

Gábor Czoch:

report on the M2 thesis of Ali Hatapçı titled:

*Kurdish Identity and The Revolutionary Left in Turkey*

*From The Eastern Question to The Kurdish Question*

*(1960-1990)*

The thesis of Ali Hatapçı, written in (a very good) English, consists of 109 pages, from which 98 pages for the real analysis and 5 pages of bibliography. The author has chosen to examine some aspects of a politically hot issue, the Kurdish question. This choice presents advantages: the interest to study this topic doesn't need long explications. But in the mean time, the actual political relevance of the topic makes this choice risky. In addition, there is a huge number of literature devoted to the Kurdish problem which makes difficult to conduct an original research on that issue with the promise of new results. One of the great merits of M. Hatapçı is to find a pertinent scientific approach of the Kurdish question which allows him to avoid the potential pitfalls of this choice on the one hand, and which makes possible a new contribution to this problematic on the other hand. So, one of the most important keys of the success of this work is the excellent construction of the research object. This construction lies on a series of starting reflections requiring a wide preliminary knowledge of the theme and which permit a fruitful limitation and the problematization of the general topic of the Kurdish question. These initial considerations conduct the author to examine the discursive aspects of the construction of the Kurdish identity. Given the fact that the two principal poles of the examined public debate are the State and the leftist Turkish and Kurdish intelligentsia, M. Hatapçı concentrates his research on this leftist discourse which he considers always in correlation with the official governmental positions. Besides, he defines a pertinent main motif to examine "in the discourse the discourse and ideas which were employed to define or construct a Kurdish identity in a particular mind-set: Marxist-Leninism", which is the problem of the relation between the geographical belonging of the Kurdish people and the construction of their national identity. As a result, when scrutinizing „What did characterize the discontinuities in the Kurdish discourse between 1960 and 1990?" the author puts in the center of the analysis an important transformation in the interpretation of the Kurdish question with its impact on the Kurd national identity construction and also on the leftist political movement in Turkey: this is the process in which the Eastern question became the Kurdish question, as it is indicated in the title of the thesis. It means in fact, that at the starting point of the examen, in the years 1960, although the state did not deny the physical existence of Kurds, it avoided the term 'Kurd' while denoting the

problem. A set of discursive tools therefore were invented to denote this problem at the disposal of the state. This set of discursive tools allowed imagining the Kurdish question in many different ways other than ethnic. It was first of all the so called Eastern question, which was conceived as a simply problem of backwardness, a challenge of regional development. The author demonstrates how it has become, under the impact of marxist ideology, a problem of colonialism, and at the end the Kurdish question with ethnic implications.

For the abovementioned reasons, I propose 5 (very good) for the author of the thesis.



Gábor Czoch