslan demanded that the Supreme Court of Military Appeals (*Askeri Yargıtay*) issue a correction on behalf of the rightist defendants. Furthermore, his account sets another target to achieve: "refreshing the information in the memory of" readers.⁴²² By doing so, he aimed to allow those who disgraced the people of Maraş in front of the world apologize. Overall, he rewrote the event in an attempt to break the hegemony of the radical left and the RPP in the public opinion.

After 12 September: From Denial to Forgetting

The military takeover on 12 September changed the shape of the event. The military prosecutors took the Kahramanmaraş Incidents as an advantage in its campaign against the left. As I will show in the case of Ökkeş Kenger's campaign on rewriting the event, the military courts' decisions inspired the writers whose aim was

⁴²² "Hafızalarımızdaki bilgileri tazelemek istiyoruz." Alparslan, *Hergün*, 28 August 1980.

to lay the blame on the left. For this reason, to begin with these decisions is appropriate.

In 1984, members of an illegal leftist group were punished for bombing the Çiçek Cinema. According to the same decision, not *ülküçüs*, but the same group had bombed the Akın Coffee House and killed two leftist teachers.⁴²³ Thus, the military courts' decisions meant a reformulation of the events between 19 and 22 December. Second, another decision alleged the radical left for initiating the incidents by provoking people. According to this document, on 21 December 1978, representatives of four leftist groups had met in the office of the Kahramanmaraş TÖB-DER and decided to attack rightist workplaces and shoot at whomever tried to prevent the funeral demonstration on 22 December.⁴²⁴ In short, the courts' decisions lay the blame of provoking the people on the radical left due to the anti-leftist campaign against the left prevalent throughout the country. The decisions reflected the political atmosphere of the day. These decisions became frequently deployed material in the writers who sought to rewrite the event from the perspective of the right and gave them later credence.

On the other hand, the court decisions after 12 September were not enough to convince the people that the radical left had carried out the bloodiest massacre in Turkish history. Many people, including rightists, insisted on remembering the event as a massacre perpetrated by fascists. However, Ökkeş Kenger, the first defendant in the trial of Maraş, responded to the people who claimed this. As will be seen below, Kenger worked hard to claim the ownership of an experience in which he was among the most important actors. On every occasion, he struggled to make others accept his

⁴²³ *Adana-Kahramanmaraş-G.Antep-Adıyaman-Hatay-İçel İlleri Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı 1 Nolu Mahkemesi Gerekçeli Karar no: 1984/208*, quoted in Şendiller, p. 42, 58, 59.

⁴²⁴ *Adana-Kahramanmaraş-G.Antep-Adıyaman-Hatay-İçel İlleri Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı 1 Nolu Mahkemesi Gerekçeli Karar no: 1984/109*, quoted in Şendiller, p. 63.

analysis of the event as the only accurate narrative. If we can claim that the history of the event was totally reversed, it is no exaggeration to say that this was his success.

The first struggle undertaken by Kenger was against a well-known source, the Meydan Larousse Encyclopedia, which in 1984 published an additional issue that included an article titled “The K.Maraş Incidents.” The article describes the event by using the trial indictment. It presents Kenger as one of the protagonists of the massacre. At the end, it stated that twenty-two of the protagonists had been sentenced to death, but did not mention whether Kenger was among them or not. Kenger made this failure a case for bringing the editor of the encyclopedia, İsa Öztürk, to court in 1987. He proposed that the writers of the article had done him an injustice by not stating that he had been acquitted. In 1988, the court sentenced Öztürk to pay 750,000 Turkish liras in compensation for Kenger’s damage. In addition, the court ordered the correction of the article with a statement about Kenger’s acquittal.⁴²⁵ This was Kenger’s victory in triumphing over the past. By this decision, he gave the message that writers must think long when writing about the event.

Related with this message, Kenger warned the historians who did not follow his theses. One of them was Professor İsmet Giritli, who was known as a right-wing historian and as a writer of the staff of the right-wing *Tercüman* newspaper in the 1970s. In the third volume of his *Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi* (Atatürk Principles and History of Revolution), a history textbook used at Anadolu University’s Faculty of Distance Learning (*Açık Öğretim Fakültesi*), he wrote:

The Kabakçı Mustafa Insurrection, the 31 March Incident, the Konya Insurrection in the National Struggle, the Kubilay Tragedy in Menemen, the Said-i Nursi Incidents and eventually the Kahramanmaraş Incidents at the end of 1978 were some examples of the terrible treacheries levied for the sake of religion.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁵ Ankara 8. Asliye Hukuk Mahkemesi Karar no: 1987/558, Yargıtay 4. Hukuk Dairesi Karar no:988/3322, quoted in Şendiller, p. 206.

It is clear that Giritli used a Kemalist discourse in examining the Kahramanmaraş Incidents. He did not mention the place of the event in the historical context of the 1970s. Moreover, he did not mention anything about the 1970s. Related to this, the socio-economic factors behind the event, the place of nationalism in the Islamic discourse of the political agents determining the event, the political left and other factors were not examined in his simplistic analysis. Thus, he evaluated the event only as a link in the chain of reactionary/fundamentalist betrayals in Turkish history. However, his evaluation did not share the *ülkücü* view that the event had been organized by communists and Armenians.

Kenger refused to accept the existence of claims alternative to his view even if they came from a conservative writer like Giritli. In addition, it is important that Giritli's version appeared in a history textbook that was used by thousands of students who had not heard anything about the Kahramanmaraş Incidents before. Thus, Kenger's struggle was not only against an alternative claim, but also against the risk of the event taking place in the collective memory. It is a conscious attempt to prevent people from knowing about the real responsible of the massacre.

To achieve that target, he started a campaign against Giritli. On 8 July 1989, Kenger's open letter to Giritli was published in two newspapers, the right-wing *Zaman* and the *ülkücü Yeni Düşünce*.⁴²⁷ At the beginning of his letter, in an emotional tone, Kenger explained why he felt he needed to write the letter: "I found it necessary to write you as a reader of yours in *Tercüman* newspaper from my childhood for the reason that I could not possibly understand the reasons that would

⁴²⁶ "Din adına yapılmış korkunç ihanetlere, Kabakçı Mustafa İsyanı, 31 Mart Vakası, Milli Mücadelede Konya İsyanı, Şeyh Sait Ayaklanması, Menemen'de Kubilay Faciası, Said-i Nursi Olayları ve nihayet 1978 sonundaki Kahramanmaraş olayları birkaç örnekti." Şendiller, p. 208.

⁴²⁷ The letter is also published in *Anadol*, pp. 75-77; Şendiller, p. 208, 209.

drive a scientist like you to make such a wrong evaluation.”⁴²⁸ Subsequently, Kenger underlined that 12 September was a turning point in the evaluation of the event. He wrote that, “the real face of the incidents after 12 September has finally come to the surface.”⁴²⁹ By referring to the court decisions made after 12 September, he said:

If we exclude your fortune telling, we did not come across an “insult to the name of the religion,” in the investigations and courts...The K. Maraş Incidents happened eleven years ago. The lawsuits were completed and approved by the military *Yargıtay* years ago. So what is your evidence in making such an allegation? If there was such a situation, the judged would have been punished by law 163, but there is no such a thing. Your allegations against religious people and a town, lacking of any evidence, deeply hurt our feelings...We have seen such allegations lacking foundations and evidence in the publication of *Meydan Larousse Encyclopedia* in annex 15, page number 501, which was punished with action of damages and correction. We see an aim behind these publications. Nevertheless, the truth cannot be hiding by these actions if there is no bad aim in blaming religious and Muslim people for these crimes rather than supporting these claims with real evidence.⁴³⁰

Additionally, Kenger stated that he would help Giritli if he wanted to re-evaluate his position. Giritli’s answer was a certain retreat. He stated that he had used the book *Causes and Targets of Anarchy and Terror in Turkey* (Türkiye’de Anarşi ve Terörün Sebepleri ve Hedefleri), which had been published by the Council of Higher Education (*Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu, YÖK*) in 1985 for writing about the Kahramanmaraş Incidents. He claimed that in that book, the cause of the event was

⁴²⁸ “Sizi daha küçük yaşından beri Tercüman’da bir okuyucunuz olarak tanıdığım ve bir ilim sahibine böyle bir değerlendirmeyi yaptıran yanlışlığın sebebini çözemediğim için yazma ihtiyacını duydum.” İbid.

⁴²⁹ “12 Eylül sonrası hadiselerin gerçek yüzü ortaya çıkmıştır.” İbid.

⁴³⁰ “Oysa soruşturmalarda ve mahkemelerde ‘din adına ihanete’ zat-ı alinizin kehaneti dışında rastlamadık(.) Kahramanmaraş olayları 11 yıl önce olmuş. Mahkemeler neticelenmiş ve askeri Yargıtayca karar onaylanalı yıllar olmuşken, böyle bir suçlamayı yaparken deliliniz nedir? Eğer böyle bir durum söz konusu olsaydı yargılananların 163’ten teczireleri gerekirdi ki, o da yoktur. Hiçbir dayanak olmadan dindar insanları ve bir şehri suçlamamız, bizi derinden yaralamıştır(.) Daha önce böyle temelsiz ve maksatlı yayını *Meydan Larousse Ansiklopedisi* ek 15. sayısının 501. sayfasında yaptı. Manevi tazminat ve düzeltme cezasına çarptırıldı. Biz bu tür yayınların arkasında bir maksat görüyoruz. Ancak, “Güneş balçıkla sıvanmaz” misali böyle vahşiyane bir hadisenin arkasında müslüman ve dindar insanları aramak maksatlı değilse araştırmayı, incelemeyi ve gerçeği bulmayı gerektirir.” İbid.

shown as the exploitation of religion and sectarian divisions.⁴³¹ After that, he remarked that he was sorry, but that he had had to use that book because it included the official line of the 12 September regime. He added that he did not give credence to the incriminatory statements about the *ülkücü* movement in YÖK's book. He said he had taken a liking to the *ülkücü* movement, which he believed was sincerely anti-communist and nationalist. Moreover, he concluded that the RPP, separatist and communist organizations, and "probably" Armenians had been responsible for the event.⁴³²

This exchange was a clear victory for Kenger. A professor of history had retracted his claims about the event and openly declared that he was totally in line with him. In addition, this discussion produced sympathy for Kenger in the conservative public opinion. For example, a *Zaman* reader wrote these words to Kenger on 10 July 1989:

We evaluate our intellectuals' position with anger as a lesson from a mishap. We are also aware of the reason for these unilateral and intentional behaviors of our esteemable intellectuals. Unfortunately, these attitudes and behaviors direct society into wrong convictions for a certain time. However, our belief delineates the fact that realities cannot be kept hidden. This is also valid for our esteemable professors. Also I request that you send me a copy of your forthcoming book *Behind the Scenes of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents* with your autograph. Hereby I present my salutation, compliments and endearment to you; and I wish that an environment in which realities will be reflected as they were is achieved. I wish you unending success.⁴³³

⁴³¹The source of Giritli was an unpublished document including the text of a series of conferences given in the Central Building of the *Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu* on 12 April 1985. The related paragraph that Giritli refers states: "İstanbul Incidents which took place on 16 February 1969, clashes which took place in Kahramanmaraş, Çorum, Amasya, Tokat, Sivas, Erzincan, Elazığ and Malatya reflects the threat posed by harmful religious elements to our country. In both of these events, destructive activities achieved their targets by exploiting the religious faith of the citizens." "16 Şubat 1969 İstanbul olayları Kahramanmaraş, Çorum, Amasya, Tokat, Sivas, Erzincan, Elazığ ve Malatya illerimizde meydana getirilen çatışmalar zararlı dini unsurların ülkemiz açısından ortaya koyduğu tehlikeleri yansıtmaktadır. Bütün bu olaylarda vatandaşların şu veya bu tarzda dini inançları istismar edilerek yıkıcı faaliyetlerin arzuladığı sonuçlar doğmuştur." *Türkiye'de Anarşi ve Terörün Sebepleri ve Hedefleri (12 Nisan 1985 günü Yükseköğretim Kurulu Merkez binasında verilen konferanslar)*, p. 113.

⁴³² Şendiller, p. 210.

In 1990, the publication of former president Kenan Evren's memoirs in *Milliyet* opened another page in Kenger's struggle over memory about the event. On 22 October 1990, Kenan Evren wrote that the militants of the NAP and fundamentalists had started the Kahramanmaraş Incidents.⁴³⁴ On 24 October, Kenger held a press conference and said that if Evren could not prove his claims, he would seek his rights under law. This intervention increased Kenger's popularity and influence.

After these three struggles, Kenger published his book titled *Kahramanmaraş Olayları'nın Perde Arkası* in 1989. His book can be read as the continuation of Mehmet Yusuf Özbaşı thesis, described above. In the book, Kenger tries to rewrite the history of Turkey and put the event in its place. In doing this, he declares that his understanding of history is contrary to Karl Marx's approach proposing that what makes history is class struggle. Kenger says history means struggle among nations. Moreover, he proposes that there is a distinctive Muslim Turkish ideology opposing capitalism, communism and fascism.⁴³⁵ Then he enters into a discussion of the history of Turks. After his evaluation of the history of Turks before and after the acceptance of Islam, he summarizes the Turkish Islamic Ideal (*Türk-İslam Ülküsü*) of Seyyid Ahmet Arvasi. Then he enters into the issue of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey and criticizes its leaders and intellectuals for not trying to understand the

⁴³³ "Sayın aydınlarımızın durumunu ibretle ve bazan nefretle takip etmekteyiz. Bizde devamlı olarak ve maalesef ilim adamına yakışmayan tek taraflı, yer yer maksatlı bu davranışların kaynağını da çok iyi bilmekteyiz. Bu tutum ve davranışlar maalesef belli süreler için de olsa toplumu yanlış kanaatlere sürükleyebilmektedir. Ancak inancımız ve imanımız gerçeklerin uzun süre saklanamayacağını, er-geç ortaya çıkacağını bize göstermiştir. Aynı şeyin sayın prof. lerimizin düşünceleri için de geçerlidir. Aynı açıklamanızda yayınlanacağını memnuniyetle öğrendiğim "Kahramanmaraş Olayları'nın Perde Arkası" isimli kitabınızın imzanızı da taşıyan bir örneğinin lütfen ödemeli olarak yukarıda bulunan adresime posta ile gönderilmesini de özellikle rica ediyorum. Bu vesile ile sonsuz selam, sevgi ve saygılarımı sunar, gerçeklerin olduğu gibi yansıtılabildiği bir ortama kavuşmamız dileğiyle çalışmalarınızda başarılar dilerim." *İbid.*, p. 211.

⁴³⁴ *Milliyet*, 22 October 1990, in Evren, p. 230.

⁴³⁵ Şendiller, p. 176, 177.

people and unite with them.⁴³⁶ After that, he looked at Turkey's geopolitical situation and declared that the imperialist powers had produced conspiracies against Turkey throughout Turkish history. In the Republican period, they had tried to prevent Turkey from uniting the Muslim countries under its leadership.⁴³⁷ The tools to prevent this were provoking rebellions and insurrections via the exploitation of class distinctions, minority racism and sectarianism. The first of these was the job of communists. The second was the Kurdish movement that was provoked by the United States and Soviet Union. The Alevi-Sunni animosity was provoked by Iran, Britain, the Soviet Union and China. For Kenger, these tools of conspiracy had been used in Kahramanmaraş with the alliance of the RPP under Ecevit, democratic mass organizations such as the TÖB-DER and POL-DER, trade unions like DİSK, communist organizations, secessionists including the Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK), Armenians and so on.

Interestingly enough, Kenger builds his narrative not only on conspiracies. He uses a language uniting the conspiracy theory of an *ülküçü* with a political position that tries to delineate its taking side with the oppressed. He describes the unequal life conditions in the rural areas and criticizes the system of land ownership. In addition, his critiques target the capitalists in Maraş for exploiting workers. He also criticizes trade unions for their passivity in defending workers' rights and leaving the workers open to communist DİSK's influence.⁴³⁸ Additionally, he presents his position as an unjustly treated person like every "Muslim Turkish" person in Kahramanmaraş. He describes his interrogation by torturers and his days in prison at length.⁴³⁹ He

⁴³⁶Ibid, pp. 177-179.

⁴³⁷Ibid., pp. 180-182.

⁴³⁸Ibid., pp. 25-32.

proposes that none of his friends in prison had killed anyone in Maraş. At the end of the book, he writes that his attempt, including writing the book, is a phase in his struggles.⁴⁴⁰

His struggles succeeded to a certain extent. As Merdan Yanardağ states, the important thing is many people's readiness to believe Kenger.⁴⁴¹ He enlarged his base of legitimacy during the 1980s and became a well-known political figure due to his insistence on struggling against alternative readings that underlined his movement's responsibility in the massacres. He developed his political career from being a tea seller in the *Ülkücü* Youth Association in Kahramanmaraş in 1978 to becoming the president of the Nationalist Working Party (*Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi*, MÇP⁴⁴²) in Kahramanmaraş between 1988 and 1991. In the local elections on 26 March 1989, he was the party's candidate for mayor. He lost the elections by a close margin. However, his political line continued to rise. One year later, in the general elections on 20 October 1991, he was elected as Kahramanmaraş deputy from the list of the alliance of three conservative parties, namely the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*), the Nationalist Working Party, and the Reformist Democracy Party (*Islahatçı Demokrasi Partisi*). What is interesting in this period is the change of his surname to Şendiller because he claimed that his surname gave him difficulty. On 7 July 1992, he resigned from the MÇP with the group known as Turkist-Islamist *Ülkücüs* led by Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu, who had been a famous *ülkücü* youth leader in the 1970s. On 29 January 1993, Şendiller was among the founders of the Great Unity Party (*Büyük Birlik*

⁴³⁹Ibid., p. 95-170.

⁴⁴⁰Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁴¹Merdan Yanardağ, *MHP Değişti Mi?-Ülkücü Hareketin Analitik Tarihi* (İstanbul: Gendaş, 2002), p. 135.

⁴⁴²*Ülkücü* movement's party from 30 October 1985 to 24 January 1993 when the party retook the name Nationalist Action Party because of the new law that gave the right of re-establishment for the parties closed after 12 September 1980.

Partisi, BBP) and became the secretary general of the party. Today, he is the vice-president of this party.⁴⁴³ It is possible to argue that Şendiller's political success is not only a personal story of success, but marks the victory of the *ülküçü* position on the issue of rewriting the event and establishing hegemony in the collective memory. Even today, most of the rewriting activities share his line.⁴⁴⁴

The second step in the struggle over memory is to allow the public to forget the event. As Tanıl Bora and Kemal Can argue, the Kahramanmaraş Massacre has become lost in the generality of the terror incidents before 12 September. Its significance has been forgotten by Turkish society via state policies which deform and traumatize the collective memory.⁴⁴⁵

In the process of forgetting, the Turkish press has played a significant role. For instance, *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, which published important research about the event before 12 September, stopped this activity after that time. For example, in 1983, it published a series about the Menemen Incident of 1930,⁴⁴⁶ which has the same date as the Kahramanmaraş Incidents (23 December); however, it wrote nothing about Maraş. The newspaper chose to bring the Menemen Incident onto the public agenda

⁴⁴³Hakkı Öznur, *Ülkücü Hareket-Cilt 3- Komplolar ve Provokasyonlar* (Ankara: Alternatif, 2001), p. 255.

⁴⁴⁴A very interesting example of this kind of an evaluation came from *Aksiyon* (a journal in line with Fethullah Gülen's religious community. It is among the most well known weekly news journals in Turkey). The news narrates the event via turning round the facts. For instance, it proposes that one of the most important causes of the tragedy in Maraş was leftists who plundered the houses in the city during the march for the two leftist teacher's funerals. There was no such event. The author of the article, Mehmet Baransu, openly sets his aim as preventing the people to claim that the *ülküçü* movement had any responsibility in the incidents. According to him, the intelligence services of foreign states, including the CIA, KGB, MOSSAD and Greek intelligence, gave five-thousand weapons to leftist and rightist equally groups in Kahramanmaraş. He gives the names of these leftist groups openly using the same method with Kenger (Şendiller); however, he does not write anything about who are these rightist groups. What is clear in his account is his only aim is to support the idealist movement. Mehmet Baransu, "Silahların Gölgesinde Maraş Olayları," *Aksiyon* (214), 9-15 January 1999, p. 22-31. *Ülkücüs* presented this article as a proof of their innocence (Öznur, p. 295).

⁴⁴⁵ Bora, Can, p. 492, 493.

⁴⁴⁶Hikmet Çetinkaya, "Menemen'de Bir Devrim Şehidi: Kubilay," *Cumhuriyet*, 23-25 December 1983.

for the sake of secularism; however, it did not want to write anything about the Kahramanmaraş Massacre, which had happened only five years earlier. Thus, from its perspective, the Menemen Incident was more important than the Kahramanmaraş Massacre. In short, *Cumhuriyet* chose to fall in line with the Kemalist secularism of 12 September regime, that was strictly anti-leftist. In consequence, the newspaper consciously neglected to remember the massacre that had been perpetrated for the sake of Islam and nationalism against the Alevis and leftists. For *Cumhuriyet*, secularism had no meaning without Kemalism. It played into the hands of the state ideology and the right under the mask of so-called militant secularism.

Of course, *Cumhuriyet* was not the only example. The Kahramanmaraş Incidents received no mention even in the books about the city. For example, Serdar Yakar's book *About My Town: Kahramanmaraş with Its History, Culture, Social Structure and Economy* (Memleketime Dair-Tarihi, Kültürü, Sosyal Yapısı ve Ekonomisi ile Kahramanmaraş)⁴⁴⁷ includes every detail about the aspects mentioned within its title except the Kahramanmaraş Incidents. According to Yakar's account, the history of Kahramanmaraş started from Antiquity and came to today, bypassing 22-25 December 1978. No such event happened for Yakar. Of course, it is unproductive to expect his book to include this kind of "detail" since he openly declares his position in giving thanks to nine firms operating in Maraş.⁴⁴⁸

The third example shows that any attempt to remember the event has met with resistance with the defenders of forgetting. A columnist of *Akşam*, Turgut Türkeş criticized Zülfü Livaneli for mentioning the names of incidents in Kahramanmaraş, Çorum, and Sivas three times in his television documentary about the Alevis. For

⁴⁴⁷Serdar Yakar, *Memleketime Dair-Tarihi, Kültürü, Sosyal Yapısı ve Ekonomisi ile Kahramanmaraş* (Kahramanmaraş: Ukde, 1997).

⁴⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 4.

Türkeş, Livaneli's mistake was calling attention to these events due to the "danger" of these events' finding place in the collective memory. People who did not know anything about these events would ask others and learn of these events. This threat would disturb the peace in Turkey.⁴⁴⁹

It seems that the most interesting example about the process of forgetting is the trial between Ökkeş Şendiller and journalist Hayri Balta. On 1 April 1994, Balta wrote an article in *Ulus* newspaper about Şendiller. He stated that when he saw Şendiller's photograph in a newspaper, he remembered that he had been the gunman who had shot at him seventeen years earlier in Gaziantep. After telling about his shock of recognizing the gunman, he looked at the gunman's story and stated that he was the first defendant in the Trial of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents and now a deputy representing Kahramanmaraş.⁴⁵⁰ Subsequently, Şendiller took Baltacı to court. He stated that he had been acquitted during the Kahramanmaraş trial and had not shot Hayri Balta. All Balta's doing was lying for alleging himself and the nationalists, he stated. Balta responded to Kenger's accusations in the court by stating that Kenger (Şendiller) had been acquitted from the Kahramanmaraş trial because of the absence of evidence but this did not prove his innocence. Additionally, he stated that he was sure that Şendiller was the man who had shot and wounded him. In the end, the court decided that Balta had violated Şendiller's personal rights by insulting him without having any real evidence of his offense. Of course, this was a normal reason from the perspective of legal rights since the judge had no legal report proving that Şendiller was guilty. However, the judge was not content only with underlining the absence of legal evidence. Transcending the

⁴⁴⁹Turgut Türkeş, *Akşam*, 20 October 1994.

⁴⁵⁰ Hayri Balta, *Ulus*, 1 April 1994, quoted in *T.C Asliye 13. Hukuk Mahkemesi Karar no: 1995/486*, p. 1.

borders of legality, he stated in the decision that with the statement of reasons that the Kahramanmaraş Incident had lost its currency and there was no common “interest” to put this event on public agenda.⁴⁵¹ In short, the official line to allow society to forget this event was documented thanks to Şendiller’s action in 1994.

Consequently, under the influence of denial and forgetting, the Kahramanmaraş Incidents have become a perfect example of the embodiment of Walter Benjamin's definition of the meaning of history for the oppressed as "ruins." The adventure of such a large-scale tragedy in the collective memory brought the meaning of "ruins" from being a theoretical abstraction to an actual reality. No such event as the Kahramanmaraş Incidents happened for the majority of Turkish society. For them, the Kahramanmaraş Massacre simply did not take place.

This ruin is the source of other ruins that have critical importance. First, one is the area of human psychology. After the ruins of an experienced tragedy, people who are forced to leave their country have difficulties coping with that matter. People who have lost their relatives feel a mixture of different emotions: anger, despair, hate, and try to forget. These words are from a man who lost many of his relatives in the incidents and then migrated to İzmir, in answer to the question, "What do you think when you remember those days now?"⁴⁵²

Last year I went there and saw that our houses are still there. However, those who have come here have never turned their face to Maraş. I had a neighbor whose name was İsmail...In those days; a person with a beard killed him with an axe in his back. His blood is on the stones of my house. I saw him in Maraş and fainted. I was very near to suicide. We may get no benefit from this town; we did not turn our face to that side. It is our town, but we may get no benefit from it... We do not want to go back there.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁵² "Şimdi o günleri hatırladığınızda ne düşünüyorsunuz?" *Yeni Gündem* (38), 23-29 November 1986, p. 15.

⁴⁵³ "Geçen yıl gittim gördüm, öylece duruyor evlerimiz. Buraya gelenler bir kez bile Maraş'a doğru yüzünü çevirmiş değil. Geçen yıl ben giderken vicdanım tutmadı Maraş'tan geçmeye. Çünkü evimin

Another man who migrated to Ankara remembers those days with these words: "Let the name of Maraş be lost. Why should I go there? We have come here from that bloody town...Why do you continue to ask about Maraş? Why do you want us to talk about that place? You only make us to remember our sadness."⁴⁵⁴

The second is about direct political consequences. Forgetting the past has not brought immunity from fascist and Islamist mass mobilizations to the Alevis or the left. Fifteen years after the Kahramanmaraş Massacre, Turkey witnessed another violent massacre in Sivas. As mentioned before, the city experienced an event similar to that of three months before the Maraş event. On 4 September 1978, thousands of people attacked the leftists, Alevi districts, and nine people died. After 12 September 1980, the city experienced a similar process to that of Maraş. The majority of Alevis left the city. The political left lost much of its power, as in other parts of the country. The most important similarity with Maraş is that in a social and political atmosphere in which a large-scale event like Maraş could be forgotten, memory of the incidents in Sivas were lost even more easily and quickly. However, in a much more different political atmosphere, the Kahramanmaraş type of event happened. Thirty-seven people, including writers, poets and minstrels of Alevi or leftist origin, were burned to death by ten thousand people in a hotel in Sivas on 2 July 1993.⁴⁵⁵ The majority of

yanında Şah İsmail isminde Kayserili bir komşum vardı. O günlerde çember sakallı birisi haberi olmadan arkadan kafasına balta vurarak gövdesinden ayırmış. Kanı benim evimin taşları üzerinde duruyor. Onu gördüm Maraş'ta, gözlerim karardı. İntihar edecektim. O memleket bize haram olsun, o tarafa yüzümüzü çevirmiş değiliz. Gerçi memleketimizdir ama, bizim için haram olmuştur.. O memlekete dönmek istemiyoruz." Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ "Adı kesilsin Maraş'ın. Nesine gidelim? Kanlı dünyadan geldik buralara.. Ne diye Maraş'ı sorup, anlattırıp, yaralarımızı deşiyorsunuz?" *ibid* , p. 16.

⁴⁵⁵ A famous Turkish author, Aziz Nesin, who took the initiative to struggle against the prohibition of the publication of Salman Rushdi's famous book "Satanic Verses" was the target of the mob in Sivas. In that period, Rushdi's book had started a great anger in the Muslim World. The Islamic Republic of Iran declared that it would award a prize for the head of Rushdi. The protests spread even in European countries. Thus, the protest against Nesin was affected by that international tension. However, the

the people of Turkey have forgotten even this massacre. Some opinion leaders such as *Hürriyet* newspaper's columnist Ertuğrul Özkök have demanded more and more effort to forget the Sivas tragedy. On the ninth anniversary of the massacre, he wrote an article demanding that people stop organizing protests every 2 July.⁴⁵⁶ In these circumstances, the potential victims of new massacres are forced to trust the mercy of murderers.

This chapter discussed the process after the incidents of 22-25 December 1978 in Kahramanmaraş. Two different periods were evaluated. The first period was marked by the leftist forces' insistence on reminding the people the reality of Kahramanmaraş. The second era which began on 12 September 1980, was marked by the success of the forces whose interests lay behind the disappearance of the Kahramanmaraş reality because people have forgotten the massacre. A third era that will reconstruct the collapsed collective memory of the oppressed will become possible if the words of Herbert Marcuse are taken seriously:

This ability to forget...is an indispensable requirement of mental and physical hygiene without which civilized life would be unbearable; but it is

cause of the event was not only Nesin. The Alevi community's insistence on organizing an annual festival that had been prohibited by the 12 September regime was a certain response to different political actors from *ülküçü* and Islamist circles to the Turkish state's official religious line that protects the Sunni version of Islam. In addition, from 1988 to 1993, they organized their festivals. Different segments of the political left took part in them. Thus, in addition to the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture and Solidarity Association's (*Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği*) left-Kemalist line, the festival began to tread a more radical line. Overall, the festival turned into a counter-cultural activity in the local context. On 2 July 1993, thousands of men who gathered for the Friday *namaz* in Sivas (the same as in the case of Kahramanmaraş) started a march protesting Aziz Nesin and the festival. However, this march turned into a riot in the city. The number of the mob increased to ten thousand. They attacked the Government Office and demanded the resignation of the governor, Ahmet Karabilgin, who had given permission for the festival's organization and did not refuse Nesin's coming to Sivas. Subsequently, the mob came in front of the Madımak Hotel in which the people coming to participate to the festival including Nesin were. They set the hotel on fire. Thirty-seven people died in this "ceremonial" massacre. The security forces did not do anything to stop the massacre. The Alevis and the left could not take the support of the party they voted for, namely the Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti-SHP*) during the event. For this reason too, the case was a repetition of Maraş in which the people could not get the help of the RPP in an active manner. After the massacre, the Alevi community stopped organizing the festival in the city center of Sivas.

⁴⁵⁶ Ertuğrul Özkök, "Sivas Olayını Böyle Anmaya İtirazım Var," *Hürriyet*, 3 July 2002.

also the mental faculty which sustains submissiveness and renunciation. To forget is also to forgive what should not be forgiven if justice and freedom are to prevail. Such forgiveness reproduces the conditions which reproduce injustice and enslavement: to forget past suffering is to forgive the forces that caused it-without defeating these forces. The wounds that heal in time are also the wounds that contain the poison. Against this surrender to time, the restoration of remembrance to its rights, as a vehicle of liberation, is one of the noblest tasks of thought.⁴⁵⁷



⁴⁵⁷ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (New York: Vintage Boks, 1962), p. 212, quoted in Oktay, p. 53.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: CURRENCY OF “FIRE ALARM”

This study presents the history of 1970s Turkey as the history of a low-intensity civil war that had the dynamics to transform itself into a more direct type of civil war. Although this alternative did not play itself out completely, thanks to the military intervention of 12 September 1980, it was a real alternative. Our case study concerning the Kahramanmaraş Incidents of 1978, at first hand, must be evaluated as the proof of this fact. If we look at this event, we see that a great hostility stemming from the political mobilization came to the surface during this event. More than 15,000 people gathered in the streets to attack the leftist and Alevi targets and carry out a widescale massacre. On the other hand, despite their unprepared position and lack of unity (especially stemming from the competition among radical leftist groups), the people targeted by the attackers were able to defend themselves with their own means, as seen in the example of the Yörük Selim District.

However, giving an account of this kind of a large-scale incident is not enough to cover the social/political reasons behind it. For this reason, this study started with the evaluation of the sides of this civil war in the local context of Kahramanmaraş. As seen in Chapter Two, the peasant struggles, which began in the second part of the 1960s achieved their peak in the late 1970s and created a somehow revolutionary climate in the rural areas. Peasants who did not want to withdraw from their gains, such as giving the occupied lands back to the landowners, participated in the struggles *en mass*. In addition, day laborers, whose working conditions were not very different from those of slaves, participated in the land occupations constituted the second element in these areas. On the other hand, contrary to the underdevelopment

of the industry in the city, the workers did not wait for developments to take their own rights. As observed in the example of the Pişkinler Yarn Factory, some of the workers who were used also as paramilitary forces against the left by their employers changed their position and sided with the left-wing trade unionism. Also, the struggles of the teachers and other employees working in the public sector must be added to the workers in the private enterprises. Finally, the student movement gained a certain level of militancy, especially in the period after 1974.

In this study, the position of the radical left was evaluated *vis a vis* its capacity to cooperate with and penetrate into these sectors of the social struggle. Thus, the ideological standpoint of the radical leftist groups in this region does not have much importance. Of course, we considered at this point too and underlined the significance of Maoism in the will to start a “people’s war” mostly based in the rural areas. Nevertheless, the thing that must be underlined is that the groups’ capacity to infiltrate these movements is more important than other factors and it must be noted that these groups were successful to a certain extent. Additionally, one point must be understood in answering the question of from where these actors’ success arose. This was the relationship of the radical left with the religious/cultural tradition of Aleviism. By emphasizing the so-called socialistic and libertarian perspective of Alevi tradition, these groups prevented themselves from alienating the Alevis, who constituted nearly the majority in the rural areas. Of course, the Alevis’ historical distance from the power and state since the Ottoman period provided a structural basis in this relationship and helped these groups to recruit the young generation of the Alevi community as “revolutionary militants.” However, this relationship had negative effects on the left since the rightist political actors were able to sustain a certain influence within the Sunni population by the exploitation of their traditional distance from the Alevis. In this way, they were able to define the left as an Alevi

movement hostile to Islam. This is a key point in answering how 15,000 thousand people could be mobilized against the left and the Alevis.

The fascist movement was the main entity able to wield this kind of a mystification. None of the actors of the Turkish right could have achieved this kind of mystification. However, an objection can be arised: The *ülkücü* movement never achieved an electoral success in the 1970s and it was a marginal movement. However, this argument does not explain the specificity of Turkish fascism. The NAP and the *ülkücü* movement cannot be understood by the criteria which are applied to party politics. NAP was a “political mass movement” using “extra and non-parliamentary” methods.⁴⁵⁸ Thus, its influence society cannot be accounted for by looking at its electoral performance. The only way to account for it is investigate its capacity to mobilize the masses. As seen in the examples of the mass mobilizations in Malatya, Sivas, Kahramanmaraş (1978) and Çorum (1980), the NAP was able to mobilize thousands of people who had never voted for this party. On the other hand, they sided with NAP against the “communist threat” embodied in the radical leftist movement, the Alevis and the Kurds. In all of these massive uprisings, the NAP used an Islamist and extreme nationalist discourse to attract the support of the masses.

Nevertheless, to refer to the ideological/political baggage of the NAP does not have much explanatory capacity. Underlining the NAP’s Islamist and ultra-nationalist discourse is not enough. Thus, to see this ideological combination “as essentially a false metaphor and to dissolve it into more basic elements of conscious experience” is needed extremely.⁴⁵⁹ As Harootunian argues,

What a man (or a group) does or chooses to do in response to problems

⁴⁵⁸ Arslan, p. 9, 11.

⁴⁵⁹ Harootunian, “Commentary on Nationalism in Japan: Nationalism as Intellectual History” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31, no.1 (November 1971), p. 58.

he has perceived discloses what he was or has been; in his effort to transcend the given-present social reality-he shows what had to be overcome and the personal (or collective) impulse informing this act. He also demonstrates, in this act, what can be done because he is seeking to realize one choice in a field of possibles. The choice in a field of possibles is the project, which, in turn, is a mediation between changes in circumstances and changes in human activity, between two historical moments.⁴⁶⁰

From this point of view, the *ülkücü* discourse is evaluated as a response to the problems stemming from the structural changes following the 1950s. As summarized in Chapter Two, small capital owners feared the increasing incorporation of the countryside to capitalism. Their perception of threat was not restricted to the economic realm. Moreover, this perception represented itself as the will to overcome the problem of capitalist modernization that included a life style different from the traditional values. Fascist discourse was in charge of responding to this demand. In its emphasis on Islamic moral values and Turkish racial identity, it promised a stable and unchanging everydayness alternative to modernism. However, these elements were not restricted to the discursive realm. It had certain effects on politics. In the region including Kahramanmaraş, the *ülkücü* movement intervened into everyday life practices in favor of its own alternative, using violence against the targets evaluated by them as un-Islamic and non-Turkish. Thus, the Alevis, the communists, and the supporters of the RPP were evaluated as the representatives of the same enemy: capitalist modernization. Thus, the Islamist/Nationalist discourse becomes meaningful when looking at these factors behind it. Without doing this, we would only be engaged in an empty task: examining discourse only with other discourse without evaluating the concrete reasons.

In contrast to its anti-modernism, the *ülkücü* movement did not criticize the structural base of capitalist modernization. It was not an exception, since all fascist

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 59.

movements fall into the trap of understanding modernism only as a life-style. However, it was not only misrecognition. It stemmed from the position of fascism in the class struggle. The *ülküçü* movement sided with the bourgeoisie against the labor movement and the left. Thus, we came to the second side of this movement. From the beginning of the establishment of the RPP government, this movement followed a civil war strategy that was recognized as the last alternative by the NAP against the “communist threat.” Thus, transforming the low-intensity civil war into an open civil war was the “final solution” for it. The massive attack against the enemies in Kahramanmaraş was the peak point of this strategy. The main aim was to reinforce the RPP in a declaration of Martial Law since the NAP estimated that the military’s involvement in the political climate would pave the way to a right-wing coup that would ally with NAP. This strategy is the second part of the significance of the *ülküçü* involvement in the Kahramanmaraş Massacre.

Although this study covers the social and economic problems of the 1970s summarized above, it presents a problematic which concerns the present. This problematic is inspired by Walter Benjamin’s insistence that history must be “written from the point of view of the defeated.”⁴⁶¹ For this reason, it focuses on an experience of the defeat of the oppressed. However, by taking the experiences of the dominated classes into its center, this study underlines their capacity to build up an emancipatory and libertarian answer. So, this study does not look at the “defeated of history” as passive actors victimized by a powerful victory. In contrast, the reason of their victimization is their rejection of passivity and insistence on choosing redemption. Thus, one of the intentions of this text is to struggle on behalf of the dead against the victorious enemy’s ceaseless attacks.

⁴⁶¹ Michael Löwy, *Redemption & Utopia Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity* (California: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 2.

The second task entrusted by this text is the actualization of Benjamin's "Fire Alarm." From this text's point of view, the relationship between capitalist modernization and fascism is a guarantor of a possible rise of fascism. As this text insists, if fascism does not stem from a lack of capital expansion (development) or an insanity of the prewar period, it is a real problem and thus will produce more disastrous results than the massacre in Kahramanmaraş, as shown in Chapter 5 with the example of the Sivas Massacre of 1993. As opposed to Perry Anderson's claim, we must insist on "conjur[ing] up renewed dangers of fascism."⁴⁶² I do not mean that the past will repeat itself as it was. Of course, in the "present which is different from the past," the past does not recur itself as it was.⁴⁶³ In other words, "it is possible for fascism itself to recur, but of course it would not necessarily arise or come to power in the same forms as in the past."⁴⁶⁴ However, Poulantzas' caution is still vital:

Marx, following Hegel, said that history can sometimes repeat itself: but what the first time was tragedy, is the second time farce. The formulation is striking, but it is true in one sense only: there are such things as black comedies. Louis Bonaparte was only funny from a particular point of view. And there are funny men in history who kills others...It is none the less true, however little the lessons of history have been learned, the fascism is a problem of today, and it must be correctly dealt with. If history has a meaning, it is as a lesson for the present. To be wrong now, and to fail to see the reality of a future rise of fascism, would not be excusable, however much it might have been so in the past. Fascism...is not a 'disease' or an 'accident'; it is not something that only happens to other people.⁴⁶⁵

If this study has any merit, it is its emphasis on the need to bring the "Fire Alarm" to the agenda for any possible kind of a barbaric recurrence like the Kahramanmaraş Massacre.

⁴⁶² Harootunian *Overcome..*, p. xxviii.

⁴⁶³ Harootunian "Commentary..", p. 62.

⁴⁶⁴ Poulantzas, p. 358.

⁴⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 358.

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