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**The Limits of Ideology:
Failure of the Turkish Left to Mobilize Rural-to-Urban Migrants in Ankara (1960-1971)**

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Abstract

Immediately following the 1960 coup in the Republic of Turkey the military-led government fashioned a new constitution, opening up politics for the first time to ideologically-based political parties. As a result left-wing actors, comprised primarily of socialists and communists espousing Marxist and Leninist ideology, overtly situated themselves within the evolving societal framework and (despite schisms) appeared to emerge as “highly influential.” These changes emerged alongside rapid rural-to-urban migration, encouraged by political domination of right-wing parties dependent upon capitalist-based industrialization projects. It is within this malleable context that the Turkish Left fought an ideological battle over the nation’s understanding of citizenship. By the 1960s, urbanization led to over sixty percent of Ankara’s population living in illegal shantytowns along the city outskirts, known as the *gecekondu*. The majority of these residents consisted of rural-to-urban migrants, a target audience of the left. Generally embodying the “total process of rural migration and urbanization, or modernization,” the new urbanites from the *gecekondu* morphed into a critical voting bloc courted from both sides of the political spectrum. Yet, election results of the 1960s reveal a downward trend of “left bloc” support (from 41.4% in 1957 to 32.9% in 1969), bringing to question the left’s ability to reach its intended support network, a topic generally overshadowed by leftist militancy in the decades following 1960. Building off of political historian F. Michael Wuthrich’s argument that the left focused on perpetuating ideology rather than on meeting basic needs of those in the *gecekondu*, this project uses the left’s primary outlet of periodicals, monographs, and literature from 1960-1971 to further understanding of the relationship between the Turkish Left and urban migrants, the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of socialist strategy in garnering revolutionary support, and the ways in which leftist intellectuals sought to reach this portion of urban society through literature.

Note: All Turkish quotations not attributed are translated by the author of this paper.

“...and then my people,
ready to embrace
with the wide-eyed joy of children
anything modern, beautiful, and good—
my honest, hard-working, brave people,
half full, half hungry,
half slaves...”¹

Written by renowned Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet in 1939, just one year into his 28-year prison sentence (thirteen of which he served) for being an active communist, these lines suggest the apparent condition of the majority of people in the Republic of Turkey since the establishment of the modern nation-state in 1923.² At the time Hikmet sought to awaken the masses from their slumber induced by political elites propagating a philosophy of “nationalist homogenization” under the guise of Kemalist principles. Led by the nation’s first President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish Parliament legislated comprehensive political and societal reforms aimed at transforming the people of Turkey into a secular-nationalist identity via a single-party political system.³ Despite promises of renewed prosperity and the reassertion of national sovereignty, not all Turkish citizens bought into the westernizing agenda of the ruling *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Republican People’s Party – RPP). Left-wing actors, comprised primarily of socialists and communists espousing Marxist and Leninist ideology, planted themselves within the evolving societal framework of the early republic and (despite schisms) emerged as “highly influential” in Turkey from 1960 to 1980.⁴ As a result the Turkish Left became embroiled in an ideological battle over the nation’s understanding of citizenship.

¹ Nazım Hikmet, trans. Randy Blasing & Mutlu Konuk, “Istanbul House of Detention,” *Poems of Nazım Hikmet* (New

² Nazım Hikmet, trans. Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Life’s Good, Brother* (New York: Persea Books, 2013), 191.

³ Ali Aslan, “The Impossibility of Society: Beyond Center-Periphery Relations in Turkey,” *Human & Society* 3, no 5 (2013): 37-54, <http://dx.doi.org/10.12658/human.society.3.5.M0057>, 47.

⁴ Şenol Durgun, “Left-Wing Politics in Turkey: Its Development and Problems,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 37, no 1 (2015): 9-32, doi 10.13169/arabstudquar.37.1.0009, 9.

Major shifts within Turkish society oriented around urbanization contributed to the political unrest of the 1960s. In conjunction with industrialization, urbanization resulted in a significant transfer of population from rural regions to urban areas. More specifically, “The mechanization of agriculture after World War II, which left jobless the agricultural workers and eliminated the marginal farmers...aggravated further the social dislocation and increased the pressure for migration in rural areas.”⁵ With the nation’s population doubling since 1935 to 35.8 million by 1970, cities absorbed the brunt of these changes as urban residency within that same time period increased more than two-fold to 35.8%.⁶ Class shifts accompanied this worldwide phenomenon. According to Turkish political scientist Ergun Özbudun, rural-to-urban migration opened up social mobility such that nearly 40% of the petty bourgeoisie hailed directly from the agricultural sector.⁷ The left drew heavily upon such drastic transformations in society. For example, the majority of socialist movements in Turkey adhered to Marxist principles, looking to the petty bourgeoisie to guide workers and villagers toward class class-consciousness and lead the resultant revolution. With nearly half of this rising class comprised of rural-to-urban migrants, these individuals occupied a key space in the audience of the Turkish Left.

Since the formal structures of Turkey’s cities remained incapable of accommodating such dramatic influxes of migrants, the urban periphery had to absorb them. The *gecekondu* (“built overnight”), therefore, became the staple of urban transition for villagers.⁸ These illegal shantytowns expanded across Turkey, becoming synonymous not only with the concept of transition, but also with that of social mobility. Kemal Karpat, one of the leading sociologists who conducted research on *gecekondu* communities at the time, argued that “migration made old social structures and cultural

⁵ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Gecekondu: rural migration and urbanization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 19, referencing his previous article “Social Effects of Farm Mechanization in Turkish Villages.”

⁶ Ergun Özbudun, *Social Change and Political Participation in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 82.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Gecekondu*, 11.

systems into news ones” and “produced corresponding changes in identity.”⁹ These factors, once understood by rural-to-urban migrants, led Karpat to conclude that the *gecekondu* played a decisive role Turkish politics. Michael Wuthrich echoes this response in stating:

Although often living on the margins of the city and struggling to defend their squatter communities from being demolished, this population’s confrontation with city and state created a heightened sense of political awareness and action that distinguished these newly arrived urban dwellers from their village counterparts. Having built unofficial dwellings on state lands, the members of these communities were placed in a context in which they had to be aware of political mechanisms and work together to realize their demands. Thus, they acquired a heightened awareness of both political action and political community that bordered on class-consciousness, with functional concerns that transcended former social groupings and loyalties.¹⁰

Gecekondu residents thus constructed their new identity around meeting the practical need of legitimizing their homes, and their resultant status, within society. As these individuals broke away from their rural past, they fashioned a unique source of power with other members of the shantytowns, considered a significant voting block in subsequent elections.

This trend deeply affected the politically charged geographical space of Ankara, Turkey’s capital. Even though Istanbul existed as the capital of the Ottoman Empire for centuries, Atatürk shifted the center of the republic to Ankara in 1923. Despite glorious intentions, implementation of Atatürk’s plan to reflect dual symbolisms of modernity and reinforcement of being a Turkish citizen remained a challenge. In 1932 German urban architect Hermann Jansen designed the city around his open-space concept, integrated with transitional green zones, and centered it upon the ancient Hittite castle.¹¹ This orientation projected Turkish pre-Ottoman roots alongside Atatürk’s ideology of progress and secularism.¹² Although the architect’s urban development met initial intentions,

⁹ Kemal H. Karpat, “The Genesis of the Gecekondu: Rural Migration and Urbanization (1976),” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* (online), Thematic Issue, no 1 (2004), <http://www.ejts.revues.org/54>, para 10.

¹⁰ F. Michael Wuthrich, *National Elections in Turkey: People, Politics, and the Party System*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 144.

¹¹ Duygu Kacar, “Ankara, a Small Town, Transformed to a Nation’s Capital.” *Journal of Planning History* 9, no 1 (2010): 43-65, doi 10.1177/153851320935986946, 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 48.

projections for future development contained inaccuracies. Jansen worked off assumptions that the city would grow to 335,000 by 1980, yet reality drew numbers in upwards of 2.3 million, as the city could not keep pace with state-led industrialization.¹³ Furthermore, Jansen only accounted for upper and middle class residents, forcing many individuals migrating from rural areas with no other option than to erect shantytowns along the periphery of the city.¹⁴ These informal neighborhoods merged with Ankara's identity and played a significant role in the shaping of politics throughout the nation's short history.

Although these factors point to Ankara as a focal point for research on the Turkish Left, leftist militancy generally overshadows the connection to the capital's migrant community in the decades following 1960. Nonetheless, due to exponential urbanization in Turkey throughout the 1960s, the bulk of the left's target audience resided in the *gecekondu*s. In fact, by 1965 over sixty-five percent of Ankara's population resided in these peripheral shantytowns, tipping the capital's population significantly toward the working class.¹⁵ These illegal settlements generally embodied the "total process of rural migration and urbanization, or modernization—that is, of the quantitative and qualitative transformation of the economic, social, political, and cultural order—in the third world nations."¹⁶ Aside from generating an alternate image of progress to what Atatürk envisioned for the nation's capital, urbanization established an immediate connection of rural-to-urban migrants with political and ideological discourse originating from the cities. Combined with a dramatic increase in

¹³ John R. Clark, "Ankara," in *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*, 2nd ed., no 2, vol 1, ed. Phillip Mattar (New York: Macmillian Reference USA, 2004), 207.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁵ Bülent Batuman, "City Profile: Ankara," *Elsevier* 31 (2013): 578-590, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2012.05.016>, 586, referencing T. Akçura's work "Ankara: Türkiye'nin Başkenti Hakkında Monografik Bir Araştırma" (Ankara, METU Faculty of Architecture Press: 1971, 57).

¹⁶ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Gecekondu*, 1.

nationwide literacy rates, these changes placed an even greater value on leftist literature oriented toward this unique migratory group within society.¹⁷

In addition to Ankara's position as the capital, as well as its urbanization trends, the growing city surfaced as a primary space for leftist activity. For example, the Marxist-Leninist oriented *Milli Demokratik Devrim* (National Democratic Revolution – NDR), a political movement of a portion of the Turkish Left led by former communist Mihri Belli, gained a majority of its support from urban-based university students. Ankara University's Political Science and Law departments, known hotbeds of revolutionary activism along with Middle East Technical University, formed a basis on which NDR focused its efforts to generate revolutionary support in the nation's capital. In addition, left-wing activists published and heavily disseminated *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* (Clarity Socialist Magazine), the central organ of NDR, in Ankara. The target recipients of this leftist literature consisted primarily of university students and workers, many of which claimed connections to Ankara's rural-to-urban migrant families. Notably, *Devrim-Gençlik* (*Dev-Genç* or Revolutionary Youth), a militant youth faction chaired by a student from Ankara University, emerged from within NDR in late 1969.¹⁸ Duly, the city (especially its universities) served as an important urban public space, enabling the political engagement of the left with Ankara's working and middle classes.

At first glance it would appear that newfound freedoms for socialists, with the urban backdrop of an ever-growing working class, would spark significant political backing for the left. However, election results in 1960s—an era open to leftist political thinking—reveal a downward trend of “left bloc” support. With statistics descending from 41.4% in 1957 to 32.9% in 1969 (alongside only 3% for the pure Marxist group), one must question the left's ability to reach its intended

¹⁷ With literacy rates for Turkish men topping out at 84% in the 1950s, and numbers even higher for younger generations, written forms of communication factored heavily into the left's mobilization strategy. Kemal H. Karpat, *The Gecekondu*, 26.

¹⁸ Özgür Mutlu Ulus, *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 112.

support network.¹⁹ Given this historical context, this project aims to further understanding of the relationship between the Turkish Left and urban migrants. By highlighting the ineffectiveness of socialist strategy in garnering support via their primary outlet of periodicals, monographs, and popular novels, this project exposes the ways in which the Turkish Left failed to mobilize the working class and peasants (their intended audience) toward achieving socialist revolution in Turkey from 1960-1971.

*** Historical and Theoretical Constructs of Turkish Society ***

In light of Atatürk's attempts to generate solidarity in Turkey, society within this multi-ethnic nation still appeared divided. Many historians attribute this fissure to widespread modernization projects catered toward the cities, erecting a divide between rural and urban populations. Turkish historian Şerif Mardin set the precedent for this view. By penning a historically significant article in 1973, he addressed Turkey's perceived societal by building off of Edward Shils' "central system values" concept.²⁰ Mardin argued that every "society [had] a center...exist[ing] within a system of linkages with peripheral elements."²¹ Within this center-periphery structure, he claimed, Turkish society and politics emerged, placing newly-fashioned elites at the center under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's tutelage. This structure empowered elite groups to shape national identity on behalf of (but apart from) the peripheral masses.²² Mardin's words served as an attack on the predominant nationalistic view, reinforced by the government through the education system. This dominant view built upon Atatürk's westernizing reforms, which intended to uplift the struggling Turkish people.

¹⁹ F. Michael Wuthrich, *National Elections in Turkey*, 30 and 123.

²⁰ Edward Shils' *central value system* concept asserts that this system "...is the central zone of the society. It is central because of its immediate connexion with what the society holds to be sacred; it is central because it is espoused by the ruling authorities of the society (p 118)." For more information on this topic reference the Edward Shils' essay "Centre and Periphery" in *The Logic of Personal Knowledge: Essays Presented to Michael Polanyi* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1961).

²¹ Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus* 102, no 1 (1973), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20024114>, 169-170.

²² *Ibid.*, 183.

“The symbol of the peasant as the ‘fundamental Turk’ came up very early in the Kemalist movement,” Mardin asserts, “but Kemalist energies were devoted to the building of symbols of national identity, rather than to radically altering the place of the peasant in the system.”²³ Mardin built upon a previously existing binary argument, enabled both by Shils approach and Kemalist elites, shaping the periphery as backward. His words thus reveal the fact that Atatürk oriented his nation-building agenda away from the periphery, rejecting this portion of society in his vision for Turkey’s future.

By orienting Turkish society around a center determined by the ruling class, Şerif Mardin articulated a societal divide based upon class and political power. Yet through this lens, he simultaneously exposed the real agenda of the progressive Kemalist program:

Ataturk was trying to do with ideology what he had not achieved through political mobilization or through a commitment to radical changes in social structure. This was a hard burden to shift onto ideology. The Turkish countryside, already suspect as separatist, was not brought closer to the center by these policies. While showing a remarkable ability for small but sustained growth, the periphery could see that it was paying for the prosperity of the cities, that it was being given speeches as consolation, but being denied the haven of its religious culture.²⁴

According to Mardin, the Kemalist reforms, despite enforcement through an authoritarian single-party regime, remained incomplete. Atatürk’s failure to refashion all of society left the rural masses outside the newfound Turkish identity, and respectively at odds with it. Societal and economic improvements centered on the cities, driving a further wedge between the center and periphery. Mardin’s article subsequently reinforced the idea that a divide existed between Kemalist elites and the rural masses. As a result, this gulf reduced Turkish society to a two-sided struggle over its central values shaped by both a bureaucratic and peripheral code.

While his words erected dual ends of the societal spectrum, significant grey area still remained between the two, compounded by unclear transition points separating the urban and rural

²³ Şerif Mardin, “Center-Periphery Relations,” 183.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

margins. For example, Mardin stated that “organized labor [was] not completely part of the periphery.”²⁵ In addition, he never conveyed the relative size of the center or periphery. Mardin’s framing of the working class alone drives one to question whether the grey area between the center and periphery overshadows both. Considering the fact that his article hinged on push- pull factors shifting portions of society either toward the center or the edge, Mardin leads readers to focus on the ways in which each side has fashioned itself against the other in order to draw upon more support from those existing within the shifting grey area. Consequently, historians utilize this article as a way to interpret Turkish societal development in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Political scientist F. Michael Wuthrich criticizes Mardin’s widely accepted center-periphery cleavage theory, declaring it a confining explanation for Turkish society and politics. “Indeed, for a periphery to persist on one side of a cleavage,” Wuthrich proclaims, “it has to perpetually lose—that is, be ineffectual or socially marginal—which in the Turkish context could only be argued, as mentioned above, to apply to the communist parties and those supportive of Kurdish nationalists.”²⁶ In other words, Wuthrich asserts that Mardin’s theory is reductive, erroneously placing a majority of the Turkish Left (located both in the center and periphery) statically on the periphery. Such framing inaccurately diminishes the collective influence of socialists and rural-to-urban migrants alike to that of ineffective. Mardin, in turn, discounts the dynamic influence of the left in the 1960s and early 1970s, ignoring the ways in which socialist ideology infiltrated elite circles and reoriented major political parties. The center-periphery approach to society, therefore, fails to provide an accurate lens by which to view the Turkish Left or urban migrants.

Another relevant view of Turkish society arises from research by Ali Aslan connected to Ernesto Laclau’s discursive account of society. In his article “The Impossibility of Society: Beyond Center-Periphery Relations In Turkey,” Aslan argues against Şerif Mardin’s theory, claiming that

²⁵ Şerif Mardin, “Center-Periphery Relations,” 187.

²⁶ F. Michael Wuthrich, *National Elections in Turkey*, 61.

“society is not self-transparent for there is always a surplus of meaning in the *social*.”²⁷ Aslan utilizes Laclau’s discourse theory to reorient societal assessment away from what it appears to be toward the barriers that inhibit it from becoming what it truly is.²⁸ By removing the periphery from the discussion, Aslan constructs all of society as a center “coming into existence as societal differences in the social are fixed through discursive acts around one single center.”²⁹ The push-pull forces Mardin refers to Aslan in turn redefines, delineating these agents of power as discourse anchored around a center rather than linearly between two points. Aslan’s approach reveals the dynamic nature of society, whereas Mardin confines Turkish social order to a static binary always existing in opposition.

Similar to Michel Foucault’s construct of *power-knowledge*, Laclau’s discursive theory gains momentum via “empty signifiers” open to reinterpretation within society. Placed within the Turkish context Aslan infers, “Kemalism emerged as a mythical space in the dislocated political space of the Ottoman Empire. This mythical space engaged in filling the structural void by fixation of meaning around empty signifier ‘order’ in its attempt to construct not only a new society, but also a new polity.”³⁰ In other words, Atatürk’s project to refashion Turkish society depended upon his ability to reorder the nation by redefining it. The dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire following World War I left the concept of order vulnerable to reinterpretation, and thus restructuring.

The battle over control of the remaining societal center resulted in the absolute dominance of a secular, ethnocentric nationalism integrating both Mardin’s supposed center and periphery. Yet, this narrow-minded view on society did not always dominate politics in Turkey. As historian Ryan Gingeras reveals, Mustafa Kemal catered to all political standpoints while forming the nation’s first constitution during the War of Independence, utilizing rhetoric to draw support from those on the

²⁷ Ali Aslan, “The Impossibility of Society,” 38.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 39.

³⁰ Ibid., 43.

sociopolitical left. “Many of his speeches and official statements from this period,” Gingeras accounts, “echoed leftist references to the threats of Western imperialism and capitalism...benefit[ing] Mustafa Kemal’s unitary influence over politics in Ankara.”³¹ Atatürk fought for control of the ability to define society by posing an inclusive idea of the nation, then subsequently using this support to consolidate power over institutions that governed the nation.³²

Turkish political scientist Ergun Özbudun points out another compelling example of the way in which Atatürk filled and adjusted empty signifiers to acquire support for his concept of an independent, modern nation. In an effort to inspire and unite the people, Turkey’s first president heavily leaned upon the tenet of *halkçılık* (populism).³³ Similar to many concepts promoted during the War of Independence and in the first few years of the republic, Atatürk bent the meaning of the term to fit his political agenda. Formerly interpreted as anti-imperialistic, *halkçılık* transformed into a precept proclaiming to “secure social order and solidarity instead of class conflict and to establish harmony of interests.”³⁴ By propagating a concept previously accepted by the people, the founder of Turkey reoriented the direction of the nation under the guise of instituting order and ensuring cohesion among the masses. The resultant “Turkification” of society, enabled by the RPP, placed a homogenization program on the people of forced assimilation.³⁵ Atatürk expanded this project beyond ethnic lines. Once acquiring majority power by 1925, the President quickly silenced socialist, communist, and Islamist voices in politics through purges, as their vision for Turkey did not align

³¹ Ryan Gingeras, *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: Heir To An Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 101.

³² “Institutions” could also be interpreted as political and economic apparatuses that possess the power to enforce “truth” in relation to society, as devised by Michel Foucault. In *Power/Knowledge* (Pantheon Books, 1980), Foucault proclaims that such apparatuses of knowledge/truth enable the perpetuation of societal norms apart from ideology, the real source of power—enforced by society itself, not from above.

³³ Ergun Özbudun, “Turkey: Plural Society and Monolithic State,” in *Democracy, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, ed. Ahmet T. Kuru and Alfred Stepan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 72-73.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁵ Turkification refers to the ethnocentric nationalistic agenda of Kemalism, initiated in the late Ottoman Empire by the Young Turks, which forcibly shaped the culture and language of the multi-ethnic state into one solely Turkish.

with his. Discourse, therefore, served as the vehicle to generate public support and enforce societal change, as Ali Aslan asserts.

In lieu of the fact that Mardin and Aslan offer different interpretations of Turkish society, similarities remain. Both appear to place the Turkish Left—those adhering to socioeconomic-based political views similar to the left in Europe—at the center. In Mardin’s case, urban Kemalist elites controlled the center in direct opposition to the rural periphery. Yet self-proclaimed Kemalists comprised a large portion of left-wing leadership (be it communist, socialist, or unionist), and came from educated, urban middle and upper class families. Mehemt Ali Aybar, for example, a French-educated Istanbul lawyer and initial leader of the Marxist-oriented *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* (Workers’ Party of Turkey – WPT) hailed from an aristocratic family.³⁶ Aslan’s discourse theory anchors the left within the center as well, contending over the ability to define with all the other players attempting to influence society. The left intelligentsia’s perception of what should be the “central values” of Turkey centered on pursuit of a classless society, directly in contrast to the real agenda of elites in the center and on the right. As a result, the left in actuality and theory occupied the same space as ruling elites. One reason for this placement is the fact that both sides drew legitimization for their political and social reasoning from Kemalism.³⁷ Thus, by utilizing Atatürk’s principles the left could legally engage openly in political discourse, expanding its reach among the masses.

Despite the left being at war with the center in both social theories, the major difference between the Mardin and Aslan’s argument exists in strategy. The center-periphery approach focuses on linear movement toward the center; that of taking over space in the center occupied by ruling elites and replacing it completely. Through discourse theory, however, the left contends with more than just ruling elites for the ability to redefine empty signifiers that form society. While each

³⁶ F. Michael Wuthrich, *National Elections in Turkey*, 158.

³⁷ M. Şükrü Hanioglu establishes this link clearly in his article “The Historical Roots of Kemalism” in *Democracy, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, ed. Ahmet Kuru and Alfred Stepan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

strategy challenges the universalism of existing society and those that control it, discourse theory shows how the “[h]egemonization of the discursive field by the Kemalist discourse led to the emergence of various differential positions over the Kemalist ground, center.”³⁸ This perspective creates room for individuals and groups, many existing within the Turkish Left, that do not fit into the center-periphery construct. In like manner, migrants transitioning from rural to urban areas through the *gecekondu*s occupy a nebulous region similar to that of the left. Considered neither center nor periphery, discourse directed at this portion of society remains the avenue to bringing such individuals under the influence of the political organizations engaging with them over practical needs. Aslan’s approach, therefore, makes Turkish society more legible and accurate, while at the same time capturing most effectively the means to connect with the populous.

*** *Out of the Way! Socialism’s Coming!* ***

1965 emerged as a significant year in Turkish politics, placing socialism center stage within a context previously condemning the idea. As a direct result of the military coup in 1960 and 1961 Constitution to follow, “For the first time, a leftist party emphasizing the plight of the urban working class and the poor rural peasant was allowed to compete legitimately within the existing institutional structure [and] brought the political position of the ‘left’ into the party system.”³⁹ The Workers’ Party of Turkey (WPT) was born legally out of this foundational change proclaiming a Marxist agenda of socialism as the solution to Turkey’s political, economic, and social problems. The years leading up to the 1965 election thus served as an opportunity for the newly formed left to legally promote their case and to build a strong support network. Yet the term “socialist,” although placed within a political context now accepting of its inferences, still possessed a stigma heavily impacted by the state’s aggressive fight against it.

³⁸ Ali Aslan, “The Impossibility of Society,” 50.

³⁹ F. Michael Wuthrich, *National Elections in Turkey*, 147.

Renown Turkish author Aziz Nesin captures the bipolar societal condition of this transformational change around socialism in his 1965 satirical short story *Sosyalizm Geliyor Savulun!* (Out of the Way! Socialism's Coming!). Published the same year as this monumental election campaign, Nesin narrates the strategy of Turkish swindlers to expose social taboos, societal fears, and the metamorphosis of socialist identity at the time. Opening up as a conversation between two men debating the unemployment crisis in Turkey to which they themselves fell victim, one man, Sabahattin, poses socialism as a possible solution to the unnamed main character:

“What do you think about socialism?”

“Don't even mention that word, “I berated him. “Haven't you got anything better to do?”

“But do you really understand socialism?”

“For heaven's sake! If anyone overheard us, we'll get ourselves arrested...”

“Oh, come on now... You've got to wake up to the world! These days in Turkey, socialism's the most talked-about topic... The twist and socialism have become the fashion.”⁴⁰

The main character then goes on to explain his fear of the term *socialism*. By detailing how a random act of pity toward the city's poor led to his imprisonment, violent interrogation, and subsequent surveillance by local police, Nesin utilizes the main character's account to construct the atmosphere of fear and mistrust prevalent in Turkey since the mid-1920s. After successfully establishing formal institutions to uphold his state-building agenda for the Republic of Turkey, Atatürk intensified his nation-building project oriented around an ethnocentric narrative by purging his opposition in 1925. Prior to this year, and especially during the War of Independence, Mustafa Kemal “and his supporters adopted multiple planks that resonated with the growing leftist consensus [which narrowed in his] unitary influence over politics in Ankara.”⁴¹ This strategic positioning unified the resistance against occupying imperial powers of the West and served as the foundational forces for

⁴⁰ Aziz Nesin, trans. Damian Croft, *Out of the Way! Socialism's Coming!* (London: Milet Publishing Ltd., 2001, first pub. 1965), 13.

⁴¹ Ryan Gingeras, *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*, 101.

his realization of an independent nation-state. Kemal's vision for Turkey, however, did not include an opposition but a state-enforced homogeneity to bring the nation into modernity.

Beginning with religious reforms reshaping the outward identity of the Turkish people, Atatürk expanded his legal maneuvering toward all opposition in an effort to secularize the nation while simultaneously consolidating power. A few years later in 1927 Mustafa Kemal utilized his historic 36-hour speech, known as the *Nutuk*, to reorient the nation. However, as historian Erik Zürcher puts it, the founding President used the *Nutuk* as “a vindication of the purges of 1925-26” in parallel with framing “the historical vision of the genesis of the new Turkish state.”⁴² Such posturing set the tone for persecution of the left, a group whose ideology challenged the agenda and assertion of Atatürk's power. As a result socialism carried palpable notions of fear, made so apparent in the words of Azızn Nesin's main character.

Despite Atatürk's modernizing agenda, the nation's socialist roots predate the establishment of the Republic. Formalized in 1910, the *Osmanlı Sosyalist Partisi* (Ottoman Socialist Party - OSP) mimicked aspirations of French socialists in pursuit of achieving socialism through parliamentary action.⁴³ Anticipating the political shift following World War I and the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire, this party reimagined itself as the *Türkiye Sosyalist Fırkası* (Turkish Socialist Party - TSP) in 1919, but was overshadowed by communist influence in the years following the Bolshevik Revolution (1917).⁴⁴ Initially divided, various communist organizations merged in 1920 to form one political party with deep Soviet ties, known as the *Türkiye Komünist Partisi* (Turkish Communist Party – TCP).⁴⁵ This unified front, however, remained short lived as the socialist left branched into separate camps differing on interpretations of socialism and foreign involvement in Turkish politics.

⁴² Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 175.

⁴³ Şenol Durgun, “Left-Wing Politics in Turkey: Its Development and Problems,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 37, no 1 (2015): 9-32, doi 10.13169/arabstudquar.37.1.0009, 13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Many of the founding members of the TCP, heavily influenced by the proposed program of the Third Communist International (Comintern) in 1919, adhered to a policy of *inciting* class struggle via revolution. This strategy, focused on revolutionary struggle, aligned with the Turkish War of Independence led by Atatürk. As Şenol Durgun puts it:

[T]he support strategy of the Comintern to the national movements of independence deeply influenced the approaching of the left-wing movements in 1920s and 1930s Turkey to the Kemalist ideology. The pro-Soviet [TCP] argued in this period that the conditions were not ripe for a socialist revolution in Turkey and that the Kemalist government should be supported for the development of capitalism so as to gain independence from imperialism and to eradicate feudalism...[with] the main objective...not to come to power through revolution until the conditions grew ripe for socialism.⁴⁶

External influences guided initial actions of the Turkish left, especially in regard to its placement alongside Kemalism within the early years of the republic. This modified, patient revolutionary strategy set the stage for those adhering to the leftist ideology in Turkey to create their own interpretations of it via a Kemalist lens. M. Şükrü Hanioğlu confirms such thinking in his assessment of the writings of the early Turkish-based communist magazine *Kadro* (Cadre). “The Turkish example led by Mustafa Kemal should serve as a model...and ideology for all oppressed people,” Hanioğlu summarizes, “thus intellectuals, together with Mustafa Kemal as their brain, should serve as the engine of the revolution and change, and the state should be their main agent.”⁴⁷ This magazine codified the strategy of the Comintern within Turkey, utilizing Atatürk’s ethno-nationalist agenda as a means to stabilize the emerging Turkish nation and set it apart from dependence upon imperial influences. Once achieved, the left could utilize Parliament (after inciting class-consciousness) to transition the new nation-state to socialism. Although this strategy appeared to unify the left and the right in their fight against a common enemy—the occupying forces after World War I—it eventually sparked a permanent division within Turkey’s left-wing.

⁴⁶ Şenol Durgun, “Left-Wing Politics in Turkey,” 14-15.

⁴⁷ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, “The Historical Roots of Kemalism,” 35.

Following Atatürk's death and the conclusion of World War II, Turkish leadership opened up the nation to a multi-party system. While this move enabled other voices to be heard outside of Atatürk's previously dominant Republican People's Party, the emerging competitor and subsequent victor of the 1950 elections, the *Demokrat Parti* (Democrat Party – DP) emerged politically centralist in most areas. The Turkish military stepped in with a coup d'état in 1960, threatened by the expanding autocracy of DP technocrats, rapidly expanding foreign debt, and revisionist policies said to undermine the progressive program of Kemalism (mostly related to Islamic practice in Turkey). Despite an open party system during the previous decade, communism was still illegal, and socialism remained a taboo. In the year following the coup, the military-led government oversaw the drafting of a new constitution, which opened up politics for the first time to ideologically-based political parties.⁴⁸ The resultant 1961 Constitution enabled the voice of the left be heard overtly without persecution from the state, as long as it sidestepped communism for socialism.

Aside from newly acquired rights in the post-coup constitution, formation of the WPT created the conditions from which political parties could reshape themselves in relation to the left and “use this party's position to benefit their own positioning or imaging.”⁴⁹ Wherein the majority of parties established at the time situated themselves in the center, the nation's first party—the Republican People's Party (RPP)—took a different approach. RPP leadership sought to expand their political influence by framing themselves as “left of center” in order to portray the RPP as the defender of “social justice [prioritizing] the situation of the [urban] worker.”⁵⁰ This move allowed the centrist RPP to chip away at the monopoly held by the left on issues such as land redistribution and

⁴⁸ F. Michael Wuthrich, *National Elections in Turkey*, 146-147.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 151

workers' benefits. Political reframing thus transformed the meaning of socialism within Turkey's complex societal context in the early 1960s.

Aziz Nesin articulates the newly acquired popularity of left-wing ideals best in *Out of the Way! Socialism's Coming!* Frustrated by a trend of failed attempts to deceive businessmen into financing their "fight against socialism," a discourse erupts among the group of scam-artists.

Niyazi was right. The businessmen we'd been visiting all had started to say something along the lines of:

"Socialism's not such a bad thing. I'm a socialist, or at least, I'm thirty percent socialist. Everything has its right amount. It's just that some overdo it."

And Niyazi would reply:

"Your humble servant is also slightly socialist, but as you yourself admitted, there has to be a limit to this socialism... One person might be twenty percent socialist, another thirty percent. But the limit has to be forty percent. Too much of anything is harmful."

We went back to see some of those we had called on earlier. Even they were gradually turning more socialist, and the money they gave us therefore diminished proportionately. The last big businessman we went to had this to say:

"I'm sixty percent socialist..."

And after hearing that, Niyazi told us in the coffee shop:

"Friends, it's finished. When these guys are sixty percent socialist, then we're out of a job."

"Why's that?" I asked.

"Businessmen are like that," he said. "They slowly take over until they've become sole owners of their companies. You can see by the percentages that the extent to which they feel themselves socialist is gradually increasing and in the near future they'll say they're a hundred percent socialist. And then we'll be hanged! They've found another way of preventing socialism. You see, once they've become socialist themselves, then socialism will be nothing!"⁵¹

Political shifting from the center to the left may define percentages mentioned here. Formerly existing as a definite zero, businessmen begin to align with the popularity of socialism and alter the percentage of their socialist leanings to reflect in their public image. Nesin unmasks the real agenda behind this maneuvering in the last sentence: *once they've become socialists themselves, then socialism will be nothing!* The RPP operated with the same objective. By promoting themselves as a political party touting social justice and workers' rights, the RPP was able to fill the ideological role of a Marxist

⁵¹ Aziz Nesin, *Out of the Way! Socialism's Coming!*, 53-55.

party (WPT) and meet the practical demands of its left-wing supporters as a major party. With the left political agenda absorbed into “left of center” politics, the RPP negated the need for the left. This tactic enabled centrist parties once again *become sole owners of* Turkish politics, while reducing the power of socialists to *nothing*.

Left of center tactics proved vital to the RPP garnering necessary support from the newly fashioned collective of the *gecekondu* voting block. Considering the fact that these individuals completely depended upon legitimization of their illegal residences, social justice image posturing by the RPP proved decisive in absorbing rural-to-urban migrant votes in the 1960s. With the probability much higher for the RPP than the untested WPT to win elections and fulfill campaign promises, *gecekondu* communities rallied behind political organizations that could meet the needs of their daily struggles.

The *Yön* movement hailed from this political turning point. A product of a collection of radical leftist intellectuals in Turkey, this movement propagated discourse through their journal entitled *Yön* (Way or Direction), first published in 1961.⁵² *Yön* uniquely drew from a variety of contributors as “a freer flow and exchange of ideas contributed greatly to arousing the interest of Turkish intellectuals in economic, social, and political issues.”⁵³ While the magazine enabled public discussion proposing resolutions to Turkey’s problems, it oriented everything from a socialist point of view. Similar to *Kadro*, this magazine stressed how Kemalism remained the link between the current struggling capitalist system and a future socialist state, primarily through its tenet of *etatism* (statism).⁵⁴ Then, the elections of 1965 changed everything.

The *Yön* movement initially perceived Turkey as still trapped in the democratic stage of revolution, lacking the maturity to transition to socialist revolution. As a result, these intellectuals

⁵² Özgür Mutlu Ulus, *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey*, 20.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

backed the newly formed Workers Party of Turkey (WPT) in hopes of bringing about such democratic transition. The 1965 election outcomes, however, placed WPT support at only 3%.⁵⁵ Convinced by the election that the working class would never develop enough in Turkey to counter bourgeoisie complete manipulation of state control, *Yön* leadership split into those supporting the parliamentary avenue through the WPT and those in favor of “vigorous forces” inciting revolution through armed struggle alongside the military.⁵⁶ This rupture caused the radical side of the *Yön* movement to align with other leftist revolutionaries, namely ex-communist Mihri Belli. Such a move of left-wing unification, however, unraveled quickly.

Belli, an American educated communist previously exiled from Turkey and imprisoned multiple times for his activism and leadership within the covert TCP organization, spent a few years engaged in guerilla warfare as part of the civil wars in Greece during the late 1940s.⁵⁷ His revolutionary spirit, militant background, and intellectual prowess propelled him upward within *Yön*'s ranks shortly after surfacing as an effective writing contributor in the early 1960s. Subsequently Belli guided the more radical arm of *Yön* adhering to national democratic revolution. This concept, conceived by Lenin back in 1905, differed from Marxism in that it proclaimed that socialist revolution must be brought about by armed struggle rather than patiently waiting for capitalism to take its full course.⁵⁸ Although Belli agreed with *Yön*'s intellectuals on many fronts, over time it became apparent that the ex-communist sought to generate a new movement within *Yön* that drew a great deal of communist support. Mihri Belli embodied a camp within the TCP that rejected

⁵⁵ F. Michael Wuthrich, *National Elections in Turkey*, 123.

⁵⁶ Özgür Mutlu Ulus, *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey*, 37-42.

⁵⁷ “Mihri Belli hayatını kaybetti: Türkiye sosyalist hareketinin sembol isimlerinden Mihri Belli hayatına gözlerini yumdu,” *Milliyet*, August 16, 2011, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/mihri-belli-hayatini-kaybetti-gundem-1427595/>.

⁵⁸ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, trans. Abraham Fineberg & Julius Katzer, “Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution,” *Lenin: Collected Works*, vol. 9, George Hanna, ed. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), 30-31.

Comintern control in Turkey, desiring autonomy that enabled development and implementation of its own internal strategy for the nation. This mindset prompted his removal from the party.

Belli's work within the *Yön* movement drew many of the "old guard" cadre of the communist party, putting him at odds with core movement leadership. This fissure widened in the late 1960s, culminating with his split from *Yön*, banishment from the WPT, and reimagining the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) as a separate organization.⁵⁹ NDR utilized the same tactic as *Yön*, publishing *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi* as a means to introduce itself as the primary source of true revolutionary understanding while mentoring individuals into its cause. As *Aydınlık* attempted to mobilize Turkish workers and peasants through literature toward class-consciousness and revolution, its strategy depended on mentoring young military officers and university students to lead the movement. NDR's focus on such groups, however, created the conditions for which its emerging youth leaders could branch off with their own movements. As a result, a year after *Aydınlık's* initial publication, a group of key NDR youth leaders established *Dev-Genç* (Revolutionary Youth). Set up as an umbrella organization for a variety of militant youth organizations, *Dev-Genç* sheltered many terrorist organizations intent on inciting revolution through guerilla warfare.⁶⁰ Nevertheless ideological conflicts led to splintering both within *Dev-Genç* and NDR. These clashes significantly divided the Turkish Left and undermined its legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

These conditions forced *Aydınlık* to wage its battle for image placement both among the left and within the political party "left of center" construct. NDR's strategy to counter such political

⁵⁹ Şenol Durgun, "Left-Wing Politics in Turkey," 18.

⁶⁰ *Dev-Genç* existed as a legal subset of NDR, with aspirations to pass on the struggle for revolution to Turkey's younger generation. Although Mihri Belli desired ideological consistency among these militant youth, significant divisions surfaced based upon interpretations of the army's political role as well as differing examples of revolutionary practice set by contemporary actors in China and South America. For example, the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (THKP-C) supported a reactionary military coup based upon anti-American guerilla warfare, while the People's Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO) scoffed revolutionary theory and the army in favor of acts of terrorism. Both of these clandestine cells favored a Leninist perspective on revolution, however, the Proletarian Revolutionaries (PDA) stressed a guerilla activity stirring up peasant support in rural areas strictly from a Maoist lens. For more information on *Dev-Genç* reference Özgür Mutlu Ulus's work *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey* (112-131).

maneuvering and image posturing anchored on educating the public through literature. Once again Nesin's characters lay it out clearly. Expressed in their first pitch to a well-known businessman fearful of the threat of socialism, the group of con artists unveiled their plan:

The businessman was drumming his fingers on the desktop. He said seriously:

"And how do you propose to wage this campaign?"

"It will be a campaign of ideas."

"These socialists generate a lot of propaganda...[w]e have to produce some propaganda to counter it..."

"In defense of private enterprise and capital," explained Sababattin, "we are planning to bring out a magazine."

"We're asking for help from public-spirited businessmen. And if they don't help us today in this small matter, tomorrow all could be lost..."⁶¹

Building off of the concept of furthering "a more accurate" discourse and countering misperceptions via propaganda, these men saw publications as the means to get their message out. This medium served as the best option to wage a *campaign of ideas* both in the short story as well as in reality. In an effort to set itself apart as the most correct leftist revolutionary movement, Doğu Perinçek (with the support of Mihri Belli) began to publish *Aydınlık* in late 1968. This periodical, produced in Ankara, provides valuable insight into the left's approach to reach the nation's urban and rural workers.

**** Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi ****

Although *Aydınlık*'s editors announced the purpose of the magazine's release in their first issue, they failed to unveil the goal of its release until the second issue, published in December 1968. While the former spoke of forming and educating revolutionaries through accurate revolutionary theory to bring about socialism, the latter focused more on an interactive relationship with its

⁶¹ Aziz Nesin, *Out of the Way! Socialism's Coming!*, 31-35.

readers.⁶² According to NDR leaders, *Aydınlık*'s goal remained threefold, "...the realization of the socialist cadre's education and training goals in execution of the struggle for freedom and democracy, a serious connection with its readers, and to establish a lively/living relationship with these readers."⁶³ From the start Perinçek *et al* made it clear that the readers were the target audience of NDR, a force capable of bringing about revolution under the leadership of NDR cadre. Yet *Aydınlık* also understood that lively interaction required a dual effort. This explained why their goals moved beyond simply educating masses of revolutionaries.

After clarifying the publication's goals, the authors proceed to lay out *Aydınlık*'s plans to establish this vital connection with its readers: "First, the magazine must take up both the left movement's long and short term problems, and bring correct solutions. Secondly, the magazine must enter into close discourse (idea shopping) with readers."⁶⁴ In each of these circumstances the reader must be considered. Although *Aydınlık* claimed to be the true interpreter of revolutionary theory, its authors allowed room for readers to contribute to the forging of this truth. For example, Perinçek *et al* expressed later in this section that readers must critique *Aydınlık*'s work and communicate these criticisms to the magazine in order to refine the NDR movement and deepen its relationship with the audience.⁶⁵ This agenda emphasizes the fact that the magazine and NDR leaders did not intend to remain static. By creating conditions for this interplay *Aydınlık* maintained a dynamic capability to receive feedback over the real issues of its readers.

As noted previously, NDR rejected the WPT as the embodiment of revolutionary change within Turkey. NDR saw revolution incited via armed struggle, not through political party

⁶² Doğu Perinçek, *et al*, "Aydınlık Niçin Çıkıyor," *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, November, no. 1 (1968), 29-31.

⁶³ "Aydınlık'ın çıkış amacını, yani bağımsızlık ve demokrasi mücadelesini yürüten sosyalist kadroların eğitmesi amacını gerçekleştirebilmesi, okuyucuları ile sıkı bir bağ, canlı bir ilişki kurmasına bağlıdır," Doğu Perinçek, *et al*, "Aydınlık'tan Okuyucuya," *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, December, no. 2 (1968), 90.

⁶⁴ "Bu bağın kurulabilmesinin bizce iki yolu vardır: Birincisi, derginin sol hareketin hem uzun vadeli, hem de kısa vadeli meselelerini ele alması, bunlara doğru çözümler getirmesi ve ikincisi, okuyucuları ile yakın bir fikir alışverişine girmesidir," *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

maneuvering under a bourgeoisie-dominated parliament. As a result, NDR spent a great deal of effort undermining the WPT and exposing its failures. First off, *Aydınlık* accused Turkish unions of being under the power of U.S. unions and the CIA, a group from which the WPT originated. Secondly, the magazine asserted that Turkish elites ultimately controlled all unions (including the WPT), evidenced by their ability to imbed pro-elite individuals within key leadership. Mehmet Ali Aybar emerged at the heart of this accusation. A lawyer by trade, union leaders selected Aybar to lead the WPT despite the fact that he came from aristocratic, not working class, roots. *Aydınlık's* authors, therefore, claimed elites hijacked WPT leadership via petty bourgeoisie opportunists and civil soldiers “not enacting anti-imperialist and anti-feudal policies.”⁶⁶ The distancing of NDR from WPT remained paramount to *Aydınlık's* strategy of setting itself apart as the accurate interpretation and authority on socialist revolution. By dismantling the legitimacy of the WPT, Doğu Perinçek and Mihri Belli conveyed to readers that the only option to bring about socialism in Turkey was through National Democratic Revolution.

The nation's Socialist Congress surfaced in *Aydınlık* as one of the primary solutions to bringing about revolution. From the perspective of NDR, the national meeting would connect socialists across Turkey, generate awareness of other socialist revolutions and socialist roles, bring order to the national movement via streamlined strategy and tactics, and fund academic socialism.⁶⁷ Although these recommendations enabled the possibility of networking and generating cohesion, they seemed to fall far short of meeting the practical needs of the working class in Turkey.

When it came to rural-to-urban migrants, generating a collective bargaining power (not class-consciousness) remained the top priority. Kemal Karpat recognized this overarching agenda in his research on *gecekondu* communities:

⁶⁶ Doğu Perinçek, *et al*, *Aydınlık*, no. 2, 92-93.

⁶⁷ “Türkiye İşçi Partisi ve Sosyalist Hareket,” *Ibid.*, 102-103.

The immigrant communities could produce militant supporters for the extremist factions, but the prevailing culture and attitudes in the *gecekondu* favored the status quo, which could be manipulated to satisfy the *gecekondu* dwellers' demands. Indeed, contrary to many expectations, the *gecekondu* dwellers were generally conservative; only certain areas were dominated by radicals of the left or right. The dwellers chief demand was the legalization of the land plot on which each dwelling had been built and they realized that the granting of the land deed could be achieved by supporting the political party that promised it.⁶⁸

Karpat's insight into *gecekondu* politics unearths the apparent disconnect of the left with rural-to-urban migrants. The dramatic shift from village to urban life left many surviving on the fringes of society in an attempt to create new lives for themselves. Generally, explanations for this residential transition to the fringe orient around housing shortfalls and excessive rental rates in the cities. However, in Turkey a leading factor for squatters to move to the urban periphery centered on aspirations to own property.⁶⁹ Democrat Party promises (and fulfillments) in the 1950s to award squatters the titles to the land they occupied exacerbated such a trend.⁷⁰ With this informal political tradition established, upcoming generations of *gecekondu* dwellers leaned upon the same tactic. As a result, by 1965 over sixty-percent of the nation's capital lived in *gececondus*.⁷¹

Although property ownership topped out as the primary objective of shantytown dwellers within the political arena, everyday living conditions significantly dominated the rest of their collectivist agenda. As Karpat reveals, the vast majority of *gecekondu* houses lacked city water, electricity, baths, or even paved roads (rendered almost impossible to cross with the rain).⁷² Solutions to these problems rested in a municipality's absorption of such areas into budgeted urban development plans, and subsequent legal acceptance, over which politicians resided.⁷³ Yet, overt attempts by political parties to garner support of this new demographic varied. Seen as a significant voting block, squatter settlement residents sought to legalize their space and thus their identity.

⁶⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, "The Genesis of the Gecekondu," para 17.

⁶⁹ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Gecekondu: rural migration and urbanization*, 89.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷¹ Bülent Batuman, "City Profile," 586.

⁷² Kemal H. Karpat, *The Gecekondu: rural migration and urbanization*, 94.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Casting votes for major parties seemed the best strategy, as they had the highest probability of making good on campaign promises geared toward social justice and workers' rights. Thus, contrary to what many believed, the *gecekondu*s were not the hotbeds of political and militant extremism.

In order to improve their daily lives within society, rural-to-urban migrants worked hard to provide for themselves and typically avoided ideology that altered the direction of their aspirations. Karpat's work reveals that those living in the *gecekondu*s "regarded the life in the *gecekondu* as a temporary provisional, rather than a permanent way of life, [internalizing] the old city residents' way of life as their own ultimate goal, even as an ideal model."⁷⁴ Thus, migrants thrived in pursuit of the urban dream, shaping something similar through their demands. Because their squatter neighborhoods were constructed illegally, politics in the *gecekondu*s primarily oriented around access to public utilities, paved roadways, extensions of public transportation, and other issues shaping quality of life in practical ways. These aims shifted the collective backing of major national parties, as they offered the best chance to directly change the living conditions of these migrants. Despite ideological posturing by NDR, "left of center" image placement by the RPP incorporated migrant issues into their greater political agenda. Thus, rather than wasting a vote on a newly emerging Marxist party unable to meet their current demands, rural-to-urban migrants tried to make the most of the electoral process.

The left's impatience with Turkey's pace toward socialist revolution heavily contributed to its failure to mobilize the working class as well. *Aydınlık*'s authors, through their denunciation of the WPT, attempted to convince workers and villagers that the WPT parliamentarians voted into the *Meclis* (Grand Assembly/Parliament) lost their revolutionary spirit. Doğu Perinçek *et al* used this contradiction to conclude that only through ideological training, not political parties, could the

⁷⁴ Kemal H. Karpat, "The Genesis of the Gecekondu," para 21.

masses achieve successful revolution.⁷⁵ This assertion shut off a primary avenue of political change, however, leaving urban migrants to apparently deal with their practical problems solely with academic solutions. *Aydınlık* attempted to justify this positioning by following up with the magazine's significance in the needs of the people. "If [the workers and villagers] are not connected to practical revolutionary theory, [they] are aimless. If they are not enlightened with practical revolutionary theory," *Aydınlık* claimed, "they enter into slavery in darkness."⁷⁶ In this context the authors attempt to convince readers of their enslavement and simultaneous blindness apart from theory. After laying this foundation, Perinçek *et al* conveniently offer up a solution. "If they walk in the light of the petty bourgeoisie, the working class will fulfill its job in its victorious struggle against imperialism."⁷⁷ Here the authors prompt the working class to find truth, direction, and leadership in the intellectual guidance of those outside their class. NDR perceived the working class in Turkey as small and unorganized. Despite its recent growth, Perinçek *et al* felt that the petty bourgeoisie (themselves) should make the workers and villagers aware so as to lead them in revolution. This exposed the significant doubts NDR had that the working class could progress toward revolution. Furthermore, *Aydınlık* pushed immediate revolution so as not to begin attempts to transform the nation from an irreversible state.

Although NDR doubted the working class, Karpat and Wuthrich's evidence shows that rural-to-urban migrants already comprehended their political sway and acted on it as such. "[T]he immigrants' view of their membership in the political community," Karpat concludes, "and their growing awareness of their rights as citizens and the power of the ballot, which existed in the limited

⁷⁵ Doğu Perinçek, *et al*, *Aydınlık*, no. 2, 94.

⁷⁶ "Teori, devrimci pratiğe bağlanmadıkça amaçsızlaşır. Pratik devrimci teori ile aydınlanmazsa karanlıkta körçesine gider," *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷⁷ "Gerekirse küçük burjuva aydınının ayağına kadar gidip, onu emperyalizme karşı mücadeleye kazanmak, işçi sınıfının görevidir," Doğu Perinçek, *et al*, "Yaşansın İçşi-Köylü Gazetesi," *Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi*, July, no. 9 (1969), 164.

form in the village, acquired new strength and dimension in the *gecekonu*.⁷⁸ Portrayed as a transformational power for both Turkish society and Turkish politics, the *gecekonu* emerged as a stepping stone for migrants to assert themselves on the national stage and maneuver for basic rights within the context of their new and limited living conditions. NDR leadership's arrogance, as seen through the phrasing professed in *Aydınlık*, negated the power of the migrant masses already at work. This in turn caused the *gecekonu* residents to look to majority parties for practical solutions to their evolving problems on the fringes of developing cities.

*** Conclusion ***

In an effort to reduce the political motivations of rural-to-urban migrants within the context of 1960s Turkey, sociologist Kemal Karpat proclaims, “[T]hese squatters, most of whom were industrial workers arriving from the provincial villages, entered into politics of ‘demand satisfaction’ and hence were not inspired by radical ideologies, except when their material demands were not met by normal political channels.”⁷⁹ Karpat’s analysis, although thorough regarding the needs of migrants in urban areas, fails to consider the actual words expressed within publications of the left, widely dismissing movements within the left-wing simply as ideological. This effort falls far short of capturing the strategy of leftist movements, such as the National Democratic Revolution, in parallel with emerging national party image placement.

By looking into the actual words within periodicals like *Aydınlık* and popular literature like Aziz Nesin’s work *Out of the Way! Socialism’s Coming!*, left-wing ideological focus becomes clear. However, NDR’s lack of confidence in the working class to achieve consciousness and lead themselves explain the movement’s motivation for perpetuating revolutionary theory. This doubt and impatience caused NDR leadership to avert its attention from the audience’s practical needs in

⁷⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, “The Genesis of the Gecekonu,” para 22.

⁷⁹ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Gecekonu*, 199-200.

an effort to educate the masses on theory. Compounded by shifting tides of societal taboos surrounding the term socialist, one may see how political parties adhering to conservative socioeconomic viewpoints appropriated the term by posturing their image as being “left of center.” Such political maneuvering set the stage for the undermining of Turkey’s emerging Marxist party as the RPP propagated an agenda of “social justice” and “workers’ rights” akin to the WPT. With a significant support base already in place, rural-to-urban migrant looked to major parties like the RPP to legitimately realize their practical need of legal recognition of their land and position. Furthermore, the well-established placement of the RPP added to its support from *gecekondu* dwellers. As Karpat’s research reveals, squatter settlement residents felt connected to socialist activists, but refrained from supporting their political organizations (like the WPT), as migrants felt that deviations to “leftist extremism [reduced] their chances of success in the long run.”⁸⁰ This evidence affirms the left’s ability to establish a connectedness with its readers, as *Aydınlık* desired, yet exposes the practical limits of leftist ideology in Turkey. With these layers in place, the failure of the Turkish Left to mobilize rural-to-urban migrants toward revolution through their primary means of literature becomes legible.

Returning to Nazım Hikmet’s bold, poetic depiction of Turkish society as *half full, half hungry*, one may see how discourse materializes as the primary means to fill or deplete society in relation to generating support from the masses. Just as Atatürk shaped empty signifiers to further his political and societal agenda of “modernization,” the RPP hijacked the unrefined definition of “socialism” within a politically open 1960s Turkey. In like manner, the Turkish Left sought to reach urban migrants in the working class and petty bourgeoisie through literature. Yet, the NDR approach sidestepped the practical needs of urban migrants in the *gecekondus*, failing to understand their commitment to actualize their identity as a legitimate urban resident and property owner rather than

⁸⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Gecekondu*, 215.

as a revolutionary. Rural-to-urban migrants, therefore, carved out their own space in society through collective bargaining during elections. At first seen by Hizmet as *half slaves*, this evolving subset of society congealed into a political force capable of freeing themselves from their bonds of enslavement within the context of Turkish politics, rather than transforming society through revolutionary action.

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