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## Turkish Left between Two Military Interventions: From 27 May 1960 to 12 March 1971

*İki Askeri Müdahale arasında Türk Solu: 27 Mayıs 1960'tan 12 Mart 1971'e*

### Abstract

The traditional periodization of Turkish political history after 1945 identifies military interventions of 1960, 1971 and 1980 as its main turning points. This is also true for the history of socialism in Turkey in the multi-party era. Socialism in Turkey became a publicly visible political force after the military coup of 1960. The military intervention of 1971 represented a rupture within this history. After a period of interregnum, socialism revived again; but this revival was crushed very harshly, this time, by the military coup of 1980. In this article, the focus is on the history of socialism in Turkey between 27 May 1960 and 12 March 1971. While elaborating on main socialist groups in Turkey in the 1960s, their alternative methods of attaining political power is also discussed.

**Keywords:** Turkey, 27 May 1960, Socialism, Power Strategies

**Jel Code:** Y8, Y9

### Özet

1950 sonrası Türkiye siyasal tarihinin dönemlendirilmesinde geleneksel yaklaşım 1960, 1971 ve 1980 askeri müdahalelerini temel dönüm noktaları olarak ele alır. Aslında bu türden bir dönemlendirmeyi sosyalizmin Türkiye'deki tarihi için de yapabiliriz. Sosyalizm 1960 askeri darbesinden sonra Türkiye kamuoyunda gözle görülebilir bir siyasal güç haline geldi. 1971 askeri müdahalesi bu tarih içerisinde bir kırılmaya işaret eder. Bir ara dönemden sonra sosyalizm, 1970'lerin geri kalan döneminde tekrar bir canlanma gösterdi. Fakat bu yeniden canlanma bu kez 1980 askeri darbesiyle sert bir şekilde ezildi. Bu makalede, Türkiye'de sosyalizmin 27 Mayıs 1960 ve 12 Mart 1971 arasındaki tarihine bakılmaktadır. Bu dönemde sosyalizmin belli başlı akımları üzerinde durulurken aynı zamanda onların iktidarın nasıl ele geçirilmesi gerektiği konusundaki farklı yaklaşımları da ele alınmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** biyoiktidar, biyopolitika, sosyal politika, güvencesizleşme, yönetimsellik.

**Jel Kodu:** Y8, Y9

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## Introduction

The historical origins of socialism in the Ottoman-Turkish context can be extended back to the turn of the 19th century. But the decade following 1960 constitutes a unique period in the history of socialist movement in Turkey. After the military coup of 1960 socialism appeared as one of the major ideological and political currents of thought in Turkey and attracted many people. The left gained momentum at the very beginning of the 1960s and in the following years, and its influence was felt at different levels of Turkish society. The involvement of radical leftist political groups in domestic politics increased considerably, as they were able to propagate their ideas and distribute their publications more freely. Relatively more liberal political atmosphere of the period following the military coup of 1960 was reflected in the Turkish press and literature. The publication of works sympathetic to leftist and progressive ideas flourished. The politicization of the intelligentsia, students, and even workers accelerated. However, the period that started with the military coup of 1960 ironically came to an end with the military intervention of 1971. The government which was formed after the intervention reacted to leftist groups with massive repression. Thousands of intellectuals, students and workers were persecuted and suppressed. This article gives a brief overview of socialism in Turkey in the 1960s by focusing on its main factions and their leading names with a focus on their alternative strategies of coming to power in Turkey. But first it provides a general political historical analysis of Turkey in the 1960s with an emphasis on the military coup of 27 May 1960, the 1961 Constitution and the ideologically fragmented political climate of the period.

### 1. Turkey in the 1960s

The 1960s were experienced in Turkey, like in many other countries, as a decade of rapid change. In the Turkish case, the decade was inaugurated by the 27 May 1960 military coup. Although, the military coup of 27 May 1960 did not change the basic foundations of the republic as it was established in 1923, the way politics was carried out was transformed in a quite radical way. The military takeover was supported by a broad coalition composed of civil-military bureaucrats, intellectuals, big industrial and business circles of Istanbul and the majority of the constituents of the Republican People's Party (RPP) (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*). Most of the leftist intellectuals of the period also welcomed the military intervention and the 1961 Constitution. For example, Behice Boran (1968: 59-60), one of the most important leaders of the Workers Party of Turkey (WPT) (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*), considered the coup as a significant event in Turkish political history since it gave the Turkish people a comprehensive constitution, and gave the Turkish socialist movement an important opportunity to organize itself, disseminate its ideas and bring out its publications freely within a legal framework. Mehmet Ali Aybar, who later became the chairman of the WPT, was of the same opinion. In an open letter to President Cemal Gürsel on 19 November 1960, he (1968: 179-188) was portraying the intervention of 27 May as a progressive movement, which, he also believed, would allow establishing socialist parties in Turkey.

Its actors and supporters did not prefer to see the 27 May military intervention as a coup and preferred to identify the military takeover with the notion of revolution (*inkılap*), with the hope of elevating its status in the Turkish public imagination. The coup and its supporters tried to justify the military intervention into politics by describing it as a legitimate and necessary act of putting an end to the increasingly corrupted, oppressive and reactionary Menderes government of the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> The officers' justification for the intervention, first stated in a radio broadcast on 27 May, was as follows: "Owing to the crisis into which our democracy has fallen and owing to the recent sad incidents and in order to prevent fratricide, the Turkish armed forces have taken over the administration of the country. Our armed forces have taken this initiative for the purpose of extricating the parties from the irreconcilable situation into which they have fallen" (quoted in Weiker, 1963: 20). Just after

justification of the removal of the DP government from power was also reinforced by references to the historical role and mission assigned to the Turkish military. The officers were seeing themselves as the guardians of the state, the regime and its official ideology, Kemalism, against the “praetorianism, instability, inefficacy, careerism, populism, lack of prudence, corruption, and irresponsibility” of civilian politicians (Cizre, 1997: 156). As Keyder (1987(a):46) puts it, “the officers who carried out the coup of 27 May 1960 were, ideologically, the direct descendants of the CUP ... Their conception of social change was derived from the authoritarian, etatist ideology of the CUP- RPP elites.” They believed that it was “their historical mission to intervene and save the state from usurpers who relied on the supporters of an ignorant electorate.”

According to its proponents, the intervention did not just simply put an end to the “unlawful Menderes rule”, but also transformed and re-regulated the political institutions of the regime and led to a radical change in the social and political atmosphere of the country, through making and implementing a new constitution (the 1961 Constitution) and new political institutions. The new constitutional design reflected the victors’ intention of controlling political parties and politicians through a new system of check and balances. The concentration of power at the hands of ‘irresponsible’ politicians would be prevented by dispersing and differentiating power with the creation of the Constitutional Court, which would review the constitutionality of legislation, the National Security Council, which would allow the military High Command having a constitutional role in government, and a bicameral parliament, composed of the National Assembly and the Senate.

For the supporters of the 27 May coup, the 1961 Constitution had a very strong social and democratic content, which had never been seen in Turkey before.<sup>2</sup> Under the new constitution, it was argued, a wider spectrum of political activity would be tolerated, and the citizens would now enjoy a remarkable degree of freedom and more civil rights. The new constitution contained guarantees of freedom of thought, expression, association and publication as well as other democratic liberties. It was within this new political liberalization that universities were guaranteed greater autonomy; students were given the freedom to organize their own associations; trade unions were given the right to strike and engage in collective bargaining. For the socialists of the sixties, the 1961 constitution also had a very strong social dimension; it was progressive, in favor of the people and did not present an obstacle to social development. According to the spokespersons of the WPT, for instance, the new constitution was charging the state to remove all political, economic, and social obstacles restricting the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual in such a way as to be incompatible with the principles of individual well-being, social justice and the rule of law; and to bring about the conditions required for the material and spiritual development of the individual. The logical conclusion of this argument was that the complete implementation of the constitution could only be realized by a socialist government (Sarica, 1966: 12, 20-21).

The ideological differentiation of the Turkish political spectrum on ‘left’ and ‘right’ axes in the 1960s was the most significant feature of the decade, radically distinguishing it from the 1950s.

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the intervention, a committee of university professors (the Onar Commission, under the chairmanship of Professor Siddik Sami Onar, the rector of Istanbul University), who were given the task of drawing up a new constitution, issued a declaration legitimizing the intervention: “It would be wrong to view the situation as an ordinary political coup... The political power that should have been the guardian of civil rights, and that should have symbolized the principles of state, law, justice, ethics, public interest and public service had... become instead a materialistic force representative of personal influence and ambition and class privileges... The state was transformed into a means of achieving personal influence and ambition” (quoted in Karpas, 1972: 357).

<sup>2</sup> The referendum on the new constitution was held on 9 July 1961. The constitution was accepted with only 61.7 percent of the voters. It “was rejected outright in the 11 coastal provinces in the west where the DP had been strongest before 1960” (Zürcher, 2005: 246).

Although there was a rivalry between the DP and the RPP in the fifties, this competition was not yet expressed within the idiom of the confrontations between 'leftist' and 'rightist' ideological stances. But, political and ideological fragmentation would soon be the defining characteristic of the Turkish politics in the 1960s (and 1970s). The RPP leadership's decision to move the party to the left of the center of the Turkish political spectrum in the second half of the 1960s changed the political nature of the controversy between the RPP and the main successor to the DP, the Justice Party (JP) (*Adalet Partisi*), and fortified the polarization of the political life after 1960. The process of the alignment of main political parties (the RPP and the JP) in the left and right wings continued with the establishment of relatively smaller parties with more obvious and radical ideological stances and with parliamentary representations. At one end of the political spectrum, there was the radical left, represented by the Workers Party of Turkey (WPT) (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*), which was founded just after the military intervention; and at the other, the extreme right, represented by the Republican Peasants Nation Party (RPNP) (*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi*), taken over by Alparslan Türkeş and his followers in 1965, and renamed as the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) in 1969.<sup>3</sup>

The features of new political climate became more apparent especially during the 1965 and 1969 general elections.<sup>4</sup> The 1965 general elections, for instance, had essential political differences when compared to the earlier elections. For the first time topics such as socialism, capitalism, land reform, foreign policy and economic development became the issues of election campaigns and were debated by a variety of parties with different ideological perspectives (Szyliowicz, 1966: 473). In the election campaign of 1965, socialists, represented by the WPT, differed from the other parties in their insistence on social issues and reforms. They also used a considerably different discourse in its election propaganda. The WPT's manifesto for the 1965 elections started with an address to workers, day laborers, peasants, artisans, clerks, pensioners, Kemalist and social-minded intellectuals (TİP, 1965, p.3). The 1965 elections were also characterized by the rise of anti-communism as being a basic tenet of all right-wing parties and groups, reflecting the polarized political atmosphere and intensified ideological tensions of the period. During the election campaigns, the WPT was faced with the physical and verbal attacks of right-wing parties. The people who played major roles in these attacks for the most part were supporters of the Association for Fighting Communism in Turkey (AFCT) (*Türkiye Komünizmle Mücadele Derneği*).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Islamic movement was also a part of this ideological fragmentation in the 1960s. But Islamic movement established its political party (the National Order Party) (*Millî Nizam Partisi*) at a relatively late date, in 1970, under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan (see Toprak, 1987: 218-2351).

<sup>4</sup> The return to political "normalization" started on 13 January 1961 with the removal of the ban on political activity and the allowance for the registration of new parties for the next general elections. The political legacy of the DP was inherited by two new parties (the JP and the New Turkey Party (NTP) (*Yeni Türkiye Partisi*)). In the first general elections after the coup, held on 15 October 1961, the RPP won 36.7 per cent of the vote compared to the 34.8 per cent won by the JP. These two parties were followed by the NPT with 13.9 per cent and the RPNP with 13.4 per cent. But the 1961 election results could hardly be seen as a victory for the RPP. The results of the 1965 elections were another shock for the RPP. The size of the JP's electoral victory and that of the RPP's defeat were greater than expected. The JP received fifty-three percent of the total votes and won 240 seats in the parliament, giving it an absolute majority in the assembly. The JP was followed by the RPP, with twenty-nine percent of the votes and 134 seats. The other impressive result of the elections was the WPT's entrance into the National Assembly with fifteen deputies (received 2.83 per cent of the total votes). The new electoral system, guaranteeing proportional representation, and based on the national remainder system served to strengthen the representation of smaller parties in the Assembly. The electoral performances of the other parties were as follows: the NP won 31 seats, the NTP 19, and the RPNP 11. In the 1969 general elections, the national remainder system was abandoned and a new election method was adopted, disfavoring this time the smaller parties of the parliament. For instance, in the 1969 general elections, the WPT received 2.58 percent of the total votes, and won only two seats in the parliament. On the other hand, there were only slight differences in the competition between the JP and the RPP. In 1969, the JP gained 46.5 per cent of the vote, and the RPP got only 27.4 per cent.

<sup>5</sup> The main goal of the association was to fight against communism in Turkey. This extreme rightist organization was founded in 1963. The number of its branches throughout Turkey reached 110 in 1965 (Landau, 1974: 203-4).

These ideological fragmentations and confrontations in the parliamentary politics were also reflected outside the National Assembly. The politicization of the intelligentsia, students, and workers accelerated in this period. 1960s were also a period of rapid social change. Rapid capitalist economic development, industrialization, urbanization, and increasing mobilization of people transformed the Turkish society in a very dramatic way after 1950. The emergence of an industrial working class and its growing number was accompanied with the rise of unionization and its increasing radicalization.<sup>6</sup> This industrial militancy was culminated in the establishment of the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions (CRWU) (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*) in 1967 by the split of a group of unions from the mainstream Confederation of Turkish Workers' Unions (CTWU) (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*). The climax of the working class and trade union radicalization was the massive protests of workers on 15-16 June 1970 sparked off as a spontaneous response to the attempts at amending the Unions law.

Another source of political radicalization was the universities. In the years between 1968 and 1971, anti-American demonstrations gained momentum. The most active political agent of the anti-imperialist, anti-American mobilization in these years was especially university students. In late sixties, university students began to engage with "domestic and international problems, and words like imperialism, reaction, Vietnam, socialism, and social justice became commonplace" (Szyliowicz, 1972: 52). Student participation in Turkish political life manifested itself in the form of "opposition to existing social, economic and political institutions, and hence of violent anti-Americanism, since the United States was regarded as an imperial power supporting the reactionary JP government through such channels as NATO" (Szyliowicz, 1972: 52-3). The symbols of the anti-imperialist struggles of the late sixties were student demonstrations against the U.S. Sixth Fleet's visits to Istanbul and Izmir. The radicalization of university students shifted quickly from occupations and sit-ins in the late 1960s to the establishment of radical armed organizations at the very beginning of the 1970s.

By early 1971, Turkey was in a state of social unrest. The growing activities of the radical leftist groups and, to some extent, rightist circles, and the increasing militancy of workers' demonstrations weakened the Demirel Government to the point of paralysis. The government seemed incapable of controlling the turmoil in the universities and the streets. On 12 March 1971, the high command of the Turkish military issued a memorandum, interrupting the normal functioning of the parliamentary regime and suspending democratic freedoms. After the 12 March military intervention, thousands of intellectuals, students and workers were persecuted, imprisoned and suppressed. The military intervention tried to legitimize itself by reference to the guardianship role of the Turkish army, claiming that "the parliament and the government, through their sustained policies, views and actions, have driven our country into anarchy, fratricidal strife, and social and economic unrest" (quoted in Ahmad, 1977: 288-89). The memorandum demanded the resignation of the Demirel Government and its replacement by a new one. The period which started with a military coup (27 May 1960 takeover) ended dramatically and ironically with another military intervention.

## 2. Socialism in Turkey in the 1960s

Socialism in the 1960s was understood and introduced as an ideology and development strategy to achieve rapid modernization and social justice. To reach these goals, it proposed central

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<sup>6</sup> In the period between 1950 and 1965, the number of wage earners had risen from 400,000 to almost 2 million. The number of unionized workers meanwhile rose from 78,000 in 1950 to 834,680 in 1967 (see Karpat, 1966: 177; Işıklı, 1987: 316).

planning based on state authority. Statism was perceived as a key element of socialism in Turkey in the 1960s (see, Karpas, 1967: 157; 1973: 341). It was thought that statism could only provide solutions for economic and social problems of the country. The socialist movement of this period had also an elitist character. Successors to the elite-bureaucratic tradition, socialists of the 1960s believed in a permanent revolution from above (Keyder, 1987b: 52). Most of the Turkish socialist groups were “theoretically and politically shackled to an obsolete and romanticized vision of an alliance between the working masses and a ‘progressive’ state bureaucracy” (Samim, 1987: 154).

This strategy was best represented by a political group that emerged around a weekly review, *Yön* (Direction). Founded by writer-journalist Doğan Avcıoğlu, the first issue of *Yön* appeared on 20 December 1961 and its publication continued until 30 June 1967. The programmatic approaches and analyses that determined the political perceptions and perspectives of the Turkish left during the decade were first seen in the pages of this journal.<sup>7</sup> As Landau (1974: 50) writes, “for the five-and-a-half years of its publication, it was undoubtedly one of the most discussed periodicals in Turkey.” *Yön* typified the socialism of the 1960’s in many respects. *Yön* mainly had an eclectic social and economic policy, composed of Kemalism and Third Worldism socialism. The *Yön* circle identified imperialism, feudalism, and the big comprador bourgeoisie as the main obstacles to initiating a rapid economic development and to establishing a “national democracy” in Turkey. So, for the *Yön* movement, the main political task was to construct a national democratic front in which all anti-feudal, anti-imperialist forces would unite in order to carry out the national democratic revolution.

The strategy of the founders of *Yön* was to change the society from the top to down. They envisaged and promoted a military coup which would be undertaken by the progressive civil and military bureaucrats and intellectuals, and which would be more comprehensive and revolutionary than the 27 May military intervention. For the leading figures of the *Yön* group, seizing the political power in Turkey by electoral ways was impossible. They had serious doubts about the prospects of a regime change in a multi-party system. In their publications, they declared their growing skepticisms about the parliamentary system on every occasion. Avcıoğlu (1969: 509-510), the leading ideologue of the *Yön* circle, claimed that after the establishment of the multi-party regime in Turkey, all free general elections had brought conservatives to the power. He held that a parliament under the control of the conservatives only expressed the interests of the ruling classes, specifically comprador bourgeoisie and the big landlords. The backward social and economic structures and conditions of the country would not allow the progressive forces to come to power through constitutional, parliamentary or electoral means, ways or methods. Underdeveloped countries like Turkey needed a radical change in their regime and a revolutionary breakthrough in order to develop. For this reason, a parliamentary system which favored conservatism, not revolutionism, was not convenient for any country making efforts to develop (Avcıoğlu, 1971: 135). To elaborate his view, Avcıoğlu asked which was more democratic, Atatürk’s authoritarian one-party regime aiming at revolutions and land reform, or Demirel’s liberal regime which refused to carry out the land reform. Answering his own question Avcıoğlu (1969: 509) said that “the Atatürk regime was authoritarian but more democratic. The Demirel regime is liberal but less democratic.”

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<sup>7</sup> The contributors of *Yön* included many well-known left-inclined thinkers and writers of the period, such as Nermin Abadan, Muammer Aksoy, Çetin Altan, Sadun Aren, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Fakir Baykurt, Mihri Belli, Niyazi Berkes, Erdoğan Berktaş, Behice Boran, Edip Cansever, Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca, Arif Damar, Abidin Dino, Muzaffer Erdost, Selahattin Hilav, Sırrı Hocaoglu, Rıfat Ilgaz, Atilla İlhan, Abdi İpekçi, Orhan Kemal, Yaşar Kemal, Sait Kırılmaztoprak, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, Hasan Hüseyin Korkmazgil, Onat Kutlar, Yalçın Küçük, İdris Küçükömer, Uğur Mumcu, Fethi Naci, Nadir Nadi, Aziz Nesin, Fikret Otyam, Bahri Savcı, İlhan Selçuk, Mümtaz Soysal, Kemal Tahir, Ülkü Tamer, Cahit Tanyol, Taner Timur, Turgut Uyar, Can Yücel. For the *Yön* movement see, Atılgan (2002); Aydınoglu (1992: 73-85, 107-19); Landau, (1974: 50-64, 79-87); Lipovsky (1992: 85-108); Özdemir (1986; 2000).

Since the parliament was under the influence of the conservatives and the progressive forces were unable to seize power by electoral methods, from the perspectives of the *Yön* circle, the transition to national-democratic regime could be brought about only by non-parliamentary means and forces. For this purpose, Avcıoğlu and his close associates, like İlhan Selçuk, İlhami Soysal, Cemal Reşit Eyüboğlu, began to publish a new weekly called *Devrim* (Revolution) on 21 October 1969. *Devrim* was envisaged by its publishers to be a means that would ideologically fortify and legitimize a 'progressive' military coup, which was expected to be carried out on 9 March 1971. The majority of the Turkish left, especially the *Yön* group and the supporters of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) (*Milli Demokratik Devrim*) group, foresaw a 'revolutionary' junta as imminent. But this attempt failed; and *Devrim* was closed down after the military intervention of 12 March 1971, on 27 April 1971. Even just after 12 March, a majority of the leftist groups published proclamations supporting the military's assumption of power (Samim, 1987: 158-160). But the military regime that took the power on 12 March 1971 reacted to these leftist groups with massive repression. The intervention showed, in a dramatic way, the failure of the theory of the leading role of the military and civilian intelligentsia in the revolutionary process in Turkey. The coup also showed that the Turkish left exaggerated the radicalism of the military and civilian intelligentsia and their 'revolutionary' potential. The idea of the revolutionary potential of the army was abandoned in the 1970s. In the 1970s, none of the factions of the socialist movement regarded military juntas as a serious and realistic way to socialism in Turkey (Lipovsky, 1992: 165-166).

In the second half of the 1960's, the strategy of a national democratic revolution became a distinguishing feature of one of the factions of Turkish socialism, the National Democratic Revolution movement (for the NDR movement see, Lipovsky, 1992: 109-121; Aydınöğlu, 1992: 141-187, 211-216). In many respects, the political and ideological approaches of this newly shaped movement overlapped with those of the *Yön* group. The NDR circle also believed that in a backward country like Turkey, the main struggle would be against imperialism and feudalism. Since the proletariat was too weak as a class, revolutionary change could only be carried out by a broad national front of all the exploited social classes and groups, including intellectuals, officers and the national bourgeoisie. This revolution directed against landowners and compradors would be of a national and democratic character, not a socialist one. However, there were differences among the NDR movement and *Yön* regarding the methods of taking power. While *Yön* mainly advocated a coup led by intellectuals and officers, adherents of the NDR movement preferred an armed guerrilla struggle. The national-democratic revolution movement formed itself first around a weekly called *Türk Solu* (The Turkish Left), which was accompanied then by a monthly magazine, *Sosyalist Aydınlik* (Socialist Enlightenment).<sup>8</sup> The leading figure of the movement was Mihri Belli, a former member of the Turkish Communist Party. Under his leadership, the NDR movement became one of the most significant socialist factions in Turkey, grown in membership especially among university students.

The NDR strategy, like the *Yön* strategy, believed in the impossibility of carrying out national liberation and attaining political power by electoral means within a multi-party system. Belli (1970: 194), sharing a similar view with Avcıoğlu, asserted that in the reactionary parliamentary system of Turkey, believing that a party could carry out change by electoral methods was an illusion. The

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<sup>8</sup> *Türk Solu* started publication on 17 November 1967 and continued until 14 April 1970. Among its contributors there were publicly known figures like Life Senator Suphi Karaman, ex-Senator Niyazi Ağırnaslı, İlhami Soysal, Uğur Mumcu, İlhan Selçuk, Aziz Nesin, Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, Reşat Fuat Baraner, Şevki Akşit, Erdoğan Başar, Muzaffer Erdost, Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Küpeli, Şahin Alpay, Cengiz Çandar, Doğu Perinçek. For more information, see Landau (1974: 75-79). The theoretical monthly, *Sosyalist Aydınlik*, began to be published in 1968. Its contributors included names like Mihri Belli, Muzaffer Erdost, Vahap Erdoğan, Mahir Çayan, Şahin Alpay, Doğu Perinçek, Halil Berktaş.

establishment of the multi-party regime had unfolded as a counter-revolutionary attempt aimed at strengthening imperialist exploitation and domination (Belli, 1970: 239). For Belli and his followers, the aim of the implementation of the parliamentary system in Turkey was to give the impression that Turkey was a democratic country. Belli held that “bourgeois parliamentarism” in Turkey, which was closed to the left and open to the right, suited only to the interests of the conservative elements.

The NDR movement from the end of 1969 onwards experienced inevitable splits. The newly shaped organizations, established after these splits, mainly rested upon the university students. Students became the most militant and active element of the socialist movement in Turkey in this period. In the mid-sixties, the leftist students began to organize under the *Fikir Klüpleri Federasyonu* (Federation of Idea Clubs), backed by the WPT. However, in the late sixties, the Idea Clubs changed not only their name but also the very character of their political perspective. In the autumn of 1969, the *Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu* (Federation of the Revolutionary Youth of Turkey), briefly *Dev-Genç*, was established, with the NDR strategy as its ideological and political platform. For the adherents of *Dev-Genç*, the main revolutionary task became a national democratic revolution. From 1970 onwards, the youth groups around *Dev-Genç* decided to establish their own independent political organizations under the leadership of their own leaders.

The first split occurs in the NDR movement at the end of the 1969 with the break of a group of activists from *Sosyalist Aydınlik*, under the leadership of Doğu Perinçek and Şahin Alpay. This pro-Maoist group began to publish its own monthly, *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik* (Proletarian Revolutionary Enlightenment), trying to implement Maoist teaching into Turkish conditions, and propagating a national-democratic revolution, the fundamental force of which would be the peasantry. They tried to distinguish themselves from other factions with a very radical discourse, for instance, claiming that, “we reject any reformist or parliamentary ways. The power of the workers and peasants can be established only through revolution and can be born only from the muzzle of a gun” (quoted in Lipovsky, 1992: 103). This split was followed by other splits in the early seventies, leading to the establishment of new organizations, with more radical discourses and strategies, led by figures like Mahir Çayan, Deniz Gezmiş, İbrahim Kaypakkaya. In the deepening political crisis and the growing social conflicts, these new groups decided that political agitation was not enough by itself and came to the conclusion that an armed guerilla struggle was needed to carry out the national democratic revolution. All the NDR supporters agreed that a regime change in Turkey could only be brought about by armed force. However, those newly shaped organizations were the most eager to put this strategy into practice. From 1970 onwards the People’s Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu*), led by Deniz Gezmiş, and the People’s Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi*), led by Mahir Çayan, the Turkish Communist Party- Marxist/Leninist (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi- Marksist/Leninist*), led by İbrahim Kaypakkaya, began guerilla warfare. The state reacted to these guerilla groups with massive repression. On 12 March 1971, military regime took power. The embryonic guerilla groups were crushed, putting a bloody end to the romantic attempts of a generation.

Considering *Yön* and the NDR movement, the other most important political force of the Turkish left in the 1960’s was the WPT.<sup>9</sup> The WPT was established on 13 February 1961 by a group of trade union leaders. Their motivation behind establishing the WPT was their belief that a political party represented in the parliament could defend the interests of the workers (Aren, 1993: 31). But, the party became an active and visible political force after Mehmet Ali Aybar became the chairman of the WPT.

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<sup>9</sup> For the WPT see, Aren (1993); Aybar (1988); Aydınöglü (1992: 87-139); Doğan (2010: 313-328); Landau (1974: 122-70); Lipovsky (1992: 11-82); Ünsal (2002).



The WPT's entrance into the parliament with 15 representatives after the general elections of 1965 was an important milestone in Turkish political life. For the first time in Turkish history socialist ideas found formal representation in the parliament. In spite of its limited weight in the parliament, the party played an important role as part of the opposition and changed the very character of the political debate. It introduced class politics, an ideological dimension absent among parties which differed in emphasis rather than in substance (Ahmad, 1977: 192).

The leadership of the WPT categorically rejected the idea of a national democratic revolution in Turkish context and envisaged a socialist transformation by democratic and constitutional means. And the party gave the leading role in this transformation to the Turkish working class. They did not accept the view held by Y n and the NDR circle that the proletariat of the country was politically immature. But the differences between the WPT's strategy and those of the NDR movement and the Y n group were not actually so big in reality. Looking at the program of the WPT, it can be said that the party's objectives closely resembled those promoted by Y n and the NDR movement. The supporters of the NDR strategy often argued that the WPT's strategy was in practice very similar to their demands.<sup>10</sup>

The WPT differentiated from other factions of the Turkish socialist movement of 1960s with its emphasis on parliamentary methods. As Doğan (2010, p.) observes that "the leaders of the WPT clearly stated, from the very beginning, their intention to follow the constitution and democratic ways and to act within a legal framework to reach their political aims." This intention was also clearly stated in the party program: the WPT "comes to power by democratic electoral methods. By rejecting the exploitation of man by man, remaining loyal to basic human rights and freedoms, it remains in and is removed from the power by elections" (T P, 1964: 69).

For the WPT leadership, extra-parliamentary orientations of other main factions of the Turkish left, i.e. the Y n group and the NDR movement, deserved to be identified as petty bourgeois strategies. According to the party leadership, there was no short-cut to socialism and it was not possible to carry out a revolutionary transformation by relying on military coups or by waging guerilla warfare. Socialism in Turkey could only be achieved through getting organized in laboring people, increasing their political hegemony in the country, through preparing them for power with patience (Boran, 1975: 101). The WPT differed from other socialist factions of the period also by choosing a constitutional and parliamentary strategy with belief that a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism is possible. For instance, Mehmet Ali Aybar (1968, p.600), the leader of the party, affirmed in many different occasions that, "Our constitution is, with no doubt, open to socialism... Our constitution with its understanding of state, social order, with its revolutionary character and with its principle based on *Kuvay-ı Milliyecilik* is in favor of the people and labor. For all of these reasons, it is open to socialism and closed to grasping (*kaptıkaçtı*) capitalism." The leaders of the party believed that the WPT would develop into a mass party and come to power through parliamentary elections.

The history of the WPT, especially in the second half of the 1960s, was characterized by growing factional disputes among its ranks. The disagreement between the WPT's leadership and supporters of the NDR strategy at the second national congress of the party held in Malatya in 1966 over the question of whether the national-democratic and socialist tasks were indivisible or not was first serious rift within the WPT (see T P, 1966: 6). The next major controversy within the party

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<sup>10</sup> Belli (1970: 123), for instance, argues that "the WPT program is generally a program of national-democratic revolution. Even if this program is fully realized, Turkey will become not a socialist but an independent and democratic state." For similar statements see also Erdost (1969: 86-89).

leadership erupted after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Unlike Boran and Aren, Aybar stood against the invasion. This dispute gave Aybar an opportunity to reveal his understanding of non-authoritarian, democratic socialism. The crisis within the leadership deepened after the failure of the WPT in the 1969 general elections. Aybar resigned first from the leadership of the WPT in 1969 and then finally from the party in 1971. After the 1971 military memorandum, the WPT, accused of propagating communism and supporting Kurdish separatism, was closed down and party members were arrested. In a new political atmosphere following the 1973 general elections, the WPT was re-established in 1975 under the leadership of Boran. But the second-WPT, losing its former political hegemony on Turkish socialist movement, evolved into one of the small ideological fractions of the extreme left in the second half of the 1970s.

### **Conclusion**

The 12 March military intervention led to a temporary retreat of Turkish socialist movement. The interregnum that started with the military intervention ended in 1974, when the new RPP-led coalition government, which came to power after the general elections of October 1973, granted an amnesty to the political prisoners of the 12 March intervention. This date also marked the beginning of a new period in the history of Turkish socialist movement, which lasted until the next military coup on 12 September 1980. Although there was continuity, the socialist movement of the 1960s was different from that of 1970s in terms of organizational and programmatic orientations. The left in the 1970s “mutated into a wild variety of groups and sects, much more diverse and complex than in the 1960s” (Samim, 1987, p.161). 1970s were characterized by deep rifts and splits, reflecting the alignment of socialist movement at the international level in the same period. The sharpening of the ideological fragmentation of political life and the rise of political violence in Turkey in the 1970s radically differentiated the two decades from each other. The agenda of the socialists of the 1960s was anti-imperialism and to build up and lead broad national fronts against imperialism. Anti-imperialism left its place in the 1970s to anti-fascism. The calls for fighting against fascism and building up anti-fascist populist fronts appeared as the basic preoccupations of socialist activity in the seventies.

### **ETHICAL STATEMENT**

The author(s) declare that all processes of the study comply with research and publication ethics, adhering to ethical standards and principles of scientific citation. The study does not require ethical permission.

### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

The study is single-authored research, and the author's contribution rate is 100%.

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