

THE CIRCUITOUS POLITICIZATION OF ALEVISM:
THE AFFILIATION BETWEEN THE ALEVIS AND THE LEFT
POLITICS (1960-1980)

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Title: The Circuitous Politicization of Alevism:
The Affiliation between the Alevis and the Left Politics (1960-1980)

This study scrutinizes the affiliation between the Alevis and the left-wing political movements within the context of the 1960s and 1970s. These years witnessed the dissolution of traditional Alevism, which had been based on rural/isolated life, as a result of urbanization. Turkey also experienced a rapid social and physical mobilization in these years. The social dynamics of Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s associated the dissolution of the archaic Alevism with the social mobilization of Turkey within the context of urbanization; therefore, the Alevis, who became more visible in the newly urbanizing environment, mainly remained a part of left-wing politics in that period. The left politics enabled Alevis to be integrated into the modern life and the centralized state apparatus during the dissolution process of traditional Alevism. In this regard, this thesis examines why Alevis politically moved towards the left movements politically during this time period. The affiliation between the Alevis and left wing movements is investigated in two dimensions. On the one hand, the Alevis' relation with the Republican People's Party on the basis of Alevis' satisfaction with the secularist policies of the early Republican governments and the populist discourse of Bülent Ecevit are discussed. On the other hand, the affiliation between the Alevis and the radical socialist movements within the framework of the overlaps between the implications of nomadic characteristic of the archaic Alevism and the actual needs of the socialist movements of the era are examined. Moreover, the Unity Party of Turkey which addressed the Alevis indirectly and the Alevis' indifference to the UPT are investigated while inspected the affiliation between the Alevis and left politics.

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Başlık: Aleviliğin Örtük Politikleşmesi:
Aleviler ve Sol Siyasetler arasındaki Yakınlaşma (1960–1980)

Bu çalışma 1960'lı ve 1970'li yıllarda Aleviler ve sol siyasal hareketler arasındaki yakınlaşmayı incelemektedir. Bu yıllar kırsal alanlarda dışa kapalı bir yaşam biçim üzerine temellenen geleneksel Aleviliğin, kentleşme etkisiyle çözülmesine tanık oldu. Ayrıca söz konusu dönemde Türkiye hızlı bir fiziki ve sosyal hareketlilik yaşadı. 1960'lı ve 1970'li yılların sosyal dinamikleri geleneksel Aleviliğin çözülmesiyle Türkiye'nin yaşadığı sosyal hareketi keşiştirdi ve kentleşmenin etkisiyle toplumsal yaşamda daha da görünür hale gelen Aleviler bu dönemde daha çok sol siyasetlerin içinde yer aldılar. Bu anlamda sol siyaset geleneksel yaşam koşulları çözülen Alevilerin modern hayata ve merkezi devletin araçlarına entegre olmasına olanak sağladı. Bu tez söz konusu dönemde Alevilerin neden politik olarak solda konumlandığını incelemektedir. Aleviler ve sol siyasetler arasındaki ilişki ise iki boyutta değerlendirilmektedir. İlki erken cumhuriyet hükümetlerinin seküler politikalarından duyulan memnuniyet ve Ecevit'in populist söylemi ekseninde Aleviler ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi arasındaki ilişkidir. Diğeri ise geleneksel Aleviliğin göçebe özelliklerinin etkileriyle incelenen dönemin sosyalist hareketlerinin ihtiyaçları arasındaki örtüşme ekseninde Alevilik ve radikal sosyalist örgütler arasındaki yakınlaşmadır. Ayrıca, Alevilere seslenen Türkiye Birlik Partisi ve Alevilerin bu partiye yönelik kayıtsızlıkları da, sol siyasetler ve Aleviler arasındaki ilişki bağlamında incelenecektir.

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To my father, who would never read it

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PREFACE

“If you are Alevi, you are a leftist naturally” or “If the Alevis did not exist, who would support the left politics?” are only two of the common phrases which indicates the popular perception of the relation between the leftism and Alevism. Because the writer of this study has also been subjected to that kind of reactions, due to his Aleviness, one of the starting points of that study is these popular perceptions. Therefore, the analyses of this thesis are tolerably connected with the personal history of the writer and his family.

Another point of departure of this study is the current political positions of the squatter settlements which were established in the 1970s. For example, Kazım Karabekir and 1 Mayıs districts (in Ümraniye) are only two of these settlements which were established in the 1970s by the migrants, who mainly came from Sivas to Istanbul. The residents of both of these settlements have been employed in parallel occupations and have shared similar socio-economic conditions; however, the residents of Kazım Karabekir have mainly supported the right-wing political movements and the residents of 1 Mayıs district remained a part of left politics from the 1970s. Despite crucial similarities of Kazım Karabekir and 1 Mayıs districts, there is a difference between the residents of these districts. 1 Mayıs was established by the Alevi urban newcomers; whereas, Kazım Karabekir was founded by Sunni migrants. Despite the similar socio-economic positions of the urban newcomers, political positions of these squatter settlements and sectarian identity of their residents connote a question: Has the religious sect played a role on the political preference of the urban newcomer or on the general worldview of the political activists? That study aims to

answer this question within the framework the relation between the Alevis and left-wing political movements.

This thesis analyzes the politicization of the Alevi community in the 1960s and 1970s within the framework of the affiliation between the Alevis and the left politics of the era. It will scrutinize why the Alevis' position moved to the left movements politically during this time period. The affiliation between the Alevis and left wing movements will be investigated in two dimensions as the Alevis' relation between the Republican People's Party (RPP) and the affiliation between the Alevis and radical socialist movements. The relation between the Alevis and the left movement becomes more interesting due to the existence of the Unity Party of Turkey (UPT). Although the UPT was a center-left party which addressed the Alevis indirectly, the Alevis did not support it. Why did they prefer to vote for the RPP or to participate in the radical left movements instead of supporting the UPT? While analyzing the affiliation between the left movements and the Alevi community, the UPT as an experiment in Alevi politics will also be examined.

The study will focus on the years between 1960 and 1980, because the socio-political mobilization of Turkey and the dissolution of the traditional Alevism overlapped in that period. The social dynamics of Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s associated the dissolution of the Alevism with the social mobilization of Turkey within the context of urbanization; therefore, the Alevis mainly remained a part of left-wing politics in that period. In this regard, this thesis will examine the dynamics of the relation between the Alevis and the left-wing political movements. Because the politicization of the Alevis did not rest on an independent Alevi identity and emerged within the context of left politics, it will be evaluated as a "circuitous" politicization.

This thesis will be based on an extensive literature survey. The literature utilized can be classified under three categories, which focus on cosmology of Alevism, the socio-political environment of Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s, and the study of urbanization. Moreover, the documents of the UPT such as party statute and election declarations will be investigated in detail. The newspapers of the period such as *Cumhuriyet*, *Milliyet* and *Vatan*, and periodicals like *Cem*, which supported the UPT, will be used as well. Another resource of this study will be the interviews which were conducted with the political leftist militants, Alevi political activists and members of the political cadres of the UPT.

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter One deals with the role of the political action within the context of the urbanization process which Turkey experienced intensely in the 1960s and the 1970s. Because the traditional life conditions of the Alevism dissolved by courtesy of the urbanization process, it played a critical role in the politicization of the Alevis. Therefore the urbanization process will be the starting point of this thesis. The first chapter examines the role of politics for the urban migrants. It will be assessed as an adjustment strategy of the migrants to survive in the urban sphere. Acting from that point of view, the determinant which effects the formation of the urban migrants' political position will be scrutinized and the sectarian identities of the urban newcomers will be evaluated as one of the factors in their political preferences within the framework of a community bond. Thus the affiliation between the left politics and Alevism gains meaning within the context of urbanization.

Chapter Two looks at the political history of the UPT in chronological terms. The history of the party will be evaluated in two dimensions. Before the leadership of Mustafa Timisi, the party was a center party which addressed the

traditional Alevi community. During the political leadership of Timisi, the party underwent an ideological transformation and moved to the social democrat political position. In this chapter that ideological transformation will be assessed within the context of the Alevi community's move to the left politically.

Chapter Three examines the relation between the Alevis and the RPP within the framework of the secularist policies of the early republican era during the reign of the RPP, and the populist discourse of Ecevit in the 1970s. The political relation between the Alevis and the RPP will be described in chronological order, starting with the National Struggle. Discussion of the early republican era will follow on the basis of the secularist policies of the single party government. The government of the Democratic Party will be evaluated as a detour for the affiliation between the Alevis and RPP. Lastly, the emergence of the left of center and the rise of Ecevit will be evaluated on the basis of their socio-political role in the politicization of the Alevi community.

The Chapter Four deals with the affiliation between the Alevis and the radical left politics within the framework of the nomadic culture of Alevi tradition and the coincidence between the needs of the Turkish left and Alevi culture. In this chapter, Alevism will be evaluated as a reassessment of Islam within the context of nomadic culture. The political culture of the Alevism, which was shaped by the nomadic way of life, will be investigated on the basis of the weak relations between the Alevi community and the centralized political authorities. This political culture was triggered by the left movements, which needed a secular and local culture for their struggle against imperialism. Thus the political needs of the socialist movements and the cosmology of Alevism overlapped within the context of the socio-political atmosphere of the 1970s. In this chapter that affiliation will be

investigated in detail. Moreover, the civil war strategy of the Nationalist Action Party will be assessed as a factor which contributed to the affiliation between the Alevis and left movements as well.

Chapter Five concludes the arguments of the paper which was discussed in the previous chapters.

CHAPTER ONE

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ABOUT THE ROLE OF POLITICS FOR URBAN MIGRANTS AND EFFECT OF THE SECTARIAN IDENTITY ON POLITICIZATION

Turkey experienced rapid social and political mobilization in the 1960s and 1970s. As Eric Jan Zürcher states they were years of rapid change during which “people became more mobile both politically and socially.”¹ In the 1960s university students and industrial workers were the profound actors of the political mobilization within the framework of the relatively liberal conditions which were established by the 1961 constitution. The expansion of industrial capacity and the rise of the working class were the indirect results of urbanization. The working class realized its social role owing to both its quantitative expansion and the 1961 constitution’s social rights comprehension, which strengthened the position of the trade unions and recognized the right to strike. The working class sought to play a more dominant role in social life within such a socio-political environment. It can be asserted that workers were one of the influential actors of the political mobility in Turkey during the 1960s.²

As a result of the explosion of the birth rate after 1945, the number of university students increased in the 1960s. This meant not only a numerical increase, but also indicated a qualitative transformation. Universities became more accessible to the young people from the lower classes. The students became more mobile

¹ Eric Jan Zürcher, *Turkey A Modern History* (London; New York: I. B. Taurus, 1994), p. 266.

² Hikmet Özdemir, “Siyasal Tarih 1960 – 1980” in *Yakınçag Türkiye Tarihi 1*, ed. Sina Aksin (Istanbul: Milliyet Kitaplığı, 2005), pp. 259 – 260.

politically owing to that heterogeneity. University education represented the opportunity for vertical mobilization. On the other hand, the universities in the 1960s were not prepared for such an influx or the transformation required in physical and organizational terms.³ The limiting of vertical mobilization for university students caused a reaction against the social system, because the students believed that the social system and institutions prevented their vertical mobility. Therefore discontent university students became the leading component of radical politics when their social demands were not met by the university education.⁴ Moreover, the world was being shaken by student rebellion during the late 1960s. When we evaluate this universal phenomenon with the university students' active role in the fall of the Menderes government and their political reliance which came from this situation, it can be claimed that the university students were the dynamo of political mobilization in Turkey during the 1960s.

In the 1970s, the level of political mobilization increased and it became an ordinary element of daily life. The focus of the political mobilization shifted from the university campuses and factories to the squatter settlements, so the new city dwellers became the main actors of politicization. Indeed the role of the urbanization process on political mobilization that had come into force in the 1960s through the numerical expansion of working class and the heterogeneity of the university students; but its role on politics became more characteristic in the 1970s through the participation of the squatter settlements in the political mobilization.

Manuel Castells, who played a key role in the development of a Marxist urban theory during the 1970s, asserts that because the demand for the social services

³ Zafer Toprak, "1968'i Yargılamak ya da 68 Kuşağına Mersiye", *Cogito* (Spring 1998), p. 158.

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Ages of Extremes: The Short Story of Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), pp. 299 – 300.

like housing, education, transporting and health was not able to be met by the state within the context of the social welfare state, the new urban conflicts and social movements emerged in the cities which can not be explained by the classic antagonism between the labor and capital.⁵ Castells mostly studied developed countries; however, his arguments were valid for developing countries as well. In developing countries, which experienced rapid urbanization, the demand for housing in the urban areas was not met by the state; therefore, new social movements emerged which stemmed from the solidarity of the new urban residents with the object of survive in the cities. The social movements of the 1970s in the urban areas of Turkey were consistent with the those in the analysis of Castells.⁶ In this context, this chapter aims to analyze the politicization of the squatter settlements within the framework of the role of political action for the new urban dwellers.

Before scrutinizing the role of political action for the new urban dwellers, it should be explained that the urbanization literature on both the national and global planes ought to be analyzed in two dimensions. The first phase includes the studies of urbanization written before the 1980s. In that period, the practices of the social welfare state in the developed countries and Import Substitute Industrialization in the developing countries were in force. The interventionist role of the state in urban areas was one of the main characteristics of the period. The essence of the period was to transfer the wealth that had been acquired from to urban growth to the great majority of the society.⁷ In that period, the urban sociology stressed the urban

⁵ Manuel Castells, *City, Class and Power*, trans. Elizabeth Lebas (London: The Macmillan Press, 1978), pp. 1-2.

⁶ Şükrü Aslan, *1 Mayıs Mahallesi: 1980 Öncesi Toplumsal Mücadeleler ve Kent* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p.59.

⁷ Oğuz Işık and Melih Pınarcıoğlu, *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk: Sultanbeyli Örneği* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 121.

migrants' living conditions, their integration process into the cities and their strategies of adjustment to the urban area on a large scale.⁸

Along with the hegemony of neo-liberal economy policies, the urbanization literature underwent a change in parallel with the reproduction of the urban sphere. The key concepts of the urbanization in the 1980s were differentiation, diversification and segregation instead of adjustment. The upper classes segregated themselves from the other classes in the cities and created fortified enclaves for themselves. The commercialization of the *gecekondu* (squatter settlements) divided their owners and their residents. Therefore, the social role of *gecekondu* varied from supplying housing to urban migrants to supplying income through ownership.⁹ From the 1980s, urban sociology focused on the capitalization of the urban areas and social segregation in the urban spaces on a large scale.

In this context, it can be asserted that the main focus of urban sociology was deeply altered after the 1980s. As mentioned above, this chapter will examine the role of politics for the migrants in the context of Turkey in the 1960s and the 1970s. Therefore, the starting point of the chapter is the period's urbanization dynamics and it will benefit from the urbanization literature which focuses on the urbanization process of the Import Substitute Industrialization period. In this regard, political action will be assessed as an adjustment strategy of the migrants for surviving in the urban sphere. Acting from that point of view, the determinant which effects the formation of urban migrants' political position will be scrutinized and the sectarian

⁸ Some example studies of the first phase in Turkey context are: Kemal Karpat, *The Gecekondu: The Rural Migration and Urbanization* (London: Cambridge, 1976); Yakut Sencer, *Türkiye'de Kentleşme* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979); İlhan Tekeli, Yiğit Gülöksüz, Tarık Okyay, *Gecekondu, Dolmuşlu, İşportalı Şehir* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1976); S. Kemal Kartal, *Türkiye'de Kentleşme* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1983); Tansı Şenyapılı, *Gecekondu: Çevre İşçilerin Mekanı* (Ankara: ODTÜ Yayınları, 1981) and Metin Heper, *Türkiye'de Kent Göçmeni ve Bürokratik Örgütler* (İstanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1983).

⁹ Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk: Sultanbeyli Örneği*, pp. 123-166.

identities of the urban newcomers will be evaluated as one of the factors influencing their political preferences within the framework of community bond.

The Role of Politics for the Urban Migrants

In Turkey, urbanization was the most important social phenomenon of the 1960s and 1970s. The statistical data clearly indicate the importance of this phenomena. According to censuses of 1950, 1955, 1960 and 1965, the total cumulative number of migrants in these years amounted to 1,692,933, 2,507,454, 3,186,166 and 4,018,770 people, respectively.¹⁰ Between 1950 and 1980, although Turkey's overall population more than doubled from 20,947,000 to 44,737,000 the urban population grew nearly six-fold, from 3,782,000 to 20,330,000 during the same years.¹¹ As a result of that condition, 60 % of the population of Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara were living in squatter settlements in the late 1970s.¹² Therefore, migration and urbanization provide keys for understanding not only the political mobilization, but also the basic transformation in the quality of the population. Therefore, the urbanization process will be a starting point in this thesis for analyzing the political mobilization and politicization of Alevism in Turkey in the context of the 1970s.

Urban sociologists believe that the adjustment problem of the migrants to the cities is one of their main problems.¹³ When they migrate to the cities from the

¹⁰ Kemal Karpat, *The Gecekondu: The Rural Migration and Urbanization* (London: Cambridge, 1976), p. 59.

¹¹ T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *Türkiye Nüfusu, 1923-1994: Demografi Yapısı ve Gelişimi* (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1995), p. 44.

¹² S. Kemal Kartal, *Türkiye'de Kentleşme* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1983), p. 40.

¹³ Philip Morris Hauser, "Urbanization: An Overview" in *the Study of Urbanization*, eds. Philip M. Hauser and Leo F. Schnore (New York : Wiley, 1965), p. 21.

villages, they find themselves in between urban and rural ways of living. They become dislocated or trapped between two ways of life, and are unable to participate fully in either.¹⁴ That marginality refers not only a cultural marginality, but also to social and physical marginalities. Emigrants live in the *gecekondus* which do not have public utility services such as electricity and sewer systems, and which are distinct from the established residential areas of the city ecologically.¹⁵ They work in informal/marginal sectors which do not have adequate work organization or a high degree of specialization, without any social security. The dynamism of labor, job mobility and destandardization of the work are the main characteristics of the marginal/informal sector employing unskilled labor such as the construction worker, repairmen or *işportacı* (street peddler).¹⁶

In their collective study of the urbanization process of Turkey in the late 1970s, İlhan Tekeli, Yiğit Gülöksüz and Tarık Okyay underline that the big cities of Turkey showed a dual structure in the areas of employment. One of them was the “organized sector”, which included officials, civil servants and skilled workers. The other one was the “marginal sector”, which contained street paddlers and unskilled labor. According to Tekeli, Gülöksüz and Okyay, the marginal sector was the result of the social demands which were not being fulfilled by formal ways. The main characteristics of the marginal sector were that it was unorganized, not ordered with legal procedures, its provisionality, high degree job mobility, easily entrance to employment and absence of the social security opportunities like accident insurance or pensions. On the other hand, the employees who worked in large scale and

¹⁴ Marc Howard Ross, *The Political Integration of Urban Squatters* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.39.

¹⁵ Yakut Sencer, *Türkiye’de Kentleşme* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979), pp. 123-124.

¹⁶ Tansı Şenyapılı, “Gecekonduların Ekonomik Profili” in *Kentsel Bütünleşme*, ed: Türköz Erder (Ankara: Türkiye Geliştirme Araştırma Vakfı Yayınları, 1982), p. 107.

organized production processes or in the private and public service sectors were components of the organized sector. The employees of the organized sector had the rights of social security and their job mobility was low. More importantly their relations with the state or employer became institutionalized.¹⁷ Tekeli, Gülöksüz and Okyay assert that this dualistic structure of the cities was not limited to the area of employment and its traces appeared in all aspects of daily life. The dualism showed itself in public transportation through the distinction between bus and *dolmuş* (shared taxi) and in housing through the distinction between apartments and *gecekondu*.¹⁸

In this study, the Tekeli, Gülöksüz and Okyay's conceptualization of the city's dual structure is accepted on a large scale. It should be stressed that the concept of dual structure does not assume a natural transitional relation from the marginal sector to the formal one. Both of these sectors were simultaneous and cohabited. They were components of the same socio-political environment and they were interdependent sectors. As a result of that interdependency, the boundaries of the marginal sector and the organized sector can not be defined absolutely.¹⁹

Indeed, that dualistic structure of the city was the direct result of the urbanization process. It can be asserted that the split between the organized and marginal sectors referred to the divide between urban dwellers and migrants for the most parts. Actually the occupied job categories of the migrants and their dwelling units associated the migrants with the marginal sector. There was a high correlation between being a migrant and being a constituent of the marginal sector.²⁰

¹⁷ İlhan Tekeli, Yiğit Gülöksüz and Tarık Okyay, *Gecekondu, Dolmuşlu, İşportalı Şehir* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1976), pp. 209-211.

¹⁸ Ibid. , p. 14.

¹⁹ Ibid. , pp. 15-16.

²⁰ For a detailed study about the correlation between being urban migrant and being a constituent of marginal sector, see Tansı Şenyapılı, *Gecekondu: Çevre İşçilerin Mekanı* (Ankara: ODTÜ Yayınları, 1981).

Acting in accordance with the conceptualization of the dual structure of the city, the migrants' adaptation problem to the urban region stemmed from their marginality in the areas of employment and housing. Regardless of their marginality to the urban life, the migrants' final aim was to integrate into the cities. That integration should not be assessed as an assimilation into the stable values of the city. The migrants' adaptation to the city also indicated the transformation of the city, because they were not subjects that were one-way assimilated into the urban culture. They reshaped the culture of the city while adjusting to it.²¹ The migrants carried both rural and urban features at the same time and developed a synthesis out of the combination of the two while adjusting to the urban areas.²² As Kemal Karpat writes,

The migrants play a double role, first, as subject of change and second agents of transforming the city itself. Thus the migrants lose some features of the rural culture while they redefine and incorporate other rural characteristics into the newly emerging modern urban culture.²³

In her field study on the industrialization process of Ereğli, Mübeccel Kıray examines the buffer institutions which appeared in the comprehensive change period. She claims that although they were not components of either the new or the former structure, buffer institutions provided urban newcomers' integration into the new structures in the end.²⁴ In this regard, although they are not assessed as buffer institutions in the literature, organizations like the *Gecekonduyu Güzelleştirme*

²¹ Janet Abu-Lughod, "Migrant Adjustment to City Life: The Egyptian Case" *The American Journal of Sociology*, 67, no.1 (July 1961), p. 23.

²² Tahire Erman, "Becoming 'Urban' or Remaining 'Rural': The Views of Turkish Rural-to-Urban Migrants on the 'Integration' Question", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 30, no. 4 (November 1998), p. 541.

²³ Kemal Karpat, "The Politics of Transition: Political Attitudes and Party Affiliation in the Turkish Gecekondu" in *Political Participation in Turkey*, eds. Engin D. Akarlı ve Gabriel-Ben Dor (İstanbul: Bogazici University Publications, 1975), p. 91.

²⁴ Mübeccel Kıray, *Ereğli, Ağır Sanayiden Önce Bir Sahil Kasabası* (Ankara: Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 1964), p. 5.

Derneği (Gecekondu Beautification Society) or the networks based on kinship relations can be assessed as buffer institutions which hastened the migrants' adjustment to the city. Although they are primordial relations, the kinship and *hemşeri* (being from the same region) relations are reproduced within the context of urban life in accordance with the needs of the migrants.

Due to the existence of such relations, migrants built an social environment in which they lived with other resembling themselves and decreased the degree of their marginality in the cities in this way. Although these buffer institutions facilitated the adjustment of the migrants to the cities in the short term, they held the urban newcomers back from in getting in touch with the settled urban dwellers in the long term. That is why the urban migrants implemented various strategies, except for buffer institutions, in order to integrate themselves into urban life.

In this context, political identities and actions were some of the elements of the strategies which were used by the migrants in order to overcome their marginality in the cities. In his valuable study about the squatter settlements in Istanbul, based on both general observations and the findings of his extensive fieldwork, Karpat claims that the drastic change in the migrants' living conditions psychologically mobilizes them for political action. He writes that,

Politics and political action covering all aspects of individual and collective life have profound transforming and integrative functions in the *gecekondu*. Probably no other activity is as instrumental as political action in achieving the squatters' urban and national integration.²⁵

The role of politics for the urban migrants should be analyzed in both its political and social dimensions. Political action provides an opportunity for the urban migrants to establish formal relations with government and official organizations

²⁵ Karpat, *The Gecekondu: The Rural Migration and Urbanization*, p. 196.

politically. Sema Erder investigates the formation of an urban district within the framework of the case of Ümraniye. She diligently stresses the importance of the formalization of the informal housing sphere during the establishment of squatter settlements in that study.²⁶

“Formalization” means to be recognized formally by the government. Indeed, to be recognized formally can be assessed as one of the distinctive criteria between the marginal sector and organized sector. Not to be recognized formally by the state within the framework of social insurance, taxation and transfer payments is one of the crucial factors of the marginal sector’s social insecurity. If we take into consideration both the conceptualization of dual economy, the characteristics of the marginal sector and Erder’s analysis of the housing scene, it can be asserted that the urbanization process connotes being recognized formally by the state. In this regard to have a land title in the housing sector or to have regular employment with benefits in the areas of employment are the concrete aspects of the formalization process which also constitute survival in the urban areas for the migrants. Therefore, the urbanization process can be assessed within the framework of the transition from informal/marginal living and working conditions to formal living spaces.

In her study, Erder cites that integration into formal/public life and legitimization play important roles in the process of the migrants’ adjustment to the cities. At that point, political action appears as an essential practice of legitimization for *gecekondu* dwellers. At the preliminary stage, the function of the political action for *gecekondu* dwellers is to settle in the cities. Then politics play the role of taking up the demands of the new urban dweller, which aim to raise their standard of

²⁶ Sema Erder, *İstanbul’a Bir Kent Kondu: Ümraniye* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006).

living.²⁷ In this context, political action lays the groundwork for migrants to legitimize their informal conditions and to partake in the formal area. In other words, politics bridges the gap between the *gecekondu* dweller and the state, because political action provides access to elected officials and government agencies. As Karpat writes politics “played a major role in speeding the squatters’ integration in the city by sharpening their consciousness of self, place and role in the society. It also increased their communication with city and national party leaders.”²⁸

In their study of the role of politics for urban migrants under the conditions of rapid urbanization, Michael Danielson and Ruşen Keleş note that “government has been much more important to squatters than to the established city dwellers. Public officials held the keys to the survival of squatter communities, to title to *gecekondu* dwellings and to desperately needed municipal services.”²⁹ They add that *gecekondu* residents create neighborhood associations and join political parties and work in political campaigns in order to capitalize on their political potential. In this process the main objectives of the urban migrants are governmental recognition of their communities, the provision of public services and the legalization of individual dwellings; on the other hand, their political source is the votes.³⁰

Due to the size of the migrant population, they became one of the areas of focus for power in the multi-party political system. The organization of political activity within the squatter settlements and bargaining or getting in touch with local politics and political parties became part of demand satisfaction in the settlements.³¹

²⁷ Ibid. , pp. 84 – 87.

²⁸ Karpat, “The Politics of Transition: Political Attitudes and Party Affiliation in the Turkish Gecekondu”, p. 117.

²⁹ Michael N. Danielson and Ruşen Keleş, *The Politics of Rapid Urbanization* (New York; London: Holmes&Meier, 1985), p.124.

³⁰ Ibid. , pp. 124 – 125.

³¹ Karpat, *The Gecekondu: The Rural Migration and Urbanization*, p. 199.

In this regard, the migrants' basic demands became elements of bargaining in the policy-making process and the political actions provide the solution to the migrants' basic urban problems such as titles to land, employment problems, housing, use of city amenities, electricity, water and transportation. Thus politics contributed to the social, economic and cultural adjustment of the migrants to urban life. In this regard, the *gecekondu* dweller became more active in the process of the distribution of the urban resources and reproduction of the urban sphere into which he/she sought to integrate. The *gecekondu* dweller articulated his/her problems to the national agenda through political action.

The role of constituting municipality clearly demonstrates how politics figured in the formalization process of the migrants. Erder notes that to form a municipality or to enter into a municipality was a critical part of the legitimization process. The constituting municipality, on the one hand, regulates the statues of ownership and provides the legitimization to the *gecekondu* resident; on the other hand, it provides the settled relations between the migrants and urban residents.³²

In this context, it is clear that the urban migrants were not concerned with radical politics and preferred to get involved within the boundaries of legal politics in order to benefit from the advantages of the political system. To take advantage of the economic expansion of the rapid economic growth was the main criteria of the legality of the migrants' political action. In other words, if the political system's capacity to absorb the urban newcomers' demand declined, the urban migrants' political tendencies might shift from legal political actions to radical politics, as Turkey experienced in the late 1970s.

³² Erder, *İstanbul'a Bir Kent Kondu: Ümraniye*, p. 155.

The 1960s saw the implementation of Import Substitute Industrialization (ISI). The essence of ISI in the 1960s was the domestic production of durable consumer goods. For this aim, five-year plans were constituted under the direction of the State Planning Office (SPO), which used the techniques of the restrictive trade regime and subsidized credits and state investments. This economic policy aimed not only at the substitution of imported goods for domestic products, but also at the emergence of modern capitalist production. Although the ISI aimed to reduce the import dependence of the economy, it, paradoxically, increased the dependency of the Turkish economy. Because the expansion of investments goods was less than the growth of intermediate inputs, Turkey's economy relied on the import of intermediate inputs and energy in order to maintain production.³³

In his study on the socio-economic history of Turkey, Çağlar Keyder states that obtaining foreign exchange in order to finance the foreign trade deficit and creating an internal demand for domestic products were the main criterion of the ISI's continuity. Urbanization and rural transformation established new consumption structures and nurtured the emergence of international market. The state as a regulator of the internal economy was active in the redistribution of income and the expansion of the market. Furthermore, the remittances of Turkish workers abroad, international aid and bilateral agreements provided a sufficient amount of foreign exchange.³⁴ Keyder asserts that due to the workers' remittances and borrowing in the short-term credit market, Turkey was able to avoid an economic crisis until the late 1970s.³⁵ As a consequence of the world recession in the 1970s and Turkey's Cyprus intervention in 1974, the inflow of foreign currency decreased and the deficit of foreign exchange

³³ Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908-2002* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2004), pp. 118-122.

³⁴ Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye'de Devlet ve Sınıflar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), pp. 210-212.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

triggered an economic crisis. Although the economic crisis was delayed owing to the foreign exchange reserves and accommodating monetary policies, it broke out more traumatically in the second half of the 1970s. The economic crisis nurtured political disquiet and the daily effects of the crisis were coupled with continuing political disorder.³⁶

In this context, as a consequence of the crisis of the ISI, the urban migrants' capacity to benefit from the economic expansion decreased. The urban migrants faced rising unemployment and unsatisfactory living conditions as a consequence of the crisis of the ISI. In this regard, the falling rate of economic development led to increased polarization, social strife and political violence.³⁷ In other words, the suppressed hopes of the migrants' upward mobilization and integration into the cities led them to illegal political action.

Şerif Mardin examines the political violence of the youth within the framework of the social mobility of Turkey from the 1950s. He claims that as a consequence of the urbanization and the multi-party political system, people who had been constituents of the stationary rural culture became political actors. In this regard, the political institutions were not able to satisfy the demand of well-educated young people whose social environment was deeply changed. Both that cultural change and dissatisfaction of the youth contributed to the rising political violence in the squatter settlements in the 1970s.³⁸

³⁶ Roger Owen and Sevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle Eastern Economies in the 20th Century* (London, 1998), pp. 114-115.

³⁷ Ergun Özbudun, "Income Distribution as an Issue in the Turkish Politics" in *the Political Economy of Income Distribution in Turkey*, eds: Ergun Özbudun and Aydın Ulusan (New York: Holmes&Meier, 1980), p. 79.

³⁸ Şerif Mardin, "Türkiye'de Gençlik ve Şiddet", trans. Mustafa Erdoğan in *Makaleler 4: Türk Modernleşmesi*, eds. Mümtaz'er Türköne and Tuncay Önder (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p.253.

Acting from the point of Mardin, it can be asserted that the rising tendency of radical politics in the squatter settlements was also nurtured by a clash of generations. The second generation urban dwellers, who had been born in the cities or had come to the cities when they were children, and who were better educated than their parents, were more receptive to political activism than their elders.³⁹ Although the first generation urban migrants evaluated their living conditions in the cities with respect to their earlier rural life conditions, the second generation's assessments were shaped by the values of urban life.⁴⁰ In addition to the clashes with their elders, relations between the second generation migrants and their coequal urban dwellers were tense within the framework of the sharing of urban resources. The second generation migrants' receptivity to political radicalism, which was nurtured by these two conflicts, also contributed to the political extremism of the squatter settlements. Within the context of the economic crisis, the focus of political action shifted to political violence; however, the legal politics in the squatter settlements maintained their importance on a large scale.

The partial obstruction of legal politics for the migrants did not mean that political action lost its importance in their eyes. Indeed the squatter settlements' transformation as an area of political violence indicated the political action's integrative role for the urban migrants. Whether legal or illegal, political action played a vital role for the urban newcomer in order to survive in the urban areas; only the form of the action changed parallel to the socio-economic conditions of the country.

The role of politics for migrants in the process of adjustment to the cities should not be restricted to political factors and it ought to be evaluated from a more

³⁹ Danielson and Keleş, *The Politics of Rapid Urbanization*, p.129.

⁴⁰ Birsen Gökçe, *Gecekondu Gençliği* (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1976), pp. 158-159.

wide-ranging perspective including social dimensions. Political activities brought the migrants closer to the city people, because such activities united the migrants and long term city dwellers together under a political identity. This was important, because as mentioned above, the dual structure of the cities differentiated the living spaces of the migrants and urban dwellers. When the migrants came to the cities, they usually worked in marginal sectors and lived in the squatter settlements with their migrant relatives or *hemşeris*. Therefore their relations with the urban dweller were limited.

In this context, politics and political action brought the migrants and urban dwellers together under the similar statues and shared political targets. Political action socialized the migrants and they acted closely with the urban dwellers. This socialization process which was established by political action (whether legal or illegal) decreased the marginalization of the migrants to the older dwellers of the city. Furthermore the *gecekondu* dweller more actively participated in the national policy-making process and attempts at solving the urban problems through political action. Thus, the migrants internalized the urban and national values and identified themselves with the city through political identities.

In conclusion, politics played a vital role in the migrants' adjustment process in the city. First of all, it socialized the migrants and brought them together with the urban dwellers through the political action. Moreover, the *gecekondu* dwellers as a constituent of the marginal/informal sector gained the opportunity to enter into institutionalized relations with the state within the framework of political action. That formalization process also meant integration into the city for the migrants. Finally, it should be added that the highly political environment of Turkey and the world in the late 1960s and the 1970s improved the value of political

identities as a strategy for integration into the cities. As a result of Turkey's political atmosphere, political identities and actions became the most effective strategies for the new city dwellers in order to survive in the cities.

Sectarian Identity:
A Determinant on the Political Position

The role of the politics for the urban newcomer raises a question: which factors shaped the political preferences of the migrants who were trying to survive in the cities? Certainly their class feeling, economic and occupational structure in the cities, family structure, literacy and educational backgrounds played vital roles in their political preferences. Regardless of the profound impact of their socio-economic structures on their political preferences, the migrants' political positions can not be explained solely by their socio-economic positions in the cities because although the migrants had similar social backgrounds and life conditions in the cities, they favored different political tendencies in the 1970s. The squatter settlements, where socially similar urban migrants lived, became the liberated areas of different political movements.

The grounds of the urban migrants' political preferences can be followed from their primordial ties such as kinship and *hemşeri* relations or sectarian identity. In his article on the role of primordial ties in working relations, Alan Dubetsky asserts that Turkish industry was predominantly organized in small units and the overwhelming majority of the factories had 25 or fewer workers. These small factories in the cities were family-run firms whose employees were urban migrants employed as unskilled workers. These workers were also the *hemşeris* of the employers. In this regard, the primordial ties, kinship relations and sharing a common

sectarian identity in small scale factories created a familistic environment and strengthened the relation between employee and employers. The workers felt a high degree of affinity with their patrons and the employer of the small-scale factory maximize the trust between his workers and himself.⁴¹

Dubetsky's analysis reveals the importance of kinship relations and sectarian identity in the migrants' socio-economic position in the urban sphere. They provided a feeling of solidarity to the urban migrants in *gurbet* (a place far from homeland).⁴² On the point of the urban migrants' group solidarity, Keleş and Danielson note that group solidarities in the squatter settlements tended to be high, because they had to hang on to other *gecekondu* dwellers in order to survive in the urban areas.⁴³ Survival in the urban areas "depended above all on the inhabitants solidarity, organizational skill and concerted action."⁴⁴ That is why the sources of solidarity which created a collective bond such as kinship, citizenry or sectarian identity were strong in the squatter settlements.

At that juncture, Sami Zubaida, who studies law and politics in Islamic societies within the social context of the Middle East, evaluates the formation of political identities in the cities within the framework of social solidarities and community bonding. He writes,

Political forces are constituted from social solidarities, whether of community or of class. These solidarities are social process presented as givens to the political sphere. Political institutions and process themselves play little part in the constitution of political forces. These are constituted as social constitution of political forces. These are constituted as social solidarities developed on the basis of common interests or of traditional

⁴¹ Alan Dubetsky, "Kinship, Primordial Ties, and Factory Organization in Turkey: An Anthropological View", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 7, no. 3 (July, 1976).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 440.

⁴³ Danielson and Keleş, *The Politics of Rapid Urbanization*, p.124.

⁴⁴ Karpat, *The Gecekondu*, p. 81.

loyalties and bonds or a mixture of the two ... I argue that the constitution of political forces relates to various and shifting bases of social solidarities, but, crucially these varieties and shifts often result from changes in political and economic conjuncture, including state structure and policies.⁴⁵

The urban life conditions broke down the communal relations of the new urban settlers and they became atomized individuals within the context of city life. Their need of network and community bonding was the main catalyst of the politicization and the urban newcomers found collective ties in their primordial relation forms.⁴⁶ Acting in accordance with the Zubaida's enlightening analyses about the importance of group solidarity for the urban newcomer, it can be asserted that traditional sectarian identities as a source of social solidarity can be regarded as one of the factors which determined the political preferences of the urban migrants. The group solidarity of the sectarian identity as a shared common value might have influenced the political position of the urban migrants.

Furthermore, the sectarian identity served not only a soul of collectivity to the migrants, but also shaped their political reflexes within the context of its cosmology. At this point, Karpat states that "the process of integration and urbanization politicizes many values and concepts in the new city dweller's traditional culture by relating them in an active situational manner to his status and needs in the cities."⁴⁷ In other words, the political tendencies of the migrants were shaped within the framework of their traditional values, which grew out of rural life. The migrants assessed political symbols with reference to their rural values. In this regard, in the context of the 1970s, the religious sectarian identities of migrants,

⁴⁵ Sami Zubaida, "Class and Community in Urban Politics" in *Islam, the People and the State* (London ; New York : I.B. Tauris, 1993), p. 87.

⁴⁶ At this point, I have to thank to Associate Professor M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu who stimulated me to think about the importance of the migrants' needs for community bonding in our talks.

⁴⁷ Karpat, *The Gecekondu*, p. 196.

which might be traced back to their rural life, might have played a critical role in the formation of their political preferences.

In this context, the migrants adapted to the socio-economic changes in their living conditions through political action which was adequately shaped by their traditional values, such as their sectarian identities. It should be clarified that this does not mean a simple continuation of sectarian socio-cultural traditions. It indicates the redefinition and reproduction of ethno-religious traditions within the context of urban areas.⁴⁸ Sectarian identities as a collective soul of community bonding may be only one of the factors which affected the political position of the urban newcomers.

In his field study about the role of the class consciousness and the community bonding in the urban squatter settlements, Dubetsky investigates a squatter settlements in Istanbul in 1970. He asserts that the division of the neighborhood was based upon the differentiation between the religious orthodoxy and heterodoxy. This splitting up sometimes revealed in the course of the division between Laz and Kurds; but mainly occurred through the antagonism between the Alevis and the Sunnis. He states that the settlements divided into the two different moral communities which referred two separate social worlds.⁴⁹ Dubetsky argues that this separation influenced political preferences as well. The Sunnis in the settlement, whether worker or patrons, supported the Justice Party; whereas, the Alevis tended to vote to the Republican People's Party (RPP), the Unity Party (UP) or to a lesser extent, the Worker Party of Turkey (WTP).⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ayça Kurtoğlu, *Hemşehrilik ve Şehirde Siyaset: Keçiören Örneği* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 59.

⁴⁹ A. Dubetsky, "Class and Community in Urban Turkey" in *Commoners, Climbers and Notables*, ed. C.A.O. Van Nieuwenhuijze (Leiden: Brill, 1977), p. 362.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.369.

Because accurate statistical information about the religious or ethnic make up of the regions is lacking in Turkey, the influence of sectarian identity on political preferences can not be proved by statistical data entirely. However, it can be observed that the members of the Alevi community mainly remained on the left wing of the political polarization through either voting for the RPP and socialist parties or becoming partisans of radical left movements in the 1970s. This will be scrutinized in detail in the following chapters.

In his study on the social movements in urban areas within the context of the district of 1 Mayıs, Şükrü Aslan notes that radical left movements sought to perform an alternative urbanization model through the formation of squatter settlements as liberated areas. The districts of Gulsuyu, Gazı, Nurtepe and 1 Mayıs were the constituents of the socialist movements' alternative urbanization plan where these movements were powerful.⁵¹ All of these districts were established in the 1970s as squatter settlements by Alevi migrants who came from Sivas, Tunceli and Tokat. Furthermore, the 1973 and 1977 elections results reveal that the support for the RPP from these Alevi districts and the provinces in which the Alevi population lived like Tunceli, Tokat, Maraş and Sivas, were greater than average in Turkey.⁵²

This assertion does not mean that the political polarization which was experienced in the 1970s was a struggle between Alevi and Sunni communities. It means that religious sectarian identity was only one of the factors which shaped the

⁵¹ Aslan, *1 Mayıs Mahallesi: 1980 Öncesi Toplumsal Mücadeleler ve Kent*, p.85.

⁵² The results of the 1973 elections clearly show the affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP. The RPP gained 33.4 % of the total votes in the 1973 elections. Its votes in the Alevi provinces were significantly above from its national average. In Tunceli, the RPP gained the 70 % of the votes. The RPP's votes in Arguvan (Malatya) and Imranlı (Sivas), of which the population mainly consisted of the Alevi were also greatly above its average. It gained the 84.9 % in Arguvan and 54.52 % in Imranlı. Because more detailed election results and analysis about the relation between the RPP and the Alevis will be conveyed in the third chapter, the election results will not be detailed in that context. For the source, see 14 Ekim 1973 Milletvekili Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974).

political preferences of the new city-dwellers. When Zubaida evaluates the affiliation between the Iraqi Shiites and the Iraq Communist Party, he notes that the political culture of a community may become an important component in the constitution of political forces at particular historical conjunctures.⁵³ From the perspective of Zubaida, it can be asserted that the social culture of Alevism and the political needs of the left movements overlapped within the historical conjectures of the 1960s and the 1970s, which were shaped by urbanization on a large scale. In other words, the political opposition of Alevism to the established institutions, which was historically formed from the ninth and tenth centuries, was awakened by the socio-political developments in Turkey within the framework of the urbanization process. The affiliation between the Alevi community and left-wing political movements was established in this context.⁵⁴

The main characteristics of the Alevi cosmology should be examined briefly in order to apprehend the fundamental changes in the Alevi community's way of life which grew out of the urbanization process on a large scale.⁵⁵ It should be noted that "Alevism" is an umbrella term which defines a large number of heterodox groups whose beliefs and spiritual rituals may differ; however, these heterodox groups may show familiar characteristics which collect them together under a common term. At that point, Irene Melikoff claims that Alevism is the reassessment of Islam within the framework of the nomadic way of life. She goes on, stating that Alevi culture is a synthesis of Islamic values and nomadic Turcoman⁵⁶ communities' religious beliefs

⁵³ Zubaida, "Class and Community in Urban Politics", p. 94.

⁵⁴ Sabır Güler, *Aleviliğin Siyasal Örgütlenmesi: Modernleşme, Çözülme ve Türkiye Birlik Partisi* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınevi, 2008), pp. 126-127.

⁵⁵ The characteristics of the Alevi community will be analyzed in detailed in the chapter about the affiliation between the radical left movements and the Alevis.

⁵⁶ In this usage, the term of Turcoman does not refer to a ethnic group. It indicates a group of nomadic people who had recently become Muslim.

from before the acceptance of Islam. Indeed the non-Muslim nomadic communities' values merge into the Islamic religion within Alevi culture, or heterodox Islam.⁵⁷ In this study, to a large extent, the assumptions of Melikoff about Alevi culture are accepted.

Because Alevism is based on nomadic culture, the Alevis did not establish strong relations with the institutionalized central authorities for long years. This gap was fulfilled by communal order and the authority of the Alevi *dedes* (the holy men of the Alevi tradition). The existence of the *dedes*' privileged positions kept the Alevis from establishing direct relations with the state, because some of the social functions of the state such as trial, punishment and reconciliation, were performed by *dedes* informally.⁵⁸ The communal order countervailed the functions of the rules of government. At that point, Shankland, who is a social anthropologist with a special interest in modern Turkey, particularly in social change, religion and politics in the Republican period, states that "the Alevis can not integrate into the modern Turkish state without conflict between this integration and belief in their myths, rituals and ideals, because taken literally this undermine the legitimacy of the central government."⁵⁹

The political pressure on the Alevi community loosened as a result of the new republic's secularist policies. Therefore, after the Republic was founded, the Alevi community opened up to the outside and its semi-closed life started to erode slightly. Consistent with this process, the influence of the communal order on individuals started to decrease, too. This process would be accelerated with the migration from the rural to the urban areas in the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover,

⁵⁷ Irene Melikoff, *Uyur İdik Uyardılar: Alevilik-Bektaşılık Araştırmaları*, trans. Turan Alptekin (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1993), p. 40.

⁵⁸ Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), pp. 84 – 94.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

because traditional Alevi villages had been built in precipitous regions in order to avoid political pressures, they tended to migrate to the cities more enthusiastically than the Sunnis.⁶⁰ It seems that as a proportion of their total respective rural population, more Alevi than Sunni migrated to the cities. More importantly, urbanization put an end to the isolated life of the Alevi which had been maintained for centuries. The traditional institutions and social bases of Alevism which could only function in the isolated face to face societies were lost in the new conditions which were created by urbanization.⁶¹ As a result of these developments the Alevi way of life was radically transformed in these years. In the 1960s, they became ready to take their place in the nation and to integrate themselves into the institutions of the modern state.

In this regard, the 1960s and 1970s were years of transformation for the Alevi community. With urbanization, the integration of the Alevi to the modern state was accelerated and the traditional Alevi cosmology was transformed in that process.⁶² Therefore, the effects of the urbanization process on the Alevi migrants was more traumatic than it was for their Sunni contemporaries. In this regard, political action did not only mean the adjustment to the urban area but also indicated the integration into the modern state apparatus for the Alevi. The engagement with the left politics became one of the strategy of the Alevi in order to amalgamate into the centralized government.

⁶⁰ İsmail Yeşilyurt was a political activist in the 1970s from the Black Sea region of Turkey. He certifies that the Alevi villages were built on the precipitous regions in Alaçam in Samsun. He adds that as a consequence of this phenomenon, the Alevi tended to migrate to big cities more enthusiastically than Sunnis. İsmail Yeşilyurt, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 14 July 2007.

⁶¹ Kamil Fırat, *Urban Alevilik: Self Perception of the Two Neighborhoods in Ankara*, M.A Thesis, The Graduate School of Social Sciences of the Middle East Technical University, 2004, p. 30.

⁶² Nail Yılmaz, *Kentin Alevileri* (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2005), pp. 131-155.

In this context, this study aims to analyze the socio-politic dynamics of the affiliation between the Alevis and left wing movements. In other words, it will scrutinize why the Alevis' position moved to the left movements politically within the context of the 1960s and 1970s. The urban areas will be the point of origin of the study; however, because the impact of the urbanization process can not be limited to the urban areas as it also triggered a rural transformation (especially in the regions of Alevi population) this study also examines the rural Alevis to some extent.

The Alevi community's affiliation with the left wing movements did not take a monolithic line. Melikoff claims that the less educated and conservative Alevis tended to vote the RPP; on the other hand, young Alevis who were educated in the modern schools were opened to the new ideological thought supported the different fractions of the socialist movements.⁶³ In parallel with Melikoff, Kehl Bodrogi asserts that conservative Alevis who regarded Kemalism as a guarantor of their security of existence against socio-political exclusion supported the RPP. The young Alevis who grew up in a non-traditional environment devoted themselves to the revolutionary ideologies.⁶⁴ In parallel with these two influential researchers, this thesis will evaluate the affiliation between the Alevis and left wing movements in two dimensions as the Alevis' relation between the RPP and the affiliation between the Alevis and the radical socialist movements.

In this regard, the Alevi community's affiliation with the RPP will be analyzed within the framework of the Alevis' satisfaction with the secularist policies of the single party regime under the reign of the RPP and the populist political discourses of Bülent Ecevit in the 1970s. Especially Ecevit's populist discourse,

⁶³ Irene Melikoff, *Hacı Bektaş: Efsaneden Gerçeğe* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Yayınları, 1999), pp.317-338.

⁶⁴ Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, "Introduction" in *Sycretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, eds. Kehl-Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele, A. Otter-Beujean (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. viii.

which assumed an amalgamation between state and people, will be assessed as a survival space for Alevis who were trying to integrate into the apparatus of modern life.

The relation between the Alevi community and radical left politics will be assessed within the context of the nomadic culture of the Alevi tradition and the coincidence between the needs of the Turkish left and the characteristics of Alevi culture. In that study, Alevism is evaluated as a reassessment of Islam within the framework of nomadic life. Because Alevism is based on nomadic culture, Alevis have not established strong relations with the institutionalized central authorities. The weakness of the Alevis' relations with the authority might have played a significant role in their approachment towards socialist movements which resisted social establishments. On the other hand, Alevi tradition filled one of the gaps in the Turkish socialist movements. The left movement's anti-imperialist characteristic encouraged them to return to their local origins, which was necessary not only for struggling against imperialism, but also for gaining popular support from the people. Because of the Kemalist effect on the Turkish left, the left activists attempted to find a secular and local cultural origin, which was, in this case, represented by the Alevi culture.

The relation between Alevis and the left movement becomes more interesting by means of the existence of the Unity Party of Turkey (UPT). Although the UPT was a center left party which addressed the Alevis indirectly, the Alevis did not support it. Why did they prefer to vote for the RPP or to participate in radical left movements instead of supporting the UPT? While analyzing the affiliation with left movements and Alevi community, I will also examine the UPT as an experiment in Alevi politics.

In this context, the next chapter scrutinizes the UPT, which was active between 1966 and the coup of 12 September 1980, through its program and charter,

election campaigns, political alliance efforts and the party leader's discourses. This part of the study will be a political/historical survey. The Alevis' hands-off attitude toward the UPT will render opinions about the political manner of the Alevi community and their affiliation with Ecevit's RPP and radical socialist movements within the context of the 1960s and the 1970s. After the political history of the UPT, the relations between the Alevis and the RPP and the Alevis' relation to the socialist movements will be analyzed in turn.

CHAPTER TWO

THE UNITY PARTY OF TURKEY: AN EXPERIEMENT IN ALEVI POLITICS

The Unity Party of Turkey (UPT) which addressed the Alevi community was the first party in Turkish political history to deal with a specific religious and cultural community indirectly. The party can be regarded as both a result of the socio-political conjecture of Turkey in the 1960s and a consequence of some of the Alevi elites' desire for political careerism. It can be asserted that both those explanations are accurate. The urbanization process, which opened up the isolated life of the Alevi community, raised the problem of the Alevis' integration into the modern state apparatus both politically and socially. On the other hand, the 1961 constitution provided an opportunity for various cultural identities and social classes to organize politically. In this regard, the formation of an Alevi party was one of the tools which the Alevis used to integrate into the modern life. The Unity Party of Turkey was a result of the socio-political environment, shaped by urbanization and the 1961 constitution.

On the other hand, some party members' political careers such as those of Cemal Özbey, Hasan Tahsin Berkman, Tahsin Tosun Sevinç and Hüseyin Erkanlı and the party's formation in great haste purport that the UPT was an outcome of those founders' political careerism. It can be claimed that some of the party founders who had been unable to survive in various political parties sought to maintain their political careers within the framework of their Alevism by the use of a new Alevi

party. Both of those explanations about the formation process of the party are accurate.

At any rate, it is clear that the existence of the UPT contributed to the politicization of the Alevi in the 1960s and 1970s. In this chapter, the political history of the UPT will be scrutinized and the party will be assessed as an experiment in Alevi politics. The Unity Party was formed as a center party which showed sensitivity to the problems of the Alevi community. In 1969, Mustafa Timisi's election as the leader of the UP meant a strict ideological transformation from a center party to a social democrat party. Under the leadership of Timisi, the UPT moved to more left, parallel to the political leanings of the Alevi community; however, the election results showed that the Alevi community did not support the UPT. They supported either the RPP or the radical left movements politically. Furthermore, the UPT's move to the left broke the affiliation between the party and the traditional Alevi elites, who were disparaged by the leftist Alevi. It seems that the UPT's political inefficiency mainly stemmed from this antagonism.

This chapter offers a descriptive narrative of the Unity Party of Turkey in chronological terms. In this regard, the story will start with the political conditions which laid the groundwork for the establishment of an Alevi party. Then the formation of the party and main political developments under the leadership of Hasan Tahsin Berkman and Hüseyin Balan will be discussed. It was mentioned above that Timisi's election as the leader of the party triggered the ideological transformation of the party. In this regard, the party's move to the left will be investigated in detail in the course of the party documents, the party's 12 principles and the speeches of Timisi. The expulsion process of the Ulusoy family from the party will be investigated within the context of the party's move to the left and the

rupture of the relations between the traditional Alevi elites and the UPT. Finally, the election performances of the UPT will be analyzed in depth. Because they are the most expressive indication of the political efficiency of a political party, to a large extent, the analysis of the UPT will be based on the party's election performance, which includes the hustings and election results.

The Emergence of Alevi Politics

In her useful study about the Alevi movement's politicization, Elisa Massicard writes that two political phenomena played vital roles in the Alevis' politicization. One of them was the establishment of the multi-party system and the other was the military coup of 27 May 1960 and the 1961 constitution. She asserts that Alevism participated in the policy making process through the potential of the Alevi community as voters within the framework of the multi-party political regime. In this regard, it can be claimed that the multi-party system indirectly politicized the Alevis. On the other hand, she states that the direct politicization of the Alevism occurred with the political atmosphere shaped by the 1961 constitution.⁶⁵

The political problems of Turkey, which were disregarded, became apparent courtesy of the 1961 constitution. The Alevi issue was one of them. In this context, in 1963, Cemal Gürsel, who was the president of the Turkish Republic, invited the Alevis to participate in the debates about the formation of the Office of Religious Sects (*Mezhepler Bürosu*) under the control of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*). In this way the issue of Alevism formally became apparent for the first time. In view of Gürsel's request, the rightist media reacted

⁶⁵ Elise Massicard, *Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya Alevi Hareketinin Siyasallaşması*, trans. Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), pp. 54-56.

against the formation of Office of Religious Sects and they claimed that the Alevism was not a religious sect.⁶⁶ Some students of Ankara University handed out fliers under the name of Alevi Turks (*Alevi Türkler*) against the reports of the rightist media. This was important, because the term of “Alevi” was used for the first time in a document.⁶⁷ In 1963 a public *cem* prayer was performed in Ankara for the first time by *Hacıbektaş Turizm ve Tanıtma Derneği* (the Tourism and Publicity Association of Hacıbektaş).⁶⁸ Moreover in the 1960s Alevi associations were formed and periodicals like *Cem* and *Ehl-i Beyt* were published. In this regard it can be claimed that these events referred to the emergence of an Alevi issue in the early 1960s.

Together with that political phenomenon, the Alevis became apparent as a consequence of a social process: urbanization. Migration from rural areas to the urban areas put an end to the isolated life of the Alevis. They became more visible in social life. Their interaction with the Sunnis in the both urban and rural areas activated the historical animosity between the Alevis and the Sunnis on the base of political discourses. In this regard, the visibility of the Alevis in the daily life and their interaction with the Sunnis on the basis of the urbanization process triggered the formation of an Alevi identity.

In that socio-political context, debates on a party based on the Alevi community emerged. A number of concrete events prompted the attempts at the founding an Alevi party. One of them was the increased influence of the *Nurculuk* (Radiancism) in the 1960s. The speeches of leading politicians and public officials clearly indicate the increased influence of the *Nurculuk* on political sphere. For

⁶⁶ Fikret Otyam, *Hu Dost* (Ankara: Gazeteciler Derneği Yayınları, 1964), p.99.

⁶⁷ One of the signers of that notice was Mustafa Timisi, who would be leader of the Unity Party of Turkey from 1969 to 1980.

⁶⁸ Massicard, *Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya Alevi Hareketinin Siyasallaşması*, p. 55.

example, İsmet İnönü accused Süleyman Demirel of tolerating the reactionary political movements and of being the caliph of Said-i Nursi.⁶⁹ Moreover, Cemal Tural, who was the chief of general staff of the period, declared that *Nurculuk* was as dangerous as communism for Turkey's national security.⁷⁰ More importantly for the Alevis, İbrahim Elmalı, who was the chief of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and who was accused of being under the influence of *Nurculuk*, made statements to the disadvantage of the Alevi community in the 1960s.⁷¹ With the indirect encouragement of Elmalı's speeches, attacks on the Alevi community increased.

The Ortaca incident was another event that triggered the attempts to founding of an Alevi party. A land struggle between the Alevi Feyziye village and Sunni Kızılyurt village in the province of Muğla turn into a clash between religious sects. A cinema of which the patrons were Alevi was bombed. The Alevis reacted to the bombing and a young Sunni man was wounded. Then an Alevi village was attacked by the Sunnis. The bridge of the Feyziye village was blow up and the Alevi village was isolated from the outer world. The Ortaca incidents, which took place between 5 June 1966 and 17 June 1966, resulted in the one death and seven wounded.⁷² The case of Ortaca was followed by events in Elbistan (in Maraş), Kırıkhan (in Hatay), and İslahiye (Gaziantep).⁷³

In his detailed monographic study on the Unity Party of Turkey, Kelime Ata asserts that the reactions of the Worker Party of Turkey (WPT) and the

⁶⁹ *Milliyet*, 2 June 1966.

⁷⁰ *Milliyet*, 12 June 1966.

⁷¹ The Cem periodical's news about the İbrahim Elmalı shows the displeasure of the Alevi community from the politics of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. See *Cem*, 1 November 1966, year: 1, no: 5, pp. 12-18.

⁷² *Milliyet*, 19 June 1966

⁷³ Kelime Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966-1980* (Ankara: Kelime Yayınevi, 2007), p. 52.

Republican People's Party (RPP) to the Ortaca incident did not meet the expectations of the Alevi community. The WPT assessed the incident on the basis of class analysis and underlined that to divide people according to their sects was of value to the bourgeois. On the other hand, İsmet İnönü, who was the leader of the RPP, believed that the conflict between the Alevis and the Sunnis had been overcome with the secularist policies of the republic. In that context, both of these parties avoided assessing the Ortaca incident as a clash of religious sects. Therefore, the Alevi community felt abandoned by the WPT and the RPP.⁷⁴

As a consequence of the political parties' passive manner in response to the the Ortaca incidents, the Alevi elites put the issue of the founding of an Alevi party on their agenda. Cemal Özbey declared that if the clashes between the religious sects had not been closed, the Turk Alevis would have had the right to self-defense.⁷⁵ In the following days, Özbey declared that the Alevis would found a party which would resist discrimination on the basis of race, social class and sectarianism.⁷⁶ Those speeches marked the start of the attempts to form an Alevi party.

Mustafa Timisi, who was involved in the process of the forming an Alevi party, noted that the party would be a social democrat party which would especially address the Alevi community. In this regard, a relation with the intellectuals would be established and the tendencies of the party base would be investigated throughout the country.⁷⁷ The party program would be prepared by Cahit Tanyol on the basis of

⁷⁴ Ibid. , p. 55.

⁷⁵ *Milliyet*, 15 June 1966.

⁷⁶ *Milliyet*, 18 June 1966.

⁷⁷ Mustafa Timisi, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 21September 2007.

the programs of the Labor Party of England and the Sweden Social Democrat Party.⁷⁸

Kelime Ata asserts that a great many of the group had aimed to form a social democrat party; however, Cemal Özbey took the initiative and the party was transformed from a social democrat party into an Alevi party.⁷⁹ Timisi corrects the analysis of Ata and says that, on a large scale, the party was formed on the initiative of Özbey while the efforts to establish the party were ongoing. He adds that the party was not the party that they had wished to form; however, the Unity Party was formed and they had to take part in it at any price.⁸⁰

The foundation process of the party reveals that the Unity Party can not be regarded as a party which was the direct result of Turkey's political conjuncture or of the demands of the Alevi community. It can not be denied that an Alevi phenomenon occurred as a consequence of Turkey's socio-politic conjuncture in the 1960s; however, the political history of the party founders shows that the Unity Party was also the result of their political careerism. The influential founders of the party had begun their political careers in different parties, but they had not been able to survive in those parties.

Cemal Özbey, who was born in Malatya in 1928, graduated from the Ankara University Faculty of Law. He launched himself into politics with the Democrat Party and then transferred to the Freedom Party. After the 27 May military intervention, his political career continued in the Republican People's Party, until the formation of the Unity Party. Another founder of the Unity Party, Hasan Tahsin Berkman, was the first party chairman of it. He was a retired general who had been

⁷⁸ *Cem*, August 1966, year: 1, no: 1, p.18.

⁷⁹ Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966-1980*, pp. 63 – 64.

⁸⁰ Mustafa Timisi, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 21 September 2007.

expelled from the army for participation in an attempt of military coup against the Democrat Party government. He had been the Çorum candidate of the Republican Peasant's Nation Party in the 1961 Senate elections; however, he had not been elected. Tahsin Tosun Sevinç, who was a trade unionist, had been candidate of the WPT from Tunceli in the 1965 elections. Hüseyin Erkanlı, who was also a lawyer, had been Tunceli candidate of the New Turkey Party in the 1965 elections.⁸¹

In this regard, the foundation of the Unity Party can also be considered the result of those founders' efforts to survive in the political arena within the framework of their Alevism by the use of a new Alevi Party. Their attempts to transform a social democrat party into an Alevi party may be analyzed within that context.

The Foundation of the Unity Party

The Unity Party (UP) was formed in Ankara on 17 September 1966. As mentioned above, it was the first political party to address a specific religious and cultural community indirectly. Although the party did not aim to establish a social and political order on the basis of Alevi tradition, its discourse clearly addressed the Alevis. The party emblem, which consisted of a lion in the middle of 12 stars, reveals its ideological manner, as, according to Alevi tradition, 12 stars symbolize 12 *imams* and the lion expresses Hz. Ali.

The party's 16 founders were Hasan Tahsin Berkman (retired general), Cemal Özbey (lawyer), Feyzullah Ulusoy (lawyer, farmer), Salim Delikanlı (retired colonel), Tahsin Tosun Sevinç (trade unionist), Mustafa Geygel (contractor), Mehmet Güner (economist), İbrahim Zerze (worker), Hüseyin Dedekargınoğlu

⁸¹ Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966-1980*, pp. 69-73.

(printer), Hüseyin Günel (contractor), Mustafa Topal (doctor), Hüseyin Eren (retired colonel), Arif Kemal Erođlu (worker), Mehmet Ali Egeli (economist), Hüseyin Erkanlı (lawyer) and Faruk Erginsoy (lawyer).⁸²

The party's political stance can be investigated within the framework of its program. In the party program, the party's aim was established as to oppose and struggle against separatism, discrimination, extreme left and right political movements, communism, imperialism, fascism, Nazism and all kinds of dictatorships. Furthermore, the party promised to provide national unity and to prevent the clashes between social classes.⁸³

The UP accepted the mixed economy model which suggested that the boundaries of the private sector and public sector would be determined by the State Planning Office (*Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı*). Moreover, the party program assumed the nationalization of heavy industry, mining, the PTT, foreign trade, gas lease, the banking and insurance trade.⁸⁴ The party's foreign policy was based on national sovereignty and the establishment of peaceful relations with all countries within the framework of Atatürk's principle, "peace in the country, peace in the world." (*Yurtta sulh, cihanda sulh*).⁸⁵

The UP's agricultural policy clearly revealed that it was a center party. In the 1960s leftist and rightist parties were in conflict over agricultural policy within the framework of the debates between land reform and agricultural reform. Rightist political parties supported agricultural reform that suggested the modernization of the agriculture via using technology. Agricultural reform was based on agricultural

⁸² *Cem*, 15 December 1966, year:1, no: 8, p.17.

⁸³ *Birlik Partisi Tüzük ve Programı* (İstanbul: TİPO Neşriyat ve Basımevi, 1969), pp. 3–4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

productivity. On the other hand, leftist parties supported land reform which suggested providing land for farmers who had no land or who had insufficient amounts of land. The idea of land reform was based on equality. The UP's agricultural policy remained in the middle of land reform (left manner) and agricultural reform (right manner) comprehensions. The party believed the necessity of both agricultural reform and land reform and it equated land reform with agricultural reform.⁸⁶ In this regard, its agricultural policy completely demonstrated the UP's political characteristic as a center party.

The most distinctive discourse of the UP which caused it to be labeled an Alevi party was related to freedom of conscience. It was clear that the party's policy of secularism clearly differentiated it from the other political parties. In the section of the statute of the party regarding the party's aim, Article 24 declared that the language of worship and language of religious education should be Turkish. Article 25 assumed that the Directorate of Religious Affairs should include all religions and sects in Turkey. Article 26 declared that new articles should be added to the criminal code in order to preclude and punish racial, religious and sectarian discriminations. Article 27 stated that discrimination in religious education would be brought to an end and religious education would not be executed under the hegemony of any religious sect.⁸⁷ In this regard, it was clear that these aims of the party coincided with the demands of the Alevi community.

⁸⁶ Ibid. , p. 65.

⁸⁷ Ibid. , p. 5.

Political Divide in the Party

The leadership of the party's first chairman, Hasan Tahsin Berkman, nearly lasted six months. Berkman's speech at the party's Istanbul Organization triggered the process which led to his resignation. In that speech, Berkman stated that the Turkish nation should have been aware of the threat of Soviet Russia and should not have acted against the United States of America and the U.S. installations under provocations. The opportunities which NATO offered Turkey were very important, because if the U.S. cut aid, Soviet Russia might invade Turkey. He ended the speech with an advice that the UP should not follow the people who shouted "Yankee Go Home!"⁸⁸

After Berkman's speech, political opposition to him arose and the party was divided into two camps. The political circle under the leadership of Hasan Tahsin Berkman and Cemal Özbey believed that NATO was the guarantor of the free world. On the other hand, the clique under the leadership Hüseyin Erkanlı, Tahsin Tosun Sevinç and İbrahim Zerze, who were known as the *Doğulular* (Easterners) came together under the slogan of "Yankee Go Home!"⁸⁹

A serious rift between these groups occurred when the Central Executive Council gathered in order to increase the number of members of the General Executive Council from 16 to 30. Both of these groups agreed on the increase in number; however, they were not in accord about who would be the new members of the Council. Both groups purposed to determine the new members of the Council in order to gather strength for the power struggle in the party. The clique of Berkman

⁸⁸ *Cem*, 1 February 1967, year: 1, no: 11, p. 18.

⁸⁹ *Ata, Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966-1980*, p.106.

was more influential on the decision making process than Erkanlı's group because they had more members. Berkman's group had seven members; Erkanlı's had six.⁹⁰

At the beginning of the assembly, Tahsin Tosun Sevinç asked for a vote of confidence in the leadership of Berkman, which Berkman received. The general atmosphere of the assembly was in favor of Berkman's group. Seeing their chances diminished, the Erkanlı's group left the assembly in order to prevent the introduction of a resolution in that meeting. The clashes between these groups were reconciled by Hüseyin Balan, whose story will be told below. New members of the General Executive Council were determined by compromise. The eight new members were appointed to the General Executive Council were Hüseyin Balan (Deputy from Ankara), Kazım Ulusoy (Deputy from Amasya), Yusuf Ulusoy (ex-Deputy), Kasım Sönmez (Contractor), Taki Davutoğlu (Lawyer), Ahmet Çoşkun (Lawyer), Hüseyin Güler (Merchant) and Mehmet Dedekargınoğlu (Contractor).

After the new members of the General Executive Council were decided, Berkman resigned from the leadership of the UP due to his appearance as an undesirable leader for the party.⁹¹ After Berkman had resigned, the General Executive Council came together in order to elect the new chairman of the party on 30 March 1967. Hasan Tahsin Berkman and Hüseyin Balan ran for the leadership of the party and Hüseyin Balan won.⁹² He was the second leader of the UP.

⁹⁰ *Cem*, 15 April 1967, year: 1, number: 14, pp. 13 – 14.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Hüseyin Balan's Leadership

Hüseyin Balan's family migrated from Tunceli's Balan village to Adana where he was born in 1917. His political career started in the Nation Party (NP) and he was elected deputy for Ankara in the 1965 elections. When the leaders of the Unity Party decided to transfer the Alevi deputies from other parties in order to appear in the assembly, Hüseyin Balan and Yusuf Ulusoy (Amasya deputy of the Nation Party) transferred to the Unity Party on 15 March 1967.⁹³ As mentioned above, two weeks after his transfer to the Unity Party, Balan was elected the leader of party.

Kelime Ata claims that the leadership of Balan was a political maneuver of the *Doğulular* group in order to unseat Berkman. Therefore Balan's leadership created a disturbance in the party and the members of Ulusoy family (Feyzullah Ulusoy, Kazım Ulusoy and Yusuf Ulusoy), who were the *postnişin*⁹⁴ family of the Dedegan branch of the Bektashi Order, resigned from the Unity Party. Because the Ulusoy family was the spiritual leader of the Bektashi Order, the resignation of the members of family was regarded as the dissolution of the relations between the Bektashi Order and the Unity Party.⁹⁵

The first ordinary congress of the party was materialized under the intra-party schism. In that congress there were two candidates for the leadership who were Hüseyin Balan and Sıtkı Ulay. Ulay was a retired general and had been one of the active participants of the 27 May military intervention. Furthermore, he had been a member of the National Unity Committee (NUC) and Transportation Ministry of the

⁹³ Ibid. , p. 15.

⁹⁴ *Postnişin* is the head of a religious order.

⁹⁵ Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966-1980*, pp. 117 – 119.

provisional government.⁹⁶ He joined to the UP in 1967. In the congress, Ulay was supported by Mustafa Timisi, who was the general secretary of the UP.

In the first ordinary congress of the party, Hüseyin Balan was re-elected as the leader of the Unity Party. Balan gained the support of 234 delegates; on the other hand, only 76 delegates supported Ulay. The General Executive Committee of the UP, which had been determined by the votes of the delegates, soothed the disturbance in the party, because different cliques remained on the committee. Hasan Tahsin Berkman, Sıtkı Ulay, Ali Naki Ulusoy, Hüseyin Erkanlı, Hüseyin Günel, Tahsin Tosun Sevinç, and Ali Timisi (the brother of Mustafa Timisi) were some of the members of the General Executive Committee.⁹⁷

The Unity Party in the 1969 Elections

The Unity Party was unable to participate in the municipal elections in 1967. The Higher Election Authority (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*) allowed the UP to participate in local elections that were part of the Senate elections on 2 June 1968. The UP gained the 1.6 % of the total votes and 19 of the 1719 seats in the provincial council elections. The party's election results in the traditional Alevi provinces like Amasya (20.7%), Tokat (16.2%), Erzincan (15.6%), Çorum (14.5%) and Sivas (6.2%) was significantly higher than its average.⁹⁸

The 1969 elections were the first general elections in which the UP participated. The 1968 local elections showed that the UP would be an influential

⁹⁶ For more detailed information about Sıtkı Ulay, see Sıtkı Ulay, *Giderayak* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1996); and Sıtkı Ulay, *27 Mayıs 1960: Harbiye Silah Başına* (İstanbul: Kitapçılık Ticaret Limited Şirketi Yayınları, 1968).

⁹⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 24 October 1967.

⁹⁸ 2 Haziran 1968 Mahalli Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1969).

party in the regions where the Alevi population lived such as Amasya, Çorum, Tokat and Sivas. The deputy candidates of the UP were determined by both primary election and nomination from party headquarters. The candidate list revealed that the relation between the traditional Alevi elites and the UP had been re-established through the 1969 elections. There were four candidates from the Ulusoy family who were at the top of the candidate list: Kazım Ulusoy from Amasya, Cemalettin Ulusoy from Yozgat, Ali Naki Ulusoy from Çorum and Yusuf Ulusoy from Tokat. The Doğan family had influence on the Alevis in the Malatya region.⁹⁹ Two members of the Doğan family held places on the candidate list of the UP at the head of the list, Kazım Doğan from Maraş and Enver Doğan from Adıyaman.¹⁰⁰

In the election manifesto of the Unity Party for the 1969 campaigns, the party declared its opposition to the extreme leftist and rightist movements on the basis of Atatürk's revolutions and his principle of "peace in the country, peace in the world."¹⁰¹ According to the manifesto, the party had a mixed economy comprehension which assumed the nationalization of heavy industry, energy centrals, mines and oil, public works, the military industry, foreign trade, and the banking and insurance sectors.¹⁰²

The party's radical discourse which differentiated it from the other political parties was about freedom of conscience. Indeed, the party's basic principles about secularism were repeated in the laicism part of the election manifesto. It assumed that the language of worship and language of religious education should be Turkish,

⁹⁹ The head of Cem Foundation, İzzettin Doğan, is also one of the members of the Doğan family. Furthermore, he was one of the writers of *Cem* periodicals in the 1960s which had supported the UP politically.

¹⁰⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 2 September 1969.

¹⁰¹ *Birlik Partisi 1969 Seçim Bildirgesi* (Ankara, 1969), p. 2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the Directorate of Religious Affairs should include all religions and sects in Turkey, and new articles should be added to the criminal code in order to preclude and punish the racial, religious and sectarian discriminations.¹⁰³

The party's election manifesto assured four essential reforms which involved rural development, education, labor and development, administrative and personnel. Sub-reforms which supported those essential ones were political reform, investment and industry reform and housing reform.¹⁰⁴ To a large extent, the Unity Party's election manifesto was based on the project of the concrete application of these reforms. To scrutinize the UP's conceptualizations of the rural developmental reform and labor and developmental reform may reveal the basic political tendencies of the party.

Rural developmental reform included three phases. The first one was the improvement of the transportation info structure of the villages. The second one was the distribution of the public domains and town forests to landless peasants. The third one was the establishment of an Agricultural Enterprises Association (*Tarım İşletme Birliği*) and the peasant's labor on their own land for the association in order to increase the efficiency per unit.¹⁰⁵ The manifesto revealed that the party defended both land reform and agricultural reform; however, it promised not to interfere in private ownership on land.

The party's labor and developmental reform comprehension assumed that the minimum wage of the workers would be increased to the level of minimum maintenance and the basic task of the employee would be to provide maintenance for

¹⁰³ Ibid. , p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. , p.6.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. , pp. 6 – 8.

workers.¹⁰⁶ The laboring and developmental reform comprehension of the party did not consider the role of labor unions and right of strike. In this regard, it was clear that the rights of the workers were left to the honesty of the employee according to election manifesto. The election manifesto of the UP revealed that the party did not have a strict ideological comprehension.

In this context, the party was consistent with its assertion of being a center party. Only the laicism part of the manifesto differentiated the UP and related it to the Alevi community. More importantly, as mentioned above, the candidate list of the party, which included traditional Alevi leaders, would be the most significant advantage of the party.

The Unity Party participated into 1969 elections in 29 provinces. As a result of the elections, it gained the 2.8 % of the total votes and eight seats. The names and provinces of the deputies were: Kazım Ulusoy (Amasya), Yusuf Ulusoy (Tokat), Ali Naki Ulusoy (Corum), Haydar Ozdemir (Istanbul), Sami Ilhan (Malatya), Hüseyin Balan (Ankara), Mustafa Timisi (Sivas) and Huseyin Cınar (Sivas).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. , p.13.

¹⁰⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 14 October 1969.

Table 1. 12 October 1969 Election Results for the Unity Party (%)

PROVINCE	THE UP'S VOTE (%)	PROVINCE	THE UP'S VOTE (%)	PROVINCE	THE UP'S VOTE (%)
Adana	3.6	Erzincan	13.1	Manisa	2.4
Adıyaman	1.7	Eskişehir	2.5	Maraş	6.2
Amasya	23.6	Gaziantep	2.4	Muğla	1.1
Ankara	4.3	Hatay	2.2	Ordu	3.5
Antalya	2.7	İçel	5.3	Samsun	2.9
Aydın	1.4	İstanbul	2.9	Sivas	16.7
Balıkesir	2.1	İzmir	1.6	Tokat	17.7
Çorum	16.9	Kocaeli	1.4	Tunceli	6.9
Denizli	1.2	Kütahya	3.0	Yozgat	5.0
Elazığ	3.3	Malatya	11.7	TOTAL	2.8
Source: 12 Ekim 1969 Milletvekili Genel Sonuçları. (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1970), pp. IX – X					

The election results revealed that the Unity Party was successful in the cities where the different religious sects lived together, such as Çorum, Tokat, Amasya, Malatya and Sivas. In this regard, the sectarian heterogeneity, in other words the Alevis' tension of living together with the Sunnis, contributed to the success of the UP in those regions. Furthermore, the names of the candidates also played a vital role in the UP's success in those regions. The esteem for the Ulusoy family in Çorum, Tokat and Amasya; the the Doğan family in Malatya; and Mustafa Timisi in Sivas were other reasons for the UP's success in those regions.

The party's votes in Tunceli, the population of which mainly consisted of Kurdish Alevis, were fewer than those for the Justice Party, the Republican People's

Party, the Worker Party of Turkey and the independent candidate (Hüseyin Duman).¹⁰⁸ As compared with the party's vote in Sivas, Tokat, Amasya, Çorum, Erzincan and Malatya, the party was not successful in Tunceli. In this regard it can be claimed that support of the Kurdish Alevi for the UP was less than the support of the Turkish Alevi.

Indeed the party's political discourses addressed the Turkish Alevi more than the Kurdish ones. Balan's interview with Abdi İpekçi before the 1969 general elections indicated the UP's stance plainly. He stated that the one of the main aims of the UP's policy on Turkish religious education and Turkish worship was to contribute to the national unity of Turkey.¹⁰⁹ It was clear that Balan's approach disregarded the existence of the Kurdish Alevi whose daily language was not Turkish. As a consequence of this stance of Balan (and indirectly the UP), the Kurdish Alevi did not support the UP in the 1969 elections.

The election results also show that the votes of the UP in the metropolis were below its average for Turkey. Moreover, the party's rural votes in the cities like Sivas (19.0 to 6.6), Tokat (20.1 to 9.7) and Malatya (12.9 to 9.0) were higher than those of the urban votes.¹¹⁰ In this context, it can be claimed the Unity Party was more successful in the rural areas than in the urban districts.

Although the UP had gained eight seats, the election results were a great disappointment for the party leaders. The party was not able to establish a group in the parliament. More importantly, it was clear that the Alevi population did not support the Unity Party on a large scale. As a consequence of the election results, disquiet arose in the party, which was revealed at the ordinary congress of the party

¹⁰⁸ *12 Ekim 1969 Milletvekili Genel Sonuçları* (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1970), p. XXII.

¹⁰⁹ Abdi İpekçi, *Liderler Diyor ki* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1969), pp. 100 – 101.

¹¹⁰ *12 Ekim 1969 Milletvekili Genel Sonuçları* (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1970), p. XXIX.

on 23-24 November 1969. In the first day of the congress, Hüseyin Balan was the only candidate for the party's leadership and Mustafa Timisi was Balan's candidate for the general secretariat. However, Timisi agreed with the Istanbul organization of the UP and stood as candidate for the leadership of the party against Hüseyin Balan. The traditional Alevi elites remained neutral at the congress and Timisi was elected as the leader of the UP.¹¹¹ Timisi's leadership not only indicated a leader change, but also meant a strict ideological transformation for the Unity Party. It would be moved to the left radically by Timisi.

The Ulusoy Family's Expulsion from the UP

The first crisis under the leadership of Timisi occurred over a vote of confidence for the Justice Party (JP) government. In the 1969 elections the JP had gained 256 seats in the parliament and Süleyman Demirel, the leader of the JP, had formed the government. There was opposition to Demirel in the JP, and 41 deputies of the right wing of the party disallowed the budget of the government and Demirel had resigned. Demirel was tasked with forming a new cabinet; however, he required the support of the deputies outside of his party in order to form a new cabinet, because it was possible the opponent deputies of the JP would not pass a vote of confidence for Demirel's cabinet.¹¹²

In this context, Demirel required the support of the UP's deputies. Hüseyin Balan, Hüseyin Çınar and the deputies from the Ulusoy family wanted to give a vote of confidence to Demirel's government; however, the General Executive Committee of the UP took the decision not to pass the vote of confidence for Demirel's cabinet.

¹¹¹ Mustafa Timisi, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 21 September 2007.

¹¹² Tanel Demirel, *Adalet Partisi: İdeoloji ve Politika* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), pp.51–62.

In that decision, it was underlined that if the deputies of the UP passed a vote of confidence for the cabinet or did not participate in the voting, they would be handed over to the disciplinary committee for expulsion from the party.¹¹³ In contravention of the party decision, five deputies of the UP, Hüseyin Balan, Hüseyin Çınar, Kazım Ulusoy, Yusuf Ulusoy and Ali Naki Ulusoy, passed the vote of confidence for Demirel's cabinet. In the parliament, Demirel's new cabinet received a vote of confidence with the support of 232 votes against 172.

Abidin Özgünay, who was the former provincial secretary of the UP's Istanbul branch and who had come into possession of *Cem* periodical, evaluated the Ulusoy family's support for the Demirel government within the context of the Bektashi Order's relation with the political authorities. He claimed that because the Bektashi Order had been defended by the political authorities until the abolition of Janissary Corps, the *Çelebis* had avoided falling into disagreement with the political authorities. Therefore the Ulusoy family supported the Demirel's government.¹¹⁴

Kelime Ata asserts that the five deputies' votes of confidence for Demirel's government were a reaction to the party's move to the left politically.¹¹⁵ It seems that Ata's evaluation is accurate. Kazım Ulusoy stated that he had given a vote of confidence to the government in order to react to the UP's move to the radical left. Moreover, Hüseyin Balan declared that they were against the party members who sought to associate the UP with scientific socialism theoretically.¹¹⁶

The Unity Party was in deep water. On the one hand, the party discipline and principles were at issue. On the other hand, the party's number of deputies might

¹¹³ *Cumhuriyet*, 19 March 1970.

¹¹⁴ This speech of Abidin Özgünay derived from Kelime Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966–1980* (Ankara: Kelime Yayinevi, 2007), p. 207.

¹¹⁵ Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966–1980*, p. 208.

¹¹⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 17 March 1970

be reduced to two and its representation in the assembly would drastically weaken. More importantly, the party's relation with the traditional Alevi elites might be damaged if the members of the Ulusoy family were expelled from the party. In that socio-political context, the five deputies who had given the vote of confidence for the JP government were handed over to the discipline committee for expulsion from the party. The committee expelled these five deputies from the party for having violated party discipline on 28 March 1970.¹¹⁷

That decision was one of the important breaking points in the party's political life. As a consequence of the expulsion of the Ulusoy family, the relations between the party and the Alevi traditional elites were damaged. Moreover, those deputies could be regarded as having been the right wing of the UP; therefore, their expulsion from the party accelerated the party's move to the left. Under the leadership of Mustafa Timisi, the Unity Party would turn into a social democrat party.

The Unity Party of Turkey as a Social Democrat Party

Moving to left was inevitable for the UP, because the Alevis on whom the party was based were moving to left. The urbanization process had opened up the Alevi villages and dissolved their isolated lives. They became more visible in the daily life as supporters of the left movements. In the 1965 and 1969 elections the WPT had a disproportionate amount of support in the Alevi districts than in the Sunni districts. The election results showed the Alevis' (especially the Kurdish

¹¹⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 29 March 1970.

Alevis) increased interest in the WPT clearly.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the RPP which had moved to left of centre as a consequence of Ecevit's populist discourse affected the Alevis.¹¹⁹ In this context, the Unity Party moved to the left in order to gain the support of the Alevis under the leadership of Mustafa Timisi.

The party's third ordinary congress was held on 27-28 November 1971. In that congress the name of the party was changed from the Union Party to the Unity Party of Turkey (UPT). This change reflected the transformation of the party politics and discourse symbolically. Moreover, at this congress, the General Executive Committee of the party was revised. The rightist members of the committee were clarified and leftist members like Orhan Aarsal and Hüseyin Lüle participated on the Committee.¹²⁰ It can be suggested that Timisi gained ascendancy over the party with this congress.

The party's move to the left can be followed within the framework of the revised party program and its new twelve principles. With the new party program, the party's aim was established as to oppose and struggle against separatism, discrimination, extreme left and right political movements, communism, imperialism, fascism, Nazism and all kinds of dictatorships.¹²¹ The party's economy policy was based on a mixed economy comprehension under the direction of the State Planning Office again; however, the social dimension of the economic policies was highlighted. In this regard, the party emphasized the role of labor unions and

¹¹⁸ The Alevis' support to the WPT was confirmed by both the leftist intellectuals like Murat Belge and Alevi researchers like Murat Küçük. See Murat Belge (Ahmet Samim), "The Left," in *Turkey in Transition*, eds. Irvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.156; Murat Küçük, "Türkiye'de Sol Düşünce ve Aleviler." In *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce cilt 8: Sol*, ed. Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), p. 904

¹¹⁹ The relation between the Alevis and Ecevit's RPP will be scrutinized in the next chapter.

¹²⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 29 November 1971.

¹²¹ *Türkiye Birlik Partisi Tüzük ve Programı*, (Ankara: Gutenberg Matbaası, 1972), p. 3.

assumed the workers' active participation in the economic policy-making process within the conceptualization of "economic democracy".¹²²

Similar to the Unity Party, the foreign policy of the UPT was based on Atatürk's "peace in the country, peace in the world" discourse; however, the UPT's comprehension of this principle was radically different from that of the UP. The party program stated that the UPT opposed all kinds of imperialist action and supported the anti-imperialist struggles of the Third World countries. The party also supported entrance into the European Community, which was regarded as the first step for the "United Nations of European Republic."¹²³

It was mentioned above that the most distinctive political discourse of the Unity Party (of Turkey) was on the freedom of conscience. Indeed, the party program's articles about the laicism comprehension were not revised and the principles which were mentioned above were stated again. However, the party's manner toward the Directorate of Religious Affairs was modified. In the first party program, the UP had declared that the Directorate of Religious Affairs should include all religions and sects in Turkey. The UPT program stated that because a secular republic should not include any religious institutions such as the Directorate of Religious Affairs, it should be abolished.¹²⁴

The UPT defined itself as a democratic left party and the 12 principles of the party clearly showed its new ideological premises and transformation.¹²⁵ These

¹²² Ibid. , pp. 66–67.

¹²³ Ibid. , p. 58.

¹²⁴ Ibid. , p. 57.

¹²⁵ The 12 principles of the party remind the Alevi tradition's 12 *imam* figures. In this regard, this analogy shows us that although the party's discourse changed, its ideological position as a secular Alevi remained.

principles were revolutionism, socialism (*toplumculuk*)¹²⁶, Kemalism, democracy, populism, etatism, republicanism, independence (*bağımsızlıkçılık*), liberalism (*özgürlükçülük*), laicism, equality and patriotism. The UPT used these 12 principles for the 1973 elections for the first time. Then they were used for the 1977 elections and were added into the party program in 1980. Analyzing these principles will give us the opportunity to understand the UPT's new ideological tendencies.

Under the name of the revolutionism principle, it was asserted that the UPT was different from the bourgeois parties, which held the capitalist mode of production, and from the social democratic parties which aimed to perpetuate capitalism with reformist arrangements. The UPT's revolutionism principle had two dimensions, economic and social. On the economic dimension, the UPT supported a more advanced mode of production which would be established through a democratic revolution. On the social dimension, it supported a people's democracy based on the power of workers and farmers. The UPT accused the radical left movements of alienating people and it separated its revolutionism conceptualization from the radical left movements' revolutionism comprehension.¹²⁷

The party's revolutionism principles had two important points. First, although the capitalist system was strongly criticized, socialism was not mentioned openly. Second, both the UPT's discourse about coming to power through democratic means and its accusation of adventurism the radical socialist movement resembled the political discourse of Mehmet Ali Aybar. Another similarity between the discourses of Aybar and the UPT appeared in the principle of populism. The core

¹²⁶ The UPT especially used the phrase of "*toplumculuk*" instead of "*sosyalizm*", because in Turkish usage, *sosyalizm* had a more ideological content than *toplumculuk*. However, the English word socialism refers to both *sosyalizm* and *toplumculuk*. Therefore I will use the Turkish phrase *toplumculuk* with socialism in order to convey the sensitivity of the UPT.

¹²⁷ Türkiye Birlik Partisi Program ve Tüzüğü (Istanbul: Zafer Matbaacılık, 1980), pp. 76 - 77

of the populism principle was “fight for people’s democracy with the people.” According to the populism principle, people should participate in the political struggle out of their own political consciousness in order to transform the social system, which was based on antagonism between the working class and bourgeois.¹²⁸ In this regard the populism principle of the UPT resembled Aybar’s criticism of representing the political consciousness to workers from the outside. Similar to the UPT’s populism principle, Aybar supported the argument that the working class could only gain political consciousness within the framework of class struggle.¹²⁹

According to program of the UPT, the principle of socialism (*toplumculuk*) meant a social establishment in which humans are not exploited by other humans. In the party program, Kemalism is regarded as permanent revolutionism on the internal dimension and national independence on the external dimension. The party evaluated Kemalism as a political line against imperialism and fascism. According to the democracy principle of the UPT, democracy was a political system which was shaped by struggle of the social classes through political parties. The party assumed that the cores of democracy were general elections, latitude of thought, and freedom of association.¹³⁰

The principle of independence (*bağımsızçılık*) supported a fully-independent Turkey against imperialism. This principle related full-independence with economic development and political democracy. The party believed that full independence was one of the main requirements for a democratic Turkey. In this regard, Turkey should apply a foreign policy in favor of non-aligned countries and it

¹²⁸ Ibid. , pp. 80-81.

¹²⁹ For more detailed information about Aybar’s political thoughts, see Zafer Doğan, *Türkiye’li Bir Sosyalist Olarak Mehmet Ali Aybar* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2005).

¹³⁰ *Türkiye Birlik Partisi Program ve Tüzüğü*, pp. 77 – 80.

should resign from international organizations like NATO and CENTO, which damaged its independence.¹³¹

According to the principle of liberalism (*özgürlükçülük*), the UPT supported bourgeois democracy's freedom comprehension; however, it claimed that actual freedom could only be applied within the framework of the establishment of a socialist (*toplumcu*) mode of production. In this regard, the UPT supported the bourgeois democratic freedoms with the purpose of establishing a system in favor of the workers.¹³² The principles of equality supported that all the citizens should be equal before the law without distinction of religion, language, sexuality and ideological position.¹³³ The etatism principle supported an economic system which was in favor of workers. These principles assumed a statist economy which was controlled by the working classes in order to establish a democratic government of the people. Moreover, it supported the nationalization of main sectors and all economic areas where foreign capital was active.¹³⁴

The relationship between the party and the Alevi community appeared clearly under the UPT's principles of laicism and republicanism. The principle of laicism suggested that the UPT kept an open mind on both materialism and religion. Furthermore, the party objected to the role of the Director of Religious Affairs, about which the Alevi community had complaints.¹³⁵

According to republicanism, republic was the most appropriate regime for democracy; however, the party supported that theoretical republicanism was not the only important thing. In the party program it was underlined that a republic was a

¹³¹ Ibid. , pp. 85–87.

¹³² Ibid. , pp. 88 – 89.

¹³³ Ibid. , pp. 90 – 91.

¹³⁴ Ibid. , pp. 82-83.

¹³⁵ Ibid. , p. 90.

democratic and progressive regime under the conditions of full-independence and real democracy, and that the party was a republican in such a context. Furthermore, in the party program republic was supported for these reasons:

The separation of religion and state, the end of sectarianist oppression with the laicism principle made the UPT a faithful republican.¹³⁶

In this context, the party's republicanism was not only a result of the relation between democracy and republic, but also a consequence of the Alevis' pleasure in the reforms which had been applied by the early republican government.

It was clear that the UPT's new ideological leaning, which was materialized with the 12 principles, were more left than the UP's political behavior. While the UP defined itself as a center party, the UPT claimed that it was a democratic left party.¹³⁷ Although both the UPT and the UP adopted the mixed economy comprehension, the role of the state and its social functions stood in the forefront of the program of the UPT. In foreign policy, the aim of establishing peaceful relations with all countries was substituted with a policy based on full-independence. Furthermore, the UPT supported a more militant laicism, which was based on the abolition of the Director of Religious Affairs instead of making it valid for all religions and sects, than the UP.

The ideological stance of the UPT was based on the existence of antagonistic social classes. Marxist analysis methods were frequently used by the party in order to explain the prevailing conditions in the country. The concepts of democracy and freedom were evaluated on two dimensions, as bourgeois and socialist. In this context, although the UP analyzed the conditions of Turkey within

¹³⁶ *Dinin devlet işlerinden ayrılmasını gerçekleştirmesi ve mezhepçi baskılara laiklik ilkesiyle son vermesi, Türkiye Birlik Partisi'ni tavizsiz bir cumhuriyetçi yapmıştır.*” Türkiye Birlik Partisi Program ve Tüzüğü, p. 85

¹³⁷ Although the concept of the democratic left identified with Bülent Ecevit within the context of the RPP's transformation in the 1970s, that term was firstly mentioned in 1971 by Mustafa Timisi in order to explain the ideological leaning of the UPT.

the framework of the current political parties' lack of foresight, the UPT focused on the social system while analyzing the country.

It can be suggested that two main political leaders and parties had influence on the new ideological leanings of the UPT. One of them was the WPT of the 1960s and Mehmet Ali Aybar; the other was the RPP of the 1970s and Bülent Ecevit. The effect of Aybar's ideological stance on the party was evaluated when the party's principles of revolutionism and populism were analyzed. Furthermore Marxist analysis of the party indicated the WPT's impact on the party program as well. On the other hand, the populist discourse of the 12 principles showed the effect of Ecevit. In this regard, it can be asserted that the new discourses of the UPT remained in the middle of these two ideological lines.

The Unity Party of Turkey in the 1973 Elections

The UPT took part in the 1973 elections accompanied by these changes of policy. The election results were important, because they would give the general impressions of the transformation of the party politics. In another words, the 1973 elections were the first serious test of the UPT as a democratic leftist party.

That transformation of the party policy made its mark on Timisi's speech during the election campaign. In a radio speech, he described the party's ideal of Turkey as follows:

To liberate the human from all kinds of fears, to substitute effort with engine oil, to establish real freedom through the abolition of work slavery and to attain the aspiration of a free and happy Turkey was the end which we wished. A developed society is a society in which the national income is at a high level, income distribution is fair and well-balanced, social welfare level is high, there is no unemployment, anyone who wants to work is able to obtain employment, there is no exploitation and the surplus

value is invested in the most efficient areas without extraction from the country by foreign capital. In brief we aim at development that balanced and adequate to the social justice principles.¹³⁸

Timisi's speeches at the party meeting popularized the party's new ideological manner and its democratic left comprehension. At the Corum meeting, he declared that the core of the UPT's democratic left policy was the revolutionist struggle of the oppressed people in order to obtain their rights and interests.¹³⁹ At the Izmir meeting, he accused both Demirel and Ecevit of cooperating with the powers which aimed to exploit Turkey. He added that only the UPT wished a fully independent Turkey.¹⁴⁰ At the Sivas meeting he supported the nationalization of mines and resources and using higher technology for production.¹⁴¹

The UPT not only moved to the left theoretically, but also opened its arms to the socialist Mehmet Ali Aybar and his friends from the Worker Party of Turkey.¹⁴² Timisi believed that after the military intervention, to compose a unified socialist (*toplumcu*) opposition was the most important issue of the democratic powers.¹⁴³ The alliance between the UPT and Aybar was the result of Timisi's that analysis. He expected to benefit from the popularity of the WPT's experience with this alliance. Indeed, the aim of Timisi was to establish a permanent collaboration with Aybar. On the other hand, Aybar declared that because the UPT was the only

¹³⁸ "İnsanı her türlü korkudan kurtarmak, alın terinin yerine makine yağı koymak, iş köleliğini kaldırarak gerçek özgürlük kurmak, özgür ve mutlu Türkiye özlemine varmak, istediğimiz sonudur. Milli gelirin yüksek, gelir dağılımının dengeli ve adaletli, toplumsal refah seviyesinin yüksek olduğu, işsizliğin olmadığı, çalışmak isteyen herkesin serbestçe iş bulabildiği, sömürünün olmadığı, yaratılan artık değerın yabancı sermaye tarafından ülkeden çıkarılmadan yeniden en verimli sahalara yatırıldığı bir toplumdur gelişmiş toplum. Kısaca dengeli ve sosyal adalet ilkelerine uygun bir kalkınma istiyoruz." *Cumhuriyet*, 03 October 1973.

¹³⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, 04 October 1973.

¹⁴⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 08 October 1973.

¹⁴¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 11 October 1973.

¹⁴² After the military invention on 12 March 1971, the WPT was closed down on 20 July 1971.

¹⁴³ Mustafa Timisi, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 21 October 2007.

party which was opposed to the NATO and Turkey's bilateral agreements on foreign policy, he accepted to the UPT's proposal for the alliance. The aims of Aybar were to be elected as deputy and to form a socialist party in the Assembly. In this regard, he assumed that the alliance would end when its members were elected deputies. The parties of the alliance would independently go on with their political activities in the assembly.¹⁴⁴

According to that alliance Aybar and his eight colleagues would stand as candidates of the UPT in the 1973 elections. The candidates would head the list for Adıyaman, Hatay, Kars, İstanbul and Yozgat and would be second rank in Adana, İzmir and Maraş. The name of the former members of the WPT who remained on the candidate list of the UPT were Ali Haydar Yıldız for Adıyaman, Ali Göçmen for Hatay, Ayata Beğensel for Kars, Mehmet Ali Aybar for İstanbul, İbrahim Çetkin for Manisa, Cenan Bıçakçı for Yozgat, Talat Kılıç for Adana, İsmail Derman for İzmir and Mustafa Çankaya for Maraş.¹⁴⁵

The election alliance between the UPT and Aybar was strongly criticized. The criticism focused on both Aybar's political career and the political stance of the UPT. The leftist intelligentsia regarded the UPT as a sectarian party and this alliance was accused of lessening the votes of the Republican People's party against the Justice Party.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, the political career of Aybar was criticized in the UPT. Cemal Özbey, who was one of the founders of party, accused the UPT of deviating from Kemalism and moving to the radical left. That is why Özbey and some of the party members resigned from the party. Despite the existence of

¹⁴⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 21 September 1973.

¹⁴⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 4 September 1973.

¹⁴⁶ Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966–1980*, p. 242.

opposition to the alliance between Aybar, it should be noted that the party members of the UPT mainly approved of the alliance.¹⁴⁷

Regardless of the crucial changes of the UPT's political and ideological comprehension, and its alliance with Aybar, the results of the election were a great disappointment for the party. It gained 1.1 % votes and only one seat. The deputy of the party was Mustafa Timisi, who was elected from Sivas.

Table 2. 14 October 1973 Election Results for the Unity Party of Turkey (%)

PROVINCE	THE UPT'S VOTE (%)	PROVINCE	THE UPT'S VOTE (%)	PROVINCE	THE UPT'S VOTE (%)
Adana	1.2	Erzincan	2.9	Kütahya	1.4
Adıyaman	0.7	Erzurum	1.6	Malatya	1.8
Amasya	5.1	Eskişehir	1.6	Manisa	0.6
Ankara	1.7	Gaziantep	0.8	Maraş	1.8
Antalya	1.1	Hatay	1.8	Muş	0.2
Artvin	1.2	Isparta	0.7	Ordu	0.9
Aydın	0.7	İçel	3.4	Samsun	1.3
Balıkesir	0.9	İstanbul	1.5	Sivas	10.8
Bingöl	0.3	İzmir	0.6	Tokat	7.0
Çanakkale	0.8	Kars	1.0	Tunceli	0.6
Çorum	2.7	Kayseri	0.9	Yozgat	1.3
Elazığ	0.9	Kocaeli	0.8	TOTAL	1.1
Source: 14 Ekim 1973 Milletvekili Seçim Sonuçları, (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974) pp. 6 -7					

¹⁴⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 8 September 1973.

The election results showed that the Alevis did not support the UPT in the 1973 elections. The UPT's votes from the provinces where it had been successful in the 1969 elections had considerably decreased. The votes of the UPT decreased in Amasya from 23.6% to 5.1 %, in Çorum from 16.9% to 2.7%, in Erzincan from 13.1% to 2.9%, in Malatya from 11.7% to 1.8%, in Maraş from 6.2% to 1.8% and in Tokat from 17.7% to 7.0%. It seems that as a result of the resignation of the Ulusoy family from the party and the UPT's move to the left under the leadership of Timisi, the party lost the ability to represent the traditional Alevi community. Especially the UPT's loss of votes in the provinces where the members of Ulusoy family had been elected in 1969 was dramatic. Although the party moved to the left, the Kurdish Alevis, who tended to left politics more than their Turkish counterparts, did not support to the UPT either. The UPT's votes in Tunceli and Bingöl were below 1% of the total votes of these provinces.

The UPT was moving to the left in parallel with the Alevi community; however, the traditional Alevi elites were not happy with this move, because that process undercut the authority of the Alevi *dedes*. Kelime Ata asserts that the UPT was in a dilemma between the traditional Alevi elites and leftist Alevis and they preferred leftist Alevis to the traditional Alevi elites and *dedes*. On the other hand, the political conjecture of the period did not allow the UPT to benefit from the move to the left. The Republican People's Party also moved to the left under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit and the social democrat (or democratic left) voters came together under the name of the RPP. Moreover, the socialist Alevis regarded the UPT as a reformist and sectarian party and that participated in radical socialist movements on a

large scale. Therefore the UPT's move to the left did not achieve its purpose; on the contrary, they lost the support of the traditional Alevi elites.¹⁴⁸

Timisi evaluated the UPT's loss of votes on the basis of the political conjuncture which was shaped by the military intervention of 12 March. He asserted that the military ultimatum and the political atmosphere of the 1970s had produced the threat of fascism. In this regard, the democratic left powers came together under the name of Ecevit and the RPP against an actual fascism threat, because they regarded the RPP as the only democratic power able to resist fascism. In this context, Timisi felt that the UPT's loss of votes did not stem from the party's move to the left, but from the political conjuncture of the 1970s.¹⁴⁹

Consistent with that manner, Timisi pointed out that the UPT's democratic left character would not change and that the party would insist on its leftist discourse. Timisi only accepted that the coalition with Aybar had been a mistake which had contributed to their loss of votes. Under this condition the party's ordinary congress was materialized and Timisi was re-elected as leader of the party again.¹⁵⁰

Opening up the Party Organizations to the Socialist Militants

The party leaders assessed that the loss of votes had emerged out of the young Alevis' participation in the radical socialist movement. That is why they considered that the party should not only move to the left ideologically, but also move to the left practically. In this regard, the UPT opened its arms to the radical left political groups. Some of the socialist groups began to organize in the local branches

¹⁴⁸ Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966–1980*, p. 259.

¹⁴⁹ Mustafa Timisi, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 21 October 2007.

¹⁵⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 25 December 1973.

of the UPT. Indeed, the aim of the UPT leaders was to benefit from the dynamism of the young socialist activism. The party leaders aimed to transform the activism of the young militants into votes. On the other hand, the illegal socialist movements aimed to become legitimized through the legality of the UPT.

Cemal Demir who was one of the members of the UPT's youth organization in Istanbul cites that the young militants of the leftist organizations preferred to organize under the name of the UPT as a way to legitimize their political position. The party condoned the left militants' existence because it required popular support. Demir, who had been a supporter of the RPP in Sivas, evaluates his membership in the UPT within the context of getting in touch with the leftist organization.¹⁵¹

On the other hand, Timisi asserted that they had opened the party organization to the socialist militants because the party leaders aimed to protect them from the very real threat of fascism. Timisi regarded the legality of the UPT as a shield for radical activists against the attack of fascist powers. He emphasized that to safeguard more leftist politics was one of the basic characteristics of their democratic left comprehension because a democratic front against the actual threat of fascism could be formed in that manner. For this reason the UPT had opened its arms to the radical socialist militant.¹⁵²

In this context, one particular political movement, Dogu Perincek's Revolutionary Party of Workers and Farmers of Turkey (*Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi*), gained power in the UPT's local party organizations. Gün Zileli, who was one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Party of Workers and Farmers of Turkey, said that after their movement had gathered strength in the UPT's local

¹⁵¹ Cemal Demir, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 16 February 2008.

¹⁵² Mustafa Timisi, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 21 October 2007.

organizations, they demanded that Timisi turn over the UPT's management to them. When their demand was rejected, they left the UPT.¹⁵³ Thus the party's attempt to play along with the radical left movements failed with the departure the members of the Revolutionary Party of Worker and Farmer of Turkey.

The Unity Party of Turkey in the 1977 Elections

The 1973 elections showed that the political efficiency of the UPT was weak. The party members believed that the UPT should have established a coalition with the RPP for the 1977 elections. The coalition with the RPP was the only way to operate efficiently and to contribute to the democratic policy-making process. In this regard, the efforts of the alliance between the RPP and the UPT started for the 1977 elections.

Timisi noted that as a consequence of the negotiations, the UPT came to terms with the RPP. According to that alliance, the UPT was not to participate in the 1977 elections and some candidates of the UPT were to be nominated candidates from the list of the RPP. After the parts of the alliance had been elected deputies, the deputies of the UPT were to support the RPP unconditionally if Ecevit established a government. Moreover, after the election the UPT and the RPP were to be allied under the name of the RPP.¹⁵⁴

In the light of these principles, the negotiation was executed by Mustafa Timisi and Orhan Eyuboğlu, who was the general secretariat of the RPP; however that election alliance did not materialize. Timisi claimed that the alliance was not established because the leaders of the RPP suggested that the UPT would be removed

¹⁵³ Gün Zileli, *Havariler* (Istanbul: İletisim Yayınları, 2003), pp.259 – 260.

¹⁵⁴ Mustafa Timisi, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 21 October 2007.

and participated in the RPP before the elections. Timisi noted that the acceptance of this proposal was impossible for the UPT because the election process was underway and rather the party would not have been able to hold a congress under the conditions of elections. In this regard Timisi assessed the negotiation between the RPP and UPT as a distraction tactic of the RPP. He stated that due to these negotiations the UPT was not able to prepare for the 1977 elections.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand, Nurettin Karsu, who was a deputy from the RPP, accused the leaders of the UPT of political careerism. He claimed that the alliance between the RPP had become stuck on the issue of the number of UPT candidates from the list of the RPP.¹⁵⁶ The failure of the alliance attempt with the RPP raised a disturbance in the UPT, which caused a collective resignation from the party. As a consequence of these resignations, the party was able to participate in the 1977 elections in only 20 provinces.

The party's political stance for the 1977 elections was in parallel with its ideological stance for the 1973 elections. This parallelism can be followed through the party's 1977 elections manifesto, which was based on the 12 principles of the party as discussed above in.

In the election manifesto, it was declared that unless a revolutionist and patriotic party came to power, the order would not change in favor of the people. In light of that analysis, the UPT was described as:

The UPT is the revolutionist and patriotic organization of the people who seek to come to power through democratic ways. The UPT's government,

¹⁵⁵ Mustafa Timisi, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 21 October 2007.

¹⁵⁶ This speech is derived from, Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966–1980*, p. 276.

or at least, its coalition partnership, will transform the characteristic of the state and its running will proceed in favor of the people.¹⁵⁷

The UPT's economic development program was based on the importance of heavy industry. In the election manifesto, it was stated that development did not mean economic growth. Economic development was regarded as the improvement of productive forces which would be materialized with the establishment of heavy industry in order to produce the means of production and machines.¹⁵⁸ Under the slogan of the "end to the capitulation order" (*kapitülasyon düzenine son*), the UPT supported the withdrawal of Turkey from the Common Market. Moreover, foreign capital was considered a tool of economic dependence on imperialism. In this regard, the UPT felt the need for the nationalization of all the economic sectors in which the foreign capital was active.¹⁵⁹

The election manifesto of the UPT dealt with land reform as well. According to the manifesto, both land reform and agricultural reform were to be undertaken to abolish the feudal remnants of the land regime. In this context, landless peasants were to be made landowners with land reform and their land was to become fertile through agricultural reform. Both of these reforms could be effectively performed on the basis of agricultural cooperatives.¹⁶⁰

The rights of workers had a place in the election manifesto of the UPT. The party assured that it would shorten the work period to five days and 40 hours per week. Wages would be increased parallel to inflation. The UPT guaranteed all the

¹⁵⁷ "TBP halkın, demokratik yollardan iktidara gelmeye çalışan yurtsever devrimci örgütüdür. TBP'nin iktidara gelmesi, en azından iktidara ortak olması devletin niteliğinin değişmesi ve devlet çarkının halktan yana işlemesini sağlayacaktır." Türkiye Birlik Partisi 1977 Seçim Bildirgesi (Ankara: Ağaç-İş Matbaası, 1977), p.25.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. , p.27.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. , pp.40–42.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 50 – 51.

employees' right to strike and collective bargaining agreements; however, lock-out was not regarded as an economic right. More importantly, the UPT assured the active participation of all employees in the economic policy-making process. In this regard, the workers would participate in the management of the public sector and would take an interest from the employers' gain from the private sector.¹⁶¹

On foreign policy, the UPT believed that Turkey should resign from bilateral agreements and international organizations like NATO and CENTO, which damaged the independence of the country. Turkey should apply a foreign policy in favor of non-aligned countries and it should support neither NATO nor the Warsaw Pact.¹⁶² The other issues which the UPT's election manifesto dealt with were free and compulsory education for elementary and secondary schools, the re-establishment of village institutes, an amnesty law for all convicts and an end to the squatters' destruction and execution of public housing projects.

In the radio speeches for the election campaign, Timisi and the other leaders of the party especially stressed the possibility of coalition governments. Timisi stated that no party would be able to establish a government and Turkey would be governed by a coalition government. That is how the UPT might have become a partner of a coalition with 10-15 deputies.¹⁶³ In this regard, in the radio speeches, Mustafa Timisi and other representatives of the UPT asked for the votes of their electorate in order to remain in the Assembly and to have a voice in the policy-making process. Indeed the Nationalist Action Party's efficiency in the Nationalist Front governments with only three deputies inspired the UPT regarding the importance of representation in the Assembly. However, the results of the 1977

¹⁶¹ Ibid. , pp.57–58.

¹⁶² Ibid. , pp. 69 – 70.

¹⁶³ *Türkiye Birlik Partisi: 1977 Genel Seçimi Radyo Konuşmaları* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1977), p. 13.

elections were a definite frustration for the UPT. It gained only 0.4 % of the total votes and no seats in the assembly.

Table 3. 5 June 1977 Election Results for the Unity Party of Turkey (%)

PROVINCE	THE UPT'S VOTES	PROVINCE	THE UPT'S VOTES	PROVINCE	THE UPT'S VOTES
Adana	0.6	Erzincan	0.3	Samsun	0.4
Amasya	0.7	Hatay	0.4	Sivas	3.6
Ankara	0.2	İçel	1.3	Tekirdağ	0.3
Antalya	0.4	İstanbul	1.4	Tokat	1.0
Aydın	0.3	İzmir	0.3	Tunceli	0.7
Çanakkale	0.3	Kayseri	0.3	Yozgat	0.6
Çorum	0.8	Kocaeli	0.3	TOTAL	0.4

Source: 5 Haziran 1977 Milletvekili Genel ve Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üyeleri Üçtebir Yenileme Seçimi Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1977)

The election results were a continuation of the general tendency which had occurred in the 1973 elections. First, the political condition of Turkey highlighted the RPP as a democratic front against the very real threat of fascism, more concretely against the possibility of a new Nationalist Front government. That is why leftist votes came together under the RPP and the highly popular “*Karaoğlan*” (Black boy, that was the epithet of Bülent Ecevit) figure. Leftist Alevis, which the UPT addressed, did not support the UPT. They supported the RPP for the reasons mentioned above or participated in radical socialist movements. On the other hand, the UPT’s move to the left broke its relations with the traditional Alevi elites like the *Çelebis* and the *dedes*. Therefore, the UPT’s loss of power continued with the 1977 elections.

After the 1977 elections, the supporters of the UPT felt that the party should be closed down and the party members should join the RPP. In those conditions Dursun Bila, who was the general secretariat of the party, believed the party should be closed. He declared that the UPT had abandoned its democratic mission and it should not have sought adventure. He added that to act against the social process and political preferences of the people was damaging both the UPT and the democratic struggle.¹⁶⁴

Timisi, on the other hand, strongly opposed joining the RPP. He based his opposition on Ecevit's manner toward the attempt to forge an alliance between the RPP and UPT before the 1977 elections. He stated that the political stance of Ecevit had created an obstacle for the formation of a democratic power and the UPT should have run on its political activities with the aim of establishing a democratic front.¹⁶⁵

The sixth congress of the party put an end to the debates about the political existence of the party. In that congress, Timisi was re-elected as leader of the party and it was declared that regardless of the political failure, the ideological stance of the party was accurate and it would carry on its political activities. Moreover, it was agreed that the statute of the party would be revised.¹⁶⁶

The Alevi Massacres

The 1977 elections clearly showed that the political efficiency of the UPT continued to decline; however, the Alevi massacres in Malatya, Sivas, Çorum and

¹⁶⁴ *Vatan*, 30 October 1977.

¹⁶⁵ Mustafa Timisi, interview by the author, tape recording, Ankara, Turkey, 21 October 2007

¹⁶⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 27 December 1977.

Maraş and the RPP's passive manner toward them provided an opportunity to the UPT to bring up the Alevi issue and its political approach.

Although the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) had increased its votes from 3.38 % to 6.42 %, in the 1977 elections, its leadership became aware that they would not be able to take power by elections. Therefore, the NAP planned to enforce a civil war strategy which aimed at coming to power by means of a right wing military coup. With this aim, the NAP used political violence against the leftist forces in order to increase political tension. To mobilize the Sunni Muslims against the Alevis and leftist forces was the main characteristic of the NAP's new civil war strategy.¹⁶⁷ The socio-political background of that strategy will be examined in detail in the chapter about the affiliation between the socialist left and the Alevis. In this chapter, only the course of the events in Sivas, Malatya and Maraş will be conveyed.

The opening of this strategy was a large-scale fascist mass mobilization 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 parcel bomb on 17 April 1978. Ten thousand people attended his funeral and destroyed the offices of the RPP, TÖB-DER and local leftist newspapers. After that, a major attack started against the Alevi districts of the city. The clashes continued until 20 April. In the end, eight people died, 100 were wounded. Nine hundred and sixty workplaces and houses were ruined.¹⁶⁸

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

¹⁶⁷ Ömer Laçiner, "Malatya Olayı-Türkiye'de Faşist Hareketin Yapısı ve Gelişimi", *Birikim*, no: 39 (May 1978) p. 15-16

¹⁶⁸ Burak Gürel, *Political Mobilization in Turkey in the 1970s: The Case of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents*. M.A Thesis, Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkey History, 2003. pp. 100-101

rightist militants attacked him and the events escalated. Two women who interfered in the fight were killed. Rumors, such as "the communist Alevi have bombed Alibaba Mosque" spread throughout the city. After that, a major attack started in Sivas targeting the municipal building (because the mayor was a RPP member), and the stores owned by Alevi. Rightist militants attacked Alevi districts such as Alibaba, Aydoğın and Çiçekli, and the people living in these districts resisted the attacks. At the end of the day, five people had been killed, and 50 wounded. The following day, people who gathered at the mosques for the funerals of the rightist militants started to march, shouting "Communists and *Kızılbaş* [Alevi] 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 the end, nine people were killed and about 100 wounded.¹⁶⁹

The most tragic massacre occurred in Maraş on 22-25 December 1978. On 19 December 1978 Çiçek Cinema, in which people had settled in to watch Cuneyt Arkin's film "When will the Sun Rise" (*Güneş Ne Zaman Doğacak*), was bombed. The following day Akın Coffee House was bombed by *ülküçü* (nationalist) militants. On 21 December, two leftist teachers were killed on their way home from work. On 22 December, the funerals of the teachers were prevented by people within the mosque when nearly 10000 people attacked the leftist who attended the funeral. Then the crowd set fire to the buildings of political organizations like the RPP, Turkey Worker and Peasant Party, the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions, the Textile Union, the Union of Turkey Teachers-Association and the Directorate of Healthcare Duties (*Sağlık İşleri Müdürlüğü*). They also burned and looted shops owned by Alevi and leftists. On 23 December, rightist militants attacked Alevi

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. , pp. 101-102.

districts and 30 people were dead by the end of day. On 24 and 25 December, events became more tragic when the attacks of the rightist militants on the Alevi districts and villages escalated. When the Alevis sought revenge, the events were transformed into a serious civil war. By Tuesday 26 December the situation in the province was brought under control with the declaration of martial law. According to official documents the toll of those three days were 111 deaths and over 1000 wounded.¹⁷⁰

When those events materialized, the RPP government was in power and the government was unable to obstruct the run of events. Ecevit's passive manner toward the massacres disappointed the Alevis, because they had been attacked in Maraş for supporting the RPP. In his master thesis about the Maraş Incidents, Burak Gürel writes that "the attackers accused the Alevis of supporting the RPP and to be a supporter of *Karaoğlan* meant death in Maraş."¹⁷¹

Timisi accused Ecevit of exploiting the Alevis for his own political interests. He declared that the Maraş incident had materialized when Ecevit was prime minister and Ecevit had remained an onlooker to the massacre of the Alevis who had supported him. On the other hand, Ecevit believed that there was a conspiracy against the RPP, and the UPT was a tool to soften up the RPP on the basis of sectarianism.¹⁷²

It was clear that the Alevi massacres raised a disturbance in the RPP; the 23 Alevi deputies of the RPP were disturbed by the RPP's passive manner toward the events. Under these conditions, Tunceli deputy of the RPP, Ali Haydar Veziroğlu,¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. , pp.106 – 127.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. , pp. 120–121.

¹⁷² Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966–1980*, p. 299.

¹⁷³ Ali Haydar Veziroğlu was a prominent figure in the Alevi politics. He was elected as the RPP's Tunceli deputy in the 1977 elections. Then he transferred to the UPT. He was a contractor in the 1980s and 1990s who undertook the projects for the NATO. More importantly, he was the founder of the Peace Party (1996–1999), which was regarded as an Alevi party.

resigned from the party and transferred to the UPT. However, the transfer was limited to Veziroğlu and none of the RPP's Alevi deputies resigned from the party. Ata asserts that although the Alevi deputies of the RPP criticized the leaders of the RPP, they were aware of the UPT's political inefficiency and did not transfer to the UPT.¹⁷⁴

It can be claimed that because the Alevi massacres occurred when the RPP was in power, that party relatively lost the support of the Alevi community. An Alevi party member of the RPP in Sivas in the 1970s declared that the RPP had not reacted to the attacks on the Alevis in Sivas valiantly and that the Alevis had withdrawn their support for Ecevit as a consequence of that passive manner.¹⁷⁵ Although the Alevis' relative secession from the RPP was not a wide spread tendency, it reflected on the 1979 senate elections. The votes of the UPT, especially in the big cities, increased in comparison with the 1977 elections; whereas, the votes of the RPP decreased.

Table 4. 14 October 1979 Senate Election Results for the Unity Party of Turkey (%)

PROVINCE	THE UTP'S VOTES	PROVINCE	THE UTP'S VOTES	PROVINCE	THE UTP'S VOTES
Amasya	1.6	Erzincan	0.6	Manisa	0.5
Antalya	0.6	Hatay	0.4	Muş	0.4
Artvin	0.7	Isparta	0.5	Siirt	0.3
Balıkesir	0.5	İstanbul	2.0	Tokat	8.1
Burdur	0.6	Kars	1.0	Yozgat	0.5
Çanakkale	0.5	Kütahya	0.7	TOTAL	1.1

Source: 14 Ekim 1979 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üyeleri Üçte Bir Yenileme ve Milletvekili Ara Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Matbaası, 1980)

¹⁷⁴ Ata, Ata, *Alevilerin İlk Siyasal Denemesi: (Türkiye) Birlik Partisi 1966–1980*, p. 300

¹⁷⁵ This speech is derived from, Massicard, *Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya Alevi Hareketinin Siyasallaşması*, p. 201.

In the senate elections the votes of the UPT increased from 0.4 % to 1.1 %. However, elections were not held in Maraş, Sivas and Malatya, where the attacks on the Alevi community had occurred. If we accept that the reaction to the RPP's passive manner toward the Alevi massacres directed the votes to the UPT to a certain extent, the UPT might have gained more votes from the 1979 senate elections if the elections had been held in those provinces.

The Beginning of the End

After the 1977 elections, the UPT moved further to the left in order to distinguish itself from Ecevit's democratic left comprehension. The Alevi massacres and the RPP's passive manner also contributed to this move. In that context, Timisi accused the RPP of having become a political organization of the capitalist system. Therefore he regarded the RPP as a rightist party. Timisi underlined that reformist social democracy could not solve the problems of the people. The only way to overcome the economic crisis was to leave the capitalist system. He stated that only a democratic socialist system would be able to solve the problems of Turkey precisely.¹⁷⁶ It is important that Timisi used the word of "socialism", instead of "*toplumculuk*". That usage reflected the party's move to the further left ideologically.

This move was followed by a change of the party statute in 1980 for the third time. In the former party statute, the party's aim had been established as to oppose and struggle against separatism, discrimination, extreme left and right political movements, communism, imperialism, fascism, Nazism and all kinds of

¹⁷⁶ Hulusi Konuk, *TBP'nin Kuruluşunun 12. Yılında Mustafa Timisi ile Yaptığı Sorulu-Cevaplı Konuşma: Türkiye Birlik Partisi 1966-1978* (İstanbul: Nurdoğan Matbaası, 1978), p. 9.

dictatorships. In the new party program, the opposition to the communism passage was detached and the party's characteristic was described as:

The Unity Party of Turkey which endeavor to the government of employee people's in legal procedures is a revolutionist and socialist (*toplumcu*) political organization opposed to the imperialism and fascism.¹⁷⁷

An analysis of the Turkish Republic held a large place in the new program of the party. That historical analysis claimed that the republic had been the result of the first anti-imperialist independence war of the twentieth century. However, the influence of the United States of America on Turkey had damaged the national independence under the reign of the Democrat Party. American imperialism, which had taken possession of Turkey, annoyed the revolutionists of Turkey. The 27 May military coup had been a perversion of the class struggle in order to prevent an anti-imperialist social explosion which was performed under the tutelage of the USA. In this regard, Articles 141, 142 and 163 of the penal code, which outlawed the socialist world view, were maintained. The illegal movements were the result of the some oppressive articles of the 1961 constitution and the penal code. Regardless of these characteristics of the 27 May event, it contributed to the expansion of the democratic struggle by courtesy of the 1961 constitution.¹⁷⁸

In that historical context, the program claimed that the main reason for the socio-political crisis in Turkey was imperialism. Fascism was related to imperialism and it was regarded as a tool of the imperialist powers to oppress the revolutionists' wish for full-independence. It was cited that the aim of the UPT was to end the

¹⁷⁷ "Türkiye Birlik Partisi emekçi halkımızın iktidarına yasal yoldan yürüyen, emperyalizme ve faşizme karşı devrimci, toplumcu bir siyasi örgüttür." Türkiye Birlik Partisi Program ve Tüzüğü (Istanbul: Zafer Matbaacılık, 1980), p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. , pp. 66 – 71.

domination of the monopolistic bourgeois and landlords within the context of democratic procedures.¹⁷⁹

After this analysis, the party's 12 principles and its concrete suggestions which had been part of 1977 election manifesto were repeated in the new party program. The party program of the UPT clearly showed that the party had moved further left than its political stance before the 1977 elections. The phrase of "opposition to communism" was removed from the statute. Moreover, the word "socialism" was frequently cited in a positive manner. The 27 May military coup was criticized with the influence of political climate of the Turkey in 1980.

Regardless of that crucial modification, the leaders of the UPT were unable to see the results of that program change because a military coup was materialized on 12 September 1980. All the political parties, including the UPT, were shut down. In this way, the political life of the UPT, which had started on 17 October 1966, ended on 12 September 1980.

To conclude, the urbanization process which opened up the isolated life of the Alevi community brought up the problem of the Alevis' integration into the modern state apparatus, both politically and socially. The 1961 constitution provided an opportunity for various cultural identities and social classes to organize politically. The Unity Party of Turkey was a result of that socio-political environment, which was shaped by both urbanization and the 1961 constitution. Moreover, the proportional representation system, which provided an opportunity for small parties to hold a place in the assembly and the sectarian organization of Sunni Islam in the early 1960s contributed to the formation of the Unity Party of Turkey.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. , pp. 71–74.

Under the leadership of Hasan Tahsin Berkman and Hüseyin Balan the party presented itself as a center party sensitive to the problems of the Alevi community. However, only the party's laicism policy differentiated the UPT from the other political parties. Another important feature was its relation to the traditional Alevi elites. Under the leadership of Berkman and Balan, the party established strict relations with influential Alevi elites such as the Ulusoy family, who were the *postnişin* of the Bektashi Order and spiritual leaders of the Bektashis, and the Doğan family, which was a prominent *dede* family in the region of Malatya.

The election of Timisi as leader of the UP in 1969 resulted in a radical ideological alteration for the party. Under the leadership of Timisi, it was transformed into a social democrat party. The traditional Alevi elites reacted to the party's ideological move to the left and the party ended its relations with them. The expulsion of the Ulusoy family symbolically indicated the rupture between the traditional Alevi elites and the UPT.

Indeed, the party's ideological position moved to the left parallel to the Alevi community's political leanings. The Alevi community, which mainly supported the RPP and the WPT politically in the 1960s, moved more to the left in the 1970s with the escalation of radical politics. The RPP maintained a more leftist attitude under the leadership of Ecevit and the political gap of the WPT was filled by radical left organizations which had disproportionate support among the Alevis than they did among the Sunnis. In this regard, moving to the left became a necessity for the UPT.

Regardless of the UPT's move to the left parallel to the Alevi community's political leanings, the election results showed that the Alevis did not support the UPT. They preferred to support either the RPP or radical socialist movements.

Paradoxically, when the party moved to the left parallel to the great majority of the Alevis' political tendencies, its votes decreased, because the traditional Alevi elites, who had been disparaged by the leftist Alevis, withdrew their support from the UPT. In that manner, in the 1990s when the debates about the formation of a new Alevi party through the Movement of Democratic Peace (*Demokratik Barış Hareketi*) arose, the managers of the traditional Alevi association, like *Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı*, and religious leaders of the *Sahkulu Sultan Lodge* and *Karacaahmet Lodge*, and, a new category, the Alevi researchers/writers strongly criticized the experience of the UPT as being a party which was based on religion.¹⁸⁰

The Alevis' move to the left was countered by the RPP and illegal socialist movements and the UPT was unable to gain the support of the Alevis in the 1970s. Why did the Alevis not support the UPT in spite of its all efforts? Why did they prefer to support the RPP or the socialist movements instead of the UPT? Timisi explained this occurrence with the political conjuncture of Turkey which had polarized the political arena. Although analysis of Timisi is tolerably acknowledged, the Alevis' support of the RPP and radical socialist organization in the 1970s should be analyzed from a wider theoretical perspective. In this regard, the next chapter will examine the relations between the RPP and the Alevis within the framework of their historical background and the concrete circumstances of the 1970s.

¹⁸⁰ For more detailed information about the debates on the formation of a new Alevi Party, see *Nefes*, year 2, no 18, (April 1995); *Nefes*, year 3, no 30, (April 1996); *Nefes*, year 3, no 36, (October 1996).

CHAPTER THREE

THE STORY OF A HISTORICAL LINK: THE ALEVIS AND THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY

Although the Unity Party of Turkey specifically addressed the Alevis, the election results showed that the Alevi community did not support it. It was clear that the Alevis supported the Republican People's Party (RPP) in the 1970s on a large scale. Therefore the relationship between the RPP and the Alevi community and especially their affiliation in the 1970s deserve to be analyzed. This chapter aims to examine the affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP within the framework of the secularist policies of the early republican era during the reign of the RPP and the populist discourse of Ecevit in the 1970s.

It can be asserted that Alevis welcomed the RPP from the establishment of the new republic. The origin of the positive relation between the RPP and Alevis stems from the secularist policies and reforms of the new republic under the leadership of this party in the early republican era. These policies, provided chances for the Alevis to feel more secure legally. The relative decline in the power of Sunni Islam during the early republican era is a factor that contributed to the relative improvement of the position of the Alevis. It can be suggested that an affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP was established in the early republican era and its consequences were clear in the 1970s.

This positive relation was reinforced by Bülent Ecevit's highly popular image as "*Karaođlan*" (Black boy) and his populist discourses in the 1970s which was the essence of the political stance of Ecevit. In this regard, a special emphasis will be put on Ecevit's populist discourse, and the affiliation between the Alevis and Ecevit's RPP will be attempted to analyze on the basis of it.

In this chapter, the relation between the Alevis and the RPP will be described in chronological order. The story starts with the National Struggle. The relation between the nationalist elite and the Bektashi order will be investigated. The early republican era follows on the basis of the secularist policies of the RPP. Then the Democratic Party practices will be assessed as a parenthesis for the affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP. In this regard, the Alevi community's relative respect for the DP in the early years of that party will be analyzed. Lastly, the emergence of the left of center and the rise of Ecevit will be evaluated in terms of their socio-political role in the politicization of the Alevi community. The populist discourse of Ecevit will constitute the core of the analysis as an opportunity for the Alevis to integrate into the modern state.

The Alevis during the National Struggle

It is a general belief that the affiliation between the Alevi community and the national elites can be dated back to the years of the National Struggle. According to this belief, the Alevis supported the National Struggle as a whole. In this regard, the period of the National Struggle can be a place to begin to analyze the relationship between the Alevis and the republican elites.

The relationship between Alevi and national elites during the National Struggle can be scrutinized within the framework of the Bektashi Order's support of the National Struggle. Although Bektashism and Alevism can not be equated, Bektashi Order's attitudes toward the National Struggle render an opinion about the affiliation between the Alevi community and M. Kemal Atatürk. Moreover, due to the catastrophic war conditions, the relation between the Alevi and the national elites in this period can be scrutinized within the framework an institution like the Bektashi Order.

The Bektashi Order, in 1551, split into two branches, the *Dedegan* and the *Babagan*. As a result of this separation, two leaders arose in Bektashi Order. Each of these branches accepted Hacı Bektaş Veli as its patron saint, but the difference was based on accepting Hacı Bektaş Veli as celibate. The Dedegan branch claims that Hacı Bektaş was married and the spiritual leaders of their movements are descendants of Hacı Bektaş. The authority of *Çelebi*, who is *postnişin*¹⁸¹ of the Dedegan branch, comes from their claim of kinship with Hacı Bektaş Veli. On the other hand, the Babagan branch, asserts that Hacı Bektaş was celibate and had no children. Therefore, they do not respect the authority of *Çelebi*. The spiritual leader of the Babagan branch is called *Dedebaba*.¹⁸² This division continued during the era of the National Struggle, so there were two branches of the Bektashi Order in those years.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ *Postnişin* is the man who is the religious leader of an order.

¹⁸² Esat Korkmaz, *Alevilik – Bektaşilik Terimleri Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2003), p. 79.

¹⁸³ After the abolition of the Bektashi Order, Nakshi or Khalwati sheiks were appointed as legal heads of Bektashi Order by the Ottoman authorities. Therefore, in the years of the National Struggle, there were three branches in Bektashi Order, the Babagan branch of the order, the Dedegan branch of the order and the Nakshi order. Although Sheik Hadji Hasan was described officially as Nakshi sheik of the order during the national war, from 1919 to 1922, there was no de facto Nakshi sheik of the order.

Both of these branches gave support to the National Struggle and the elites of the Bektashi Order participated into nearly all nationalist activities. Salih Niyazi Baba, who was the head of Babagan branch of the order, actively supported the National Struggle. Despite this, because the *Çelebis* had more considerable influence on the Alevi community in Anatolia, the high ranking officials of Ankara recognized *Çelebi* as the head of Bektashis and tried to get in contact with him rather than with Salih Niyazi Baba.¹⁸⁴

Cemalettin Çelebi, who was the *postnişin* of the *Dedegan* branch of the Bektashi Order, supported the National Struggle actively since Amasya circular on 21/22 June 1919. Çelebi was one of the signers of the circular.¹⁸⁵ In the first Turkish National Assembly there were three members to represent the Bektashis and the Alevis. These were Cemalettin Çelebi for Kırşehir, Hüseyin Mazlum (Bababalım) for Denizli and Ahmed Nüzhet for Ergani. There were also Alevi members in the Assembly from Dersim (Diyap Ağa, Hasan Hayri, Mustafa Ağa, Mustafa Zeki), Erzincan (Girlevikli Hüseyin Aksu) and Kars (Pirzade Fahrettin), who were full of respect for Cemalettin Çelebi as their spiritual leader. As a result of his religious authority, Cemalettin Çelebi was elected to the second vice presidency of the Turkish National Assembly, but he was unable to attend the meetings because of illness and he died in 1922.¹⁸⁶

Veliyeddin Çelebi, who was the brother of Cemalettin Çelebi and last official *postnisin* of the Bektashi Order, supported the National Struggle more actively than his brother. He published a proclamation in *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* on 5 May 1922. In that declaration he stated that the Bektashis could not tolerate the

¹⁸⁴ Hülya Küçük, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Bektaşiler* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2003), pp. 106–107.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁶ Cemal Şener, *Atatürk ve Aleviler* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1991), pp.72–73.

Greek invasion; therefore they would continue to support Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues in order to accomplish the National Pact. More interestingly in that declaration, Veliyettin Çelebi associated M. Kemal with Hacı Bektaş on the basis of the purpose of enlightening Anatolia.¹⁸⁷ Veliyettin Çelebi's support of Mustafa Kemal continued after the military phase of the National Struggle had ended. On 25 April 1923, he published a proclamation in *Yeniğün* in what he addressed all Alevi calling them to vote for the candidates of M. Kemal. The Alevi associated with Çelebi appeared to have followed Çelebi's appeals.¹⁸⁸

Despite the Bektashi Order's active support of the National Struggle, it can not be claimed that all Alevi supported the National Struggle. As pointed out above, Bektashism and Alevism can not be equated. Therefore, the Bektashi Order did not have absolute influence on the Alevi community. Moreover, the Bektashi Order had little influence in East Anatolia.¹⁸⁹ As Martin Van Bruinessen writes, especially in the Dersim region, the "Kemalist movement appeared as a movement of Sunni-Turk Muslims and it did not generate much enthusiasm."¹⁹⁰ Some Alevi tribes refused to co-operate with the nationalist movement in the Dersim region. The Koçgiri tribes in the Sivas and Dersim regions claimed their autonomy from Ankara on the grounds of their Kurdishness; however, their revolt remained a local affair and was suppressed. Nuri Dersimi, who was one of the organizers of the Kurdish Te'ali Association, claims that in the Sivas and Dersim regions not only Kurmanci and Zaza-speaking Alevi, but also Turkish Alevi participated in the opposition to the Ankara

¹⁸⁷ Küçük, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Bektaşiler*, p. 152.

¹⁸⁸ In his monographic study about the Bektashi Order's manner toward the National Struggle, Hülya Küçük asserts that the certitude of that proclamation is debatable, because the newspaper of *Yeniğün* does not involve in it on 25 April 1923.

¹⁸⁹ Surayia Faroqhi, *Anadolu'da Bektaşilik* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2003), p. 192.

¹⁹⁰ Martin Van Bruinessen, " 'Aslını İnkâr Eden Haramzadedir': The Debate on the Ethnic Identity of the Kurdish Alevi" in *Sycretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, eds. Kehl-Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele, A. Otter-Beujean (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 12 – 13.

government.¹⁹¹ Actually the Capanođlu revolt against the national movement in 1920 confirms this claim of Dersimi. Some Alevi tribes in the Yıldızeli and Zile regions participated in this uprising. Furthermore, some Alevi elites who were against to the National Struggle, like Rıza Tevfik and Sakallı Rıfkı, established anti-nationalist organizations or became members of them, like *Tarikat-ı Salahiyye*.¹⁹² Therefore, it can be asserted that the Alevi community did not adopt a definite position on the National Struggle despite the Alevi elites' clear support of the Ankara government.

Although the Alevi community did not support the National Struggle completely, the majority of the Alevis, especially the Dedegan branch of the Bektaşî order, sustained it. In this regard, Alevi researchers focus on the Alevi community's voluntary participation in the National Struggle and claim that the Alevis were constant allies of the nationalists from the beginning of the National Struggle. According to them, the War of Independence was the result of Alevi effort rather than Sunni.¹⁹³

It seems that their views about the role of Alevis in the National Struggle derive from the political authorities' historical attitude toward the Alevis. Because the Alevis had been ignored by the political authorities of the Ottoman dynasty, M. Kemal's interests in the Alevi community during the National Struggle were of great importance for the Alevis.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, the national elites' manner toward the Alevis as a political addressee was evaluated as if they principally emphasized Aleviness.

¹⁹¹ Nuri Dersimi, *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim* (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1997), pp. 64 – 65.

¹⁹² Küçük, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Bektaşiler*, pp. 170 - 175

¹⁹³ For the most crystallized examples of this claims, see Cemal Şener, *Atatürk ve Aleviler* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1991); Baki Öz, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Alevi-Bektaşiler* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Gazetesi Yayınları, 1997)

¹⁹⁴ Murat Okan, *Türkiye'de Alevilik* (Ankara: Imge Kitabevi, 2004), p. 89.

Indeed, the Alevis no more displayed special attitudes than the Sunnis during the National Struggle. The affiliation between the Alevis and the nationalist movement was not very different from the relationship between the Sunnis and the nationalist movement. The political use of religion was a prominent strategy of the national elites in order to generate social and political mobilization against a common enemy. According to M. Kemal, the Bektashi Order was only one of the dervish orders of the Anatolia which controlled many people and material resource. Consistent with that stance, he did not give special emphasis to the Alevis during the National Struggle. The vice presidents of the National Assembly were selected from among Sunni and Bektashi leaders.¹⁹⁵ He both visited the Alevi and Sunni elites and their holy places without any distinction. Both Alevi and Sunni religious elites gave support to the National Struggle.¹⁹⁶

The Bektashi Order was only one of the orders which gave support to the National Struggle. Consequently, there were no special association between Mustafa Kemal and Alevis different from Sunnis during National Struggle. In this regard, it can be asserted that the affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP started with the establishment of the new republic and the enforcement of secularist reforms which took aim at the daily projections of Orthodox Islam.

The Secularist Policies of the Republic:
An Alliance between the Alevis and the RPP

It is a general belief that the Alevis have favored the RPP since the new republic was formed. It can be asserted that the positive relations between the Alevis

¹⁹⁵ Küçük, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Bektaşiler*, p. 180.

¹⁹⁶ Ali Sarıkoyuncu, *Atatürk Din ve Din Adamları* (Ankara: Türk Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2002), pp. 121 – 167.

and the RPP stem from the secularist policies of the new republic which provided the means for the Alevis to feel more secure. “It was after the foundation of the republic, that the Alevis felt a grater sense of security and acquired equal legal rights with Sunnis as individual citizens of Turkey.”¹⁹⁷ When the Alevis compared their position in the Ottoman period with the republican one, they favored the republican governments as well as their secularizing actions.¹⁹⁸ Because these improvements were realized under the leadership of the RPP, the Alevis closely associated these developments with that party.

Kemalist secularism, the main aim of which was to create a rational and modern state, was the refusal of the ideology of political Islam.¹⁹⁹ At that point, Eric Jan Zürcher claims that Kemalist secularism had three dimensions.

The first was the secularization of the state, education and law: the attack on the traditional strongholds of the institutionalized Islam of the *ulema*. The second was the attack on religious symbols and their replacement by the symbols of European civilization. The third was the secularization of social life and the attack on popular Islam it entailed.²⁰⁰

In March 1924 the Caliphate was abolished, the article that stated that Islam was the religion of the state was dropped from the Constitution in 1928, the principle of secularism was accepted by the RPP in 1931 and it was introduced to the Constitution in 1937. The secularization of the state was followed by the secularization of education and law. On 3 March 1924 the Law on the Unification of Education was accepted and the educational system was completely secularized. In

¹⁹⁷ Fahriye Dinçer, *Formulation of Semahs in Relation to the Question of Alevi Identity in Turkey*, Ph. D. Dissertation, Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, Bogazici University, 2004, p. 67.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. , p. 66.

¹⁹⁹ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst&Company, 1998), p. 499.

²⁰⁰ Eric Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 194 – 195.

1926 the Swiss civil code and Italian penal code were adopted; thus family law was taken from the control of the *ulema*.²⁰¹

The second area of the secularization policy was the replacement of religious symbols with the components of European civilization. The fez was replaced with the hat in 1925. It was followed by the adaptation of the Western clock and calendar in 1926, of Western numerals in 1928, of the Latin alphabet and of Western measures in 1931. It can be claimed that all these reforms were aimed at religion symbolically.²⁰²

The third and most traumatic aspect of the secularization policy was the secularization of social life. In this regard, everyday Islam became the target. The new republic touched the vital elements of popular religion and daily Islam such as clothing, pilgrimages, soothsayers, holy sheiks and festivals. For this aim, Law No. 677 was passed by the Grand National Assembly, closing all lodges and *zaviyes* in 1925. All ceremonies and meetings of the order were banned; all tombs and shrines as well as other places of pilgrimage were closed. The use of religious titles as *şeyh*, *baba*, *mürüt*, *seyit*, *dede*, *çelebi* and *halife* was forbidden.²⁰³

Secularism in Turkey meant the suppression of religious beliefs in the public sphere. Although no religious group, including the Alevis, would be able to express its religious identity in the public sphere, it was apparent that the target of the secularist policy was Sunni Islam and the related religious orders and groups, because the social life had been penetrated by the Orthodox view of Islam. That is why the Alevis did not influence policies as the Sunni community influenced them. Thus the Alevis were relatively happy with the secularization policy, because it

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 195.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 197.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 200.

targeted orthodox-Sunnis, who were considered the “others” with respect to the Alevi.²⁰⁴

Establishing a secularized social life was one of the aims of the new republic and it coincided with the Alevi’ way of life. It does not mean that the Alevi were secular; it means that the daily life of the Alevi was not penetrated by popular Islam. The religion that the Kemalist reform targeted was based on Orthodox-Sunni tradition; on the other hand, Alevi tradition was not under the influence of orthodox Islam. For example, the replacement of Arabic *ezan* (call for prayer) with a Turkish one and the translation of the Koran into Turkish were some elements of the attempts to secularize daily life; whereas, the Alevi were performing their prayers in Turkish in that period. As a result of such coincidences, it can be asserted that the positive relation between the Alevi community and the RPP was nurtured by the content of the Alevi with the secularization policy of the early republic under the reign of the RPP.²⁰⁵

Although the Alevi welcomed the secular practices of the Kemalist reforms, they also influenced such policies negatively. Binnaz Toprak writes that, “the republican government came to the conclusion that the greatest threat to secular reforms came from the dervish brotherhood rather than the ulema.”²⁰⁶ In this respect, on 30 November 1925, Law no. 677 about closing all lodges and *zaviyes* was passed, and the tekke of Hacı Bektash was closed down. Furthermore, as a result of the militant version of secularism, the Alevi dedes were arrested and charged with illegal

²⁰⁴ Okan, *Türkiye’de Alevilik*, p. 92.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²⁰⁶ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), p. 47.

religious and superstitious activities.²⁰⁷ Regardless of these events, the leadership of the Alevi community maintained the reforms of the early republican period which introduced a gradual opening to the Alevi community. One of the members of *postnisi* family of the Dedegan branch of the Bektashi Order, Ali Naki Ulusoy (he was also the deputy of the UPT) says that his family supported the law on closing down the dervish lodges and tombs. He explains that the support of this law stemmed from the false people who settled down the orders. They had become places where thieves and illegal people took refuge. He goes on, stating that due to the existence of these illegal people, Atatürk had to close down of the all orders and lodges on a non-discriminatory basis. More importantly, Ulusoy underlines that his family supported this law because they were supporters of Atatürk's revolution.²⁰⁸

Except for the early republican government's secularism policy, there was a concordance between the Kemalist elites' nationalism comprehension and the Alevi culture as well. Nationalism became the ideological tool of modernism in the early republican period. In this respect, the aim of the Kemalists was the establishment of a strong nation state in the 1930s. Turkishness was redefined on the basis of unity in political entity, language, homeland, race and origin, historical kinship and ethical kinship without any reference to religion.²⁰⁹

Language politics played a vital role in constituting the Turkish national consciousness. Speaking Turkish became one of the most important criteria of being

²⁰⁷ Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, "Atatürk and Alevis: A Holy Alliance?" in *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview*, eds. Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), pp. 63 – 64.

²⁰⁸ "Cumhuriyetten Bugüne Hacı Bektaş Dergahı", interview with Ali Naki Ulusoy, *Nefes* (October 1994), pp. 25 – 26.

²⁰⁹ Afet İnan, *Medeni Bilgiler ve Atatürk'ün El Yazıları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1969), p. 22.

Türk.²¹⁰ The Alevi groups who were considered to be of Turkish descent became important targets of this appeal.²¹¹ The Turkish language was kept alive and was given importance by a considerable number of Alevi communities. It is especially significant to note that both the Turkish and Kurdish Alevis perform prayers in Turkish during the *cem* ceremony on a large scale. That is why the Alevis were given importance by the authorities due to their relation to the Turkish language. They were considered as the authentic representatives of Turkishness. However, instead of being a belief system or religion, Alevism was considered more as a cultural structure which was associated with Turkishness. In the state's appeal to the Alevis, Turkish ethnicity became significant factor in which religion was absorbed into the culture.²¹² That is why Massicard terms the Republic's manner toward the Alevism as equivocation.²¹³

Whatever disadvantages the republic might have brought for the Alevis, they welcomed the new regime. It can be asserted that the affiliation between the Alevi community and the RRP was established as a result of republican government's reforms on the basis of secularism. The relative decline in the power of Sunni Islam during the early republican era is considered to have been a factor that contributed to the relative improvement of the position of the Alevis. The republican government's secularist actions indirectly eliminated all the principal institutional obstacles to the Alevis' equality with the Sunni majority. These secularist policies

²¹⁰ Soner Çağaptay, "Otuzlarda Türk Milliyetçiliğinde İrk, Dil ve Etnisite", trans. Defne Orhun, in *Türkiye'de Modern Siyasi Düşünce cilt 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), pp. 260 – 261.

²¹¹ The attention of nationalist elites on the Alevis traces back to the period of the Committee of Union and Progress. Under Baha Said's leadership, Turkish Hearth (*Türk Ocağı*) conducted research on the Alevi groups in Anatolia. For some results of this research, see Baha Said, *Türkiye'de Alevi-Bektaşî, Ahi ve Nusayrî Zümreleri* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000).

²¹² Murat Küçük, "Mezhepten Millete: Aleviler ve Türk Milliyetçiliği", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce cilt 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), p. 903.

²¹³ Massicard, *Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya Alevi Hareketinin Siyasallaşması*, p. 45.

did not suggest a solution to the identity problems of the Alevis, but they offered the opportunities for the Alevis to feel more secure and to solve their issue of existence.²¹⁴ The relation between the early republican government and the Alevi community can be summarized with these evaluations of Bodrogi:

They welcomed the republic, considering the basic principles of laicism and nationalism as the best guarantors for putting an end to their religious discrimination. They were willing to accept the fact that they were still denied official recognition as a religious community, as long as the state generally banned religion from the public sphere and therefore also radically curtailed Sunni religious activities and institutions. The Alevis were given to the opportunity to advance on the social, economical and political level on condition that they did not make a public issue of their religious and social identity.²¹⁵

A Parenthesis for the Affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP:
The Alevis and the Democrat Party

The Alevi community was content with the secularist actions of the early republican government; however, in the 1950s, it seems that the Alevis appreciably supported the Democrat Party (DP) in 1950 and 1954 elections against the RPP.²¹⁶ The difficulties that the Alevis (and Sunnis as well) had experienced under the single party government during the war period may explain why some of them supported to the DP. The support of the Alevis for the DP may have stemmed from the oppressive character of the party-state regime, the harsh conditions of the war period and the pressure of the war economy which became associated with the İnönü's RPP.

²¹⁴ Dinçer, *Formulation of Semahs in Relation to the Question of Alevi Identity in Turkey*, p.100.

²¹⁵ Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, "Introduction" in *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, p. vii.

²¹⁶ Murat Küçük, "Mezhepten Millete: Aleviler ve Türk Milliyetçiliği", p. 905.

Indeed, it seems that, because Sheri government had been abolished by Atatürk, the respect of the Alevis for him was greater than that for the RPP.²¹⁷ They regarded him as the man who rescued Anatolia from foreign invasion and who liberated them from the domination of theocratic governments.²¹⁸ Therefore, after the death of Atatürk, the significance of the RPP decreased in the estimation of the most Alevis. In addition, after the catastrophic years of the war policies under the reign of İnönü's RPP, the DP appeared as a sign for the Alevis as well. In this context, it can be asserted that the Alevis regarded the RPP as the oppressive party of İnönü rather than as Atatürk's party, which liberated them from the domination of theocratic governments.

Moreover the DP's economic policies and investments which were concentrated on road network and the building industries and agro-industries attracted the Alevis. Particularly the new road network opened up the country and villages came into contact with the outside of the world for the first time. In 1950 the length of hard surfaced roads in Turkey was 1600 kilometers, and in the next 10 years it reached 5400 kilometers.²¹⁹ It can be asserted that these developments were more significant for the Alevis who had lived in isolated areas for long years. The policies of the DP contributed to the opening up of the isolated Alevi villages and laid the groundwork for their more active integration into daily life.²²⁰

The positive relation between the Alevis and the DP in the early years of the DP government began to dissolve as a consequence of the DP's retreat from the

²¹⁷ "Cumhuriyetten Bugüne Hacı Bektaş Dergahı", interview with Ali Naki Ulusoy, *Nefes*, October 1994, pp. 25 – 26.

²¹⁸ Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey*, p. 21.

²¹⁹ See İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, "Türkiye'de Demiryolu öncelikli Ulaşım Politikasından Karayolları öncelikli Ulaşım Politikasına Geçiş", in *Cumhuriyetin Harcı, Cilt 3: Modernitenin Altyapısı Oluşurken*. (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), pp. 369-432.

²²⁰ Şükrü Cangir, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 22.08.2007.

secular policies of the single party era.²²¹ It does not mean that the DP pursued a policy of encouraging religious obstructionism, but there are some indicators that DP politicians promised a greater respect for religious freedom to their electorates and used religion for political mobilization. After the DP came to power, the Democrats softened the restrictions on the expression of religious feelings and made concession to the feelings of the Sunni-Muslim population.

The prohibition of the call to prayer in Arabic was lifted. The ban on religious radio programs was removed and the DP government permitted the broadcasting of Koran readings over the state radio. The education of religion was expanded and the number of *imam-hatip* schools multiplied under the reign of the DP. Moreover, the budget of the Directorate of Religious Affairs was expanded.²²² More importantly, the daily appearance of popular Islam increased under the reign of the DP. Toprak states that “the country witnessed an unprecedented rise in the publication of religious books and pamphlets, in the number of people making the pilgrimage to Mecca, in the number of visits to local shrines and in the number of people publicly wearing religious garbs ... Approximately 1500 new mosque a year were built during the ten years of DP’s stay in Turkey.”²²³ Moreover, the total number of religious organizations increased from 95 to 5104 in the 1950s.²²⁴ The daily projections of Sunni Islam became more apparent under the reign of the DP

²²¹ It should be noted the concession from the single party government’s secularism policies did not start with the DP government. After the DP was formed, the issue of religion seems to have been an important indicator on the RPP’s attempt to compete with the DP. At the Seventh congress, the RPP made some changes in its policies concerning religious matters. In 1948 the Ministry of Education opened courses in order to train religious personnels, in 1949 elective religion courses were added to the curriculum of elementary schools, a faculty of theology at the Ankara University was opened and the religious shrines were re-opened. See Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. 77 - 78

²²² Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy* (Boulder: Westview, 1997), p.365.

²²³ Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*, p. 81- 82.

²²⁴ Ahmet N. Yücekök, *Türkiye’de Örgütlenmiş Dinin Sosyo-Ekonomik Tabanı 1946 – 1968* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1971), p. 133.

government. As a result of the DP's activities and its relation with Sunni conservatives, most of the Alevis chafed and went back to supporting the RPP in the 1957 elections. The political preferences of the Alevis have been based on laicism since the 1957 election.²²⁵

Apart from the DP's retreat from secularism, its economic failures in the second half of the 1950s dissolved the relationship between the Alevis and the DP as well. Indeed, it can be suggested that the DP's retreat from secularism and its economic failures went arm-in-arm. Large scale American aid combined with excellent weather, the demand for food in post-war Europe and the Korean War occurred in the first three years of the DP government. The whole economy (both agricultural and industrial production) grew at a rapid rate of 13 %.²²⁶ The DP's convenient use of governmental patronage in order to provide the needs of its supporters was one of the reasons for its electoral success.²²⁷ Such patron-client relations survive best under conditions of economic growth and the DP benefited from the economic boom in the early 1950s. However, this economic boom did not last very long. Because the agricultural growth was based on weather conditions, level of production could not be maintained when the weather grew worse. International demand slackened and the prices of the export commodities began to decline. The foreign exchange system was quickly exhausted under the liberalized import regime and the trade deficit rose. The government had to account for its negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and a stabilization program which included devaluation, import liberalization, changes in the export regime, the removal of price controls, increases in the prices of the goods of the state enterprises,

²²⁵ Okan, *Türkiye'de Alevilik*, p. 95.

²²⁶ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of the Modern Turkey* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 116.

²²⁷ Mustafa Sabri Sayarı, "Political Patronage in Turkey" in *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Society*, eds. Ernest Gellner and John Watterbury (London: Duckworth, 1977), p.111.

and the consolidation and rescheduling of the external debts came into effect. The total external debts of the country were a quarter of the gross national product in 1960 and the annual rate growth of the Gross National Product declined to four per cent.²²⁸

Support for the DP began to decrease as a consequence of this economic situation and the DP's inability to provide the needs of its patron-client relations. When their popular support began to decline, the Democrats both raised the political oppression of their opponents and used religion more actively in order to mobilize the people around them. Therefore, both the DP's use of religion and the Alevis' departure from the DP were accelerated by the party's economic failure.

Due to the lack of statistics about the religious or ethnic make up of the regions in Turkey for the era under the discussion, empirical data can only be obtained by indirect means. In this regard, in order to support the analysis of the relation between the Alevis and the DP, I will benefit from personal memoirs and the election results of the Alevi region.

Zeki Coşkun's anecdotes from Sivas show the motion of the relations between the Alevis and the DP. Coşkun denotes that the Alevis supported the DP in the 1950 and 1954 elections in Sivas. He asserts that the Alevi community's support of the DP stemmed from the traumatic results of the RPP's war time economy policies and the DP's election maneuvers. The candidate list of the DP in Sivas included some Alevi candidates in order to get the support of the Alevi community. As a consequence of these developments, the Alevis supported the DP in the first years of its power. However, the DP's secularism policies, which revealed its Sunni

²²⁸ Owen and Pamuk, *A History of Middle Eastern Economies in the 20th Century*, pp. 108 – 109.

interests, were regarded as a retreat from secularism and the Alevi community in Sivas turned towards the RPP in 1957 elections.²²⁹

It can be observed from the election results that the Alevi community supported the DP more than the RPP in the 1950 and 1954 elections. Tunceli, the population of which mainly consisted of Kurdish Alevis, shows the Alevi community's affiliation to the DP in 1950 elections. The DP gained the 58.7 % and the RPP gained 41.3 % of Tunceli's vote in the 1950 elections. In the 1954 and 1957 elections, the votes of the DP decreased to 42.5% and 34.8% in Tunceli. Those for the RPP increased to 48.2 % in the 1954 elections and 53.5 % in the 1957 elections.²³⁰ The election results of Tunceli show the motion of relationship between the Alevis and the RPP, too.

It seems that the favor of Alevis for the DP was a temporary phenomenon which grew out of the popularity of the DP against the single party government and the RPP's oppressive policies during the Second World War. İzzettin Doğan, the chairman of the Cem Foundation, confirms that the Alevis supported the DP in 1950 and 1954 elections as a reaction to İnönü's repressive policies. He adds that, because of the DP's move away from secularism, the Alevis were directed toward the RPP. The Alevi community's positive relation with the RPP was re-established with the 1957 election and it was reinforced by Ecevit in the 1970s.²³¹

²²⁹ Zeki Coşkun, *Aleviler... Sünniler... Öteki Sivas* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995), pp. 265 – 272.

²³⁰ T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *1950 – 1965 Milletvekili ve 1961, 1964 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üye Seçimleri Sonuçları* (Ankara: 1966) p. XXXIV – XXXV.

²³¹ “Tek Şansımız Diyalog”, interview with İzzettin Doğan, *Cem*, no. 71, October 1997, p. 29.

The RPP and the Left of Center

The golden age of the relationship between the Alevis and the RPP was the 1970s when Ecevit was chairman of the RPP. The left of center comprehension, which became associated with Ecevit, and his democratic left conception in the 1970s attracted the Alevis to the RPP once more. Indeed, Ecevit's political stance and populist discourse shook off the RPP's elitist, state-centered image and it developed closer ties with the people, including the Alevis.

The reform of the policy of the RPP and the emergence of Ecevit were the results of the socio-economic conditions of Turkey in the 1960s. That period saw the rapid change. The formulation of the left of center was an attempt by the RPP to adapt to the socio-political conditions of the 1960s. As Derya Kömürcü states "the RPP's adaptation of a center left stance and its attempts to form close ties with the people was directly linked with the socio-economic transformation that Turkish society has been undergoing."²³²

As mentioned in the first chapter, urbanization was the main catalyst of the social transformations which widened the urban middle and lower classes on a large scale. The RPP was compelled to adopt a new policy towards urban middle and lower classes, and peasants as well. "The main drive for the RPP in moving to left-center was to draw electoral support from the new middle and working classes of Turkey which grow out as a consequence of urbanization."²³³

Together with this social transformation, the 1961 constitution reshaped the political atmosphere of the 1960s. The constitution defined Turkey as a secular and

²³² Derya Kömürcü, *The Emergence of the Center-Left Politics in Turkey, 1960-1980*, M.A. Thesis, Bogazici University Institute of Social Sciences Graduate Program in Political Science and International Relations, 2001, p. 97.

²³³ Ibid. , p. 31.

social state. It did not limit the democracy with regular elections and recognized basic rights and freedoms such as freedom of the press and the right to form unions. The 1961 constitution not only provided a legal basis for social reforms, but also ensured safety for individuals to engage in political activity.²³⁴

Such a political and social environment assured radical political movements like the Workers Party of Turkey (WPT) on the left wing, and National Action Party and Order of National Party on the right wing. Within this context, the RPP's adoption of the left of center politics aimed to compete with the rightist populism of the Justice Party on the right wing and undermine the position of its socialist rival, the WPT on the left wing.²³⁵

The party's new line, called the left of center, was named by İnönü in an interview with Abdi İpekçi in *Milliyet* on 29 July 1965. İnönü claimed that left of center was not a new political direction, but the existing line of the RPP since the party had been formed. He went on to say that because the RPP was a secular and statist party, it was to the left of center.²³⁶ Kemal Karpat notes that "this revision of the RPP did not stem from a realistic appraisal of the Turkish economic and social realities, but from the tactical considerations designed to benefit from the social ferment and win votes."²³⁷ In this way the RPP aimed to appear to be a left party as an alternative to the WPT.

The election declaration of 1965, under the title of Republican People's Party Promises (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Söz Veriyor*), mainly reflected the

²³⁴ Kemal Karpat, "The Turkish Left", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1, no. 2 (1966), p. 183.

²³⁵ Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy*, p. 251.

²³⁶ Suna Kili, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisinde Gelişmeler* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1976), p. 212.

²³⁷ Kemal Karpat, "Political Developments in Turkey 1950-1970", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 8, no:2, (May 1972), p. 367.

conception of left of centre. The idea of planning; an equitable tax policy; emphasis on rural development; regional equality in services and investments; social insurance for artisans, craftsmen, and the self-employed; civilized and healthy residences for each family; the solution of shantytown problems; the socialization of health service; the realization of the land reform; the participation of workers in the management and decision making process of state economic enterprises and the management of strategic mines by the state enterprises were the some of the issues taken up in the manifesto.²³⁸ They were also the core of the left of center conceptualization. In this context, the left of center ideology aimed to transform the society into a welfare society on the basis of social justice.

In spite of the RPP's left of center tendency, the 1965 election results were a disappointment for the RPP, which gained only 28.70% of the total votes. The conceptualization of left of center was regarded as the main reason for the RPP's election defeat. İnönü and the leader cadre of the party abandoned the use of the concept of the left of center except for Bülent Ecevit. He was the only person who defended the conceptualization of the left of center after the 1965 elections.²³⁹ As a consequence of his decisive defense of the left of center, he became the leader of the group within the party which advocated that conceptualization.

After the 1965 defeat, the party divided into two groups. One of them was the right wing of the party under the leadership of Turan Feyizoglu which was called 76s, and the other one was the left of center under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit. The 18th party congress of the RPP in 1966 witnessed a clash between this groups and it would be a turning point both for Ecevit and the RPP. During the congress, the

²³⁸ *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Söz Veriyor - 1965 Milletvekili Genel Seçimleri Seçim Bildirgesi* (Ankara: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Yayınları, 1965)

²³⁹ Yunus Emre, *The Genesis of Left of Center: 1965 – 1967*, M.A Thesis, Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkey, 2007, p. 105.

party rule proclaimed that the left of center was a characteristic of the party which gave a progressive meaning to the party. Moreover, Ecevit was elected general secretary of the RPP at 18th congress.²⁴⁰ As a result of these developments, Turhan Feyizoglu and his group resigned from the RPP and formed the Reliance Party (*Güven Partisi*). Thus Ecevit became unrivalled in the RPP under the leadership of İnönü.

Ecevit's election to the second ranking position in the hierarchy of the party in October 1966 represented the beginning of a new phase for the RPP. It can be asserted that the evolution from left of center to the democratic left comprehension and political history of Ecevit were equated at that congress.

The Rise of Ecevit

Ecevit was one of the theorists of the left of center comprehension in the RPP. In his master thesis about center left politics in Turkey between the years of 1960 and 1980, Derya Kömürcü writes that, "Ecevit did not only see the left of centre strategy as a political tactic to compete with the WPT and to gain additional votes from the newly emerging middle and lower classes, but also as a policy that would be most beneficial to Turkey and for the social and economic development of Turkish people."²⁴¹ In other words, the left of centre was not only a pragmatic discourse, but also an ideological orientation for Ecevit.

In addition to the specific commitments of the 1965 election manifesto, which shaped the characteristics of the left of center, Ecevit defined the left of center on the basis of a humanist discourse. His work, *Left of Center* (Ortanın Solu), drew a

²⁴⁰ Ibid. , pp. 108-112.

²⁴¹ Kömürcü, *The Emergence of the Center-Left Politics in Turkey, 1960-1980*, p. 53

model of society which was both industrialized and humanized. In this book, Ecevit repeated most of the social, economic and political measures of the 1965 election manifesto. However, he elaborated these measures with philosophic premises. More importantly, Ecevit added a humanist/populist discourse to the left of center which would become its essence later.

According to Ecevit, the characteristics of the left of centre were humanism, social justice, social security, social democracy, populism, statism, revolutionism, reformism and a planned economy.²⁴² He also defined the person who welcomed the policy of the left of center as one who felt motivated to do something in order to eliminate the injustices which caused impecuniosities and inequity in the society or one who felt responsibility of a shoeshine boy's condition who had to work instead of going to school or playing games.²⁴³ Ecevit's left of center comprehension envisaged a society where all restrictions on the human beings were eliminated and people were able to control their own living.²⁴⁴ Thus Ecevit ornamented the left of center conceptualization with a populist/humanist rhetoric which became more attractive for ordinary voters. In this regard, it can be asserted that this populist/humanist rhetoric was the main difference between left of centre conceptualizations of Ecevit and İnönü.²⁴⁵

Ecevit's left of center comprehension replaced the democratic left thought after Ecevit won the power struggle and became party leader. The democratic left was a more ideological conceptualization than the left of center, because Ecevit had to clarify his pragmatist stance with a consistent ideological character after he

²⁴² Bülent Ecevit, *Ortanın Solu* (Istanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1975), pp. 24- 28.

²⁴³ *Ibid.* , pp. 12 – 13.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.* , p. 107.

²⁴⁵ Özkan Ağtaş, "Ortanın Solu: İsmet İnönü'den Bülent Ecevit'e" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce cilt 8: Sol*, ed. Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), p. 219.

became the party leader.²⁴⁶ He defined democratic leftism as a leftism from below and declared that the term of “democratic left” was chosen to show its difference from social democracy’s Marxist origin.²⁴⁷

In his useful article about the populist discourses of Ecevit and Revolutionary Path, (*Devrimci Yol*), Necmi Erdoğan assesses the political discourse of Ecevit within the framework of Laclau’s populism conceptualization.²⁴⁸ It can be suggested that both Ecevit’s left of center and democratic left comprehensions were based on a populist discourse which fit into Laclau’s and Di Tella’s populism conceptualizations. Laclau defines populism as hegemonising strategy which assumes an antagonism between the people and the power bloc.²⁴⁹ On the other hand, Di Tella stresses that populism is “characterized by a sense of differentiation between those who are poor and those who are elites.”²⁵⁰ Such populist rhetoric loomed large in the political discourse of Ecevit in the 1960s and 70s. Ecevit’s conceptualization of the people clearly indicates his populist rhetoric. He defines the people like that,

The persons who regard themselves as privileged in the society, who believe that they should have some privileges and resources or get these resources; who get unbalanced share from the surplus value of labor or get more power than the equality principle of the democracy by the use of these resources and who throw their weights about state government exceedingly can be considered as out of the conceptualization of people. The people concept includes in the persons who survive by means of their physical or

²⁴⁶ Kömürcü, *The Emergence of the Center-Left Politics in Turkey, 1960-1980*, p. 72.

²⁴⁷ Bülent Ecevit, *Demokratik Solda Temel Kavramlar* (Ankara: Ajans-Türk Matbaacılık Sanayii, 1976) p. 51 – 52.

²⁴⁸ Necmi Erdoğan, “Demokratik Soldan Devrimci Yola: 1970’lerde Sol Populizm Üzerine, *Toplum ve Bilim*, no: 78, Fall 1998, p. 25.

²⁴⁹ Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism and Populism* (London: NLB, 1977), p. 173.

²⁵⁰ Paul Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), p.13.

mental labor and who were unable to participate in society and state government sufficiently.²⁵¹

Ecevit's definition reveals that his analysis of the political space was based on binary oppositions like oppressed people and power bloc, elites and people, intellectuals and people, and producers and unproducers. After Ecevit maintained such binary oppositions, he declared the RPP's aim as to abolish that binary opposition and to provide an amalgamation between the people and the state.²⁵²

The affiliation between the Alevi and Ecevit may have stemmed from Ecevit's that populist discourse. In the first chapter it was briefly mentioned that the Alevism was the reassessment of the Islam within the framework of the nomadic way of life. The nomadic characteristic of Alevism and its political implication will be scrutinized in the next chapter in detail. In this context it should be mentioned again that the Alevi communities had not established strong relations with the institutionalized central authorities for long years. This gap was fulfilled by communal order under the direction of the Alevi *dedes*.

The political pressure on the Alevi community loosened up as a result of the new republic's secularist policies. This process would be accelerated with the migration from the rural to the urban areas in the 1960s and 1970s. Urbanization put an end to the isolated life of the Alevi which had been preserved for the long years. As a result of these developments the Alevi's way of life was radically altered in these years. The Alevi identity fundamentally changed; therefore, in the 1960s, they

²⁵¹ "Toplumda kendilerini imtiyazlı gören, kendilerinde bazı imtiyazlar herkesin yararlanamayacağı bazı olanaklar bulunması gerektiğini düşünen veya öyle olanakları elde etmiş olan ve bu olanaklardan yararlanarak emeğin artı değerinden dengesiz pay alabilen veya demokrasinin eşitlik ilkesinin ötesinde bir güç edinebilen, toplum yönetimine ağırlığını aşırı ölçüde koyabilen kimseler halk kavramının dışında görülebilir. Halk daha çok bedensel veya düşünsel emeğiyle yaşamını kazanmak durumunda olan ve tek başına sahip olduğu olanaklarla topluma ve devlet yönetimine yeterince ağırlığını koyma olanağı bulamayan insanların toplamıdır." Ecevit, *Demokratik Solda Temel Kavramlar*, p. 9.

²⁵² *Ak Günlere: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi 1973 Seçim Bildirgesi* (Ankara: 1973), p. 17.

became ready to take their place in the nation and to integrate into the institutions of the modern state.

Ecevit's populist discourse coincided with this radical transformation of the Alevis' life conditions. Ecevit's conceptualization of binary opposition between the state and people and his commitment to the incorporation of the masses and the state were meaningful for the Alevis who were taking their place in the state. In other words, Ecevit's populist discourse provided an opportunity for the Alevis to integrate into the modern state more easily. Thus, the affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP was reinforced during the reign of Ecevit in the 1970s within the context of Ecevit's populist stance.

Apart from the populist discourse of Ecevit, his relation with local party offices might have been another reason for the positive relations between the Alevis and Ecevit's RPP. Ecevit was the general secretary of the RPP from 1966 to 1972; in other words, he was in the second-ranked position in the hierarchy of the party in those years. Consistent with his populist discourse, Ecevit believed that the RPP should go to the people in order to amalgamate with them.²⁵³ He offered to establish a People's Organization (*Halk Örgütü*) in order to popularize the party and to solve the RPP's "alienation" to the people.²⁵⁴ As a consequence of his political attitude, he opened the local party organizations to people. His position (General Secretary of the party) gave him the opportunity to develop close ties with the local party branches. In 1972, he defeated the historical leader of the RPP, İnönü, owing to these close ties with the local party branches, and became the chairman of the RPP.

²⁵³ Emin Alper, "Milliyetçilik-Modernleşme Geriliminde 'Ortanın Solu' ve Ecevit", *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 93 (Spring 2002), p. 117.

²⁵⁴ Ecevit, *Ortanın Solu*, pp. 99-102.

Because the local branches of the big cities had more influence on the party affairs, Ecevit's relations with local party branches was more apparent in the big cities like Istanbul, İzmir and Ankara. If it is kept in mind that the nearly 60 % of the total population of Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir were living in the squatter settlements, Ecevit's relation with local party branches in the big cities can not be analyzed without considering urbanization process and political action's vital role for the new city dweller.

In the first chapter, it was mentioned that the migrants used different strategies in order to integrate into the cities. Political identities and actions were some elements of these strategies which were used by the migrants in order to put an end to their marginality to the cities. In this regard, it can be asserted that Ecevit's populist rhetoric was appropriate for the migrants who tried to survive in the cities. Ecevit's promise of an amalgamation of the people and the state carried special emphasis for the new city dweller whose aim was to be legally recognized by the state within the context of dualistic structure of the city. His populist discourse offered upward mobility opportunities to the new migrants, who played a crucial role in his rapid success in the big cities.

In this regard a clientalist relation between the new migrants and Ecevit was implicitly maintained. On the one hand, Ecevit provided an opportunity for the migrants to integrate into the cities within the framework of the party affiliation and being electors. On the other hand, the local party organizations espoused Ecevit against İnönü in the struggle of the RPP's leadership and the migrants supported Ecevit against Demirel in the 1973 and 1977 general elections. At that point, Harald Schüller, who investigated the role of sectarian identities and *hemşeri* relation on the political party preferences within the framework of the relation between the Social

Democrat Populist Party (SPP) and the Alevi community, asserts that Ecevit's rise was the result of his achievement at the successful combination between the ideological discourse and clientalist relations, which was momentous for the new city dweller. He goes on to say that gaining the support of the migrants in the metropolitan areas and its influence on local party organizations was the main reason for both Ecevit's triumph over İnönü in 1972 and the RPP's success against the Justice Party in the 1973 elections.²⁵⁵

The results of the 1973 and 1977 election confirm the affiliation between Ecevit and new city dweller through local party branches. During the time of Ecevit in power, the RPP got the majority of its votes from the urban areas and chiefly put a great deal into the big cities like Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir which experienced a stream of migration in the 1960s and the 1970s.²⁵⁶ The RPP gained 33.29 % of votes in the elections of 1973. On the other hand, the RPP's votes in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir were above average for its total votes in Turkey. In 1973 elections, the RPP gained 48.92 % of the votes in Istanbul, 41.91 % of the votes in Ankara and 44.05 % of the votes in Izmir. In the 1977 elections, the RPP gained 41.39 % of the votes in Turkey. Its votes in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir were far above the average of its total votes again. The RPP gained 58.24 % of the votes in Istanbul, 51.28 % of the votes in Ankara and 52.66 % of the votes in Izmir. The RPP's success in the big cities can be explained by the political action's vital role for the new city dweller.

It was apparent that the integrative role of Ecevit's populist discourse for the new city dwellers was valid for both the Alevi and the Sunni migrants. However,

²⁵⁵ Harald Schüler, *Türkiye'de Sosyal Demokrasi-Particilik, Hemşehrilik, Alevilik*, trans. Yılmaz Tonbul (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 112.

²⁵⁶ It should be reminded that the 60 % of the population of Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara were living in the squatter settlements in the late 1970s. See S. Kemal Kartal, *Türkiye'de Kentlileşme* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1983), p. 40.

if we bear in mind that the urbanization process was more traumatic for the Alevis than the Sunnis and the historical affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP was maintained, it can be claimed that Ecevit's political strategy was more appropriate for the Alevi migrants. In this regard, the clientalist relation between the migrants and Ecevit might be assessed as one of the reasons for the affiliation between the Alevi migrants and Ecevit's RPP.

Due to the lack of statistical information about the religious or ethnic make-up of the regions in Turkey, empirical data can only be obtained by indirect means. It can be observed that the Alevi community supported the RPP at a rate disproportionate to that of the Sunnis which might have stemmed from the reforms of the new republic under the reign of the RPP, and Ecevit's highly popular "*Karaođlan*" image and his populist discourses in the 1970s.²⁵⁷ In this regard the election results of the some regions where the Alevi population lived at a rate disproportionate can proffer suggestions about the affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP.

İmranlı is an Alevi district of Sivas. It clearly shows the relation between the Alevis and the RPP, and the impact of the Ecevit figure on this relation as a reinforcement factor. In the 1969 elections the RPP gained 18.4 % of the votes in İmranlı. The Unity Party of Turkey, which gained 32.4 % of the votes in İmranlı, was the victorious party in the region.²⁵⁸ In the 1973 elections the RPP gained 54.52 % of

²⁵⁷ Harald Schlier's detailed study about the relation between the Social Democrat Populist Party (SPP) and the Alevi community in the 1980s reveals that votes and organization of the SPP were above its average in the places where the population mainly consisted of the Alevis. For more detailed information, see. Harald Schlier, *Türkiye'de Sosyal Demokrasi-Particilik, Hemşehrilik, Alevilik*, pp. 174 - 190.

²⁵⁸ 12 Ekim 1969 Milletvekili Genel Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1970), p. XXII.

the votes there.²⁵⁹ This was the first election of Ecevit as party chairman; therefore, it can be proposed that this score indicates both the Ecevit factor and the RPP's enduring influence on Alevis. In 1977 elections, the RPP increased its votes to 68.50 % there owing to Ecevit's charismatic leadership.²⁶⁰

Arguvan is a district of Malatya of which the population mainly consisted of the Alevis. Similar to İmranlı, Arguvan also indicates to the relation between the Alevis and the RPP. Moreover, the impact of the highly popular Ecevit figure can be followed through the election results of Arguvan. In 1965 elections the RPP gained 46.48 % of the total votes (3019/6494) in Arguvan.²⁶¹ In 1969 elections, the RPP's votes in Arguvan decreased to 31, 6%, because the Unity Party gained 26% and the WPT gained 16.9% of the total votes there.²⁶² The 1973 elections were the first general elections of the RPP under the leadership of Ecevit. In that election, the votes of the RPP drastically increased to 84.9% in Arguvan; on the other hand, the votes of the UPT in Arguvan decreased to 2.4 %.²⁶³ In 1977 elections, the RPP gained the 87.5 % of the total votes in Arguvan.²⁶⁴ The case of Arguvan clearly shows both the relation between the Alevis and the RPP, and the impact of Ecevit on the Alevi community. Especially it was remarkable that the votes of the RPP in Arguvan nearly tripled under the leadership of Ecevit.

²⁵⁹ 14 Ekim 1973 Milletvekili Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974), p. 54.

²⁶⁰ 1977 Milletvekili Genel ve Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üçte Bir Yenileme Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1977), p. 52 – 53.

²⁶¹ 1950–1965 Milletvekili ve 1961, 1964 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üyeleri Seçimleri Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1966), p. 955.

²⁶² 12 Ekim 1969 Milletvekili Genel Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1970), p. XIX.

²⁶³ 14 Ekim 1973 Milletvekili Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974), p. 48-49.

²⁶⁴ 1977 Milletvekili Genel ve Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üçte Bir Yenileme Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1977), p. 46.

Tunceli, whose population mainly consisted of Kurdish Alevis, represents another excellent case which shows the Ecevit's impact on Alevi voters. The RPP gained 18.88 % of the Tunceli's votes in the 1969 elections. Due to the existence of other left movements, like the Workers Party of Turkey (WPT) and the Union Party (UP) and the independent candidate, the RPP's votes in Tunceli were below the average of Turkey. The WPT gained the 16.80 % of Tunceli's votes, which was five times better than its average of all Turkey. The independent candidate gained 17.56 % and the UP gained 6.94 %.²⁶⁵ In the 1973 elections, the votes of the RPP in Tunceli would increase dramatically to 70% under leadership of Ecevit.²⁶⁶ This rise shows the impact of Ecevit's figure on the voters clearly. In the 1977 elections the RPP maintained its votes in Tunceli and gained 66.3 % of the total votes in this region.²⁶⁷

As discussed above, the populist discourse and practices of Ecevit were appropriate for the migrants who tried to survive in the cities. His populist discourse served the upward mobility aspirations of the new migrants, who played a crucial role on the rapid success of Ecevit in the big cities. The clientalist relation between Ecevit and the migrants can be followed through the election results of the squatter settlements which were maintained in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. In this regard, the election results of four squatter settlements of Istanbul will be analyzed. They are Güzeltepe in Eyüp, Gazi in Gaziosmanpaşa, Sarıgazi in Ümraniye and Gülsuyu in Maltepe. These districts were settled by Alevi migrants and it is crucial that their support of Ecevit was more apparent than the support of Sunni squatter

²⁶⁵ 12 Ekim 1969 Milletvekili Genel Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1970), p. XXII.

²⁶⁶ 14 Ekim 1973 Milletvekili Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974), p. 22.

²⁶⁷ 1977 Milletvekili Genel ve Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üçte Bir Yenileme Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1977), p. 52.

settlements. The election results reveal that the clientelist relation between Ecevit and migrants was more evident for Alevi migrants and Ecevit.

In 1973 elections the RPP gained 33.3 % of the total votes in Turkey. Its votes in İstanbul were above the average of Turkey. The RPP gained 48.9 % of the votes in İstanbul.²⁶⁸ Its votes in four squatter settlements in 1973 elections were as follows:

Table 5. The Result of the 1973 General Elections in the Districts of Güzeltepe, Gazi, Sarıgazi and Gülsuyu

DISTRICTS	REGISTERED VOTERS	RPP VOTERS	PERCENTAGE OF RPP VOTES
Güzeltepe	1825	950	52%
Gazi	558	206	36.91%
Sarıgazi	317	239	75.3%
Gülsuyu	2286	1481	64.7%

Source: 14 Ekim 1973 Milletvekili Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974)

The relation between Ecevit and the Alevi migrants became more important in the elections of Senate of Republic in 1975. In İstanbul the RPP received 58.2 % of the total votes in the 1975 elections. The election results of the RPP in four squatter settlements as follows:

²⁶⁸ 14 Ekim 1973 Milletvekili Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974), p. 14

Table 6: The Result of the 1975 Senate Renewal Elections in the Districts of Güzeltepe, Gazi, Sarıgazi and Gülsuyu

DISTRICTS	REGISTERED VOTERS	RPP VOTERS	PERCENTAGE OF RPP VOTES
Güzeltepe	1769	1026	57.9%
Gazi	592	417	70.4%
Sarıgazi	495	341	68.8%
Gülsuyu	2142	1422	66.3%

Source: 12 Ekim 1975 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üyeleri Üçte Bir Yenileme ve Ara Seçimi Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1976)

In the elections of Senate of Republic in 1979 the votes of the RPP decreased to 37.9 % in İstanbul. The decrease was reflected in its votes in the four squatter settlements. Moreover, the Alevi massacres and the RPP's passive manner which was discussed above was one of the important factors which contributed to the RPP's loss of votes in the Alevi squatter settlements. However, the RPP's votes from the settlements were above from its general votes in Istanbul. Furthermore the election results of these settlements revealed a tendency of Alevi migrants toward the Unity Party of Turkey in the 1979 elections.

Table 7. The Result of the 1979 Senate Renewal Elections in the Districts of Güzeltepe, Gazi, Sarıgazi and Gülsuyu

DISTRICT	REGISTE RED VOTERS	RPP VOTERS	UPT VOTERS	PERCENT AGE OF RPP VOTES	PERCENT AGE OF UPT VOTES
Güzeltepe	2975	1138	625	38.2%	21%
Gazi	747	237	284	31.7%	38%
Sarıgazi	649	363	24	55.9%	0.3%
Gülsuyu	3735	1601	347	42.8%	9%

Source: 14 Ekim 1979 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üyeleri Üçte Bir Yenileme ve Milletvekili Ara Seçim Sonuçları (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1980)

To sum up, the Alevi community did not respect the Unity Party of Turkey in the late 1960s and 1970s, however that party addressed them. The general belief and election results show that the Alevis politically supported to the RPP in the 1970s. It can also be asserted that Alevis had favored the RPP since the new republic was formed. The positive relation between the Alevis and the RPP stemmed from the Alevi community's pleasure from the new republic's secularist policies under the reign of the RPP. As a consequence of these secularist policies, the formal religious characteristics of the state disappeared and the daily appearance of Sunni Islam relatively vanished. Therefore, the Alevis felt a grater sense of security and enjoyed the acquisition equal legal rights with the Sunnis as individual citizens of Turkey. When the Alevis compared their previous position (in the Ottoman period) with the latter one (in the republican period), they favored the secular governments as well as

their secularizing actions. Thus, it can be asserted that the affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP was established under the single-party government.

In the context of the 1970s, the leadership of Ecevit reinforced the historical affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP. Ecevit's populist discourse, which was based on an antagonism between the people and power block or state, aimed to provide an amalgamation of the people and the state. This populist discourse was meaningful for the Alevis, whose traditional culture and isolated way of life was disappearing as a consequence of the radical social transformation engendered on urbanization. Ecevit's conceptualization of a binary opposition between the state and people and his commitment to the incorporation of the masses and the state were meaningful for the Alevis, who were taking their place in the modern state. Thus, Ecevit's populist discourse provided an opportunity for the Alevis to integrate into modern life. Massicard's claim of the Alevis' nearly monolithic support to the RPP in the 1970s takes a meaning from that perspective.²⁶⁹

It can be suggested that Ecevit's populist discourse enabled the migrants' integration into the cities. A clientalist relation between Ecevit and the new city dweller was established on the basis of Ecevit's populist rhetoric. On the one hand, Ecevit provided an opportunity for the migrants to integrate into the cities within the framework of party politics. On the other hand, the migrants supported Ecevit against Demirel's Justice Party. As a consequence of that clientalist mechanism, Ecevit gained the support of squatter settlements. Particularly the Alevi settlements supported the RPP more than the Sunni settlements.

The RPP was not the only political preference for the migrants in order to survive in the cities. The squatter settlements formed by Alevi migrants were not

²⁶⁹ Massicard, *Alevi Hareketinin Siyasallaşması*, p. 207.

only the supporters of Ecevit's RPP, but also the "rescued zone" of radical socialist movements. Put another way, the radical socialist movements provided another mechanism for the Alevi migrants in order to integrate into the cities. In this context, the affiliation between the Alevis and radical socialist movements will be scrutinized next.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AFFILIATION BETWEEN THE ALEVIS AND THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS

In the previous chapter the relation between the RPP and the Alevis was scrutinized. It was asserted that the relation between them was established within the context of the early Republican governments' secularist policies and that affiliation was strengthened by Ecevit's populist discourse, which was based on a binary opposition between the state and the people. As a consequence of the urbanization effect, the traditional Alevism had eroded and the populist discourse of Ecevit had enabled the integration of the Alevis into the modern republic. Especially in the urban areas, Ecevit's populist discourses and political activities facilitated the survival of the migrants in the cities.

Supporting Ecevit's RPP was not the only preference of the Alevi migrants in order to integrate into the urban areas. In the 1970s the squatter settlements which had been established by the Alevi migrants became fortified enclaves of the socialist movements. Furthermore, in the rural areas, the socialist movements usually preferred to organize in Alevi villages. This chapter analyzes the affiliation between the Alevis and socialist movements within the framework of the nomadic features of the Alevi cosmology and the needs of the socialist movements within the context of the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, the Nationalist Action Party's (NAP) civil war strategy in the late 1970s, which targeted the Alevi community, will be assessed as a reinforcing factor for the affiliation between the Alevis and the socialist left.

In this chapter, the Alevism will be evaluated as a reassessment of Islam within the context of a nomadic way of life. Due to the fact that their way of life is based on a nomadic culture, the Alevi community did not establish strong relations with the institutionalized central authorities. Their weak relations with the state might be one of the dynamics which affiliated them with the socialist movements. On the other hand, the Alevi tradition filled one of the gaps in the Turkish socialist movements. The left movement's anti-imperialist characteristic encouraged them to return to their local origins. The return to local origins was necessary not only for struggling against imperialism, but also for gaining popular support from the people. Because of the Kemalist effect on the Turkish left, left activists attempted to find a secular and local cultural origin, which was, in this case, represented by the Alevi culture.

The affiliation between the Alevis and the socialist left was reinforced by the Nationalist Action Party's civil war strategy. After the 1977 elections, the political cadres of the NAP realized that they would not be able to come to power through democratic procedures. Consequently, the NAP planned to enforce a civil war strategy in order to come to power through a right-wing military coup. Mobilizing the Sunni Muslims against the Alevis and the leftist forces was the main characteristic of the NAP's civil war strategy in the late 1970s. As a consequence of that strategy, the Alevis affiliated themselves with the left movements in order to protect themselves from the attacks of the nationalist militants.

The Alevism As a Nomadic Conceptualization of Islam

The point that Alevism is the reassessment of Islam within the framework of the nomadic way of life had been accepted by many scholars who have studied Alevism.²⁷⁰ Irene Melikoff, who is one of the most influential academics on the Alevi culture, confirms that argument. She goes on by stating that Alevi culture is a synthesis of Islamic values and nomadic Turcoman²⁷¹ communities' religious beliefs before the acceptance of Islam.²⁷² Indeed the term of “nomadism” in this usage refers to the “semi-nomadism” of those who lived in sheltered places and summer pastures periodically. It also indicates a struggle with the conditions of nature and with the authority of the state.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ For the studies which regard the Alevism as nomadic Islam, see Irene Melikoff, *Uyur İdik Uyardılar: Alevilik–Bektaşilik Araştırmaları*, trans. Turan Alptekin (İstanbul: Demos Yayınları, 2006); Fuat Bozkurt, *Çağdaşlaşma Sürecinde Alevilik* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2006); Ayhan Yalçınkaya, *Alevilikte Toplumsal Kurumlar ve İktidar* (Ankara: Mülkiyeliler Birliği Vakfı Yayınları Tezler Dizisi, 1996); Nail Yılmaz, *Kentin Alevileri* (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2005); Murat Okan, *Türkiye’de Alevilik* (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 2004); Metin Acar, *Alevi Toplumu ve Devlet İlişkisi*, unpublished M.A Thesis, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2003; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, “Aleviliğin Tarihsel Sosyal Tabanı ile Teolojisi Arasındaki İlişki Problemine Dair” in *Tarihi ve Kültürel Boyutlarıyla Türkiye’de Aleviler Bektaşiler Nusayriler* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 1997), pp. 385–399, İlyas Üzüm, “Günümüz Alevi Örgütlenmeleri ve Geleneksel Alevilikle İlişkisi” in *Tarihi ve Kültürel Boyutlarıyla Türkiye’de Aleviler Bektaşiler Nusayriler* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 1997), pp. 335 – 376.

²⁷¹ In this usage, Melikoff carefully emphasizes that the term of the Turcoman does not refer to an ethnic group. It indicates a group of nomadic people who have recently become Muslim. See Melikoff, *Uyur İdik Uyardılar: Alevilik–Bektaşilik Araştırmaları*, p.31.

²⁷² Ibid. , p. 37.

²⁷³ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Babailer İsyanı: Aleviliğin Tarihsel Altyapısı yahut Anadolu’da İslam-Türk Heterodoksisinin Teşekkülü* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1996), p.59.

In this regard, the syncretism²⁷⁴ and heterodox²⁷⁵ aspects of Alevism stem from its nomadic feature. The values of non-Muslim nomadic communities' merged with the Islamic religion under the Alevi culture and Alevism crystallized as the nomadic Islam. Melikoff attempts to argue the syncretistic characteristic of Alevism with reference to crucial similarities between the *Gök Tanrı* (Sky God) belief of non-Muslim nomadic communities and the Ali figure of Alevi culture. In this respect, she asserts that Ali is the Islamic form of the *Gök Tanrı* cult.²⁷⁶

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, who is a student of Melikoff and another important researcher about the heterodox movement of Anatolia, defines Alevism as a syncretistic belief which was constituted from the Shamanism, Buddhism, Islam Sufism, Khorasan Kalendirism, Zoroastrianism, Mazdakism, Manichaeism Hurifism and Safavid Shiism.²⁷⁷ He regards Alevism as the heterodox Islam and asserts that it was constituted from the combination of mystified Islam and other mystic non-Muslim beliefs within the context of the animistic life conditions of the nomadic way of life.²⁷⁸

In this respect, Ocak enriches the similarities between Alevi culture and the beliefs of non-Muslim nomadic communities. Shamanism was a belief that had an

²⁷⁴ “Syncretism is the attempt to reconcile diverse, even opposing, beliefs to meld practices of various schools of thought. Especially in the theology and mythology of religion it is associated with the attempt to merge and analogize several originally discrete traditions.” Ceren Selmanpakoğlu, *The Formation of Alevi Syncretism*, M.A Thesis, Bilkent University, the Department of Graphic Design and the Institute of Fine Arts, 2006, p. 41.

²⁷⁵ The term of the “Orthodox” indicates to adherence to the belief of a religious system’s dominant and common explanations. If a religion is systematized and attains the status of the doctrine of a state, it becomes an Orthodox view. On the other hand, “heterodoxy” refers to the groups of beliefs which do not have a homogenous unity. It refers to the departure from the accepted beliefs or standards. See Niyazi Öktem, “Anadolu Aleviliğinin Senkretik Yapısı” in *Tarihi ve Kültürel Boyutlarıyla Türkiye’de Aleviler Bektaşiler Nusayriler* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 1997), pp. 223-225.

²⁷⁶ Melikoff, *Uyur İdik Uyardılar: Alevilik–Bektaşilik Araştırmaları*, p.40.

²⁷⁷ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türkiye’de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde: Türk Sufiliğine Bakışlar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), pp. 210–211.

²⁷⁸ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), pp. 43–44.

influence on nomadic Turkoman communities. Ocak establishes a parallelism between the Alevi *cems* (ritual ceremonies) and shaman ceremonies in which both men and women are present and face to face with one another. Moreover, musical instruments are played both during Alevi *cems* (*bağlama*- a plucked instrument with three double strings and a long neck) and shaman ceremonies (drum).²⁷⁹ The position of the Alevi *dedes* (the holy men of the Alevi community) runs parallel to that of shaman. Both of them are regarded as holy men whose superiority is hereditary. Because of their magical powers, both of them are accepted as the spiritual leaders of their communities.²⁸⁰ In this respect, the Alevi *dedes* can be regarded as “Islamized shamans”.²⁸¹ The Alevi tradition’s similarities to other beliefs can be diversified. For example, the Alevi-Bektaşî cosmology derived the belief of incarnation from Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, or it got the belief of reincarnation from the Buddhism and Manichaeism.²⁸²

The comparison of Alevi and Sunni religious practices also indicates that Alevism is the reassessment of Islam within the framework of nomadic values. *Namaz*, which is the main religious practice of orthodox-Sunni Islam, is based on stabilization. On the other hand, *cem*, which is the basic religious ceremony of heterodox-Alevi belief, is based on *semah*, a kind of religious dance. The term *semah dönme* (to turn *semah*) evidently reflects the activity of nomadic life.

In this thesis, accepting Alevism as the reassessment of Islam on the basis of nomadic culture plays an important role in the relation between the Alevis and socialist left; however, the Alevis became sedentary gradually in the late nineteenth

²⁷⁹ Ahmet Yasar Ocak, *Alevi Bektaşî İnançının İslam Öncesi Temelleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), pp. 175 – 176.

²⁸⁰ Ibid. , p.71.

²⁸¹ Fuat Bozkurt, *Çağdaşlaşma Sürecinde Alevilik* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2006), p. 41.

²⁸² Ocak, *Alevi Bektaşî İnançının İslam Öncesi Temelleri*, pp. 183–205.

century. Due to the heterodox beliefs of the Alevis, which stemmed from the nomadic way of life, the Alevi communities were alienated from Ottoman society. The Ottomans viewed the mobility and independence of the nomads as a potential threat to the sedentary way of life and to the state.²⁸³ That social alienation was strengthened by the heterodox groups' rebellions in the Anatolia under the ideological influence of the Safavid Shiism in the sixteenth century. In other words, the social differentiation between the nomadic heterodoxy and settled orthodoxy was reinforced by the political polarization under the influence of the Safavid effect.²⁸⁴

Melikoff claims that the *Kızılbaşlık*,²⁸⁵ which indicated the reassessment of the Safavid Shiism within the context of Anatolian Sufism, participated in the Anatolian heterodoxy in the sixteenth century through those rebellions.²⁸⁶ In this regard Melikoff, Ocak and Bozkurt disconnect the concepts of the Bektashism and *Kızılbaşlık*. Melikoff asserts that the Bektashi Order was not influenced by Safavid propaganda; however *Kızılbaşlık* became the heterodox Islam which was influenced by Shiism.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, the *Kızılbaş*s lived in isolated rural areas; whereas, Bektashis lived in urban areas within the context of a religious order.²⁸⁸ Bozkurt asserts that, from the 1500s, the historical development of Alevism materialized in two dimensions as Bektashism and *Kızılbaşlık*. He states that this separation

²⁸³ Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in the Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Series, 1983), p.55.

²⁸⁴ Okan, *Türkiye'de Alevilik*, p.58.

²⁸⁵ Before the nineteenth century the term "Alevi" did not have an apparent name in the Ottoman archival documents. They were mostly called '*rafizi*' (heretic, separated from the generally accepted belief), '*zındık*' (heretic, unbeliever), '*mülhid*' (irreligious) or '*kızılbaş*' in the meaning of 'rebellious to God'. The term of the *Kızılbaş* was firstly used in the period of the royalty of Shah Haydar in the 1460s who was the ruler of the Safavids and the father of the Shah Ismail. See. Melikoff, *Uyur İdik Uyurdular: Alevilik-Bektaşilik Araştırmaları*, pp. 51- 52.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* , p. 54.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* , p. 57.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.* , p. 102.

indicates a political conflict as well. Although the Bektashis took a stand in favor of the Ottoman state, the *Kızılbaşs* supported the Safavids in the early 1500s.²⁸⁹

On the other hand, Ocak prefers a periodical segmentation and bisects the cultural history of the Alevism as the period of Alevism before the Safavid effect between the tenth and fifteenth centuries and the period of the Alevism with the cult of Ali under the influence of Safavid/Shiism from the sixteenth century.²⁹⁰ He asserts that the Turcoman heterodoxy was transformed into Alevism as a consequence of the the Safavid effect.²⁹¹ Ocak also asserts that the propaganda of the Safavid state partially consolidated the various heterodox beliefs on a common political denominator against the Ottoman state.²⁹² Moreover, he states that as a consequence of the Safavid propaganda, Sunni Islam hardened and became the dominant ideology of the Ottoman state.²⁹³

In this thesis, consistent with the general usage, the term “Alevism” both refers to *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektashism. Despite the socio-political differences between *Kızılbaşlık* and the Bektashism, due to the syncretistic characteristics of Alevism, a categorical distinction between the terms of *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektashism is not adequate nowadays. Thus, the term of Alevism both referred to the *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektashism.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁹ Fuat Bozkurt, *Aleviliğin Toplumsal Boyutları* (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınları, 1993), pp.52–53.

²⁹⁰ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, “Aleviliğin Tarihsel Sosyal Tabanı ile Teolojisi Arasındaki İlişki Problemine Dair” in *Tarihi ve Kültürel Boyutlarıyla Türkiye’de Aleviler Bektaşiler Nusayriler* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 1997), pp.386–387.

²⁹¹ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türkiye’de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde: Türk Sufiliğine Bakışlar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), pp. 208- 209.

²⁹² Ibid. , pp. 253–254.

²⁹³ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Mülhidler ve Zındıklar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), pp. 94–95.

²⁹⁴ Metin Acar, *Alevi Toplumu ve Devlet İlişkisi*, M.A Thesis, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2003, p.18.

As a consequence of Safavid/Shii effect and the uprisings in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,²⁹⁵ Alevism became more and more political and more than 40,000 *Kızılbaş* were massacred.²⁹⁶ Due to the political suppression, the Alevi communities secluded themselves and lived in isolated rural areas for long years. Because of their highly isolated life, they did not interact with outsiders and the nomadic features of the Alevi community remained quite a while even if they became sedentary.²⁹⁷ Their isolated life began to open up in the period of the republic; however, this process was accelerated after the 1950s as a result of the urbanization process.²⁹⁸

In this study, the limited relations with the political authority (state) as an aspect of nomadic life will be assessed as one of the illustrative points in order to explain the affiliation between the Alevis and radical left movements. Because Alevism is based on nomadic culture, the Alevis had not established strong relations with the institutionalized central authorities, like the state. The authority relations in the community replaced the function of external and institutionalized authorities. Thus, the state was always the “other” and the “outsider” to the Alevis.²⁹⁹ This statement does not mean that there was no authority configuration in the Alevi communities. It indicates the limit of the external authorities on the society, whereas

²⁹⁵ The Alevi uprisings in the Anatolia in the early 1500s were Şahkulu (1510–1511), Nur Ali Halife (1512), Bozoklu Celal (1517–1518), Şah Veli (1519), Süklun Koca-Baba Zünnun (1525–1527), Atmaca (1526), Yenice Bey (1526), Veli Halife (1526), Kalender Çelebi (1526–1527), Seydi Bey (1529). For more details, see Baki Öz, *Osmanlı’da Alevi Ayaklanmaları* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1992); and Çetin Yetkin, *Türk Halk Hareketleri ve Devrimleri* (İstanbul: May Yayınları, 1974), pp. 196–213

²⁹⁶ Baki Öz, *Osmanlı’da Alevi Ayaklanmaları* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1992), pp. 125–126

²⁹⁷ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, “Aleviliğin Tarihsel Sosyal Tabanı ile Teolojisi Arasındaki İlişki Problemine Dair”, p.397.

²⁹⁸ Nail Yılmaz, *Kentin Alevileri* (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2005), pp. 104–105.

²⁹⁹ Ayhan Yalçınkaya, *Alevilikte Toplumsal Kurumlar ve İktidar* (Ankara: Mülkiyeliler Birliği Vakfı Yayınları Tezler Dizisi, 1996), p. 163

the Alevi community had its own authority configuration which ordered relations in the group.

Murray Bookchin, founder of the social ecology movement within libertarian socialist or socialist anarchism and ecological thought, describes the existence of a hierarchical society between the organic (communal) and class societies. In that kind of hierarchical society, the stratification was based on blood ties. It was the primordial appearance of the patriarchy in which elders began to rule society as a collective whole.³⁰⁰ Bookchin states that the hierarchy was not institutionalized or embedded in the matrix of equality in that kind of societies. Elders sought to institutionalize their privileges and shamans appeared as a critical figure in the development of the social hierarchy, because “shaman solidified the privileges of the elders into the particularized of a special segment of that stratum.”³⁰¹ The three levels of animistic society, which were the sky, the earth and the underworld, were connected by a central axis, which materialized in the body of the shaman.³⁰² In other words, the shaman, who derived his authority from his hereditary magical skills, appeared as the incipient state.³⁰³

In this regard, it can be asserted that, the social life of the Alevi communities bore resemblance to Bookchin’s conceptualization of the primordial (hierarchical) society within the context of the Alevi *dedes*’ privileged roles as the incipient state. The power of the *dede* was based on the acceptance of their inherent superiority, which was consistent with primordial society’s basic tendencies and the

³⁰⁰ Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Warner; NH: Silver Brook Press, 2003), pp. 121-125.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³⁰² Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p.259.

³⁰³ Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom*, p.84.

social functions of the shamans. In this regard, although the nomadic communities had an authority configuration, they were not class societies, because the primordial blood oath, on which the nomadic societies were based, constrained the development of authority and domination to the class society, which was rested on economic exploitation on the basis of property.³⁰⁴

The social role of the Alevi *dedes* was in rapport with the characteristics of the organic/communal society more than the class society; therefore the social stratification of the society did not evolve.³⁰⁵ As Shankland states, in the Alevi community all women were equal to the men; however, a man (the *dede*) who was the reproducer of the tradition was superior to all men and women.³⁰⁶ Such an authority configuration, personalized with the existence of a holy man like the Shaman or the Alevi *dedes*, was a characteristic of nomadic society. The social functions of the Alevi *dedes* fulfilled the duties of the state and prevented the formation of a state mechanism, because the requirements of the state authority, such as stability, centralization and professionalism, occur when personal loyalties are transmuted into depersonalized institutions.³⁰⁷ As mentioned above, the political authority of the *dedes*, which was based on kinship and which bore the some characteristic of the organic society was more libertarian than class societies, relatively. In this context it can be asserted that the authority of the Alevi *dedes*, consistent with the authority configuration of nomadic society, was not based on obligation, but consent.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Ibid. , p. 87.

³⁰⁵ Reha Çamuroğlu, *Tarih, Heterodoksi ve Babailer* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1992), p. 70.

³⁰⁶ Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey*, p.10.

³⁰⁷ Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom*, p. 129.

³⁰⁸ For the basic characteristics of nomadic-sedentary relations in the Middle East context, See. İbn-i Haldun, *Mukaddime*, trans. Süleyman Uludağ (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2004).

The internal authority relations and customs in the community met the social functions of the central authority and restricted the Alevis' relations with the state.³⁰⁹ They reacted to the pressure of the central government by closing their community to non-Alevi persons and institutions within the context of their own traditions.³¹⁰ Except for that customs, endogamy reproduced the isolation of Alevi society as well. The existence of Alevi *dedes*' privileged positions kept them from establishing direct relations with the state, because some of the social functions of the state such as trial, punishment and reconciliation, were performed by the *dedes* informally. As Shankland states, the role of the Alevi *dedes* became synonymous with the rule of the central state in the Alevi community.³¹¹

Moreover, the Alevi *cem* ceremonies and the social role of *düşkünüük* (excommunication) under the direction of the *dede* regulated the own mechanism of the community which was based on social self-sufficiency and isolated life. A person could only be regarded as *düşkün* as a result of a "trial" in the *cem* ceremonies. Some of the crimes which could cause to consider as *düşkün* are to commit a murder, a burglary, adultery; to gamble, to foul someone's name; and to divorce unnecessarily.³¹² Despite the judgment of the *dede*, complaining in a court of law in order to resolve a question was a reason for *düşkünüük* which indicates the confrontational relation between the authority of the Alevi tradition and the central government. In this regard, Ayhan Yalçınkaya asserts that Alevism did not embrace the existence of external authorities like the state. It assumed an administrative organization on the basis of an ethical systematic. Thus, the Alevi communities did

³⁰⁹ Bozkurt, *Çağdaşlaşma Sürecinde Alevilik*, p. 41.

³¹⁰ Ocak, *Babailer İsyanı*, pp. 59–60.

³¹¹ Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey*, pp. 84 – 94.

³¹² Doç. Dr. Bedri Noyan (Dedebaba), *Bektaşılık Alevilik Nedir?* (İstanbul: Ant and Can Yayınları, 1995), pp.227–231.

not require a central authority and met its function with their ethical organizations. Under the direction of the *dedes*, the *cem* ceremonies undertook the social functions of the central authority and acted as a micro-state.³¹³

In this context, the archaic Alevism was based on alternative authority configurations which ordered the social life on the basis of customs under the direction of the *dedes*. The settlement of the Alevis and the institutionalization of the modern governance practices in the Tanzimat era and especially the early republican era brought to a standstill the authority comprehension of archaic Alevism; however, it remained until the 1950s. The urbanization process opened up the isolated Alevi villages and the traditional social life of the Alevis was broken.³¹⁴ The social institutions such as *dedelik*, *cem* ceremonies and *musahiplik* (brotherhood) were not able to be executed in the heterogeneity of the urban spaces. The dissolution of the archaic Alevi identity raised the question of how the Alevis integrated into modern life and the state apparatus.³¹⁵

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the populism of Ecevit offered an opportunity to the Alevis who sought to take their part in modern life. Becoming involved in the radical left movements became another way for the Alevis to survive in the urban areas. In his study about the political organization of Alevism, Sabır Güler writes that the opponent characteristics of the Alevi identity was formed in the tenth century; however, that antagonist feature was not ready to develop into politics every time. The emergence of that antagonism as a political force was firmly predicated on socio-political conjunctures.³¹⁶ In this respect, between 1950 and 1980

³¹³ Yalçınkaya, *Alevilikte Toplumsal Kurumlar ve İktidar*, p. 176.

³¹⁴ Güler, *Aleviliğin Siyasal Örgütlenmesi: Modernleşme, Çözülme ve Türkiye Birlik Partisi*, p.173.

³¹⁵ Metin Acar, *Alevi Toplumu ve Devlet İlişkisi*, p. 89.

³¹⁶ Güler, *Aleviliğin Siyasal Örgütlenmesi: Modernleşme, Çözülme ve Türkiye Birlik Partisi*, p.15.

when the archaic Alevism eroded, the political antagonism of the Alevism might have become a political force. In other words, the authority configurations of Alevism as an archaic character of the Alevi community might have assisted in the Alevis' participating in the radical left politics within the framework of the urbanization process.

The authority comprehension of the Alevis, which derived from the nomadic way of life, could have played a role in the relations between the Alevi community and socialist movements in the context of the 1960s and 1970s. There was an implied accordance between the left, which resisted social establishments and, the Alevis, who were outside of the sphere of external authorities and social establishments. Thus, the weakness of the Alevis' association with the central authority might have played a significant role in their affiliation with the left wing movements, which were resisted to social establishments.

The radical left organizations sought to establish an alternative system of community relations against the hegemony of the state. Their attempts found socio-cultural responds in the Alevi community which had lived outside of the central authority for the centuries. The similarities between the concepts of the treason to struggle and *düşkünlük* or notions of the comradeship and *musahiplik* indicate that overlapping. Thus, the accusations against leftist militants of being enemies of the state or traitors were meaningless for the Alevis. Indeed the accusation of traitor against the leftist militants and the charge of the fidelity for the Alevis overlapped.³¹⁷

The Alevi community's historical suppression by the political authorities, which was mentioned above briefly, contributed to their support of the radical left

³¹⁷ Murat Küçük, "Türkiye'de Sol Düşünce ve Aleviler" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce vol 8: Sol*, ed. Murat Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2007), p. 900

movements. The socialist discourse, which aimed at transforming the authority relations in favor of oppressed people, attracted the Alevi, whose daily practices and beliefs had been suppressed by the political authorities for long years. Therefore the political and cultural suppression of Alevism contributed to the Alevi's support to the socialist left movements as well. In another words the historical grievance of the Alevi became one of the grounds to the affiliation between the Alevi community and the left politics.

In this context, the traditional Alevism's way of life and historical suppression Alevism both politically and socially engendered the affiliation between the Alevi and the radical left movements. Therefore, the Alevi became more open to the discourses of the left politics. On the other hand, the Alevi community provided the opportunity to the left movements of the *halka gitmek* (to go to the people) within the context of the secular and local culture in the 1960s and the 1970s. It will be the other dimension of that relation.

The Needs of the Socialist Movements and the Response of the Alevi Community

In the 1960s the popularity of left-wing political movements grew. Ergun Aydınoglu, who was a political activist in the 1960s and who studies the left movements in Turkey, claims that 27 May military intervention altered the conceptualization of the policy and body politics became a larger part in the policy-making process. The intelligentsia, working class and leftist cadres as political actors of the left movements developed in those years within the context of Marxist literature's translation into Turkish. The left performed an organizational development through the existence of the Worker Party of Turkey, Revolutionary

Youth, *Yön* (Direction) periodicals and the National Democratic Revolution conceptualization in the 1960s as well. Moreover, the international conjuncture of the world, which was shaped by anti-imperialist national struggle movements and student activism, also nurtured the development of leftism in Turkey.³¹⁸ That is why the period between 1960 and 1980 was a unique era in which the left-wing political movements performed a continuous development.³¹⁹

The respectively libertarian socio-politic atmosphere of the country following the 27 May coup with the adoption of a new a constitution contributed to the development of left movements in Turkey. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the 1961 constitution did not limit democracy to regular elections and recognized basic rights and freedoms such as freedom of the press and the right to form unions. In this way it ensured safety for individuals to engage in political activity. Moreover, the 1961 constitution opened the door to the political movements which had been excluded from the political arena.³²⁰ The socialist movements were part of those.

The most important left-wing movements in Turkey in the early 1960s were *Yön* (Direction) periodical and the Worker Party of Turkey (WPT). *Yön* was published from 20 December 1961 to 30 June 1967. It created an intellectual mobilization in Turkish political thought.³²¹ *Yön* periodicals proposed a Kemalism

³¹⁸ Ergun Aydınöđlu, *Türkiye Solu: 1960–1971 Eleştirel Bir Tarih Denemesi* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1992), pp. 19–22.

³¹⁹ Ergun Aydınöđlu, *Türkiye Solu 1960–1980* (İstanbul: Versus Yayınları, 2007), p. 46.

³²⁰ The rise of the left movements in Turkey can not be explained with the 27 May coup and the 1961 constitution solely. Socio-economic factors like urbanization, the explosion of the birth rate after 1945 and the increase in the number of university students, the development of capitalism and the expansion of the working class were other factors which contributed the development of the left movements in the 1960s. Because the previous chapters discussed these factors, they are not repeated in this context.

³²¹ Although they were not the permanent writers of the *Yön* periodical, the some of the writers of the periodical like Çetin Altan, Sadun Aren, Behice Boran, Fethi Naci, Murat Sarıca, Kemal Tahir, Orhan Kemal, Yaşar Kemal, Fakir Baykurt, Aziz Nesin, Mahmut Makal, Rıfat İlgaz, Hasan Hüseyin Korkmazgil, Attila İlhan, Asım Bezirci, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Abdi İpekçi, İlhan Selçuk, Uğur Mumcu, İlhami Soysal, Mümtaz Soysal, Turan Güneş, Bahri Savcı, İbrahim Yasa, Mübeccel Kıray,

which was embellished with Marxist analysis on the basis of the anti-imperialist struggle and non-capitalist development path. Gökhan Atılğan regards the *Yön* movement as the Young Turks of the 1960s which had accepted the socialist development path. He adds that the power of *Yön* in the early 1960s stemmed from the radicalism of its strategy of power.³²² In his study about the *Yön* movement, Hikmet Özdemir underlines the same point and asserts that the most distinctive aspect of the *Yön* movement was their strategy of power which was based on the non-parliamentary struggle of the *zinde kuvvetler* (energetic power) that was constituted from the civil and military intelligentsia.³²³ In this regard, the non-parliamentary strategy of the *Yön* movement and its theoretical analysis influenced the *Milli Demokratik Devrim* (National Democratic Revolution) conceptualization, which was one of the sources of the student movements' radicalism in the late 1960s.

The other important leftist political force in the early 1960s was the Worker Party of Turkey (WPT), which was established on 13 February 1961 by the trade unionists. Because the political analysis of the WPT overreaches the scope of this study, the importance of it for the left will be mentioned briefly.³²⁴ The WPT introduced the leftist discourse and new ideological concepts such as class politics,

Nermin Abadan, Niyazi Berkes, Ali Gevgilli, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Taner Timur, Mete Tuncay, İdris Küçükömer, Mihri Belli (with the name of Erdal Tüfekçi) indicates to the intellectual aura of the *Yön* periodical. The political diversity of the *Yön* writers made difficult to propose an existence of the monolithic *Yön* movement; however, the political position of Doğan Avcıoğlu who was the editor of the periodical can be regarded as the political stance of the *Yön*. For the full list of the all writers, See. Hikmet Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı: Yön Hareketi*, (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986), pp. 328-333.

³²² Gökhan Atılğan, *Kemalizm ile Marksizm Arasında Geleneksel Aydınlar: Yön-Devrim Hareketi* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2002), p.329.

³²³ Hikmet Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı: Yön Hareketi*, (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986), p. 286–287.

³²⁴ For more detailed information about the political position of the WPT, See. Mehmet Ali Aybar, *Türkiye İşçi Partisi Tarihi* (İstanbul: BDS, 1988); Sadun Aren, *TİP Olayı 1961–1971* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1993); and Artun Ünsal, *Umuttan Yalnızlığa Türkiye İşçi Partisi 1961-1971* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 2002).

class analysis and social justice into the Turkish political arena.³²⁵ The leftist political discourse's representation in the Grand National Assembly with 15 deputies of the WPT created a public opinion. The existence of the WPT polarized the political parties on the basis of economic development and social justice, so it forced the political parties to make an ideological choice indirectly between being leftist or rightist.³²⁶ Thus, the existence of the WPT popularized the leftist discourse and took the political agenda to the left ideologically. Moreover, the political cadres of student activism flourished from the local organization of the WPT and the party acted as a school for the political cadre of student activism.³²⁷

Because of the WPT's rigid parliamentary position and party leaders' intention to behave within the legal framework and the rejection of non-parliamentary struggles, the party was unable to meet the dynamics of the political opposition. In this respect, the student activism was fulfilled by the National Democratic Revolution comprehension which was formulated by Mihri Belli, the leading activist of the Turkish left movement.³²⁸ It assumed the liquidation of the powers of the feudal landowners and the elimination of imperialism and its domestic compradors with a national and democratic revolution at the preliminary stage in order to found a socialist establishment. Indeed, it was not an original conceptualization and had similarities to *Yön*'s non-capitalist development strategy, Stalin's conceptualization of National Democratic Revolution and other national liberation movements in Cuba, Egypt, Algeria, and Vietnam ideologically; however,

³²⁵ Erkan Doğan, *Parliamentary Experience of the Turkish Labor Party*, M.A Thesis, Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkey, Boğaziçi University, 2000, p. 33.

³²⁶ Kemal Karpat, "Socialism and the Labor Party of Turkey", *Middle East Journal*, 21 (Spring 1967), p. 171.

³²⁷ Orhan Silier, "TİP'in 1961-1971 Dönemi Üzerine Bazı Notlar" in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* vol. 7, ed: Ertuğrul Kürkçü (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 1988), p. 2159.

³²⁸ Aydınoğlu, *Türkiye Solu 1960-1980*, pp. 127-147.

its distinctive character stemmed from its advocacy of guerilla warfare to take the power. “The National Democratic Revolutionaries advocated the armed struggle against the ruling classes to change the prevailing order for the first time in Turkish political history.”³²⁹

Under the ideological influence of the National Democratic Revolution conceptualization, the 1968 student activism took the leftist movements out of its traditional channel. Atıl Ant, who was a student activist of the 1968 movements, asserts that student activism drew apart from the political atmosphere of 27 May and created its own dynamism and political agenda in 1968.³³⁰ The growth of the new left forces in the second half of the 1960s should not be reduced to the emergence of student activism solely. The establishment of the *Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* (Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions) and the 15-16 June events indicated the radicalization of the struggle of the working class as well.

The National Democratic Revolution attracted student activism and met their dynamism in its preliminary stage; however it lost its initial appeal. The process of dissolution was opened by the division of Doğu Perinçek and his group and accelerated by the separation of Deniz Gezmiş (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu*, Turkish People’s Liberation Army) and Mahir Çayan (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi*, Turkish People’s Liberation Party-Front) groups. Although its appeal disappeared soonest, the debate on taking power through a guerilla movement within the armed struggle, which had been introduced to the Turkish left by the National Democratic Revolution indirectly, stood. Especially the groups of Mahir Çayan sophisticatedly formulated the needs of political violence within the context

³²⁹ Erkan Oktay, *A Comparative Study of the National Democratic Revolution Movement in Turkey*, M.A Thesis, Bogazici University Institute of Social Sciences, 1998, p. 100.

³³⁰ Alev Er, *Bir Uzun Yürüyüşü 68* (İstanbul: Gendaş, 1998), p. 23.

of the guerilla movement. An anti-imperialist armed struggle brought up the need for popular support in order to function it. In other words, the popular concept of the Turkish left “*halka inmek*” (go to the people) was introduced to the leftist literature in the late 1960s.

The concept of the people, as perceived by the Turkish leftists, consisted of different groups which differentiated from the strict Marxist class conceptualization. Indeed, the motivation of the Turkish leftist in the late 1960s resembles the Russian populist. In his article about the Russian Populism, M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu discusses the populism with reference to birth of the new kind of intelligentsia. In this article, Karaömerlioğlu deals with the Russian populist Lavrov’s theory which emphasized on the overlap between the individual attempt to seek pleasure and struggle to make the society better within the context of understanding the law of society. Thereby the relation between the social responsibility of the revolutionary intelligentsia and their individual motivation was established. In other words “the debts of intellectuals became the ethical motivation in the struggle for the emancipation of the people.”³³¹ Despite the vital differences between the Turkish and Russian social contexts, the motivations of Russian populist and Turkish revolutionist resembled the each other within the context of the “go to the people”. That situation raised the question of how the leftist militant would go to the people in order to operate an anti-imperialist armed struggle.

In this context, it will be asserted that the Alevi population and culture fulfilled that need of the left movements. At that point, the Kemalist characteristic of the left movements was an important factor in the affiliation between the left movements and the Alevi community. Kemalism was one of the factors which

³³¹ M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, “On Russian Populism”, *UCLA Historical Journal*, 16 (1996), p.136.

contributed to the ideological manner of the leftist movements. The student activists were under the influence of the national liberation struggle of the period in the Third World countries, and they evaluated the National Struggle as the pioneer of the age of national struggles. The leaders of radical left movements in 1968 activism recognized Atatürk as a national figure who had resisted British and French imperialisms in order to form an independent nation state. That is why they evaluated their movements as performing a second national war of liberation against imperialism.³³² Moreover, the legacy of the National Struggle provided a historical source to the leftist militants who were struggling against imperialist domination.³³³ Therefore, the myth of Kemalism provided an opportunity to the revolutionist within the context of the rewriting of history in order to create historical and legitimate resources for their struggle.

The Kemalist influence on the leftist movements was not only ideological. It needs to be analyzed from a wider perspective. It can be asserted that there was a Kemalist influence on the student activists which shaped their behavior and manners. The leaders of the 68 movements were the children of civil servants who had been born and who had grown up in the cities on a large scale. They usually came from middle class families where the parents were usually civil servants like teachers, public prosecutors and army officers.³³⁴ Due to their relations with the governmental authorities within the framework of their family's occupations and their educational

³³² The privileged role of Kemalism and the National Struggle can be followed through the writings of Mahir Çayan who was the most influential theoretician of the student activism in Turkey in the late 1960s. He evaluates Kemalism as the ideology of the radical petty-bourgeois and regards it as a revolutionist movement indirectly. See Mahir Çayan, *Teorik Yazılar* (İstanbul: Gökkuşluğu, 1996)

³³³ Nadire Mater, "Devrimci Gençlik Hareketi Üzerine Ertugrul Kürkcü ile Görüşme" in *Türkiye Sorunları Dizisi 2* (İstanbul: Alan Yayınları, 1987)

³³⁴ The social origins of student activists can be followed through the Bedri Baykam's conversation with them. See Bedri Baykam, *68'li Yıllar: Eylemciler* (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 1998) Moreover the memories of Gün Zileli who was an important figure of the *Aydınlik* movement indicates to the social origin leftist militants either. See. Gün Zileli, *Yarıma 1954-1972* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2000)

background, the student activists were open to the influence of Kemalist discourses and reflexes. One of the Kemalist reflexes which the activists gained was the evaluation of laicism as an axis for defining progressive versus conservative, modern versus traditional, and revolutionist versus reactionary categories.³³⁵

The Kemalist effect on the leftist militants internalized in practical terms was the starting point of the affiliation between the Alevi and the leftist movements. As a consequence of that Kemalist influence on the leftist militants, the people that the activists went should not be under the influence of orthodox-Islamic daily practices, like praying or fasting. In this regard, the Alevi community the daily practices of which were not affected by orthodox-Islam became the “people” of the leftist militant.

Indeed, the Kemalist feature of the left movements of the 1960s was firmly related to its anti-imperialist characteristic as well. İsmail Yeşilyurt, who was one of the leftist activists of the 1960s and 1970s in the Black Sea region, asserts that the basic characteristic of the 68 movements in Turkey was anti-imperialism.³³⁶ The anti-imperialist characteristic of the left movements was underlined by other militants like Ertuğrul Kürkçü, who was a student activist in the 1968 movements and the last chairman of the *Dev-Genç* (Revolutionary Youth).³³⁷

Gökhan Atılğan, who studies the leftist movements of the 1960s, asserts that more than fifty countries secured independence after the Second World War in Latin America and Africa. As a consequence of their national struggles’ influence, anti-imperialism became the main source of the left movements of Turkey in the

³³⁵ Binnaz Toprak, “The Religious Right” in *Turkey in Transition*, eds. İrvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak with translations by Rezan Benatar, İrvin Cemil Schick, Ronnie Margulies (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 218.

³³⁶ İsmail Yeşilyurt, interview by the author, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 14 July 2007.

³³⁷ Nadire Mater, *Devrimci Gençlik Hareketi Üzerine Ertuğrul Kürkçü ile Görüşme* in “Türkiye Sorunları Dizisi 2” (Istanbul: Alan Yayınları, 1987), p.16.

1960s in order to establish an ideological hegemony. This anti-imperialism of the left movements encouraged them to relate with Kemalism in order to gain legitimization. In that context the National Struggle was regarded as the first anti-imperialist war of the oppressed nations and its legitimacy was frequently cited.³³⁸

Moreover, the anti-imperialist struggle encouraged left movements to return to their local origins as places of resistance against the imperialist culture's penetration. The anti-imperialist struggles had to prove their indigenous aspects. The returning to local origins was necessary for the leftist militant in order to mobilize the people against imperialism. At that point, in the Turkish context, the Alevi culture represented to the socialist movements a secular and local origin which they needed.³³⁹

Thus, the socialist left, under the influence of Kemalist discourse which aimed to return to its local origins in order to struggle against imperialism and to establish a relation with the masses, would find a secular cultural origin which did not include daily religious elements. At that point the Alevi culture, which was outside of orthodox-Sunni values, provided an excellent opportunity to the left movements. It filled those gaps in leftist movements through representing a secular and local culture. It can be asserted that one of the elements which contributed to the relations between the Alevis and the radical socialist movements was this overlapping. As a result of this factor, the left activists, who went to the people and returned to their secular and local culture for this aim, used certain elements of Alevi culture as tools for their revolutionist struggle. Moreover, Alevi culture represented a sacred history to the leftist movements which consisted of rebellions. The left

³³⁸ Gökhan Atılğan, "Türkiye Sol Hareketinde Anti-Emperyalizm ve Bağımsızlıkçılık (1920–1971)" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce vol 8: Sol*, ed. Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2007), p. 681

³³⁹ Okan, *Türkiye'de Alevilik*, p. 100

movements would find a historical background in the Alevi rebellions. In that process, Pir Sultan Abdal, Seyh Bedrettin, Baba İshak and Nesimi became some of the icons of the left activists in the 1970s.

The relation between the Alevis and socialist left can be followed through the use of Alevi music. The employ of the Alevi *deyiş* (a kind of music) by the WPT in the election processes was a turning point in the history of the affiliation between the left movements and the Alevis. Henceforth, the music (Alevi *deyişes*) always connected the Alevis and the radical left. The transfer of the Alevi tradition to the next generation relied on oral culture which was materialized with the Alevi *deyişs*. Thus the Alevi *ozans* (poets) were positioned in a privileged rank as the carriers of the customs.³⁴⁰ In the 1960s and 1970s the *ozans* put their privileged positions into service to the radical left movements.

The use of the Alevi *deyişes* by the left parties started with the WPT's election propaganda through the Alevi *deyişs*. Pir Sultan Abdal's lyric "*Gelin Canlar Bir Olalım*" was vocalized by Ruhi Su and was employed by the WPT. It became one of the most popular songs of the leftist movement. The lyric clearly reveals how the left associated with the values of Alevism:

Gelin Canlar Bir Olalım

*Gelin canlar bir olalım
Münkire kılıç çalalım
Hüseyn'in kanın alalım
Tevekkeltü taalallah*

*Özü öze bağlayalım
Sular gibi çağlayalım
Bir yürüyüş eyleyelim
Tevekkeltü taalallah*

³⁴⁰ Ibid. , p. 67.

*Açalım kızıl sancağı
Geçsin Yezid'lerin çağı
Elimizde aş bıçağı
Tevekkeltü taalallah*

*Mervan soyunu vuralım
Hüseyn'in kanın soralım
Padişahın öldürelim
Tevekkeltü taalallah*

*Pir Sultan'ım geldi cuşa
Münkirlerin aklı şaşsa
Takdir olan gelir başa
Tevekkeltü taalallah³⁴¹*

In the 1970s the Alevi *ozans* whose former mission had been the transmission of the customs, became the voice of the socialist parties and organizations. Aşık Mahsuni, Aşık İhsani, Aşık Daimi, Aşık Zamani, Emekçi, Mehmet Koç and Abuzer Karakoç were the some of the Alevi *ozans* who dedicated themselves to the socialist struggle within the context of Alevi music. In that process the form of the Alevi *deyiş* was deeply transformed and many of the actual debates of the left movements took place in the Alevi *deyiş*. Aşık İhsani's dirge of Kızıldere event or Aşık Mahsuni's dirges about the Nurhak event and the death of İbrahim Kaypakkaya³⁴² or an unknown *ozan*'s critics of the Mao's theory of three worlds within the form of the Alevi *deyiş*³⁴³ were some examples of the relation between the Alevi culture and left movements within the context of music.

Some examples of the Alevi *deyişes* indicate the relation between the left and the Alevis through Alevi music. The lyrics of the *deyişes* might have not reveal the classic figure of Alevism, because they usually dedicated to the socialist struggle;

³⁴¹ *Pir Sultan Abdal Divanı* (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1995), p.110.

³⁴² Küçük, "Türkiye'de Sol Düşünce ve Aleviler", pp. 904-910.

³⁴³ Şükrü Aslan, interview by the author, İstanbul, Turkey, 08 April 2008.

however the melody of these *deyişes* clearly revealed their Aleviness. For example, Aşık İhsani's lyric *Taban Uyanıyor*,³⁴⁴ which was composed within the form Alevi music, was one of the example of the Alevi *deyiş* that was put into service on socialist struggle.

Taban Uyanıyor

*Çabalama be hey düzenbaz
Taban uyanıyor taban
Hele bir ayağa kalksın
Durduramaz onu baban*

*Sanma böyle kalacaksın
Alın teri çalacaksın
Ettiğini bulacaksın ulan
Taban uyanıyor taban*

*Niye benim bir işim yok
Niye senin göbeğin tok
Silahını ağzına sok ulan
Taban uyanıyor taban*

*Yeter bu açtığın yara
Alnıma çaldığın kara
Kendine bir delik ara ulan
Taban uyanıyor taban*

*Söylediğin yalana son
Eylediğin talana son
Yüzbin yüzbin, milyon milyon
Taban uyanıyor ulan taban!*

*Taban uyanıyor taban
Taban uyanıyor taban
Hele bir ayağa kalksın
Hele bir ayağa kalksın
Durduramaz onu baban...*

Aşık Zamani's call to leftist militant within the form of Alevi music is another example of the political Alevi *deyiş* which was written in the 1970s.

³⁴⁴ "*Taban Uyanıyor*" was also the name of Aşık İhsani's album which was released in the 1970s.

*Bak arkadaş madem girdin savaşa
Bin yara alsan da gene ağlama
Bir çember içinde tutarlar taşa
Esir düşsen bile yine ağlama*

*Denizde bir filo çıkar karşına
İçi düşman dolu hep sana bakar
Tetikler tepecek barutu kokar
Gözüne kan dolsa yine ağlama*

*Aklında ne varsa korkmadan söyle
Sende bilirsin gitmez bu böyle
Cephede hep zafer türküsü söyle
Namluyu temizle sakın ağlama*

*Toprakta kanın var bayrakta kanın
İşte şahididir tarihler bunun
Seni mahkum eden paralı kanun
Zindanda çürüsen bile ağlama*

*Zamani'yim bu düzenle var kavgam
Dinle dostum sana çokça sözüm var
Bizde nice Deniz'ler Mahir'ler doğar
Ölene matem yok sakın ağlama.³⁴⁵*

Parallel to the transformation of the Alevi *deyişs*, the left militants started listening to political Alevi music. They also started to grow moustaches like traditional Alevis.³⁴⁶

In this regard, the political affiliation between the radical left movements and the Alevis was established in the late 1960s and this affiliation increased in the popularization process of the radical left movements in the 1970s. In this context, the squatter settlements which had been established by the Alevi migrants such as the districts of 1 Mayıs and Gazi or the some of the Alevi villages in Anatolia became the fortified enclaves of the left movements. The relation between the Alevi community and socialist left movements can be followed with reference to its daily

³⁴⁵ Rıza Zelyut, *Halk Şiirinde Başkaldırı* (İstanbul: Sosyal Yayınlar, 1989), p. 382.

³⁴⁶ Reha Çamuroğlu, "Resmi İdeoloji ve Aleviler", *Birikim*, no: 105–106 (January-February, 1998) p.114.

projection. Investigation of the memoirs of the left wing activists and the political history of the squatter settlements formed by the Alevi migrants indicates the affiliation between the Alevis and the radical left politics.

Murat Küçük, who is a former editor of *Cem*, asserts that the relation between the radical left politics and the Alevis started with urbanization on a large scale.³⁴⁷ That is why the squatter settlements which were established by the Alevi migrants have an important place in order to understanding the relation between the radical left movements and the Alevi community.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the radical left movements sought to perform an alternative urbanization model through the formation of squatter settlements as liberated areas. In Istanbul, the districts of Gulsuyu, Gazi, Nurtepe, Okmeydanı and 1 Mayıs were constituents of the socialist movements' alternative urbanization plan where they were powerful. All of these settlements were established by Alevi migrants and the power of the radical movements in those districts indicated to the relation between the Alevis and the socialist left.

The district of Gazi was established in the early 1970s by the Alevi migrants who came from Tokat, Sivas and Tunceli. Cemal Demir, who migrated to the district of Gazi from Sivas, cites that the district was a political area and the radical socialist movements received popular support in Gazi from its establishment.³⁴⁸ The district was described as an area where socialist movements obtained common ground for organization in the surveillance files as well. The Gazi

³⁴⁷ Küçük, "Türkiye'de Sol Düşünce ve Aleviler", p. 898

³⁴⁸ Cemal Demir, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 16 February 2008

event, which resulted in the death of 18 people in March 1995, indicated the politicization of the district.³⁴⁹

Indeed, the establishment of the Gazi district resembled the formation of the 1 Mayıs districts in which the radical left movements were powerful. This district was established by migrants who mainly came from Sivas and Tunceli. In his field study about the establishment of 1 Mayıs as an area of urban social movement, Şükrü Aslan asserts that the district was a part of the socialist left movements' alternative urbanization plan. The Committee of People, which was an authority on the distribution of the land in the 1 Mayıs district, also indicated the hegemony of the socialist movements in the region. The existence of that committee and the establishment of the district became a model and other fortified enclaves of the radical socialist movements, like Alibeyköy, were established following that experience.³⁵⁰

In February 1980, the *Aydınlık*, a leftist daily newspaper, published a feuilleton about the "liberated areas" of the radical left movements. In that manner nine districts of Istanbul were investigated in details.³⁵¹ Okmeydanı which was established by the Alevi migrants who came from Sivas, Elazığ and Tunceli was one of the district that the newspaper. Okmeydanı was described as an area where the illegal Turkey Communist Party and *Devrimci Sol* (the Revolutionary Left)

³⁴⁹ For more detailed information about the Gazi districts and events, See Tamaşa Dural, *Aleviler ve Gazi Olayları* (Istanbul: Ant Yayınları 1995).

³⁵⁰ Aslan, *1 Mayıs Mahallesi, 1980 Öncesi Toplumsal Mücadeleler ve Kent*, pp. 101–125.

³⁵¹ That feuilleton was published between 18 February and 27 February 1980 in *Aydınlık*. The districts, which were investigated, were Kumkapı, Fener, 1 Mayıs, İzzetpaşa, Zeytinburnu, Okmeydanı, Gülsuyu, some districts of Kadıköy (Küçükbakkalköy and Göztepe) and some districts of Bakırköy (Kocasinan, Parseller, Haznedar and Bahçelievler)

organizations were powerful and where the people were not able to go their work alone, because of the safety of the life.³⁵²

İsmail Yeşilyurt, who was a political activist in the 1960s and 1970s, cites that the leftist militants were the initiators of the establishment of many squatter settlements in İstanbul. In this process the squatter settlements, the dwellers of which were both Sunni and Alevi, were established without any sectarian discrimination;³⁵³ however, only the Alevi squatter settlements such as the districts of Nurtepe, Okmeydanı, Gülsuyu, 1 Mayıs and Gazi, remained fortified enclaves of the radical movements. The political position of those districts indicates the affiliation between the Alevis and radical socialist movements.

The role of Alevism for socialist movements could be followed with reference to socialist activists' memories. Sevim Belli, who is the wife of Mihri Belli, was a prominent figure in the socialist struggle in the 1960s and 1970s. She translated many classical texts of Marxist literature into Turkish such as "The German Ideology", "A Contribution to the Critical of Political Economy", and "The Eighteen Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte". In the late 1970s she was a leading figure in the Mihri Belli's Turkey's Labor Party (TLP). In her memoirs, she cites that due to the problem of sugar beets in Tokat, the leftist parties sought to organize farmers within the context of agricultural problems; however, the leftist militants made propaganda in the Alevi regions of Tokat because they believed that only the Alevis supported them. She writes that, as a consequence of the affiliation between the socialist organization and the Alevi community, the Sunni leftist militants were ashamed of not being Alevi. Belli states that although she objected to that manner of

³⁵² *Aydınlık*, 23 February 1980.

³⁵³ İsmail Yeşilyurt, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 14.07.2007

the left militants and sought to propagandize in the Sunni regions of Tokat, they were not able to prevail over the Sunni farmers.³⁵⁴

Gün Zileli was one of the leaders of an illegal socialist movement known as *Aydınlıkçılar* (Enlightenmentists). There were theoretical debates in the socialist movements in the 1970s and *Aydınlıkçılar* remained Maoist. Consistent with their ideological comprehension, they sought to organize in rural areas. Zileli joined the *Aydınlıkçılar*'s rural organization effort in the villages of Pazarcık. Pazarcık was one of the district of Maraş in which the Alevi were living on a large scale. *Aydınlık* was not only socialist movement in Pazarcık. Other Maoist illegal movements of the period such as *Halkın Birliği* (The Union of People), *Halkın Kurtuluşu* (The Liberation of People) and *TKP– ML* (Communist Party of Turkey- Marxist Leninist) were active in that area as well. The radical groups' concentration on Pazarcık was indicative on the affiliation between the Alevi and left organizations. The composition of the reinforcement troops which came from Ankara to Pazarcık was interesting as well. Zileli introduces two of them to the readers. One of them was from Tunceli, the other was from Erzincan. Zileli underlines that both of them were Alevi like the people of Pazarcık.³⁵⁵ The landless peasants issue was one of the main problems of the socialist left movements' agenda in the 1970s in the rural areas. Although they claimed that, there were many villages populated by landless farmers, they usually were active in the villages where Alevi were living, like Pazarcık.

Although Alevism played a significant role for the inhabitants of Pazarcık in moving to the left, the socialist identity overcame in 10 villages where *Aydınlık* movement was powerful. The activists from the Alevi community derided the

³⁵⁴ Sevim Belli, *Boşuna mı Çiğnendik?* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1994), pp. 579–580.

³⁵⁵ Zileli, *Havariler*, pp. 214–218.

position of Alevi *dedes* and the traditional Alevi myths and rituals.³⁵⁶ It may be proposed that this was a general tendency. Although being an Alevi was one of the factors of remaining in the left wing movements, the Alevi identity would erode in this process and be replaced with socialist activism. In this context, the Alevi militants ignored their Aleviness in order to fulfill the requirements of being socialist.³⁵⁷ In other words, regardless of Alevi culture's influence on political preferences, the role of the socio-political struggle was more dominant in the 1970s because being socialist was more fashionable and functional for the activists, especially the migrants who had survived in the cities.

The analysis of Şükrü Aslan, who conducted a valuable field study on 1 Mayıs district and who was a left-wing activist in Erzincan region before the military coup, reveals another dimension of the affiliation between the Alevis and radical left movements. He asserts that because the Alevism was a forbidden identity until the 1990s, Alevis did not rely on the political authority which overlooked their existence. They believed that they did not belong to the political system. As a consequence of that prohibition, the Alevis drew close to left movements who were struggling for the rights of the oppressed people and who were prohibited, like them. In that process, the left movements were able to organize easily in Tunceli and the Alevi regions of Erzincan, Tokat, Sivas. He cites that the main actual ground of the affiliation between the Alevis and the left-wings movement in the late 1970s was the problem of safety of life. In these years the Alevi villages which opened up to the outside world were exposed to the attacks of right-wing militants. The socialist movements which were organizing in the rural areas sought to safeguard these

³⁵⁶ Ibid. , pp. 210 – 213.

³⁵⁷ Reha Çamuroğlu, “Türkiye’de Alevi Uyanışı” in *Alevi Kimliği*, eds. T. Olson, E. Özdalga and C. Raudvere (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), p. 99.

regions against the fascist assaults.³⁵⁸ Aslan's those analyses refer to another dynamics of the affiliation between the left wing movements and the Alevis. It was the assaults of rightist militants on the Alevi regions within the context of the National Action Party's civil war strategy.

A New Dynamic of the Affiliation between the Alevis and Left Movements:
The Nationalist Action Party's Civil War Strategy

The dynamics of the relation between the radical left-wing movements and the Alevis have been analyzed thus far. In the context of the 1970s, the Nationalist Action Party's (NAP) strategy of civil war was another factor which contributed to the affiliation between the Alevis and left movements. That policy of the NAP, which will be analyzed below, triggered the Alevis' tendency to take part in left movements in the 1970s.

Before analyzing the NAP's civil war strategy and the characteristics of its popular support, the privileged position of the state in the Orthodox-Sunni cosmology should be mentioned briefly. Although there are sufficient sociological and anthropological studies on Alevi culture and its social origins, Sunni Islam has not been evaluated in sociological terms. Indeed, Orthodox-Sunni Islam was regarded as the order of God; therefore, mostly theologizes have studied it. Because the scrutiny of Sunni Islam's social origins exceeds the limits and context of this study, Sunni doctrine's respect for the institutional authorities like the state will be mentioned briefly.

Jared Diamond, professor of geography and psychology, attempts to write a short history about everyone for the last 13,000 years in his book, "Guns, Germs and

³⁵⁸ Şükrü Aslan, interview by the author, İstanbul, Turkey, 08 April 2008

Steel.” In this study, he asserts that the combination of government and religion has functioned as one of the main sets of proximate agents leading to history.³⁵⁹ Diamond writes that institutionalized religion brings two important benefits to centralized societies. First the religion as a shared ideology “solve the problem of how unrelated individuals are to live together without killing each other- by providing them with a bond not based on kinship. Second it gives people a motive, other than genetic self-interest, for sacrificing their lives on behalf of others.”³⁶⁰ In this context, it can be asserted that all the institutionalized/orthodox religions have played vital roles during the formation process of centralized state. At that point, Şerif Mardin asserts that the political role of Islam was more stood in the forefront than other monotheist religion. He believes that because Sunni-Islam was based on an embryonic semi-urbanized structure, the politically connective role of Islam was more powerful than other monotheist religion. As a result of Islam’s political role, the state in Islam personified *Allah* (the God) symbolically and it became the state of God. In this context, being an infidel and being outside of the state became equal in respect of orthodox-Sunni cosmology.³⁶¹

While analyzing the Alevi and Sunni communities’ affiliation with the state, Shankland proposes that the existence of the *dede* in Alevi culture as mediator obstructs the direct relation between the Alevi community and the state. On the other hand, the Sunni community was associated with the forces of the state directly.³⁶² He goes on to say that the “Sunni way of life may frequently become synonymous with

³⁵⁹ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel* (New York; London: W.W. Norton&Company, 1999), p.267.

³⁶⁰ Ibid. , p. 278.

³⁶¹ Şerif Mardin, *Din ve İdeoloji* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları,1983), pp. 53 – 54.

³⁶² Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey*, p. 5.

the rule of the central state.”³⁶³ A retired mufti’s interpretation of Sunnis’ and Alevi’s manner about the election of the Caliph shows the Sunni Islam’s respect for legal authority:

First of all, *Ehli Sünnet* obeys the authority of the caliph, if he is chosen within the methods that are legally relevant. That is the way of the *Ehli Sünnet*. Thus *Ehli Sünnet* did not approve of the discussion on the authority of the caliph; however, Alevi always provoke this matter and harried the society.³⁶⁴

The interpretation of the mufti reveals not only the importance of the state, legality and order, but also the perception of the Alevi in the orthodox- Sunni comprehension. In this regard, the Sunni tradition’s emphasis on the state might have played a role about the Sunni community’s affiliation with the nationalist right movements, of which the *raison d’etre* (reason for existence) was to defend the national state from *brutum fulmen* (outsider enemy) and their communist agencies. In this regard, the mission of protecting the state which made its mark on the historical development of the nationalist movement until the 1980 military coup³⁶⁵ and the Orthodox-Sunni cosmology’s emphasis on the political authority overlapped.

The theoreticians of the *ülkücü* (idealist) movement indicated the privileged role of the state in their theory. Dündar Taşer, an influential theorist of the *ülkücü* movement, believes that the world of an *ülkücü* is made up of the state, which is the

³⁶³ Ibid. , p. 93.

³⁶⁴ “Her şeyden önce Ehli sünnet eğer bir kişi yasal yollardan halife seçilmişse, ona bi’at edilmesinin gerekliliğini kabul eder. Bu Ehli sünnetin çıkış yoludur. Böylece halife konusunda ihtilafı doğru bulmamıştır. Ancak Alevi denen zümre bu olayı devamlı kurcalamış, topluma rahatlık vermemiştir.” Orhan Türkođan, *Alevi-Bektaşî Kimliđi: Sosyo-Antropolojik Araştırma* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 1995), p.425.

³⁶⁵ Tanıl Bora, Kemal Can, *Devlet Ocak Dergah – 12 Eylül’den 1990’lara Ülkücü Hareket* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 1991), p. 39.

Turkish nation's source of power.³⁶⁶ According to the *ülküçüs*, the aim of the nationalist movement was to protect the state from foreign powers and communists in the 1970s. Although when the *ülküçüs* were rarely victimized by the state, they had never accepted criticism of the state as a political institution. For example, even though the Associations of Hearths of Ideal (*Ülkü Ocakları Derneği*) was dissolved as a consequence of the military intervention on 12 March, the *ülküçüs* did not hold the state guilty; they accused İsmet İnönü and leftists of trying to seize the state insidiously.³⁶⁷

The *ülküçü* movement, the main aim of which was to protect the state, targeted communists as a basic threat to the safety of the state. For the nationalist activists in the rural areas, the perception of communist was identical to that of the Alevis. Mustafa Çalık's field study on the NAP's socio-cultural bases in Gümüşhane indicates this perception clearly. All the *ülküçüs* that Çalık interviewed had had a negative leftist teacher image in their school life. They described their leftist teacher as having been the exact opposite of an ideal Muslim both politically and culturally. They mentioned that these teachers did not fast during Ramadan nor did they perform the *namaz* (prayer); more importantly, they did not take Islamic values seriously. According to *ülküçü* activists, the appearance of these teachers was also antipathic. At that point they identified the teachers with Alevis. They underlined that the teachers grow moustaches like the Alevis, whom they did not like.³⁶⁸ Being leftist, communist, atheist, outsider, traitor and Alevi became equal in the perception

³⁶⁶ Dündar Taşer, "Yeni Kavga Derdinin Ümidi Yine Ülkücü Gençliktir", *Devlet*, 26 June 1972, number: 148. quoted by Hakkı Öznur, *Ülkücü Hareket: Yayın Organları, Makaleler, Temel Kavramlar vol. 4* (Ankara: Alternatif Yayınları, 1999), p.99

³⁶⁷ Hakkı Öznur, *Ülkücü Hareket: Teşkilatlar ve Mücadeleler, cilt: 2* (Ankara: Alternatif Yayınları, 1999), pp. 315 – 318

³⁶⁸ Mustafa Çalık, *MHP Hareketi-Kaynakları ve Gelişimi 1965-1980* (Ankara: Cedit Neşriyat, 1995), pp.131- 149

of *ülkücü* activists. That perception of the nationalist activist triggered to their engagement in the NAP's civil war strategy.

While analyzing the *ülkücü* movement's mass support in the urban areas, Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları mentions a report of the Associations of Hearths of Ideal which stated that "the individuals who feel lonely in society and seek a circle for support, as well as those who are despised and scorned, may desire to take place within an organization and partake its strength and solidarity. Leaders must be sensitive to this and know how to channel such individuals" In this account, Ağaoğulları proposes that "many of *ülküçüs* had migrated from villages to cities and had been faced with the culture shock and maladjustment. They sought to realize their aspirations and resolve their identity problems through the authority of a leader, group solidarity and scapegoating of internal enemies."³⁶⁹

Kemal Can believes *ülkücü* militants sought to resolve their identity problems through group solidarity and political activism and they gained power through participating in Ideal Hearths. He adds that these people's political preferences as *ülkücü* were shaped by chance or environmental conditions.³⁷⁰ Indeed the traditional values of migrants which grew out of rural life were one of the factors behind their political preferences in the cities. At that point, Sunnism as a sectarian identity was one of characteristics of the *ülkücü* militants which shaped their political preferences in the cities.

Within the context of the Alevis' affiliation with the left and the Sunni cosmology's some evolutions' accordance with the nationalist right; the NAP was

³⁶⁹ Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları, "The Ultranationalist Right" in *Turkey in Transition*, eds. İrvin C. Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak, trans. Rezan Benatar, İrvin Cemil Schick, Ronnie Margulies (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.204

³⁷⁰ Kemal Can, "Radikal Milliyetçiliğin En Büyük Örgütü: Ülkü Ocakları" in *Türkiye'de Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2001), p. 216

able to enforce its civil war strategy in the 1970s. Even though the Sunni cosmology was one of the factors which established the relations between Sunnis and the nationalist right, the socio-economic conditions of the period mainly established the Sunni community's affiliation with the nationalist right. The newly emerging capitalism in Anatolia and the political strategy of the NAP shaped this relationship.

Nicos Pouluntzas argues that fascist movements find their mass support from the middle classes, who feel the threat of capitalism and becoming proletariat.³⁷¹ This argument was valid in the Turkish context in the 1970s in order to explain the rise of the *ülkücü* movement in central Anatolia and the metropolises. Turkey experienced a capitalization process from the 1950s and the *ülkücü* movement was an indirect result of that process. The urbanization process, which incorporated the countryside to the national economy, was a vital element behind the popular support of the *ülkücü* movement.³⁷²

In their study about the nationalist movement, Tanıl Bora and Kemal Can propose that the traditional propertied classes of the central and eastern Anatolian cities lost their stability as a consequence of the capitalization process. The traditional elements like artisans, craftsmen, some sections of mid-sized industry and tradesmen were not able to adapt to the capitalist development. Their reaction to the capitalization process became the source of the NAP. The mass support of the *ülkücü* movement would consist of these segments in the late 1970s.³⁷³ In this context, the *ülkücü* movement can be considered as a reaction of the small capital owners to capitalist development and its modern way of life. They embraced traditional and local cultural elements against the capitalist expansion. However there was an extra

³⁷¹ Nicos Pouluntzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, trans. Judith White (London: Verso, 1979), p.240.

³⁷² Gürel, *Political Mobilization in Turkey in the 1970s: The Case of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents*, p. 7.

³⁷³ Bora and Can, *Devlet Ocak Dergâh – 12 Eylül'den 1990'lara Ülkücü Hareket*, pp. 52 – 53.

element in the Turkish context in the 1960s and 70s. It was the rise of an Alevi middle class which combined religious identity and class position.³⁷⁴

Before the capitalization process, the Sunnis, who had dominated the economic sphere due to their traditionally onward position, had gained an advantageous position. As a result of the newly emerging capitalism in the central Anatolian cities in the 1970s, some of the traditional Sunni small capital owners lost their position and faced the threat of becoming proletariat. On the other hand, both capitalization and urbanization dissolved the isolated life of the Alevis and they became visible as elements of a middle class or central and local bureaucracy. Because the downfall of some of the segments of Sunni traditional capital owners and the visibility of the Alevis overlapped, Sunni small capital owners targeted the Alevis as others who dislocated the traditional order.³⁷⁵ Thereby, the general Alevi perception of the Sunni community was reinforced by the socio-economic conditions of the 1970s.

The accordance between the socio-economic conditions of the 1970s and Sunni cosmology's general tendencies was stirred by the NAP's political strategy, which caused the outbreak of a low intensity civil war. Although the NAP increased its votes from 3.38 % to 6.42 % in the 1977 elections, its leadership became aware of the fact that they would not be able to take power by elections. Therefore, they planned to enforce a civil war strategy aimed to bring them to power with a right wing military coup. For this aim, the NAP used political violence against the leftist forces in order to increase political tension. To mobilize the Sunni Muslims against the

³⁷⁴ "Maraş'tan Sonra...?", *Birikim*, number: 46 – 47, December 1978-January 1979, pp. 39 – 40.

³⁷⁵ Bora and Can, *Devlet Ocak Dergâh – 12 Eylül'den 1990'lara Ülkücü Hareket*, pp. 69 – 70.

Alevi and the leftist forces was the main characteristic of the NAP's civil war strategy.³⁷⁶ In his master thesis about the Maraş incidents, Burak Gürel writes that,

In these accounts, the economic rise of the Alevi and their increasing visibility in the public sphere (stemming from their migration from the villages to the cities and the upward mobility of Alevi 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 Alevi as their enemies.³⁷⁷

Especially the Çorum- Gaziantep-Erzurum triangle, where the Sunni and Alevi animosity was intense, suffered massacres among these were Maraş (1978), Malatya (1978), Sivas (1978) and Çorum (1980), which were briefly mentioned in the Chapter Two. This strategy of the NAP both reinforced its affiliation with the Sunni community and intensified the influence of the sectarian identities on political preferences. As a consequence of the NAP's strategy, especially in the rural areas of the Anatolia, the relationship between the Alevi and the left movements deepened in the 1970s.

To sum up, Alevism can be regarded as the reassessment of Islam within the framework of the nomadic way of the life. As a consequence of nomadic characteristics, the Alevi community did not establish strong relations with the centralized authorities. They had their own authority configurations which were based on the customs under the direction of the Alevi *dedes*. These authority configurations were politicized in the sixteenth century with the influence of the Safavid propaganda. The socio-political culture of the Alevi community which was

³⁷⁶ Ömer Laçiner, "Malatya Olayı-Türkiye'de Faşist Hareketin Yapısı ve Gelişimi", *Birikim*, number: 39, (May 1978), pp. 15-16

³⁷⁷ Gürel, *Political Mobilization in Turkey in The 1970s: The Case of the Kahramanmaraş Incidents*, p. 4

shaped by the nomadic way of life and Safavid propaganda was awakened by the socio-political development of Turkey in the 1960s and the 1970s. Moreover the historical repression of the Alevi community by the political authorities became another factor of the affiliation between the Alevis and the socialist movements. In this context, the Alevis drew close to the radical left movements, which struggled against the social establishment in favor of oppressed peoples.

The 1960s and the 1970s were years of the rapid change during which the left emerged as a political actor. Different political movements formulated various revolutionary tactics which came together at the point of the “go to the people” within the context of an anti-imperialist struggle. As a consequence of the Kemalist effect on the leftist groups both politically and socially, the “revolutionary” people of the leftist movements became the Alevis who were not under the influence of the “reactionary” orthodox-Islamic daily practices. Moreover, the Alevi culture provided a sacred history to the left that consisted of rebellions.

Thus the characteristics of the Alevi culture which was awakened by the socio-political environment of the 1960s and 1970s and the needs of the left movements overlapped, and the affiliation between the Alevis and left movements was established. That affiliation was reinforced by the civil war strategy of the NAP which targeted the Alevi community. Because the decline of some of the segments of the Sunni traditional capital owners and the visibility of the Alevis overlapped, Sunni small capital owners targeted the Alevis as others who displaced the traditional order. That disquiet of the Sunni petty bourgeois became the source of the NAP. It enforced a civil war strategy in order to come to power through a rightist military coup which was based on mobilizing the Sunni Muslims against the Alevis. This strategy of the NAP intensified the influence of the sectarian identities on political preferences and

reinforced the Alevis' affiliation with left politics. Thus, Alevism was equated with being leftist within the context of the 1970s.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Turkey experienced a rapid social and physical mobilization in the period between 1960 and 1980. These years also witnessed the dissolution of the traditional Alevism which was based on the isolated rural life. The erosion of the traditional Alevism was the result of urbanization which made its mark on the period. The social dynamics of Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s associated the dissolution of the Alevism and social mobilization of Turkey within the context of urbanization; therefore, the Alevis mainly remained a part of left-wing politics in that period. In this thesis the overlaps between the Alevism and the left politics was examined within the context of the socio-political environment of Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s.

The urbanization did not only shape the socio-political environment of Turkey in the 1970s, but also broke up the traditional lifestyle of the Alevis. The traditional Alevi culture derived from the isolated life of the Alevis in rural areas. It was based on the execution of the social relations in a closed/isolated society without any need to external/central authorities. Therefore, the erosion of the traditional Alevism, as a consequence of urbanization, enabled the Alevi community's integration to the centralized modern government. The crisis of the Alevi community in the 1960s and the 1970s mainly derived from the opening of their isolated life, dissolution of their traditional cosmology, and integration to the apparatus of centralized government and modern life conditions. The affiliation between the Alevis and the left wing politics within the context of the 1960s and the 1970s, which

corresponded to the erosion of traditional Alevism, enabled to Alevis' integration to the urban areas in a limited sense, and to the modern life and apparatus of the centralized government in a wider perspective. In other words, the Alevis's relation with left politics could be regarded as a kind of strategy in order to integrate to the modern centralized government. Because the affiliation between the Alevis and the left politics was established within the context of urbanization, the urbanization process is the starting point of that study.

The rapid urbanization of Turkey created a dualistic structure in the urban areas between the marginal and formal sectors which referred to the divide between urban dwellers and migrants on a large scale. Marginality to the city in the areas of the employment (informal occupations) and housing scene (the *gecekondus*) revealed the adoption problems of the migrants to the city. Political identities and actions were some of the elements of the strategies which were used by the migrants in order to surmount their marginality to the cities. First of all, political actions provided an opportunity for the urban migrants to establish formal relations with government and official organizations politically. Indeed to be recognized formally by the government was the one of the main criterion between the marginal sector and formal sector which was obtained through the political action. Thus, the political action played a vital role in the urbanization process of the migrants which can be regarded as the transition from informal/marginal living and working conditions to formal living spaces.

The urbanization process broke up the communal relations of the migrants. Their need for network and community bonding became the main catalyst of the politicization and the urban newcomers found that collective ties in their primordial relation forms. In another words, the adjustment process of the migrants to the city

politicized the traditional culture of them within the context of the urban needs. Thus, sectarian identities of the migrants as a component of traditional culture became one of the factors which affected the political preferences of the urban newcomers. In this context the Alevis mainly remained the leftist political movements in the 1970s. This study examined the dynamics of the affiliation between the Alevis and the left politics.

The existence of the Unity Party of Turkey (UPT) invested the relation between the Alevis and the left politics with interest. Although the UPT was a center left party which addressed the Alevis indirectly, Alevis did not support it. The relation between the Alevis and the UPT supplies new expansion in order to understand the affiliation between the Alevi community and the leftist political movements within the context of that question: why did they prefer to vote for the RPP or to participate in radical left movements instead of supporting the UPT? The political history of the UPT answers that question.

The Unity Party was formed as a center party which attached importance to the problems of the Alevi community. In 1969, Mustafa Timisi's election as the leader of the UP meant an intensive ideological transformation from a center party to a social democrat party. Under the leadership of Timisi, the UPT moved to more left, parallel to the political position of the Alevi community; however, the election results showed that the Alevi community did not support the UPT. They supported either the RPP or the radical left movements politically. Furthermore, the UPT's move to the left broke the connection between the party and the traditional Alevi elites, who were ridiculed by the leftist Alevis. It seems that the UPT's political inefficiency mainly stemmed from this antagonism. The Alevi community mainly moved to the left in parallel with the dissolution of the traditional Alevism; however

the UPT was not able to benefit from that move, because it was met by the RPP and illegal socialist movements. Furthermore the traditional Alevi elites, whose authority was shaken by reason of that ideological leaning, were moved away from the UPT as well. Therefore, the UPT was unable to gain the support of the Alevis whether leftist or traditional in the 1970s.

The affiliation between the Alevis and the left politics in the 1970s should be analyzed in two dimensions. One of them is the Alevi community's support of the RPP; the other is the relation between the Alevis and the socialist organization. The affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP can be dated back to the early republican era. It can be asserted that the Alevis have embraced the RPP since the new republic was formed. The basis of the positive relation between the RPP and Alevis stems from the secularist policies and reforms of the new republic under the leadership of this party at the early republican era. These policies of the early republican government established a legal framework in which the Alevis felt more secure. Furthermore, the relative decay in the power of Sunni Islam during the early republican era is viewed as a factor that contributed to the relative improvement of the situation of the Alevis. In that manner, an affiliation between the Alevis and the RPP was founded in the early republican era.

In the context of the 1970s, the leadership of Ecevit reinforced the historical association between the Alevis and the RPP. Ecevit's highly popular *Karaoğlan* image and his populist discourse, which was based on an antagonism between the people and the power block or state, aimed to provide an integration between the people and the state. This populist discourse was meaningful for the Alevis, whose traditional culture and isolated way of life was disappearing. In that manner, Ecevit's conceptualization of a binary opposition between the state and people and his

promise to the incorporation of the masses and the state were meaningful for the Alevis, who were taking their place in the modern state. Thus, Ecevit's populist discourse enabled the Alevis' integration into modern life. Therefore, the period of Ecevit became the golden years of the relation between the Alevis and the RPP.

Supporting Ecevit's RPP was not the only preference of the Alevi migrants in their efforts to integrate into the urban areas. In the 1970s, the squatter settlements which had been established by the Alevi migrants became liberated areas of the socialist movements. Furthermore, in the rural areas, the socialist movements usually preferred to organize in Alevi villages. The affiliation between the Alevis and the socialist movements stemmed from the overlap between the nomadic features of the Alevism and the needs of the socialist movements in their anti-imperialist struggle within the context of the 1970s.

Alevism can be regarded as the reassessment of Islam within the context of the nomadic way of life. In that manner, the cosmology of Alevism and lifestyle of the traditional Alevi community derived from the nomadic way of life. The weak relation with the centralized authorities, like state, is one of the main characteristics of the nomadic life. The functions of the central authority are executed by the customs under the leadership of a holy man in nomadic societies whose equivalent was the *dedes* in the Alevi community. These authority configurations were politicized in the sixteenth century with the influence of the Safavid propaganda. The socio-political culture of the Alevi community, which was shaped by the nomadic way of life and Safavid-Shiism effect, was awakened by the socio-political development of Turkey in the 1960s and the 1970s. Moreover the political repression of Alevism by the political authorities contributed to the affiliation between the Alevis and the socialist movements. In that context, the Alevis drew close to the

radical left movement, which struggled against the social establishment in favor of oppressed peoples.

The 1960s and the 1970s were years of the development of the leftist mass movements as well. Different political movements formulated various revolutionist tactics which came together at the point of the “go to the people” within the context of an anti-imperialist struggle. The people to whom the left activist went should be secular as a consequence of Kemalist effect on the left movements. That Kemalist effect stemmed from both the theoretical apprehension of the left movements and social statutes of its leaders in the late 1960s. The left movements regarded the National Struggle as the pioneer of the anti-imperialist liberation wars which inspired to their socialist struggle. More importantly, the leadership of the socialist movements in the late 1960s was the university students who came from the urban middle class society and whose parents are civil servants on a large scale. As a consequence of their educational backgrounds and their family’s occupational structure, they were open to the Kemalist reflexes. Evaluation of laicism as a criterion for defining revolutionist versus reactionary was one of the Kemalist reflexes which affected the socialist activists. In this context, the Alevism represented an excellent local and secular culture to the socialist movements which was outside of the daily appearance of the orthodox-Sunni Islam and which was consisted of many rebellions against the political authorities. That ideological legacy was taken over by the socialist movements in the 1970s.

In this regard, the socialist movements and the Alevi community came together within the socio-political context of the 1960s and the 1970s. Furthermore, the civil war strategy of the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) which targeted the Alevi community contributed to that relation as well. Because the decline of some of the

segments of the Sunni traditional capital owners as a result of capitalization and visibility of the Alevis as a consequence of the urbanization overlapped, Sunni small capital owners regarded the Alevis as others who had dislocated their traditional order. That anxiety of the Sunni petty bourgeois was directed by the NAP. The NAP, which had given up coming the power through periodical elections, enforced a civil war strategy in order to come to power through a rightist military coup. That strategy, which was based on mobilizing the Sunni Muslims against the Alevis, strengthened the Alevis' affiliation with left politics.

When the affiliation between the left politics and Alevism was established, the identity of Alevism eroded and changed place with the supporter of the left politics. In other words, although being Alevi was one of the factors for remaining in the left politics, Alevism lost its meaning and assimilated into the collectivity of being leftist. Thus, being Alevi equated with being leftist within the context of the political polarization of Turkey in the 1970s. In this regard, the 1960s and the 1970s experienced the politicization of the Alevism; however that politicization did not emerge as an independent identity and the Alevis engaged with the left-wing political movements. In other words, it referred not to the politicization of the Alevism as an identity, but to the politicization of the Alevis. Therefore it was regarded as a “circuitous” Alevi politics in that thesis.

The socio-political environment of Turkey today is radically different from the 1970s. Furthermore, the social position of the Alevis has deeply changed from the 1980s. In that manner, is it possible to establish a similar relation between the Alevis and the left politics today? The 1980s witnessed the emergence of the identity politics all over the world. In Turkey, the occurrence of the independent Alevi politics which evaluated Alevism as a source of an identity politics was a result of

that worldwide trend. In this context, “*Alevici*” (Alevist) political movements which organized within the framework of a self-determining Alevi identity damaged the affiliation between the Alevis and the left politics. It does not mean that the relation between the Alevis and the left politics has disappeared. It indicates that the dynamics of that relationship which were experienced in the 1970s have deeply changed. The political position of the Alevis today should be examined through the current socio-political conditions and the Alevis’ position in that environment which is the matter of another study. However, the analysis of that thesis may contribute to both the recent political position of the Alevis and to the role of the socio-cultural elements in political preferences.

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