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The Nationalist Action Party in Turkey

One of the first steps taken by the Turkish military commanders, upon their intervention of 12 September 1980, was the suspension of all political parties. Over a year afterwards, in late October 1981, a special decree of Turkey's National Security Council dissolved all political parties and confiscated their assets. Meanwhile, legal proceedings had been initiated against many of the party leaders, most particularly against those leftist groups and Turkey's extreme right Nationalist Action Party. The latter group thus appears to have reached the end of its road, following a fifteen year career, which has hardly been studied either in Turkey or abroad.¹ The following preliminary examination of the party's history, style, structure, leadership, propaganda and ideology may assist in providing a better understanding of its impact on recent politics in Turkey.

Republican Turkey never comprised the classless society which Mustafa Kemal and his faithful lieutenants envisaged. Nevertheless, its various socio-economic components had little or no opportunity to organize politically during the single-party era, which continued until the end of the Second World War. After all, the People's Party (later renamed the Republican People's Party) monopolized even the trade unions and students' associations; for some time, the state dictated much of the economic activity as well.² Right-of-centre groups began to organize politically only during the multi-party era: since 1946, in the Democratic Party and since 1961 in its successor, the Justice Party — both mass-parties

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with a centre-right orientation in politics and economics — and in several smaller parties with a conservative leadership, such as large landowners, moneyed circles and the like. Groups with a far-right political orientation were generally chauvinist in nature with Pan-Turk,³ anti-communist leanings; they were always small in size, outside the system and never succeeded in setting up political parties. All this changed, however, in 1965.

The 1960s were an era of increasing socio-economic unrest and political turmoil in Turkey.⁴ The 1960-61 military intervention had demonstrated that the regime could be changed by non-parliamentary means; the failure of the intervention to achieve any meaningful socio-economic reform encouraged various circles to press for such measures, a demand made possible by liberalization of censorship on the media. Leftist groups with varying interpretations of Marxism began to mushroom — one of them a fully-fledged political party, set up in 1961 as the Labour Party of Turkey. Under the circumstances, it was only a matter of time and opportunity until an extreme right party was to emerge as a militant political force.

The entire course of the new party was closely linked with its one-man leadership, that of Alparslan Türkeş. Türkeş (pronounced Tyur-kash) had been in the public eye years before entering party politics in 1965. The official party release of his *curriculum vitae*, the brief *Biography of Alparslan Türkeş*,⁵ devotes about three quarters of its two single-space foolscap pages to that earlier period — doubtlessly aiming at building up his image. Türkeş was born in 1917 in Nicosia and acquired his primary and secondary education in Cyprus. In 1932, he emigrated to Turkey, together with his family, completing his secondary school studies at a military *lycée* in which he enrolled in 1933. Over the next thirty years, Türkeş advanced within the military establishment, eventually attaining the rank of colonel. His career took him through the general Military School, the Infantry Shooting School and the Military Academy, and included such duties as staff officer, member of the Turkish General Staff delegation to the NATO Standing Group in Washington, the Nuclear School in Federal Germany and participation in various meetings and manoeuvres.

Throughout his career, Türkeş had nurtured political ambitions. Since in Turkey at that time, however, the tradition of barring the military from politics (instituted by Mustafa Kemal himself) still lived on, a military career seemed unlikely to pave the road to

political success⁶ — unless, of course, the rules of the game were changed. This is precisely what Türkeş set out to accomplish on two memorable occasions — both of which later supplied proof of his unscrupulous personal ambition to his detractors and opponents, and of his selfless patriotism to his friends and partisans.

In May 1944, Türkeş broke army regulations and participated in civilian anti-communist demonstrations, which were speedily suppressed by the authorities, acting under emergency regulations instituted in Turkey during the Second World War. The ensuing trials ended in a conviction, subsequently overturned in an appeal; both outcomes afforded Türkeş and his friends considerable publicity in all the mass media. Sixteen years later, in May 1960, Türkeş was one of the chief initiators of a military coup, whose leaders seized control of the state for one and a half years. Türkeş reappeared as a man who made his own rules. However, he and a minority group of officers ('The Fourteen') were expelled by the majority of the officers' Council for National Unity which then governed Turkey and, in October 1960, were posted to various Turkish missions abroad.⁷

In February 1963, Türkeş returned to Turkey (where civilian government had been reinstated), resigned his military commission and entered politics. Two years later, he joined the conservative Republican Peasants Nation Party — having bargained for the newly-created position of Inspector General thereof. Exploiting this position well, Türkeş soon recruited enough support to stage a surprise takeover of the party at its general congress: on 1 August 1965, he was elected President of the party. Türkeş then set out to modify the party's character, even changing its name, in 1969, to the Nationalist Action Party (or Nationalist Movement Party).⁸ From then on, Türkeş and the party became inseparable.

Succeeding years witnessed a persistent struggle to strengthen the party, provide it with a cogent ideology and render it a factor of some importance in Turkish politics. It was mostly an uphill battle for Türkeş and his associates (several of whom had been his comrades in the armed forces), in the face of determined opposition. Although the struggle did not occupy a central place in the political arena, it has nonetheless added variety to Turkish politics for one and a half decades and has contributed to fostering its radicalization.

As is the case in many other countries, few if any of Turkey's political parties have bared all their activities to the public. Consequently, much of what we know about them is what they — or their opponents — wish us to know. The Nationalist Action Party, however, more so than most others, has conducted its politics on two virtually distinct levels: an official one, largely expressed in electioneering and parliamentary activity by the party itself; and an unofficial one, sometimes semi-clandestine and outwardly dissociated from the party, implemented by affiliates of the party in other domains.

The 1965 takeover of the Republican Peasants Nation Party occurred only a few months before elections to the 450-member National Assembly, or lower house — which is the more important of the two bodies comprising the Turkish parliament (as it votes confidence in the government). Elections to the National Assembly are held every four years, on a constituency basis — Turkey's 67 administrative districts are also its electoral constituencies — with the valid votes allocated, on a modified proportional basis, to the winning candidates. The smaller Senate is generally the preserve of the two mass parties, the Republican People's Party and the Justice Party; smaller ones have made hardly any significant inroads.⁹ For our purposes, National Assembly election results are far more indicative than those of the Senate regarding voting support for the party under discussion (see Table 1).

Table 1
Voting Results in National Assembly Elections, 1965-1977:
The Support for the Nationalist Action Party¹⁰

	Number of Votes	% of the Total Vote	Seats (out of 450)
10 October 1965	208,696	2.2	11
12 October 1969	275,091	3.0	1
14 October 1973	362,208	3.4	3
5 June 1977 ¹¹	951,544	6.4	16

Sources: Resmî Gazete (The Official Gazette) and the publications of the Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü (the State Institute of Statistics), Ankara.

These results at least provide material for speculation concerning the party's standing at the polls. Briefly stated, in 1965 the party had no time to recover after Türkeş's takeover and the consequent departure of its previous party leadership; this aggravated further the party's general situation after yet another part had broken away from it about two years earlier. The 1965 results were indeed poor compared with those of 1961, when the same Republican Peasants Nation Party had obtained 1,415,390 votes, or 14 percent of the total — and 54 seats. Türkeş, although a capable organizer, simply did not possess sufficient opportunity in 1965 to plan and launch a more successful electoral campaign with a sadly-reduced party.¹² This situation changed, however, over the next dozen years: the number of votes for the Nationalist Action Party increased four and a half times, while its share of the total vote rose threefold. No less significant was the steady progress in this direction: even if the overall results attained by the party are none too impressive, its advance was constant in a nationwide context, and the doubling of its share of the vote between 1973 and 1977 was indeed striking.

The number of seats gained in the National Assembly is, of course, another matter. This, however, is largely a consequence of the Turkish electoral system which appears to favour the larger parties — thus reinforcing a trend evident in quite a few other multi-party states with free elections.¹³ In addition, an amendment to the Electoral Law, sponsored in Turkey's parliament by the two mass-parties in 1968, provided for altering allocation of remainders so as to offer seats to the larger parties at the expense of the smaller. This contributed to the Nationalist Action Party's drop from eleven seats to one (Türkeş himself), in the 1969 elections, despite the rise in its proportion of the vote. The same drastic decline befell other small parties in 1969,¹⁴ and the overall pattern was repeated in 1973, although the Nationalist Action Party then improved its representation in the National Assembly, from one seat to three, by concentrating its electioneering efforts on constituencies which appeared to present a better chance.¹⁵ In 1977, the two mass-parties again increased their proportionate share of the vote at the expense of *all* competing parties, except the Nationalist Action Party which dramatically increased its National Assembly representation more than fivefold to sixteen seats, thus becoming the fourth largest parliamentary group.¹⁶ This was due to the party's effective participation in the Cabinet Coalition during 1975-1977¹⁷ and to its aggressive electoral campaign, focusing on nationalist themes com-

bined with an emphasis on religion. Religious nationalism proved a successful theme, drawing support away from the National Salvation Party (which in 1977 lost half of its 48 National Assembly seats). In practical terms, this meant application of the rule declaring that a contingent of ten or more members in the National Assembly was to be considered a regular parliamentary group, with certain attendant privileges and fund allocations.

All of the above suggests that the turning point of the party's career — on what we have called 'the official level' — occurred when it passed from opposition to government in early 1975, in which it served for almost two and a half years, until the June 1977 elections and then again for several months between July and December 1977. Political parties everywhere are wont to devote a considerable amount of effort to getting into government. The Nationalist Action Party attained this goal thanks largely to the quirks of coalition arithmetic. After the October 1973 general elections, the largest group in the National Assembly, the Republican People's Party, formed a Coalition Cabinet in early 1974 together with the National Salvation Party, an aggressively Islamist new group. This broke down after nine months and the Justice Party, the second largest parliamentary group, set about forming an alternative Coalition Cabinet. For this purpose, however, it required the full cooperation and participation of all the smaller groups in the National Assembly, including the Nationalist Action Party — which thus obtained, with its three members in the Assembly, key positions in the Cabinet: Türkeş became Deputy Prime Minister and another of the three, Mustafa Kemal Erkovan, was Minister of State.¹⁸

The same situation was repeated after the June 1977 elections, with the Nationalist Action Party in an even better bargaining position, as its parliamentary group now comprised sixteen members. In July, Süleyman Demirel formed and headed a Coalition Cabinet of his own Justice Party with the National Salvation Party and the Nationalist Action Party.¹⁹ The last-mentioned obtained five portfolios (out of thirty): Deputy Prime Minister (Türkeş) and ministers of state, trade, health and social welfare, customs and monopolies. While these were not necessarily the most important centres of power, the participation in government afforded the party further opportunities, as in the immediately preceding years, to continue placing its people in different positions and to extend its influence — even in such governmental departments as the State Institute of

Statistics. At the same time, the party strove to prevent appointments of known leftists.²⁰ All this afforded ways and means of better securing the interests of the party on the official level and, to no less an extent, of buttressing its power on an unofficial plane as well.

Political life in Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s, more than in several other multi-party democracies, appears to have evolved on two levels, usually separate although sometimes interconnected. On the unofficial level, a struggle for power and influence went on amongst: extra-parliamentary groupings, whose number increased after the aforementioned 1968 amendment was passed; business circles and the various trade union organizations, the latter of which were bitterly antagonistic towards one another; students and youth associations, often reflecting the socio-economic and political cleavages in Turkey; and various political groups, mostly small and frequently clandestine, in which people with kindred ideologies and sometimes violently radical tendencies banded. Although many of these were allied with the extreme left, several could be defined as close to the chauvinist right, often affiliated or connected — at times quite tenuously — with the Nationalist Action Party. Among these, we may include Pan-Turk circles, youth groups, and professional associations.

Pan-Turkists, already mentioned above, have been a source of support for the Nationalist Action Party for some time. There was much in common between the two, of course, and Türkeş's own activity amongst the Pan-Turkists in the 1940s — culminating in his joining their 1944 demonstrations and then standing trial together with their leaders — together with a long fiery article he wrote in 1950 on 'Pan-Turkism and Turkish Unity',²¹ was sufficient to mobilize their support for the party he had headed since 1965. During the 1960s, Pan-Turkists formed many circles throughout Turkey's cities and towns, which, despite their relatively small numbers, were not without influence, as they included quite a few opinion-makers. The Pan-Turkists' Association, or Türkçüler Derneği, supported the party and Türkeş, in principle. Several Pan-Turkists joined the party with the intention of dominating it from within or, at least, of influencing its policies. The ideological make-up of the Pan-Turkists differed, however, from that of the party leadership: for the former, Pan-Turkism was the alpha and

the omega, while for the leadership of the Nationalist Action Party it constituted merely one of several major tenets. Eventually they parted ways after the 1969 third general party convention in Adana, when both sides clashed over the selection of the party emblem: the Pan-Turkists wanted the grey wolf, symbol of the ancient Turks, but the party leadership decided on the three crescents, which the Pan-Turkists correctly interpreted as a switch towards Islam (a tactical pre-election move, which has continued to influence the party to date). A number of Pan-Turkists left, some of whom remained rather cool towards the party, while others sympathized with it from the outside and generally could be counted upon to drum up support for it.²²

Youth groups affiliated with the party or otherwise connected with it were much more visible than the Pan-Turkist circles. From 1968, the 'Grey Wolves' (*Bozkurtlar*) were increasingly in evidence in the streets of the larger cities, particularly in Ankara and Istanbul. Numbering between several hundred and a few thousand,²³ their uniformed marches and demonstrations and their violent clashes with leftist groups attracted much interest, particularly in the press antagonistic to the Nationalist Action Party, which did not fail to draw comparisons with fascist and Nazi youth groups. One oft-repeated point was their commando training (allegedly including firearms instruction) in special summer camps, which drew them the appellation of 'commandos'. The party riposted by arguing that it was doing Turkey a very real service by providing a patriotic education for all those youths.²⁴

Perhaps the Grey Wolves were needed more by the Nationalist Action Party while it was in opposition; one certainly heard less about them as the party emerged from the political wilderness and, from early 1975, began serving in various Coalition Cabinets. Later, one begins to hear much more about other groups, the Idealists (*Ülkücüler*) which may have supplanted the Grey Wolves or organized concurrently with them (reports are contradictory in this respect).²⁵ It is more or less certain that the former was more ramified (with branches in all of Turkey's cities and provincial towns) and had a much larger membership — possibly 100,000 or more²⁶ — than the latter. First called 'Hearths of Ideals', then (from 1979) the 'Association of Idealist Youth', the organization was mostly busy with both oral and written propaganda (in frequent seminars and various bulletins, respectively) and, according to their opponents, with anti-left violence. Both the Nationalist

Action Party and the Idealists stoutly maintained that there was no connection between them. Formally, this might have been the case. However, the facts indicate that the Idealists did hold the same views as the party and actively preached them amongst themselves and others; even their *vade mecum*, published in 1978 as *Notes to the Idealist*,²⁷ openly embraced the party's main points of doctrine. One is justified in surmising that informal ties with the party were fairly regular and that the Idealists served as training cadres for the party. The fact that members of the Idealists did indeed join the party in their later years appears to prove this conclusively.

Various professional groups, most of them set up during the 1970s, displayed affinity to and possible relations with the Nationalist Action Party. The most important of those was the Nationalist Federation of Workers' Trade Unions (Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu), established in 1977 by opponents of the two other trade union federations then extant in Turkey, one of which avoided political involvement while the other was avowedly far left in its positions. During its first twenty months, the new federation was reportedly joined by 65,000 workers at 147 enterprises.²⁸ Like other similar bodies in Turkey, the Federation busied itself not merely with professional matters but with cultural, educational and political affairs as well, in which its stands were generally close to the avowed attitudes of the Nationalist Action Party. The violent clashes which occurred in the southern town of Seydisehir, in late May 1979, between this Federation and the far-left Federation of Revolutionary Trade Unions — leaving 23 persons injured²⁹ — certainly had political overtones. Again, although relations between the Federation and the party were not official, they were rather close and were bolstered by the hardly coincidental fact that Federation headquarters were located in a building adjacent to the one housing the party leadership in the Bahçelievler quarter of Ankara. Opponents of both bodies certainly identified them with one another, attacking them both verbally and physically. The same held true for a number of smaller unions — of clerks, technicians, teachers, peasants, artisans, newspapermen, financiers and economists³⁰ — most of which identified with the basic ideology of the Nationalist Action Party and supported many of its activities, generally on an unofficial basis. Mutual relations did, however, become evident at times. For example, the above-mentioned Financiers and Economists Union invited Türkeş to deliver the opening speech at their 1979 general convention.³¹

It was mostly the activities on the unofficial level, chiefly those of youth groups close to the party, which were at least partly responsible for the violence which seriously disrupted public order, as expressed in daily clashes between the extreme right and the Marxist left. When the military commanders took over the government in September 1980, they first dissolved parliament, thus enabling the wheels of justice to turn out accusations against all suspects, including parliamentarians. It was certainly no accident that Bülent Ecevit, Süleyman Demirel and Necmettin Erbakan, respectively heads of the Republican People's Party, Justice Party and National Salvation Party,³² were released after brief periods of arrest or imprisonment. On the contrary, the brunt of the investigations and ensuing trials was borne by various far-left groups, on the one hand, and by the Nationalist Action Party and groups believed to be connected with it, on the other. Insofar as the latter were concerned, in May 1981, a military court in Ankara began the trials of 587 people, for 220 of whom the death penalty was demanded. In the dock were Türkeş and most of his close collaborators in the party, as well as leaders and activists from among the Idealists and party-related professional groups. The 945-page volume of indictments was read out in court verbatim. It does tell us something, although not very much, about the party, emphasizing illegal possession of weapons, threats, murders, bombings, thefts, armed robberies and preparations for taking over the government by violent means and instituting a one-man rule in Turkey. The trials are continuing at this time of writing (April 1982) and are eagerly reported upon daily in the Turkish press.³³ The volumes comprising the indictment and the cross-examination of Türkeş, respectively, were published and immediately became best-sellers.

The general structure of the Nationalist Action Party was that laid down by law for all political parties. At first, the party conformed to the previous regulations of the Republican Peasants Nation Party, using the opportunity of the 1969 name change to introduce new ones.³⁴ The main body was the party's General Executive Board, comprising 37 members and responsible for most crucial decision-making, appointments, contacts and budget allocations. An eleven-member Presidium co-ordinated the agenda of the General Executive Board and many of the party's activities. The Chairman of the party — Türkeş — headed both bodies and, with

his assistants, directed all party activity. This was more of a centralized, vertical system of decision-making than was prevalent in most other Turkish parties, one which made Türkeş the supreme leader.³⁵

Financing was a chronic problem and the party was constantly in need of funds. Since the law limits the dues imposed on members, the party depended on public funds (such as the parliamentary allocations) and contributions of wealthy supporters, including several landowners in Anatolia.³⁶ The sale of party publications, emblems, badges and the like produced some income, both in Turkey and abroad, particularly in Germany and Holland, where the party had quite a few adherents.³⁷ Moreover, many party officials, seconded by members and sympathizers, agreed to perform many of their tasks on a voluntary basis.³⁸

Turkish parties, including the Nationalist Action Party, do not usually release membership figures; direct and indirect questions have merely elicited such replies as 'It does not matter, as such figures are not an indication of public support in Turkey'. The reason is that not only are members of the military and security forces forbidden by law from becoming party members, but also civil servants — a category comprising, amongst others, teachers at all levels. This is evidently one of the factors inducing political parties in Turkey to set up affiliated groups and associations, membership in which is not limited. It would therefore seem that electoral results are a better indication of a Turkish party's standing in public opinion than are membership rosters — which are in any case kept secret. Private sources estimated Nationalist Action Party membership at about 130,000 in 1980.³⁹ What is clear is that this party had by then established 567 branches throughout Turkey's 572 administrative districts⁴⁰ (there were no branches in Hakkari); and a number abroad (especially in Germany)⁴¹ to recruit support and funds, although not necessarily to mobilize direct membership.

Fortunately, information about the party's leadership is somewhat more accessible. A series of interviews conducted at party headquarters in Ankara during August 1979 provided us with data about thirty-one leaders of the Nationalist Action Party — all members of the General Executive Board. Eleven of these also made up the party Presidium; of those eleven, one was the party's Chairman, another its Secretary General, another four were his assistants and yet another was the Accountant General. Needless to say, Türkeş, as party Chairman, headed both the Presidium and

the General Executive Board. All the party's Members of Parliament at that time (seventeen, including one who had crossed over from another party) and its sole Senator, too, were members of the General Executive Board. Their backgrounds were as follows: seven lawyers, six retired officers, five professors and educators, four engineers and architects, three journalists, three contractors, one economist, one physician and one religious official.

While a sizeable number of lawyers and journalists is characteristic of party leadership in many countries, special attention ought perhaps to be paid to the fairly large proportion of retired officers (typical of Türkeş himself and several of his closest associates) and of professors and educators (possibly reflecting the party's emphasis on Turkish culture, as explained below). In any event, it was this group which shaped the party's policies and assisted Türkeş in his decision-making. Nevertheless (as I was informed independently by various party stalwarts), Türkeş's standing was such that although he sometimes consulted with others, when he brought matters to the General Executive Board, he frequently used it merely as a sounding-board, without putting matters to the vote, often deciding as he saw fit.

Like many small parties in Turkey and elsewhere which seek to mobilize wide popular support, the Nationalist Action Party was always keenly aware of the value of propaganda. Türkeş and other party leaders wrote pamphlets and books, which the party distributed at inexpensive prices among members, sympathizers and the general public. Reports of the party's general conventions,⁴² views of its spokesmen⁴³ and platforms for the successive electoral contests⁴⁴ were handed out. The party's Research Bureau (most Turkish parties appointed research groups) prepared study papers such as the following: a seventeen-page *Overview of Turkey's Economy and Latest Developments*,⁴⁵ dated October 1978, an all-out attack on the economic policies of the Republican People's Party government and a thirty-seven-page paper, *The Energy Problem*,⁴⁶ dated May 1979, which offers short, medium and long-term solutions to Turkey's energy shortages. Other party pamphlets from the late 1970s bear titles like *Black Spot*⁴⁷ or *Black Book*,⁴⁸ defending the party's positions and attacking the Republican People's Party and leftist violence (which the pamphlets link to one another).

Writings of the party leaders, pamphlets like the aforementioned and newspapers close to the party line were generally sold every-

where, and were available at the party's unofficial publishing house *cum* bookshop in Istanbul's Beyazid quarter, the Millî Hareket Yayinevi (National Action Publishing House). This establishment printed and distributed not only many of the above publications, together with classics of Turkish nationalism and of Pan-Turkism (works by Ziya Gökalp, Ömer Seyfeddin, Yusuf Akçura and others), but also translations of *Mein Kampf* and Goebbels's *War Diaries*.

Propaganda in the press is of special interest. In Turkey, few if any newspapers acknowledge formal attachment to any political party, as such newspapers do not sell. Nonetheless, every attentive reader of the press is able to determine who supports whom, when and how (although the 'why' is generally open to some doubt). The Nationalist Action Party has had several newspapers identified with it and others supporting it (as well as many more which attack it).

From the very outset, the party has had difficulties in setting up press organs closely connected with it; like other small parties, it has faced forbidding challenges in financing and distribution. The solution has been to launch periodicals — rather than dailies — closely (but not officially) identified with its views and goals. The first was a monthly, *Millî Hareket* (National Action, or National Movement), published in Istanbul between 1966 and 1971. This was followed by *Devlet* (State), a weekly, then a fortnightly and ultimately a monthly, published in Ankara and later in Konya between 1969 and 1979. Both provided party news on a regular basis, transcribing its leaders' speeches and propagating its views — chiefly ardent Turkish nationalism and strong condemnation of all leftist manifestations. In addition, a special news bulletin in Turkish was periodically sent to party members and, since March 1979, an English-language *MHP News and Views*,⁴⁹ published approximately once a month,⁵⁰ obviously intended to improve the party's image abroad. Moreover, during election campaigns, short-lived irregular periodicals were published by the party as well.

Newspapers supporting the party, although not identified with it, were of two varieties. One was the Pan-Turkist press,⁵¹ which generally included articles and features sympathetic to the views of the Nationalist Action Party, although not always in as categorical a style as the periodicals identified with this party. The other consisted of a small number of dailies, published in Istanbul (centre for the daily press), which allotted considerable space to the party's ac-

tions and views and openly supported its attitudes. *Her Gün, Orta Dogu* and *Millet* were the most pronounced of these; they were reportedly closed down by the authorities after the September 1980 military intervention.

It is difficult to determine the main target of party propaganda. Judging by its content and tone, it assumed a centrist position — as many rightist parties have done — in an effort to appeal to everyone, excluding leftists (whom the party could not have hoped to attract in any case). Even the style was sometimes toned down from strident to moderate, apparently with this goal in mind. Election results indicate that the party appealed more to Sunnites than to Shiites (Alevites), to Turks rather than the Kurdish minority (suspicious of the party's ultra-nationalism), to the traditional middle class rather than the wealthy — although it has appealed to workers and farmers as well in its attempts to steal the left's thunder. The party's ideology affords an inkling about how all its propaganda was neatly packaged.

In devising and presenting the party's ideology, Türkeş and his advisers appear to have had to overcome a basic problem: how to campaign against the status quo — represented by the two well-established mass-parties — while indicating convincingly that they would refrain from doing so by revolutionary upheaval leading to totalitarianism. Some of the party's achievements in this respect were described by Dr David Barchard, a British journalist versed in Turkish affairs, as follows,

Its coteries of intellectuals derive some of their thinking from European sources, but these are seldom admitted or emphasised. For its mass following the party offers a mixture of swashbuckling appeals to the glory of the Ottoman past, the legendary central Asian origins of the Turks, Islamic piety, and heady talk of eventual world domination. However, the social content of neo-fascist thought in Turkey tends to stress such themes as the need for land reform, hostility to private capital, and opposition to economic imperialism.⁵²

There is more to it, of course. The Nationalist Action Party was romantically oriented towards early Turkish history and culture, but ultra-modern in its attitudes to society and economics. It was strongly anti-Marxist and anti-communist (both within Turkey⁵³ and abroad⁵⁴), but criticized Western capitalism⁵⁵ as well, ever searching for 'a third way', based on 'Turkishness'.⁵⁶ It envisaged a powerful Turkey and laid emphasis upon strong personal leadership, discipline and sacrifices, but asserted its commitment to

parliamentary, multi-party democracy. All these — and more — found expression in the party's ideology which, although modified from time to time by the General Executive Board on points of emphasis, basically remained the same as specified by the party in its early years after Türkeş's takeover. The party's programme and especially its various election platforms — both general statements and manifestoes addressed to particular groups — are worked out in considerable detail. Nevertheless, they remained largely modelled on and adapted from Türkeş's various writings and pronouncements.

This is also true of works by other party leaders, such as Türkeş's late associate, Dünder Taser, in his *Great Turkey*⁵⁷ or his *The Question*⁵⁸ and equally true of such basic books as the party's 96-page *Handbook*,⁵⁹ a fairly detailed exposition of the party's principal views. The party's main goal is defined as 'creating a nationalist and powerful Turkey'.⁶⁰ Key slogans were 'A national state — a strong government'.⁶¹ There followed an emphasis on the democratic regime, industrialization, the establishment of national trade unions, social security and insurance, improvement of agriculture and development of the villages, exploitation of natural resources, encouragement of foreign trade, adopting nationalist stands but opposing both socialism and fascism, the betterment of education, and opposition to birth-control ('Long live the ideal of a 100-million strong Turkey!').⁶²

Türkeş has published several volumes, mostly collections of speeches and articles, the greater part of which — especially those dealing with the party's ideology⁶³ — primarily constituted an elaboration⁶⁴ of his first exposition of the party's doctrine, *Nine Lights*.⁶⁵ This sixteen-page booklet became the guiding light for party seminars and debates and served as the textbook for the study of its ideology.

The nine 'lights' or principles are as follows: (1) Nationalism (which not coincidentally comes first), defined as the sentiment feeding the Turkish nation with a desire to raise Turkey to the peak of civilization — safe, prosperous, happy and modernized. (2) Idealism, characterized as the wish to serve one's nation and secure its independence, liberty and well-being. (3) Morality, the basis of society, which ought to conform to local Turkish traditions and beliefs. (4) Social-mindedness, said to comprise the protection and encouragement of free enterprise; the provision of economic incentives to holders of small capital; and statewide organization of

social welfare. (5) A Scientific Mentality, encouraging well-planned study and research. (6) Liberalism, guaranteeing all conceivable freedoms, political and otherwise, to every single Turk. (7) Peasant Care, that is, according special significance to rural development in schooling, medicine and the modernization of agriculture. (8) Populism, intended to channel all progress and development for the benefit of the nation's overwhelming majority. (9) Industrialization, emphasizing technology and preparing for the nuclear and space era.

Briefly stated, it was a typical 'best for everyone' ideology, with obvious emphasis on nationalism, idealism and morals, in a populist vein. These elements, along with the other 'lights', recur in the party's presentations of its ideological tenets.

The Nationalist Action Party was closed down and dissolved in 1981. This, however, concludes only one chapter in the history of the extreme right in Turkish politics — which will most probably seek new political expression once civilian government is restored in Turkey. Even in terms of this completed chapter, it is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion as to the true character of the Nationalist Action Party — except for saying that it alone formed a significant extreme right (versus the splintered far-left). While some of its characteristics do remind one of certain totalitarian parties in Europe and elsewhere, others do not. The party's opponents and detractors, on the one hand, have called it 'fascist' and imputed to it diabolical intentions and deeds, including preparations for a plot to seize political power via a coup d'état.⁶⁶ Its adherents and admirers, on the other hand, have denied these charges and proclaimed its unceasing devotion to patriotism. F.W. Fernau, a German journalist writing frequently on Turkish affairs, has ingeniously labelled the party 'fascistoid'.⁶⁷ However, *Today's isms*⁶⁸ are not always easy to apply accurately and profitably. Furthermore, since all this is relevant mainly in a Turkish context, why insist on affixing labels?

Notes

1. Newspaper articles in Turkey and abroad have been mostly polemical and are more in the nature of source-materials. The pro-party *Devlet* published, between 28 July and 25 August 1968, a series of articles on its ideology, by Orhan Türkdoğan, 'Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi'nin anatomisi' (The Anatomy of the Nationalist Action Party). My own 'The Militant Right in Turkish Politics', in my *Middle Eastern Themes: Papers in History and Politics* (London 1973), 276-289, touches on the party's foundation and early years alone. The following is — to the best of my knowledge — the first attempt at a comprehensive analysis.

2. K.H. Karpat, *Turkey's Politics* (Princeton 1959), 38ff.

3. See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London 1961), 342ff.; C.W. Hostler, *Turkism and the Soviets* (London 1957); and my *Pan-Turkism in Turkey: A Study of Irredentism* (London 1981).

4. On the internal turmoil in the 1960s and 1970s, cf. my 'Radicalism in Turkish Domestic Politics', in the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung's *Die türkische Krise* (Bonn 1981), 97-106.

5. *Biography of Alparslan Türkeş, Leader of MHP*, 2pp., undated, but prepared by the party in the late 1970s.

6. Ergun Özbudun, *The Role of the Military in Recent Turkish Politics* (Cambridge, Mass. 1966).

7. W.F. Weiker, *The Turkish Revolution 1960-1961: Aspects of Military Politics* (Washington, DC 1963). Cf. my *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey* (Leiden 1974), 12-13.

8. The Turkish *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* translates both ways. My attempts to ask party leaders and members how they interpreted it elicited both versions.

9. See Ergun Özbudun, *Social Change and Political Participation in Turkey* (Princeton 1976).

10. Still called, in 1965, the Republican Peasants Nation Party.

11. No National Assembly elections have been held since 1977, as parliamentary activity has been suspended, but new ones may be held again in 1983.

12. The best study on the 1965 general elections in Turkey is still Nermin Abadan-Unat's *Anayasa hukuku ve siyasî bilimler açısından 1965 seçimlerine tahlili* (An Analysis of the 1965 Elections According to Constitutional Law and Political Science) (Ankara 1966).

13. For a recent comparative study, see J.M. Landau, E. Özbudun and F. Tachau (eds.), *Electoral Politics in the Middle East: Issues, Voters and Elites* (London 1980).

14. Cf. my 'Turkey From Election to Election', *The World Today* (London), 26, 4 (April 1970), 155-166.

15. Id., 'The 1973 Elections in Turkey and Israel', *ibid.*, 30 (April 1974), 170-180.

16. The party increased its proportionate strength later as well, in the 11 December 1977 local elections and in the 14 October 1979 elections to a part of the Senate.

17. See Erol, in *Günaydın* (Istanbul daily), 11 June 1977.

18. Details in Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975* (London 1977), 345ff.

19. Description and analysis in Avner Levy's 'Forming the Government in

Turkey After the June 1977 General Elections' (in Hebrew), *Hamizrah Hehadash* (Jerusalem), 29, 1-4 (1980), 120-129.

20. 'L'extrême droite tente d'empêcher les progressistes d'entrer dans l'enseignement', *Le Monde* (Paris), 24 November 1976 (based on *Le Monde's* Ankara correspondent).

21. 'Turkçülük ve Türk birliği', reprinted in Türkeş's *Gönül seferberliğine* (Mobilization of the Heart) (Ankara 1979), 17-23.

22. Based on interviews in Istanbul, in September 1979, with Professor Erol Güngör, of Istanbul University, who has had many contacts with the party (without being a member) and Mr Faruk Çil, a leading Pan-Turkist journalist, who has alternately supported the party and attacked it in the press.

23. See, besides the Turkish press, *The Observer Foreign News Service*, 4 February 1969 and *The Guardian*, 19 August 1969.

24. Further details in my *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey*, op. cit., 215-217.

25. See Olaf Ihlau, 'Graue Wölfe bedrohen die Demokratie', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 12 February 1976; contrast with Sam Cohen, 'Student Violence Threatens Turkish Democracy', *The Observer Foreign News Service*, 27 January 1977.

26. According to the Turkish press and my interviews with leaders of the Idealists in Ankara, in 1979 and 1980.

27. Akkan Suver, *Ülkücüye notlar* (n.p. 1978), esp. 38-39.

28. *Milliyet* (Istanbul daily), 1 August 1979.

29. *The Guardian* and the *New York Times*, both of 30 May 1979.

30. Details in my *Pan-Turkism in Turkey*, 148-149.

31. Reported in this union's ÜMİD-BİR Ülkücü Maliyeci ve İktisatçılar Birliği Derneği Genel Merkezi, *1. Türk Milli İktisat Kurultayı — Kurultay tebliğleri* (The 1st Turkish Convention For National Economy — the Convention's Reports) (n.p. 1979).

32. On which see my *Politics and Islam: the National Salvation Party in Turkey* (Salt Lake City, Utah 1976).

33. Examples in *Yanki* (Ankara weekly), No. 543, 24-30 August 1981, and in the daily press.

34. *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi tüzüğü* (Regulations of the Nationalist Action Party) (n.p., n.d. [1969]).

35. Further details about the party's organization in my *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey*, 210-214 and my *Middle Eastern Themes*, 279-281.

36. See 'Und ein Rentner inspiziert die Truppen', *Europa Archiv* (Munich), 2, 8 (August 1969), 25.

37. *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara daily), 1 September 1981.

38. This was confirmed to me by several interviewees.

39. Based on interviews in Ankara with Esat Göçhan and other influential party members, in 1979 and 1980.

40. Same source.

41. Where the party reportedly had (according to the data of the Interior Ministry in Bonn) six branches with circa 3,000 members. See *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30 December 1976; cf. *ibid.*, 19 March and 1 July 1976.

42. Such as *13. Kurultay genel idare kurulu çalışma raporu* (Working Report of the General Executive Board of the 13th Convention) (Ankara 1977). The opening and closing speeches of Türkeş were published separately.

- . 43. Such as Z.N., *Dünder Taser'in Büyük Türkiye* ('The Great Turkey' of Dünder Taser) (Ankara 1973).
44. Like the 53-page long *Kudretli, müreffeh ve büyük Türkiye için* (For a Powerful, Prosperous and Great Turkey) (Ankara 1973); or *Sanat ve sanatçı* (Art and the Artist) (Ankara 1977); or the 79-page long *Türk milleti uyan!* (Wake Up, Oh Turkish Nation!) (Ankara 1977).
45. *Türkiye ekonomisine genel bir bakış ve son gelişmeler* (Ankara, October 1978).
46. *Enerji meselesi* (Ankara, May 1979).
47. *Kara leke* (n.p., June 1979).
48. *Kara kitap* (2nd edition, Ankara, n.d.).
49. MHP is the Turkish anagram of the party's name.
50. The last issue in hand is no. 12, dated 12 June 1980, but several more may have been published.
51. For a list of those, their dates and places of publication, see my *Pan-Turkism in Turkey, 190-192*.
52. David Barchard, 'Civil War in Slow Motion', *The Guardian*, 29 June 1978.
53. See the party's three-page *Where Do We Stand?* (n.p., n.d. [1979-1980]).
54. See the party's three-page *Excerpts from Alparslan Türkeş's Press Conference on 17th of May* (n.p., n.d. [1979]).
55. But not NATO, which it generally supports. See the party's five-page *The NATO Alliance in Its 30th Year* (n.p., n.d. [1979]).
56. See C.H. Dodd, *Democracy and Development in Turkey* (Hull 1979), 118-121.
57. Dünder Taser, *Büyük Türkiye*, which went through several printings.
58. Id., *Mesele* (2nd edition, Ankara 1973).
59. M.H.P., *Milliyetçi Hareket'in el kitabı* (Ankara 1973).
60. 'Milliyetçi büyük Türkiyeyi kurmak'.
61. 'Millî devlet — güçlü iktidar'.
62. *Milliyetçi Hareket'in el kitabı*, op. cit., 89.
63. Such as *Temel görüşler* (Basic views) (Istanbul 1979).
64. For instance, *Dokuz isik ve Türkiye* (The Nine Lights and Turkey) (Ankara 1977).
65. In Turkish, *Dokuz isik*. First printed in Istanbul in 1965, reprinted several times.
66. Barry O'Brien, reporting from Ankara on 'Turkish coup plot theory', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 1977.
67. F.-W. Fernau, 'Die politischen Parteien der zweiten türkischen Republik', *Orient, Deutsche Zeitschrift für Politik und Wirtschaft des Orients* (Hamburg), 18, 3 (1977), 103.
68. Reference to William Ebenstein's *Today's isms* (7th edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1973) where fascism is discussed on pp. 110-138.

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