

COMMEMORATIVE PRACTICES AND NARRATIVES OF REVOLUTIONARY  
MOVEMENTS IN TURKEY: “KIZILDERE” AS A TEXTURE OF MEMORY

by

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Submitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Sabanci University

July 2015


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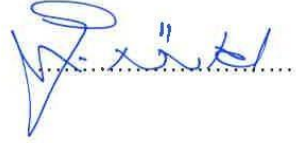
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Date of Approval: 30.07.2015

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## ABSTRACT

### COMMEMORATIVE PRACTICES AND NARRATIVES OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN TURKEY: “KIZILDERE” AS A TEXTURE OF MEMORY

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M.A. Thesis July, 2015

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Keywords: Kızıldere, collective memory, THKP-C, Turkish left, commemoration

On 30 March, 1972, ten revolutionaries kidnapped three technicians hostage from Ünye radar installation to prevent the execution of Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin İnan and were murdered in a gunfight in Kızıldere, Tokat. This event is accepted as a leitmotif for the revolutionary movements in Turkey. This thesis analyzes the “memory regime” around this key event with reference to the experiences and narratives of the victims, the witnesses, and the revolutionary movements as the “heirs” of the “political legacy” of “Kızıldere,” comparing with official history. Main data for the research include all kinds of published and visual materials of various political organizations, memoirs and in-depth interviews conducted with former and current militants and the witnesses in Istanbul, Ankara, Samsun, Fatsa and Kızıldere. Describing the primary commemorative practices and narratives reproduced by the revolutionary movements which provide intergenerational transmission of the collective memory of “Kızıldere,” I argue that various meanings and temporalities attributed to “Kızıldere” create several layers of remembering and the past become a continuing experience. I then claim that past experiences in the case of “Kızıldere” are continuously reshaped through commemorating based on the current needs. So, the collective memory of this event contributes to present and future although it belongs to the past. Finally, I claim that defining the past experiences of violence in political terms allow the revolutionaries to go beyond the notion of victim and become active subjects of the past, present as well as the future.

## ÖZET

### TÜRKİYE’DEKİ DEVRİMCİ HAREKETLERİN HATIRLAMA PRATİKLERİ VE ANLATILARI: BİR BELLEK DOKUSU OLARAK “KIZILDERE”

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Yüksek Lisans Tezi Temmuz, 2015

Tez danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Sibel Irzık

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kızıldere, kolektif bellek, THKP-C, Türkiye solu, hatırlama

30 Mart 1972’de Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan ve Hüseyin İnan’ın idamını engellemek üzere Ünye Radar Üssü’nde görevli olan üç teknisyeni rehin alarak Tokat’ın Niksar ilçesinin Kızıldere köyünde bir eve sığınan on devrimci, yürütülen askeri operasyon sonucu öldürüldü. Bu tez Türkiye’deki devrimci hareketlerin kolektif belleğinde bir mihenk taşı olarak kabul edilen bu olay etrafında şekillenen “bellek rejimi”ni inceler. Bu amaçla olayın kurbanları, tanıkları ve “siyasal mirası”ni sahiplendiğini iddia eden devrimci örgütlerin anlatılarını resmi tarih kayıtları ile karşılaştırmalı bir biçimde analiz eder. Araştırmanın temel verilerini İstanbul, Ankara, Samsun, Fatsa ve Kızıldere’de olayın tanıkları ile yapılan derinlemesine mülakatların yanı sıra dönemin devrimcilerinin anıları ve birçok siyasal örgütün yazılı ve görsel materyaller oluşturur. Bu çalışma “Kızıldere”nin kolektif belleğinin kuşaklar arası aktarımını sağlayan ve Türkiye’deki devrimci hareketlerin on yıllardır yeniden ürettiği başlıca hatırlama pratiklerini ve bu pratiklerde öne çıkan temel anlatıları tartışır. Buradan hareketle “Kızıldere” ye atfedilen çeşitli anlamların ve değişen zamansallıkların farklı bellek katmanları oluşturduğunu ve geçmişin devam eden bir deneyim haline geldiğini iddia eder. “Kızıldere” nezdinde geçmiş deneyimlerin, hatırlama yoluyla şimdiki anın ihtiyaçlarına göre sürekli yeniden şekillendiğini ve anmaya konu olan tarihsel olay ile onun etrafında gelişen kolektif belleğin, geçmişe ait olduğu halde bugüne ve geleceğe hizmet ettiğini öne sürer. Böylelikle, bu tez, yaşanan şiddeti politik olarak tanımlayan devrimcilerin, siyasal öznellik açısından istenmeyen bir konum olan kurbanlık kategorisine sıkışmaktan kurtularak geçmiş, bugün ve gelecek üzerinde söz sahibi olan aktif birer özne haline geldiğini savunur.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During this research process, I was very lucky and also unlucky comparing with my colleagues. I was unlucky because I wrote this thesis almost under war conditions which still continues. Beginning from deciding on my research topic to finalize the research, we as the whole society, witnessed numerous incidents including huge protests against the existing government, street clashes and murders, executing with extreme prejudice, bombed or suicide attacks, mine disaster, environmental massacres, etc. almost every day. While witnessing these current atrocities, I had great difficulty in writing, even thinking. But at this point, I was lucky because I have a very helpful and indulgent thesis jury who were always more than being advisors and involved in every step of my research.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Sibel Irzık, my thesis supervisor, for her valuable support and guidance through the entire course of this study. Her astute comments, mind expanding insights and striking suggestions provided me new perspectives in articulating my ideas. Whoever I told that I was working on this topic had question marks in their minds but she accepted to work with me without hesitation and improved the content of my thesis. I feel privileged to be her student and thank her deeply.

I would also like to thank my jury members for their contributions. Banu Karaca expressed her faith in this research and in me more than I believe in myself. I cannot express my gratitude to her enough for her academic and personal guidance, everlasting patience and inciting comments. I am also thankful to Füsün Üstel for supporting me sincerely. Her enthusiasm, attentiveness and constructive feedbacks encouraged me during the whole process. Without the encouragement and theoretical contributions of my supervisor and jury members, this thesis could not have been written.

I want to express my gratitude to my interlocutors who showed ever-kindness to answer my endless questions. They were as excited as me for this research and I am deeply grateful to them. Besides sharing their experiences with me, they also helped me to get in touch with other interviewees. I learned something new in each single interview and gained worthless insights. I am especially indebted to Beyaz and Ali Arslan who hosted me in Kızıldere, acted like a family member and shared their intimacy. I also owe much to their daughter, Sakine Arslan who helped me to contact with her family.

I would like to thank my dearest friend, Erdem Kayserilioğlu, for his invaluable friendship and support. His friendship became one of the most important contributions of this research process to my life. Without his humor and endless support, it would be more difficult to write this thesis.

This thesis is a product of a collective work and the contributions of Armanc Yıldız, Çiçek İlgiz, Olcay Güney Özer and Sertaç Kaya Şen were significant for the outcomes of my research. Çiçek accompanied me from the very beginning of this thesis and encouraged me through the whole process. I owe a special debt to both her and her beautiful mother Gülşen İlgiz for their continuous support. Armanc, Olcay and Sertaç all read different drafts of this thesis and contributed with their insightful comments. They were with me whenever I sought their assistance and friendships. I am also thankful to my beloved friends Doruk Tunaoglu, Ezgi Şeref, Veli Başıyigit and Dilara Çalışkan for making my life more beautiful and for their friendship. I am indebted to my faithful friends Goncagül Gümüş and Ezgi Yusufoglu who stood by me in my most difficult days and gave me the strength to finish this thesis. I wish you the same. I am

also indebted to Nazlı Akçığ who motivated me with her messages despite her busy schedule. Without you, it would not have been possible to finish this thesis.

I owe a special debt to Aydın Uğur who allocated so much from his time even he could not find time to breathe. He helped me shaping my thoughts not only for this project but also for further research and encouraged me to find my way. Besides, I am grateful to Bahar Şahin Fırat who supported me beginning from my undergraduate years. I am very happy being their student. They both have supported me in every step and shared their friendship besides their academic experiences.

I should also thank to Deniz Tarba Ceylan who has always motivated me with her smiling face and high energy. Hakan Yaşa walked with me in the streets of Cağaloğlu in order to search the books that I had difficulty to find, I really thank to him. My sincere thanks go to Elif Binici for her help for the translations of my interviews.

I would like to express my thanks to Tanıl Bora, Murat Bjeduğ and Vehbi Ersan who shared my enthusiasm and asked the course of the research at every turn.

And my thanks furthermore go to those who I cannot mention but waited this research with eagerness and interest.

Last, but the most, I would like to express my special thanks to the people without whose love and support I would not have completed this thesis.

First, I would like to thank my dear family for encouraging me from the very beginning till the end. Notably my dearest mother, Nahide Özkaya, I thank them deeply for being always there for me. Without their support this thesis would not be realized.

I should also mention my father, Orhan Özkaya. I felt his absence during the whole process of this research. Although he could not have the chance to see my achievements, I dedicate this thesis to my father. I wish I would be able to spend longer years with him.

Last but not the least, I would like to express my gratitude to Tigin Öztürk who always believed in me and shared every moment with me during the research. He gave me strength with his intense love through the entire process and continues to do. Thank you for being always there for me.

Finally, I am most grateful to my “Big Family” who allowed me to have a privilege to look at the world and life in a different way. I am indebted to its members who imagine a free, just and an equal world and fight for it.

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- AP: Justice Party  
ASD: Enlightenment the Socialist Journal  
BDP: Peace and Democracy Party  
CHP: Republican People's Party  
CKMP: Republican Peasant Nation Party  
DEV-GENÇ: Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey  
DHKP-C: The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party–Front  
DİSK: Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Trade Unions  
DÖB: Revolutionary Student Union  
DP: Democratic Party  
FKF: Federation of Idea Clubs  
MBK: National Unity Committee  
MDD: National Democratic Revolution  
MHP: Nationalist Action Party  
MİT: National Intelligence Organization  
MTTB: National Turkish Student Union  
ÖDP: Freedom and Solidarity Party  
PDA: The Proletarian Revolutionary Light  
THKO: People's Liberation Army of Turkey  
THKP-C: People's Liberation Party–Front of Turkey  
TİİKP: Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey  
TİKKO: Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey  
TİP: Worker's Party of Turkey  
TKMD: Associations for Fighting Against Communism  
TKP/ML: Communist Party of Turkey/ Marxist-Leninist  
TKP: Communist Party of Turkey  
TMGT: Nationalist Youth Organization of Turkey  
TMTF: National Student Federation of Turkey  
TRT: Turkish Radio and Television Corporation  
TÜRK-İŞ: Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Kızıldere was an ordinary village of Niksar in Tokat Province until 30 March, 1972. This date became a turning point that has changed not only the future of Kızıldere and its residents but also the revolutionary leftist movement in Turkey. Eleven revolutionaries from the People's Liberation Party–Front of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi Cephesi, THKP-C*) including its leader, Mahir Çayan and People's Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu, THKO*) had captured two English and a Canadian undercover intelligence officers working for the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) in order to prevent the impending execution of their comrades, Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin İnan. On the March 30, 1972, Turkish Special Forces surrounded the house of the Mayor at Kızıldere where the revolutionaries were harboring. During lengthy negotiations firstly Mahir Çayan was killed intentionally in the roof of the Mayor's house. As a response to Çayan's murder, the three GCHQ staff - Charles Turner, Gordon Banner and John Law - were killed by the militants during the fire-fight. This is followed by bombs and mortars massacring the revolutionaries, Sinan Kazım Özüdoğru, Hüdai Arıkan, Saffet Alp, Sabahattin Kurt, Ertan Saruhan, Nihat Yılmaz and Ahmet Atasoy from the THKP-C with Cihan Alptekin and Ömer Ayna from the THKO. Only one of the revolutionaries, Ertuğrul Kürkçü, could survive. This event has been called the Kızıldere Massacre in the history of revolutionary movements in Turkey.

This incident had far-reaching repercussions both in Turkey and abroad. It had widespread media coverage including British newspapers on the very next day and became a current issue during the following days. However, almost all parts of the country were under the repressive environment of the 1971 military intervention and this incident foreshadowed the subsequent political developments. The execution of the three THKO members, deaths under torture or in street clashes, hundreds of detentions or arrests targeting not only leftist militants but also writers, journalists, trade unionists

and workers was followed by the Kızıldere Massacre. This oppressive environment of the military coup created a great public silence about the Massacre until a new and more massive revolutionary generation emerged couple of years after the event.

The Kızıldere Massacre had broader effects on its victims and witnesses. Moreover, it is considered as one of the most important moments in the history of revolutionary movements in Turkey, especially for the followers of the “political tradition” of the revolutionary militants killed in Kızıldere. It has been (re)interpreted with its several dimensions and these (re)interpretations have constituted a collective memory which is transmitted from one generation to another. I was also a part of one of these movements for a while and I knew that there were many leftist, socialist, revolutionary organizations that have insistently commemorated this historical event through various practices in every anniversary.

### **1.1. Research Motivations and Possible Contributions**

In September 2001, I started studying in the Istanbul University and shortly after, I joined a student organization, which was a section of a leftwing organization. As members of the student organizations, we prepared a commemoration of the Kızıldere Massacre in the University building in 2002, by hanging posters and pictures of the killed revolutionaries on the walls of the school buildings, playing revolutionary songs in the corridors, and distributing flyers about the historical and political significance of the Kızıldere Massacre. We also hung huge placards of Mahir Çayan in central places in the Campus. While I was trying to hang one of these placards, one of my classmates helped me to do it. While climbing down to the ladder he looked at the placard and asked who this man was. He had no previous knowledge of Mahir Çayan or of the Massacre. I was not expecting such a question because I assumed that most of the people in our circles would have knowledge about such political figures and events. When I look back to this period, I now realize that this kind of specific knowledge goes along with the collective memory of that specific political organization.

What reminded me of this moment was the article written by Dursun Eroğlu, who was a 12 year-old child when the gunfight occurred in the village of Kızıldere. He

has a very pertinent remark on how a past event was interpreted in various ways by different parties:

“Kızıldere” is not the old Kızıldere now... It was a new period for everyone with Kızıldere origin. It was as if all of us have committed a big crime. State offices and officials have prejudged us. There were anthems and songs about Kızıldere... Some wrote the name of the village to streets, roads, flags. They showed sympathy. The name of the village became more popular than Tokat. And others conceived Kızıldere as a “source of anarchy.” We have not given jobs in state offices, and when we are given we did not get what we deserved. The name of the village was changed into Ataköy in the 1980s by the legendart governor Recep Yazıcıoğlu.<sup>1</sup>

Reading his article, for the first time I realized that all the materials that I have read or listened about this incident were all unilateral accounts, mostly uttered by former or current revolutionaries. However, Eroğlu’s narratives were completely different from what I have been familiar so far. From that moment on, I started to think about those who could not or did not speak on this crucial event which changed their life in a very material way. Although Ertuğrul Kürkçü is the only survivor of the Massacre, there are several witnesses of this event such as the residents of the house, the relatives of the militants and also the state officials who have not spoken for years. First, I thought that reaching to these different parties and listening to their personal accounts might offer very diverse narratives. This would also be an important contribution to the literature on political struggles of the 1970s in Turkey. However, while conducting my research the acts of commemoration and the strong desire for reframing the meaning of the Kızıldere Massacre of the revolutionary leftists seemed more interesting to me. With these thoughts in my mind, I started to focus on the issue of collective memory of the revolutionary leftists concerning the Kızıldere Massacre.

One of the reasons that I find this topic worth to study is very personal. This research is also an attempt to engage with my personal memory. Although my intellectual and practical position is different today, I dedicated years of my life to one of those movements and I believe that I have a privileged vision to look at the world and life in a different way from my current position owing to that movement’s

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<sup>1</sup> “‘Kızıldere’ artık eski Kızıldere değildi. (...) Kızıldere köyü doğumlu olan herkes için yeni bir dönem başlamıştı. Hepimiz sanki büyük bir suç işlemiştik. Resmi makamlar ve kişiler tam bir ön yargı içinde oldu. Kızıldere marşı, türküleri çıktı. (...) Kimileri köyün adını sokaklara, caddelere yazdı, bayrak yaptı. Bize sempati gösterdi. Köyün adı Tokat’tan fazla tanınır oldu. Kimileri de Kızıldere’yi “anarşist yatağı” kabul etti. Devlet kuruluşlarında işe alınmadık, işe girenler ise hak ettikleri pozisyonlara getirilmedi. Kızıldere adı, ‘80’li yıllarda, efsane Vali Recep Yazıcıoğlu tarafından kaldırıldı ve köyün adı Ataköy olarak değiştirildi.” Available at <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/113597-cocukluk-anilarimda-kizildere>

contributions. Moreover, I regard studying these movements as an act of honoring a debt owed to many alive and lost members of these movements. There is also an objective reason to pick this research topic: the revolutionary leftists in Turkey have always seen as the primary targets of the existing system. The nation-state's systematic campaigns against these groups to marginalize, criminalize and even demonize them have created fissures within the larger parts of the society. Nevertheless, they have been faithfully resisting to these efforts of the state and insisting on protecting their collective memory. While doing so, I claim that they have also been protecting and reproducing the cultural and political memory of this society.

In the course of this research, numerous state-sponsored acts of violence occurred in different parts of the country, targeting different groups of people. I sometimes had great difficulty in writing the story of a political massacre that took place 43 years ago as I was bearing witness to other atrocities almost everyday. Sometimes, I thought my effort were in vain. However, I insisted on finishing this study with the intention of doing something useful for those who are interested in similar topics. And I observed that my main arguments in this thesis were legitimate. In all instances of atrocity, those who raised their objections, poured out into the streets and claimed the rights of the oppressed have been the leftists, socialists and revolutionaries of this country. I think that this quick mobilization and collective action with concrete demands have been one of the most important cultural and political legacies of these movements that are transmitted up to today through collective memory.

Therefore, my main aim in this thesis is to explore the commemorative practices and narratives of the Kızıldere Massacre articulated by revolutionary leftists. Thus, I examine the sites of memory which constitute important components of the collective memory constructed around this incident. I bring into view different layers of meaning and remembering attached to these sites of memory. In order to understand the significance of the commemoration of the Kızıldere Massacre, I thus posed several questions: What does the act of remembering of the Massacre mean to revolutionary leftists from different generations? What are the concrete practices involved in this remembrance process? How is the collective memory of the Kızıldere Massacre (re)shaped? In what ways does it strengthen or weaken them? What kind of spaces can emerge (and also disappear) by remembering the Kızıldere Massacre? What is the meaning of this remembrance or forgetting in terms of politics? What purposes does the collective memory of Kızıldere serve today?

In this respect, I first describe the general political environment between 1960 and 1972 in order to show the critical moments that paved the way for the Kızıldereli Massacre. In my examination based on ethnographic fieldwork, I compare the representations of the event in official historiography and the narratives of the villagers and former revolutionary figures of the time. In doing so, I show the divergence of memories on the same historical event and reveal different meanings attributed to the Kızıldereli Massacre which also shapes the commemorative narratives of revolutionary leftists. Lastly, I elaborate on the commemorative practices and narratives articulated by the revolutionary leftist movements in Turkey (especially by those who claim to be the followers of the “political legacy” of the THKP-C and Mahir Çayan). I claim that these commemorative practices and narratives propose multiple strategies of political struggle and adjust the current political activities and aims of several political factions.

## **1.2.Theoretical Background**

Unfortunately, some of the historical periods in the recent history of Turkey are not studied equally. The 1970s is one of those periods that have attracted the least attention from the historians who work on recent Turkish history. This limited body of literature usually regards the period as an environment of “chaos,” “terror,” or “left-right conflict.” Besides, it usually tries to understand the period through the prism of macrostructures such as the changes in the coalition governments or economic transformations. These approaches tend to ignore and even silence the characteristic features of this historical period and its actors who took part in these processes. The 1970s therefore warrant detailed analysis and there is another possible way of looking at this period.

### **1.2.1. Disputing Historiographies on the 1970s in Turkey**

The 1970s is the period in which large masses were politicized and produced alternative political and social imaginations. Beginning from the 1960s, large masses became aware of their social and political rights. These masses struggled for their rights

through labor organizations, associations, student clubs and political parties (both legal and illegal). Unlike today, the notion of “political organization” (*örgütlenme*) was then considered legitimate and the left became a hegemonic actor in the political arena. I should mention that the 1970s was also a period in which the idea of armed struggle became widespread among the revolutionary movements for the first time. There were many organizations supported by large masses. According to Işık Ergüden, the 1970s is a period that created an atmosphere of emancipation, transformation, rebellion and hope in spite of its youth, primitivity, conflicts and frictions (Ergüden, 2012). However, in the official historiography, these distinctive features of the widespread social struggle of the 1970s are often reduced to violent acts, or historical actors with alternative imaginations to displace the existing order are marginalized. This tendency has also been prevalent in much of the academic circles.

In contrast to the lack of interest in recent historical studies, the political history of the period between the two military coups of 1960 to 1980 is written by the Left in Turkey. Leftist organizations and also former and current revolutionary actors have had important contributions to this history. The historical sources on this period can be categorized into three groups: First group is composed of all kinds of publications of political organizations. Factional periodicals, posters, flyers, leaflets, etc. are among the primary sources of the works published on the social and political movements of the period. These factional publications are mostly propagandist and agitating, but they still provide us with very important knowledge about the period. Accessing these primary sources, however, is often a very difficult enterprise for researchers, because most of these political organizations did not keep an archive. In that regard, the establishment of the Turkish Social History Research Foundation (*Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, TÜSTAV*) in 1992 was a noteworthy effort to overcome this problem. The second group of sources consists in a combination of memoirs with historical documents. In these works, the testimonies of the witnesses are supported by newspapers, court documents, indictments, etc. but these works are scarce in number. The last and the most abundant group of sources are the memoirs which depict the social movements of the 1970s with a focus on the personal narratives of people who participated in leftist movements. These memoirs are increasing in number recently, owing to the proliferation of oral history accounts. These works might lay the groundwork for more extensive studies on the period, but the choices of their narrators and the selectiveness of their memory do not leave much room for objective and comprehensive analysis of the period. These



works mostly feature popular figures of the time at the expense of many other political actors and therefore give rise to an “official history” of the left. Besides, these works often include nostalgic and melancholic elements for the leftist movements in a manner which limit both the writers and the readers to think about the social struggles of the period for an active intervention in the current political environment. Accordingly, Nadir Özbek states as follows:

Our remembrances about the past to constitute an alternative history might be described as a leap backwards from the present circumstances, a search for an inspiration regarding the solution of current problems, and finally an effort for the construction of a new past. It must be stressed that a view of history which does not concern an active intervention in the present time and confines itself to forming the so-called representations of the past is academism if not chroniclerism.<sup>2</sup>(2003: 235)

The representations of this period in popular culture might also be seen as another source of the historiography on the 1970s. Retrospectively, 1968 is considered a milestone in the socialist movement of Turkey as in the other parts of the world. Therefore, the generations of '68 and '78 and being a member of these generations called '68'ers or '78'ers (*'68'liler ya da '78'liler*) have become promoted elements in the popular culture. Beginning from the second half of the 1980s, this generational approach has become hegemonic in the literature on the 1970s. The establishment of a number of associations and foundations with reference to these generations (The Foundation of '68'ers, The Federation of '78'ers) and the rise of a popular historiography around the renowned figures of the period have boosted this literature. All these contributed to the popularity of this period, but they have two important drawbacks: Firstly, they created widely circulated artificial concepts such as the “spirit of '68 or '78.” The social struggles of the period which proposed alternatives to the modern and alienated life have become trends that drain these alternatives of their radical features, while transforming them into nostalgic commodities (Argın, 1998). Mainstream media's representation of the student leaders of the period with completely irrelevant people under the common banner of '68'ers also fostered this process of commodification.

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<sup>2</sup> “Alternatif tarih oluşturmak üzere geçmişe ilişkin hatırlamalarımız bugünün koşullarından geriye doğru bir sıçrama, bugünün sorunlarının çözümüne ilişkin bir ilham arayışı ve nihayetinde yeni bir geçmiş inşasına yönelik bir çaba olarak nitelenebilir. İçinde yaşanan zamana aktif bir müdahale kaygısı tanımayan ve yalnızca geçmişin sözde temsilcilerini oluşturmakla yetinen bir tarih anlayışının vakanüvislik olmasa bile akademizm olduğunun altı çizilmelidir.”

As opposed to the popular representations of '68'ers and the continuing emphases on its "spirit," the socialists did not consider 1968 a milestone before the second half of the 1980s. As I will show in the following chapter, the turning point was 1971, and not 1968, for the revolutionaries of the period. The military intervention on 12 March 1971 and subsequent political developments resulted in the suppression of revolutionary socialist mobilization. State violence became visible for different parts of the society other than the radical left. These developments induced a great silence in the society, but only for a couple of years, because a new generation of politically active youth began to emerge. Particular events came to bear symbolic significance in the reorganization of this new generation of revolutionaries and the Kızıldereli Massacre was the most important one of these events.

In the light of this general information about the disputing historiographies of the 1970s in Turkey, this thesis presents a critical exploration of the hegemonic accounts of the past. It is neither an attempt to rewrite the history of the 1970s, nor an alternative historical account of the 1970s. I simply try to situate the Kızıldereli Massacre within its context. I draw on all types of historical sources to understand this key event and the historical period that surrounds it. My main goal is to understand the relevance of remembering the Kızıldereli Massacre to the contemporary political arena in Turkey. For this reason, I mostly pay attention to the active subjects of this remembrance. I bring into view the narratives of the former or current political figures and organizations. These narratives, however, are not testimonies that purvey the truth of the event, nor are they nostalgic yearnings for the past as is often the case with memoirs or oral history accounts on the period. On the contrary, these narratives are the expressions of the ways in which these individuals or groups (re)interpret this event in terms of a political struggle, even though most of them did not bear witness to the event. Accordingly, I argue that what and how we remember or forget designate our perceptions about former, current and future social and political struggles.

Before proceeding to explain the methodological considerations of this research, I think it is useful to draw a broad sketch of the rise of memory studies in Turkey. There is a vast literature emerging on collective memory which has been developed to meet the need to remember the traumatic and violent events that mark the twentieth century, especially wars and the Holocaust. These works address some of the key issues in the study of collective memory, for instance, the role of cultural and political institutions and practices in constituting collective memory, the relation between collective memory

and constructions of identity, the motivations of remembering the past for nations or other social groups and the ways in which individuals and groups challenge hegemonic memory regimes. The vast literature on collective memory and various related topics constitute a very vivid field that gives rise to new debates and new concepts almost every day. Therefore, given the limited scope of this research, it is not possible for me to make an overall assessment of these inspiring products. For this reason, I try to briefly explain the increasing concern with memory studies in Turkey.

### **1.2.2. Increasing Concern with Memory Studies in Turkey**

Kerwin Lee Klein begins his article on the emergence of memory in historical discourse with the phrase “Welcome to the memory industry” (2000: 127) and seeks to find an answer to the question of how memory is popularized as a feature of new historicisms. There have been many researches on the recent memory boom in the social sciences. There is a growing academic and popular literature on collective memory with relation to history, identity, trauma, state-led violence, etc. that attempts to rediscover and reinterpret the contested events of the past.

Memory discourses firstly emerged as a new genre in almost all of the post-colonial countries after the 1960s. Afterwards; it came to life in Europe and the United States in the early 1980s, inspired by the debates on the Holocaust. Furthermore, we have witnessed the recurrence of genocidal politics in Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s for which the Holocaust has served as a template. The questions of memory and forgetting have become quite significant issues in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union since 1989 and this have had important repercussions in the Middle East, in post-apartheid South Africa, in Rwanda, Nigeria and so on (Huysen, 2003: 13-15). In this process of the globalization of memory discourse, the Holocaust plays a very significant role. Since racial oppression and organized violence was so integral to the Holocaust, it has been seen as a proof of the failure of Western civilization for the enlightened modernity that had claimed to live in peace despite differences. This is one of the most important factors that lead to proliferating discourses on remembering the past. The collapse of the Soviet Union can be seen as another watershed moment, because the Soviet Union had symbolized an

alternative world. Therefore its collapse gave rise to the discourses on the end of the history. According to Andreas Huyssen, modernity ended with the loss of hope for the future and people consequently started to look for utopias from their past instead of the future (Huyssen, 2003).

The globalization of memory discourse has also influenced the academia in Turkey. Remembering and forgetting has become central to both scholarship and public debates in Turkey in recent years. One can easily observe that the most popular topics for research projects, works of NGOs and discussions in the academia have focused on topics related to memory. This concern whose emergence dates back to the 1980s was intensified especially in the beginning of the 2000s. In Turkey, the production of memory studies has visibly increased during the 1990s, especially through the rise of oral history studies. Moreover, starting with the 2000s, memory studies emerged as a distinct field in the academia. Understanding how memory studies have emerged as a separate discipline and subsequently developed in Turkey requires the analysis of the 1990s. Because the effects of the 1980 *coup d'état* became visible during the 1990s and the entire economic, social and political environment of Turkey underwent immense changes. In her discussion on the nostalgia and privatization of Kemalist ideology in Turkey, Esra Özyürek discusses the significant features of the late 1990s: The rise of political Islam and the Kurdish movement on the one hand, and on the other hand, the close relationships with European Union (EU), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. All of these have laid the foundations for the emergence of memory studies in Turkey both in the economic and political arena. The rise of the two important movements – political Islam and the Kurdish movement – in this period also led to the questioning of the contested past of Turkish state. As the mobilization of the masses and political organizations accelerated, these movements began to write alternative histories against the official state history.

Although this has not been taken into account in most of the academic researches, by the beginning of 1990s, the leftist/revolutionary organizations in Turkey also began to reorganize after a period of silence that the widespread arrests and other repressive policies of the military coup entailed. Despite their defeat by the military coup and their moral defeat with the collapse of the Soviet Union, they succeeded in gathering the largest amount of supporters and gained public visibility during these years with new types of organizations. In addition, new human rights organizations were formed in these years, including the Human Rights Association (*İnsan Hakları*

*Derneği, İHD*) and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (*Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, THİV*). Although these organizations did not claim to focus on collective memory, their attempts at reporting human rights violations gave this important problem public visibility and constituted a suitable ground for further research.

This process continued in the 2000s, especially with the alleged democratization process. After the 1980 *coup d'état*, new governments geared to the neoliberal ideology rose to power, and since the beginning of the 2000s, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*) based its understanding of democracy on a confrontation with the incorrect political stances of their predecessors. In this period, the Turkish government tried to meet the increasing demands of the EU, IMF and the World Bank through economic credits and this process ended with the enactment of many legal reforms. This enabled the formation of several institutions, especially NGOs that mostly depend on international funds. The increasing impact of neoliberal ideology in both economic and intellectual spheres has still been a burning debate. In the last decade, many new organizations which produce several projects with EU funds have emerged and memory studies have a central role for these organizations. For instance, the Center for Truth, Justice, Memory (*Hakikat, Adalet ve Hafıza Merkezi*) formed in 2011 is one of these famous organizations. We can also add in this list the expansion of private media companies and private institutes and the emergence of privately funded museums or art and cultural centers. There are also independent efforts of memorialization in Turkey and one of them is the Collective Memory Platform (*Toplumsal Bellek Platformu*), founded in 2009 by the families of those who fell victim to political murders. In addition, journalists, documentary filmmakers and museum professionals have also had important contributions to this process.

All these efforts have been very influential in the memorialization of the contested history of the Republic of Turkey. As a result of questioning the official Turkish history, it is revealed that all the past events repressed, omitted or silenced in the national history of Turkey have been violent or traumatic experiences. In order to analyze these traumatic experiences and their effects on the victims, a relatively new and crucial subfield of memory studies emerged: trauma studies. Some of the important historical events that feature in the memory and trauma literature are the Massacres of Alevi Kurds of Dersim in 1937-38 (known as *Dersim '38*), the Armenian Genocide of 1915, the pogroms against minorities during 6-7 September 1955 and the war between

the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, PKK*) and the Turkish state (Neyzi, 2010).

As I stated before, the Holocaust and other harrowing events has navigated the literature on memory and trauma. Concentrating on similar patterns, most of these studies dwell on cultural identities with an extensive focus on ethnic groups or minorities who witnessed mass massacres or state violence. The main narratives of these kinds of researches are mostly based on the suffering and victimization of people on grounds of their ethnicity, race or religion. They mainly emphasize the powerlessness, helplessness and innocence of the victims and their suffering is seen as a natural and necessary condition for claiming rights for present and the future. However, they usually ignore the “agency” and demands of other political actors. These works also ignore another type of victimization which is based on political identity.

Beginning from the early Republican era, state sponsored acts of violence, especially those targeting the leftists, socialists or revolutionaries have continued apace in Turkey. Recent news provides us with examples in that regard, showing the Turkish state's attitude towards these parts of society. While I was struggling with the last parts of this thesis, on 20 July 2015, a suicide bomb attack killed 32 young socialists affiliated with the Federation of Socialist Youth Association (*Sosyalist Gençlik Dernekleri Federasyonu, SGDF*) in Suruç, in Urfa which is a city near the Syrian border.<sup>3</sup> They were on their way to reconstruct Kobane in order to be in solidarity. Although the city has been under strict control of the government because of the conflicts with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), the Turkish state did not prevent this massacre. Just after two days, the Turkish police launched raids in 13 cities of Turkey and detained 297 people with the suspicion that they are members of terrorist organizations.<sup>4</sup> Although it was declared that the raids were targeting the ISIS, most of the detainees were socialists from different political organizations. Moreover, a young woman in İstanbul's Bağcılar district was reportedly killed during the operation and her lawyers claim that the police executed the victim with extreme prejudice. There have been numerous examples throughout the years which evidence the systematic campaigns of oppression targeting the revolutionary leftists in Turkey and their oppression is not a case limited to the military coups. However, it is difficult to find

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33619043>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sendika1.org/2015/07/polis-operasyonu-basladi-bagcilarda-gunay-ozarslan-olduruldu/>

works of memory studies which focus on the individuals or communities who witnessed atrocities or traumatic events because of their conscious political choices and political identities. The same silence is also prevalent in studies that focus on trauma. Although the Turkish society experienced a massive trauma with the two military coups of 12 March 1971 and 12 September 1980, the memories and traumatic experiences of different parties of these periods are not sufficiently studied yet.

Not only as the subjects of these studies but also as active participants of the memorialization process the political communities or organizations play important roles in the memory literature in Turkey. Especially the continuous and courageous struggles of these leftist organizations and the Kurdish movement made important contributions to the current memory studies in Turkey, because their struggles enabled the thinking and talking about the “dangerous” and unexplored topics or events in the political history of the Turkish state. Mass massacres, forced disappearances, unidentified murders, etc. constituted the topics of research projects as a result of this resistance. These communities are significant in the examination of the different practices of remembering and forgetting. Remembering the atrocities they witnessed enables these political groups; it provides a vital motivation for their living members to maintain the struggle. In other words, the violence - which they have been exposed to - functions as a founding principle of the collective memory, and creates a narrative for resistance that contributes to the formation of a group identity. If individuals or communities that bore witness to a violent act cannot define this violence politically, they may confine themselves to the narratives of victimhood without agency. Far from being an empowering stance, this is indeed a disempowering position for political actors.

In this context, this research examines the ways in which remembering the Kızıldereli Massacre and confronting with that kind of past experiences have transformative potentials for political actors in particular and for the society in general. It attempts to show that insisting on remembering and making people remember this Massacre is on the one hand a way of recording the attacks that targeted them and on the other hand an act that symbolizes empowerment. The most important capacity of such remembrance is the capacity to challenge the sovereign.

### 1.3. Significance and Possible Contributions

The leftist, socialist or revolutionary movements in Turkey have witnessed numerous atrocities in their history of struggle. These numerous atrocities allow for several layers of commemoration which display continuous state violence and also the continuity of the revolutionary struggle. Although all instances of atrocity play a central role in the commemorative practices of these movements, all of them are not commemorated equally. Certain events gain an iconic and primarily symbolic status. The Kızıldereli Massacre has been one of such symbolic events.

The Kızıldereli Massacre and its aftermath were followed closely by almost all parts of Turkish society at the time. Although it did not attract the same degree of attention in the following years, a youth movement reemerged a few years later under the strong influence of these revolutionary figures who gained sympathy from the large segments of society, and the second half of the 1970s witnessed a much more massive revolutionary movement that was going to be suppressed by another military *coup d'état* on 12 September 1980.

The Kızıldereli Massacre has distinctive features both for its victims and perpetrators, and the later socialist and revolutionary movements kept these features alive in their collective memories. To begin with, it was the first mass massacre targeting the socialist movement and organized by the state with the support of international security forces after the annihilation of Mustafa Suphi and his comrades, the leaders of the Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi, TKP*) in 1912. Besides, not only the Massacre but also Mahir Çayan's political arguments and the significant features of the THKP-C played an important role in the newly-formed leftist organizations in the coming years. Beginning from 30 March 1972, a wide range of discussions was carried out on the political consequences of the Massacre, and towards the end of 1973 these discussions gave rise to a series of movements claiming the heritage of the THKP-C and Mahir Çayan. Some of these movements considered the massacre an "end" or "defeat", while the others claimed that it was a "victory" or "a new beginning." They designated their political paths according to these assessments and all of them acquired a wide audience and mass support. Although these groups experienced the oppressive and murderous face of the Turkish state, they began to reorganize quickly. These new organizations constituted a dynamic stream which is still active in the socialist and revolutionary movement in Turkey. It is generally agreed that



the massacre was a turning point for the revolutionary movement. Finally, the Kızıldere Massacre found a central spot in the debates made on the path to revolution in Turkey, whether it will be achieved through armed struggle or democratic means. Thus, discussions on the Kızıldere Massacre have also been questioning the revolutionary strategy in Turkey for some of the political organizations.

Besides the significance of the Kızıldere Massacre in the political history of Turkey, conducting a research on this incident is also important because the resources on this topic are very scarce in number. Despite the increasing number of studies in Turkey concerned with the recent history of the Republican of Turkey and the memory and trauma studies, the experiences and collective memories of the leftists, socialists or revolutionaries have often remained outside the purview of academic research and NGOs' projects. Although recent historical sources and the memoirs on the 1970s mention the Kızıldere Massacre, they mostly focus on the course of the event. The only book which is basically centered on the Massacre was published in 2012, but it also suffers from the same tendency. Thus, different actors involved in the course of this event are usually ignored. In the memory and trauma literature, the Kızıldere Massacre has not been mentioned even once. Thus, this research is the first academic work on this topic, despite its shortcomings. I hope that it will be useful for filling some gaps in this literature and might be my humble contribution to the works of those who intend to pursue further research.

#### **1.4. Methodological Considerations and Limitations**

In this study, I explore different memory regimes and changing narratives revolving around the same event with various conceptualizations. Therefore this study proposes a multi-vocal and multi-generational representation of experiences. For this research, I spent a long time to conduct a preliminary investigation before proceeding onto the fieldwork. I tried to find and read as much historical sources on the 1970s and the Kızıldere Massacre as possible. I collected data through court records, newspapers, periodicals published by political organizations, memoirs written by state officials and politically active figures of the time, poems or songs written on the Kızıldere Massacre, and all kinds of written propaganda materials including flyers, posters, slogans, etc. Although I could not effectively put all of these materials into use in this study, I put

together an extended archive on the period which can be used in further research on the “leftist memory” in Turkey. As many literary and cultural theorists have pointed out, there is an intertwined relationship between the sociality of cultural texts and the textuality of culture. Texts reflect social reality and also shape it. In this context, these textual materials both reflect different political actors’ ways of thinking, cultural and ethical values, hopes or objections, etc. and at the same time they also reproduce their existence and group identity, in other words their social reality (Culler, 1997).

At the same time, I determined the names of my interlocutors basically from the memoirs and indictments. I tried to reach people who had close relationships with the militants killed in Kızıldere or had knowledge about the period. First, I reached to a number of witnesses of the period on my own. Subsequently, my interlocutors helped me to find other interlocutors. I also contacted with particular political groups that organize or take part in the commemorations of the Kızıldere Massacre. Particularly, I wanted to conduct interviews with two organizations which are committed to the remembrance of the Massacre and advocates for the THKP-C and Mahir Çayan’s ideology. I paid visits to their offices repeatedly, but I could not find an access to them. Then I decided to follow their publications. Another shortcoming of this study is that I could not conduct an interview with the only survivor of the Massacre, namely Ertuğrul Kürkçü. Although I kept in contact with him, we were not able to meet because he had a busy agenda. Therefore, I turned to his previous statements and testimonies about the event.

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in five different cities between March and September 2014. The fieldwork included in-depth and semi-structured interviews with 28 interlocutors. The interviews lasted from 1 hour up to 3.5 hours. I also made contact with some witnesses of the period through phone, but I could not conduct interviews with them because they were living in different parts of the country. I conducted my interviews in Istanbul, Ankara, Samsun, Fatsa and Kızıldere, usually at the homes of my interlocutors. I prepared a set of questions deriving from the main question of the thesis, but I did not follow a strict, standardized list of interview questions during the interviews to allow my informants to express their experiences and feelings. Former militants of the THKP-C and current leftists from different political factions are among these twenty eight interlocutors. In the meantime, I also benefited from other interviews conducted by journalists, writers or documentarists.

I visited Kızıldereli for two days and stayed in the venue where the Massacre took place. It was a very strange, yet also a very touching experience for me. Although I could not give wide coverage to this experience in this research, I hope to carry on a separate study to do so. I also visited the Karşıyaka Cemetery in Ankara on 31 March 2015 for the last anniversary of the Massacre. I observed the commemorative ceremonies of different political factions and personal or familial visits paid to the graveyards of the revolutionaries. Although I wanted to attend the commemorative ceremony in Kızıldereli, I could not fulfill this wish because of the access problem.

As I mentioned before, I was familiar with the narratives, discourses and practices of the collective memory around the Kızıldereli Massacre due to my previous experiences as a member of one of these political groups. This involvement facilitated my contacts with the informants and helped me to reach written or visual materials. Such a familiarity with the cultural world of the “natives” expanded my understanding of the discourses deployed by interviewees and enhanced my grasp on the political genre of published materials.

This study agrees with the premise that language is closely connected to social reality, that is, the domain of power struggles. As Culler indicates “[l]anguage is thus both the concrete manifestation of ideology – the categories in which speakers are authorized to think – and the site of its questioning or undoing.” (1997: 60) Accordingly, I seek to investigate the ways in which the narrators reframe this common past event, and the kinds of narratives that they prefer to explain the same event or the echoes they create with the aim of altering the bonds of meaning interwoven between the Massacre and the present.

At this point, I have to make a clarification on a number of concepts that I prefer to use in this thesis. The terms “massacre,” “revolutionaries,” “revolutionary leftists,” and “militants” are frequently used throughout the thesis. I shared my personal history frankly, so I do not claim the position of absolute objectivism in this research. I do not even believe in the possibility of such a thing. After all, choosing a research topic also involves a political choice in itself. Therefore, I do not deploy these terms for sake of political indoctrination or agitation. An absolute majority of my interlocutors and most of the resources I draw on to conduct this research deploy these terms. So, I adopt their choices in this thesis. I do neither aim to contribute to the hegemonic battle over the description of the event nor being a part of the debates concerning the factuality of the Massacre. However, I want to remark that this event has been called as “massacre”

without any doubt by the socialist movement in Turkey due to the disproportionate use of state's repressive force and the assassination of a wounded revolutionary, Saffet Alp. This important detail about Saffet Alp's assassination is documented in the news and in the parliamentary minutes of the following day. One of the revolutionaries, Saffet Alp, was still alive but critically wounded when the troops entered to the house at the end of the gunfight. However, he was killed instead of being captured alive. The Home Secretary of the period, Ferit Kubat, articulated this detail in the parliament in March 31, 1972:

After a harsh collision the group with body armours, captured all of them dead. Even if the last anarchist had the chance to shoot his gun by making use of the momentary negligence by saying "I surrender" the bullet did not pass through the body armour and killed by the counter fire.<sup>5</sup> (Parliamentary Minutes, 1972: 411)

This important detail was also reported by the journalist Özdemir Kalpakçıoğlu on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, 1972 in the newspaper *Milliyet* as: "While the Security Forces were entering the house, Saffet Alp went out after being hurt and shot. The Security Forces responded him and Alp was died." The dairies of Nihat Erim, The Prime Minister of the time, and the statements of government doctor Şehsuvar Savuran support these statements:

At 18:00 pm. Tağmaç called. All of them were captured dead. When gendarmerie realized that talking was of no use and they threw bombs and fired guns, they started firing at 16:30. They sneaked into the house, found the technicians dead and killed the other survivors.<sup>6</sup> (Erim, 2005: 1017)

*The Journalist:* You talked about a corpse in front of the door. Did it go there by itself?

*Savuran:* Yes it went there by itself. He went out after being hurt. His name was... From the military school...Saffet.<sup>7</sup> (Düzgören, 1988: 140)

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<sup>5</sup> "Çetin bir müsademe sonucunda çelik yelekli ekip, hepsini ölü olarak ele geçirmiştir. Son bir anarşist 'teslim oldum' demiş ve o anlık gafletten istifade ile silahını ateşleme fırsatını bulmuşsa da kurşun, çelik yelekte kalmış, çelik yeleği geçmemiş ve mukabil ateşte de öldürülmüştür."

<sup>6</sup> "Akşam saat 18.00'de Tağmaç telefon etti. Hepsi ölü olarak ele geçmiş. Saat 16.30'da nasihatın etkisi olmadığını ve devamla bomba ve silah atıklarını görünce, jandarma da ateş açmış. Eve sokulup girmişler, İngilizleri ölüb ulmuşlar, ötekilerden sağ kalanları öldürmüşler."

<sup>7</sup> "Gazeteci: Kapının önünde bir cesetten söz ettiniz de... O oraya kendi mi çıkmıştı?  
*Savuran:* Kendisi çıkmış. Yaralandıktan sonar kendini dışarı atmış. Adı da şeydi. Hani harp okulundan... Saffet."

Thus, all these news coverages and statements serve as proofs in the sense that the leftists, socialists and revolutionaries in Turkey call this event a “massacre” without hesitation. Fikret Karacan, Saffet Alp’s sister, wrote a petition to the Ministry of Interior with an appeal to the Law on the Right to Information after the publication of Nihat Erim’s diaries in the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Massacre. Karacan demanded revelation of the security and intelligence officers’ identities who took part in the military operation in Kızıldere in order to start a legal and criminal prosecution.<sup>8</sup> However, the government did not take any concrete steps.

Referring to the abovementioned factual “detail” about the event, I also find appropriate to use the term massacre to describe what happened on March 30, 1972 in Kızıldere. However, in the course of my research I realized that the name of “Kızıldere” has been used in different contexts to refer to the village as a concrete place or to the Massacre as a historical event not only by my interlocutors, but also in the literature on this event. Moreover, there is a repertoire of meaning and values attributed to the name of Kızıldere by the revolutionary leftists. Thus, “Kızıldere” is not only a name of a village or a historical event; it refers more. For this reason, I prefer to use the name of Kızıldere in quotes (“Kızıldere”) throughout this thesis to refer both the historical and the spatial dimension and all other meanings attributed to it.

Lastly, I would like to explain the way I write the proper nouns. I wrote the names of the political parties, organizations or associations firstly in English and then I inserted the original names along with their abbreviations in brackets. After the first reference of a proper noun, I continued referring to them by abbreviations. I also kept the Turkish names of the titles of some articles and periodicals to make it clearer for the reader.

## **1.5. Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Following this Introduction, where I give a brief overview of the main features of the historiography on the 1970s and the increased interest in memory studies in Turkey, in Chapter II, I present the historical

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<sup>8</sup> <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/76861-kizildere-katliami-dosyasini-acin>

and political background of the Massacre in order to make the following chapters comprehensible. I present the significant moments that paved the way for the Kızıldere Massacre between the *coup d'état* of May 27, 1960 and the annihilation of political opposition by means of state sponsored violence in 1973.

In the Chapter III, I make a comparative analysis of conflicting narratives on the Kızıldere Massacre. First, I present the representation of the event in the official historiography through newspaper coverages and parliamentary minutes. Then, I look at the narratives of witnesses of the Massacre including the accounts of Ertuğrul Kürkçü - and the villagers of Kızıldere. In what follows, I reveal the change in the narratives of the active political actors of the socialist movement in the 1970s. Comparing these narratives, I try to demonstrate the frequently articulated themes such as innocence, victimhood, heroism, solidarity and the like.

Lastly, in Chapter IV, I focus on the commemorative practices and narratives about the Kızıldere Massacre promulgated by the revolutionary leftists as political actions for decades. After describing the commemorative practices which are substantiated in texts, images, songs, walls, particular dates and places or ceremonies, I try to analyze the construction of commemorative narratives. I bring into view the main narratives such as propagating armed struggle or self-sacrifice, sacralization of “heroes” or “martyrs” and lastly defining the “Kızıldere” as a battle. I show different themes such as iconization, creating archetypal martyrs, propagating self-sacrifice and/or solidarity, claiming continuity and creating historical analogies which are embedded these commemorative narratives. By doing so, I try to reveal various commemorative practices and narratives of this symbolic event providing multiple strategies of political struggle for several left-wing organizations in Turkey.

## CHAPTER II

### THE HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Remembering/forgetting is not solely about a moment. We remember/forget a specific time, event, or a person in the context of everything that surrounds it. This certainly applies to the Kızıldere massacre as well. Both the primary witnesses of the massacre and the revolutionaries of that period remember the massacre as it was prepared, shaped, defined and distorted by all the discussions that took place before and after the event, all the actors involved in the process, and every other important historical and political moment that led to or simply preceded it. Remembering/forgetting the Kızıldere massacre thus signifies remembering/forgetting an epoch in recent Turkish political history.

From this point of view, in this chapter, I will present the cornerstones of the period's conflicts between different political factions and the state that paved the way for the Kızıldere massacre. This chapter can be seen as a macro background to allow a comprehension of the next chapters on the narratives and practices of remembering and commemorating the Kızıldere massacre. It provides a broad historical overview of the years between 1960 and 1973, beginning from the military *coup d'état* on May 27, 1960 to the annihilation of political opposition by means of state violence in 1973.

It is crucial to have a basic knowledge of the developments between the two military *coups d'état*, 27 May 1960 and 12 March 1971, in order to analyze the period and interpret the events preceding the massacre. It is also crucial to capture the debates that emerged in the aftermath of the events. Since this thesis is not a comprehensive historical research, it will not be possible to cover every detail about this period that witnessed very important developments almost every day. Rather, I will focus on the political debates characterizing the period most distinctively, while addressing some conceptualizations that are still alive in discussions of the socialist movement in Turkey. Certainly, the selection of the events, actors and political debates represent my own

perspective, but the general content of this chapter is structured according to the narratives of my interviewees.

## **2.1. The 1960s in Turkey: The Period of Massive Social Awakening**

The 1960s in Turkey opened with the military *coup d'état* on May 27, 1960, with the statement announced on the Turkish Radio Station:

Owing to the crisis into which our democracy has fallen, in view of the recent sad incidents, and in order to avert 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 (Ahmad, 2003: 119).

The military declared that the National Unity Committee (*Milli Birlik Komitesi, MBK*) consisting of 38 officers, took power and became the only decision-making organ until the “free and fair elections” to be conducted in near future.

The coup was greeted enthusiastically by some parts of the society (Zürcher, 2004:241), especially by the intellectuals and university students, because these segments of Turkish society, including the military, brewed the growing opposition to the anti-democratic and oppressive policies of the ruling Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti, DP*) throughout the latter half of the 1950s. These oppositional groups saw the military takeover as an opportunity to bring Turkey back to the “progressive,” “revolutionary” and “national” path of development in line with the principles of Mustafa Kemal.

The first activity of the MBK was to form up a group with law professors in order to draw up a new constitution. These professors issued a declaration in which they justified the military intervention on the grounds that the DP government had acted unconstitutionally. This new constitution gave a legal basis both to the coup and to the existence of the MBK (Zürcher, 2004: 242, Ahmad, 2003: 121).

The new constitution, known as the 1961 Constitution, was more liberal than the previous one and “[I]t tolerated a wider spectrum of political activity than before, both to the left and to the right” (Zürcher, 2004: 246). It contributed to the development of the struggle for democracy in Turkey with its relatively democratic rights and freedoms.



It secured through laws the right to establish political parties and trade unions, to strike, and to organize protests and demonstrations. This provided the new political movements with the opportunity to blossom. It also guaranteed administrative, financial and academic autonomy to the universities, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (*Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu – TRT*), and the Constitutional Court (Zürcher, 2004; Ahmad, 2003; Aydın & Taşkın, 2014).

Ergun Aydınoğlu indicates that the 1960 coup is not an ordinary military *coup d'état* because it had an impact on the upcoming period not only in terms of the relationships between the military and politics but also in several other dimensions. It created disengagement in the hegemonic understanding of politics in Turkey. After the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, a majority that had hitherto been excluded from politics started to engage in politics. In that regard, the *coup d'état* mobilized the left, contrary to the intentions of those who realized it (Aydınoğlu, 2007: 46).

These distinctive features of the 1960 coup led to a flurry of discussions on its character and naming. A group of intellectuals and leftists call it the “27<sup>th</sup> May Revolution” on the grounds of its “progressive” and “social” features. Ahmad’s perspective provides a good example of this approach: “Soldiers had captured the political power, but it was intellectuals who turned the 27 May movement into a revolution, a ‘revolution of the intellectuals’” (Ahmad, 2003: 120). The other group claims that despite its democratic outcomes, it was the beginning of the tradition of military intervention in Turkey, and thus it should be named and condemned as a coup. The former approach was more widespread during the 1960s among socialist actors and groups, while the latter has become dominant today (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014: 79).

Another controversial issue about the 27<sup>th</sup> May military *coup d'état* was its positioning in terms of international relations. The spokesmen of the *coup d'état* had declared their strong commitment to NATO and CENTO in their first statements most probably in order to give the message to the USA that this intervention was not an act of opposition to the West (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014: 64). Despite this emphasis, certain parts of the oppositional groups, including different branches of the 1960s left, paradoxically defined the coup as an anti-imperialist act. They saw it as an intervention against the imperialist policies of the DP and they hoped a return to the “revolutionary” ideas of Mustafa Kemal. This approach was going to be altered towards the end of the 1960s as a result of discussions on Kemalism.

In the relatively democratic environment of the 1961 Constitution, an expanding leftist movement emerged within the newly opened political parties, university campuses, and labor unions and around the growing number of political journals. Leftist publications proliferated and some seminal texts written in other languages were translated into Turkish. They quickly found circulation among university students and the working classes. Under the strong influence of the leftist movements in various parts of the world, all these developments also led to the rapid spread of socialist thought, first among intellectuals and students, and then among workers and peasants.

As stated before, political mobilization of the right-wing also rose throughout this period. The right-wing students were organized through associations; National Turkish Student Union (*Milli Türk Talebe Birliđi - MTTB*) under the government control and other nationalist associations such as National Student Federation of Turkey (*Türkiye Milli Talebe Federasyonu - TMTF*) and Nationalist Youth Organization of Turkey (*Türkiye Milliyetçi Gençlik Teşkilatı*) were the centers for these groups.

In the mid-1960s, the leftists determined their own positions according to three major interrelated discussions: The first discussion was concerned with the historical phase that Turkey was in. The second discussion was on the characteristics of the political regime in Turkey. And the third discussion revolved around the revolutionary path of Turkey, with the possible alliances in this struggle. In line with these discussions, two main political groups and the tensions between them shaped this period: The Worker's Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP*) led by Mehmet Ali Aybar supported the notion of a "Socialist Revolution" (*Sosyalist Devrim, SD*) under the leadership of the working-class, whereas the other group supported the idea of a "National Democratic Revolution" (*Milli Demokratik Devrim, MDD*) theorized by Mihri Belli, a former member of the TKP.

The 1960s were also a period of lively intellectual debates that produced numerous new periodicals, which were also important sites for political organizations. One of the powerful actors guiding the political debates of the period was the journal *Direction (Yön Dergi)* with its editor Dođan Avciođlu. The diversity of views on Turkey's political history and socialism were symbolized by these groups. Former TKP members, especially Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, were also a member of these discussions, but the socialist movement in the 1960s developed independently of the TKP.

The driving force in all these groups were mainly university students organized under the roof of the Federation of Idea Clubs (*Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu - FKF*)

which would later be renamed as the Revolutionary Youth Federation of Turkey (*Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu - Dev-Genç*), which kept its imprint also on the second half of the 1970s.

In the following part, I will try to examine the distinctive political actors of the period and the main ideological discussions made by these significant groups. This overview of the actors and discussions will be fruitful to the examination of the various social dynamics at play before the Kızılderle Massacre.

### **2.1.1. The Worker's Party of Turkey (1961-1971)**

The Worker's Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP*) was one of the first major forces of the left in the early 60s. The TİP was founded in February 13, 1961 by a group of trade unionists and workers.<sup>9</sup> In 1962, the leaders of workers invited the intellectuals to the party and many intellectuals and professors joined the TİP. The TİP gained much support across the country from all social classes during the 1960s. In Eric J. Zürcher's words, "it served as a kind of laboratory for the Turkish left, which would later split up into innumerable factions" (Zürcher, 2004: 247). The TİP can be seen as a distinctive experience in the history of political parties in Turkey with its socialist character. It was a new character in Turkish politics that represented a different understanding of politics than that of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP*) and the DP. In addition to workers, trade unionists and intellectuals, the TİP was also a centre of attraction for leftist university students.

The main cadres of the TİP claimed that despite its deficiencies, the political regime of Turkey was democracy and they proposed a "non-capitalist path of development" (kapitalist olmayan kalkınma yolu<sup>10</sup>) which could be achieved by democratic and parliamentary vehicles. Their main goal was to organize workers around trade unions, with the expectation of growing class-consciousness and political mobilization among the workers. In the first issue of the journal Labor (*Emek*), the TİP cadres declared their political arguments in an article entitled "From Socialist Potential

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<sup>9</sup> For the whole list, see Aydın, Suavi, Taşkın, Yüksel, *1960'tan Günümüze Türkiye Tarihi*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014, p.85.

<sup>10</sup> TİP cadres did not use the notion of "socialism" neither in the party programme nor in the party regulation. Instead, they preferred to use "communitarianism" (toplumculuk). (Şener, 2007: 359)

to Socialist Power” (*Sosyalist Potansiyelden Sosyalist Güce*). Here, they stated that the hegemonic mode of production in Turkey was capitalism but it was underdeveloped. The working class and its allies, for them, had inadequate class consciousness and organization capacities. However, it was possible to compensate for this by giving priority to socialist training and organization (*Emek*, 1969: 8-11). M.Ali Aybar also brought up a similar argument by indicating that “For the revolutions to be made in our country, firstly it is compulsory to warn and educate our people, to adopt the revolutions to our people. Therefore, the revolutionary path must pass through democracy.” (Aybar, 1968: 273)

In the 1965 general elections, the TİP members established important connections with different parts of Turkey through the election campaigns. They managed to send fifteen deputies to the parliament and popularized the leftist opposition. “With these results the party had won the struggle for legitimacy. And also this was a huge opportunity for the propoganda of TİP.” (Şener, 2007: 360) These results of the election filled the TİP members with hope that the TİP could rise into power through elections. Nevertheless, this optimistic environment did not last for long. The TİP leaders in the parliamentary struggle came under heavy criticism by party members and an opposition movement within the party began to grow by 1966.

According to Aydınöğlü, the discussion within the TİP started with Doğan Avcıoğlü’s article entitled “On the TİP” (*TİP’e Dair*) in the journal *Yön* on June 17, 1966 (Aydınöğlü, 2007: 111). The opposition group was later called the MDD group but then, they were expressing their political ideas mostly in the journal *Yön*. This group was not homogenous, but the driving force was composed of the FKF members who supported the former TKP member Mihri Belli and the notion of MDD. They harshly criticized the TİP for becoming “pacifist” and “ineffective” and established the “Revolutionary TİP Committee” (*Devrimci TİP Komitesi*) to carry on ideological struggle within the TİP. The TİP leaders chose to conduct disciplinary boards in order to suppress the dissent within the party. They expelled the members of the opposition group claiming that they established factions. All of these created a great tension within the party and this conflict influenced the supporter base of the party. Consequently, university students tended to become affiliated with the MDD (Şener, 2007: 360-362).

Beginning from 1968, the student movement turned into a socialist and anti-imperialist movement, especially in the larger cities of Turkey. From 1968 onwards political debates among different factions gained much more weight and these factions

started to seek extra-parliamentary options for the revolutionary path of Turkey. M. Ali Aybar wrote that the year 1968 was the beginning of the end for the TİP (Aybar, 1988: 9). The TİP distanced itself from the growing student movement, for the TİP was against radicalization, and became unable to keep its strong ties with youth. Thus, it lost an important pillar and the most dynamic part of the leftist opposition.

The administration of the FKF was under the control of the TİP members until the end of 1968, but the MDD supporters were dominant in the universities. Another source of internal contention within the TİP was the discussions on the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. While Aybar condemned the invasion, other party leaders such as Behice Boran and Sadun Aren did not supported him and the conflict between these two views resulted in a separation in the administrative level of the party. Ersan summarizes this period with these sentences:

For the socialist groups whose numbers have increased during the 70s, the TİP was the first phase of socialist movement which contains every kind of ‘deviation’ and ‘negation’ thus a ‘temporary evil.’ Even for the second TİP established in 1975, the former TİP was a political party which has not been based on the principle of scientific socialism.<sup>11</sup> (Ersan, 2013: 19)

### **2.1.2. The Journal Yön (1961-1971)**

Another important actor of the period was the journal Yön. First published in December 20, 1961, the journal Yön was a kind of forum where people from a wide range of leftist positions could publish their writings. Accordingly, Yön published a manifesto<sup>12</sup> with the signatures from 1402 people including writers, journalists, and intellectuals from different political perspectives in its first issue. This had repercussions in the political arena. The manifesto claimed that a rapid development in the economic field was necessary in order to reach a level of contemporary civilization aimed by Mustafa Kemal, to build a democracy on solid grounds, and to achieve social justice (Ersan, 2013: 22, Aydın & Taşkın, 2014: 109). Yön succeeded to influence the political agenda of the country and improved the political training of the leftists. This

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<sup>11</sup> “1970’li yıllarda daha da çoğalan sosyalist gruplar için 1961-1969 arası TİP, her türlü ‘sapma’yi ve ‘olumsuzluğu’ barındıran sosyalist hareketin ilk evresi, yani ‘geçici bir kötülük’ten ibaretti. 1975’te kurulan Türkiye İşçi Partisi için dahi, eski TİP ‘bilimsel sosyalizm’in egemen olamadığı bir partiydi.”

<sup>12</sup> For the whole text of the manifesto, see Hikmet Özdemir, *Kalkınmada Bir Strateji Arayışı Yön Hareketi*, Bilgi Yayınevi, 1986.

journal was a common place for those who identified themselves with different levels of the leftist politics.

Doğan Avcıoğlu, the founder of the journal, explained his understanding of socialism in his famous known book, *The Order of Turkey (Türkiye'nin Düzeni, 1968)*. The book turned into a reference guide for the leftists of the period, including the members of the Turkish military. According to his thesis, the main goal was to protect and improve the achievements of the 27<sup>th</sup> May “revolution.” In order to realize this goal, leftist/socialist students and intellectuals should form an alliance with “the Vigilant Forces” (“*Zinde Güçler*”), by which he meant Kemalist military officers. Consequently, “*Zinde Güçler*” would make a military coup and seize power (Avcıoğlu, 1968). Avcıoğlu’s understanding of socialism was not based on an international working-class movement. Instead, he identified himself with a version of socialism dependent on Kemalism, seeking to accomplish the unfinished reforms of the Kemalist era. “He saw socialism as the only viable model of development in a semi-colonial country and advocated state planning and protectionism.” (Zürcher, 2004: 254)

Yön was banned by the Martial Law Command after its 77<sup>th</sup> issue published on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, 1963. It started again in October 1965 and ended its publication life in June 1967 after 222 issues. Avcıoğlu continued to share his ideas through a new journal, the *Revolution (Devrim)*, beginning from 21 October 1969. During its publication, Yön provided various leftists, including the TİP and the FKF members, with a ground to express their views and brought many issues on the agenda, which helped improve the political environment. However, Yön and Doğan Avcıoğlu were remembered as proponents of “leftist Kemalism” which dreamt a “revolution from above” (Aydınöglü, 2007:74) through the military coup. The traces of ideas disseminated in Yön were to be seen in different socialist organizations in the next years.

### **2.1.3. The National Democratic Revolution**

Although many political actors of the period expressed themselves both in TİP and Yön, the supporters of the National Democratic Revolution (*Milli Demokratik Devrim - MDD*) and its prominent advocate of Mihri Belli were the most significant figures of the period. Understanding the growing student movement in the second half

of the 1960s and the development of the idea of armed struggle in the socialist movement in Turkey thus requires the examination of the notion of the MDD and its circulation among different organizations.

A group of followers of the oldest party on the left, the TKP, was acting with the TİP during the 1960s. Mihri Belli was a member of this group and he defined the political regime of Turkey as a “Philippine type democracy.” In his article entitled “With and Against Whom in the Democratic Revolution” (*Demokratik Devrimde Kimle Beraber ve Kime Karşı*, 1966) in *Yön*, where he formulates the notion of the MDD and claimed that Turkey was a semi-feudal, underdeveloped and dependent country with a weak proletariat. Therefore, a “national front” – composed of the national bourgeoisie, civil intellectuals and military- should carry out an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle before proceeding to the socialist revolution (Ersan, 2013: 25). These arguments can be interpreted as Belli's search for an alliance with *Yön*, which aimed to rise into power by forming up a military junta consisting of Kemalist officers in search of the junta. The revolutionary movements of the coming years were going to see the resurgence of these arguments asserted by both Avcıoğlu and Belli in the discussions on the role of the military in Turkish politics.

As mentioned above, the TİP leaders and the MDD supporters had a disagreement since 1966. Many MDD supporters were sent to the disciplinary committee and expelled from the party. Those who were expelled thus started to publish the journal Turkish Left (*Türk Solu*) in November 1967. Former writers of *Yön* and the former TKP members began to write for the *Türk Solu*. Enlightenment, the Socialist Journal (*Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi- ASD*) was another publication site for the ideas expressed by the movement.

The MDD supporters became prevalent within the student movement and they took over the FKF by the end of 1968. In 1969, the FKF turned into the Dev-Genç and constituted one of the main currents in the revolutionary left in Turkey. Due to the fact that the paths of development for the MDD group and the FKF intersected, it is crucial to examine these two organizations with the important moments of their political lives.

#### 2.1.4. The Student Movement

The massive and the most active part of the opposition movement were composed of university students. During the first half of the 1960s, university students embraced the political “legacy” of Mustafa Kemal’s “revolution.” They regarded themselves as “the owners” and “the guardians” of the reforms and the regime and began to accuse the government of betraying the ideals of Mustafa Kemal. They were organized around various associations during the 1960s. Idea clubs in universities, student unions, youth associations were the centers where socialist ideas and experiences were passionately discussed and Marxist classics were eagerly read.

The first socialist student organization of the period, the FKF, was founded in 17 December 1965. It started with the establishment of the Socialist Idea Club in the Faculty of Political Science in Ankara University and then spread around Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and the Eastern Anatolia. The FKF explains its main goals in its statute as follows: “The FKF takes the youth, domestic and world events as a whole. It sees the happiness of young people in an order where there are opportunities to develop the human self. Young people have some responsibilities to reach this advanced order. The FKF aims to enable young people to attain maturity to fulfill their responsibilities, become conscious, and give direction to their country and the world through coordinated and organized actions.”<sup>13</sup> (Yıldırım, 2008: 48)

In this period, students gathered under the roof of the FKF that had a very strong impact in the rapid expansion of revolutionary ideas among university students and the success of the TİP’s mobilization across the country. Both the TİP and the FKF were the first places the oppositional students stepped their foot in when they started university. Some of the significant student leaders such as Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Çayan, Harun Karadeniz, İbrahim Kaypakkaya and many more were the members of both the TİP and the FKF.

The chain of events that made the university students the leading force of the socialist opposition started with the boycott in Ankara University on 10 June 1968. Beginning from 1968, boycotts with the demand for university reform spread to almost

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<sup>13</sup> “Fikir kulüpleri federasyonu, gençlik yurt ve dünya olaylarını bir bütün olarak alır, gençlerin mutluluğunu, insanın kendini yetiştirebileceği olanakların var olduğu bir düzende görür, bu ileri düzene ulaşabilmek için gençlere ödevler düştüğünü kanısındadır. Gençlerin ödevlerini yerine getirebilecek olgunluğa erişmesi, bilinçlenmesi, eş güdümlü ve örgütlü eylemlere girişerek yurda ve dünyaya yön verebilmesini amaçlar.”



every university including Istanbul University, Istanbul Technical University, Academy of Economics and Commercial Sciences in Izmir and turned into occupations in some cases. Boycotts and other types of demonstrations were witnessed even in the high school level. The universities became the centers of revolutionary youth.

The movement which started with boycotts and university occupations in June 1968 turned into political actions such as the protests of the American Sixth Fleet in Dolmabahçe, Istanbul in July. American war ships of the Sixth Fleet, which was the naval force of the USA in the Mediterranean, were harbored in various ports of Turkey between 1967 and 1969. In this period, reactions of the student movement to the anti-imperialist Vietnam War were on the rise and they were organizing anti-imperialist demonstrations.<sup>14</sup> The boycott with the demand of ending American style education system in the Middle East Technical University (*Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi, ODTÜ*) and burning the car of Robert Komer, an American ambassador who was a significant figure in the pacification process of South Vietnamese in the Vietnam War, during his visit in the ODTU were the other important demonstrations of the period. The boycotts and occupations in the universities as well as anti-imperialist, anti-fascist demonstrations in the streets continued during 1969.

On 9-10 October 1969, the FKF renamed itself as the Dev-Genç in its fourth general assembly. Ünüvar states that the university students had to abolish their own organization, the FKF. At this stage, FKF had to transform itself into a real political actor and become a party; it would dissolve otherwise. Under these circumstances, the Dev-Genç was designed as the core of a revolutionary party (Ünüvar, 2008: 828). The members of the Dev-Genç described their organization as a “mass organization of the socialist youth.” (*Türk Solu*, 1969: 13) The Dev-Genç as the MDD supporters became the only hegemonic power in the political arena beginning from this date.

The Dev-Genç members were restlessly active during the period of 1.5-2 years starting from June 1968 and they were able to mobilize thousands of young people from different parts of the country. Their activities were not limited to university problems. Ertuğrul Kürkçü as a former member and also head of the Dev-Genç states that:

Dev-Genç became a mass student movement but this was the result of the patient and faithful efforts of people whose actions could be regarded as ‘crazy’ by the outsiders, who tried to raise their voices here and there, to make agitation in

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<sup>14</sup> The anti-imperialist notion of the students’ movement was also derived from the agreements with the United States. Besides the membership of NATO, there were 56 separate agreements concluded before 1950 and the early 1960s. For a detailed discussions on these agreements, see Çağrı Erhan, ‘Türkiye ile ABD arasındaki ikili anlaşmalar’, in Baskın Oran (ed.) *Türk Dış Politikası: Cilt 1 1919–1980*, Istanbul: İletişim, 2002.

every opportunity, who did not get immediate results for these actions and who were not offended by being treated by others as ‘fools’.<sup>15</sup> (Kürkçü, 2006: 14)

This period also witnessed the increasing political activity of the working classes and a political mobilization of peasants. The workers were organizing in the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, Türk-İş*) which was established in 1952. The Türk-İş was politically mixed and did not interfere in politics, but it had close ties with Demirel’s rightist government. On 13 February 1967, a group of unionists supporting the TİP separated from the Türk-İş and established the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers’ Trade Unions (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu – DİSK*). The DİSK was proposing political demands and claiming economic rights. It soon became the centre of attraction for thousands of workers. Unionization also gained momentum by 1968 and was expanded to teachers and civil servants besides industrial workers.<sup>16</sup> This dynamism enveloped the peasants as well, for they were inspired by the struggle of workers. Especially, small-scale producers were organizing demonstrations with the demand of increasing the base price of their products in different parts of the country. These demonstrations sometimes turned into land occupations (Ahmad, 2003, Ersan, 2013, Zürcher, 2004).

The Dev-Genç members both attended and organized these peasant rallies supporting the land occupations and workers’ strikes in the factories all over Anatolia. The demonstrations organized by the hazelnut and tobacco producers in the Black Sea Region and the land occupations and peasant rallies in different parts of the Aegean Region were the most famous examples. They had the opportunity to establish close networks in many cities and towns of these regions and then they greatly benefited from these relationships.<sup>17</sup> They almost became the reference point in the villagers’ land

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<sup>15</sup> “Dev-Genç kitlesel bir öğrenci hareketi haline geldi, ama onun kitlesel bir öğrenci hareketi haline gelmesi, dışardan bakanlara ‘çılgın’ olduklarını düşündürebilecek hareketlerde bulunan, orada burada ses çıkarmaya, her fırsatta ajitasyon yapmaya çalışan, bunların sonucunu ilk elde alamayan; karşılardakilerden ‘ahmak’ muamelesi görmeye gücünmeyen insanların bir kaç yıl boyunca sabırla, inançla süren çabalarının sonucunda oldu.”

<sup>16</sup> The number of unionized workers was more than 700.000 in 1967 and it became more than 2.000.000 in 1970 (Tüm İktisatçılar Birliği, 1976: 146).

<sup>17</sup> With the help of these relationships, a group of the Dev-Genç members, who would be later conduct armed struggle, held small-scale guerilla camps in these regions or acquired logistic support for their armed struggle.

occupations and demonstrations across Turkey.<sup>18</sup> Şansal Dikmen was one of the administrators of the TİP in the Black Sea Region and expresses the significance of the Dev-Genç:

Exactly at this point the Dev-Genç stepped in. But here is the thing: nobody invited them, they came by themselves. I think the Dev-Genç who heard that demonstrations were organized, were sent by the head office whose leader was Ertuğrul Kürkçü. As far as I remember Hüseyin Cevahir and Yusuf Küpeli were among these young people. They have contributed a lot to the hazelnut demonstrations. We, as TİP members, did not have the physical capacity to organize these types of huge demonstrations; we did not have any young people to arrange visits to the villages, to prepare the banners and placards. Most of the party members were working and they did not have any time.<sup>19</sup> (Dikmen, 2014: 134-135)

This mobility had important effects on both the socialist movement in general and the Dev-Genç members in particular. Firstly, the Dev-Genç members improved their abilities in the social movement because most of them went out from the university campuses or dormitories and found the opportunity to have contact with “people” in the proper meaning of the word and saw the “actual” conditions within which these people live besides the theoretical explanations they read. Secondly, the notion of “the peasantry as the main force of the revolution” was adopted by some parts of the socialist movement during that period a notion which remains influential even today. Some segments of the socialist movement began to believe in the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and created new organizations also with the influence of the struggles in China, Vietnam and Cuba (Aydınöğlü, 2007: 218).

Meanwhile, there was also contention between different groups in The Dev-Genç, which became evident in the elections for the members of board. Each group was working to win the elections to seize power.<sup>20</sup> Ongoing ideological discussions within

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<sup>18</sup> For a detailed collection of the activities of both the FKF and the Dev-Genç, see Ali Yıldırım, *FKF Dev-Genç Tarihi*, Doruk Yayıncılık, 2008, İstanbul, Turan Feyizoğlu, *Türkiye’de Devrimci Gençlik Hareketleri Tarihi 1960-68*, Belge Yayınları, Ankara, 1993., Turan Feyizoğlu, *Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu*, Ozan Yayıncılık, 2002, İstanbul.

<sup>19</sup> “İşte tam burada sözünü ettiğin Dev-Genç’liler devreye girdi. Şu var ama: Kimse çağırmadı Dev-Genç’lileri, kendileri geldiler. Mitinglerin örgütlendiğini duyan Dev-Genç’liler, Ertuğrul Kürkçü’nün başkanı olduğu genel merkezden gönderildiler sanıyorum. Bu gençlerden hatırladıklarımın arasında Hüseyin Cevahir, Yusuf Küpeli vardı. Çok emekleri geçti fındık mitinglerine. Biz TİP’lilerin bu büyük mitingleri tertipleyecek fiziki gücümüz, yani köylere geziler düzenleyecek, pankartları ve dövizleri hazırlayacak gencimiz yoktu. Partililerin çoğu çalışan insanlardı ve onların da doğru düzgün zamanları yoktu.”

<sup>20</sup> One of the important discussions was held during the congress in 1969 October when the FKF turned into the Dev-Genç and ended with a split. Mahir Çayan, Yusuf Küpeli and M. Ramazan Aktolga, the founding cadre of the THKP-C, were in opposition to Doğu Perinçek and his fellows who had accused them as “adventurous.” At the end of the congress, Atilla Sarp who had been closer to Mahir Çayan and his friends took the chair and then, in 1970, Perinçek

The Dev-Genç resulted in the creation of different political groups and publication of new journals with new revolutionary perspectives. Towards the end of 1969, Deniz Gezmiş and his fellows established the Revolutionary Student Union (*Devrimci Öğrenci Birliği, DÖB*) and attempted to follow a political route independent of Mihri Belli. On the other hand, Mahir Çayan claimed that a “war organization” should be established apart from the Dev-Genç in his speech during the congress of the Dev-Genç in October, 1970. His statement was interpreted as a significant indicator of a break with Mihri Belli and the MDD group. Such acts of dissidence were the first signs of a new period which brought a change in the political route of the socialist student movement which will be discussed in the coming parts of this chapter. At this juncture, it will be worthwhile to scrutinize the distinguishing features of the Dev-Genç because it differs from the FKF and other youth organizations of the period with its several features.

The Dev-Genç led to the formation of a social movement in its period. Despite its short-existence, it is possible to find the traces of its understanding of organization and politics in the leftist movements of the following decade. The Dev-Genç can be seen as a segue between the 1960s political environment and the 1970s’ socialist movement. It is a product of the former and a source of the latter. Kerem Ünüvar points out to two important features of the Dev-Genç. Firstly, the Dev-Genç was a self-confident, large-scale organization which was recognized by other left-wing political actors. Moreover, the Dev-Genç members were not limited to fulfilling some reading lists; they were in pursuit of various ideas as part of a big socialist “family”. In this way, the Dev-Genç managed to maintain a wider audience and established a relationship with socialism (Ünüvar, 2007: 833). Due to its wide-range, most of the new organizations created in the following years were the works of the Dev-Genç members. Aydınoğlu claims that the most important contribution of the Dev-Genç to the political culture of the left was the invention of the “Dev-Genç style” (*Dev-Genç’li tipi*). This style was characterized by standing away from bureaucratism, behaving as unpretentious students

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and his group went into liquidation from the Dev-Genç. This tension and separation was brought to agenda of the ASD because both of the groups had been represented on the editorial board of the magazine. On October 1969, in the 12th issue of the ASD, Doğu Perinçek and his group published an article entitled “Let’s Strengthen the Proletarian Revolutionary Ranks” (*Proleter Devrimci Safları Çelikleştirelim*) and they criticized the radicalization of university students by defining these kinds of activities as “extreme left” (*sol sapma*). Mahir Çayan, the feature leader of the THKP-C, responded these critiques in the 15th issue of ASD with an article, “Rightist Deviation, Revolutionary Theory and Practice” (*Sağ Sapma, Devrimci Pratik ve Teori*) and expressed the reasons for separation in detail. As a result of this tension, the first group, Doğu Perinçek and his supporters, started to publish another magazine The Proletarian Revolutionary Light (*Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik, PDA*) on January 1970 (Ersan, 2013, Feyizoğlu, 2011).

who are open to learning from previous generations, self sacrifice, and solidarity (Aydınoğlu, 2007: 271-272).

Moreover, one should take into consideration that although it was a student organization, the Dev-Genç was trying to lead the social movement of the entire country. It came to fill the vacuum left by the TİP and other political organizations who failed to absorb into their ranks the forces of opposition. This contradictory position caused many difficulties for the Dev-Genç members, because they had to take responsibility beyond their capability as while they were politically ripening. In such an environment, they naturally made many mistakes. However, the socialists of the time remember being a member of the Dev-Genç as a privilege. Considering that, the experience of the Dev-Genç or being a member of Dev-Genç (*Dev-Genç'lilik*) can also be seen as a new understanding of becoming socialist or revolutionary in that period. This has important repercussions on the current socialist or revolutionary movement in Turkey.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2. The '68 Movement around the World<sup>22</sup>

Of course, these developments in Turkey were not independent of what was happening in the world. Partially they were the reflections of international developments on a domestic level, including the 1968 student movements in Europe and the anti-colonial struggles of the Third World countries. The Turkish left mostly saw itself as a part of the international revolutionary upsurge that became apparent in the United States in the early 60s and erupted in France in 1968. However, they did not directly identify with the opposition movement in Europe (Tura, 1999: 36-37). The revolutionary breakthrough in Latin America beginning with the Cuban Revolution, the

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<sup>21</sup> The notion of “Dev-Genç'lilik” has a special part in the socialist or revolutionary movement in Turkey. Although the Dev-Genç was closed just after the 12 March 1971, it became the first organization which was re-established in 1976 and became a significant political actor in the second half of the 1970s. Even today, there are different organizations which use the name of the Dev-Genç with different sub-headings, mostly carrying out activities as youth branches of political organizations. Apart from the new versions of the Dev-Genç, former members of the Dev-Genç gain respect from the current socialists, irrespective of their current political position. They are invited to activities to give speeches or they are presented as candidates for the elections. It is not only the socialists who pay homage to them, they are also in demand among journalists, writers or documentarists.

<sup>22</sup> The information in this part is compiled from several books including Nadire Mater, *Sokak Güzeldir '68'de Ne Oldu?*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul, 2009; Aydın Çubukçu, *Bizim '68*, Evrensel Yayınları, İstanbul, 2008; *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1988.

struggle of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and the anti-imperialist struggle in Vietnam were more decisive in those years.

During the Cold War, the entire world witnessed the struggle for hegemony between the USA and USSR. The Korean War (1950-1953) and then the Vietnam War (1955-1975) elicited anti-imperialist reactions around the world. In particular, the Vietnam War became the most impressive element of the world revolutionary process for 25 years. The 1950s was also the period of anti-colonial struggles and national revolutions, especially in the Third World countries. The Algerian struggle against France and the Cuban Revolution were the most inspirational experiences for anti-imperialist and leftist masses. In 1959, France accepted the right for “self-determination” of Algeria and Cuban Revolution gained victory. Every revolutionary movement all over the world for the next 20 years was going to bear deep traces from these two revolutions. The armed struggle conducted by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) against Israel with the purpose of the "liberation of Palestine" was another influential incident

Beginning from the 1960s, the left-wing opposition began to surge around the world. The existence of the Soviet Union, the rise of the student movements in Western Europe, the upsurge of anti-imperialism due to the American occupation of Vietnam and the guerrilla struggle for national liberation in Latin America and the Middle East had a major impact on political opposition. All of these developments signified that socialism was no longer a utopia. Instead, it was a feasible and strong political alternative around to the current system. The hope of revolution spread across the world.

In the wake of these developments, the 1960s witnessed the growing social opposition and the diffusion of anti-imperialist, leftist, socialist ideas around the world, including the "socialist" countries in Eastern Europe. This opposition reached its peak in Paris, in May '68 and began to be called the “'68 Movement.” Although 1968 is accepted as a turning point, what is meant by 1968 is the symbolic name of an era rather than a year. For this reason, we should understand a period of growing social and political movements across the globe between 1966 and 1971 by using the conceptualization of the “'68 Movement.” Certainly, one cannot refer to a single '68 experience. There were diverse experiences of '68 in different societies and countries. Thus, I will not attempt to cover these diverse experiences within the limited scope of this work, but I still think that it is helpful to make an overview of the period in order to trace the connections with the “'68 movement” in Turkey.

The “’68 movement” started at the beginning of the 1960s in America under the strong impact of the Vietnam War. Landing US troops of the USA to Vietnam in 1965 resulted in crowded anti-militarist and anti-war demonstrations and the emergence of the anti-imperialist student movement. The African-American Civil Rights Movement (1954–68), which aimed to end racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans, was another important factor during these years. Campaigns against military service in Vietnam, protests against military institutions, and university occupations were the significant actions mainly organized by university students. Mao Zedong, the leader of “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)” in the People's Republic of China, and Che Guevara, who was killed in Bolivian mountains in 1967, became important symbols of this movement.

Similar occurrences were seen in England and several other European countries including Germany, Italy and France. The Vietnamese War and the anti-imperialist emphasis were the common leitmotiv of all these movements. However, domestic economic and social problems on a domestic level were intertwined with the international resistance. Mass demonstrations and boycotts were organized; university campuses and factories were occupied, and workers were on strike. Street clashes with police took place and hundreds of people were detained or arrested.

’68 was substantially a student movement the world over but occasionally workers and peasants also attended the resistance. This period usually faded spontaneously after increasing police violence or governments’ limited concessions. Towards the end of the 1970s, street demonstrations and mass protests began to recede gradually into the background and radical political organizations advocating armed struggle in city centers; most notably The Red Brigades in Italy, The Red Army Faction (RAF) in Germany and The Weather Underground Organization (WUO) in the United States started to appear.

### **2.3.The Streets Catch on Fire**

In the light of this very general information on the period around the world, turning back to Turkey with its distinctive features will be helpful for a holistic analysis. Obviously, the development of the socialist movement in Turkey parallels the process

unfolding across the world in general. However, there is an important feature that differentiates the student movement in Turkey from the '68 movement of Europe: the violent attacks of the opponents from the beginning of the movement.

The 1960s in Turkey is also a period of increasing repression of the left by the state and state-sanctioned nationalist organizations. Immediately after 1965, the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi, AP*) under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel<sup>23</sup> came to power and began to fail to comply with the democratic provisions of the constitution. Despite the democratic framework of the 1961 Constitution, the anti-communist bias of the regime was still alive in line with the anti-communist upsurge in the world. An important document fomented the anti-communist biases: In December 1958, the USA published an internal service document (the National Security Agency document numbered 5820/1) which suggested that Islam and nationalism could be used as antidotes to communism (Ahmad, 2003: 136). The Turkish government fell under the influence of this anti-communist environment and this perspective designated its attitude towards socialists.

During the AP government, socialist or communist propaganda began to be seen as a criminal act. The 141st and 142nd articles of the Turkish Penal Code<sup>24</sup>, which were introduced in the 1940s, came into force again and many members of the student associations, trade unionists, and intellectuals were arrested. Many university professors were arbitrarily purged from their jobs. Beginning in 1962, the offices of TİP around the country were attacked by “unknown” perpetrators during the election campaigns and some administrators of the TİP were assassinated. After 1965, student protests organized by the FKF became targets of attacks for police and right-wing nationalist organizations. In this period, anti-communist publications flourished. Demonstrations and meetings were organized to condemn communism (*Komünizmi tel'in mitingleri*).

Ömer Laçiner states that the *raison d'être* of fascism is the “danger” of socialist revolution. The fascist movement concretizes the reaction to this “danger” (Laçiner, 2000: 10). For this reason, the emergence of a fascist movement in the 1960s Turkey

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<sup>23</sup> Süleyman Demirel employed two tactics to maintain his position throughout the 1960s: The first one was the emphasis on the Islamic values and he kept close relationships with the leaders of the *Nurcu* movement. The second tactic was the propagation of anti-communist propaganda and a constant pressure on socialists with the help of the National Intelligence Organization (Zürcher, 2004: 251).

<sup>24</sup> According to the 141th Article of the Turkish Penal Code, the establishment of communist associations was considered a crime and it prohibited the formation of communities that harbored anarchism, dictatorship, racism and anti-national feelings. And the 142th Article included the punishments in paralel for these accusations (Alacakaptan, 1965-1966: 3).



becomes so clear. İlhan Darendeliöđlu claims that “Nationalism, which was pro-actionary until 27 May, became reactionary after 1960.” (1968: 296) This anti-communist reaction was organized under the roof of The Associations for Fighting Against Communism (*Türkiye Komünizmle Mücadele Dernekleri, TKMD*) until the mid-1960s. These associations were financially supported by the AP government that considered them legitimate.

This anti-communist reaction also drew international official support from the NATO and the USA. Turkey had joined the NATO in 1952 and one of the branches of NATO, the Seferberlik Tetkik Kurulu (STK) started its activities. It launched its office in the building of the CIA organisation, Joint US Military Mission for Aid to Turkey, JUSMMAT (*Türkiye'ye Yardım için Ortak ABD Askeri Kurulu*) in Ankara and renamed Special Warfare Department (*Özel Harp Dairesi*) in 1965. Besides these institutions, textbooks written by American counter-guerrilla experts were translated into Turkish and by this way, special war methods were promoted. On 25 May 1964, one of these translations, "Directive ST 31/15 for Operations against Irregular Forces" (*ST 31-15 Kara Kuvvetleri Sahra Talimnamesi Gayri Nizami Kuvvetlere Karşı Harekat*) was promulgated. In this doctrine of “unconventional warfare” regarded all kinds of social opposition were regarded as destructive and pro-communist. All these played a very significant role in the development of “counter-guerrilla” in Turkey because a kind of “civil war apparatus” (*iç harp aygıtı*) which shaped the anti-communist reactions ideologically and organizationally was constructed. Ertuğrul Kürkçü claims that these attacks were an important part of an “operations to suppress the rebellion” and later would be named as “contra-guerrilla” (Kürkçü, 2007: 494-495). Therefore, the contra-guerrilla came into force before the beginning of guerilla warfare in Turkey.

The anti-communist stream of the post-Cold War era led to the popularization of fascistic tendencies and this potential was actualized in the Republican Peasant Nation Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi – CKMP*) under the leadership of Alparslan Türkeş (Bora & Can, 2000: 52). In 1969 the party’s name was changed into the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP*) and it became “a hierarchically organized, militant party with an ultra-nationalist program” (Zürcher, 2004: 256). MHP began to establish its youth organization ‘Hearths of the Ideal’ (*Ülkü Ocakları*) in all the universities in 1968. The members of *Ülkü Ocakları* called themselves “the Grey Wolves” (*Bozkurtlar*), based on a figure in pre-Islamic Turkish mythology. *Bozkurtlar* launched a campaign to intimidate socialists immediately after

their establishment. MHP formed “commando camps” in various cities under the management of retired military officers and conducted paramilitary training with militants who would carry out “street wars” against communists. These “educated” militants played active roles in the systematic and planned attacks against the revolutionary students (Ersan, 2013: 30). In February 1969, Türkeş declared that Bozkurtlar lent assistance to the party in order to protect Turkey from communism (Bora & Can, 2000: 59). So, socialists had to fight against both the police and these attacks during the boycotts and occupations beginning from 1968. These kinds of attacks spread to different universities and dormitories dominated by the leftist students in various cities. On the one hand, socialists were engaged in heated debates on the revolutionary path of Turkey. On the other hand they were searching for ways to ward off the attacks. In the meantime, three important attacks which were considered as important turning points in the student movement took place.

On 17 July 1968, the police raided the dormitory of Istanbul Technical University (ITU) and Vedat Demircioğlu, a member of both the FKF and the TİP, and defenestrated him. He stayed in coma for a week and then passed away on 24<sup>th</sup> of July. Demircioğlu is accepted as the first “martyr” of both the student movement and the TİP’s struggle in Turkey (Ersan, 2013: 33). Another important attack occurred on 16 February 1969 during the protests against the American Sixth Fleet in Taksim. The civil fascist group attacked the protesters and killed the TİP member Ali Turgut Aytaç and the worker Duran Erdoğan by knife. More than 100 people were injured during this event and it came to be known as “the Bloody Sunday” (*Kanlı Pazar*) (Feyizoğlu, 2011:107-108). The final straw was the murder of Taylan Özgür, a student in ODTU, on 23 September 1969.<sup>25</sup> Özgür was killed in the police raid during the congress of Istanbul Student Union (*İstanbul Öğrenci Birliği*) in Istanbul University (Ersan, 2013: 31). The government, taking advantage of the increasing conflict, closed down Ankara, Istanbul and Ege universities, Yıldız Technical School and ITU student associations, National Student Federation of Turkey in 2 October 1969. Student associations in ODTU and the Faculty of Political Science in Ankara University (*Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler*

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<sup>25</sup> This assassination is accepted as the first murder of contra-guerrilla organization in Turkey. Although there are several witnesses of the murder, the murderers were not put on trial. Talat Turhan, who is known with his works on contra-guerrilla actions in Turkey, declared in 1990 for the first time that the murderer of Taylan Özgür was a high-ranking member of the Turkish Armed Forces in those days. This was also known by some members of the RPP. For the narratives of the witnesses, see <http://fraksiyon.org/taylan-zgr-cinayeti-chp-katilleri-biliyor/> and <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1999/01/17/y05.html>

*Fakültesi, SBF*) were shut down on 28 October. The central office of the Dev-Genç was raided and the student leaders were arrested. After these events, “self-defense” became a burning issue for student organizations. They started to think about armed resistance as a method of anti-fascist struggle and some of their members began to carry guns.

Just before the 12 March coup, in January 1971, the AP government gave permission for a wide range of operations in universities and dormitories. On 21 January, ODTU was closed down; the dormitory of SBF was raided. Hundreds of students were beaten up by the police and the members of *Ülkü Ocakları* acted as volunteer militia against leftists (Ahmad, 2003: 132). These types of attacks by the police and civil fascist groups were carried out almost every day and hundreds of leftist students were taken into custody or arrested until the 12 March 1971 *coup d'état*.

In the meantime, the AP government also tried to weaken the workers' movement, particularly the growing struggle of the DİSK. The government wanted to make changes in the law of unions, collective agreement and strike and these changes intended to restrain the workers' free choice of union. According to the proposed law, a union should have organized one-third of the workers in a particular sector in order to operate nationwide. It was supposed that the regulation would abolish the DİSK. As a reaction, hundreds of thousands of workers protested the proposed regulation during 15-16 June, 1970. Large-scale demonstrations were held in all regions from Istanbul to Kocaeli. This event was a cornerstone of history for the working class in Turkey. It was also important for the socialist movement of the time in general because the military did not support the workers contrary to the expectations of many socialists. Demonstrations resulted in the military's opening fire on the workers.<sup>26</sup> This event raised new discussions among the socialist circles on the role of the military in the revolutionary path of Turkey. They had to make a decision: They could try to achieve a revolution in collaboration with the military or to develop a new revolutionary strategy. This situation fostered the idea of armed struggle, which gained strength and popularity in the student movement (Ünüvar, 2007: 832).

In such an environment, the Chief of General Staff and the Force Commander handed a memorandum to the prime minister on March 12, 1971. It was an ultimatum

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<sup>26</sup> During the clashes, three workers and a policeman were died. Thereupon, the martial law was proclaimed in İstanbul and 162 workers were detained. At the end of demonstrations, the Constitutional Court rescinded the disputant articles and the martial law was upheld during three months in both İstanbul and Kocaeli (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014: 193).

by the military that demanded the formation of a new and strong government in order to end “anarchy.”<sup>27</sup> Following the resignation of the Prime Minister Demirel, a new cabinet was formed by Nihat Erim.<sup>28</sup> The first action of the government was to limit the democratic rights and freedoms protected by the constitutional law. In a very short span of time, the socialists and those who support them began to be perceived as definite threats to the “unity” and “legitimacy” of the state. On 27 April, the National Security Council proclaimed martial law in 11 provinces and it would be renewed every two months in the next years. During the martial law, the TİP and the Dev-Genç were closed down; the buildings of leftist associations in the universities, the TÖS and the DİSK were searched by police; meetings, strikes and lockouts of the unions were prohibited and many leftist political newspapers and periodicals were banned. The Associations of Fighting against Communism and *Ülkü Ocakları* were also shut down.

As soon as the state of emergency was declared, an extensive campaign of detention was conducted and hundreds of politicians, journalists, and professors were detained for questioning. All of the leading members of the TİP and many unionists were arrested.<sup>29</sup> Zürcher remarks that “the Erim government used the situation to institute a veritable witch-hunt against anyone with leftist or even progressive liberal sympathies.” (Zürcher, 2004: 259)

The 12<sup>th</sup> March 1971 military intervention was a turning point for socialists who had supported an alliance with the military for purposes of revolution because they could no longer trust the state and its institutions for any kind of cooperation. This was an important experience to see the brutal face of the state, so they had to reconsider about the revolutionary struggle in Turkey.

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<sup>27</sup> With this memorandum, the military appealed to a legal basis which legitimizes such interventions. This was the 35th article of the Internal Service Act of the Turkish Armed Forces. According to this article, the armed forces should protect the Republic of Turkey. This article was used for several times in the next years.

<sup>28</sup> Nihat Erim formed a cabinet with technocrats and selected fourteen members of the cabinet were from outside of the political establishments. Some of the cabinet ministers were coming from the World Bank, the Turkish Armed Forces Assistance (and Pension) Fund (*Ordu Yardımlaşma Kurumu, OYAK*), Turkish Petroleum (*Türkiye Petrolleri*) and State Economic Enterprises (*Kamu İktisadi Teşekkülleri, KİT*). This overall picture of the cabinet did not seem to be able to do democratic reforms.

<sup>29</sup> Some detainees were tortured in a mansion in Ziverbey, İstanbul. The mansion was under the control of the Commander of the martial law, Faik Türün and major general Memduh Ünlütürk. Those who were tortured heard for the first time that they were questioned by contra-guerrilla. For a detailed information, see İlhan Selçuk, *Ziverbey Köşkü*, Cumhuriyet Kitapları, İstanbul, 1997; Celil Gürkan, *12 Mart'a Beş Kala*, Tekin Yayınları, İstanbul, 1986; Uğur Mumcu, *Demirel ve Çankaya* (Bütün Yazıları, 26), Um:Ag Yayınları, Ankara, 1997.

## **2.4. The Road to Kızıldere: The Period of Armed Struggle in the Socialist Movement in Turkey**

I have tried to make an overview of the leading political actors and watershed events of the socialist movement in Turkey thus far. I addressed the increase in the social and political mobility including workers, peasants and mostly students especially beginning from 1968 and the acceleration of violent attacks from both the state and state-sanctioned fascist groups. I have also stated that the possibility of extra-parliamentary options for the struggle and guerrilla movement were the most debated issues in this period. In this part, I will write about the period of armed struggle between 1970 and 1973. Although it was an ephemeral experience, it left deep scars on the socialist movement in Turkey which is still need to be discussed with several dimensions.

As indicated before, armament had emerged before the idea of armed struggle as part of self-defense in the socialist struggle in Turkey. It was legitimate for the revolutionary students; in fact they were the ones organizing this. Although the tendency to take up arms intensified by the confrontation with the fascist movement, this cannot be seen as the only basis of the idea of armed struggle as a political strategy. The members of the Dev-Genç chose armed struggle voluntarily, even though they were forced to take up arms for self-defense earlier. The political debates conducted through different journals and the ideological texts written by the student leaders of the time. Especially Mahir Çayan and İbrahim Kaypakkaya showed that the efforts to survive under attacks and creating a theory of guerilla warfare were intertwined. They emphasized the inadequacy of legal struggle and several groups of people went to the guerrilla camps belonging to The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in order to receive guerrilla training. They were also under the strong influence of the anti-imperialist Vietnam War as well as the independence and national liberation movements in Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. At the same time, the translation of the books of guerilla leaders such as Douglas Bravo, Carlos Marighella, Alberto Bayo and Regis Debray had an important effect on this shift.

Ertuğrul Kürkçü refers to three major conditions in the emergence of the idea of armed struggle for socialism in Turkey:

The first one was the dynamics of the Cold War, the fascist, paramilitary organizations supported by the USA and the will to resist them. The second condition was about the spread of assumptions that the socialist struggle cannot be achieved through parliamentary system. And the third condition was the discussions on different approaches to the revolutionary struggles in the international communist movement.<sup>30</sup> (Kürkçü, 2007: 503)

Three important political organizations which had significant influence on the socialist movement during the second half of the 1970s in Turkey were established: People's Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu, THKO*), People's Liberation Party–Front of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi Cephesi, THKP-C*) and the Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi ve Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu, TİKKO*). Almost all of the militants of these organizations were the Dev-Genç members. For this reason, the armed struggle in Turkey should be analyzed in connection with the historical role of the Dev-Genç. For Kürkçü, the common quality of these three movements was problematizing the issue of power from the moment they had started to fight. These movements were on attack, not on defense (Kürkçü, 2007: 508).

The first one was the THKO, which was founded during the end of the 1970s by a group of university students including Deniz Gezmiş, Sinan Cemgil, Hüseyin İnan, Yusuf Aslan and their colleagues. The founding figures of the THKO thought that the attacks of the “counter-revolution movement” would increase in the coming period. They thought that a guerilla war should start which would expand from rural areas to urban spaces. So, they had a two-pronged plan: One group would go to the Nurhak Mountains (located between Malatya-Akçadağ-Elbistan) in order to set up a base for rural guerilla (*kır gerillası*) and to find supporters. The second group would stay in Ankara and procure money and guns. With these ideas in mind, the second group organized several actions in Ankara including armed attacks to a police station, bank robberies and kidnapping. The response of the government was very harsh: They began intensive monitoring and launched operations against the revolutionaries. Under the intense hunt of the state, some members of the group who had stayed in Ankara decided to join their comrades at the Nurhak Mountains. However, on the 16<sup>th</sup> March and just a few days after the military intervention, Deniz Gezmiş and Yusuf Aslan were captured.

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<sup>30</sup> “Sosyalizm için silahlı mücadele fikrinin ortaya çıkışının üç belli başlı koşulundan söz edilebilir: Birincisi, Soğuk Savaş’ın dinamikleri, ABD destekli sağcı, faşist, paramiliter güçler ve bunlara karşı koyma iradesi. İkincisi sosyalist politik mücadelenin parlamenter yoldan başarıya ulaştırılamayacağına dair kabullerin yaygınlaşması. Üçüncüsü, uluslararası komünist harekette dünya devrimi açısından az gelişmiş, yarı-gelişmiş ülkelerdeki mücadeleyle yaklaşımdan doğan tartışmalar.”

On the 23th March, Hüseyin İnan was captured as well. Sinan Cemgil, Kadir Manga and Alparslan Özdoğan were killed during a gunfight in Adıyaman and most of the survivors were arrested. These operations brought an end to the THKO's guerilla warfare experience (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014; Ersan, 2013; Feyizoğlu, 2011).

On the other side, another group in the Dev-Genç who had gathered around Mahir Çayan, Yusuf Küpeli and Münir Ramazan Aktolga was conducting ideological discussions. Çayan criticized the idea of a peaceful transition to socialism, which was supported by the TİP and the idea of the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie within the anti-imperialist front. He claimed that in a semi-feudal country like Turkey, an anti-imperialist front should be formed and the working class should be made the leader of the revolution by bringing consciousness to them (Çayan, 2004). In 1970, this group separated from the leftist junta supporters and believed in the necessity of an armed struggle. In the second half of 1970, they became a substantial group by making use of their close relationships in the Black Sea Region, their strong ties with the workers and trade unions in Aliğa, İzmir, with the help of Necmettin Giritlioğlu, the Chairman of the Construction Workers Union, and by getting organized within the army with the help of lieutenant Orhan Savaşçı, Çayan's brother-in-law.

In June 1970, in the 20th issue of the ASD, Çayan wrote an article entitled "On the Quality of New Opportunism" (*Yeni Oportunizmin Niteliği Üzerine*). In this article, he claimed that the MDD is the implementation of Leninist continuous revolution theory in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal countries. The People's War (*Halk Savaşı*) is a compulsory stage of the MDD and urban struggle has a secondary importance. According to Çayan, the MDD would spread from the countryside to the cities because the working class in semi-colonial and colonial countries is not as strong as those in advanced capitalist countries. Also, unlike semi-colonial and colonial countries, imperialism has a strict control in cities of advanced capitalist countries. Thus, the leadership of the working class would be ideological, not actual. Çayan severely criticized the socialists and intellectuals who defended a struggle within the boundaries of legitimacy (Çayan, 2004: 169-231).

In January 1971, Mahir Çayan, Yusuf Küpeli, Ertuğrul Kürkçü and Münir Ramazan Aktolga collectively published "An Open Letter to the Enlightenment Socialist Journal (*Aydınlık Sosyalist Dergi'ye Açık Mektup*) where they declared that they broke their ties with Mihri Belli. They criticized Belli for being a reformist and focusing on the leadership of civil-military intellectuals instead of the subjective forces

of the revolution. They asserted that the revolution would start from the countryside and extend towards the cities. Thus, the peasantry would be the primary force of the revolution whose leading force is the working class (Çayan, 2004: 235-260).

Çayan's speech in the congress of the Dev-Genç in October 1970 and this article were the declaration of a separate organization. In the indictment of the THKP-C, it is written that the organization was established in December 1970 with the central committee consisting of Yusuf Küpeli, Münir Ramazan Aktolga ve Mahir Çayan and a general committee with 10 members. The publication of the movement was the journal, Emancipation (*Kurtuluş*). According to the THKP-C, the first step for a revolutionary organization was to establish a Marxist-Leninist party. They therefore criticized the THKO on the grounds that they had started armed actions too early. Nonetheless, they also started urban guerilla action sooner than they had planned. They organized bank robberies in order to finance their following actions. However, the military intervention of 1971 was going to take place soon afterward and revolutionaries were under strict surveillance in such an environment. For this reason, the THKP-C members decided to move to Istanbul because of their restricted mobility in Ankara.

In Istanbul they kidnapped the landlord, Talip Aksoy and the businessman, Mete Has for ransom. Then they kidnapped Ephraim Elrom, the Israeli Consul General. This was the first action that they described as armed propaganda and they published a leaflet with two demands from the government: Release of all revolutionary prisoners and the broadcast of the first bulletin of the THKP-C<sup>31</sup> continuously and completely in the news in TRT news for 3 days. The government's response was a widespread security check. The vice prime minister of the period, Sadi Koçuş declared that "(...) everybody who are close to the THKP-C which undertook the action or not, the ones who encouraged this action, all the agitators whose identities are known by the police department will immediately be taken under custody even if they are outside the areas governed by martial law" and continued as "(...) In the case of the murder of consul, the legal arrangements for the execution of these and the previously arrested ones will be brought to parliament immediately (Aksoy, 2000: 1080-1086).

After Koçuş's declaration, an operation known as "*Balyoz Harekati*" was launched and hundreds of people including journalists, writers and scientists were detained. When the time expired, Elrom was not killed. Then the commander of martial

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<sup>31</sup> For the whole text, see Mahir Çayan, *Bütün Yazılar*, Boran Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2004, pp.453-457. or *Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi Cephesi (THKP-C) Dava Dosyası, Yazılı Belgeler*, Yar Yayınları, İstanbul, 1988, pp.443-446.



law declared curfew in Istanbul on the 23th of May. When it was declared that all the houses would be searched, the THKP-C members killed Ephraim Elrom. After the incident, Mahir Çayan and Hüseyin Cevahir were blockaded in a house in Maltepe, Istanbul. After hours of siege, Cevahir was killed and Çayan was captured. Çayan stayed in Haydarpaşa Military Hospital for nearly two months and then was placed in a single cell in the Selimiye barracks. Other arrestees were taken to Ankara Mamak and Istanbul Maltepe military prisons. The arrests and detentions of other THKP-C members and supporters continued in this period.

Another branch of the MDD supporters was the group organized around the journal *The Proletarian Revolutionary Enlightenment (Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik, PDA)* under the leadership of Doğu Perinçek. Also known as “*Aydınlıklar*,” they established their own organization, namely the Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi, TİİKP*) towards the end of 1971. They advocated a Maoist revolution and sought to start “people’s war” in Turkey. After a while, İbrahim Kaypakkaya (*İbo*) and his colleagues left TİİKP and established the Communist Party of Turkey/ Marxist-Leninist (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi Marksist Leninist, TKP/ML*) and its military branch, the Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi-Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu, TİKKO*) in February 1972. Kaypakkaya tended towards Maoist socialism as well. They intended to move from rural to urban revolution under the leadership of the peasantry. Therefore, they aimed to create “rebel zones” and operated specifically around the Malatya-Elazığ-Dersim triangle. The TKP/ML also organized several armed actions but was not able to live long (Aydın & Taşkın, 2014; Ersan, 2013).

The prosecution process of Deniz Gezmiş and his colleagues started in Ankara Military Commission on 16 July 1971. One month later, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August, Mahir Çayan and his colleagues’ prosecutions started in Istanbul. While the trials were proceeding, a group of the THKP-C and the THKO detainees<sup>32</sup> escaped from the Maltepe Military Prison on 29 November 1971 by digging a tunnel.

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<sup>32</sup> The escapees were Mahir Çayan, Ulaş Bardakçı and Ziya Yılmaz from the THKP-C; Cihan Alptekin and Ömer Ayna from the THKO.

## 2.5. The Kızıldere Massacre

As these events were unfolding, martial law continued. Nihat Erim's government was under the strict control of Turkish General Staff and the socialists and revolutionaries were subjected to state terror. Under these circumstances, first, the Court of Military Appeals on 10 January and then the parliament on 10 March 1972 approved the death sentences of Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin İnan. From then on, all parts of the opposition movement, including the CHP, struggled to abolish death penalty.<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime, the THKP-C members were making preparations for an action in order to rescue Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan and Yusuf Aslan. For this purpose, they acted in accordance with the THKO members, Cihan Alptekin and Ömer Ayna. However, they could hardly move under police and military surveillance and their location was disclosed. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of February, 1972, Ulaş Bardakçı was surrounded in a house in Arnavutköy, Istanbul and he was killed in an armed conflict. On the night of the same day, Ziya Yılmaz was captured alive, yet wounded in Fındıkzade. Koray Doğan, who was finding hideouts for the fugitives, was killed in Ankara on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 1972. And finally, the military officers organized around Orhan Savaşçı were arrested.

Because of the widespread state operations, Istanbul and Ankara slipped beyond the reach of revolutionaries. The only place where they could survive was the Black Sea Region because Mahir Çayan, Sebahattin Kurt and Hüseyin Cevahir had been to Fatsa several times and they had the opportunity to stay there. Especially, they had close relationships with Ertan Saruhan, a teacher in Çarşamba, Samsun. Saruhan made the necessary arrangements to take them from Ankara and brought them to Fatsa. Hasan Pekbüyük, Ziya Yılmaz's nephew, brought Mahir Çayan, Ertuğrul Kürkçü, Ömer Ayna, and Cihan Alptekin to the Yapraklı village of Fatsa on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 1972. Meanwhile, Sinan Kazım Özüdoğru, Hüdai Arıkan, Saffet Alp and Sebahattin Kurt were staying at another house.

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<sup>33</sup> The RPP did not have a formal party attitude against the executions but there were groups of people who had openly taken a stand against the law, including İsmet İnönü. Not only oppositional groups but also the families of the militants, Cemil Gezmiş, Hıdır İnan, Beşir Aslan and their lawyers Halit Çelenk and Niyazi Ağırnaslı strove for preventing the death penalty; they had several meetings with parliamentaries. Besides, a group of intellectuals including Onat Kutlar, Yaşar Kemal, Erdal Öz, Murat Belge and Gencay Gürsoy organized a petition and collected 20.000 signatures in order to give to the parliament.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, the region was blockaded and ransacked by military and police forces as well as the National Intelligence Organization (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı, MİT*) members. Fikri Sönmez and his apprentice Avni Kayacı, who had helped the revolutionaries to find places to stay, were taken into custody and brought to Ankara. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, the revolutionaries kidnapped two English technicians and a Canadian technician, Charles Turner, Gordon Bunner and John Low<sup>34</sup>, from the NATO radar base in Ünye. They hoped to use them in a bargain to release of three revolutionaries. With this aim, they wrote a declaration entitled “To the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, Parliament and Government” (*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, Parlamentosu ve Hükümetine*) and demanded the immediate cessation of executions and the announcement of this decision on radio. Otherwise, the soldiers would be killed. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, they went to the house of Emrullah Aslan, the Mayor of the Kızıldere village, Tokat. Ali Kaynar, Şener Şadi, Turan Külünk, Abdullah Yılmaz and Hasan Yılmaz, the residents of Fatsa, were taken into police custody after the kidnapping. On the morning of 30 March, around 5.00 a.m., two soldiers arrived at Emrullah Arslan’s house. The revolutionaries had written a note to prevent accusations against the family living in the house, explaining that the only responsibility of the event is solely theirs. Arslan gave this note to the soldiers. The house was surrounded by the military.

This military operation was conducted under the strict control of the government. Many top government officials and MİT members were also present in the operation.<sup>35</sup> This showed that the government took this action seriously because the prestige of the Turkish state was on the line. The revolutionaries gave 48 hours notice to have their demands met, but the government refused to negotiate. In what follows, the revolutionaries shot the hostages. After 10 hours, the military troops stormed the house

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<sup>34</sup> Yasemin Çongar pointed out an important information about these technicians which is rarely known even by the socialists in Turkey. In her article in *Al-Monitor*, she wrote that: “On March 28, 1972, British Secretary of State for Defense Lord Carrington stood up in the House of Lords and read a statement: ‘I regret to inform the House that three Ministry of Defense civilian radar operators, working with the Turkish Air Force, were kidnapped on the evening of March 26 at Ünye, on the Black Sea coast of Turkey. The operators’ names were Gordon Banner, John Law and Charles Turner. They were neither civilian technicians as Lord Carrington claimed nor members of the NATO staff as their kidnappers believed them to be. They were undercover intelligence officers working for the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) – a British state secret that would not be revealed until the incident was discussed in the House of Commons in 1984.’” (November 3, 2013)

<sup>35</sup> Home Secretary of the period Ferit Kubat, Intelligence Head of the General Commandership of Gendarmerie Brigadier Vehbi Parlar, Provost Marshal of Ankara Major General Tevfik Türüng, Undersecretary of National Security Organization Lieutenant General Nurettin Ersin, The Governor of Tokat, National Security Organization Head of Department of Ankara and National Security Organization officer Mehmet Eymür were some of these officials.

and slaughtered ten revolutionaries, namely Mahir Çayan, Sebahattin Kurt, Sinan Kazım Özüdoğru, Hüdai Arıkan, Saffet Alp, Ömer Ayna, Cihan Alptekin, Ertan Sarıhan, Ahmet Atasoy and Nihat Yılmaz, in a gunfight. Only Ertuğrul Kürkçü was caught alive. A large and experienced cadre of the THKP-C was thus physically annihilated. The Turkish government preferred to use deadly force instead of trying to save the hostages and capturing the revolutionaries alive.

The Kızıldere Massacre had an immense impact on the revolutionary movements of both this period and the following years. It was the biggest but not the last action aiming to prevent the executions. The supporters of the THKO attempted to organize several actions to rescue the captured militants but they failed. Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan and Yusuf Aslan were executed by hanging on the 6th of May 1972 in Ankara Central (*Ulucanlar*) Closed Prison.

The state's operations to exterminate the revolutionaries continued. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1973, İbrahim Kaypakkaya and his several colleagues were caught in Tunceli. He was taken to the Diyarbakır Prison after staying in hospital for three months. On the second week of May, he was taken to his cell and died in prison in 1973. The state officials declared that he had committed suicide in his cell, but his family and comrades claimed that he was killed after being tortured for over four months.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of these extensive state operations, hundreds of revolutionaries and their supporters including writers, journalists, trade unionists, and workers were detained, tortured and some of them were arrested. The significant revolutionary leaders were killed or arrested. The opposition movement had weakened because of the state's oppressions and prohibitions. Although groups of university students tried to protest the brutal state violence<sup>37</sup>, the larger segment of the society remained quite in fear. The thought that armed struggle in particular and the socialist movement in general came to an end in Turkey was widespread. However, this was going to be proven false in a very short time.

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<sup>36</sup> İbrahim Kaypakkaya has been remembering as “unbreakable man of valor” (“*Ser verip sır vermeyen yiğit*”) because of his resistance during long standing tortures. He is accepted as a symbol of resistance in the socialist movement of Turkey.

<sup>37</sup> On the 31<sup>th</sup> of March, a group of university students in the Political Science Faculty of Ankara University wanted to organize a boycott in order to protest the Kızıldere Massacre. But the university administration started a prosecution against them and 12 students were detained. The leader of PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, was one of these students and he has emphasized the strong influence of the Kızıldere Massacre in his political life on a number of occasions. Again on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1972, students organized a demonstration in Gazi Training Institute in Ankara, but they were attacked by a group of right-wing students and eventually were taken into custody (Feyizoğlu, 2011: 592).

## 2.6. A New Period in the Revolutionary Struggle: The “Revolutionism of ’71”

In official history, this period of social awakening is usually ignored or downplayed to a period of “terror and chaos,” “conflict between left and right,” or reduced to violence. The political actors and their activities are marginalized and even represented as monstrous. On the other hand, many historical works focusing on this period have a tendency to regard ’68 as a renaissance and they consider the 1971 military coup as the end of this period. According to this view, the executions of Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin İnan, the Kızılderle Massacre, and the murder of İbrahim Kaypakkaya constitute the tragic final scene (Tura, 1999: 37).

However, at least some of the socialists and revolutionaries of Turkey have proposed an alternative historiography. For the people who participated in the revolutionary movement after 1973, the period beginning in 1971 has already become a legend. After a few years, a large segment of the Turkish society regarded the dead revolutionary leaders as “heroes” who faced death without hesitation in order to “liberate” the whole society. The new revolutionaries aspired to be like them and they kept reciting their names. They composed songs and revolutionary anthems about them and carried their photographs at every turn. These figures have turned into “revolutionary martyrs” and continue to be so for the Turkish left. This sympathy became an advantage for the reorganization of the revolutionary movements in the second half of the 1970s.

For some of the revolutionary groups, revolutionary practice seen between 1968 and 1973 is called the “Revolutionism of ’71” (*’71 Devrimciliği*). This notion refers to the people and groups who severed theoretical and practical ties with previous socialists, organized in accordance with the theories of revolution, and adopted armed struggle as a revolutionary method. In other words, the views and practices of the THKO, the THKP-C and the TKPLM/TİKKO, which were physically destroyed by the state in 1973, represent this notion. It is an important break from the idea of a revolution that is dependent on the support of outside forces such as the military, intellectuals, or other countries. It is also a break from the Kemalist understanding of revolution.

The Kızılderle Massacre was seen as one of the significant manifestations of this notion. It became a “legend of solidarity and resistance” for the followers of these revolutionaries. It continues to be remembered with reference to the THKP-C and its doctrinaire, Mahir Çayan, because the practices of the THKP-C and the distinctive political views of Mahir Çayan played an important role in the newly-formed organizations in the following years. Çayan’s political legacy enabled the emergence of many diverse movements which claim to be the “heirs of this tradition.”<sup>38</sup> These movements were also under the influence of youth leaders who got out of prison with the 1974 amnesty. This new revolutionary generation maintained a much more massive and dynamic struggle until the 1980 military coup.

The growing social struggles in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s had significant effects on the revolutionary movements in the succeeding period. The political actors of this period created a growing social mobility within the social and political constraints of their time and under the strong influence of the the existing institutions and discourses. As Karl Marx remarked in his inspiring work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language (1963: 15).

This period may take much criticism retrospectively, but it is important to consider the gains, if any, of the period. This review can be seen as an attempt to recognize the potentials and the constraints of the socialist movement of this period. The socialists of the 1970s left a strong legacy behind them. Despite their deficiencies, incompetence and failures, this period is full of important lessons for subsequent revolutionary generations and also for the state. The Kızılderle Massacre plays a very important role in this legacy with its political and symbolic values. It has been the haunting “ghost” of the revolutionary movements and the sovereign for 43 years.

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<sup>38</sup> THKP-C (*Acilciler*), *Marksist Leninist Silahlı Propaganda Birliđi (MLSPB)*, *Devrimci Yol (Dev-Yol)*, *Kurtuluş, Devrimci Sol (Dev-Sol)* and *DHKP-C* are the major organizations which identify themselves with reference to the political legacy of the THKP-C.

Official history has sought to shelve this history in order to make people forget. The commemorative narratives and practices of the victims, the witnesses, and the inheritors of its “legacy” constitute a persistent effort to remember, an effort that allows the transmission of knowledge and experience to the following generations. As a result of changing narratives, discourses and remembering/forgetting practices about the massacre in response to the state's methods of suppression, a "memory regime" has emerged to revolve around this key event. In Chapter 3, I look at the narratives of the witnesses of the massacre and the witnesses of the historical period while comparing these narratives with the representation of the event in the official historiography.

## CHAPTER III

### CONFLICTING NARRATIVES ON “KIZILDERE”

The theoretician of nationalism, Ernst Renan, claimed that forgetting is a founding element in the construction of a nation. This is also valid for the Republic of Turkey. While the foundation of the Republic was defined as a turning point, the previous historical period was forgotten or trivialized. Tanıl Bora indicates that the Republic of Turkey is founded on the special effort of nullification of history by erasing the past (Bora, 2009:8). He calls this process as “militant forgetting” which is taught by the national education system, popular historiography and also daily nationalist valor.

This “militant forgetting” has not been for once only; it continues as a “tradition” and all governments beginning from 1923 have been in a struggle to forget or make the society forget numerous atrocities. The history of the Republic of Turkey, as all other nation-states, is based on human right violations, mass massacres, oppressions and atrocities which have been forgotten or made forgotten, mourned or not, called to account but not included in the official history. Although these human rights violations have had continuity in the recent history of Turkey, they increased dramatically during the military interventions. During these periods, especially after the March 12, 1971 memorandum and the September 12, 1980 coup, there were massive human rights violations mostly targeting the leftists, socialists or revolutionaries. Thousands of people were detained, incarcerated, executed or killed in armed conflicts. As a result, different layers of memory and repression were formed, with some atrocities gaining visibility while others were silenced. “Kızıldere” can be seen as only one of the “layers of oblivion” (*nisyan katmanları*) (Bora, 2009: 7-17) which could not be publicly discussed on these lands.

As I discussed in the introduction, there has been a rise of interest in cultural and collective memory and their connections with questions of identity, power and



representation throughout the world in the last twenty years. Oral history, testimonies, forms of memorialization and the analysis of remembering and forgetting practices, in addition to discussions on the difference between history and memory, have become central in memory studies. This increasing interest in memory studies has been evaluated in connection to the so-called crisis of historicism because it was seen as “a critique of the totalizing aspects of historical discourse” (Klein, 2000: 128). This critical review led to the new notion of paying attention to the voice of the witnesses (Traverso, 2009: 5) and we entered “the era of the witness” in Annette Wieviorkia’s words (Wieviorkia, 2006).

Following this line of work, in this chapter, I will examine some of the ways in which the state and the witnesses of the massacre remember/forget this specific key event and what kinds of narratives they produce in this remembering/forgetting process. My primary interest is the contents of narratives rather than the details about the event. Thus, I will not share the varying explanations about the course of the event which can be learned through several sources.<sup>39</sup>

Written materials about the time of the event and official sources, besides the testimonies of some politically active figures of the time will provide the material to analyze the different approaches and narratives on the same event. In-depth interviews with former militants who had close relationships with the killed revolutionaries and also witnessed the social and political conditions that led to this massacre and the accounts of the villagers who also witnessed the massacre with its before and after will form a basis for a comparative analysis between different narratives of the witnesses.

### 3.1. Narratives of Official Historiography

“Kızıldere” does not have a wide coverage in official historiography and the main sources are newspapers, radio news and parliamentary speeches on the days following the massacre. The books published with the orders of the Prime Ministry<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Some of these sources are *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi 7. Cilt 1960-1980*, İletişim Yayınları, 1988, Uğur Mumcu, *Çıkamaz Sokak*, um:ag Vakfı Yayınları, Ankara, 2014, Turhan Feyizoğlu, *Mahir On'ların Türküsü*, Alfa Yayıncılık, 2011, Musa Kaplan, *Devrim Yolcuları*, Ozan Yayıncılık, 2012, Burhan Dodanlı, *Kızıldere Katliamı*, Grafiker Yayınları, 2012, Aydın Çubukçu, *Bizim 68*, Evrensel Yayınları, 2008.

<sup>40</sup> *Beyaz Kitap - Türkiye Gerçekleri ve Terörizm*, Ankara, 1973.

and the Secretariat-General of the National Security Council<sup>41</sup> on “terror” and “terrorist organizations” are important components of this official historiography. After more than 30 years, testimonies of government officers of the time, Nihat Erim<sup>42</sup> (the Prime Minister of the period) and Mehmet Eymür<sup>43</sup> (former head of the Counter-terrorism Department of the National Intelligence Organization), were published and became the new sources which reproduce the official historiography on “Kızıldere.”

Paul Sant Cassia, in his work on the relationship between history and memory focusing on the armed nationalist struggle of *Ethnikí Orgánosis Kipriakou Agónos* (National Organisation of Cypriot Struggle, EOKA) during 1955-59 in Cyprus, writes that:

The nation-state does not just emerge historically in the evolution of society and polity, but also when the conceptualization of history (and hence of time) has itself been changed (clearly a by-product of changes in social organisation, industrialisation, literacy, etc.). It is the manipulability of history rather than its falsifiability (as in the classical world) that the nation-state requires, and brings into being as its ultimate ruse of conscious conviviality (1999: 51).

The notion of “the manipulability of history” has also been relevant for the official historiography on the Kızıldere Massacre and the newspapers played a crucial role in this manipulative process. On 31 March, 1972, all the newspapers announced the Kızıldere Massacre with photographs of the slaughtered people and bombed-out and mowed down village house surrounded by troops pointing guns to it (See Appendix 1-2). Some of the headlines were: “Rebels killing three innocent Brits Captured Dead,” (*Hürriyet*) “10 Anarchists Captured Dead in a Shoot-out,” “Anarchists killed 3 Brits,” (*Cumhuriyet*) “The end of the Anarchists,” “10 Anarchists cornered in Kızıldere village of Niksar and Captured Dead,” “The dead City Rebels (with photographs),” “They prepared their own end,” “The corpses of the killed anarchists in front of the house they nested in.” (The photographs of the piled up corpses) (*Gün*) “After a-12-hour of siege in

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<sup>41</sup> Milli Güvenlik Konseyi Genel Sekreterliği, *12 Eylül Öncesi ve Sonrası*, Ankara, 1981.

<sup>42</sup> Nihat Erim, *Günlükler 1925-1979 I.Cilt*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Mehmet Eymür, *Analiz - Bir Mit Mensubunun Anıları*, Milenyum Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005.

Niksar, the Anarchists killed 3 Brits and they got killed” (*Milliyet*)<sup>44</sup> (See Appendix 3-6).

The main plot of the news was almost always the same: The “anarchists” or “marauders” responded to the summons of the security forces by weapons. They rejected the calls for “negotiation” and killed the foreign hostages. Then, the security forces surrounded the village house and a shooting broke out including bombs and even mortars. As a result, the “anarchists” were captured dead.

Roger Silverstone, in his work *Why Study the Media*, claims that we need to understand “how the meanings emerge, where and with what consequences” in the process of mediation. He continues “We need to understand its politics: its vulnerability to the exercise of power; its dependence on the work of institutions as well as individuals; and its own power to persuade and to claim attention and response” (1999: 18). From this perspective, we should also try to understand the political repercussions of the representations of “Kızıldere” in the newspapers.

These representations were constructed by discursive practices within the historical and political context of the period and they created official state-sponsored accounts of the massacre. These narratives have a number of common features: First, they were based on the narratives of “anarchy” and labeling. Their choice of using concepts referring to slaughtered people cannot be seen as random; they were insistently represented as “anarchists” or “marauders.” None of the mainstream newspapers called them “guerrillas,” “militants” or “revolutionaries” because these terms were not negative enough at that time. They did not even mention the names of their political organizations because this could have been construed as a kind of propaganda in itself. This effort to shape the society’s understanding of events by imposing particular categories for conceptualizing the actors involved is a common state practice. Since the 1980s, the concept of “terrorist” has replaced “anarchist” and it is used for all radical oppositional movements with or without arms. Likewise, instead of uttering the names of the political organizations news broadcasts refer to them as “separatist” or “destructive” terror organizations. Labeling is an effective way of creating a distance from those “cruel” and “violent” people.

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<sup>44</sup> “Üç masum İngiliz öldüren şakiler ölü ele geçtiler,” (*Hürriyet*) “10 anarşist silahlı çatışma sonunda ölü olarak ele geçti,” “Anarşistler 3 İngiliz öldürdü,” (*Cumhuriyet*) “Anarşistlerin Sonu,” “Niksar’ın Kızıldere köyünde kısırılan 10 Anarşist ölü olarak ele geçti,” “Ölen Şehir Şakileri,” “Sonlarını kendi elleriyle hazırladılar,” “Öldürülen anarşistlerin cesetleri yuvalandıkları evin önünde,”(*Gün*) “Niksar’da kuşatıldıktan 12 saat sonra anarşistler üç İngiliz öldürdüler ve öldürüldüler.” (*Milliyet*)

Secondly, the language in the details of the news emphasized the “innocence” of the foreign technicians as opposed to the “gratuitous and cold-blooded murderers.” *Hürriyet* printed the caption “Here is the disgraceful picture of humanity” (*İşte insanlığın yüz karası tablo*) just under the photos of the technicians’ dead bodies and wrote:

They had no guilt except joining to the duty for the common defense of Turkey. They were enrolled in a radar base around Ünye province of Ordu city by the order of their home country. They were not soldiers but civilians. They were not combatants but technicians. They had mothers, fathers, wives and children who were waiting for them at home. They were taken from their homes in Ünye at Sunday night forcefully by the ones who wants to destroy the Republic of Turkey. Yesterday, at 2 p.m., they were killed as their hands tied from the back and by a bullet to their heads in the Mayor’s house in Niksar’s Kızıldere village. The sorrowful stories of John Law, Gordon Bunner and Charles Turner were ended like this. Here is the disgraceful picture of humanity that the security forces encountered when they have entered into the house.<sup>45</sup> (31 March 1972)

As opposed to the “innocence” and “purity” of the technicians, the militants were represented as “pollutions” to be “cleaned up.” *Milliyet* described the impact of the massacre on the residents of the village and the Turkish society in general with these sentences:

The residents of Niksar and Kızıldere village provided great help for the security forces. The people constantly carrying food, water and beverages for commando-soldiers cheered their love for security forces at the scene of event after the anarchists were killed. In addition to the local people who applauded for minutes the security forces that wiped away the anarchists, the operation the security forces initiated aroused a great feeling of joy across the country.<sup>46</sup> (31 March 1972)

Lastly, presenting the militants as “unreasonable,” “weak-willed” and/or “tools” used by “external forces” was also common in the news. *Cumhuriyet*, which considered

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<sup>45</sup> “Türkiye’nin müşterek savunmasına görevli olarak katılmaktan başka hiçbir suçları yoktu. Kendi ülkelerinin emri ile Ordu ilinin Ünye ilçesi civarındaki bir radar üssünde görevliyidiler. Asker değillerdi, sivildiler. Muharip değil, teknisyendiler. Evlerinde onları bekleyen anneleri, babaları, eşleri ve çocukları vardı. Pazar gecesi Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’ni yıkmak isteyenler tarafından zorla Ünye’deki evlerinden alındılar. Dün saat 14.00’de Niksar’ın Kızıldere köyünde muhtarın evinde elleri arkalarından bağlı olarak beyinlerine sıkılan kurşunlarla öldürüldüler. John Law, Gordon Bunner, Charles Turner’in hazin hikayeleri böyle sona erdi. İşte, güvenlik kuvvetlerinin eve girdikleri zaman karşılaştıkları insanlığın yüz karası tablo.”

<sup>46</sup> “Niksar ve Kızıldere köyü sakinleri güvenlik kuvvetlerine büyük yardımlarda bulunmuşlardır. Komando-askerlere devamlı olarak yiyecek, su ve içecek taşıyan halk anarşistlerin öldürülmesinden sonra da olay yerinde güvenlik kuvvetlerine büyük sevgi tezahürlerinde bulunmuşlardır. Anarşistleri temizleyen güvenlik kuvvetlerini dakikalarca alkışlayan halkın yanı sıra güvenlik kuvvetlerinin giriştiği hareket, yurttta da büyük sevinç uyandırmıştır.”

the event as “the unreasonable efforts of the leaders of the red anarchy” (*kızıl anarşinin önderlerinin giriştikleri akılsız deneme*), is an appropriate example of this narrative:

The doom from which the red anarchy suffers in Turkey is exemplary of the events the consequences of which are predetermined. The reason why some want to sustain it as a whim despite its fate is that those who are involved in this movement are the prisoners of an international flow beyond their own will. If they had the opportunity to slightly know the structure of Turkish people, the army of the republic and generations of true Kemalists, they would immediately throw themselves out of the inflamed circle into which they fell. It is necessary to well evaluate the hate the last event they caused by kidnapping three British people created across Turkey. The reaction of the people is obvious. Those who engage in unreasonable acts such as supposedly saving the people perished in the hands of the people.<sup>47</sup> (31 March 1972)

“Kızıldere” was not the main issue for only newspapers but also the newscasts in the only radio channel, TRT, which disseminated the current developments from Kızıldere to all parts of the country. Although it is not possible to reach the radio records about the event, it can be easily predicted that those newscasts represented the “national voice” and reproduced the official narrative. Considering the fact that, TRT was the only source of news for a major part of the country, most of the people in Turkey learned the massacre with the official narrative.

Besides the newspapers and radio, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, TBMM*) also put the event on their agenda on 31 March 1972. The Home Secretary of the period, Ferit Kubat, explained the details of the event<sup>48</sup> and then the spokesmen of the parties and representatives expressed their opinions. The Parliamentary Minutes (*meclis tutanakları*) were very similar to the narratives of the newspapers. A small part from the speech of Fahri Uğrasızoğlu, the representative of Uşak, is a good example to see this similarity:

I would promptly like to state the fact that three innocent foreign technicians, two British and one Canadian, were brutally killed by these reprehensible anarchists was vehemently condemned by our precious nation as well as by the entire humanity. At this point, the sorrow of the Grand Assembly is profoundly great. I believe that the delay in the execution of capital punishments for three

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<sup>47</sup> “Kızıl anarşinin Türkiye’de uğradığı âkıbet, sonucu önceden belli olaylara bir örnektir. Buna rağmen bir heves olarak sürdürülmek istenmesinin nedeni, içinde rol alanların, kendi iradelerinin ötesinde milletlerarası bir akımın tutsağı durumuna girmiş olmalarıdır. Yoksa Türk halkının yapısını, cumhuriyet ordusunu ve gerçek Atatürkçü nesilleri biraz tanıma olanakları bulunsa, içine düştükleri kızgın çemberin dışına kendilerini bir an önce atarlardı. Üç İngiliz kaçırılmak suretiyle sebebiyet verdikleri son olayın Türkiye’de yarattığı nefreti iyi değerlendirmek gerekir. Halkın gösterdiği tepki meydandadır. Güya halkı kurtarmak gibi akılsız davranışlara girişenler halkın elinde perişan olmuşlardır.”

<sup>48</sup> For Kubat’s full text of speech, see Uğur Mumcu, *Çıkamaz Sokak*, um:ag Vakfı Yayınları, Ankara, 2014, pp.3-7.

anarchists caused the murder of three innocent foreign people. People will feel the anguish for that murder in their conscience.<sup>49</sup>

“Kızıldere” had great repercussions not only in the large segment of Turkish society but also in the international arena. The British and Canadian governments were following the developments in Kızıldere from the beginning of the military operation. For this reason, the newspapers gave wide publicity to the British and Canadian officers’ statements about the event. The Turkish government was deeply sorry about the loss of the technicians and sending messages to them through the newspapers and also speeches in the parliament. The main feeling about the technicians was “sadness” and “embarrassment” to their families and homelands, so messages of “condolence” should be shared.

The Prime Minister Nihat Erim’s condolence messages to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Canada can be seen as a summary of the official discourses on “Kızıldere”:

It will help all of Turkey’s friends to understand in the strict sense that these relentless terrorists do not refrain from committing every kind of murder no matter how contemptible they are and help them to perceive the situation Turkey is facing. Turkey hopes that its friends will understand that Turkey tries to eradicate the destructive aims of those terrorists. (...) We can assure you that the organizations and individuals sharing the responsibility for that villainous murder will be brought to justice as soon as possible.<sup>50</sup> (*Milliyet*, 31 March 1972)

The most striking narrative about the militants was “the doubts of their Turkishness.” The DP Representative Mustafa Vedat Önsal raised this issue in his parliamentary speech with these sentences:

The incident proved that those who create the anarchic movements in our country and those who direct such movements are not even remotely close to being a Turk and that they are the bought agents of an international organization that intends to kill the Turkish State. The Turkish people are hospitable. The Turkish people help and protect those who are not able defend themselves. It has

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<sup>49</sup> “Şunu hemen ifade etmek isterim ki, ikisi İngiliz ve biri Kanadalı olan bu üç masum yabancı teknisyenin bu menfur anarşistler tarafından hunharca öldürülmüş olmaları, aziz milletimiz ve bütün insanlık alemi tarafından nefretle karşılanmıştır. Bu noktada Yüce Meclisin üzüntüsü fevkaledede büyüktür. Üç idamla ilgili infaz cezalarının geciktirilmiş olmasının, üç yabancı masum insanın öldürülmesine sebep olduğuna inanıyorum. Bunun manevi ıstırabını vicdanlarında hissedener olacaktır.” Available at [https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/MM\\_/d03/c023/mm\\_03023064.pdf](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/MM_/d03/c023/mm_03023064.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> “Türkiye’nin bütün dostları tarafından Türkiye’nin karşısında bulunduğu durumun ve bu amansız tedhişçilerin ne kadar alçakça olursa olsun her türlü cinayeti işlemekten kaçınmayacaklarının tam manasıyla anlaşılmasına yardım edecektir. Türkiye’nin bu tedhişçilerin yıkıcı amaçlarının kökünü kazımaya çalıştığıнын dostları tarafından anlaşılacağını umar. (...) Şundan emin olabilirsiniz ki, bu alçakça cinayetin sorumluluğunu paylaşan örgütler ve fertler en kısa zamanda adalete teslim edileceklerdir.”

never been seen that any Turkish person has ever pull their gun towards the people whose hands are tight, even if they are the archenemy. If those who killed the British and Canadian technicians under the known circumstances had got even one drop of Turkish blood within their veins or they had been even remotely connected to being Turkish, they would not have murdered those impeccable people who stayed as guests in our country.<sup>51</sup>

All these newspapers and parliamentary speeches have common features in terms of narratives: The foreign technicians were “innocent” or “victims” and they were “the guests of Turkish society.” Because of the “insane behaviors” of the “abominable anarchists, marauders or homicidal criminals,” these “innocent” technicians were “brutally murdered.” Thus, the “anarchists” and their supporters should be “condemned vehemently.”

It goes without saying that the Turkish state and the main-stream media conducted a campaign to discredit the militants. They tried to legitimize the slaughter of armed guerillas by dehumanizing them and provoking hostility. The photographs of the stacked dead bodies of the militants and the declarations about them after the event exposed the “worthlessness” of the militants. Thus, the Turkish state showed its power as the only “sovereign” and gave the message that those who resisted the state would encounter the same result.

At this point, I want to indicate a number of narratives on the impact of these news reports and the photographs of the dead bodies. All of the newspapers, without any exception, published full-page photographs of the military operation, especially those of the dead bodies of the revolutionary militants stacked as if they were in an abattoir. Burhan Dodanlı, a journalist who monitored the operation from beginning to end, described this scene in the following terms:

Everything was over, everyone in the house were dead. I cannot find any word to describe the horrifying scene we saw when we were called to take photographs. The corpses piled on top of one another in a bloodbath. (...) It was an appalling image. Hard to look at; as journalists witnessing Kızıldere

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<sup>51</sup> “Olay, yurdumuzdaki anarşik hareketleri yaratan ve bu hareketlere istikamet verenlerin Türklük ile uzaktan yakından alakası olmadığını, Türk Devletinin hayatına kasteden beynelmilel bir teşkilatın satın alınmış ajanları olduğunu ispat etmiştir. Türk, misafirperverdir. Türk, kendisini müdafaa edemeyecek durumda olanların yardımcısı ve hamisidir. Türk’ün elleri kolları bağlı kimselere, en büyük düşmanı dahi olsa silah çektiği görülmemiştir. İngiliz ve Kanadalı teknisyenlerin, malum şartlar içinde hayatlarına kast edenlerin damarlarında Türk kanının zerresi veya Türklükle en ufak bağları bulunsa idi, elleri kolları bağlı, ülkemizde misafir olarak bulunan bigünah kişilerin hayatına kıyamazlardı.” Available at

[https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/MM\\_/d03/c023/mm\\_03023064.pdf](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/MM_/d03/c023/mm_03023064.pdf)

massacre, we had great difficulty in even taking this photo.<sup>52</sup> (Dodanlı, 2012: 29-30)

Dursun Eroğlu has similar statements and explains the influence of this scene on the villagers with these sentences:

Imagine for a moment, these people had never seen piled up animal corpses, and yet these are human beings... You piled up these people... Some of them are moaning, others are in the throes of death. People's heads are blown, their legs are chopped, their internal organs are lying on a corner. (...) But no one attempted to hide this. I do not know if they called anyone, but no one stopped it. After all, this created a great fear and horror for people... Not only me, but also everyone who witnessed that scene had nightmares for days and night. Imagine that you had never experienced something like that before; you had not never seen it even in a movie.<sup>53</sup>

We learned that publishing the photographs had been organized consciously by the state itself when the diaries of the Prime Minister of the period, Nihat Erim, were published after 33 years. He writes “A. İ. Göğüş called at night. The martial law banned all the news and photo broadcasts or publications apart from the formal communiqués. I found Tağmaç and told him, ‘The ban on the photo is not right. People would think the truth is being concealed.’ People inquired about the ban; it turned out that there was a mistake. The photo would be published.”<sup>54</sup> (Erim, 2005: 1017)

The newspapers, especially photographs and the radio news were not used simply to “inform” the society or to “tell the truth” about the event. They were used by the police and other security forces in order to demoralize and break the resistance of the revolutionaries or their supporters in detention or in prisons. My interviewees who had been arrested during the gunfight in Kızıldere said that they learned of the massacre through newspapers in prison. Moreover, they stated that the officers in the prison had sent newspapers to the wards although some of the prisons had not allowed the

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<sup>52</sup> “Her şey bitmiş, evdekilerin hepsi ölmüştü. Fotoğraf çekmeye çağrıldığımızda gördüğümüz ürkütücü manzara karşısında söylenecek söz bulamıyorum. Kan gölünde üst üste yığılı cesetler. (...) Korkunç bir görünüş. Bakması bile zor, Kızıldere Katliamı'na tanık gazeteciler bu resmi bile çekerken çok zorlanmıştk.”

<sup>53</sup> Personal interview with Dursun Eroğlu conducted in Ankara on 08.08.2014: “Düşünsene, bu insanlar öyle üst üste konmuş hayvan cesetleri bile görmemişler. Ki bunlar insan... İnsanları koymuşsun üst üste... Kimisi inliyor, can çekişiyor... Kimisinin kafası dağılmış, bacağı kopmuş, iç organları köşede duruyor. (...) Ama onu gizlemek için kimse çaba sarf etmedi. Gelin filan dediler mi onu bilmiyorum ama kimse de engel olmadı. Sonuçta onun yarattığı insanlarda büyük bir korku, dehşet... Sadece ben değil orada herkes günlerce gecelerce kabuslar gördüler. Düşünsene öyle bir şey yaşamamışsın, film bile izlememişsin öyle...”

<sup>54</sup> “Gece A. İ. Göğüş telefon etti. Sıkıyönetim resmi tebliğ dışında haber ve resim yayını yasak etmiş. Tağmaç'ı buldum. ‘Resim yasağı doğru değil. Gerçeğin gizlendiği sanılır’ dedim. Soruşturdu, yanlışlık olmuş. Resim yayınlanacak.”



prisoners to read newspapers before. One of my interlocutors, Necmi Demir, explained this situation as:

“We would not know about the event, to be honest... But we were on the corridor in the morning of the massacre. First they squeezed us into wards; then we managed to open them somehow, we were able to go out to the corridors. Some turned on the radio while we were on the corridor, that’s how we heard about the massacre.”<sup>55</sup>

And another witness of the period from a different political faction, Aydın Çubukçu, tells his experience with these sentences:

I just got out of torture back then. I stayed in a counter-guerilla torture house for 10-15 days, and then I was shipped off to Izmir. I was incarcerated in a cell in Izmir. They would not give any newspaper; I was under complete isolation. One morning, they threw newspapers under the door of the cell. I asked, “What happened? What is this paper for? While I was thinking where the newspaper came from with no reason, I saw the corpses of my friends massacred in Kızıldere on the whole page; they were all shredded. They threw the newspaper to let me know about my friends, I figured. I guess they gave me the paper to demoralize me. This event shook me to my core. All of my close friends died there.<sup>56</sup> (Aydın Çubukçu cited in Kaplan, 2012: 416)

In the same manner, those who were being interrogated during the military operation learned of the massacre through the newspapers which were thrown to them:

For example, I was in the query. I did not hear anything about what happened before and after the event; I did not know. When I was in query, they would blindfold me; then they would untie the blindfold and someone would appear before you. I remember very well, he threw the newspapers towards me and said, “Look, you are done.” I asked “How, what do you mean?” He said, “Take the paper; read, read. It is free to read.” When he said that, I looked at the paper. All those terrible pictures, the pictures of the massacre... The examiner wanted to execute psychological pressure about how the event took place and he said, “This is your end, we brought you the end; do not stand against us anymore.” The interrogator was a part of this machine.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Personal interview with Necmi Demir conducted in Istanbul on 16.06.2014: “Haberimiz olmuyordu doğrusu... Fakat katliamın sabahında koridordaydık. Önce bizi koğuşlara tıkmışlardı, biz bir şekilde açtık, koridora çıkıyorduk artık. Koridorda radyoyu açtılar, oradan duyduk katliamı.”

<sup>56</sup> “O zaman işkenceden yeni çıkmıştım. 10-15 gün kontrgerilla işkencehanesinde kaldım, sonra İzmir’e gönderildim. İzmir’de bir hücreye atıldım. Gazete verilmiyordu, tamamen tecrit halindeydim. Bir sabah hücrenin altından gazeteler atıldı, ‘Hayırdır, bu ne gazetesi?’ dedim. Durup durukken bu da nereden çıktı diye düşünürken sayfanın tümünde Kızıldere’de katledilen arkadaşların bombalarla parçalanmış cesetlerini gördüm, onu haber vermek için atılmışlar gazeteyi meğer. Moralimi bozmak için böyle bir şey yaptılar herhalde. Çok derinden sarsmıştı bu olay beni. Çok yakından tanıdığım arkadaşlarımın hepsi ölmüştü.”

<sup>57</sup> Personal interview with Fahri Aral conducted in Istanbul on 14.07.2014: “Ben mesela sorguydım. Hiçbir şekilde öncesini veya sonrasını duymadım, bilmiyordum. Sorgulandığım zaman, işte sorguda gözlerini bağlarlar, sonra açar karşında birisi çıkar filan. İyi hatırlıyorum, önüme gazeteleri attı; ‘Al işte bak, bittiniz’ dedi... Ben nasıl yani filan dedim. ‘Al işte oku oku, serbest okumak’ dedi filan. Onu deyinince baktım, bütün o korkunç resimler, katliam resimleri

This aspect of the event is also described in one of the literary works on that period. In *Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu* (1996), Sevgi Soysal represented this moment:

(...) Then, I make a request from Suna for the first and last time during my whole imprisonment. I say to her, “Morning papers... Keep those that published the photographs of the dead aside, we will pick them up later.” Suna does not answer me. (...) The morning comes. I hear a rattle outside the ward door. Then the rustling... They throw the newspapers under the door. *Tercüman* newspaper is on the top. The shredded corpses are on the front page. So is Saffet Alp’s severed head. I cry out, “I will show you Suna,” feeling inside what is called spite for the first time in my life.<sup>58</sup> (Soysal, 1996: 116)

To get back to the subject, the sources of official history on “Kızıldere” are limited, as I mentioned in the beginning of this part. However, its hegemonic narratives can also be traced in the social sciences literature, especially in the historical works on the widespread social struggles and resistances between 1960 and 1980.<sup>59</sup> Although they do not exactly use the same conceptualization, in most cases they reproduce the same narratives while explaining the whole period in terms of “anarchy,” “terrorism,” “right-left conflicts” or “fraternal fighting,” and they represent “Kızıldere” as almost a “natural” or “inevitable” end for those who wanted to overthrow the state by using violence. In most of these academic works, “Kızıldere” is not even mentioned,<sup>60</sup> and they help silencing this period. Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes in *Silencing the Past*:

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*falan filan... Ama o zaman mesela nasıl olduğu konusunda tabi sadece psikolojik olarak baskı altına almak istiyor sorgulayan, 'sonunuz bu artık, bu hale getirdik, bundan sonra da bize karşı çıkmayın' gibi... Orada sorgulayan adam da aslında bu çarkın bir parçası.”*

<sup>58</sup> “(...) Sonra, Suna’dan bütün tutukluluğum süresince, ilk ve son olmak üzere bir ricada bulunuyorum. ‘Sabah gazetelerini... Ölülerin fotoğrafları basılı olanları ayrı tutun, onları sonra alırsız’ diyorum. Suna karşılık vermiyor. (...) Sabah oluyor. Koğuş kapısının dışında bir tıkırtı duyuyorum. Ardından bir hışırtı. Kapının altından gazeteler atılıyor. En başlarında *Tercüman* gazetesi. Paramparça ölüler baş sayfada. Saffet Alp’in parçalanmış başı da. ‘Alacağın olsun Suna’ diye bağıryorum. Hayatımda ilk kez kin denen şeyi içimde duyarak.”

<sup>59</sup> To give a couple of examples, you can see Şerif Mardin, “Türkiye’de Gençlik ve Şiddet.” *Bütün Eserleri 9 Türk Modernleşmesi Makaleler 4*, ed. Mümtaz’er Türküne and Tuncay Önder, 15th ed., İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2005., Clement Henry Dodd, *The Crisis of Turkish Democracy*, London: Eothen Press, 1983., Atilla Yayla, *Terör-Terörizm ve Fatsa Örnek Olayı Çerçevesinde Türkiye’de Terör*, Ph.D. dissertation, Ankara University, Social Sciences Institute, 1986., Orhan Türkdoğan, *Sosyal Hareketlerin Sosyolojisi İdeolojiler ve Köylü Hareketleri*, Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1998.

<sup>60</sup> As an example, in *The Socialist Movement in Turkey 1960-1980* by Igor P. Lipovsky does not have any information about the political developments between 1970 and 1973. In the *Introduction*, Lipovsky writes: “Many groups of socialists that had made up the leftist student confederation, *Dev-Genç*, revived as extremist left-wing organizations. Their acts of terror plunged the country into a situation akin to anarchy and led to the military coup of 12 March 1971.” (1992:1)

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance) (1995: 26).

In the case of “Kızıldere,” all these moments of silences can be seen. Moreover, this silencing has been continuing for more than forty years. It is almost impossible to find a historical work mainly focused on “Kızıldere” although it was a much-debated event at that time. “Kızıldere” has a very limited representation not only in historical works, but also in literature, as I will discuss in the next chapter. Although there are many novels directly or indirectly about both the 1971 and 1980 military coups, “Kızıldere” has not found a place in Turkish literature.

It is difficult to make claims about the repercussions of these official narratives on the entire society. However, the witnesses of the massacre have different narratives from official historiography. In the following section, I will show the narratives of the witnesses based on the various statements of the only survivor of the massacre and one of the former members of the THKP-C, Ertuğrul Kürkçü, and the personal interviews conducted with the residents of the village house where the armed conflict took place. Additionally, the narratives of Dursun Eroğlu, who witnessed the massacre when he was 12 years old, based on his article and personal interview will provide the main materials for the analysis.

### **3.2. Narratives of the Witnesses of the Massacre**

The construction of an account of historical events is constrained by selective narrativizations of events (Novick, 1996: 28). This selective narrativization can also be seen in the memories of the residents of Kızıldere village. The villagers’ personal accounts of the massacre are constructed differently, based on their witnessing, and they contest official narratives.

The first contestation is about the flow of the events. The official records reported that the gunfight had begun after the militants’ fire, but the villagers have

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different testimonies. Beyaz Arslan, who spent 13 days with the revolutionaries in that small village house and witnessed the military operation from the very beginning, has a completely different narrative:

At that moment, while they were still talking, before they started shoot-out and without any order for fire, they shot Mahir. Ah, ah! (...) My father told that they put two of them in the same sack and the other one in a separate sack (she means the foreign technicians). I figured it out, he said. Our guys only shot those technicians since they understood that they would not survive... In fact, they did not shoot even one bullet towards outside...<sup>61</sup>

Dursun Erođlu also has a narrative falsifying the claims of a battle between the revolutionaries and the state's security forces:

This is a gunfight or something like that; there is no such gunfight. There is not such balance of power. The house was built of stone; the ground floor was made up of stone and soil walls. On top of that, they put adobe. They are cornered in that house... All encircled... Each and every soldier came out of there unharmed and uninjured. There is no such thing as balance of forces.<sup>62</sup>

A retired teacher, Rıza, was 17 years old during the massacre and staying in the boarding school in the city center, Tokat. He is not an eyewitness but he was closely acquainted with the villagers' accounts of the event, including his father's and tells what he remembers as follows:

Since I do not have any observations on how the event took place, I can only recount what I heard. One of the close neighbors narrates that the house was surrounded and then Mahir went up to the roof, Mahir was communicating with them and he was shot while speaking to them. The neighbor tells that Mahir and his friends did not even draw their gun to soldiers and that they did not counterattack... Our villagers tell that everything suddenly got hectic after Mahir Çayan was killed and people here probably got panicked. There are people even saying that alive people were staying there and the soldiers killed them when they got up in the morning. (...) In my father's words, the anarchists came to the village, they got busted in our village, people were killed and soldiers dropped gas bombs before they killed those people and my father's eyes

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<sup>61</sup> Personal interview conducted with Beyaz Arslan in Kızıldere on 01.09.2014: *"O arada daha konuşurken tek kurşunla, daha ateş başlamadan, vur emri şu bu yokken Mahir'i vuruyorlar. Oofff off (...) İkisini bir çuvala, birini de ayrı koymuşlar dedi babam. Ben çözdüm dedi... Bizimkilerin tek kurşunu onlara vurmuş, kendileri kurtulamayınca... Yoksa dışarı tek kurşun atmadılar..."*

<sup>62</sup> Personal interview conducted with Dursun Erođlu in Ankara on 08.08.2014: *"Bu bir çatışma filan, öyle bir şey yok. Öyle bir güç dengesi yok. Orası taştan yapılmış, zemin katı taş-toprak duvar. Onun üzerinde kerpiç. Orada kıştırılmış...Her tarafı çevrilmiş...Mesela tek bir askerin bile burnu kanamadı...Güç dengesi diye bir şey yok."*

got filled with tears while taking people out of there... I saw my father's eyes were still full of tears the day after the event.<sup>63</sup>

Similar narratives maintained as oral accounts and stories about revolutionaries have circulated among other residents of Kızıldere through different generations. These narratives focus on the “innocence” of the revolutionaries who “could not have drawn the gun to the soldiers.” Thus, the use of the notion of “innocence” in these accounts is diametrically opposed to that in the official accounts.

The villagers' common sense of the lack of violence on the part of the revolutionaries might be interpreted in connection with their (a)political positions because these people did not have any idea about what it meant to be a revolutionary at the time, who these revolutionaries were, and what their aim was. Dursun Eroğlu explains the political environment of Kızıldere at that period with these sentences:

There was no politics. Back then, people talked a couple of things about politics: Either the followers of Justice Party (descendant of Democrat Party – Demirkıratçı) or the followers of İnönü... Ecevit came later. There was no other choice than voting for İnönü or Demirel; people would not talk about politics. For example, radios would only broadcast news about the prime minister, but no one would pay attention to that. There were neither district organizations of political parties nor a membership to the party. There was no movement among the village youth; it came at a later period. There was no connection with outside. No one would go the town or read newspapers... Therefore, those who came looked like, well, they were bandits, people thought... The televisions said so, the anarchists... One wonders, who is this anarchist?<sup>64</sup>

The notion of “innocence” and the varying meanings attributed to it will come across in the narratives of the witnesses of that political period which I will discuss in

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<sup>63</sup> Personal interview conducted with Rıza in Kızıldere on 01.09.2014: “Konunun oluş şekliyle ilgili benim gözlemim olmadığı için ancak duyularımı söyleyebilirim. Yakın komşulardan biri etrafın sarıldığını, daha sonra ise Mahir Çayan'ın çatıya çıktığını, Mahir Çayan'ın onlarla iletişim halinde olduğunu ve konuşurken vurulduğunu aktarıyor. Hatta onların hiç silah çekmediklerini, karşılık vermediklerini... Tabi Mahir Çayan öldükten sonra her şeyin bir anda karıştığını, burdakilerin de herhalde paniğe kapıldığını anlatıyor bizim köylüler. Hatta burada canlı insanların kaldığını, sabahleyin dahi insanları öldürdüklerini söyleyenler var. (...) Babamın deyimiyse anarşistlerin köye geldiğini, bizim köyde basıldıklarını, buradaki insanların öldüğünü, hatta insanları öldürmeden önce buraya gaz bombası attıklarını, insanları buradan çıkarırken babamın gözlerinin yaşlandığını... 1 gün sonra halen o yaşın gitmediğini gördüm.”

<sup>64</sup> Personal interview conducted with Dursun Eroğlu in Ankara on 08.08.2014: “Siyaset yoktu. O zaman siyasetle bir iki şey söylenirdi: Demirkıratçı ya da İnönücü... Ecevit de daha sonradan çıktı. İnönü'ye ya da Demirel'e oy vermek dışında bir şey yoktu, insanlar siyaset konuşmazdı. Mesela radyolardan sadece başbakan haber olurdu ama kimse bunu tartışmazdı. Partilerin ilçe örgütleri, parti üyeliği filan da yoktu. Köy gençliği içerisinde de bir şey yoktu, sonradan geldi. Dışarıyla bağlantısı yoktu. Kasabaya gitmez, gazete okumaz... Dolayısıyla bu gelenlerin dışarıdan görüntüsü de şeydi, bunlar eşkıya... Televizyon öyle söylüyor, anarşist... Acaba kim bu anarşist?”

the following part. For now, I keep the discussions around it on the back burner and continue with the other prominent narratives of the witnesses.

As I wrote in the previous part, the newspapers and the parliamentary speeches represented the foreign technicians as “defenseless victims” who had been “brutally murdered.” However, in the villagers’ accounts, these positions became reversed and the revolutionaries were seen as “defenseless.” They usually do not talk about the technicians; the main issue for them is the state’s violence towards the revolutionaries. They sympathize with the revolutionaries without questioning the political character of the event or their political actions. This point of view leads the villagers to form emotional narratives on the massacre which are usually structured around their feelings and the main feelings are affection and grief:

Blood, fight in our village... it is a place far from such things. There are not people killing one another or fighting each other; we do not see that. So, murdering people that way was savagery, people were reacting to that. I mean, I could see that all of them were reacting to the murder. They were sorry but... Well, they did not know who these men were; they did not know why these men came there. But it was late... There were people in the throes of death; they were put up on top of one another at the entrance of the house... That’s why it is a humane reaction. It does not mean that they were revolutionary, not at all. There was no one thinking that way. The villagers do not feel sympathy for the massacred revolutionaries because of political reasons; this sympathy is purely humane. So is it for me...<sup>65</sup>

But now I feel so sorry; why didn’t we give them mattresses and blankets... I am so sorry for that. We cannot sleep now when it is cold; how could they did? I still feel sorry for them, I cry for them... That’s how it happened, they are gone, my child... They were ruined... If only one of them survived; look, the man become a member of the parliament. Ah! They saddened me so much; they are gone... May Allah rest their soul...<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Personal interview conducted with Dursun Erođlu in Ankara on 08.08.2014: “Bizim orada kavga, kan... yani bu tür şeylere uzak bir yer. Bizim köyde birbirini öldüren, döven, böyle bir şey yok. Dolayısıyla bir insanın böyle göz göre göre öldürülmesi bir vahşet, insanlar buna tepkililerdi. Yani ben orada hepsinin tepkili olduğunu görebiliyordum. Üzüntü ama... Yani bu adamların kim olduğunu bilmiyorlar, neden oraya gelmişler onu da bilmiyorlar. Ama genç yani... Orada can çekişenler de vardı, üst üste yığılmışlardı evin girişinde... Dolayısıyla bir insani tepki bu. Yoksa bunlar devrimcidir filan, yook. Öyle düşünen de yok köyde. Siyasi nedenlerle ona yakınlık duymuyorlar, bu yakınlık tamamen insani. Benim için de...”

<sup>66</sup> Personal interview conducted with Beyaz Arslan in Kızıldere on 01.09.2014: “Ama çok üzülüyorum şimdi şimdi, onlara niye yatak yorgan vermedik... Ona çok üzülüyorum. Şimdi biz soğukta yatamıyoruz, onlar nasıl yattı. Hala üzülüyom, ağlıyom onlara... İşte böyle oldu, gittiler yavrum... Mahvoldular... Bi tanesi olsun sağ çıkaydı, bak adam milletvekili oldu çıktı. (referring to Ertuğrul Kürkçü) Offf, beni de çok üzdüler, onlar da gitti... Allah rahmet etsin gani gani...”

Another contestation appears against the “dehumanized” narratives of the official records. Beyaz Arslan remembers the revolutionaries utterly in a humanistic manner:

(...) they were human beings, too. Allah also created them. I saw them when they were alive, I served them, and I talked to them. Why would I be afraid of them? Still, I am not afraid. May Allah rest their souls and may they rest in heaven. I never had dispute with them. We served them... I feel so sad, so much... They had parents... They were humans too... What was the... They had to take only 14 people. What would happen if they got them without shooting? But they openly and directly came to kill them.<sup>67</sup>

Besides the feelings of affection and grief, the villagers, as we see also in the subsequent revolutionary organizations, are filled with admiration for the revolutionaries due to their “courage.” The revolutionaries’ young age is evaluated in connection with being “foolhardy” and most of the narratives are based on glorifying these young men who took part in the gun-fight as “idealists” and “valorous:”

They did not stand a chance of surviving. A surrounded, encircled house; an army of soldiers, there might be a couple of thousands of soldiers... That is what I heard from people, the poor guys, what a pity... But they inwardly admire them because the villagers are afraid of gendarmerie. They see these guys come and stand up to the gendarmerie. There are also soldiers of high rank and commanders and these guys intimidate all of those soldiers and commanders. They call them the dogs of America, they yell at them crying out that they are not going to surrender. All the people in the village are astonished. When gendarmerie says something, everyone shuts up, otherwise they beat the tar out of you. So, the villagers felt an underhanded admiration towards them. (...) In our village and its periphery, one does not see courageous types. People usually struggle to make a living and they are fainthearted. One does not see people defying gendarmerie. Or people recklessly protesting or reading manifestos with a decent Turkish... They spoke in earnest and sermonized. Therefore, these guys are important people, why would they die?<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Personal interview conducted Beyaz Arslan in Kızıldere on 01.09.2014: “(...) onlar da insandı, onları da allah yarattı. Onları diriırken de gördüm, hizmet ettim, konuştum, onların neyinden korkayım? Korkmuyorum yine de. Allah gani gani rahmet eylesin, mekanları cennet olsun. Hiçbir zaman da nızalanmadım. O kadar hizmet ettik... Çok üzülüyom çoook... Onların da annesi babası var... Onlar da insandı ... Neydi ki bu kadar... Alacakları da 14 kişiydi, ne olurdu ateş etmeden alsalardı. Ama adamlar resmen direkt öldürmeye gelmişlerdi.”

<sup>68</sup> Personal interview conducted with Dursun Eroğlu in Ankara on 08.08.2014: “Bunların oradan kurtulma şansları yok. Çevrilmiş, çembere alınmış bir ev; kalabalık asker, belki birkaç bin asker vardı...İnsanlardan duyduğum ya gariban çocuklar, yazık... Ama içten içe de bir hayranlık var. Çünkü jandarmadan korkar köylü. Şimdi bu adamlar gelmişler, jandarmaya kafa tutuyorlar. Hem de rütbeliler var, komutanlar filan ama bunlar hepsine posta koyuyorlar... Amerikan köpeği diyorlar, bağıryorlar teslim olmayacağız diye... Şaşkınlık var. Bize jandarma bir şey deyince herkes susar, yoksa eşek sudan gelinceye kadar dayak yersin. Dolayısıyla alttan alta hayranlık vardı. (...) Bizim köy çevresinde öyle cesur tipler de pek görmüyorlar. Genelde insanlar geçim derdinde, pısrık filan. Öyle jandarmaya efelene tip çıkmaz ki köyde... Ya da uluorta çıkıp düzgün Türkçe laflarla protesto, manifesto çeken... Cidden konuşuyorlardı da, bayağı nutuk atıyorlardı. Dolayısıyla bunlar önemli adamlar, niye ölsünler ki...”

The “truth value” of these accounts can be questionable and I do not take the memories of the villagers as either “true” or “false.” Rather, I want to show the conflicting narratives on the same event and I suggest that the memory or what is remembered / forgotten is (re)shaped by dominant cultural, political and historical dynamics. I think all these narratives tell something more than the massacre itself and organize our understanding of the past as James V. Wertsch indicates in *Voices of Collective Remembering*:

(...) the narrative texts used in collective memory are best viewed as tools, or raw materials to be employed in organizing or reconstructing an account of the past. Instead of serving as containers of precise, unchanging information, these texts seem to play a role in memory by serving as indicators of “the sort of thing” an individual or group would say (2002: 8).

In Chapter I, I stated that “Kızıldere” is remembered in connection to an understanding of revolutionism. This is also relevant for the residents of Kızıldere in a different way. Prior to this event these villagers, who had had no idea about what a revolutionary or an anarchist is, learned it during this “resistance” and the state’s “merciless massacre.” These young and courageous people stood against the gendarmerie, which symbolized state authority, and the villagers began to sympathize with the revolutionaries. This sympathy became apparent when the young people of the village joined different leftist political organizations in the following years. Besides, the personal accounts of the villagers provide important data to understand the social, political and economic structure of the rural areas of Turkey at that time.<sup>69</sup>

In comparison with the accounts of the villagers, it can be said that Ertuğrul Kürkçü’s narratives are free from these kinds of affective comments. He has spoken or written several times as the only survivor of “Kızıldere” in different platforms. But most of these narratives are about the course of events from their arrival in the Black Sea Region to his arrest, and they are mostly political assessments. As I stated before, I will not repeat these accounts, but I think it is very important to see what “Kızıldere” means for the “victim”, the only survivor, and also for a politically active figure from the beginning of the 1970s up to the present.

First of all, Kürkçü objects to narratives about the “innocence” of the revolutionaries:

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<sup>69</sup> In order to learn some details about the social, political and economic life in Kızıldere at that time, see <http://bianet.org/biamag/toplum/113597-cocukluk-anilarimda-kizildere>



I do not approve the discourses stating that we did not kill the British murdered in that shoot-out. The innocent discourses such as revolutionists in effect do not kill anyone are not right. I can state that, just as Elrom was killed, there was a very clear conviction among both the THKP and THKP-C that those who were taken as hostages would not stay alive if the demands were not meet, including those British people. At least the friends to whom we talked thought so. (...) However, what matters is that it was seen in a later autopsy that the political unity did not indeed care anyone in terms of forces. They got hit by infantry rifle bullets, which the autopsy reports demonstrate. Therefore their claim about our cruelty is valid for both sides.<sup>70</sup> (Kaplan, 2012: 391-392)

As opposed to the emotional accounts of the villagers, Kürkçü makes relatively “objective” remarks about the event. He interprets the attitudes of the revolutionaries in the political context and as a part of their political struggle at that time.

Rather than the representations of the event at that time, its varying narrativizations serve to conceptualize different forms of remembering “Kızıldere.” The most prominent discussions around “Kızıldere” have taken the form of defining it as a “defeat” or a “triumph,” which has led to the emergence of several political organizations claiming to be the heirs of Mahir Çayan and the THKP-C. Kürkçü contributes to this discussion with these words:

(...) Did we really get defeated? If I consider our organization THKP-C, yes it is true. The leading cadre of the THKP-C got defeated in respect of their claim to implement their own thesis. They were defeated in person, too. I men they died, what else would you expect! Or they were rendered ineffective and they were made to lead a life in prisons. But look what happened afterwards! Everything Mahir Çayan said, “this shall happen” took place after his death and the movement incredibly grew and spread across Turkey; the organizations of THKP-C were spontaneously founded. Hundreds and thousands of people re-established the revolutionary movement after 1974. Now, would one say it beat or got beaten? What can one say about that?<sup>71</sup> (*Birgün*, 31 March 2005)

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<sup>70</sup> “Bu çatışmada öldürülen İngilizlerin bizler tarafından öldürülmediği gibi söylemleri doğru bulmuyorum. Devrimciler aslında kimseyi öldürmezler gibi masum söylemler de doğru değil. Ben şunu söyleyebilirim; nasıl Elrom öldürüldüyse bu insanlar da gerek THKP gerekse THKP-C olsun rehin alınanların talepler karşılanmadığı takdirde canlı kalmamaları için çok net bir kanaat oluşmuştu. En azından bizim konuştuğumuz arkadaşlar böyle düşünüyorlardı. (...) Fakat önemli olan daha sonra yapılan otopside görüldü ki, aslında siyasi birlik, kuvvetlerde herhangi bir şekilde kimseyi gözetmiş değildi. Üzerlerinden piyade tüfeği mermileri çıktı. Otopsi raporlarında gözüküyor. Dolayısıyla onların bizim için yöneltebileceği kıyıcılık iddiasının aynısı iki taraf için de geçerli.”

<sup>71</sup> “(...) Yenildik mi aslında? Ben mesela bizim THKP-C'den hareket edeceksem, evet doğru THKP-C'nin öncü kadrosu kendi tezlerini gerçekleştirme iddiası itibarıyla yenildi. Şahsen de yenildi; öldüler yani, daha ne olsun! Ya da işte tesirsiz bırakıldılar, hapislerde süründürüldüler. Fakat devamına bak! Mahir Çayan'ın "olsun" dediği her şey kendisi öldükten sonra oldu ve inanılmaz büyüklükte, Türkiye'nin her tarafında yayılmış, kendiliğinden THKP-C örgütleri kurulmuş, yüzlerce binlerce insan 1974 sonrası devrimci hareketi yeniden kurdular. Şimdi, yendi mi yenildi mi? Ne diyeceğiz buna?”

This point of view has been supported by several people and organizations for years and formed the basis of the “continuity” argument. Continuity in both terms: the continuity of the state violence and oppression and the continuity of the revolutionary struggle. Kürkçü’s article on the 41st anniversary of “Kızıldere” can be seen as the manifestation of this perspective:

After more than forty years, ten thousands of young people who did not even start their life journey on that day express that they are the followers of our comrades who lost their lives in Kızıldere on March 30 1972. One more time, these young people prove that you cannot eradicate the cause of millions of people by killing 10 of them. Those who govern Turkey keep harping on democracy and peace, yet they continue considering the respect for the past revolutionary struggles as well as people’s freely living their emotions and memories a crime. For 40 year, tens of young people meet the prison because they turn their faces towards this revolutionary legacy. No matter which party accedes to government, March 30 is always marked in red letters in the “dangerous days” of the regime. <sup>72</sup>(*Özgür Gündem*, 29 March 2013)

In this incident, one could bear witness either on the side of the state or on the side of the revolutionaries. There can also be a third way of witnessing through silence, which can be seen as support for either the state or the revolutionaries. I should note that we cannot make a general statement about all the residents of Kızıldere. There might be personal accounts which reinforce the official narratives, but those with whom I found the opportunity to talk recount a collective memory of “Kızıldere” which subverts official historiography. Their personal experiences of the massacre can be interpreted as morally compelling narratives that subvert official ones. At the point of production of narratives about the massacre, “victimhood” and “innocence” are prominent concepts in the discourses of the residents of Kızıldere. Moreover, the state’s “dehumanization” of the militants is replaced by the “inhumanity of the state” as the perpetrator in the villagers’ personal accounts.

The tension between official historiography and witnessing does not occur only in the testimonies of the villagers. There are also other witnesses of the period who share a different collective memory of “Kızıldere.” In the following part, I will show the

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<sup>72</sup> “Aradan kırktan fazla yıl geçtikten sonra da, o gün henüz yaşam yolculuklarına bile başlamamış on binlerce genç, 30 Mart 1972’de Kızıldere’de hayatlarını kaybeden yoldaşlarımızın mücadelesinin takipçisi olduklarını dile getiriyor; bir kez daha, 10 insanı yok etmekle milyonlarca insanın davasının ortadan kaldırılmış olamayacağını ortaya koyuyorlar. Türkiye’yi yönetenlerse demokrasi ve barış sözünü ağızlarından hiç düşürmüyor ama geçmişin devrimci mücadelelerine saygı göstermeyi, insanların duygu ve anılarını özgürce yaşamalarını suç saymaya devam ediyorlar. 40 yıldır her 30 Mart’ta onlarca genç yüzlerini bu mirasa döndükleri için cezaeviyle tanışıyor. Hangi parti iktidarda olursa olsun rejimin “tehlikeli günler” takviminde 30 Mart hep kırmızı harflerle işaretleniyor.”

personal accounts of the former revolutionary figures of the period and their subsequent interpretations of the massacre.

### 3.3. Narratives of the Witnesses of the Period

Witnessing historical events does not have to be through direct personal experiences; transmitting the narratives of others can also be a form of witnessing. The witnesses of the political period that I summarized in the previous chapter play a crucial role in the transmission of collective memory of “Kızıldere” from one generation to another. Although they have not seen the massacre, they have commitments to particular narratives about it. These people were not direct observers like the villagers, but they have made significant contributions to the interpretations of the massacre. In this respect, there have been various common themes in the narratives of the witnesses of that period, despite the fact that they belonged to different political organizations, or the fact that some of them seized to be politically active figures.

First of all, the answers the revolutionaries of the period give to the question of what “Kızıldere” meant include common notions and emphases even after decades. Mihri Belli’s statement on Kızıldere can be seen as a summary of them:

What is the meaning of Kızıldere? What is it there in Kızıldere? There is revolutionary sacrifice. There is the spirit of resistance. There is rebellion against an order that makes the country orbit for the imperialism and that is the enemy of the laborer. There is solidarity among comrades. Patriotism rises to climax there. There is the challenge against death for the sake of people’s cause. In Kızıldere, there is the confinement of division into lines as well as the call to unity. And if we the “survivors” and especially the young generations will reach somewhere, we should keep Kızıldere’s spirit of resistance alive, being aware of the fact that Kızıldere is a part of our revolutionary tradition.<sup>73</sup>(Belli, 2002: 131)

These notions of “revolutionary devotion,” “the spirit of resistance,” “rebellion,” “revolutionary solidarity” and “revolutionary tradition” are repeatedly articulated in the narratives of the witnesses. Especially the notion of “solidarity” is the mostly

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<sup>73</sup> “Kızıldere ne anlam taşır? Ne var Kızıldere’de? Devrimci özveri var. Direniş ruhu var. Ülkeyi emperyalizmin uydusu durumuna düşüren, emekçiye düşman bir düzene karşı isyan var. Yoldaşlar arası dayanışma var. Yurtseverliğin doruğa yükselişi, halkın davası uğruna ölüme meydan okuyuş var. Saflarda bölünmenin mahkum edilişi, birlik mesajı var Kızıldere’de. Ve biz ‘kalan sağlar’ve özellikle genç kuşaklar eğer bir yerlere varacaksa Kızıldere’nin devrimci geleneğimizin bir parçası olduğu bilinciyle onun direniş ruhunu canlı tutmalıyız.”

highlighted narrative, which has also been determinative in the creation of slogans for the commemorative practices. Mustafa Kaçaroğlu, a former member of the THKP-C and one of the founders of the Kurtuluş movement defines “Kızıldere” as “This example of solidarity sacrificing their lives in order to prevent their comrades’ executions is the most meaningful heritage which means the socialism is the world of solidarity.”<sup>74</sup> (Kaçaroğlu cited in Özbilgen, 2015: 56) Another well-known revolutionary figure of the 1970s, Teslim Töre, emphasizes the significance of the militants killed in Kızıldere for the revolutionary struggle in Turkey with these sentences:

*ON’lar*<sup>75</sup> are the humane face of socialism, the entirety of ethical values of Marxist materialism and the symbols of the unity of left and socialism. With their social component they formed through their ethnic roots, *ON’lar* symbolizes the conviviality of all the peoples living in Turkey and they will remain so. No one can make them the symbols and tools for otherizing, fractionism, and tyranny as well as for making the organization a purpose per se.<sup>76</sup> (Töre cited in Çobanlı, 2008: 102).

Other commonly accepted themes in the personal accounts of the witnesses of the period are the blatantness of the state violence and the definition of the event as planned and organized annihilation. In these narratives, the state and its special forces are seen as the killers of the young revolutionaries and also the foreign technicians. Bingöl Erdumlu was one of the founding figures of the THKP-C and he learned of the massacre in prison, as did most of other revolutionaries of the time. He has no hesitation in defining the event as massacre:

They can be criticized in terms of their ideology but the event has a heroic and brave side. However, there is terribly villainous trap in that event, which is not quite emphasized. The fact that they tracked the revolutionists down and turned the event into a battue. They might have cornered Mahir in a house in Ankara. But that would have turned like the event in Maltepe, 1 or 2 people might have died. On the other side, they massacred 10 people altogether; it turned into a battue, I mean. (...) They started bombing only to annihilate Mahir and his friends. At the beginning, they only shot Mahir. He was the direct target. The others were eliminated within the house. I mean, once they caught, they wanted

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<sup>74</sup> “Yoldaşlarını idam sehpasından almak için yaşamlarını vererek ortaya koydukları bu dayanışma örneği, günümüzde de bizlere sosyalizmin dayanışma dünyası olduğunun en anlamlı mirasıdır.”

<sup>75</sup> In Turkish “*ON’lar*” is used for expressing the number of the revolutionaries murdered in Kızıldere (can be translated as “TENS”) and it is also a pronoun (in English, “They”). The capitalization of this number and pronoun symbolizes a kind of blessedness of these revolutionaries. In order to protect the meanings attributed to this word, I preferred to use the Turkish version within the text.

<sup>76</sup> “*ON’lar*, sosyalizmin insancıl yüzü, Marksist materyalizmin etiksel değerler bütünü, solun, sosyalistlerin birlik olmalarının sembolüdürler. *ON’lar*, etnik kökenleriyle oluşturmuş oldukları toplumsal bileşenle, Türkiye’de yaşayan bütün halkların bir arada yaşamalarının sembolüdürler. Ve öyle kalacaklardır. Hiç kimse onları, öteleyiciliğin, fraksiyonculuğun, lider sultanının, örgütü amaçlaştırmanın sembolü ve aracı haline getiremez.”

to eradicate all of the revolutionists. It is something definite. They could have killed a couple of people. They would have never had the opportunity to exterminate 11 people again. They seized that opportunity. They cornered and caught all of those revolutionists in a house. What they did is a horrible... say, a violation of right to life or say disproportionate use of force; it is a literal massacre.<sup>77</sup>

Oktay Etiman, another former member of the THKP-C, has a narrative which is completely opposite to the official records. In his narrative, the state is the “brutal murderer:”

It seems to me that after we kidnapped Efraim Elrom and security forces of the Consulate General found him dead, the state in Turkey presented this case as a legitimate ground for the violence it would inflict on us, on revolutionists; therefore, the massacre ended up killing our friends who could have been caught alive through other methods in Kızıldere took place. From then on, the state believed that it found the legitimate grounds for the violence it would persecute, thus Kızıldere Massacre bloodthirstily happened. Are they revolutionists? Yes... Then they must be killed; this is how the state reflected its rationale and spilled out its terror against the revolutionists in Kızıldere.<sup>78</sup>

Most of the witnesses do not see the notion of state violence as restricted to “Kızıldere;” they emphasize the continuity of state violence as a “tradition” of the state. Fahri Aral’s statement is a very good example in order to see this emphasis:

I regard Kızıldere Massacre as a phase in the systematization of the state terror as well as in the development of the methods through which the state aims at annihilation and extermination. (...) Kızıldere is an important milestone. It is an operation where the systematic annihilation was conducted on the basis of intelligence and some people worked de facto. But this operation does not end in Kızıldere, it continues afterwards. 1 May 1977 as well as Çorum and Maraş massacres are the rings of this chain. They are only different in appearance, but there is not change in their essence. They are all planned operations. The act of extermination of the alive and conscious forces of the society has continued to this day. After adopting this method, the state’s job is not that difficult. It can

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<sup>77</sup> Personal interview conducted with Bingöl Erdumlu in Istanbul on 26.03.2014: “(...) *ideolojik olarak eleştirilir eleştirilmez ama bir yiğitçe, kahramanca bir yanı var olayın. Ama bir de müthiş hain bir tuzak var olayda, o pek vurgulanmaz. İzledikleri ve olayı bir süre avına dönüştürdükleri... Belki Ankara’da da Mahir’i bir evde kıştırabilirlerdi. Ama o Maltepe’deki gibi olurdu, 1 kişi ya da 2 kişi... Ama öbür tarafta 10 kişiyi birden yok ettiler; bir çeşit süre avına döndü iş yani. (...) Resmen yok etmek için bombalamışlar. İlk başta yalnız Mahir kurşunlanıyor. Direkt hedef alınarak vurulan Mahir. Diğerleri evde yok ediliyorlar. Yani yakalamışken yok etmek istiyolar. Yani kesin o. Birkaç kişiyi öldürebilirlerdi de... 11 kişiyi imha etme şansını hiçbir zaman bulamazlardı. O imkanı yakaladılar. Bir evde kıştırıp yakalamışlar... Yaptıkları korkunç bi ... yaşam hakkı ihlali de, orantısız güç kullanımı de, tam bi katliam yani.*”

<sup>78</sup> Personal interview conducted with Oktay Etiman in Ankara on 10.06.2014: “*Kızıldere Katliamı bana daha çok Efraim Elrom’un bizim tarafımızdan kaçırılıp ve Başkonsolos’un güvenlik kuvvetleri tarafından ölmüş halde bulunmasından sonra Türkiye’de devletin bizlere, devrimcilere karşı yönelteceği şiddetin meşru bir gerekçesi olarak sunması sonucunda Kızıldere’de aslında başka yöntemlerle sağ ele geçirilebilecek olan arkadaşlarımızın hunharca öldürülmesi gibi bir katliam gerçekleşti. (...) Yani devlet artık kendisinin uygulayacağı şiddetin meşru zeminini bulmuş gibi hissetmektedir ve Kızıldere Katliamı bundan dolayı hunharca cereyan etmiştir. Devrimci midir, evet... O halde öldürülmelidir mantığıyla bakmıştı ve terörünü orada kusmuştur.*”

implement the same method at every period. The deep state tries the same method in tackling the Kurdish question. In that respect, Kızılderle holds an important place in the history. As written and scratched for years, “Anarchists took refuge in a village, the citizens reported them. The gendarmerie surrounded the village, the shoot-out outburst and then the anarchists died,” the event is not that simple. If we re-construe the event after 36 years, we will clearly see that Kızılderle constitutes one of the first rings of a systematic eradication movement.<sup>79</sup>(Aral, *Birgün*, 2 April 2008)

This narrative of the state violence has been usually associated with the role of contra-guerrilla and special warfare forces in the massacre:

It is necessary to know well under what circumstances the event outburst and what was the state’s role in it. Today, it clearly seems that there is counter-guerrilla in May 1, in Maraş, doesn’t it? There was counter-guerrilla movement in March 12, too. One should comprehend and demonstrate this. They absolutely try to hide these facts. I mean we can narrate forty different stories of Kızılderle. However, we should discuss this side of the event, namely, the connection of the deep state, which was called counter-guerrilla at the time, to the Kızılderle Massacre and how the state slaughtered and liquidated the left.<sup>80</sup>

Although most of the witnesses have the same opinion about the notion of the state violence and its continuity, they have been in disagreement about whether taking the foreign technicians hostage and using them to bargain was a conscious political act or a result of “desperation.” Former revolutionaries who did not continue active political life after early 1970s generally explain “Kızılderle” in connection to the “desperation” of the revolutionaries and as an unplanned action:

The plan was to something in the Black Sea region but the arrival in Kızılderle, the preparation for going there was not developed very well. They were stuck in İstanbul due to lack means and fled to Ankara. In Ankara, by that time, Ankara Ulaş and Ziya, one of them got killed and the other was caught wounded. These

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<sup>79</sup> “Kızılderle Katliamı’nı Türkiye’de devlet terörünün sistemleştirilmesinde ve yok etmenin, imhanın amaçlandığı yöntemlerin geliştirilmesinde bir aşama gibi görüyorum. (...) Kızılderle, önemli bir dönüm noktasıdır. Yani sistemli imhanın devlet eliyle istihbari bir şekilde yürütüldüğü ve birtakım insanların fiilen görev aldığı bir harekettir. Ama burada bitmiyor, ondan sonra da devam ediyor. 1 Mayıs 1977, Çorum, Maraş katliamları da bu zincirin birer halkası... Burada sadece şekil değiştirmeler var ama özünde bir değişiklik yok, özünde bir planlı hareket, toplumun diri ve bilinçli güçlerini yok etme eylemi günümüze kadar geliyor. Bu yöntemi edindikten sonra zaten artık derin devletin işi o kadar zor değil. Her dönemde aynı yöntem uygulayabilir. Bugün Kürt sorusunda da derin devlet aynı yöntemi deniyor. Bu bakımdan Kızılderle önemli bir yerde duruyor. Yıllarca yazıldığı, çizildiği gibi: “Anarşistler bir köye sığındı, bir vatandaş ihbar etti. Jandarmalar köyü sardı, çatışma çıktı ve öldüler...” yani bu kadar basit değil olay. 36 yıl sonra yeniden yorumlarsak, Kızılderle’nin, sistemli bir imha hareketinin ilk halkalarından birini oluşturduğunu açıkça görürüz.”

<sup>80</sup> Personal interview conducted with Bingöl Erdumlu in İstanbul on 26.03.2014: “Olay hangi şartlarda geliştiği ve devletin de rolü nedir onu iyi bilmek lazım. Bugün çok açık gözüküyor di mi 1 Mayıs’ta kontrgerilla var, Maraş’ta var. Yani 12 Mart’ta da vardı, bunu iyi kavramak ve bunu göstermek lazım. Tabi bunlar hep saklanmaya çalışılıyor. Yani Kızılderle’yi kırk türlü anlatabiliriz. Ama eğer bu yanı, yani derin devletin, o zamanki adıyla kontrgerillanın da bu olayla bağı, devletin nasıl sola kıydığı ve onu likide ettiğini de tartışmalıyız.”

arrivals and departures were done in haste. And at the end, they shut the revolutionists at one point, and then came their slaughter. Those British technicians were abducted, an act performed out of desperation.<sup>81</sup>

It is an act of flee, so to speak... They did not have the opportunity to think it through while escaping. Afterwards, both our imprisoned friends and the friends who visited us tell that there were so many people who waited their door open throughout Turkey, including Kurdistan, at that time. We were not aware of that. Of course, none of them were informed about that. While people across Turkey were waiting for them, the revolutionists experienced a process leading to Kızıldere, being stuck in a corner and in an intense hunt. It is as if they had all alone in Kızıldere, the majority of the people embraced them, though. I mean, as if they had been lonely in a village house. This is the most dramatic aspect of the event.<sup>82</sup>

These narratives contain desperation and victimhood rather than willing self-sacrifice. As opposed to them, some of the witnesses who participated in the establishment of new revolutionary organizations in the following years evaluate “Kızıldere” as a political act that was an integral part of Mahir Çayan’s political theory based on armed-guerilla struggle. İsmet Öztürk, who was one of the key figures of the THKP-C in the Black Sea Region and had detailed information about the organization of this action, claims that:

The evaluation that the purpose of Kızıldere demonstration was to stop executions is not wrong. Yet it is necessary to distinguish between the individual purpose of an act and individual act of a purpose because the Kızıldere itself was the individual act of a purpose. This purpose does not contain such singular problems as heroism, solidarity, alliance and unity or stopping the executions. It is a holistic and large-scale purpose that embraces all of the said problems and that would evaluate them all in accordance with the time and conditions. (...) As the act of the purpose, Kızıldere is step of transition from the city guerilla to the unity of urban-rural struggle. Setting aside the discussion of this step taken without any military preparation and with the compulsion of being cornered, this is the first intended purpose; the second unchanged purpose was to create a

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<sup>81</sup> Personal interview conducted with Bingöl Erdumlu in Istanbul on 26.03.2014: “Karadeniz’de böyle bir şey yapılması düşünülüyordu ama Kızıldere’ye gidiş o hazırlığın çok iyi geliştirip de gidilmiş; çaresizlikten İstanbul’da sıkışıp Ankara’ya kaçıp, Ankara’dan da o arada işte Ulaş ile Ziya biri öldürüldü, biri yaralı yakalandı. Biraz telaşla gidilmiş şeyler bunlar. Ve böyle o anlamda da giderek bir yerde kıştırma oluyor, işte sonunda imha ediyor herifler yani... O İngiliz teknisyenler kaçırıldı. O da yine çaresizliğin yaptırdığı bir eylem...”

<sup>82</sup> Personal interview conducted with Necmi Demir in Istanbul on 16.06.2014: “Böyle bir deyim yerindeyse bir kaçış şeyi... Yani kaçarken düşünme imkanları bile olmuyor adeta. Sonrasında gerek hapse giren arkadaşlar gerek bizi ziyarete gelen arkadaşlar anlatıyorlar... Aynı dönemde Türkiye’nin her tarafında, Kürdistan dahil, evlerini açıp bekleyen o kadar çok insan varmış ki, hiç bundan haberimiz yok. Tabi onların da hiçbirisinin haberi yok. Onları Türkiye’nin her tarafında beklerken insanlar, dar bir şeye sıkışmış durumda, kovalamaca içerisinde Kızıldere’ye giden bir süreci yaşıyorlar. Adeta büyük bir çoğunluğu kucaklamışken tek başına kalmış gibiler orada. Yani bir köy evinde tek başına kalmış gibiler. Bu en dramatik şeydir yani bunun.”

tradition of armed resistance that is uncompromising, consistent, and decisive.<sup>83</sup> (Öztürk, 2010: 71-72)

Thus, Öztürk indicates that the mostly accepted notions attributed to “Kızıldere” are important components of a broader aim: the armed struggle which had been theorized by Mahir Çayan in “Permanent II-III” (*Kesintisiz II-III*).<sup>84</sup> Çayan wrote that there was an ever-present national crisis (*milli kriz*) in Turkey, where capitalism had been developed by external powers. Due to this dependent development of capitalism, the contradictions between the masses and the oligarchy had been softened and an artificial balance (*sunî denge*) had been created. According to Çayan, Turkey’s political system was a colony-type fascism (*sömürge tipi faşizm*), which made an armed struggle by the vanguards of the proletariat (*öncü savaşı*) necessary. This struggle would break the passivism of the masses and lead them to join the revolutionary movement. Çayan claimed that a Marxist-Leninist party had to guide this struggle with also non-military actions and achieve the People’s War (*Halk Savaşı*). This was called the Politicized Military War Strategy (*Politikleşmiş Askeri Savaş Stratejisi - PASS*). According to this strategy, increasing state repression and violence in reaction to armed propaganda would alienate the people from the state and the Marxist-Leninist party would become the only source of hope for the oppressed masses, who would begin to sympathize with armed struggle (Çayan, 2008). In the light of this very brief summary of Mahir Çayan’s political arguments, Öztürk argues that “Kızıldere” should be seen as a manifestation of *PASS*.

Ömer Güven, who had been the Istanbul Regional Executive Head of the Dev-Genç between 1970 and 1971 and tried in the cases of the THKP-C and Istanbul Dev-Genç, refers to a common understanding about the relationship between “Kızıldere” and Mahir Çayan:

The first group that fought against the state for the first time in the whole history of the state... Its mental background is a different issue. But it was an uprising where the revolutionists fought against the state with arms, took this shoot-out to

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<sup>83</sup> “Kızıldere eyleminin amacının idamları durdurmak olduğu tespiti yanlış değildir. Ancak bir eylemin tekil amacıyla amacın tekil eylemi ayrımını iyi yapmak gerekir. Zira Kızıldere eyleminin kendisi de bir amacın tekil eylemidir. Bu amaç tek başına ne kahramanlık, ne dayanışma, ne ittifak ve bütünleşme ne de idamları durdurmak vs. gibi tekil sorunlar değildir. Bunların hepsini içeren, zaman ve şartlara göre hepsini değerlendirecek olan geniş ölçekte bütünsel bir amaçtır. (...) Amacın eylemi olarak Kızıldere, şehir gerillasından kır-şehir mücadelesinin birlikteliğine geçişin adıdır. Sıkışmışlığın zorlamasıyla asgari hazırlığın bile olmadığı koşullarda atılan bu adımın tartışmasını bir yana bırakırsak, murat edilen ilk amaç budur ve değişmeyen ikinci amaç ise tavizsiz, tutarlı ve kararlı bir silahlî direniş geleneği yaratmaktır.”

<sup>84</sup> These texts are the most significant theoretical documents left from the THKP-C. Mahir Çayan explained his revolutionary strategy inspired by Mao Zedung’s the Permanent Revolution thesis and Lenin’s understanding of revolutionary organization.



the end and an uprising that masses of people showed respect. “Kızıldere” is a historical defining moment in fighting and combatting this tyrant state. Nurhak (referring to the murder of the THKO militants in the Nurhak Mountains) was not so, but “Kızıldere” was because “Kızıldere” has a history peculiar to Mahir. Mahir did not joke, he did not play games and he was deadly serious. He did not make any jokes when he robbed a bank, abducted Elrom and when he went to Kızıldere. He was so serious... The state knew that how much Kızıldere corresponded to Mahir’s personality, his ideological stance and formation and the state wanted to turn this into a massacre. And it did so.<sup>85</sup>

Once again, the close ties between Mahir Çayan and “Kızıldere” were expressed by Şaban İba, who had been a THKP-C militant and then took part in the organization of the Kurtuluş movement beginning from 1974, with a very well-known quotation from Çayan:

The sentence Mahir Çayan uttered, “We did not come here to return, we came here to die” was alone sufficient enough to express Kızıldere. Mahir’s sentence was the reply he gave to the counter-guerrilla commander’s call to surrender on March 29, a short while before the massacre. This sentence was the proof of revolutionary resolution, sacrifice and of making history. As a result, remembering Kızıldere is the same thing as remembering this sentence by Mahir, without any further saying.<sup>86</sup> (İba cited in Özbilgen, 2015: 49)

The identification of “Kızıldere” with Mahir Çayan results in turning Mahir Çayan into an icon as an “archetypal martyr” in the narratives of the witnesses of the period. This iconicity has been transmitted through different generations among revolutionary organizations. As I will discuss in the following chapter, the act of self-sacrifice with its embodiment in “martyrdom” has become dominant in commemorative narratives in subsequent revolutionary generations.

Another important theme in the narratives of the witnesses of the period is whether “Kızıldere” was a “victory” or a “defeat” for the revolutionary movements as I showed in Kürkçü’s narratives before. The revolutionaries’ declaration of armed

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<sup>85</sup> Personal interview conducted with Ömer Güven in Istanbul on 04.07.2014: “*Sosyalist hareketin tarihinde ilk defa devletle kapışan... Zihinsel arka planı şöyledir böyledir ayrı bir konu. Ama devlete silah çeken kapışan ve bu kavgayı sonuna kadar götüren ve halk kitlelerinin nezdinde saygı gören bir isyandı... Bu ceberrut devletle savaşıma, kapışma meselesinde Kızıldere tarihi bir dönüm noktasıdır. Nurhak böyle olmadı, Kızıldere böyle oldu. Çünkü Kızıldere’nin Mahir’e özgü de bir tarihi var. Mahir şaka yapmadı, oyun oynamadı, çok ciddiydi. Bankayı soyarken de, Elrom’u kaçıırken de, Kızıldere’ye giderken de hiç şaka yapmadı. Çok ciddiydi... Kızıldere Mahir’in kişiliğine, ideolojik duruşuna ve formasyonuna denk düştüğü kadar devlet de bunu biliyordu ve bunu bir katliama çevirmek istedi. Ve de öyle yaptı.*”

<sup>86</sup> “*Mahir Çayan’ın ‘Biz buraya dönmeye değil, ölmeye geldik’ sözü tek başına Kızıldere’yi anlatmaya yetmişti. Mahir’in bu sözü 29 Mart günü, yani katliamdan kısa bir süre önce kontrgerilla komutanının teslim olun çağrısına verdiği yanıtı. Bu söz, devrimci kararlılığın, fedakarlığın ve bir tarih yazmanın kanıtıydı. Sonuç olarak Kızıldere’yi unutmamak, fızla söze gerek kalmadan Mahir’in bu sözünü hatırlamakla aynı şeydir.*”

resistance against the state as the “enemy” has been seen as a “victory” in itself and the reorganization of subsequent revolutionary movements has been interpreted as a representation of this “victory.” However, some of the witnesses and also some organizations founded during the second half of the 1970s define “Kızıldere” as a “defeat,” based on its historical and political outcomes.

It must have a historical importance, but when evaluated in military terms, it could not succeed in life at that time. However, the fact that the individuals of a revolutionary struggle or the actual strength of that struggle is defeated does not eliminate the truth that the struggle was a revolutionary movement. On the contrary, it constitutes a number of materials for history to learn from and obtain experience as well as to investigate, research and to carry towards the future. Moreover, it is a cosmic articulation and expression of the objection of the human being and of the historically oppressed classes to the persecutors, to the oppressive state and to the state of the capitalism. I perceive it in both ways.<sup>87</sup>

One could say that the THKP-C was defeated; it is, however, is not possible to ignore the fact that it bequeathed a glorious tradition of resistance, full of lessons. Yet this legacy can should be evaluated with due consideration of its negative sides, rather than positive sides.<sup>88</sup>(Öztürk, 2010: 76)

Lastly, the notion of “innocence” has also been one of the key themes in the narratives of the witnesses of that period as I discussed in both the official historiography and the villagers’ personal accounts. Unlike the previous representations, in most of these narratives, “innocence” of the revolutionaries has been closely linked to their positions in the armed struggle. Although most of the narrators have participated actively in the revolutionary movements of that period, they make a distinction among the militants in Kızıldere. A typical example of this approach can be seen in the preface of Füsün Özbilgen’s book attributed to Sinan Kazım Özüdoğru. Özbilgen and her husband were supporters of the THKP-C before the massacre. They opened up their house to the revolutionaries and both of them were arrested because of their support. She tries to demonstrate the “innocence” of Özüdoğru with these sentences:

Had Sinan Kazım Özüdoğru not been killed in Kızıldere, there would have been no action to cause him to be prosecuted. There was no crime to charge him,

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<sup>87</sup> Personal interview conducted with Oktay Etiman in Ankara on 10.06.2014: “Tarihsel bir önemi vardır ama güncel, askeri açıdan bakıldığında hayat karşısında başarıya ulaşamamıştır o an için. Fakat bir devrim mücadelesinin bireylerinin ya da o mücadelenin fiili gücünün yenilmiş olması onun bir devrim hareketi olduğu hakikatini ortadan kaldırmaz. Tam tersine tarihe hem bir deneyim, bir tecrübe, ders çıkarılacak; incelenip araştırılacak, geleceğe taşınacak bir takım derslerin malzemesini oluşturur. Hem de insanın tarih içerisindeki ezilenlerin, baskı görenlerin zalimler karşısında, baskıcı devlet, kapitalizmin devleti karşısındaki itirazının da kozmik bir ifadesidir, dışa vurumudur. Ben iki yönüyle de anlıyorum.”

<sup>88</sup> “THKP-C yenildi denebilir, ama derslerle dolu, şanlı bir direniş geleneğini miras bıraktığını görmezlikten gelmek mümkün değildir. Tabii bu miras belki olumluluktan çok olumsuz yanlarıyla değerlendirilmelidir.

except for his revolutionary attitude and activities; he participated in neither bank robbery nor kidnapping. Sinan Kazım did not partake in the kidnapping of the British on the way to Kızıldere. . (...) The only thing with which the prosecutor might charge him would have been his revolutionary rebellion. Today, is there anyone who thinks that the general uprising of the youth against the 12 March junta government and their regime was wrongful? Sinan Kazım Özüdoğru, the general secretary of the Dev-Genç, which is a legal organization, is a revolutionist young man who was executed extra-judicially by some police chiefs, MIT officers and government authorities because he was involved in the youth rebellion, he could have been caught alive and led a long life, though.<sup>89</sup> (Özbilgen, 2015: 10)

Özbilgen, intentionally or not, makes a distinction within the revolutionaries as the “innocent” and the “guilty” based on their political actions. Although she does not express it explicitly, she represents the other militants who had participated in illegal political actions as “guilty.” Similar approaches can be seen in several witnesses’ narratives with different conceptualizations.

In this chapter, I tried to show the differences between official history and on the accounts of “Kızıldere” by villagers and previous militants or supporters of several leftist, socialist, revolutionary organizations in Turkey. I examined how individuals who were direct witnesses to the massacre or to the whole political period make sense of the same event with varying narratives. These narratives include various themes which show alteration basically according to generational or temporal differences, varying political engagements (factional differences, being a member of an organized community or not) as well as local or personal differences. As it can be seen in their personal accounts, the witnesses, especially the villagers generally have personal and emotional accounts about the massacre. The humanistic representations of the revolutionaries and the emphasis on their innocence are dominant in their narratives as opposed to the official accounts based on their dehumanization and criminalization.

However, it is more difficult to see such interpretations in the narratives of revolutionaries from different generations. They mostly propose reinterpretations of the incident based on their former or current political engagements and reproduce much more normative accounts which provide political perspectives for both the past and the present. Based on the close links between the political interests and the reproduction of

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<sup>89</sup> “Sinan Kazım Özüdoğru, Kızıldere’de öldürülme, hakkında suç oluşturacak bir eylem bulunmuyordu. Devrimci tutumunun ve çalışmalarının dışında kendisinin suçlanacak ne banka soygunu ne adam kaçırma eylemi vardı. Kızıldere’ye giden yolda, İngilizlerin kaçırılmasında da Sinan Kazım yer almıyor. (...) Savcının onu suçlayacağı tek şey, sadece devrimci isyanı olabilirdi. 12 Mart cunta idaresine ve o günün rejimine gençlerin genel isyanını bugün haksız bulan var mı? Yasal bir örgüt olan Dev-Genç’in genel sekreteri Sinan Kazım Özüdoğru, gençliğin isyanında yer alması nedeniyle, Kızıldere’de sağ yakalanabilecek ve uzun yıllar yaşayabilecekken, bazı polis şefleri, MIT görevlileri ve iktidar yetkilileri tarafından yargısız infaz edilen bir devrimci genç.”

narratives, commemorative narratives on “Kızıldere” also change for different actors from various political factions and their significance in the political arena.

Hayden White writes that “every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralise the events of which it treats.” (1980: 14) In the narratives on “Kızıldere,” this desire to moralize appears both in official historiography and in the personal accounts of the witnesses with two themes: “innocence” and “victimization.” Although these are common themes, they are used for different subjects of the event. In official historiography, the “innocent” foreign technicians are the “victims” of the “abominable anarchists or marauders.” In sharp contrast to this narrative, the personal accounts of the witnesses are based on the victimization of “innocent” revolutionaries.

Edward Bruner claims that “narratives are not only structures of meaning, but structures of power as well.” (1986) So, the narratives of official historiography are important components of witnessing the state as the supreme authority and the narratives of “victimhood” and “innocence” are clearly understandable and expectable. However, the witnesses’ narratives of “innocence” and “victimhood” are marked by a failure: The narratives of “revolutionary martyrs” as “victims” and the efforts to demonstrate their “innocence” in various ways bring the political character of those revolutionaries into disrepute. Sibel Irzık, in her article on the constructions of victimhood in Turkish *coup d’état* novels, claims that:

(...) the majority of the Turkish novels and stories directly or indirectly referring to the military coups of 1971 and 1980 (...) have a tendency to slip into discourses of victimhood that are based on either childlike innocence or on the abstraction, pathologization and depoliticization of the subjects involved. (...) What escapes representation in these novels is not the violence, the torture, the pain, but the specifically political character of this collective experience (Irzık, 2009: 19-20).

I think this tendency is also present in the narratives of the witnesses of “Kızıldere.” Instead of “the legitimisation of violence as a means to an end” as in the political writings of Mahir Çayan, these narratives promulgate “involuntary” actions of a group of young people. By doing so, they depoliticize the revolutionaries and their acts of “dying for a cause.” Some of these narratives represent these revolutionaries as “desperate” people who did not have anything to do under the brutality of the state and see their death as inescapable. And some others highlight the “innocence” and “guiltlessness” of them in reference to non-violent political actions. All these narratives

implicitly make moral judgments about the revolutionaries and overshadow their conscious political resistance.

Whether it has been called a “defeat” or “victory”; whether the militants were seen as “defenseless”, “desperate”, “and innocent” or “brutal anarchists,” “Kızıldere” has remained a milestone in the history of revolutionary movements in Turkey. All these varying narratives triggered different forms and contents of commemorative practices beginning from the next generation in the 1970s. I will discuss how these narratives of remembering are collectivized and how they are transmitted through generations focusing on different commemorative practices in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### COMMEMORATIVE PRACTICES and NARRATIVES of REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS in TURKEY: “KIZILDERE” as a LIVING MEMORIAL

There has been a growing academic and popular literature on memorialization among several identity groups who had suffered under the state violence and witnessed traumatic events especially during the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republic of Turkey in recent years. Academic works and various projects administered by non-governmental organizations have been enriching the memory literature on this period. However, they have a main tendency of focusing on the notion of “victimhood” often based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion which can be claimed to be “involuntary.” Whereas, revolutionary leftists in Turkey have also become the “victims” of the state (led) violence -and surely more than once- as there have been a systematic campaign of oppression against them. This notion of “victimhood” based on the conscious preferences and concerted political actions, the experiences, narratives and discourses of these groups of people have been generally ignored in the existing literature. Although the Turkish society experienced a massive traumatic period ushered by two military coups in 1971 and 1980 with gross human rights violations, it is difficult to encounter a comprehensive literature on different modes of remembering/forgetting these traumatic and violent political events, alternative imaginations and political experiences of the period.

It can be claimed that the “defeat” of the left and the radical social and political changes of the 1980 military coup precluded continuity both in terms of political experiences and also cultural memory. Besides, the overemphasis on the “trauma” and its “inexpressibility” has been a main tendency in memory studies. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that the problem is more comprehensive. There have always been

different political interests that lead conflicting memory regimes between the hegemonic powers and their opponents. For the aforementioned historical period, remembering the political conflicts, state violence and revolutionary political actions and imaginations have been seen as “threats” to the existing system or consciously converted to “threats” by marginalization or criminalization of the actors of the period. Thus, the efforts of memorialization of the 1970s with political actors, narratives and discourses have been either prohibited or restricted by the power elites in each period. This is closely related to the nation-state’s one of the major aims to make the society forget “negative” or “undesirable” events while creating its national memory (Gellner, 1983). Using force has been one of the ways in order to achieve this aim and this suppression may create a prohibition of remembering whereas it may also occur with the unconscious choices of society which is called “public silence.”

At this point revolutionary leftist movements play a crucial role in breaking this silence because their persistent struggle of remembering and making the society remember has been playing a crucial role in the memorialization process of this historical period. It can be claimed that existing forms and repertoires of collective memory of this period have been mostly (re)produced by both the witnesses of the period as well as the following revolutionary leftist movements from different generations. The slogan “We Did Not Forget, We Will Not Let It Forget!” (*Unutmadık, Unutturmayacağız!*) has been used by almost all leftist movements in various protests in Turkey throughout the last couple of decades. It appears as a leitmotif which is being used as a declaration not to forget and/or make the society forget the atrocities for which the state is held responsible. This declaration however, cannot be seen as a simple sentence speaking for its own. In order to make sure that the promise and commitment is fulfilled, it is accompanied by a variety of practices, mechanisms, institutions which create and reproduce certain political discourses related to the past as well as the present.

The notion of “public silence” and the insistence of the revolutionary leftists on remembering are also closely related to “Kızıldere.” As I tried to show in the previous chapter, the incident had come to the fore in all around the country and even abroad when it occurred. Yet in the following years, a great silence arose among the larger masses. However, the revolutionary leftists have been faithfully resisting keeping “Kızıldere” alive with different meanings attributed to it for more than 40 years and insisting on protecting their collective memory. Commemorative practices of

“Kızıldere” which have been continuously repeated in different forms and contents have become very influential acts in breaking this public silence.

In this chapter, I elaborate different commemorative practices and narratives of “Kızıldere” articulated by the revolutionary leftists in Turkey. Commemorative practices of “Kızıldere” have been substantiated in texts, images, songs, and wall writings, on particular dates and at places or ceremonies. These commemorative practices have been maintaining for decades in different forms and contents as important components of cultural and political environment of each period and they enable the intergenerational transmission of collective memory among revolutionary leftists. First, I briefly discuss the relationship between the space and the collective memory and try to explain why I use the concept of “sites of memory” with reference to Pierre Nora in order to mention all types of commemorative practices of “Kızıldere.” Then, I show the most frequent commemorative practices and narratives of “Kızıldere” (re)producing particular meanings and important discussions around them. This chapter is also about frequently proliferated political narratives on “Kızıldere” (re)produced by revolutionary leftist organizations. Some of the themes in these narratives coincide with the narratives of the witnesses of the mentioned period as I discussed in Chapter 3. So, there might be some repetitions but this also shows the inter-generational transmission of collective memory on “Kızıldere.”

I focus on the construction of commemorative narratives which specifically propagate armed struggle or self-sacrifice, valorize “heroes” or “martyrs” or define “Kızıldere” as a battle. I show different themes such as iconization, creating archetypal martyrs, propagating self-sacrifice and/or solidarity, claiming continuity and creating historical analogies which are embedded in these commemorative narratives. I claim that these ever-changing narratives propose multiple strategies of political struggle and they have been so determinative in (re)shaping the political activities and aims of several political factions. I argue that these narratives can also be seen as means of contention within different political factions besides transmission of collective memory through generations.

Considering this diversity both in terms of form and content, these commemorative practices have always been open to change although they seem to be stable. All the written and visual materials used for these practices and the circulation of particular narratives offer various temporalities besides the Kızıldere Massacre as a past event. Hence, it is difficult to say that these practices commemorate only the Massacre



itself. Rather, they consist of different layers of remembering which are crucial for the revolutionary leftists.

These commemorative practices were not conducted smoothly. There have been numerous confiscated and closed publications over the years, numerous people have been prosecuted or arrested with the accusations of “making propaganda of the terror organizations,” the participants of the commemorative ceremonies have been threatened or the places of commemorations have been terrorized during the anniversaries. Due to these oppressive practices of the power holders in each historical period, these sites of collective memory turned into sites of conflict between the state and the revolutionaries.

Lastly, I claim that “Kızılder” with all these various commemorative practices and narratives can be defined as a “living memorial” due to the dynamic features of being open to change, possible interactions between the participants and the audiences, including different meanings and temporalities and turning into sites of conflict under the repressive state policies.

#### **4.1. Sites of Collective Memory**

One of the strategies of commemoration is spatializing it at a specific place. The spatialization of collective memory is crucial in the protection and transmission of collective memory through generations. Commemorative practices are closely linked to the ways in which particular groups organize and experience a particular space at a particular time. This spatial togetherness of a group of people creates new memory places with varying narratives about a past event. There is a vast range of research on the relationship between space and collective memory in the social sciences literature. Rather than writing a comprehensive survey of these discussions within the limited scope of this thesis, I have focused on two works that opened useful starting points for the purposes of this thesis and its theoretical framework.

The theoretician of collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs, problematizes the relationship between memory and space in his work *On Collective Memory* (1992) and reveals the connections between time, space and collective memory in a sociological perspective. Halbwachs connected the notion of collective memory with another concept, “social frame” and claimed that “No memory is possible outside frameworks

used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections” (1992: 43). On the other hand, it can be seen that the notion of “social frame” does not only correspond to the physical or social space, it is also symbolic which is open to “the collective thought of the group” as he writes:

Since places participate in the stability of material things themselves, some similar procedure is a primary condition of memory itself: the collective thought of the group of believers has the best chance of immobilizing itself and enduring when it concentrates on places, sealing itself within their confines and molding its character to theirs (Halbwachs, 1980: 156).

Almost half a century after Halbwachs, the French historian Pierre Nora developed the idea of collective memory and he extended Halbwachs' notion to the cultural memory of a nation with his influential concept of “sites of memory” (*lieux de mémoire*). His major work on the national memory of France is *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de mémoire* (abridged translation *Realms of Memory*) with three volumes published between 1984 and 1992. In the preface to this work entitled “Between Memory and History” (first published in English in 1989), Nora proposed a distinction between two concepts, *lieux de mémoire* and *milieux de mémoire*:

Our interests in *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn - but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory (Nora 1989: 7).

According to Nora, “museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders” (1989: 12) are *lieux de mémoire* which are all residual of memory and every community who wants to form a group identity should create such realms. He claims that in order to be *lieux de mémoire*, there must be a will to remember. Otherwise, it is a *lieux d'histoire* (sites of history). For Nora, the purpose of the *lieux de mémoire* is “to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial (...) in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs” (1989: 19).

Nora's this seminal work influenced almost all of the thinkers working on collective memory, surely with criticisms. One of the critiques is about his metaphor of “crystallization” which has seen as fixing the sites of memory and precluding to be open

to change. This understanding lacks the capacity to transform the present. Another critique comes from Eray Çaylı in his forthcoming essay, *Diyarbakır's 'Witness-sites' and Discourses on 'the Kurdish Question' in Turkey*. He criticizes Pierre Nora's distinction between *lieu de mémoire* and *milieux de mémoire* as a problematic dichotomization of 'the old paradigm' versus 'the new' and claims that Nora has an understanding of temporality only as linear and irreversible progression. As an alternative, he develops a new concept, "witness-sites," referring to sites at which atrocities and related phenomena have taken place. According to Çaylı, these witness-sites are important because not only a past event took place therein but also they have current roles of incorporating different overlapping temporalities. He proposes Diyarbakır Prison, the Madımak Hotel in Sivas, and Ulucanlar Prison in Ankara as important examples to these witness-sites.

I do acknowledge that Nora's conceptualization seems to be stable and close to change and he is found insufficient to explain the mutual transformative relationship between the space and the collective memory. However, he clearly expresses his understanding of memory in his distinction between history and memory— although I find this kind of a distinction problematic – and emphasizes the notion of change:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past (Nora 1989: 8).

Regarding the critiques, I still prefer using the notion of "sites of memory" in my analysis of the commemorative practices and the organization of space of the revolutionary leftists in the case of "Kızıldere." Revolutionary leftists in Turkey have many sites of memory where their political and cultural messages are materialized. Different political organizations have come to experience and engage with the sites of memory in a variety of nuanced ways. They impose their political agendas and cultural maps on these sites of memory. These sites of memory themselves are seen as the raw materials for the meaning-making activities of political groups and they might become a source of (re)producing different commemorative narratives as Khalili claims: "Spaces provide a stage for commemoration, but they can also act as mnemonic markers,

sources of commemorative narratives, and a focus of contention over meanings of history” (2007: 82).

In the case of “Kızıldere,” specific sites have become endowed with memorial significance and they have been serving as the grounds for collective memory. All types of commemorative practices including history-telling/writing, publishing, (re)naming and all kinds of written, visual or electronic images used for these practices, slogans, songs, poems, anniversaries and ceremonial gatherings all constitute sites of collective memory of “Kızıldere.”

#### **4.2. Commemorative Practices of “Kızıldere”**

Commemoration practices are collective practices that can be seen as attempts to transmit knowledge, experiences or feelings about a past event. They might be rituals, monuments, performative activities, exhibitions, etc. and they might be conducted in cyclical ways as anniversaries or only as one-offs (Connerton, 1989). In this part, I examine major commemorative practices of “Kızıldere” under the categories of history-telling/writing, publishing and electronic media, commemorative images and slogans, literary works, (re)naming the places and people after the massacre, anniversaries and the organization of time and commemorative ceremonies. All these practices have been commemorating different aspects of “Kızıldere” in various ways. Panels or concerts organized on the anniversaries can be also seen as other types of commemorative practices.

Commemorative practices of Kızıldere Massacre have seemed to be remaining constant in terms of their forms but their contents have changed over time. Collective memories of the revolutionary leftists and their political interests have been closely intertwined. So, these commemorative practices are always (re)shaped by the political needs and interests of their community. None of these commemorative practices precludes the other; in fact most of the time they are congruent. Thus, they all have to be grasped in a holistic manner. However, each practice may generate a different meaning in the collective memory of “Kızıldere,” so I try to shortly explain every practice.

#### 4.2.1. History-telling/writing

The most significant commemorative practice of “Kızıldere” has been history-telling/writing. History-telling is usually seen in public events in the anniversaries of the massacre such as commemorative ceremonies, political meetings, panels, forums or interviews (See Appendix 7). According to Alessandro Portelli, “the history-teller weaves personal recollections into a broader historical background, and is encouraged to expand the tale toward a full-sized oral autobiography in which the self-contained narrative units of anecdotes or tales are included in a more complex framework” (Portelli, 1992: 51). This is also relevant for the commemorative practices of “Kızıldere.” Mostly, politically active figures and the witnesses of the 1970s have been the frequent history-tellers in the public events of commemoration, especially the only survivor, Ertuğrul Kürkçü (See Appendix 8). They usually tell their memories about the “martyrs” and personal feelings or ideas and mostly in the form of anecdotes. There are also commemorative activities which are close to the audiences, particularly directed to the members or supporters of a particular political organization and the history-tellers in such activities are often selected based on a certain authority acquired through age or political experience. In such activities, instead of anecdotal statements, there are usually agitative and propagandistic narratives aiming to influence the participants and invite them to the political struggle.

Journalists, documentarists or researchers in general might encourage the act of history-telling. Although there is not a sufficient amount of research on “Kızıldere,” it can be claimed that most of the commemorative works are based on oral tradition. Since the oral history is accepted as a legitimate source of historiography, it became a very popular form of the intergenerational transmission of memory. The current literature on the leftist, socialist or revolutionary movements in Turkey is based on memoirs besides academic research. The increasing numbers of new publishing houses, usually owned by former socialists or revolutionaries, also encourage these kinds of works. Although, these works might lay the groundwork for more extensive studies on the massacre, the choices of their narrators and the selectiveness of their memory do not leave much room for objective and comprehensive analysis of the period. Besides, these works often include nostalgic and melancholic elements for the leftist movements in a manner which

limit to think about the social struggles of the period for an active intervention in the current political environment.

I suggest that there are important questions to ask for this form of commemoration: Who tells this history and for whom? Who select the history-teller(s) and according to which qualifications? And most importantly, who does not speak? In the case of “Kızıldere,” there has been a tendency to listen to the popular political figures instead of “ordinary” people. What I mean by “ordinary” people are those who shared their homes with the slaughtered revolutionaries during their last days or helped them to find somewhere to stay or family members and relatives of the revolutionaries. Besides, three of the slaughtered revolutionaries<sup>90</sup> were the local people who had been known by the people of the Black Sea Region and still there are a lot of people in the region who knew them but it became almost impossible to hear those people’s accounts of “Kızıldere.” Moreover, the real witnesses of the massacre, the residents of the village house wherein the armed conflict had happened<sup>91</sup> and the villagers who followed the military operation from the very beginning to the end have rarely found the opportunity to speak.

Carol Duncan, in her work on the art museum and the rituals of citizenship, writes “What we see and do not see in art museums is closely linked to larger questions about who constitutes the community and who defines its identity” (1995: 9). In our case, the history-tellers who we can hear and cannot is very much about the leftist historiography of “Kızıldere.” Although the revolutionary leftists claim to write a counter-history and create an alternative regime of collective memory as opposed to the repressive erasure (Connerton, 2008: 60-61) of the state’s official history, they fall into a similar position and create “official” history of the revolutionary leftists. They cannot grasp all the historical actors and their accounts, so they – knowingly or unknowingly – become a part of silencing. Hopefully, this tendency seems to become reversed in recent years. Especially, in the anniversaries, various newspapers or magazines publish article series based on the testimonies of the witnesses or letters from the relatives or close

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<sup>90</sup> Nihat Yılmaz was a driver from Fatsa, Ertan Saruhan was a teacher working in Fatsa and Ahmet Atasoy was a farmer in Ünye.

<sup>91</sup> There has been a common idea that the mayor of Kızıldere, Emrullah Arslan, who had hosted the revolutionaries, denounced them when the gendarme came to their house. Although Arslan did not accept this, he has been labelled as the “informer” by the leftists for years. I think that this labeling had a strong impact on the researchers as well as the leftists and they did not consider Emrullah Arslan and his family as potential history-tellers.

friends of the slaughtered revolutionaries. These articles are also widely disseminated through the Internet.<sup>92</sup>

#### 4.2.2. Publishing and Electronic Media

As it can be seen, the practice of history telling/writing goes hand in hand with publishing and dissemination as electronic media. However, publishing and electronic media are not limited to the stories of particular history-tellers/writers. Periodicals, leaflets, circulars and all kind of published materials of various political organizations are also very important forms of commemoration. All these materials enable these organizations to express their political assessments about the event.

One of these publications is the Revolutionary Movement (*Devrimci Hareket*) and its representative explains their effort of commemorative publishing with these sentences:

While commemorating, we definitely care about the following points: publication of their symbolic pictures, writing about them in banners, stickers, graffitis, in declarations and in various platforms, organizing marches for them... These things cannot be only considered “ceremonial” activities. But at the same time we are trying to update the importance of the event at every historical moment in literary terms. We do not absolutely make a new discovery of Kızıldere every year but in saying, “let us have a look at the event from today’s perspective,” we think that we can generate a literary production in order to enrich what one should understand from updating.<sup>93</sup>

On the anniversaries of the Massacre, several factional periodicals often publish the photographs of the slaughtered militants in their front cover (See Appendix 9). They also include special memorial sections about the Massacre which includes images and short biographies of the “martyrs” and announcements about the commemoration ceremonies. Sometimes there can be several pages dedicated to the “martyrs” including

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<sup>92</sup> For an example, see <http://bianet.org/bianet/diger/120990-onlarin-hayati> and <http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/murat-bjedug/turkiye-solunun-genc-liderleri-kizildere-yoluna-nasil-ciktilar,4901>

<sup>93</sup> Personal interview conducted in Istanbul on 17.05.2014: “Biz anarken kesinlikle şunları önemsiyoruz: o tarihte sembolik türde onların resimlerinin yayınlanması, afişte, stickerda, duvar yazılarında, çeşitli yerlerde yer verilmesi, bildirilerde yer verilmesi, onlar için yürüyüş yapılması...Bu sadece böyle “törensel” deyip geçilmeyecek şeyler. Ama aynı zamanda mesela şunu da yapmaya çalışıyoruz: yazınsal olarak da onun önemi her tarihsel anda bir kez daha güncelleniyor. Tabi ki her yıl yeni bir Kızıldere keşfinde bulunmuyoruz ama bugünün gözüyle bakarsak deyip, biraz da güncellemeden ne anlaşılması gerektiğini zenginleştirmek açısından da böyle bir yazınsal ürün de ortaya koyuyoruz.”

poems or lyrics of revolutionary songs/anthems and iconic images such as gun. These publications share the information about commemorative calendars which can differ among political factions and also serve to consolidate and legitimize their political positions. They are usually full of agitative narratives of self-sacrifice for the revolutionary struggle.

The circulation of these publications was limited to the closed circles of those political organizations, thus the knowledge of those commemorative practices reached only to the people who are directly or indirectly connected to these political organizations. However, these types of materials began to be quickly proliferated to broader masses with the development of electronic media (See Appendix 10). Besides the images, there are also videos and amateur documentaries including the photographs of the revolutionaries with poems or songs attributed to them which are widely shared through Internet. Thousands of people can share or reach to these written or visual materials via Internet. Electronic media, especially social media channels, have been immensely influential in reaching broader masses which are not taken part of direct organizational connections. Those developments help the transmission of memory to a larger audience. This is not only important because it helps to reach more people. The proliferation takes also the control on reproduction of the memory out of the hand of political factions, thus numerous people can carry out these commemorative practices. A large number of people who do not have direct connections to the existing political organizations can also (re)produce similar or different commemorative narratives of “Kızıldere” which (re)shapes the collective memory of the revolutionary leftists and also the society in general.

#### **4.2.3. Commemorative Images and Slogans**

Besides publishing and electronic media, various political organizations use posters, pictures, placards and flags for the commemoration ceremonies. The photographs of “martyrs” are the most popular images in these commemorative practices as Mahmud Darwish writes in *Memory for Forgetfulness*: “Faces on the walls – martyrs freshly emerging from life and the printing presses, a death which is a remake of itself. One martyr replacing the face of another, taking his place on the wall, until



displaced by yet another or by rain.” (1995: 53) These images are usually supported with specific slogans that symbolize the political assessments on “Kızıldere” of that particular political organization.

Commemorative images and announcements of the commemoration ceremonies also find its place in the walls of the cities. They are also seen in the form of murals usually in the poor neighborhoods of the big cities where mostly working class, Kurdish, Alevi communities live and the revolutionary organizations are prevalent.<sup>94</sup> The posters of the “martyrs” of “Kızıldere” and slogans attributed to them have been proliferated throughout these neighborhoods (See Appendix 11). Different political organizations use the walls of the neighborhoods as spaces for displaying photographs of “martyrs” and slogans for commemoration of the Massacre. These walls and the slogans also constitute “major channel of communication between political groups” (Hunter, 1993: 273) which are the indicators of different agendas of various political organizations.

These walls are not only a part of public space but also a part of the everyday locations of the thousands of people. Thus, they have been “quotidian memory places” (Khalili, 2007) which provide popular appropriation of these commemorative images and narratives. With this feature, they have been very important to spread the commemorative images beyond the borders of a particular political organization’s publications or an oppositional newspaper’s pages. However, quotidian memory places might also become “meaningless” for many people because they sometimes pass by them even without noticing what is written on the walls. Thus, these walls and the slogans on them might create “ordinariness” which may prevent remembering.

These commemorative images also appear in the walls of the political organizations’ offices. Although some of these buildings have undergone several destructions due to the police raids, Mahir Çayan’s photographs constitute one of the first things to be present in the walls (See Appendix 12). These types of images can be seen as the only adornment of these places. The possibility of being “ordinary” or “meaningless” is also relevant for these images because they become an inseparable part of daily routine.

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<sup>94</sup> Okmeydanı, Gazi, Nuretepe, Küçük Armutlu, 1 Mayıs (Mustafa Kemal), Gülsuyu-Gülensu and Sarıgazi neighborhoods in Istanbul and Tuzluca and Mamak neighborhoods in Ankara are the major districts where these kinds of commemorative images can be easily seen almost at every step.

The circulation of these commemorative images might result in iconization of the “martyrs.” Laleh Khalili, in her inspiring work on the politics of national commemoration in Palestine, summarizes the process of iconization as such:

Iconization transforms a concrete event, object, or being into a symbol. It is the process by which an event is decontextualized, shorn of its concrete details and transformed into an abstract symbol, often empty, which can then be instrumentalized as a mobilizing tool by being ‘filled’ with necessary ideological rhetoric (Khalili, 2007: 153).

As Khalili indicates, “Kızıldere” has been filled with different ideological rhetoric which I try to show in this chapter. As I discussed in the introduction, “Kızıldere” has been one of the iconic events in the history of revolutionary leftist movements in Turkey. However, iconization is not only limited to “Kızıldere” as a historical event. It usually based on honoring the militants died in the conflict. In almost all commemorative narratives, the murdered militants, specifically Mahir Çayan, have been iconized. The iconization also becomes concrete in synecdoche such as “*ON’lar*” or “*Mahirler*”<sup>95</sup> which refer to the ten revolutionaries killed in Kızıldere. The public statement used in the 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Massacre can be seen as an example of such a use of synecdoche: “The history of resistance and solidarity is our honor. Our struggle on the path to equality, freedom, justice, peace and brotherhood will continue with the strength we derive *ON’lar*.”<sup>96</sup> (*Bianet*, 30 March 2013) In addition, the most frequent slogan “We promised *ON’lar*, the revolution will be achieved!”<sup>97</sup> chanted during the commemorative ceremonies can be seen as another example.

This iconization might lead to heroic narratives which are usually seen in the national historiography. Even so, all these commemorative images are the most important forms of concretization and spread of memories. Bringing the “martyrs” into the public sphere in vast numbers and making them public in the walls with their posters is a wide-spread mode of commemoration among the revolutionary movements in Turkey. Usage of images in commemoration of the dead is crucial in defining those

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<sup>95</sup> Again “*Mahirler*” is the plural form of “*Mahir*” referring to the ten revolutionaries identifying with Mahir Çayan, the leader of the THKP-C. Most of the commemorative texts or images reproduce this trend and use these puns, but they lead to overshadow the other revolutionaries while emphasizing the leadership of Mahir Çayan. This iconization reflects on the commemorative ceremonies in the cemeteries. While there are three graveyards in Karşıyaka Cemetery in Ankara, the centre of the ceremonies has been Mahir Çayan’s graveside.

<sup>96</sup> “*Direnişin ve dayanışmanın tarihi onurumuzdur. Eşitlik, özgürlük, adalet, barış ve kardeşlik yolunda mücadelemiz ON’lardan aldığımız güçle devam edecek.*”

<sup>97</sup> “*ON’lara sözümüz devrim olacak!*”

events that constitute the collective self and they all testify that those “martyrs” with their political arguments and actions are still alive in the memories of their political “heirs” and their supporters.

#### 4.2.4. Literary Works

Literary works such as novels, songs, poems, anthems, etc. are also containing mnemonic markers which articulate the history and meaning of “Kızıldere” through different generations. There is a subgenre of *coup d'état* novels in Turkish literature mostly produced by authors who had had direct or indirect involvement with the revolutionary movement between the period of late 1960s to the 1980 military coup. However, “Kızıldere” has a very limited representation in this literature as I mentioned in the previous chapter.

*Yıldırım Bölge Kadınlar Koğuşu* (1996) by Sevgi Soysal and *Her Dağın Gölgesi Deniz'e Düşer* (2009) by Evrim Alataş are important works in this scarce literature. These books are not solely on “Kızıldere” but they have important representations about its repercussions in totally different places. While Soysal tells how they heard about the Massacre when they were in prison and how they felt about it, Alataş narrates the emotions of people in another village a long way from Kızıldere, in Malatya with these words:

The leaders of an organization sacrificed their lives to save the lives of the leaders of another organization. Maybe solely because of this reason, the love and the sorrow felt for the revolutionists of that period are free from the coldness of the political debates and it is unplanned. Merely because of that reason, I use clear-cut concepts while narrating those times. I say revolutionists... Now in a different time, in a different political climate where concepts are mixed with one another, you probably problematize to which this word “revolutionists” exactly corresponds and you might be surprised by my attitude. You may ask whether it is possible to use such ambivalent expressions. Concepts were clear at those times. There was no middle, edge or margin of the left. Even though the revolutionists were divided into various groups, they were all revolutionists. They would remain so.<sup>98</sup>(Alataş, 2009: 117)

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<sup>98</sup> “Bir örgütün lideri ve üyeleri, bir başka örgütün liderlerini kurtarmak için kendi canını feda etmişti. Belki tam da bu sebepten, bu dönemin devrimci gençlerine duyulan sevgi ve hüznün, politik tartışmaların soğuşundan uzak, hesapsızdır. İşte tam da bu nedenle, o zamanları anlatırken net kavramlar kullanıyorum. Devrimciler diyorum...Şimdi siz başka bir zamanda, başka bir siyasi iklimde, kavramlar birbirine karışmışken, böyle “devrimci” kelimesinin tam olarak nereye düştüğüne takılıyor, şaşırıyorsunuzdur belki. Bu kadar yakın ifade mi olur diyorsunuzdur. Bu zamanlarda netti kavramlar. Solun ortası, kenarı, kıyası yoktu. Devrimciler kendi içlerinde çeşitli gruplara ayrılışlar da hepsi devrimciydi. Öyle kalacaklardı.”

I think that it is important to ask the question why such an event which is accepted as a turning point in the revolutionary leftist movement and an obvious example of state sponsored violence could not find its adequate place although there is respectable amount of literary works about the period. I am not capable of answering this question but I suggest that this might be closely linked to the notion of “innocence” as I discussed in the previous chapter. Most of the literary works on the two military *coup d'états* focus on the innocence and victimhood of the political actors as opposed to the repressive state violence.<sup>99</sup> However, the case of “Kızıldere” appears as a “problematic” issue because the political actors involved to this event were armed guerillas and they resisted to the state security forces until the last moment. Moreover, they have been advocating the idea of armed struggle in the revolutionary struggle in Turkey. Thus, discussing “Kızıldere” requires an engagement with the notion of revolutionary violence. Instead of entering such a controversial discussion, I think most of the writers preferred not even to mention the event.

In such an environment, it can be claimed that the literary works on “Kızıldere” has also been produced by the leftist, socialist, revolutionary individuals or groups although the success of these efforts is disputable. The most productive literary space has been music rather than writing novels or stories.<sup>100</sup> There are several songs or anthems about the Kızıldere Massacre and attributed to the “martyrs.” The most well-known song is a lament written by a women minstrel, Aşık Sinem Bacı, just after the Massacre.<sup>101</sup> This lament has sung by various protest singers including Aşık İhsani and Selda Bağcan during the second half of the 1970s, but it became a well-known anthem

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<sup>99</sup> For a detailed analysis of the notions of innocence and victimhood, see Irzık, Sibel, ‘The Constructions of Victimhood in Turkish *Coup d'état* Novels: Is Victimhood without Innocence Possible?’ In *Betraying the Event: Constructions of Victimhood in Contemporary Cultures*, Ed. Fatima Festic, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, 3-20.

<sup>100</sup> The only novel on Kızıldere is *MAHİR ÇAYAN / Hasretim Derin Uykularda* (2010) by Vehbi Bardakçı. Bardakçı wrote the series of the events that paved the way to Kızıldere in a fictional narrative but it is very difficult to distinguish it from other recent history books.

<sup>101</sup> The lyrics of the lament: “Oi dere, Kızıldere / Where do you flow so eagerly / Did you think they would end / Giving their lives to you/ The creek is home to us/ Its water is the blood we sweat / Oi creek, tell me why / Why do they shoot our young brothers / The creek will not calm down / No bullet should find the youth / Never think one day the fascist / will not pay for what they did” (*Oy dere Kızıldere / Böyle akışın nere / ON'lar biter mi sandın / Sana can vere vere / Dere bizim evimiz / Suyu alınterimiz / Söyle nedendir dere / Vurulur gençlerimiz / Dere böyle durulmaz / Gence kurşun sıkılmaz / Sanma faşist olandan / Bir gün hesap sorulmaz*). In order to learn the story of the lament and Aşık Sinem Bacı, see [http://sinembaci.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=57:birgun-gazetesi&catid=35:basindan-yazilar&Itemid=56](http://sinembaci.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=57:birgun-gazetesi&catid=35:basindan-yazilar&Itemid=56)

by almost all of the leftists in Turkey only after the cover of Grup Yorum<sup>102</sup> in 1997 and it became the song for all types of commemorative gatherings. Another protest singer, Sevinç Eratalay put out albums dedicated to Mahir Çayan with the name of “Mahir’s Ballad 1-2” (*Mahir’in Türküsü 1-2*) in 1995 and 2004. In *Stories and Song in Iraq and South Africa*, Kimberly Wedeven Segall writes that sharing songs as a part of witnessing each other’s acts of mourning reaffirms its members’ common social bonds and continues as: “The song of protest encourages the people to identify with a common history and motivates continued political resistance. The songs, like the poetic laments, suggest a certain poetic potential for group identification through cultural forms” (Segall, 2005: 139-142). Thus, the songs attributed to the Kızılderem massacre and its “martyrs,” constitute important mechanisms of strengthening the bonds of collective group identity and transmitting collective memory on this symbolic historical event.

#### 4.2.5. (Re)Naming

Names can be seen as “memory texts” which enclose the “loss” of an object, a person or a place and/or honor a historical moment, an event or people. Renaming a person or a place invokes the memory again and again and also makes that memory a component of everyday practices (Slyomovics, 1998, Khalili, 2007). Naming children with the names of revolutionaries after their loss has been an ongoing “revolutionary tradition” within the supporters of revolutionary leftists for decades. The names of slaughtered revolutionaries in Kızılderem, especially the name of “Mahir” have been explicit illustrations of this “tradition.”<sup>103</sup> Many people who had been actively

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<sup>102</sup> Grup Yorum vocalized a prose poem in the beginning of the song in their album which constitutes a very good example of the highlighted commemorative narratives on “Kızılderem:” “The death did not catch them all of a sudden. *ON’lar* walked towards the death in the limitless chain of mountains and plateaus, in the poor neighborhoods and roaring squares of cities, under the siege and behind the barricades with the honor of not yielding to exploitation and oppression. They did not hesitate. They welcomed death with songs and anthems and by saying, ‘We did not come here to return, but to die.’ For a free and equal future, we buried our best as if something had been ripped from our lives. The Tens fill our hearts as the symbols of revolutionary values, honor, virtue and belief; they enlighten our consciousness and tie us to the revolution with the unbreakable bonds. (*Ölüm ON’ları apansız yakalamadı. Ülkemizin uçsuz bucaksız sıradağlarında ve ovalarında, kentlerin yoksul mahallelerinde ve uğuldayan meydanlarında, kuşatmalar altında ve barikatlar arkasından sömürüye zulme boyun eğmemenin onuruyla ölümün üstüne yürüdü ON’lar... Tereddüt etmediler yok. ‘biz buraya dönmeye değil, ölmeye geldik’ diyerek türkülerle, marşlarla karşıladılar ölümü... Özgür ve eşit bir gelecek için canımızdan bir parça koparırçasına en iyilerimizi verdik toprağa. ON’lar yaratılan devrimci değerlerin, onurun, erdem, inancın simgeleri olarak, yüreklerimizi dolduruyor, bilincimizi aydınlatıyor; bizi kopmaz bağlarla bağlıyor devrime.*)

<sup>103</sup> For a series of interviews conducted by young people who were named with the lost revolutionaries’ names, see Cem Çobanlı, *Mahir Deniz İbo*, Kalkedon Yayınları, İstanbul, 2008, pp.143-150.

participated in the struggle or felt sympathy to the revolutionary movements of that time named their sons or daughters with their names. This act of naming leads the embodiment of the “martyrs” in the new generations as Susan Slyomovics writes in *The Object of Memory*:

Place possesses history and narrative. When place is gone, it is recuperated in two ways: naming the daughter and telling the story. When a father calls out to a daughter, pronouncing the name of the town or village he can no longer inhabit or visit, he conjoins a lost past and a vivid present in her person (Slyomovics, 1998: 202).

The notion of “conjoining a lost past and a vivid present in a person” through the (re)naming of people and places is also prevalent in the commemorative practices of “Kızıldere.” The act of (re)naming as an independent act of organized political struggle functions as a continuous transmission of collective memory through generations and makes the lost “immortal.”

Commemorative (re)naming of revolutionary leftists can also be seen in the neighborhoods of Istanbul. The late 1970s witnessed the establishment of new neighborhoods called shantytown (*gecekondu*) due to the large scale migration of people from the countryside to the big cities, which had started in the 1950s. In the establishment of these shantytowns, revolutionary leftists played an important role from planning to the construction of the houses and also in the decision-making processes. Çayan Neighborhood in Nurtepe, Istanbul is one of these neighborhoods which had been founded by one of the radical leftist organizations of the time, the Revolutionary Left (*Devrimci Sol*, *Dev-Sol* [1978-1994]). In 1977, "People's Committees" (*Halk Komiteleri*) led by Devrimci Sol were established and all the residents became parts of the decision-making process along with revolutionaries (See Appendix 13). These committees decided to name the neighborhood as Çayan due to the loss of Mahir Çayan in Kızıldere.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> This process is summarized in the periodical of Devrimci Sol as: “We can proudly say that Nurtepe is the only squatter neighborhood the construction of which is led by the revolutionists and where the people’s committees have the initiative and various interest circles as well as the diverse profit-run groups are not allowed. In fact, municipality, the official state authorities, the mafia and some leftists groups seeking small schemes attacked the neighborhood with arms or without arms as well as ideologically and psychologically many times in order to demolish this neighborhood that the people themselves govern but they were rebuffed by the people’s barricade at every attack. At the end, the name of Nurtepe vanished and the neighborhood was named ÇAYAN in the consciousness of the people living in Nurtepe and of the people in the nearby neighborhood. This name is so normal that the neighborhood was remembered as ÇAYAN neighborhood among minibus associates, children and the elderly as if it had been the actual name for decades.” (*Gururla söyleyebiliriz ki, Nurtepe'nin inşa edilmesi, ülkemizde devrimcilerin öncülük ettiği ve halk komitelerinin inisiyatif sahibi olduğu, çeşitli çıkar çevrelerinin ve de kâr amacıyla hareket eden çok çeşitli kesimlere izin verilmeyen tek gecekondu bölgesidir. Öyle ki, halkın yönettiği bu mahalleyi yıkmak için belediye, resmi*

Another example of the act of naming a place in memoriam of revolutionaries can be found again in Istanbul, Maltepe. However, this example is distinct from the actions of revolutionaries because it was organized by the RPP municipality of Maltepe. On the 41th anniversary of the Kızıldere Massacre, on the 30<sup>th</sup> March of 2013 the municipality of Maltepe inaugurated a park in Güleusu Neighborhood and named it “Mahir, Hüseyin, Ulaş Park” (See Appendix 14). The mayor Prof. Dr. Mustafa Zengin declared the purpose of opening this park with these words:

If we acknowledge and question that we did wrong when Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Arslan, and Hüseyin İnan were executed, then we should challenge what was done to Mahir and his friends. Mahir, Hüseyin and Ulaş were engaged in a struggle. This struggle was carried out for the people, for the country. (...) We do not believe that these friends of ours did bad things and we say, “Young friends, reevaluate those friends and question what they wanted to do and what they did. Do not forget, because forgetting is betrayal.”<sup>105</sup>

Güleusu has been one of the working-class neighborhoods where the revolutionary organizations have significant power over the organization of everyday life. The location of the park and RPP’s act of naming it in memoriam of revolutionaries gave rise to question different political interests at work; because (re)naming as a commemorative practice can be seen as an effective demonstration of reshaping the political power structures. The selection of the names is determined by the political needs and power relations. Thus, this act cannot be seen only an act of honoring those who had sacrificed themselves for the revolutionary struggle. It is a way to legitimate political entities and institutions in the eyes of broader masses.

The Turkish state, as all other nation-states, is obviously aware of this power struggle, so politically motivated renaming is not peculiar to the revolutionaries or leftists in the case of “Kızıldere.” Another practice of (re)naming can also be seen in the governmental level with a completely opposite purpose. The Kızıldere Village was renamed as Ataköy after the Massacre and the traces of this contested event tried to be

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*devlet güçleri, mafya ve küçük hesaplar peşinde olan bazı sol gruplar, defalarca silahlı, silahsız, ideolojik, psikolojik olarak saldırmış ve her saldırıda halkın barikatıyla karşılaşarak püskürtülmüşlerdir. Sonuçta, Nurtepe adı ortadan kalkmış, gerek Nurtepe halkı, gerekse çevre halkının bilincinde Nurtepe, ÇAYAN Mahallesi olmuştur. Bu öylesine doğal bir şeydir ki, minibüs muavinlerinden, çocuklardan yaşlılara kadar sanki onyılların yerleşmiş bir adı gibi ÇAYAN Mahallesi olarak anılmıştır.* (Kurtuluş, 1995:29.)

<sup>105</sup> “Deniz Gezmiş’in, Yusuf Arslan’ın, Hüseyin İnan’ın asıldığı konusunda hala yanlış yaptığımızı söylüyor ve bunu sorguluyorsak o zaman Mahirleri de sorgulamamız gerekir. Mahir, Hüseyin ve Ulaş bir çaba içerisinde olmuşlardır. Bu çaba halk için olmuştur, ülkesi için olmuştur. (...) Biz bu arkadaşlarımızın kötü şeyler yaptıklarına inanmıyoruz ve şunu söylüyoruz; gençler bu arkadaşlarımızı yeniden değerlendirin, ne yapmak istediklerini ve yaptıklarını sorgulayın. Unutmayın, çünkü unutmak ihanettir.” Available at: <http://m.bianet.org/bianet/yasam/145445-maltepe-de-mahir-huseyin-ulas-parki>

erased. Although there is no such a place called Kızıldere in the official records, the residents of Kızıldere<sup>106</sup> and the revolutionary movements have insisted to use Kızıldere which is also a commemorative practice in itself. Considering these examples of (re)naming, it can be claimed that the act of (re)naming people or places after the lost combines the commemorated past with everyday life and play important role in the construction and perception of social reality (Azaryahu, 1997: 480).

#### **4.2.6. Anniversaries and the Organization of Time**

Dates are also important components of historical consciousness and the culture of remembrance. In *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin writes “The calendar does not therefore count time like clocks. They are monuments of a historical awareness, of which there has not seemed to be the slightest trace for a hundred years” (1968: 261-262). The revolutionary leftists in Turkey have always had specific calendar which has been totally different from the national calendar. They organize their time according to particular dates which should be celebrated or commemorated. They often schedule special events or actions for these particular dates which have historical and political significance for the revolutionary struggle.

The date of the Kızıldere Massacre, 30<sup>th</sup> of March, has been one of these significant dates for more than forty years. There has been an annual cycle of commemorative practices in every 30 March both in different cities of Turkey and also abroad. Since 1972, the 30<sup>th</sup> of March is not an ordinary date for most of the revolutionary movements, especially claiming to be the “heirs” of the Kızıldere “martyrs.” Moreover, “30 March” has been using as a metaphor encapsulating the anniversary of the “Kızıldere” with all the different meanings attributed to it by various political organizations.

Periodically revisiting an event occupying a significant place in the collective past and having a commemorative calendar are crucial in our mnemonic socialization (Zerubavel, 2003: 47). This mnemonic socialization is not only based on the cyclical commemorative practices; varying meanings and temporalities are also important in

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<sup>106</sup> The residents of Kızıldere have a village society in Istanbul and they use Kızıldere in their official name, mentioning Ataköy in paranthesis. In order to view the web site of the village society, see <http://kizildere.org.tr/>



terms of the commemorative practices. “30 March” has been embodied with different temporalities and several layers of remembering based on several political issues of the time of commemoration. Varied manifestations and experiences of temporality come from different ways in which organizers and the participants of these commemorative practices formulate their discourses and practices in relation to the past. The most typical example is The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party–Front’s (*Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-DHKP-C*) announcement of its establishment date as the 30<sup>th</sup> of March. Devrimci Sol, which had separated from the Revolutionary Path (*Devrimci Yol, Dev-Yol*) in 1978, transformed to the DHKP-C in March 30, 1994 with a congress and pointed to the claim of ideological continuity with the revolutionaries slaughtered in Kızıldere as follows:

And the Congress sets the foundation date of Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front as March 30 1994, the opening day of the Congress. This date is also the 22th anniversary of the Kızıldere Massacre, which is significantly valuable for the history of Marxist-Leninist movement and Revolutionary Left. March 30 1972... March 30 1994... <sup>107</sup>(2000: 915)

Again the same organization declared the period between March 30<sup>th</sup> and April 17<sup>th</sup> as the “Commemoration of the Revolutionary Martyrs and Celebration of the Establishment of Hope” (*30 Mart-17 Nisan Devrim Şehitleri Anma ve Umudun Kuruluşunu Kutlama Günleri*)<sup>108</sup>, which is another attempt to create continuity between the Kızıldere Massacre and the foundation of the party along with its dead militants. It seems possible to state that for the DHKP-C members and its supporters, it is not only the massacre which is remembered in the anniversaries of the March 30<sup>th</sup>. This date became also a symbol of celebrating the establishment of their political organization.

This example shows that March 30<sup>th</sup> indicates a reference point of multiple calendrical pasts and presents that people relate differently. Thus, different temporalities overlap in this very date and form continuity between the past and the present, therefore the meanings attributed to this reference point are not fixed.

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<sup>107</sup> “Ve Kongre Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi Cephesi’nin kuruluş tarihini, Kongre’nin açılış tarihi olan 30 Mart 1994 olarak belirler. Bu aynı zamanda, Marksist-Leninist hareketin, Devrimci Sol’un tarihinde büyük bir değer taşıyan Kızıldere katliamının 22. yıldönümünün tarihidir. 30 Mart 1972... 30 Mart 1994...”

<sup>108</sup> Ten Devrimci Sol militants were murdered by police on the 16- 17th April, 1992 in Istanbul and several commemorations have been arranged in the name of them by the same organization.

#### 4.2.7. Commemorative Ceremonies

Commemorative ceremonies of “Kızıldere” are the most prominent and continuously repeated practices of commemoration for decades. On the anniversaries of “Kızıldere,” there have been commemorative ceremonies or political actions in and outside of the country, mostly organized by the “heirs” of the THKP-C and supporters of Mahir Çayan's political ideology. Historically, the organization of ceremonies, visual and written materials used in the ceremonies and speeches show similarities both in the commemorations of “Kızıldere” and the other anniversaries of the revolutionary movements. These commemorations usually begin with one minute’s silence in the name of the revolutionaries killed in Kızıldere and also all other revolutionaries who have lost their lives in revolutionary struggles. This can be seen as a “tradition” of these kinds of ceremonies which have continued for decades and been transferred to the new generations, as we witnessed during the Gezi Uprising. After the moment of silence, one of the group members reads a text or declaration announcing the significance of the event, explaining its historical and political content. Sometimes one or more guest speakers attend to these commemorations to share their memories about the event or the revolutionaries. Then poems are read, revolutionary marches are sung and the ceremony ends with promises to maintain this revolutionary struggle. Thus, the ceremonies are highly stylized and composed of many ritualistic elements.

These commemorative ceremonies bring people together in a particular time and place, which can be either private or public. Major places of commemorative ceremonies have been the cemeteries of the slaughtered revolutionaries in different cities of Turkey. Also the universities around the country, offices of various political parties, magazines or associations and prisons have been the centers of commemorative ceremonies. Furthermore, two massive and more public types of commemorative ceremonies became more popular in recent years; marches and public statements in the central places of cities and the yearly visits to Kızıldere Village with hundreds of people. These types of ceremonies show a discrepancy according to the political and social conditions of both the historical period and the organizations themselves. In these terms, illegal demonstrations, organizing panels or concerts can be also seen as other types of commemorative ceremonies.

The places of commemorative ceremonies, either public or private, determine both the content of the ceremony and the potential of transformative relationship between the place and the participants or the audience – especially public commemorations which fundamentally contain audiences. The main target of the commemorative ceremonies of “Kızıldere” in private places such as the offices of political organizations and prisons is to strengthen the collective identity within the political community and to reinforce the historical bonds. Another important motivation in such ceremonies is to demonstrate the existence of the political organization in each and every situation. Suat Baysal, a former militant of Devrimci Yol, summarizes the basic purpose of the commemorative ceremonies in prisons with his following statement:

We organized commemorative events in prisons after 1980. We organized symbolic commemorations in our wards, which meant: Yes, we are in prison, we are prisoners but we are still alive and as long as we live, that is our path. And we performed those commemorations in order to reflect the resolution to show our commitment to our past, to our history.<sup>109</sup>

Other commemorative ceremonies in the public spaces such as university campuses, cemeteries, street demonstrations and visits to Kızıldere Village are open to interaction between the organizers, participants and the audience who can at least partially follow them from the media. Hence, none of these commemorations is the same with the previous or next one; each ceremony has its own dynamics with its ritualistic practices and its influence on its participants and audience. Although these ceremonies have some limitations in terms of time and space, they also have the power to give meaning and attribute value to the life of their participants and organizers. In these ceremonies the political aims are also diverse. Trying to make the commemorative event visible as a public issue, divulging the state violence and call the perpetrators to account on their criminal acts in front of the public become as crucial as demonstrating the existence of the political organization. Thus, the public commemorative ceremonies can also be seen as a realm of power struggle between the state and the revolutionary leftists.

The ceremonial gatherings in the cemeteries of the revolutionaries have always been symbolically important for the revolutionary leftists in Turkey. Cemeteries are key

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<sup>109</sup> Personal interview conducted with Suat Baysal in Samsun on 21.08.2014: “80 sonrası hapisanelerde de anmalar yaptık. Koşullarımızda sembolik anmalar olurdu. Onun anlamı şuydu: Evet cezaevindeyiz, tutsağız ama hala yaşıyoruz ve yaşadığımız sürece yolumuz yoldur. Ve biz geçmişimize, tarihimize bağlılığımızı gösterme kararlılığını ifade etmek için yaptık.”

sites for remembrance and they can also be seen as repository of collective memory. They are the places constructed for both the dead and the living where some kind of communication between them becomes possible. Thus, they are both the reminders of the loss and also reminders of the living members of the society. This makes them common places of the past and the present. They carry different affective meanings for different people. For the commemorations of “Kızıldere” Mahir Çayan’s graveside in Karşıyaka Cemetery, Ankara (See Appendix 15) has been the central meeting point for long years<sup>110</sup> and has witnessed several parades organized by different political organizations, parties and associations during the anniversaries of the massacre. These cemeteries are not visited only by political groups; people from different parts of the country come to visit the cemeteries personally or in groups. Unlike politically organized commemorative ceremonies, these people exhibit their love, loyalty or respect to the revolutionaries in their own ways, including viscerally practices such as praying or touching upon the tombstones (See Appendix 16).

The Federation of Revolutionary 78’ers (*Devrimci 78’liler Federasyonu*, ‘78’liler) has been one of the central organizations in Ankara that brings different political groups together for the commemorative ceremonies of the Kızıldere Massacre. Its president, Nejat Kangal clearly explains their approach about these ceremonies in those words:

But we pay visits there (the cemetery) as a political activity and as a political action rather than a death anniversary. But we also encounter many people coming from the nearby neighborhoods at morning and praying by the grave. But as far as we are concerned, all of the commemorative activities are political actions. (...) May 6 and March 30 are days of resistance. They are the days of resistance demonstrations. Even if we organize them in a cemetery, we do not regard it as a day on which we remember our sorrow but as a day of honor.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> The common place of the commemorative ceremonies of Kızıldere has been Karşıyaka Cemetery in Ankara where the graves of Mahir Çayan, Sinan Kazım Özudođru and Hüdai Arıkan have been located; the graves of Ahmet Atasoy, Ertan Saruhan and Nihat Yılmaz in the villages of Fatsa, Cihan Alptekin’s grave in Ardeşen, Rize and Ömer Ayna’s grave in Diyarbakır. Commemorative ceremonies in Fatsa, Rize and Diyarbakır have been regional and organized by former and current politically active figures or groups of that region.

<sup>111</sup> Personal interview conducted with Nejat Kangal in Ankara on 12.06.2014: “*Ama biz orayı bir ölüm yıldönümünden çok bir politik etkinlik, bir eylem olarak görerek orayı ziyaret ediyoruz. Ama şunu da görüyoruz. Sabah saatlerinden itibaren çevre mahallelerden mezar başına gelip dua okuyan birçok insanla da karşılaşılıyor. Ama bizim için anmaların tamamı politik eylem niteliğindedir. (...) 6 Mayıslar, 30 Martlar direniş günleridir. Direniş eylemlerinin günleridir. Onu bir mezarlıkta dahi yapılacak olsa üzüntümüzü hatırladığımız bir gün olarak değil, onurun günü olarak algılarız.*”

I have confronted with similar statements about the notions of “political act” and/or “resistance day” in my interviews as well. Almost all of the political organizations or actors explain their insistence on the organization of these ceremonial gatherings as a “political act” and they attribute different meanings to those acts. The personal accounts of two former militants of Devrimci Yol, Cahit Akçam and Suat Baysal also support these statements:

They were not simply commemoration events for us; they never were. These commemorations manifested the resolution that those people were not forgotten and their flag would be received and assigned to others.<sup>112</sup>

Since 1977, we organized our commemoration every year on March 30. The commemoration of March 30 was a political duty for us (...) March 30 was always one of the most important revolutionary tasks and activities carried out back then. It did always have a great meaning and significance.<sup>113</sup>

As it can be seen in these statements, visiting cemeteries which have seen as a religious ritual are transformed into public demonstrations by the revolutionary leftists. This transformation provides the integration of the “loss” into the lives of the living people. They not only express their grief or anger, but also express their political presence and positioning. The cemeteries of revolutionaries can be seen as the “means of honoring and remembering them, as ‘sacred spaces’ for the retelling of myths” (Huggins, 2012: 480). These cemeteries and commemorative ceremonies lead to the “eternalization” of the revolutionaries and their ideas.

Another continuous commemorative ceremony has been the ceremonial gatherings in the universities. University students from different generations have organized the most extensive commemorative ceremonies which have spread the whole country. In every anniversary, university campuses become one of the central sites of memory (See Appendix 17-18). Their walls are encrusted with posters, placards, flags or slogans before the ceremony and the students usually organize a march which often ends with a public statement in a central place of the campus. Commemorative ceremonies in the universities can be seen as a representation of the ideological continuity with the revolutionary youth movement of the 1970s. Most of the political

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<sup>112</sup> Personal interview conducted with Cahit Akçam in Ankara on 11.06.2014: “*Bunlar bizim açımızdan sadece bir anma etkinliği değildi, hiçbir zaman da olmadı. O insanların unutulmadığı ve onların bayrağının teslim alınarak başka insanlara devredileceğini ortaya koyan bir kararlılığı göstermek gibi bir özelliğe sahipti bu anmalar bizim için.*”

<sup>113</sup> Personal interview conducted with Suat Baysal in Samsun on 21.08.2014: “*Biz de 77’den itibaren her yıl 30 Mart’ta anmamızı yaptık. 30 Mart anmaları bizim için bir siyasal görevdi (...) 30 Mart her zaman o zamanlar yapılan en önemli devrimci görev ve faaliyetlerden biriydi. Her zaman çok yüksek bir anlamı ve önemi oldu.*”

organizations with the claim of being “heirs” of the political movements of the 1970s have been insistently embracing and maintaining the political practices of that period. This is seen as the will to keep the political “legacy” of the revolutionary leaders within their current political struggle. These ceremonies and all printed or visual materials used for them contribute to make the commemorative event relevant to the present. They have been also an inseparable part of the intergenerational transmission of the collective memory of “Kızıldere.”

Beginning from 2009, the places and types of the commemorative ceremonies became diversified. Public demonstrations and the commemorative ceremonies in the village of Kızıldere became prominent from this time on whereas previous indoor ceremonies and commemorations in the cemeteries were framing the norms of commemorative practices. Various political organizations started to arrange street demonstrations or public declarations in the public spaces of different cities of Turkey. Marches at Beyoğlu, public declarations in front of Galatasaray High School in Istanbul (See Appendix 19-20) and in Konur Street in Ankara became the centers of these public commemorations. Furthermore, different groups organized marches or public declarations on the central places in different cities including Adana, Konya, Artvin, Samsun, Eskişehir, Konya and the like.

I argue that growing interest in confronting with the acts of state sponsored violence and violations of human rights do not only strengthen the collective memory about those events. It also contributes to the struggle for justice for the survivors which became very influential in the diversification of the commemorative ceremonies in the recent years. Especially, renewal of the judicial proceedings of surviving members of the Turkish military based on their leading roles in the September 12, 1980 *coup d'état* in April 2013 and memorialization projects such as the September 12<sup>th</sup> Museum of Shame (*12 Eylül Utanç Müzesi*) by the ‘78’liler and several non-governmental organizations constituted a suitable ground for such public debates. In this political atmosphere, several leftist groups or individuals supported these street demonstrations. This shift also resulted in discursive changes within the commemorative practices of some of the political organization. The Kızıldere Massacre started to be addressed as a subject matter in the literature of confrontation and the pursuit of justice from a very small group of leftist institutions or actors. For instance, in the last anniversary, a group of political parties, trade unions and associations organized a public statement in Beyoğlu and declared that:

The “secret history” of the Kızıldere Massacre which has been remained in the dark is so unknown, we demand for uncovering. Families who lost their relatives in Kızıldere and the revolutionary, democratic public have not received answers to their questions for years, we demand for answers. We demand to know the conditions paved the way to Kızıldere and the responsible who adjudicated the massacre. We demand for an account for the perpetrators. Because we want to recognize the rulers from the past up to date, understand today and build a clean future.<sup>114</sup>

As an example of similar approach, a representative from Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP*), Şerafettin Halis, posed a question in the parliament in the anniversary of the massacre in 2010.<sup>115</sup> He demanded the investigation of the massacre and finding those who are responsible by establishing an investigation commission. Although there have been evidences and eye witness reports, bringing the massacre into question within the limits of law is a rarely seen practice of commemoration. Main practices of remembering and calling for accountability have maintained through the commemorative practices of the revolutionary leftists.

Another recent novelty which became a part of the repertoire of the practices of commemoration is the visits to the Kızıldere Village. Some of the political organizations which are active in the Black Sea region or groups of people independently have been visiting the house in the village for years. However, since 2009, one of the radical leftist groups in Turkey, the People’s Front (*Halk Cephesi*), that strongly claims to be the inheritors of Mahir Çayan’s ideology and the revolutionary practices of the THKP-C, arrange this visit as a political action. Hundreds of people from different parts of the country meet in the entrance of the village and they march to the house with various banners and pictures of the murdered revolutionaries, chanting slogans and revolutionary marches (See Appendix 21-22).

Both the village house in Kızıldere and the cemeteries of the slaughtered revolutionaries perceived almost as sacred places. The ceremonies held in and around these places have become routinized political rites and they have symbolic features

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<sup>114</sup> “Türkiyeli devrimcilerin ve Türkiye’nin siyasi kaderine damgasını vuran Kızıldere Katliamı’nın karanlıkta kalan ‘gizli tarihi’ pek bilinmiyor, açığa çıksın istiyoruz. Kızıldere’de yakınlarımızı kaybeden ailelerin ve devrimci/demokrat kamuoyunun yıllardır cevabını bekledikleri soruların yanıtları verilmedi, yanıtlanmıyor istiyoruz. Türkiye’yi Kızıldere’ye getiren koşulların ve Kızıldere Katliamı’nın hükmünü veren muktadirlerin bilinmesini ve katil muktadirlerle hesaplaşma yaşanmasını istiyoruz. Çünkü geçmişten güncele bizi yönetenleri tanımak, bugünü anlamak, temiz bir gelecek kurmak istiyoruz.” Available at: [http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/163396%C2%ADkizildere%C2%ADkatliami%C2%ADnda%C2%ADoldurulenler%C2%ADanildi?utm\\_content=bufferda848&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com%E2%80%A6](http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/163396%C2%ADkizildere%C2%ADkatliami%C2%ADnda%C2%ADoldurulenler%C2%ADanildi?utm_content=bufferda848&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com%E2%80%A6)

<sup>115</sup> <http://www.sendika.org/2010/03/bdpli-halis-kizildere-katliami-icin-arastirma-onergesi-verdi/>

similar to pilgrimage. For example, some of the participants collect soil/stones from the surroundings of the house or try to touch upon the objects in the house or tombstones in the cemeteries. Year in and year out, various “Kızıldere pilgrims” have stood in this site and each one evokes a unique memory. They have been received as memorial artifacts which are capable of (re)shaping the present by encapsulating varying political practices. They also have the impact of a monument. The existing literature on public monuments and statues based on the argument that they are the attempts to fix a certain form of historical interpretation (Crapanzano, 2004) or can be seen as tools for mastering the past from the perspective of the present (Ahiska, 2011). However, in the case of “Kızıldere” it can be claimed that these “proposed” monuments are reshaped and reconstructed in each commemoration rather than being fixed artifacts.

### **4.3. Sites of Memory, Sites of Conflict**

Most of the commemorative practices of “Kızıldere” have become a site of confrontation with the repressive forces of the state authority. They have been kept under constant pressure and control by the state for years. Commemorations of revolutionary leaders and their publications have been banned or used as pretexts for accusations and even imprisonment in Turkey. Many people are accused of keeping these publications or promulgating their ideas through periodicals or newspapers. For this reason, sites of collective memory on “Kızıldere” turn into sites of conflict between the revolutionary leftists and the state.

During the last decade, the number of these kinds of accusations, and of people brought to trial and imprisoned as a result of them has increased noticeably. For example, in 2008, 13<sup>th</sup> High Penal Court in Istanbul decided to withdraw Mahir Çayan’s book, *Collected Essays (Toplu Yazılar)*, from the market. The AKP government has been periodically launching operations against leftwing organizations with various reasons, and prosecutors have been preparing indictments where democratic protests and legal demonstrations are regarded as evidence of crime. For instance, in 2006, ten members of the Freedom and Solidarity Party (*Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi, ÖDP*) were accused of being members of the DHKP-C after they arranged a public declaration on the anniversary of the Kızıldere Massacre. In the indictment, it was written that



“Mahir Çayan, who was murdered in Kızılderne on the March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1972, Hüseyin İnan, who was executed on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1972, and İbrahim Kaypakkaya, who died in Diyarbakır Prison, are the members of the DHKP-C, which was formed during 1990s. The public declaration included sentences praising terrorists and members of terror organizations.”<sup>116</sup>

Another strange example is from Adana. Four members of the Adana Association for Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (*Adana Temel Haklar ve Özgürlükler Derneği*), which is a legal institution, were arrested after an operation and they were accused of being members of a terrorist organization and making its propaganda. The activities cited as evidence were attending the Women’s Day celebrations carrying a banner that read “Let’s show the power of women”, attending the commemoration of the Kızılderne Massacre and Newroz, graveyard visits, demonstrations against the educational system or of going to picnics.<sup>117</sup> The strange part of these accusations is that the mentioned political organizations, the THKP-C and the THKO, of which these accused people are assumed to be members in the indictments, are not active anymore. In other words, these people are accused of being members of nonexistent political organizations. Especially the THKP-C and Mahir Çayan were in the center of the accusations.

Specifically during the commemorations in different cities of Turkey, except İstanbul and Ankara, the state security forces are put on full alert. From blocking the roads to the cemeteries to prevent the means of transportation; to threatening the villagers to prosecute the participants of the ceremonies, different kinds of oppression are applied. For instance, 48 people who had participated to the commemorative ceremony in Cihan Alptekin’s cemetery on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 2007 were prosecuted in 2011 with the accusations of “opposition to the law of assembly and demonstration” and “praising the crime and criminals” up to 5 years of imprisonment.<sup>118</sup> It is possible to encounter these kinds of events almost in every anniversary of the Kızılderne Massacre from different parts of the country.

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<sup>116</sup> <http://www.sendika.org/2006/09/cayan-anmasina-iliginc-dava/> Thus, five different political organizations including a legal political party constituted in 1996, three former illegal parties which were active during 1970s and their leaders and one more illegal party constituted in 1994 and still active were brought together in one indictment.

<sup>117</sup> <http://bianet.org/bianet/hukuk/140173-herkes-orgut-uyesi-olabilir>

<sup>118</sup> For details, see <http://www.sendika.org/2011/08/cihan-alptekin-anmasina-dava/>

These sites of collective memory are not only the sites of conflict between the revolutionary leftists and the state; they also constitute sites of power struggle between different political factions. As I stated before, in the anniversaries of “Kızıldere” the cemeteries of the revolutionaries witness several parades by different political groups. During the day, large and small groups of political organizations display their ceremonies and demonstrations one after another. This is also the case in other commemorative ceremonies organized in the universities, neighborhoods or in Kızıldere. So, different groups of people choose to participate in some specific ceremonial gatherings in order to declare their solidarity with a particular political organization and not others. This leads to the rivalry among different political factions. This multipartite view has been a matter of debates within political groups thus within my interlocutors. Some of them claim that this multipartiteness is a sign showing that the message of “revolutionary solidarity” of the “martyrs” of the Kızıldere Massacre is not understood. Ali Karaduman, one of the organizers and participants of the commemorative ceremonies in Fatsa for almost 40 years, stated that “These people cannot convene in such events, which in effect hurts people like us. (...) People who believe with their whole heart and the comrades in the same struggle fight together no matter what fraction they belong to.”<sup>119</sup> Others argue that it constitutes an obstacle to have a strong and unified image of the revolutionary leftists. This critique of multipartiteness is not unique to the commemorative ceremonies of “Kızıldere,” it is a general critique directed to the Turkish left which has been almost a “myth” in the discussions on the left in Turkey. Being influenced by this kind of critique lead me ask questions to all of my interlocutors in my interviews. Some of them supported this argument and complained about it. However, a considerable part of them objected to these critiques with the arguments that I think Nejat Kangal clearly explained:

As a matter of fact, when you look at this as an image from outside, it does not look very nice. It is partially true, but not completely. It exists within politics now and then: particular structures find it hard to stand side by side. People may react to this, asking, “Can’t you stand together even when visiting the cemetery?” but all of such positions are political demonstrations. If they stood side by side in a political protest, then they would become allies, which would

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<sup>119</sup> Personal interview conducted with Ali Karaduman in Fatsa on 25.08.2014: “*Bu insanlar bu tür etkinliklerde biraraya gelemiyorlar. Bu aslında bizim gibi insanları yaratıyor. (...) Yürekten inanan insanlar, mücadele arkadaşları hangi fraksiyonda olursa olsun beraber mücadele eder.*”

be something different. But if we are taking a political action there and if every word we utter has political meanings...<sup>120</sup>

Despite these kinds of disagreements, the commemorative practices of “Kızıldere” have been seen as one of the most important “political acts” for almost all of the political organizations or actors. They have been conducting these practices as a kind of political duty and they attribute different meanings to those acts. I argue that Eric Hobsbawn’s explanations on inventing traditions could be helpful to understand the emphasized notion of “political act” and the conflicts between the revolutionary leftist and the state and within particular factions. In *Inventing Traditions*, Hobsbawn writes:

[Inventing traditions] seem to belong to three overlapping types: a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior (1983: 9).

Conceptualizing commemorative practices of “Kızıldere” as “political acts” of the revolutionary leftists seems in harmony with these three types of inventing traditions. While these practices reinforce the social cohesion within particular political factions, they also legitimize diverse authorities in the same platform. In our case, rather than socialization, the main purpose of these groups is politicization of both their members and the broader masses by infusing particular political behaviors and values through these commemorative practices. As a consequence, these sites of memory turn into the sites of conflict both between the state and the revolutionary movements as well as within particular political factions.

#### 4.4. Commemorative Narratives of “Kızıldere”

Paul Connerton, in his well-known book *How Societies Remember*, states that “If there is such a thing as social memory, we are likely to find it in commemorative

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<sup>120</sup> Personal interview conducted with Nejat Kangal in Ankara on 12.06.2014: “Aslında bu görüntü olarak dışarıdan bakıldığında çok hoş görünmeyen bir şeydir. Bir yanıyla doğrudur ama bütün olarak da bu değil. Zaman zaman politika içerisinde var olan bir şeydir: Bazı yapılar yan yana durmakta zorlanırlar. Bunu tabiki şöyle “yaa bir mezarlığa giderken de mi yan yana duramıyorsunuz?” diye söylenir ama bunların tamamı politik eylemlerdir. Politik eylemde yan yana duruyor olsalar zaten müttefik olurlar, başka bir şey olur. Ama biz orada politik bir eylemlik içerisindeyse orada söyleyeceğimiz her söz politik anlamda bir şey ifade ediyorsa...”

ceremonies” (1989: 4-5) and argues that history can be exemplified in non-textual practices like commemoration ceremonies and bodily practices. He claimed that the images of the past and the remembered data can be transferred to the present through performative acts like commemoration ceremonies. “Commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit: and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms” (1989: 5). In Connerton’s analysis, the formal structure and the content of commemorations are conservative and repetitive because the practices of these commemorations based on habits which have specific rules, repeated periodically and becoming quite unchangeable. However, performative nature of commemoration makes them to be effective on both the participants and also audiences with reference to the moral values, political affiliations and collective memories. Thus, besides the organizers, the participants and audience of the commemorative ceremonies are very important in determining the meanings attributed to the commemorative event. Moreover, this is not only valid for commemorative ceremonies but also all types of commemorative practices.

I argue that the commemorative practices of “Kızılder” seem to be unchangeable only on the surface. Although most of the practices have been maintaining the same form, their contents are not fixed. The meanings attributed to those practices both by the participants and wider audiences, the discourses reproduced in connection to changing political developments and the affective influence on the participants are contested. All these sites of collective memory of “Kızılder” are tied to the interests and concerns of particular political factions and all kinds of changes in the group will determine the future meaning and significance of a given site of memory. In every sites of collective memory of “Kızılder,” another historical and political event or its particular dimension is remembered. Thus, these sites evoke particular commemorative and interpretative political and historical narratives which have been concretizing and materializing the memories of “Kızılder.” What makes these commemorative practices open or close to contestation is the diversity of the commemorative narratives varying according to the ideological stance of the political organizations.

I discussed the narratives of the witnesses of the period in the Chapter III. Most of these narratives are in harmony with the commemorative narratives of the revolutionary leftists which I think is a demonstration of the intergenerational

transmission of collective memory. Common themes in the commemorative narratives have been interpreting “Kızıldere” as a representation of revolutionary solidarity, spirit of resistance, an explicit example of state sponsored violence, defining it as a victory or defeat and identification of it with the THKP-C and Mahir Çayan. Besides these narratives, “Kızıldere” as a historical and political symbol has been filled with several ideological discourses and moral values by revolutionary leftists from different generations. It is usually instrumentalized by several political factions in order to manifest their political stance. The excerpts below manifest some of the ideological rhetoric defined by two political organizations claimed to be the “heirs” of the “political tradition” created in “Kızıldere:”

Kızıldere is a call to war! Kızıldere is the manifestation of the revolution of Turkey! (...) Kızıldere is the insistence on armed struggle and the claim of the revolution. (...) Kızıldere is being an alternative of power (to the sovereign) and the challenge to the imperialism and the oligarchy<sup>121</sup> (Yürüyüş, 2012: 4-5).

Kızıldere is not limited to the slaughter of our vanguards by imperialism and oligarchy. Kızıldere is the resistance against the imperialism and oligarchy/fascism. It is the revelation of the fascist face of the 12 March military intervention, the concrete form of the revolutionary unity which is a current need, vanguard struggle and the revolutionary path of Turkey<sup>122</sup> (Barikat, 2014: 41).

Similar statements can be seen in several published or visual materials in different years. These narratives are mostly defined according to varying political aims and interests of particular political factions. Thus, some of these themes might be emphasized by particular factions in a particular historical period while the other themes are highlighted by other political organizations. They might also historically change based on the political shifts of the organizations. One of the most common commemorative narratives is defining the Kızıldere Massacre as a crucial “battle” which is usually seen in nationalist discourses. This approach is usually noticeable in the political organizations which approach to the political violence as a legitimate means in the revolutionary struggle. Commemoration of “Kızıldere” in terms of a “battle” allows interpreting the event with military concepts such as a “defeat” or a

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<sup>121</sup> “Kızıldere Savaş Çağrısıdır! Kızıldere Türkiye Devriminin Manifestosudur! (...) Kızıldere, silahlı mücadelede ısrar ve devrim iddiasıdır. (...) Kızıldere, iktidar alternatifi olmak emperyalizme ve oligarşiye meydan okumaktır.”

<sup>122</sup> “Kızıldere, emperyalizm ve oligarşinin öncülerimizi katletmesiyle sınırlı değildir. Kızıldere, emperyalizm ve oligarşiye/faşizme karşı direniştir. 12 Mart açık faşizminin yüzünü açığa çıkarmaktır, bugün bir ihtiyaç olan devrimci birliğin somut biçim almasıdır, öncü savaşı devrimciliktir, Türkiye devriminin yoludur.”

“victory” which results in conceptualizing “Kızıldere” as “an end” or “a new beginning” in its period.

The self-disposal of the THKP-C was its political victory. After this self-abolishment, the youth movement that developed after 1974 improved thorough that victory. (...) The fact that the movement got defeated did not create a bad impact upon us. Yes, we felt sorry but we did not consider it as a defeat that could lead us to the revolution. To the contrary, we regarded it as a political victory; that is how I perceive it.<sup>123</sup>

states Cumhur Yavuz, a former Dev-Yol guerilla and a current member of 78'ers Association. Defining “Kızıldere” as a political “victory” as opposed to the physical annihilation of the revolutionaries has been a common approach for most of my interlocutors who had attended the revolutionary struggle after 1974. This approach is still prevalent for most of the revolutionary movements.

Similar interpretations can be seen in almost all of the political periodicals or the public declarations in the commemorative ceremonies during the anniversaries of “Kızıldere.” Specifically, the “heirs” of the THKP-C, commemorate all other “battles” or conflicts in their political struggle with reference to “Kızıldere.” It is seen as one of the “battles” in their long-termed revolutionary “war” which is stated in a factional periodical as: “Kızıldere is one of the stages in the revolutionary path of Turkey. The revolution is permanent; it will be achieved through the numerous stages”<sup>124</sup> (*Barikat*, 2014:43). Although “Kızıldere” is seen as a political victory by some of the organizations, the “ultimate victory” would be the revolution following the “tradition” of resistance initiated in Kızıldere.

Thus, “Kızıldere” as a significant “battle” has been represented as a constitutive element or a “myth” which established an important historical and political “legacy” for some of the revolutionary leftists in Turkey. This perspective brings about the idea of continuity between different historical and political events for which the state is seen as perpetrator. The obvious expression of this approach can also be seen in one of the most frequently used slogans “Kızıldere is not the end, the war continues”<sup>125</sup> This emphasis

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<sup>123</sup> Personal interview conducted on 12.06.2014: “*THKP-C'nin kendini imha etmesi politik zaferiydi. Ondan sonra Türkiye'de 74 sonrası gelişen gençlik hareketi o kazanım üzerinden gelişti. (...) Hareketin yenilmiş olması bizler açısından olumsuz bir etki yaratmadı. Evet, üzüldük ama onu biz devrime ulaşabilecek bir yenilgi olarak görmedik. Aksine politik bir başarı olarak gördük. Ben öyle algılıyorum yani.*”

<sup>124</sup> “*Kızıldere, Türkiye devriminde bir duraktır; devrim süreklidir, sayısız duraklardan geçerek zafere ulaşacaktır.*”

<sup>125</sup> “*Kızıldere Son Değil, Savaş Sürüyor*”

on “continuity” between different historical events of state sponsored violence also lead to the idea of a continuous resistance that can be seen in the following sentences:

Frontiers (*Cepheliler*)<sup>126</sup> turned each and every place where the enemy attacked into Kızıldere, not only the places that were sieged. Frontiers made it traditional not to surrender but to resist when faced with the enemy. Today, people put up resistance everywhere from the magazine office, to association building, from the center for culture to law office, just as how they resisted against the terror of the fascism in Kızıldere.<sup>127</sup> (*Yürüyüş*, 2013: 5)

The notion of “continuity” is the most frequently encountered theme in all kinds of commemorative practices and narratives. It usually appears in three different formats: Claiming organizational or political continuity with the THKP-C, creating historical analogies between the Kızıldere Massacre and different political events and emphasizing the continuity of the state sponsored violence by naming it as a state tradition.

As stated before “Kızıldere” is seen as a constitutive element by some of the political organizations and they claim to be the “heirs” of its political “legacy.” For this reason, several political factions need to create direct links with both “Kızıldere” as a symbol of resistance and also the revolutionaries. The political factions organizing commemorative ceremonies claim to be the “only” and “real” successor of the THKP-C because they put forward it as a confirmation of their ideology. This claim can be seen explicitly in these statements: “In those days, we have interpreted Mahir’s thoughts accurately and politically organized in that way. From that day to this, we have been the successors. We have been representing his ideology and revolutionism”<sup>128</sup> (*Barikat*, 2014: 43) and “The living equivalent of Mahir’s legacy is Devrimci Yol. Devrimci Yol is Turkish Marxism”<sup>129</sup> (*Devrimci Hareket*, 2013).

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<sup>126</sup> “Cepheliler” is referring to the supporters of the DHKP-C which is accepted as the follower of the THKP-C and Mahir Çayan’s ideology. The journal *Yürüyüş* is the factional periodical of the DHKP-C where this notion of “continuity” has been repeated for numerous times.

<sup>127</sup> “Sadece kuşatmalarda değil, düşmanın saldırılarının olduğu her yer Cepheliler tarafından Kızıldere’ye çevrilmiştir. Düşman karşısında teslim olmamak, direnmek Cepheliler tarafından gelenekselleştirilmiştir. Bugün bir dergi bürosundan, dernek binasına, kültür merkezinden hukuk bürosuna faşizmin terörü karşısında Kızıldere’de nasıl direnilmişse öyle direnilmektedir.”

<sup>128</sup> “O günlerde Mahir’i, (...) en doğru biz yorumladık ve bunun politik karşılığını örgütledik. O gün de bugün de devamı biziz; biz bu ideoloji ve devrimciliği temsil ediyoruz.”

<sup>129</sup> “Mahirin mirasının yaşayan karşılığı Devrimci Yol’dur. Devrimci Yol, Türkiye Marksizm’idir”

Most of the commemorative narratives draw correspondences between the Kızıldere Massacre as a historical event, the THKP-C as a political organization and its leader Mahir Çayan. This has created a contention between different political factions because several political organizations do not embrace the commemoration while the “heirs” of the THKP-C arrogate to themselves. Some “martyrs” “belong” to particular factions, while others are claimed and iconized by all political factions. Although the revolutionary leaders of the 1970s have been accepted as the “martrys” of all the leftists, conflicting political aims and strategies reflect a rivalry on the basis of “ownership” of their “legacy.” A clear representation of this approach can be seen in these lines:

(...) We tell those who defy armed struggle and consider the refusal to surrender a “suicide” and “adventurousness,” who defend a line that has no connection whatsoever with Kızıldere in legal partisanship lane and to the crestfallen and exhausted and to the European leftists, “You cannot appropriate Mahir and his friends. You cannot lay claim on Kızıldere. You are the deniers and exploiters of this history!”<sup>130</sup>(*Yürüyüş*, 2012: 5)

This statement is a way of declaring that “We are also a part of this unity” and manifesting that this struggle requires sacrifices such as devoting lives, which is a challenge for other political organizations. This tendency leads to draw boundaries between different political factions and create “imaginary communities.” Those who emphasize more “Kızıldere” and Mahir Çayan are seen as the more prominent political actors. Such an understanding leads a debate on possession of a particular historical event and raise debates on the notion of “property” with reference to “Kızıldere.” This special effort to create direct links with a past event with its protagonists results in a linear understanding of history and raises discussions on property right, which is quite problematic for those who claim to be a part of a “Marxist” political organization.

Another version of claiming “continuity” is usually seen as creating historical analogy in order to view the past as somehow “similar” to the present. Eviatar Zerubavel, in his successful work *Time Maps*, explains how discontinuous events are linked together and the historical origin is constructed:

Like any other symbol, historical analogies clearly transcend their historical specificity. When drawing such analogies we therefore do not feel constrained by the considerable temporal distance often separating past signifiers form their

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<sup>130</sup> “(...) silahlı mücadeleyi inkar edenlere, teslim olmamayı “intihar” ve “maceracılık” olarak görenlere, Avrupa solcularına, legal partacılık kulvarında Kızıldere’yle uzaktan yakından ilgisi olmayan bir çizgiyi savunanlara, tamamen düzen içine yerleşmiş yılgınlara ve yorgunlara, “Siz Mahirler’i sahiplenemezsiniz. Kızıldere’yi sahiplenemezsiniz. Siz bu tarihin inkarcıları ve istismarcılarıdır!” diyoruz.”



corresponding present signified. Their evocative power is much greater, however, when the cultural affinity between the two helps offset such distance (2003: 50).

Mobilizing the collective memory of “Kızıldere” in this manner has been a very wide-spread effort within the revolutionary leftists which is reflected on almost all types of commemorative practices. For instance, after his death the leader of the DHKP-C, Dursun Karataş, became a figure at the ceremonies and found its place next to Mahir Çayan. One of the slogans in these ceremonies has been “From Mahir to Dayı<sup>131</sup>, This Struggle Continues”<sup>132</sup> (See Appendix 23). These figures can be diversified with other passed away militants who were killed in the armed struggle which integrate the past experiences with the present political agenda (See Appendix 24-25).

Similar historical analogies can be found in several slogans which differ according to current political issues. “From Kızıldere to the Revolt of June, From Mahir to Berkin, We have been walking towards the revolution,”<sup>133</sup> (See Appendix 26) “From Kızıldere to Gezi This is just the beginning, resistance will continue,”<sup>134</sup> and “From Kızıldere to Kobane The Struggle Continues”<sup>135</sup> are some of the examples of these historical analogies.

Not only slogans but also public statements and declarations contain similar historical analogies:

There has been no difference between the rulers of the past and today who deems nothing but massacres proper for our people from Kızıldere to Çorum, Maraş and Sivas. The imperialism and the AKP government as its current representative, that arrests or commits to prison all oppositional segments including the revolutionaries, democrats, is the current version of this massacre tradition. Those who burned our 35 people in Sivas and absolved the murderers, massacred 35 Kurdish villagers bombing in Uludere, bloodshed of our people during Newroz and slaughtered our comrades in Kızıldere are the complementary parts of the same order.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> “Dayı” is the epithet of Dursun Karataş; he is known as Dayı by most of the leftwing organizations in Turkey.

<sup>132</sup> “Mahir’den Dayı’ya Sürüyor Bu Kavga”

<sup>133</sup> “Kızıldere’den Haziran Ayaklanması’na Mahirler’den Berkinler’e Devrime Yürüyoruz,” Available at: <http://halkinsesity-2.blogspot.com.tr/2015/04/mannheimda-kzldere-anmas.html>

<sup>134</sup> “Kızıldere’den Gezi’ye Bu Daha Başlangıç Mücadeleye Devam” Available at: <http://www.sendika1.org/2014/03/antalya-kizildereden-geziye-bu-tarih-bizim/>

<sup>135</sup> “Kızıldere’den Kobane’ye Sürüyor Mücadele” Available at: [http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/anadolu\\_universitesinde\\_kizildere\\_gerilimi-1324999](http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/anadolu_universitesinde_kizildere_gerilimi-1324999)

<sup>136</sup> “Kızıldere’den Çorum’a, Maraş’tan Sivas’a değin, emekçi halklarımıza katliamdan başka hiçbir şeyi reva görmeyen dünün egemenleri ile bugünkülerin arasında öz itibarıyla hiçbir fark yoktur. Devrimcileri, demokratları,

In these narratives, the revolutionary leftists perceive a similarity between several past and current political issues, events or atrocities which turn into transhistorical symbols in the revolutionary struggle. These historical analogies also draw boundaries between two different parties, but this time not political factions: the revolutionary leftists and their supporters on the one hand and the state on the other. Historical analogies and the narratives of continuity enable to reinforce the ties and create symbolic but seemingly direct links to the past. These kinds of narratives preclude a possible historical gap between the past and the present and strengthen the collective identity of particular political groups.

At this point, I will return to the definition of “Kızıldere” as a “battle.” Designation of the “Kızıldere” as a “battle” in a long-termed “war” accompanies the notion of “martyrdom” which has been another deeply valorized theme in the commemorative narratives of the revolutionary leftists. The notion of “martyrdom” is generally used by Islamist movements. However, it has also been present within the nationalist, liberationist or revolutionary movements, especially in the Middle East. Martyr is a figure of either a victim who can be sacrificed for the gods or a leader who is in the forefront of a community to mobilize them in the way guided by the gods. Another feature of the martyr is its collectivization. A martyr has been the child of a mother and father before being the martyr but it turns into the child of a community which carries particular values that makes him/her martyr. In this regard, martyr does not have a family. The “owner” of the martyr is the community itself which can be a country, religion, nation or a political community as in the case of “Kızıldere” (Yalçınkaya, 2011).

The revolutionary movements in Turkey have also appropriated the use of this concept for long years. The revolutionaries killed by the state sponsored violence or dead in the revolutionary struggle have been called “martyrs” by the revolutionary leftist organizations. Ten revolutionaries slaughtered in Kızıldere have also been called “martyrs” in relation to their conscious political act of self-sacrifice for a political aim. “Martyrs” of “Kızıldere” are inseparable components of the iconization process and they usually promoted as “heroes” who could sacrifice their lives without hesitation for

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*yurtseverleri ve muhalif tüm kesimleri tutuklayan, hapisanelere koyan emperyalizm ve onun bugünkü maşası (ya da temsilcisi) AKP hükümeti, bu katliamcı geleneğin bugünkü versiyonudur. Sivas'ta 35 canımızı yakanlarla, o katilleri bugün 'aklayanlar', Uludere'de 35 Kürt köylüsünü bombalayarak katledenlerle, halklarımızın Newroz'unu kana bulayanlar ve Kızıldere'de yoldaşlarımızı katledenler aynı düzenin birbirini tamamlayan parçalarıdır.*” Available at: <http://www.devrimehareket.net/kizildere-son-degil-savas-suruyor/>

their “people” although they had known that they would be killed before going to Kızıldere. Ten revolutionaries, specifically Mahir Çayan as the “archetypal martyrs” are represented as the iconic protagonists who have become politically recognized “heroes.” This heroic narratives focus on the notion of “self-sacrifice” and the necessity of armed struggle as the path to follow for the revolution. Che Guevara’s famous quotation from his speech in the Tricontinental Congress in 1967 has been almost the motto of the national liberationist movements:

Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome, provided that this, our battle cry [against imperialism], may have reached receptive ears and another hand may be extended to wield our weapon and other men may be ready to intone the funeral dirge with the staccato singing of the machine guns and new battle cries of war and victory (2010: 688).

As it can be seen clearly, Guevara was glorifying “martyrdom” and defining it as a kind of invitation to the revolutionary struggle. As a similar illustration, one of Mahir Çayan’s last words in the armed conflict, “We did not come here to return, we came here to die”<sup>137</sup> has become an explicit representation of devotion for a political cause in the commemorative practices and narratives of “Kızıldere.” Self-sacrifice for a political cause –revolution, justice or freedom– has been seen as an ultimate expression of the love of life which is represented in the effort of making life better for humanity. These discourses support the idea of the proliferation and mobilization of new revolutionaries inspired by this historical event which create an imagined community within the revolutionary leftists circles based on the idea of resistance. All these commemorative narratives have become self-perpetuating in the collective memory of the revolutionary leftists and they are transmitted through different generations. They provide a continuity encouraging the pride of the insurgent of all periods and provide a basis for inspiration of resistance. They can also be interpreted as the efforts of political organizations for their assertion of “once incomplete and suppressed but finally restored identity” (Said 1994: 267).

A broad overview of the commemorative practices and narratives of “Kızıldere” provides a contextual understanding on the changing meanings of political organization, using violence, being a militant or revolutionary. This can also be seen in the present political mobilizations. As a current massive social movement in Turkey, the Gezi Uprising contains similarities with the narratives, discourses and practices of the

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<sup>137</sup> “Biz Buraya Dönmeye Değil Ölmeye Geldik”

revolutionary struggle. There are common features even in the “new language” and “new resistance practices” of the Gezi movement which greets the practices of revolutionary movements in Turkey. From building barricades to composing anthems of resistance, combinations of old and new slogans, commemorating the murdered people with red cloves and insisting on carrying their pictures in all kinds of demonstrations and furthermore shows that they both use similar repertoire of resistance in Turkey.

#### **4.5. “Kızılder” as a Living Memorial**

“Memories are never simply records of the past, but are interpretive reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and contexts of recall and commemoration” (Antze & Lambek, 1996: vii). If collective memory is a re/construction of particular historical moments, commemorative practices and narratives have been inseparable parts of this process. What is considered as the most significant plays a crucial role in the formation of various narratives on the same event.

In this chapter, I tried to show different commemorative practices on “Kızılder” which have been transmitted through generations and continuously (re)shaped in time with particular narratives. I discussed the main themes of these commemorative practices and claimed that these themes refer broader political narratives. What is celebrated or mourned, appreciated or ignored in the commemorations of “Kızılder” reveals different narratives. These narratives have been represented in texts, images, slogans, songs, walls, ceremonies and the like, usually promote self-sacrifice for political cause, valorize “martyrdom,” create historical analogies and claim continuities between different historical events. I claimed that all these commemorative practices explicitly or implicitly contain different narratives which transform a past event into a coherent story with protagonists, metaphors, particular plots and different layers of remembering.

“Kızılder” has been an iconized political event for most of the revolutionary leftist movements and the “martyrs of “Kızılder” have been accepted as the “martyrs” of all political factions. However, there has not been only one “Kızılder” for the revolutionary leftists. There have been several “Kızılder”s. While some of the political

factions see revolutionary solidarity and devotion in “Kızıldere,” some others define it as a manifestation of armed struggle strategy and an example of self-sacrifice. And others see it as a source of desperation. Thus, “Kızıldere” cannot be commemorated as a stable and “frozen” historical event due to the attribution of different meanings to it.

Not only different meanings but also different temporalities and layers of remembering incorporated in the same event makes “Kızıldere” a “living memorial” that is “intended to commemorate the life of a victim or victims through an assemblage of people, things and narratives that are arranged in complex networks of activities” (Allen & Brown, 2011: 3). Not only different meanings but also different temporalities and layers of remembering incorporated in the same event makes “Kızıldere” a living memorial which is always open to contestation and transformation. “Kızıldere” as a living memorial continue to be alive as a name, a place, a person or a date; in a song, slogan, and image or mural within different generations and localities.

Creating historical analogies has been one of the most successful methods of transmitting the collective memory on “Kızıldere.” Commemorative practices and narratives incorporate convergent temporalities and correspondingly various layers of remembering. Hereby, boundaries between the past and the present become blurred and a perception of continuity comes into existence. Several past experiences are constantly reshaped with reference to the in the “Kızıldere” on the basis of current political needs and interests through commemoration. This reshaping leads to the legitimization of current political positions of different factions. Briefly stated, the commemorative event and the collective memory constructed around it serve shaping the interpretation of today although the referenced event belongs to the past. So, these commemorative practices and narratives of “Kızıldere:”

Create a “world of symbolic meaning” out of common realm of experience, expectation and action and establish trust and orientation through its uniting and binding power, it connects people to one another. (...) This structure at the same time unites the past with the present by forming important experience and memories and keeping them alive and by adding images and stories of another time to the horizon of the present in progress, thus giving hope and reminding memories.<sup>138</sup>(Assman, 2001: 21)

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<sup>138</sup> “Ortak deneyim, beklenti ve eylem mekanlarından bir ‘sembolik anlam dünyası’ yaratarak, birleştirici ve bağlayıcı gücüyle güven ve dayanak imkanı sağlayarak insanları birbirine bağlar. (...) Bu yapı aynı zamanda önemli deneyim ve anıları biçimlendirip canlı tutarak ilerleme halindeki şimdiki zamanın ufkuna, bir başka zamanın görüntülerini ve öykülerini katarak ve böylece ümit verip anıları canlandırarak dünle bugünü birleştirir.”

Apart from the factional differences, the leftists, socialists and revolutionaries have kept alive every kind of state sponsored atrocities in the recent history of Turkey which were oriented towards all segments of the society, not only targeted themselves. They have been striving not to forget these contested issues by a continuous effort of remembering and making the society remember. Creating symbolic links between different atrocities lead to keep both the common grief on the current political agenda and the “common enemy” in mind, which strengthen them politically. I argue that this perspective has the potential to create a holistic regime of commemoration which treat all grieves relatively equal without claiming a hierarchy between them. In addition, I also claim that the only political actor carrying the potential to promote a holistic regime of commemoration has been the leftists, socialists and/or revolutionaries of this country. However, it does not seem to be possible to achieve this for the moment because there have been also problematic approaches in the process of establishing their regime of commemoration. I think the most important one has been the iconization and thus sacralization of the past event and actors. Identifying “Kızıldere” as a constitutive element in the revolutionary struggle and defining various political issues with reference to it accompany a sanctification which disables criticism and lead to dogmatism. This should be an undesirable and evaded position for the leftists, socialists or revolutionaries. If commemorating an atrocity requires a confrontation with the past and call for accountability, revolutionary leftists should conduct a “real” discussion around this key event without hesitation.

## CHAPTER V CONCLUSION



Kızıldere, 30 March 1972



Kızıldere, 30 March 2015

The small adobe house depicted above has been the spatial referent of some of the commemorative practices and narratives on the Kızıldere Massacre for years. It was one of the millions of houses in Turkey in an ordinary village of Niksar in Tokat Province until 30 March, 1972. This house hosted significant revolutionary figures of the period and witnessed their annihilation by gunfire, along with three foreign undercover intelligence officers. This small adobe house has been maintained as the dwelling of a family who witnessed this massacre and has had to live with its traces for 43 years. It has been receiving visitors from all parts of the country and even abroad for years<sup>139</sup> and started to host revolutionary organizations for commemorative ceremonies every year on 30 March. Several poems were written and songs were composed on it.<sup>140</sup> A number of political organizations created various slogans dedicated to it and one of these slogans was introduced for the first time when I started to write this thesis.

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<sup>139</sup> In order to see a short video from one of these visits, check the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCl-iWmtUw0>

<sup>140</sup> For one of these songs, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJps49Bqbv4>

Thereby, I continued to witness the (re)production of commemorative narratives on “Kızıldere” during the research process. This new slogan was “We, from Kızıldere, from the adobe houses, will come to destroy your palaces!”<sup>141</sup> which appeared after a political action similar to “Kızıldere.”

On March 31, 2015, two DHKP-C militants took the AKP’s recent prosecutor, Mehmet Selim Kiraz, hostage in his office in Europe’s “biggest” and “extremely secure” Çağlayan Courthouse in Istanbul. They demanded the release of the names of the murderers of Berkin Elvan. Elvan was a 15-year-old boy who was shot with a police tear gas canister during the Gezi protests in June 2013 and died in March after spending 269 days in coma. Although much evidence about police officers who are thought to have murdered Berkin Elvan, including camera records, eye witness statements etc., was presented to the public prosecutors, no police officer has been brought to trial over the case.<sup>142</sup> On the contrary, there have been hundreds of investigations of those who participated in several demonstrations demanding of justice for Berkin Elvan. The militants shared the photographs of the case document through Internet and declared the names of the suspected murderers of Berkin Elvan. Despite the fact that there was the possibility to capture the militants and the prosecutor alive, the government decided to conduct an operation in the courthouse and displayed an uncompromising attitude. Six hours after the the siege started, while the negotiations were continuing, special security forces entered the building and the militants were killed. The prosecutor Kiraz was taken to hospital but succumbed to his wounds.<sup>143</sup> Because the AKP government preferred to risk the prosecutor's life instead of declaring the names of police officers, some considered the government at least partially responsible for the prosecutor’s death.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, many people sympathized with the revolutionary militants because of their last words before the gunfight. They declared: “Our people, we love you!” (*Halkımız, sizi çok seviyoruz!*), and thousands of people replied with a hashtag through twitter, “We love you, too!” (*#bizdesiziseviyoruz*). They also declared that they would fight as “Mahirs” did in Kızıldere 43 years ago.

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<sup>141</sup> “*Kerpiç evlerden gelip saraylarımızı yıkacağız!*”

<sup>142</sup> <http://chd.org.tr/caglayan-adliyesinde-meydana-gelen-katliam.html>

<sup>143</sup> <http://bianet.org/biamag/siyaset/163564-turkiye-yi-sarsan-3-gun-31-mart-2-nisan>

<sup>144</sup> <http://gezite.org/chdden-caglayan-adliyesi-katliamina-iliskin-aciklama/>



From the date of the action to the militants' narratives, this was the most recent form of commemorative practice on "Kızılder." And once more, it showed that "Kızılder" with all its different meanings is still alive in the revolutionary movements in Turkey. The most concrete expression of this can be seen in the statement of DHKC on April 1, 2015:

In Kızılder, on March 30, 1972, American servants chose to massacre 10 revolutionaries instead of stopping the execution of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades.

At present, on March 31, 2015, the lackeys of America and fascist AKP government massacred two other revolutionaries instead of releasing the names of Berkin Elvan's murderers, who were not prosecuted after 655 days.

We will make you pay for these massacres. We, from Kızılder, from the adobe houses, will come to destroy your palaces!

(...) From Mahir and his comrades to this day, our 45 year history is also the history of the struggle for justice in our country.<sup>145</sup>

Following the outcomes of this research, it is not difficult to estimate that this new slogan will be one of the major slogans of the next commemorative ceremonies of "Kızılder" and these two militants' photographs and names will be attached to the pictures of Mahir Çayan. In fact, the DHKP-C sympathizers started to make such associations just after the incident. They commemorated the militants in their graveyards with the slogan "From Kızılder to Çağlayan, Our Justice Warriors are Our Honor."<sup>146</sup>

This incident and the discussions conducted around it confirmed the current significance and validity of my research questions in this thesis. Understanding the commemorative practices and narratives of state-sponsored violence in the case of "Kızılder" was my central concern. My main aim was to capture the political relevance of remembering "Kızılder" in the contemporary political arena in Turkey. In order to do this, I focused on the proliferating commemorative practices and narratives continuously (re)produced by the revolutionary leftists for decades.

During this research process, whoever I told my topic inquired about the details of the incident, basically the positions of the mayor of Kızılder village and also the only survivor Ertuğrul Kürkçü. Not only the mayor of Kızılder has been labeled as the

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<sup>145</sup> <http://www.anti-imperialistfront.org/2015/04/01/dhkc-statement-444-01-04-2015/>

<sup>146</sup> "Kızılder'den Çağlayan'a Adalet Savaşçılarımız Onurumuzdur" Available at: <http://halkinsesity-2.blogspot.com.tr/2015/04/ankarada-tayadl-ailelerden-mezar-anmas.html>

“informer” but also Ertuğrul Kürkçü has been accepted as a suspicious figure in this incident. A large amount of people and political organizations have accused him because of hiding himself in the hayloft of the house during the gunfight instead of clashing with the troops. Especially for those who have been strongly advocated to the idea of armed struggle, this was insufferable and so was betrayal to his comrades. This understanding redounded on their narratives and practices for decades. There has been another claim that Kürkçü was working for the National Intelligence Organization and he was responsible for the massacre. However, this claim has not been proved. There have been numerous conspiracy theories about the massacre and these issues have been the major discussion topics around this key political event for long years. Rather than researching the veracity of these claims, my focus was on the kinds of memories that different ways of recollecting “Kızıldere” engendere. I argue that this examination has much to say about the memorialization of state violence, the establishment of collective memory and identity of political organizations as well as the political transformations over the years. Thus, I struggled to explain my focus on a number of occasions.

Besides these popular discussions around the incident, I encountered many doubts about my topic during this research. Some of my interlocutors were surprised about the Kızıldere Massacre can be studied within a university because they thought that the university must have accepted this topic in order to dominate for the sake of their interests. At this point, I thought that I could gain their trust by explaining my previous political experience. When I told them I was also politically engaged for a while, they felt more comfortable with the idea of being in the “same part.” However, this created another problem. Those who had knowledge about my past, started to talk with reference to my previous political organization, tried to falsify its political arguments and engage me into political discussions. So, the main flow of the interviews has changed. For this reason, I mostly explained my personal engagement at this topic through the end of the interviews. Another and more frequently encountered doubt stemmed from the idea that the Kızıldere Massacre is “abundantly political” and also “dangerous” topic for conducting an academic research. I argue that this emphasis on the notion of “danger” is a concrete representation of the penetration of official discourses on “Kızıldere” to the narratives of former revolutionaries. For most of my interlocutors and several political organizations as I showed in their commemorative narratives, remembering “Kızıldere” is also remembering the THKP-C and the idea of

armed struggle which can be seen clearly in one of my interlocutor, Cumhuriyet Yavuz's words:

The insistence on remembering the Kızıldere Massacre and making people remember will lead to conceive the need for a militant movement. (...) In other words, the insistence on remembering Kızıldere, in a sense, means the insistence on remembering the THKP-C and the armed struggle. The only way to change the existing system is to understand and believe in that struggle.<sup>147</sup>

This emphasis on “danger” was more powerful than the mistrust about me personally or towards the Sabancı University institutionally during my fieldwork. So, most of my interlocutors warned me about this “danger” but also appreciated my effort. Therefore, I found the answer to my preliminary question about the lack of academic research on the Kızıldere Massacre just at the beginning of my research. Studying on the Kızıldere Massacre was not only a research on a massacre as a traumatic past event. A research on the Kızıldere Massacre embraced questioning the 1970s as a political period with alternative imaginations and political experiences, problematizing the state-violence and also discussing on the notion of revolutionary violence. Furthermore, all of these make the research topic “dangerous” because as I wrote earlier, all the attempts to remember these issues have been either suppressed or inhibited by the ruling classes. So, I claim that “Kızıldere” should be contextualized in the frame of all these debates. Otherwise, the decontextualization of “Kızıldere,” I believe, only serves the purpose of depoliticization and instrumentalization of the collective memory on the massacre. That is why this thesis generously allocates space for the reconstruction of the political history of the 1970s.

There is a visible gap in the historiography concerning the 1970s in Turkey. The widespread social and political struggles in the 1960s and 1970s have been disregarded or even distorted in the official historiography. They have been usually reduced to acts of “anarchy” and violence or conflicts between the right and the left. As a result, possible alternatives to the existing political order have been marginalized and criminalized. In this sense, this thesis is an attempt to make a modest contribution, via the Kızıldere Massacre, to revive the collective memory about both the massacre in particular and the political struggles of the 1970s in Turkey in general.

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<sup>147</sup> Personal interview conducted on with Cumhuriyet Yavuz in Ankara 12.06.2014: “Kızıldere Katliamı'nı hatırlamak ve hatırlatmakta ısrar militan bir hareketin ihtiyaç olduğunu kavrayacaktır.(...) Yani aslında Kızıldere'yi hatırlamakta ısrar bir anlamda THKP-C'yi ve silahlı mücadeleyi hatırlamakta ısrardır. Bugünkü sistemin değişebilmesinin tek yolu o mücadeleyi kavramak ve ona inanmaktan geçmektedir.”

Therefore, after a brief Introduction where I presented the case of the Kızıldere Massacre, the main historical actors involved in, the presentation of the dominant memory regime of the 1970s, and my main research questions, I initiated a discussion on the social and political process which paved the way for the Kızıldere Massacre in Chapter II. In this chapter, the political history of the period between the *coup d'état* of May 27, 1960 and the annihilation of the political movements via state violence in 1973 was analyzed. I tried to show significant political moments and ideological discussions of the time beginning from the massive social awakening in the 1960s to the emergence of the idea of armed struggle and also its quick repression at the beginning of the 1970s. I argue that this very short experience of armed struggle in the early 1970s with its possibilities and limitations and the newly emerged revolutionary type in this period called as “71 Revolutionism” is crucial to understand the Kızıldere Massacre and its permanent effects on the revolutionary movement in Turkey. In this long historical background chapter, I did not aim to rewrite the history of the 1970s which is impossible to achieve in this limited work. Hence, I tried to engage critically with the existing gap in the historiography concerning the 1970s in Turkey in order to be able to place “Kızıldere” in its context. Otherwise, decontextualisation of the event would cause the depolitization of its memorialization which is a political act in itself.

Another reason I allocate a wide space for the historical analyses is my belief in liberating power of history-centered analyses, and how this kind of analyses attributes agency to the political actors and my interlocutors. Following Dan Diner (2011), I believe that history-centered analyses allow us to go beyond the “undifferentiated notion of victim” while freeing the interlocutors from the dichotomy of the victim and the perpetrator and to approach them as the active subjects of the past, the present and also the future.

Later than contextualizing the social and political environment of the period prior to the massacre, in Chapter III, I first looked at its representations in the official historiography basically through newspapers and parliamentary speeches on the days following the massacre. Then I attempted to show the similarities and differences between the narratives of the witnesses of the massacre itself and the witnesses of the political period. The big part of this chapter is based on the narratives of my interlocutors. Emerging out of the field, I tried to demonstrate the changing narratives of different actors on the same historical event, which constitutes the collective memory of the Kızıldere Massacre within the revolutionary movements in Turkey by presenting

and analyzing the perceptions and voices of my interlocutors. As they narrated, I came to the conclusion that these changing narratives can be classified in two groups: The first group is the eye-witnesses of the massacre; the villagers including the residents of the village house and Ertuğrul Kürkçü. Basically, the villagers and Ertuğrul Kürkçü have different narratives. While the narratives of the villagers are more emotional and usually based on affection and grief, Kürkçü often makes general assessments due to his political subjectivity. The narratives of the villagers are mostly constructed around particular themes such as victimhood and innocence of the revolutionaries as opposed to their dehumanized and criminalized representations in the official sources. They emphasize the foolhardiness and valor of the militants in contrast to the brutality of the state. Most of their narratives include such humanistic points as affinity and compassion.

The second group is composed of the witnesses of that period who took part in the political mobilization in various organizations and generally called as the generation of '68. All of these witnesses without any exception emphasized the notion of state violence and the role of contra-guerrilla in the massacre. Most of them highlighted the notion of the continuity of the state violence and also the revolutionary struggle, revolutionary solidarity and the spirit of resistance displayed in Kızıldere. There are also some contentions about the incident. While some of them defined "Kızıldere" as a defeat and an example of desperation of the revolutionaries, the others insisted on the political victory achieved in Kızıldere and focused on the notion of willing self-sacrifice as a political act. Despite the differences in their approaches, they display a monolithic collective memory on "Kızıldere." Especially those interlocutors, who identify themselves in an engagement of a particular political organization or took part in the center of political struggle even for a while, usually reproduce normative narratives about the incident.

Before entering the field, I was worried about interviewing with my interlocutors because I had thought that talking on such a traumatic event should be very difficult. Although we had difficult times in some of the interviews, most of them went smoothly because most of my interlocutors were talking from a distanced position and they were making general political assessments that generally reflect the organizational rivalry appeared in the second part of the 1970s and has continued up to today. It can be thought that these kinds of monolithic and normative narratives make some other notions and discussions invisible, even suppress them. For instance, only a number of

the interviewee talked about their personal accounts of the incident, the capabilities and also inabilities of the political movements of the time or their past mistakes. Although most of them claim that the years following the Kızılderle Massacre were a period of rethinking and considering again for the leftists, especially in the prisons, I argue that they could not achieve a real confrontation of their past from the individual level to the political organizations in general. Beginning from 1974, reorganization of the leftist movements and establishment of several political organizations in the name of Mahir Çayan's political legacy with the heroic and legendary narratives on the "revolutionary martyrs" is a concrete expression of this deficiency. This "mythologization" of the massacre and the revolutionaries died in Kızılderle might also have precluded more critical assessments and created an environment of suppression within the former and current revolutionaries. This kind of suppression makes the incident undisputable and engenders sanctity of both the incident and also the protagonists.

For sure, this thesis is also an attempt to understand the significance of remembering this specific incident for the current political organizations and transformations. So, the commemorative practices and narratives of the revolutionary movements beginning from this new revolutionary generation appeared just after the massacre and have maintained up to the present are the main scope of Chapter IV. I sought an answer to the question as to how the collective memory on "Kızılderle" can be transmitted through from one generation to another. Accordingly, I proceeded to demonstrate the basic commemorative practices of revolutionary movements under the categories of history-telling/writing, publishing and electronic media, commemorative images and slogans, literary works, (re)naming the places and people after the massacre, anniversaries and the organization of time and commemorative ceremonies. I tried to provide the reader a general context of commemoration of "Kızılderle" in order to envisage, especially for those who had no idea about these kinds of practices. So, that part of the chapter is composed of descriptive information.

I called these commemorative practices and all kinds of materials used for them as "sites of memory" with reference to Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* and claimed that these sites of memory have been ever-changing based on the current political needs and interests although they seem stable in their forms. I also claimed that these sites of memory have become both sites of confrontation with the repressive forces of the state authority and the sites of power struggle between different political factions. Thus, I also called them as sites of conflict. Based on the narratives of some of my

interlocutors, I realized that commemorative practices of “Kızıldere” have been seen as one of the main political acts for most of the revolutionary organizations whose main purpose has been the politicization of both their members and the broader masses by infusing particular political behaviors and values. Therefore, the commemorative practices as political acts create a tension both between the state and the revolutionary movements and also within particular political factions.

In the latter section of Chapter IV, I attempted to conceptualize the commemorative narratives of “Kızıldere” articulated by the revolutionary leftist movements for decades. I underscored the construction of commemorative narratives which specifically propagate armed struggle or self-sacrifice, valorize “heroes” or “martyrs” or define “Kızıldere” as a battle. I attracted attention to the different themes such as iconization, creating archetypal martyrs, propagating self-sacrifice and/or solidarity, claiming continuity and creating historical analogies which are embedded in these commemorative narratives. Then, I proposed that these narratives propose multiple strategies of political struggle and they have been so determinative in (re)shaping the political activities and aims of several political factions.

Therefore, I claimed, “Kızıldere” can be defined as a “living memorial” because all these various commemorative practices and narratives on “Kızıldere” have always been open to change, provided suitable ground for interactions between the participants and the audiences, incorporated different meanings, convergent temporalities and correspondingly various layers of remembering. By means of these, commemoration of “Kızıldere” blurs the boundaries between the past and the present and establishes an understanding of continuity between different historical events. The revival of the memory, which is ignored or tried to be forgotten for years, in a place, name or date provides for the establishment of this continuity and it also forms a basis for a power struggle on the symbolic values of time and space.

Past experiences, in the presence of “Kızıldere,” are continuously reshaped based on the current needs and this legitimizes the present conditions of political organizations. In other words, the commemoration of “Kızıldere” serves for today although the commemorated historical event belongs to the past. It is strongly linked to the way of conceptualizing the political struggle because the approach to political struggle manifests itself in the war of commemoration, as well. The commemoration of “Kızıldere” has become a war between the official ideology based on forgetting and making people forget and the revolutionaries who have been resisted to remember and

make people remember. This is a war to seize a name, time or place, in short the meaning of “Kızıldere.”

For the revolutionary movements, keeping the collective memory of “Kızıldere” with reference to their current political struggle is seen as a crucial revolutionary practice. As opposed to the attempts for shelving their past and leaving them without their memory, keeping their collective memory has also been a struggle for protecting their historical bonds and collective identity which is very important for political empowerment.

The revolutionary movements’ insistent efforts of remembering “Kızıldere” turned the sites of memory, which have been usually identified with sorrow, pain and mourning, into the sites of resistance. These sites of resistance serve the formation of a collective political consciousness, memory and also group identity. Hereby, the revolutionaries, who identify the state violence as a political act, can avoid being trapped into the passive category of “downtrodden” which is undesirable in terms of political subjectivity. So, they become active revolutionary subjects who have a voice in the past, present as well as the future.

Almost all of the commemorative narratives on “Kızıldere” promulgated by the revolutionary organizations have been based on remembering the “resistance” which usually overshadows remembering the “loss.” It can be claimed that the heroic and mythical narratives have moral privileges and they have been in demand especially for the politicization and organization of the masses. However, I claim that the emphasis on the notion of “resistance” in “Kızıldere” and its continuity in the revolutionary struggle is closely related to this feature: only political narrative makes it possible to express this kind of a great loss (Diner, 2011: 72-73). As I proceeded to demonstrate in this thesis, “Kızıldere” is not just the murder of ten revolutionaries. Although the history of the revolutionary movements in Turkey is full of these kinds of incidents, not all of them could gain the same symbolic meaning. All different meanings attributed to “Kızıldere” and the ways in which these meaning have been reproduced by years make “Kızıldere” as a traumatic past event narratable and ensure that it can be remembered.

In the light of the findings of this thesis, I propose that the revolutionary movements in Turkey can be renamed as “communities of memory” with reference to Iwona Irwin-Zarecka’s conceptualization in her book entitled *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*:



The communities of memory (...) come into existence through people's sharing in living through events as well as the telling. Collective memory, though, is not reducible to such immediacy of links with the past. Often, it is the telling itself, the ongoing articulation of the "reality of the past" that forms and informs a community. For that matter, the past so told need not to be real at all to offer the basis for communal solidarity. All that is needed is active remembrance, communally shared and deemed important for the community's self-definition. Rituals and the structuring of a yearly cycle serve that function very well (1994: 57).

Apart from the factional differences, the leftists, socialists and revolutionaries have kept alive every kind of state sponsored atrocities in the recent history of Turkey which were oriented towards all segments of the society, not only targeted themselves. They have been striving not to forget these contested issues by a continuous effort of remembering and making the society remember. Creating symbolic links between different atrocities lead to keep both the common grief on the current political agenda and the "common enemy" in mind, which strengthen them politically. I argue that this perspective has the potential to create a holistic regime of commemoration which treat all grieves relatively equal without claiming a hierarchy between them. In addition, I also claim that the only political actor carrying the potential to promote a holistic regime of commemoration and the confrontation with the past which is essential for a democratic society has been the revolutionary left in Turkey.

However, it is obvious that this does not seem possible to achieve for the moment because there have been also problematic approaches in the process of establishing their regime of commemoration. I think the most important one has been the iconization and thus sacralization of the past event and actors. Identifying "Kızılder" as a constitutive element in the revolutionary struggle and defining various political issues with reference to it accompany a sanctification disabling criticism and leading to dogmatism. This should be an undesirable and evaded position for the revolutionary leftists. In order to overcome the Turkish state's denial of violent crimes against all parts of the society, revolutionary leftists should be critical about the fixed and mythological understanding of history which leads to the suppression of the divergent voices of various subjects. Instead of converting the past events into legends, they should focus on the causes and reverberations of the historically significant incidents which are crucial to understand the current political situations and also create an opportunity to resist in the present. If commemorating an atrocity requires a confrontation with the past and call for accountability, revolutionary leftists should

conduct a “real” discussion around this key event without hesitation and see facing the past as important tool for political action in present and also in future.

Not only the understanding of history but also the perception of remembrance might be problematic for the revolutionary left. The overemphasis on remembering and making the society remember the past atrocities as opposed to the state’s attempts of “repressive erasure” may cause the neglect of how the commemorated event is remembered and for what purposes this remembrance serves. As I wrote in the introduction of Chapter IV, the revolutionary leftists in Turkey have attributed political meanings to the dialectics of forgetting and causing to forget for years. However, the forms and contents of commemoration and correspondingly, the different ways of political mobilization of the masses around the remembrance of a particular historical event are also worth pondering.

I claim that remembering the atrocities and confrontation with the past can only be possible through a political struggle for both the present and the future. In this regard, I suggest that we should hone in on how “Kızıldere” in particular and all other kinds of state violence practices witnessed in the history of the Republic of Turkey in general can be transformed into the experiences for building up a future instead of weeping together or feeling sorrow. Therefore, I claim, the most appropriate candidate for this kind of a memory regime which can tackle with the layers of forgetting within Turkey is the revolutionary leftists who can shoulder the responsibility of both remembering and also resisting for the injustices of the past and present.

Finally, in the remaining part of this conclusion, I would like to open up some issues and questions which certainly require further thinking and mainly offered by the field. First of all, I conducted the interviews for this study especially with the former militants of the THKP-C and from other different revolutionary movements namely appropriate the “political legacy” of the THKP-C and Mahir Çayan. However, this notion of “legacy” is very disputable and open to alterations for different political factions. So, all kinds of commemorative practices and narratives on “Kızıldere” both legitimize the current political routes of each fraction and also criticize other political organizations via this historical event. For this reason, it is difficult to make an analysis without mentioning the ideological differences of several leftist organizations. However, I rather preferred to avoid this kind of a discussion and refer to all these different political organizations as revolutionary leftists in Turkey. The readers who are acquainted with the leftists, socialist, revolutionary movements in Turkey or those who

are parts of these movements can designate them based on their political subjectivities. Secondly, I could not comprise the Kurdish movement, specifically the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), within this study although its publications and its leader Abdullah Öcalan's declarations are also full of commemorative narratives on "Kızıldere." The first reason is about the difficulties of fieldwork. I could not find a contact person from the Kurdish movement in order to make an interview during my research process, so I could not have the access to enter that field. The second reason is about the scope of this thesis. After conducting an investigation on the established political and historical links between "Kızıldere" and the PKK through its published and visual materials, I decided not to include this discussion into the present study. Because I argue that the repercussion of the Kızıldere massacre within the Kurdish movement and PKK's commemorative practices and narratives deserve an independent research for a detailed analysis which was not possible for the scope of this study. Thirdly, as I wrote in the introduction, I could not effectively use the data I collected during the preliminary research before proceeding onto the fieldwork. But, what I found was that the forms and contents of the commemoration of "Kızıldere" show differences both temporally and also locally. Thus, a research on the temporal and local parameters influential in these differences might enrich the literature on "Kızıldere." Under which circumstances the commemorative practices and narratives change and how? Which narratives come to the forefront in particular times and spaces and why? Do the local changes affect the general memory regime on "Kızıldere?" These questions and more can be raised in order to expand the scope of the research on "Kızıldere." Last but not the least, as I recurrently mentioned along this thesis, a discussion revolving around the Kızıldere Massacre brings into view the debate on political/revolutionary violence as a way of resistance against the state violence. So, this deficiency of my research may be marking a starting point for further research. A detailed examination of the different approaches and experiences of the political/revolutionary violence in Turkey will be useful for understanding the relevance of remembering "Kızıldere" in the revolutionary struggle and also the state's repressive enforcements towards the efforts of remembering. Furthermore, a comparative analysis with different parts of the world where the traumatic experiences of the military coups and state violence has been witnessed and the idea of armed resistance has gained currency, notably the Middle East and the Latin America, will develop a comprehensive understanding of remembering

the state violence and armed struggle in different localities. I hope this thesis would be a humble contribution to further research.

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## APPENDICES



Figure 1: Troops targeting the village house, Kızıldere, 30 March 1972 (Source: <http://rojnameyanewroz.com>)



Figure 2: Dead bodies of the slaughtered revolutionaries are represented to the soldiers and journalists (Source: <http://www.turnusol.biz>)



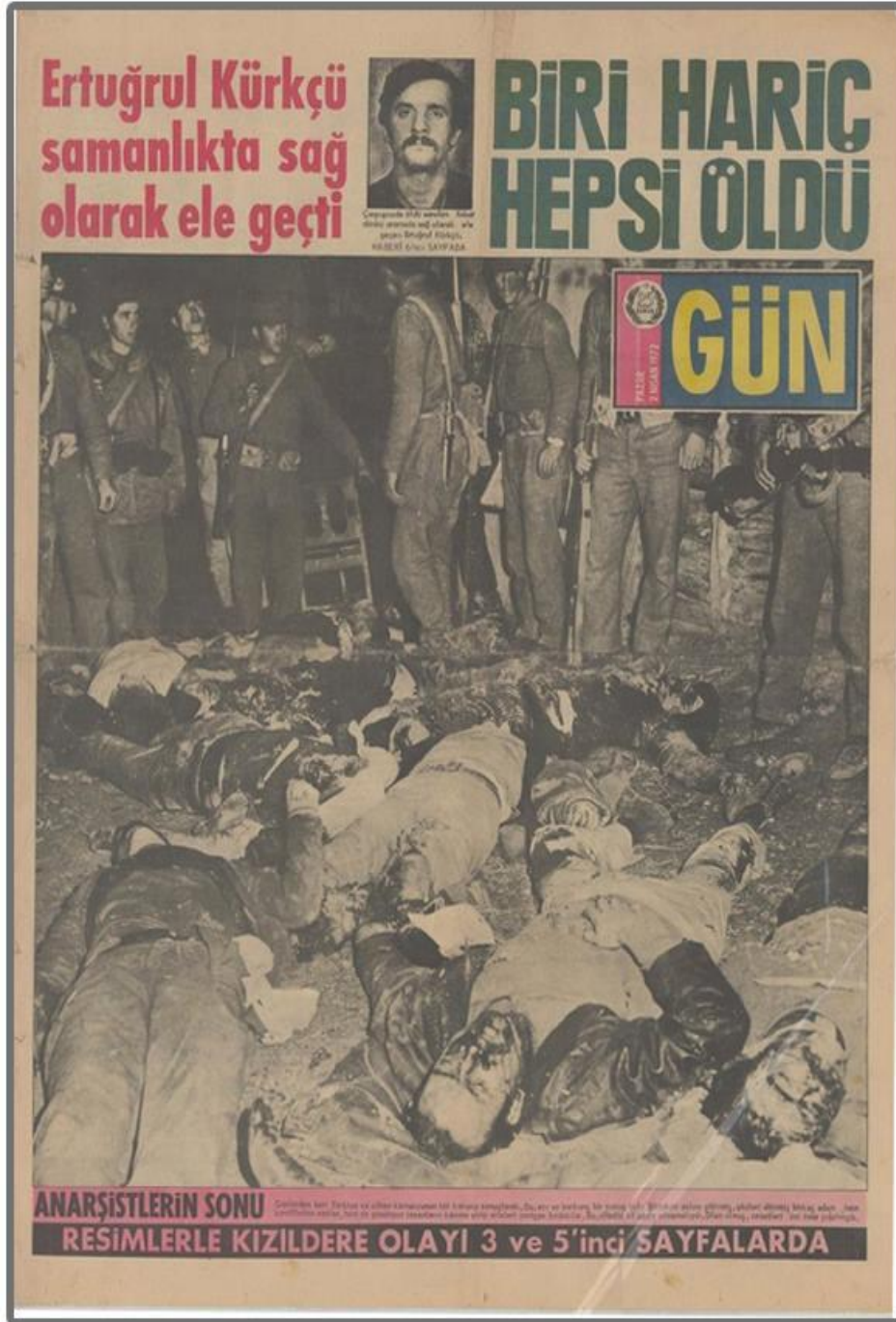


Figure 3: *Gün*, 31 March 1972



Figure 4: *Gün*, 31 March 1972





**İSTE İNSANLIĞIN YÜZ KARASI TABLO:** Türkiye'de beklenen anneleri, babaları, epleri ve çocukları vardı. Fazar gence Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni yıkamak isteyenler tarafından zorla Ünye'deki evlerinden alındılar. Dün saat 14.00'de Nisari'nin Kuzidere köyünde muhtarın evinde elleri arkalarına bağlanarak beyinlerine şokla kurbanlarla öldürüldüler. (Soldan sağa) John Law, Gordon Bunker, Charles Turner'in basın fotoğrafları böyle mena ordu. İste, güvenlik kuvvetlerinin eve geldikleri zaman karıştırdıkları insanlığı yüz karası tablo. (Fotoğrafların her hakkı Haber Ajansı'na aittir - N. İŞLER)

# Üç masum İngilizci öldüren şakiler ÖLÜ ELE GEÇTİLER



Anarşistlerin püskürte oldukları Kuzidere köyünün haritası.



ÖLÜ OLARAK ELE GEÇEN ANARŞİSTLERİN DÖRDÜ

HAKKI ÇAYAN

İBRAHİM ALPTEKİN

ERTUĞRUL KINACI

İSMAİL ARSLAN

VE ONLARA YATAKLIK YAPAN MUHTAR EMİNOĞLU KIZILAN

**N**İSAR'ın Kuzidere köyünde, güvenlik kuvvetleri tarafından yapılan arastırma, üç İngiliz tekinisyeni, başlarından vurarak öldürüldüler. Bu konuda yapılan resmi açıklamada şöyle denildi:

Kuzidere muhtarının evinde güvenlik kuvvetleri tarafından arastırma, saat 03.00'te anarşistler ve benzerlerine saat 13.30' kadar devamlı olarak teslim olmaları ve üç İngiliz tekinisyeninin öldürülmesi.

**Olaylara ait diğer fotoğraflar son sayfada**

Figure 5: *Hürriyet*, 31 March 1972



Figure 6: Cumhuriyet, 31 March 1972





Figure 7: The placard of a commemorative event organized by various political organizations, 30 March 2015 (Source: <http://www.evrensel.net>)

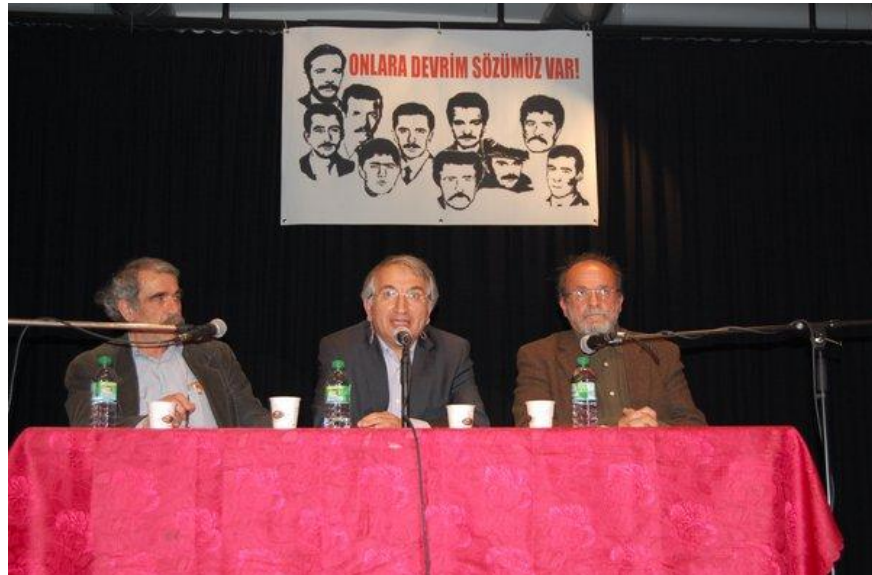


Figure 8: A commemorative panel in Hamburg (2012) Ertuğrul Kürkçü and Oktay Etiman were the spokesmen (Source: <http://www.avrupa-postasi.com>)

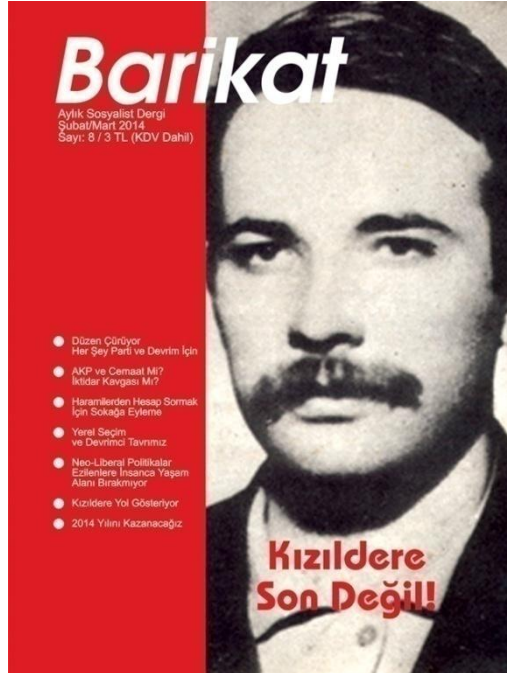


Figure 9: Front pages from two factional periodicals in the anniversary of “Kızıldere” (Source: *Barikat*, February/March 2014; *Yürüyüş*, 4 April 2010)



Figure 10: Anonymous iconic image proliferated through internet (Source: <http://bianet.org/bianet>)



Figure 11: A mural from İkitelli, Istanbul (in English: “Kızıldere is the path of victory”) (Source: [halkinsesity.org](http://halkinsesity.org))





Figure 12: A commemorative ceremony in the party building (Source: sendika.org)



Figure 13: A mural from Çayan Neighborhood, Istanbul, 2015 (Source: *Yürüyüş*, April 2015)



Figure 14: The wall of the park with the portraits of the revolutionaries and the slogan “Forgetting is Betrayal,” Maltepe, Istanbul, 2015 (Source: t24.com)



Figure 15: Ankara Karşıyaka Cemetery, 2015 (Source: sendika.org)





Figure 16: Groups of people coming from different parts of Ankara and even Turkey are visiting the cemetery of Mahir Çayan with their family members, 30 March 2015, Karşıyaka Cemetery, Ankara (Photo taken by Derya Özkaya)





Figure 17: Istanbul University, Beyazıt, 30 March 2015 (Source: <http://gercekgazetesi.net>)



Figure 18: Placard and the portrait of Mahir Çayan from a commemorative ceremony in Istanbul University, 2012 (Source: [sendika.org](http://sendika.org))



Figure 19: From the commemorative ceremony in 30 March 2013, Taksim, Istanbul (Source: sendika.org)



Figure 20: Galatasaray Square, Beyoğlu, Istanbul, 30 March 2015 (Source: <http://www.evrensel.net>)





Figure 21: March in the village, 30 March 2010 (Source: *Yürüyüş*, April 2010)



Figure 22: Commemorative ceremony in front of the village house, 2015 (Source: <http://www.evrensel.net>)



Figure 23: A Mural from Armutlu, Istanbul, March 2015 (Photo taken by Derya Özkaya)

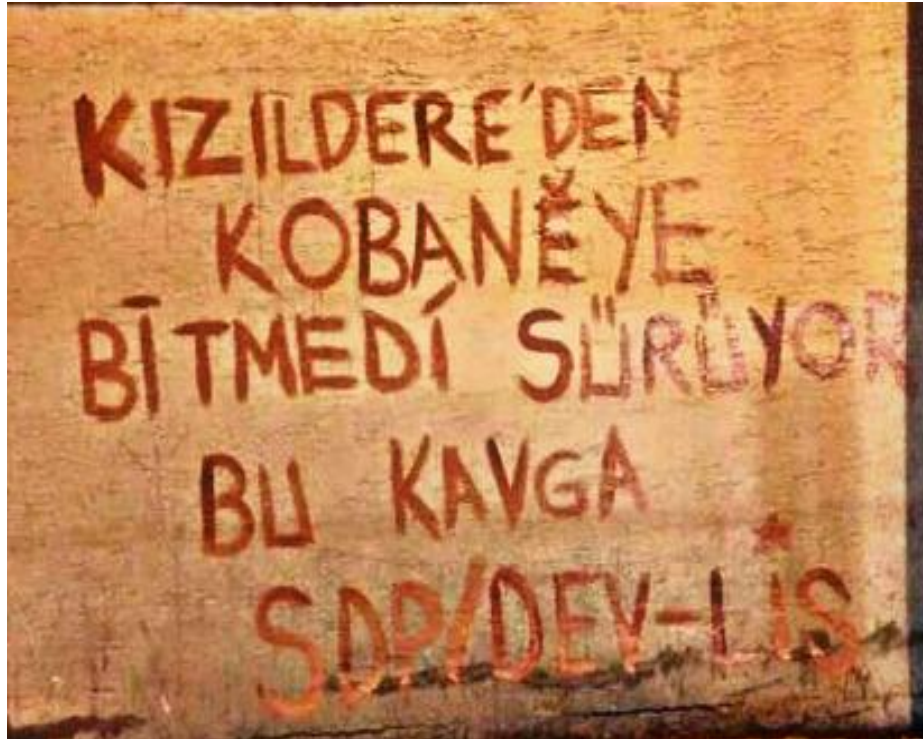


Figure 24: A Mural from Kadıköy, Istanbul, March 2015 (Photo taken by Derya Özkaya)





Figure 25: From the commemorative ceremony in Kızılder (Source: halkinsesityv.org)



Figure 26: From a commemorative panel in Mannheim, 2015 (Source: halkinsesityv.org)