Cinematic Views on Critical Representations of the Economic Policies of the Democrat Party Era: Social Realist Film Initiatives in Turkish Cinema

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Abstract

The Democrat Party era (1950-1960) sparked radical changes in Turkey. The economic practices of the party administration during the country's administration, as well as some of the negativities it created in the political and social field, have long been on Turkey's agenda. This agenda continued even after the May 27th 1960 Military Coup removed the party from power. The Turkish Constitution of 1961, which was put into effect after the coup, created an environment suitable for looking at various problems of society from different perspectives. This environment was also reflected in the cinema, paving the way for the birth of a movement called Social Realism in Turkish Cinema. It is thought that the Social Realist Movement (1960-1965) and some of the films shot under the influence of this movement mirror the economic policies implemented during the Democrat Party era and the adverse developments it brought with it. In the study, the reflections on the harmful effects of the Democrat Party's economic policies on social realist films in Turkish Cinema are discussed. The films selected within the scope of the study were criticized through critical discourse analysis, historical, sociological, and ideological criticism methods, and the political, sociological, and class aspects of the Democrat Party's policies, as well as their economic aspects, were analyzed.
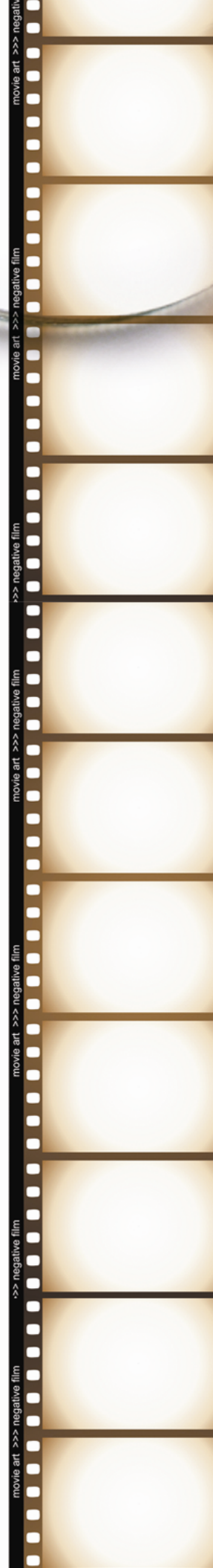
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Betül Sarı Aksakal

Introduction

After Turkey transitioned to a multi-party system in 1946, the Democrat Party took over the power from the Republican People's Party in the 1950 elections. The Democrat Party era (1950-1960) represents a significant turning point in Turkish political life. During the era, economic developments such as the change in the quality of the Turkish economy, the acceleration of private entrepreneurship, the mechanization of agriculture, and its integration with new technologies emerged. With the effect of the new conjuncture, internal migration, rapid urbanization, and industrialization, they gained momentum. With these aspects, the Democrat Party period can be characterized as both a turning point in Turkish political history and a period in which social transformation gained different dimensions.

Especially after the second half of the Menderes era, the fact that he started to give an example of a lousy administration created a strong opposition movement. After the military took over the administration on May 27, 1960, Coup, the Democrat Party's power ended. The changing political climate in the country through the 1961 Constitution created after the coup and the

libertarian environment it brought with it also laid the groundwork for essential developments in the field of art. As one of the most important branches of art, cinema has undergone significant transformations after the coup. Between 1960 and 1965, a cinema movement called Social Realism emerged in Turkish Cinema, which was dominated by a lower dose of censorship compared to the Democrat Party era, aimed to reflect social realities with a revolutionary perspective through the films it produced and to reveal an original and modern cinematic language.

Films shot under the influence of the social realism movement[1] served as a mirror reflecting the economic, political, and social problems of Turkey during and after the Democrat Party came to power. A social event or problem formed the background of the films. The themes such as dissolution in villages, facts of life, migration to big cities, unemployment, exploitation, unplanned urbanization, slums, class differences, and dreams of climbing the social ladder have been the source of the film's stories, which are the era's characteristics.

The films examined within the scope of the study are *Gecelerin Ötesi* (*Beyond the Nights*) *(1960), Acı Hayat (Bitter Life) (1962),* directed by Metin Erksan; *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (*Those Awakening in the Dark) (1964),* directed by Ertem Göreç; *Şafak Bekçileri* (*Watchmen of Dawn) (1963) and Gurbet Kuşları (Birds of Exile) (1964)* directed by Halit Refiğ.

It is impossible to evaluate cinema independently of the economic, political, and social structure in which it sprouted. In that case, it would be meaningless to focus on the social realities in the era's cinema without getting acquainted with the 1950s, which formed the basis of the May 27 Military Coup in Turkey. For this reason, in the first part of the study, a broad spectrum of economic policies implemented during the Democrat Party era has been presented. Then, the sociological and political reflections of the party's economic policies are scrutinized. These reflections can be summarized as the fortification of capitalism, internal migration, and class differences. Then, information was given about the birth of Turkish cinema by developing a unique language during the Democrat Party era and the factors that paved the way. Next, the censorship mechanism, the era's effectiveness, and the standardization of film subjects in this context were mentioned. Afterward, the libertarian environment that emerged with the May 27 Coup and the 1961 Constitution was mentioned with its main lines. What opportunities this environment has provided for the making of Social Realist films in cinema are included. Finally, the films selected within the scope of the study were discussed. The films were criticized in thematic, ideological, and sociological contexts, which shed light on which aspects of the film's subjects brought criticism to the Democrat Party's economic policies. In addition, through historical criticism, the

formation of films has been illuminated through the historical era and cinematic environment in which they emerged.

The Economic Policy Basis of the Democrat Party: Integration into the International Capitalist System through Agricultural Liberalism

It can be argued that the foundations of the economic policies of the Democrat Party were laid between 1945 and 1950. After 1946, Turkey came under the influence of the United States (US) in the field of economy, as in many other fields, and started to adopt economic liberalism (Kaçmazoğlu, 1988, p. 32). As a result, in 1946, the first significant devaluation of the history of the Republic was realized, and some foreign aid searches were initiated (Kaçmazoğlu, 1988, p. 195). Moreover, multi-party life began in Turkey with the integration of the Democrat Party into the country's administration as an opposition party in the 1946 elections (Timur, 2003, p. 99). Considering the conditions of the Second World War, the dissatisfaction created by economic difficulties in domestic politics, and the changing conjuncture of the world, it has become inevitable to enter the multi-party era, which is necessary for political modernization.

In 1948, a delegation headed by Max W. Thornburg, the representative of American oil companies, came to Turkey and prepared a report containing some recommendations on the development of the Turkish economy. The report stated that the Turkish economy should end

statism and favor free enterprise as a prerequisite for receiving American aid (Kaçmazoğlu, 1988, p. 34). Again, according to the report, Turkey should grow and export the agricultural products that Europe needs. Since Turkey wants to be one of the countries benefiting from Marshall Aids, it has accepted the mission of being an agricultural country given to it in the international division of labor. Thus, Turkey-US rapprochement was realized, and Turkey began to be articulated to the Western world and the American sphere of influence. Meanwhile, due to the elections held in 1950, the Republican People's Party period, described as the Single Party Period (1923-1950), ended, and the Democrat Party's period of power began.

The Democrat Party government further reinforced this process. In this era, the Turkish economy was integrated with the world economy based on raw material specialization (Boratav, 1988, p. 80). There is a perfect harmony between the policies of the Democrat Party, which is the spokesperson for the agricultural bourgeoisie's common interests, and the US's (Ünsaldı, 2011, p. 49). This alignment accelerated Turkey's integration into the US-led international economic and political bloc (Kaya Özçelik, 2010, p. 169). The distinctive features of the era, American admiration, liberal economy understanding, and leftist opposition, were placed on the agenda as a product of the conditions prepared by the Republican People's Party (Kaçmazoğlu, 1988, p. 145). Considering its program, the Democrat Party was on the right of the political spectrum. The party

had two primary goals. The goals can be liberalism in the economy, democracy in politics, and social welfare for the masses. It can also be said that the Democrat Party's character as a private-sector party that emphasizes the market economy is strongly underlined. First of all, ensuring safety and stability in the markets is essential. The prevailing opinion is that markets should not be interfered with unless necessary. All these prove that the party defends liberal economic policies (Demirel, 2011, p. 55).

In the 1950s, when Turkey struggled to avoid falling under Soviet domination while a new world order was being established and determined its place in the Cold War by siding with the US, it became a member of all institutions that regulated capitalism politically, militarily, and economically on a global scale. Thus, the 1950s were when Turkey was economically integrated into global capitalism, and military compliance with NATO was established (Kaynar, 2019: 13-14). Turkey's participation in NATO in 1952 has been one of the issues the Menderes government was most proud of. Prime Minister Menderes summarized his thoughts on the subject in a speech as follows: "Turkey has not had such a great foreign reputation since the time of Suleiman the Magnificent." (Cited in Akıncı, 2021, p. 187). Turkey has become a vital component of the US containment policy to eliminate the danger of communism and stimulate its economy.

Outcomes of the Democrat Party's Economic Policies: Internal Migration, Fortification of Capitalism, and Class Differences

The economic policies implemented by the Democrat Party were based on practices that facilitated Turkey's integration with world capitalism and the Western bloc (Table 1). In addition to practices such as the opening up of the Turkish economy and the encouragement of foreign capital, a process has begun in which the understanding that the driving force in the economy is not the state but the private sector has been tried to be established and accepted by the society. The transition to a liberal economic order based on free market understanding paved the way for structural transformation in agriculture. Efforts to capitalize on agriculture and integrate it into the world economy dominated the era (Keyder, 2017, p. 149). As a result of the policies implemented, a weak agricultural and commercial bourgeoisie, formed by the alliance of large landowners and bureaucrats rather than the industrial bourgeoisie, began to flourish (Timur, 2003, p. 100).

Table 1. The Main Driving Dynamics of Turkey's Economic Development in the Democrat Party Era.

Policies	Global Context and Key External Actors.	Dominant Development Discourse.	Domestic Policy Coalitions.
Agricultural Populism.	The US's ascendancy as the new hegemonic power, determination of Turkey's role in the international division of labor under the Marshall Plan.	Integration into the capitalist world economy, mainly through the agricultural sector.	A coalition of big landowners and farmers favoring an agrarian strategy, the liquidation of small peasant property, the nascent agriculture primarily, and the industrial bourgeoisie, the political party representing this new coalition of interests (Democrat Party).

Source: Generated by using Şenses (2013, 720).

As agriculture became integrated into the capitalist system and capitalist production relations developed, the class structure of the countryside began to show polarizing tendencies. The ultimate result of developing capitalist production relations in agriculture has been the formation of the rural bourgeoisie and rural proletariat (Üşümezsoy, 2006, p. 67). Large farms have increased, and capitalist farmers have run large farms through capital-intensive methods

thanks to agricultural mechanization. They have been hinged on labor exploitation. In addition, the mechanization of agriculture has created a surplus of labor in rural areas (Kazgan, 1966, pp. 74-77). It is essential to understand how this situation affects the villagers and dispossesses them by tearing them from the land. Agricultural producers with large fields were able to access credits and acquire tractors, and they were able to continue production. However, small field owners or landless peasants either went to other villages and continued working as agricultural workers or started to migrate to the cities.

Many people have accumulated in the cities, which has created severe costs in the sociological sense. Migration and the urbanization process it brought took place without adequate industrialization. Poverty and unemployment in rural areas have moved to big cities, especially Istanbul. The attempts of different population groups who migrated to Istanbul to solve their housing problems led to squatting (Adıgüzel, 2020, p. 57; Keleş, 2000, p. 375) because the market could not meet the demand for housing. The rate of urbanization increased from 25 percent to 32 percent during the decade of the Democrat Party's rule (Özdemirli, 2019: 34). The provinces' socioeconomic, physical, demographic, and cultural structure has been radically affected. Turkey's unplanned and rapid urbanization process has deeply shaken individuals, families, cities, and

society. It has faced problems such as poverty, unemployment, involvement in crime, belonging, and adaptation problems such as squatting.

Notes on Cinema in the Democrat Party Era: A Cinema Moving Away from Social Realities Through the Censorship

During the Democrat Party rule, some developments triggered radical changes in cinema. The first development is the movie houses, whose activities increase in big cities as electricity reaches the towns and villages. Thus, the necessary infrastructure and socioeconomic conditions that facilitate the spread of cinema throughout the country began to be prepared. The increase in the activities of movie theaters has led to an increasing number of films produced over the years. As mentioned in the previous section, the second significant development is an intense wave of migration from villages to big cities. In the words of Ayça (1996, p. 135), two factors brought *Yeşilçam* into existence: *The first is the start of migration from rural to urban and Turkey's steps towards urbanization. The second is the spread of movie houses in cities to rural areas.* Accordingly, a process has emerged in which the possibilities of cinematic expression in Turkish Cinema are researched and developed. The directors of a generation who consider cinema a professional profession produce effective products (Duruer Erkılıç, 2014, p. 89). With the expressions of Özon (2013, p. 15), the sharp separation of cinema from the theater and the

comprehension of cinema's unique language and identity began to take place. Turkish Cinema systematized mass film production in the 1950s; in other words, it took steps towards forming *Yeşilçam*.

Although Turkish Cinema created its language and increased its film production in these years, it grappled with an intense censorship mechanism that served as *Damocles' sword* (Yıldırım 2017, p. 17). It can be said that the pressure of censorship makes it impossible and daunting to display the realities of economic, social, political, and cultural formation by the films produced. Since the censorship policy caused a problem in the cinema, the solution was to adapt popular foreign films or best-selling market novels into films. As a result, film subjects and genres have become standardized: *Melodramas, historical films, comedies, musical comedies, detective thrillers that are remakes of Hollywood films, and village films with a melodramatic character, in which social realities are not fully addressed[2]* (Esen, 2019, p. 143). Film production practice is also very compatible with the free market ideology of the Democrat Party era:

> "The market laws of capitalism begin to work in the new economic policy of the Democrat Party, which turns from statist economy to private enterprise. Private entrepreneurs who do not have sufficient capital and accumulation have to produce goods that are guaranteed to sell. This rule also applies in the field of cinema. Since the capital invested in the films is expected to return quickly and make a profit, the films aim to reach a wide audience immediately. Goods "film" is produced according to demand; demand determines and directs supply. When this system starts to operate with more business advances and bonds in the

cinema, without investing money in the producers, it further increases and reinforces Yeşilçam's dependence on the regional film operators and therefore on the tastes and wishes of the audience".

The populist practices of the Democrat Party were very influential in forming Yeşilçam cinema. Filmmakers started to make films according to the expectations of the audience. In this new period that Turkish cinema entered under the influence of social transformations, films that deal with themes such as melodramas, emotional exploitation, rich girl-poor boy, bad man-woman, and poor-good people are being shot (Kara, 2012, p. 2). Almost no social problems were depicted in Turkish Cinema in the 1950s. In movies, people betray, fall in love, and die from tuberculosis, regardless of where they live, the environment, or the time (Daldal, 2005, p. 65).

As Daldal (2021, pp 6-7) states, Turkish directors began to get bored of making melodramas and films with a primitive cinema language, especially towards the end of the 1950s. They dreamed of a realistic Turkish national cinema that turned its face to society, like the Italian neo-realism and the Soviet Expressionist Realism of the Lenin period, led by Einstein (Daldal, 2021, pp. 6-7). Fortunately, in 1960, the environment in which they could realize these dreams began blossoming in Turkey.

Conditions Preparing the Ground for Social Realist Films: Short-Term Freedom Winds in Cinema through the May 27 Coup and the 1961 Constitution

The power of the Democrat Party began to be shaken by the problems that started to emerge from the mid-1950s. The high economic growth performance achieved in the early 1950s, especially with the economic aid received from the US during the Democrat Party period, began to reverse with the great drought in 1954 and the end of the Korean War. Inflation has increased rapidly since the mid-1950s, from 1% in 1952 to 16.5% in 1956 and 19.8% in 1959 (Tokgöz 2014, p. 143). The end of the Korean War (the demand for Turkish agricultural products was high during the war years) and the worsening of the weather conditions reduced the growth rate of the agricultural sector. The global decrease in the demand for agricultural products, which is the most crucial export resource, and the decrease in the prices of the products played a leading role in the negative direction of the economy. The high inflation environment in the country, thus the loss of the purchasing power of the citizens and the inability to reach some consumer goods in the market, exacerbated the chaos in the society and brought about the strengthening of the anti-Democrat Party formations within the army (Özer 2015, p. 111). Economic distress began to bring political tension and paved the way for strengthening political and social opposition in the country. Especially between 1954 and 1957, economic difficulties arose, and the party's practices became

harsh (Eroğul, 2003: 140-147). This power gained by the government, which reached a large majority in the parliament, has almost become a weakness (Eroğul, 2003, p. 141). While opposition journalists were arrested during the Democrat Party's rule, which could not tolerate criticism, dissatisfaction arose within the party against these developments. The party began to implement an intimidation program against the opposition, the press, universities, and intellectuals. Issues such as the failure of the Balkan Pact to yield the desired results, the events of September 6-7, and the coming to the fore of the Cyprus issue have significantly eroded the government (Eroğul, 2003: 141-147). The foreign trade regime was registered, additional credit was requested from the US to close the balance of payments deficit, and Menderes made some foreign trips to find economic support. In this period, when disagreements within the party flared up, the most crucial criticism directed at the party was "moving away from democracy." Since 1958, the Democrat Party has begun to be seen as a power and dictatorship without philosophy. The use of the state by the party, the media's censorship[3], and the impossibility of opposition have been interpreted as developments pointing to dictatorship (Çavdar 2004, pp. 66-68).

In line with all these events, the first military coup in Turkish political history was carried out on May 27, 1960. After the 1960 coup, new structures were formed in the state-economy relations, and the US-based economic liberal policies of the Democrat Party were shelved for a while. An independent and anti-imperialist economic system and development strategy has been

allowed to spread throughout the country. Even briefly, an understanding of the state that defended the principles of central planning and social justice was established.

As stated by Emre Kongar, the 1961 Constitution brought the social welfare state approach to the agenda instead of the liberal state approach (Kongar 2000, pp. 161-162). The 1961 Constitution also included some principles for the benefit of all social classes and allowed the development of protective policies for the working class. Consistent with the political spirit of the era, there was a significant increase in the number of leftist publications in the press field. Publishing houses and magazines such as *Yön, Dost, Sol, Toplum, Sosyal, Türk Solu, Dönüşüm, Yeditepe, Aydınlık, Yeni Sinema, and Bilim* started their activities. In particular, *Yön Magazine* shed light on many issues, from workers' problems to the cruelty of the capitalist system and the order of exploitation it creates to the socioeconomic problems experienced by underdeveloped world countries to the exploitation of imperialist countries.

Adopting the 1961 Constitution encouraged Turkish directors to transfer the country's social realities to their films. Thanks to the libertarian environment that came with the Constitution, films with a political side and displaying the social problems and realities in their entirety started to be produced, which are not indexed to the box office returns and commercial concerns (Çakır, 1997, p. 13; Yıldırım Kaya, 2011, pp. 202-203). As Daldal (2021, p. 5) points out, the emergence

of social realism in Turkish cinema is directly related to the end of Adnan Menderes' liberal-rural regime by the army and the adoption of the progressive 1961 Constitution. Halit Refiğ, one of the leading directors of the social realist movement, stated that the new Constitution and the army-centered coalition of the bourgeois layer prepared the appropriate political and ideological environment for the birth of a socialist cinema movement. In his words on the subject:

"The 1961 Constitution, newly established political parties, and elections created an environment suitable for looking at various issues of our society from different perspectives. This political vitality created after May 27 did not delay showing its effect in cinema. It gave rise to a movement sometimes defined as social realism, which tries to explain the structure of our society and the relationships of people from various levels within this structure" (Refiğ, 2009, p. 24).

As a result, social realities, which Turkish Cinema almost turned its back on until then, started to be treated as a theme in cinema. In the next era, films dealing with social problems and themes in cinema will be considered Social Realist films and described as films under the influence of the Social Realism movement (Uçakan, 1977, p. 11).

This newly born understanding of cinema can be evaluated as a result of the radical changes in society and art and the environment of freedom that developed after the military coup. Directors such as Metin Erksan, Halit Refiğ, Ertem Göreç, and Duygu Sağıroğlu followed the developments

in Soviet cinema and world cinema, especially Italian Neorealism. They opened the doors to a new understanding of cinema by combining their knowledge with Turkey's stories.

Looking at the Economic and Social Issues of Democrat Party Turkey through the Lens of Social Realist Cinema

Social Realism in Turkish Cinema, in the words of Aslı Daldal (2003, p. 108; 2005, p. 58): "It is a brave and heartfelt effort by a young generation of directors after the May 27 coup to create a national cinematic language and capture the aesthetic norms of the West in the burgeoning cinema environment". Through the movement, the public became a political figure in the cinema. Although the issue of social realism in art manifested itself long ago, thanks to New Realism, the national cinema movement that emerged in Italy at the end of the Second World War, post-war realistic cinema flourished in Europe, which was in physical and spiritual ruin, both in terms of production and theory. In this context, Daldal (2005, p. 44) believes the two have a clear relationship. According to the author, the Italian cinema movement in question also inspired the aforementioned Turkish cinema movement. The nearly ten-year adventure of the Italian neo-realism movement ended in Italy as the mid-1950s approached. However, the new language that the movement brought to cinema made its effects felt in the cinemas of many countries worldwide. In this context, Turkey found the environment it was looking for with the 1961 Constitution, and

in this period, many social realist-themed films were shot in Turkish cinema between 1960 and 1965. The primary characteristics of the Social Realist Cinema movement are again listed by Daldal (2005, pp. 93-116, 138; 2021: 15-16) as follows:

a. All directors at the center of the movement are artists of the "engaged" type who are sensitive to politics.

b. All social realist films try to tell the story of the "ordinary man" in an understated language.

c. All directors have an "anti-capitalist" and "anti-bourgeois" attitude.

d. A social or political event determines the dramatic tension points of most films. No character is treated independently of the social network surrounding him/her.

Social realism took its intellectual basis from the multifaceted criticism of the capitalist order with the economic, political, and intellectual impact of the First World War and the October Revolution and from the ideas of replacing the existing order with a socialist order. In this context, the movement was nourished by the ideology of the Marxist mentality that emerged after the May 27 revolution in Turkey. What is expected from social realism is to cast doubt on the validity of what exists now and to shake the optimism of the bourgeois world. On this axis, social class differences that occur due to economic differences are extensively mentioned in the films. There

has also been a break from melodrama cinema, based on the contrast of rich-poor people, good-bad people, and an imaginary fantasy universe.

The social realism movement in Turkish cinema has undertaken two important tasks: The first is to reflect the current social and economic order full of class contradictions on the screen from an objective and revolutionary perspective, and the second is to create an original, modern cinema language (Daldal, 2005, p. 58). Famous directors of the period saw the 1960 coup as the first leg of an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist progress project. Directors have also engaged in politics. Metin Erksan is the President of the Turkish Cinema Workers Union, screenwriter Vedat Türkali is a former Communist Party member, Ertem Göreç is a socialist and trade unionist, and Halit Refiğ is a Kemalist and a sympathizer of Yön magazine (Daldal, 2005, p. 94). Director Ertem Göreç and screenwriter Vedat Türkali, who created their films in line with this view, emphasize social solidarity and draw realistic socialist portraits by emphasizing the positive types in this understanding. On the other hand, Halit Refiğ highlights how human values are corrupted and lost in industrial society. Metin Erksan, on the other hand, describes both urban people with class consciousness and rural portraits in which people's evil nature and loneliness are depicted. Erksan describes the disharmony, chaos, and constant war brought by modernism without separating them from their social context (Daldal, 2005, pp. 60-61).

Films shot under the influence of social Realism in Turkish Cinema aimed to convey to the audience some political and economic distortions, social class differences, property relations, poverty, the phenomenon of internal migration, slums, and the working class (Suner, 2005, p. 219). In short, some social realities took place during the Democrat Party rule. It is accepted that the movement started in 1960 with Metin Erksan's film *Gecelerin Ötesi*. After the shooting of *Gecelerin Ötesi*, cinema has started to take on a structure that serves the society in which it is produced, educates the audience, raises life awareness, and aims to create quality products. It does not focus on box office revenues and avoids stereotypes, rather than being a mere entertainment tool. Children who say *can I call you father*, poor but proud young men or girls who say *you cannot buy me with money*, proud women *who say you can have my body but never my soul*, have not been seen in films made under the influence of social realism, unlike Yeşilçam. It is also challenging to come across the desperate patients in social realist films who have only three months to live, characters who are going blind as a result of a car accident or who lose their memory but who mostly reach a happy ending despite all the difficulties (Diken Yücel, 2021, p. 4). In this context, it can be said that social realist films have stayed away from the classical Yeşilçam patterns as much as possible.

Theoretical Framework

This study, which aims to evaluate the films it deals with in terms of the conditions of the era in which they were shot, first touched upon the years of the Democrat Party, which radically changed Turkey's economic, political, social, and cultural structure. The economic policies of the Democrat Party era, the social problems brought about by the policies, and their reflections in social realist films were designed as the main discussion topics.

In the study, it was felt that social realism should be handled holistically without being separated from the historical, ideological, and social context of the country in which it developed. For this reason, historical, sociological, and ideological film criticism methods were used to analyze the films. Movies are in a dialectical relationship with the conditions of the date they were shot (Özden, 2004, p. 121; Ryan and Lenos, 2012, p. 187). Therefore, the close relationship between cinema art and the history discipline should be evaluated within a theoretical and methodological framework. Since the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel suggested that "art reflects the spirit of nations and the era," historians have focused on the complex relationship of art with society (Cited in Berry 1999, pp. 28-32). Therefore, the films discussed are also interpreted in terms of the historical context in which they were produced. Historical film criticism was carried out in two stages. First, the films were associated with the ideological and

social conditions of the era in which they were produced. Second, the historical narratives in the films were clarified. Historical criticism also requires using ideological (Özden 2004, p. 165) and sociological criticism methods (Özden, 2004, p.   154) because the effects of historical developments can also affect society and the ideology of the society.

In addition, the critical discourse analysis method developed by Van Dijk (2003) examined the discourse and language-related elements used in the films. In this context, the discourses and dialogues that criticize the Democrat Party's economic policies and the social problems they form the basis of, either explicitly or implicitly, were examined in the films evaluated within the scope of the study. The films included in the research cover the years 1960-1965. This era was chosen because it covers the years that include social realist films that deal with the socioeconomic and sociopolitical problems of the era, along with the relative freedom brought by the 1961 Constitution. In the films included within the scope of the study, it is thought that the burgeoning economic liberal policies of the Democrat Party era and the critical traces of the negativities it brought with it were conveyed to the audience.

In describing and interpreting the films, Turkey's socioeconomic and sociopolitical environment in the 1950s and 1960s was considered. Within the scope of the study, Metin Erksan's *Gecelerin Ötesi (Beyond the Nights) (1960), Acı Hayat (Bitter Life) (1962);* Halit Refiğ's *Şafak*

Bekçileri (Watchmen of Dawn) (1963), Gurbet Kuşları (Birds of Exile) (1964); Ertem Göreç's film

Karanlıkta Uyananlar (Those Awakening in the Dark) (1964) were featured.

It is thought that the findings to be obtained in this study will bring a different perspective

to the subject and shed light on new research. The study presents extensive information about

Turkey's social, economic, political, and cultural changes and developments between 1950-1960

and 1960-1965. Furthermore, it reveals the reflections of Turkey's developments and changes in

influential art, such as cinema. Therefore, it is foreseen that it will make a different contribution to

the literature in terms of showing the position of the cinema between the dates discussed and

conveying what Turkish directors lived and produced in the cinematic context in the examined

dates.

Economic Liberalism and the Destructions of the Little America Ideal: *Gecelerin Ötesi (Beyond the Nights)*

Metin Erksan shot the movie *Gecelerin Ötesi (Beyond the Nights)* before the military

administration had not overthrown the Democrat Party's power. Economic liberalism was the

primary motivation of the capitalist ideology in the world at that time. In line with this

understanding, the Democrat Party government's non-intervention in the country's economy,

highlighting some discourses, such as individual freedom and freedom of private enterprise, has

been internalized by a significant part of society. As a result of an exaggerated belief in the economic liberal project, an understanding that the free market can solve the country's socioeconomic problems has dominated society. Adnan Menderes greatly supported this project with the slogan, "We are going to create a millionaire in every neighborhood" (Kara, 2012, p. 5). As emphasized in the slogan of the Democrat Party government, Erksan predicted that *while a millionaire grows in every neighborhood, other things would also grow in those neighborhoods*. In this context, when the political and ideological reading of the film is made by considering the historical background of the film, it would be easier to understand the message the film wants to give (Sim 2020, 119). In this film, Erksan examined the dimensions of the Democrat Party's mentality of producing a millionaire from every neighborhood, which leads young people to form a gang to commit robbery (Daldal, 2021: 13). It is thought that Metin Erksan had reached the peak of political and social consciousness during the period when he shot the film in question.

Actors such as Erol Taş and Hayati Hamzaoğlu took part in the movie. The film tells the story of six youths who ganged up to realize their economic ideals. These youths with different dreams are influenced by American culture and lifestyle in every aspect. Because the Democrat Party's promises to bring society to American-style living standards, the Americanist policies on this axis, and the discourses of turning the corner and creating a millionaire in every neighborhood, which these policies frequently use, were at the highest level at the time the film was shot, and

they influenced large sections of the society (Özer, 2015, p. 19). However, the millionaire promised by the Democrat Party did not emerge in the neighborhood where these youths lived; on the contrary, the dire straits in the neighborhood raged.

The youth mentioned in the movie form a gang of robbers and commit robberies to realize their economic ideals (Fig. 1). Therefore, theft initiates the dialectical process in the film. Theft is conveyed to the audience not as an act caused by personal evil but as an act brought about by social conditions and the sharp injustice in income distribution. A long-distance truck driver, a textile factory worker who has to take care of his family, and two musicians who want to go to America and work there, so to speak, benefit from the blessings of the new world, an unemployed idealist actor, and a penniless painter come together and commit robberies in the film (Kara, 2012, p. 14). However, these robberies ended in bitter ends. It is claimed that the tragic end of the film, where young people try illegal means with the urge to move up the grade, is directly related to the Democrat Party mentality (Daldal, 2005, p. 97). In this context, Beyond the Nights emerges as a film of rebellion (Özgüç, 1990, p. 71).

Figure 1. The night when the youths formed a gang of robbers and began to rob.

The film also criticized the idea of the *American Dream*, which the Democrat Party government developed and instilled in society in the company of capitalist and imperialist ideologies. Because at the time the film was shot, the *American Dream* turned into an *American Nightmare* due to the dramatic increase in social inequalities. While the capitalist system creates a millionaire in every neighborhood, it has turned the poor into a crime machine that does not hesitate to spend their lives to earn money (Yaylagül, 2018, p. 23). The robberies, the subject of the crime in the film, took place at night, in the darkness and night's silence. Nevertheless, as the movie's name suggests, there is always hope to see *beyond the nights*, in other words, the *light*.

A Love Lost in Dreams of Moving up the Social Ladder: *Acı Hayat* (*Bitter Life*)

The Acı Hayat (*Bitter Life)*, directed by Metin Erksan and starring actors such as Ayhan Işık and Türkan Şoray, deals with class conflict within the framework of passionate love and, more

importantly, the socioeconomic differences that create this conflict within the framework of urban social reality. The love story of a young girl who works as a manicurist in a high society hairdresser and a young man who works as a welder in a shipyard is told using melodramatic images in the movie. These two young people who dream of marriage will be thrown into different parts of life after a while. The main reason is the lack of income and the related housing problem. The social reality that forms the film's background is the class segregation that gained momentum during the Democrat Party rule (Algan, 2009, p. 36).

The movie begins with the search for a house for these two young people who want to get married. One of these two young people who love each other passionately, Nermin, spends her days with the rich people she does manicures with. In Nermin's manicure scenes, Erksan, who includes the conversations of the rich, successfully conveys to the audience that these people do not have a worldview other than their passion for money and luxury and shows the mood of Nermin, who listens to them in astonishment and despair (Fig. 2). The adventures of Nermin and Mehmet couple in search of a house begin with great enthusiasm but gradually become despair. Erksan also shows the pain and disappointment in Nermin's eyes, who look enviously at the rising luxury apartments in Istanbul, which is rapidly changing by being spatially fragmented (Algan, 2009, p. 36). At that time, luxury apartments were rising rapidly. Nevertheless, the number of

people who cannot even imagine living in those apartments is increasing rapidly. Both Nermin and

Mehmet live in slums in the suburbs of Istanbul. Although the film seems to tell a love story at

first glance, it is a film that aims to tell the social structure of the era, the economic conditions, and

the deep gap between the rich and the poor.

Figure 2. Nermin's mood emulates rich women's lives while listening to their

conversations while doing manicures.

The movie used melodrama patterns extensively while expressing the impossible love

phenomenon, its central theme. However, the film stated that socioeconomic realities and the class

inequalities induced by capitalism, the effects of which were felt intensely during the Democrat

Party era, caused this impossible love. The film has successfully presented sharply the

socioeconomic differences between people sharing the same geography through places. The

camera also fits the slums and the apartments rising right behind them in the same frame (Fig. 3).

This conscious choice is a crucial detail documenting the rich/poor divide that continues

throughout the film.

Figure 3. While Mehmet and Nermin are looking for a house in the slum, the apartments

rise behind them.

The socialite women who talked about the furs they would bring from Paris, the jewelry

they had insured, and the villas worth millions in the hairdresser's shop strengthened Nermin's

sense of moving up the social ladder. However, there is someone who makes statements that will

strengthen Nermin's feelings not only at work but also at home: her mother. Through her warnings

such as "Whatever you do, marry one of the rich customers who come to the shop. Get rid of this life. It is painful, but I am telling the truth", Nermin's mother also supported Nermin's giving up on Mehmet and indirectly on his poor life. Just at this time, Ender enters Nermin's life. Ender is the spoiled son of the rich mansion where Nermin goes for a manicure. Nermin came for a manicure for the homeowner lady sitting in a wheelchair and playing poker with her friends. This lady is Ender's mother. After that day, Ender does not let go of Nermin. At first, Nermin does not care about Ender until she realizes she cannot live in inadequate houses. Nermin and Mehmet's budget is sufficient for a shanty house or an old mansion room with a shared bathroom and kitchen. The desire for a rich life that preoccupies Nermin has formed the basis for her to have an extramarital affair with Ender.

Many scenes in the movie highlight the impact of social class advancement on individuals. Ender, who seduces Nermin, cannot marry Nermin due to her family's violent objections, despite her love for Nermin (Altıner 2005, p.   53). However, even if this is the case, Nermin is happy at first because she escaped from the slums and poor life she lived, and in a way, she moved up the social ladder. Meanwhile, welder master Mehmet gets rich with the big prize from the National Lottery, moves up the social ladder, and starts making revenge plans. He turns into an angry and ambitious rich man. Nermin fell into despair after learning this and became irritable. The metaphors used in the movie are also noteworthy. The elevator is one of them. In the movie, the

elevator metaphor symbolizes class change dynamics (Kırel 2005, p.   23)—Ender, punished by his father for being with a poor manicurist girl, thus experiences poverty. Nermin also shared Ender's fate. Mehmet will rise upwards as the new and ruthless rich. In one scene of the movie, while Nermin is going down in the elevator, the new and ruthless rich Mehmet rises quickly. He is now a wealthy contractor who builds luxury houses in Istanbul.

Meanwhile, Mehmet seduces Ender's sister, Filiz, to take revenge on Nermin. This act of revenge succeeds, and Nermin is driven to suicide. Erksan emphasized that the era's critics highly emphasized the commercial success of *Acı Hayat (Bitter Life),* that this film brought up significant economic and social problems, and that these continue. While the film uses the main structural patterns of the melodrama genre, it is a social melodrama that contains realistic elements, as the director stated (Altıner 2005, p. 54). While describing this film, Daldal also said, "It is a realistic and dramatic city film that blends a love story in Yeşilçam patterns with the theme of searching for a roof over the head of the Italian neo-realist movement" (2005: 100). Although the problems of the working class are not addressed in detail in the film, the existing problems on the subject are presented with a social realistic approach, prioritizing the dramatic structure.

In the Context of the Worker-Union-Strike Triangle: *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (*Those Awakening in the Dark)*

As class consciousness developed in Turkey, the working class struggling for union and strike rights began to emerge, and this was reflected in the cinema. Directed by Ertem Göreç and starring actors such as Fikret Hakan and Beklan Algan, *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (*Those Awakening in the Dark)* went down in history as the first Turkish film to touch upon issues such as workers, unions, and strikes. The film's director, Ertem Göreç, was then actively involved in the union movement. Former Communist Party member Vedat Türkali wrote the script of the film.

Rekin Teksoy called *Those Awakening in the Dark* the first Turkish film about workers and stated that the film deals with many themes, such as the awareness of workers, foreign capital, unions, strikes, and intellectual-worker solidarity in an impressive language (Teksoy 2007, p. 42). Giovanni Scognamillo also said that the film in which union, strike, and labor problems were discussed for the first time was *Those Awakening in the Dark* (Scognamillo 1998, p. 342). Even the title of the movie can evoke intense connotations about its subject. The film's title evokes both the symbolic awakening of the workers, in other words, their realization of how they are exploited in the capitalist system and the fact that they wake up early every morning and go to work (Daldal 2005, p. 112).

The film tells the experiences of workers working in a paint factory. The wage increases promised and deserved by their bosses are constantly postponed. Workers who resist are fired, so many remain distant from the union for fear of losing their jobs. A strike is the only solution for the workers, who see that all their conversations and efforts have yielded no results. The film touches on many issues, such as the exploitation mechanism of the worker, the country's dependence on foreign sources, the games going on within the factory management, and ordinary people's social and economic problems (Koncavar, 2013, p. 12). Around the workers' strike theme, the film also sheds light on the problems faced by the workers struggling to survive in the big cities, which increased with the policies of the Democrat Party government in the 1950s in Turkey. Poverty, the common problem of workers living in shantytowns and immigrating from Anatolia hoping to find a job, is successfully reflected in the film.

The film succeeded in conveying the problems of workers and employers to the cinema with realistic language. The employer's attitude towards his workers laid the groundwork for the workers' strike, which is the movie's theme. Workers cannot receive their wages, and arbitrary dismissals are made against workers registered with unions. Workers think the employer will terminate their employment if they join a union and go on strike. They think the only remedy in their situation is unconditional obedience to the employer until Ekrem's call for the union. The

film also emphasized the importance of the right to strike in helping the workers acquire a class consciousness and achieve economic and social gains. The film also deals with workers' union awareness[4]. The scene in the movie where Ekrem invites the workers to the union is crucial. The dialogues during the invitation are also striking:

> Ekrem: Let us see if we can prevent the employer from firing us when he thinks about it.
> A Worker: Should we join the union and let them out of our business?
> Ekrem: You are the union, you, me, him, all of us. (Taking and showing the paint can they produced) Would this have happened without our effort? So, if we do not get the right of our labor that created it, who will give it to us? I am a technician, I have no children. Don't you crawl with your four children, Mustafa, and you, Temel, earn 60 lira a week; how do you get along with your sick mother, wife, and two children? Are you Hasan, Rıza, Moiz, Şakir, Hıristo, Yaşar? What have you got to lose? The law gives you a right: instead of being scared and trembling like a dog, hold on tight to each other; look, can anyone play with your bread, your humanity?

These dialogues are almost like the summary of the message the movie wants to give. The dialogues here are reminiscent of the chapters in Marx and Engels' book *The Communist Manifesto*, in which they describe how the capitalist system creates favorable conditions for workers to become conscious and organized. The authors argued that with the development of capitalism, an increasing portion of the labor force would turn into proletarianized wage workers and advocated that with the expansion of the proletariat, capitalism would create favorable conditions that would allow workers to organize (Marx and Engels 2018). This cycle introduced by the authors is also valid in *Those Awakening in the Dark*. In the film, the workers in the paint factory went on strike in the sense of unity and solidarity, and even workers from different business

lines entered the factory area to support this strike (Fig 4). The uprising scene at the end of the film reveals the socialist perspective that emphasizes the mass war against capitalist forces (Daldal, 2021, p. 64). The film's finale is designed to convey the feeling of enthusiasm and intense togetherness to the audience. This victory of the paint factory workers is promising for the working class. The darkness, which gave its name to the movie, contains the injustices suffered by the working class. There is no need to wait for the light of the day to wake up from the darkness.

Figure 4. While the workers in the paint factory are on strike, the workers in other factories give support.

It is reflected in the movie that owning or not having the means of production is the main reason why society is divided into different classes. It has been stated that private property sharply separates the ruler and the ruled, the exploiter and the exploited. Accordingly, the movie shows

two classes that exist in class societies. The first one owns and manages the means of production, while the other owns the vast majority, is exploited, and does not have property or power. The antagonistic relationship between these two classes is the main form of the exploitation system, which is very difficult to abolish at once (Marx, 1993, p. 23). In this context, it is thought that the film was shot mainly following Marxist ideology. This is evidenced by the fact that worker exploitation, surplus value, class contradictions, the problem of strikes and unionization, and the bourgeoisie-proletariat war, which still dominate the world economies in many respects today, constitute the film's central themes. In the capitalist system, the bourgeoisie tries to maintain its existence by dominating workers in the production field and establishing hegemony in social relations. At this point, it would be appropriate to mention the emphasis made by Marxist Italian thinker and intellectual Antonio Gramsci on the concept of hegemony. The antagonistic relationship between the ruler (bourgeoisie) and the ruled (worker) in the capitalist system can be primarily explained by the concept of hegemony. The production and reproduction of material life, commodities, dominant consciousness, dominant culture, and dominant traditions are carried out simultaneously. In addition, the consciousness of the class ruled in the capitalist system must be controlled. Because the control of consciousness is the field of political struggle as much as, or even more than, the control of productive forces (Gramsci, 1971: 47, 103, 350), and popular beliefs and similar ideas are themselves material forces (Gramsci, 1971: 158-168). In other words,

bourgeois development occurs not only with the development of productive forces but also with hegemony in the field of consciousness. Gramsci argues that the real power of the system lies not in the violence of the ruling class or the coercive power of its state apparatus but in the acceptance of the rulers' worldview, in other words, their ideology, by the ruled, and in the element of consent that is thus formed (Gramsci, 1971: 55-57, 207). In this context, it is possible to observe in the movie that until the moment of the strike, the boss's world view, in other words, his ideology, was adopted by most, if not all, of the workers, and most of the workers thought that if the boss won, they would also win. At this point, the phenomenon of hegemony, which produces the ideology of capitalism and imposes this ideology, especially on the ruled groups, comes into play. When the ideology of capitalism can be reproduced, and this ideology can be imposed on the ruled groups, it means that some consent or legitimacy has been obtained from the ruled, and in the presence of such consent, the ruling power can continue this without resorting to force or coercion.

It would be helpful to note how capital, one of the film's key themes, is addressed in the film. The film represents two types of capital: foreign capital that tries to take over the country with state support and domestic capital that resists standing against it. The conflict between these two capital groups is presented through mutual discussions and comparisons. The country is presented to foreigners on a silver platter, which means the end of domestic production and the

predominance of imports of foreign goods. Factories will be closed, people will be unemployed, and those who can continue working will be forced to work for meager wages. In this context, the film is thought strongly to criticize foreign capital. At this point, the film is thought to openly criticize the *Law of Encouragement of Foreign Capital* (1951, 1954) adopted during the Democrat Party period. This law is one of the economic practices of the Democrat Party aimed at opening the Turkish economy to the outside world and creating a more competitive foreign trade power. All kinds of fields of activity that are beneficial to the economic development of the country and open to the Turkish private sector are also kept open to foreign capital investments (Takım, 2012, pp. 179-180). The law enacted in 1954 addressed the capital issue from a broader perspective. It allowed foreign capital that came to the country before the publication of this law to benefit from the same provisions. Keeping foreign capital and domestic capital equal in every aspect of the country has paved the way for domestic production to come to extinction, the importance of imports of foreign goods in the economy to increase, unemployment to increase, and the living conditions of workers to gradually deteriorate.

The importance of the film lies in the fact that, for the first time in Turkish Cinema, it managed to explain the employee-employer relationship, strike, and union cases in all their nakedness and a realistic cinema language. It successfully describes the social drama experienced by the workers, first in their confusion and then in the process of awareness leading to resistance.

The film bears the traces of Italian Neorealism and Revolutionary Soviet Cinema, which emerged after the Second World War, regarding its subject and handling. Although *Those Awakening in the Dark* bears the sociocultural and economic traces of the land in which it was created, it bears similarities with the famous Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein's film *Stachka (1925)* in terms of subject and treatment of the subject. In this movie, the themes such as workers working under challenging conditions, the determination of the workers to resist increasing difficulties, the bosses representing the insatiable capital class, and their collaborators are almost identical. With these aspects, it can be said that Those Awakening in the Dark is the film closest to socialist realism within the social realist movement (Daldal, 2021, pp. 13-14).

According to Beklan Algan, who is among the film producers and plays the character of Ekrem, *Those Awakening in the Dark* reflects Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s. In the film, the realities of those who want to give away the riches of the country to foreign capital, a handful of capital agents, compradors, the weak and thoughtless industrial bourgeoisie, and the working people who feel all the pain of living in an underdeveloped country are revealed (Algan 1965, pp. 8-9).

Understanding the Importance of the Army in the Fight Against Feudalism: *Şafak Bekçileri* (*Watchmen of Dawn)*

The *Şafak Bekçileri* (*Watchmen of Dawn)*, directed by Halit Refiğ and featuring actors such as Göksel Arsoy and Leyla Sayar, criticizes the feudal order and landlords of the era. In the film, the process of Turkey, which has experienced rapid agricultural capitalization through the economic policies implemented over the claims of Little America since the 1950s, is mentioned. It is also emphasized that this process created a new bourgeoisie in Turkey, especially in the agricultural sector, and paved the way for a process in which social class differences deepened.

In the film, it was also mentioned that the Turkish army became the most crucial power in political life after the May 27 Coup and the widespread slogan of the army/nation hand in hand, which marked the era. The basis of the film is the struggle between the feudal and conservative groups represented by the landlords and the members of the armed forces representing the progressive power. The role that the Democrat Party played in destroying the Republican gains, but the army played in rebuilding the Republican gains was conveyed to the audience (Yaylagül 2018, 76-77).

The film also sheds light on the problems experienced in the villages of the era. The suggestion presented in the film to eliminate ignorance is to teach the village people to read and

write and to raise them to maturity to fight for their rights by opposing the feudal and landlord order. Refiğ stated that with the establishment of the Nizam-ı Cedid army, most of the social innovations were established through the army, and May 27 also served as such a locomotive (Türk 2001, 146-147). With this aspect, the film is also the first film after May 27, in which the army is affirmed and is the subject (Diken Yücel 2021, 211).

A Consistent Approach to Internal Migration: *Gurbet Kuşları* (*Birds of Exile)*

Gurbet Kuşları (Birds of Exile), directed by Halit Refiğ and starring actors such as Cüneyt Arkın and Filiz Akın, is the first Turkish movie that deals with the problem of migration from the village to the city (Türk 2001, p. 148). In the film, problems faced by a family who migrated from Maraş to Istanbul to seek a better life while adapting to the big city, their alienation situation, their dissolution in Istanbul, and their return to their hometown, Maraş, were handled. Refiğ gave clues about the reasons for the migration phenomenon from the first scenes: The desire to climb the social ladder and be the king of Istanbul (Fig. 5). However, as Yıldız (2008, p. 197) stated, the dream of becoming a king in the city turned into a fight for feeding.

Figure 5. The first day of the family's arrival in Istanbul (Haydarpaşa Train Station).

As mentioned, when the Democrat Party was in power, the country's poverty was tried to be concealed by discourses such as *We are going to create millionaires in every neighborhood.* Besides, policies that encouraged people to migrate to big cities by condoning land plunder were followed instead of following policies that would bring prosperity to the entire population. Menderes, also a large landowner, is taking the steps of foreign-dependent capitalization through liberal policies. On the other hand, he did not favor land reform. Instead, he determined a policy favoring large landowners who fully supported the landlord system. The beneficiaries of these policies are the classes that own the means of production, in other words, the land. The share of landless peasants is only to be a sharecropper and experience poverty[5]. The steps towards industrialization, especially in the big cities, created new business areas. Especially in the villages,

the people fed up with hunger and poverty due to the tyranny of the landlords fell into the illusion of the *city paved with gold* and started to migrate to the big cities, where they would later become people experiencing poverty of the urban and alienate themselves.

The movie also emphasized that the Turkish economy could not progress leaned on production. The film reflected that relocation within a country that cannot switch to a production economy cannot solve social problems. The members of the Bakırcıoğlu family, who migrated from Maraş to Istanbul, are thrown to different places by the dynamics brought by the city throughout the movie, suffer moral collapse, and decide to return to their hometown after all kinds of negativities. Kemal and his lover, the only family member studying at university and staying away from the city's dangers, promise to come to Kahramanmaraş after school and send the family away. After this scene, the villagers who have just landed in Haydarpaşa say, "Istanbul is the city paved with gold," and "If God permits, we will be the king of Istanbul" enter the frame. It is shown that many people continue to come to the city with good hopes, and those who return to their hometowns realize that their urban experiences will bring more harm than gain (Makal, 1987; Güçhan, 1992).

Social realism, and thus the social realist films, was about to end in the following times. The Justice Party, led by Süleyman Demirel, claiming to be the political successor of Adnan

Menderes, came to power alone by winning a significant victory in the 1965 general elections (Zürcher, 2016, p. 365). After the Justice Party came to power, the calendars went back almost five years, and the spirit of the Democrat Party started to feel its dominance in the country again (Diken Yücel, 2021, p. 6). These elements, which paved the way for the disappearance of the May 27 spirit, made the directors realize that they could no longer live in *Yeşilçam* and be popular with a socialist discourse. Social realism is no longer a goal in movies but a tool, extra, and sometimes even a decoration (Diken Yücel, 2021, p.), leaving its place in future national cinema discussions. As also stated by Refiğ:

"Social realism, which was the first conscious left movement in the history of Turkish cinema, gained attention and developed with the uproar of the right-wing press and institutions, and then suffered its death blow from writers and institutions who pretended to be left-wing. Thus, a period of our cinema that started on May 27, 1960, ended on October 10, 1965" (Refiğ, 2009, p. 35).

CONCLUSION

Cinema films cannot be evaluated independently of the political, social, and economic developments of the country they belong to; on the contrary, they mirror these developments. Therefore, any film criticism or film review needs to be made today, considering all the

environments in which the films are located. For this purpose, it is necessary to examine the formation process of the films within the scope of the political, economic, social, scientific, intellectual, cultural, legal, administrative, artistic, and technological conditions of the era, on the one hand, and to take into account the era and conditions of the film, on the other hand.

For Turkey, the year 1950 was a turning point. The Democrat Party, which came to power by ending the 27-year rule of the Republican People's Party, laid the groundwork for significant changes in the country. The 1950-1960 era, when the Democrat Party was in power, intensified Turkey's efforts to integrate economically with the world capitalist system and the West in foreign policy and defense areas. The economic-political dynamics of this era are establishing an agricultural-development-oriented and private sector-friendly macroeconomic management framework instead of the statist industrialization strategy, abandoning the traditional neutrality approach in foreign policy, and deciding to join the West Camp in the Cold War environment. As a result, although Turkey initially entered a rapid agriculture-oriented growth phase in an international environment where conditions were favorable for raw material exporters, this positive trend started to deteriorate in the mid-1950s.

Inflation rose dramatically, the deterioration in the economic situation became one of the agenda items of politics, and these negativities strengthened anti-Democrat Party formations.

Some negativities, such as capitalism's relentless spread, the deepening of class differences, and the sharpening of political processes, paved the way for the military coup of May 27, 1960, thus ending the Democrat Party's power. The most fundamental initiative of the May 27 regime was the preparation of the 1961 Constitution. The 1961 Constitution laid the groundwork for a new and liberal environment for Turkey. It can be said that the libertarian environment and movements brought about by the 1961 Constitution paved the way for making some films with a social context, focusing on social realities and some political issues and highlighting populist and socialist issues. As a result, a new trend has emerged in Turkish Cinema, which tries to explain the people's condition belonging to various classes and tries to convey to the audience the human sufferings and weaknesses, some problems that create conflict in society, by being in a dialectical connection with the social system. This movement, which continued its influence between 1960-1965, is called Social Realism, and the films made under the movement's influence are called Social Realist films. Films produced under the influence of the social realism movement can be considered films that can go beyond the collective language of *Yeşilçam Cinema*, circulate on the shores of melodrama but do not always penetrate it, and always follow the social affairs.

Social Realist Cinema left its mark in the 1960s and produced some films about the economic policies of the Democrat Party. The exploitation order brought along the feudal relations that emerged in the countryside through the agricultural bourgeoisie and the social class

differences of the policies. The study discusses films that are thought to interact directly with the mentioned topics with their thematic contexts.

Gecelerin Ötesi (Beyond the Nights) started to be filmed before the May 27, 1960, Coup. The film was completed after the coup and entirely relied on the possible consequences of Adnan Menderes's statement, "We are going to raise a millionaire from every neighborhood," and his policies in this direction. In the film, youth conflicts and moral deterioration caused by income inequality, which is one of the giant cracks in the social structure, are also mentioned. In addition, capitalism, which was increasingly adopted during the Democrat Party era, and the pleasure-oriented social structure that led to an individualized consumer society were criticized in the film. It is possible to observe that the conflicts between classes and the sociality of crime reverberated in the film. The film relates the drama of six young people who resort to illegal means with the urge to skip a class to the negative social consequences of the Democrat Party's economic policies. A direct critique of the upgrading ideology of the era's political mentality, riveted by the urge to make quick money, was presented.

In the movie *Acı Hayat* (*Bitter Life)*, the criticism of the capitalist system is presented to the audience in the context of a dramatic love story. Although the film seems to be dealing with a melodramatic love story at first glance, it aims to tell the social structure of the era, the economic

conditions, and the deep gap between social classes. The urbanization problem and accommodation in the urban environment are also examined in the context of class conflict. With these aspects, the film is a melodrama based on social reality. In the movie's first minutes, the housing problem that prevented the couple from getting married, poverty, and the clues on the sociological effects of Westernization given through the character of Nermin mirrored the social problems of the era. It is possible to talk about the class segregation that accelerated dramatically due to the economic policies implemented during the ruling era of the Democrat Party between 1950 and 1960. In this context, it is one of the best films that describe how class segregation is constructed with cinematic language.

The movie *Şafak Bekçileri* (*Watchmen of Dawn)* defends the May 27 process. In addition, it was conveyed to the audience that the modernization process in the agricultural field due to the economic policies implemented during the Democrat Party era only benefited the large landowners, who can also be considered representatives of capitalism in rural areas. Accordingly, a significant part of society was condemned to live in dire conditions. It is also reflected in the film that the process of capitalist integration, which is lived through the ideals of Little America, paradoxically strengthens the feudal structure in the countryside. Finally, as the film's title emphasizes, an apparent reference has been made to the Turkish Air Force, which acts as a watchdog to bring the country from darkness to light.

The film *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (*Those Awakening in the Dark)* portrayed the working class and its organization, awareness, and struggle history. The film also demonstrated that capital oppresses labor and workers and that the capitalist order drags the individual to a dead end by exploiting it. The movie has particular importance as it is the first film in the history of Turkish Cinema to deal with issues such as strikes and unionization. In the movie, the economic policies of the Democrat Party era were heavily criticized. The film's main themes are foreign capital agents, the comprador, the industrial bourgeoisie, and the working class, which bears all the weight and distress of being an underdeveloped country. The process documented by the film is a portrait representing the union and political rights granted by the 1961 Constitution.

In the movie *Gurbet Kuşları* (*Birds of Exile)*, the class differences underlying the unequal relations in the big city and the material and moral collapse of a rural family in the big city are discussed in the context of a family's migration from Maraş to Istanbul and the alienation they experience there. The film is the first work in Turkish Cinema where migration from the village to the city is handled as a problem. During the Democrat Party era, the economic policies prioritizing agriculture and large landowners made many landless people lose hope of gaining from rural areas and flock to big cities. However, big cities have been the environments that paved the way for the disintegration of many families. The film presented a framework in this thematic context.

There are explicit criticisms of the political conjuncture throughout the films. The stories of the films are built on the economic, political, and social cracks that paved the way for the May 27 Coup. The themes include the increase in inflation, policies to encourage foreign capital, unemployment, internal migration, squatting in the cities after migration, social class differences, worker problems, landlordism, feudal order, and the negativities it caused were discussed in the films. The typical features of the films are that they take a stance against class differences, class conflicts, feudal exploitation order, and all kinds of events that lead to exploitation and corruption, such as capitalist production relations. Although there is an open opposition to the bourgeoisie and capitalism in almost all films, events with social characteristics such as strikes, a newly enacted law, and internal migration have formed the background of the films. It is thought that almost all of the social realist films scrutinized within the scope of the study are social contexts embellished with social justice and development motifs and criticizing the liberal economic policies of the Democrat Party.

Movies are not just movies. Like everything that humanity produces, movies are also a part and mirror of the story of humanity. Movies are sometimes political tools. Social Realist films have conveyed the spirit of the time and the social, political, and economic conditions in the closest way to reality in all its aspects. In the context of the way of discourse, films succeeded in conveying this spirit and conditions to the cinema with their most peculiar and exciting aspects.

It is a fact that social realist cinema mirrors the social balances that were tried to be established after 1960 and the ideological climate of the period. It gives us the general cinematic, economic, political, and social landscape of an essential period in Turkey. In these contexts, social realist cinema, which continued its influence between 1960-65, appears as a cinema movement that always requires more detailed research.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Editor's Note: There is a huge lack of English language scholarly academic resources on the study of Social Realist Cinema in Turkey. CINEJ and other journals previously published articles dealing with individual films or different aspects of the movement (Akser, 2013; Akser, 2017; Akser and Durak Akser, 2017; Dinc and Akser, 2021). This current article is the most comprehensive survey of the topic so far.

² *Sihirli Define (The Magic Treasure) (1950), Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa (1951), Kanun Namına (In the Name of the Law) (1952), Karanlık Dünya (The Dark World) (1952), Tahir ile Zühre (Tahir and Zühre) (1951), Hickirik (1953), Son Beste (The Last Musical Composition) (1955), Kanlarıyla Ödediler (They Paid with Their Blood) (1955), İntikam Alevi (Revenge of the Flame) (1956), Üç Arkadaş (Three Friends) (1958), Yalnızlar Rıhtımı (Lonely Man's Dock) (1959), Cilalı İbo Casuslar Arasında (Ibo the Polished Amongst the Spies) (1959), Düşman Yolları Kesti (The Enemy Cut Down the Ways) (1959)* are some of the films shot during the Democrat Party period (Yıldırım, 2016: 73). Among the films listed here, films that were placed in a different place by the critics in terms of Turkish Cinema history and that were peculiar to the cinema atmosphere of the period are the films The Dark World (1952) directed by Metin Erksan and Kanun Namına (In the Name of the Law) (1952) directed by Ömer Lütfi Akad. The film Karanlık Dünya (The Dark World), which tells the life of Aşık Veysel, made Metin Erksan be remembered as the first social realist director of Turkish Cinema (Yaylagül, 2018: 50). The film, which presents the socio-economic realities of the villages with a very plain narrative, was subjected to censorship, the most critical media weapon of the period, and the end of the film was changed to make propaganda in favor of the Democrat Party policies (Diken Yücel 2021, 166-167). Ömer Lütfi Akad's film *In the Name of the Law* was shot in a cinematic style in Turkish cinema. It was accepted as a much more professional film than its predecessors, and with these aspects, it became a reference for many films after it. In terms of film shooting characteristics - the communicative value of the films, message sequences, movement pattern, editing techniques, sound and light arrangement, and camera movement

angles - it is accepted as the first film that shows that it has gained a cinematic expression language by getting rid of the influence of the theater and that started the period that will be described as Yeşilçam (Kuyucak-Esen, 2010: 45).

[3] The Democrat Party has also been a significant pressure on press activities. During this period, materials used in newspaper printing, such as printing machines and ink, were imported from abroad. Import permits and foreign exchange allocations are also carried out by the government (Demirel, 2011, p. 204).

[4] When the Democrat Party came to power, its program included optimistic promises for workers and workers' rights. One of the most emphasized promises on the subject is the establishment of associations, cooperatives, and unions that will act in line with social and economic purposes by various professional groups. However, the view that "Unions cannot even take place at the margins of political life" dominated the era (Aydınoğlu 1992, p., 27). In addition, the issue of the right to strike remained ambiguous during the Democrat Party's stay in power, almost avoiding recognition (Dağlı and Aktürk 1988, p. 162, 176 198). During the single-party era between 1923-50, workers went on strike 104 times. A growth and accumulation strategy based on reducing labor costs was followed by a disciplined working class politically and economically. These policies have led to new rentier forms for the Turkish bourgeoisie.

[5] The capitalist system aims to detach the workers, who have nothing to sell ultimately but their labor to live, from the means of production and to ensure the continuity of this situation. Taking away the means of production from the laborer transforms the social means of production into capital and the producers into wage laborers. The land dispossession of agricultural producers and peasants is also a part of this process (Marx 2004, pp. 678-679). During the Democrat Party period, on the one hand, steps were taken towards foreign-dependent capitalization, on the other hand, unlike land reform, policies that were entirely in favor of big landlords were followed. The result of these policies is the exploitation of the peasants by the landlords who own large land, because the share of the peasants who do not own land is to serve the landlord or migrate to big cities where job opportunities are relatively developed. In this context, the film Birds of Exile also brought a critical approach to the landlord system that triggered internal migration in the 1950s.