

## A CONTRIBUTION TO TURKISH HISTORY OF DEMOCRACY STUDIES: EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND ITS PROGRAM

### TÜRK DEMOKRASİ TARİHİ İNCELEMELERİNE BİR KATKI: SOSYAL DEMOKRAT FIRKASI'NIN VE PARTİ PROGRAMININ DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

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#### Abstract

The Social Democratic Party is one of the political groups established during the armistice period. The party was based on the Wilson Principles, where great hopes were nourished at that time, and was established to develop the Ottoman State in line with the needs of the age. The center of the party is Istanbul. An official application was filed on December 22, 1918 for the establishment of the Social Democratic Party. The head of the party was Hasan Rıza, who was both a teacher and a doctor, Deputy Chairmans of the party were Kazım and Retired Brigadier General Halit, the party's Secretary General was Yorgaki Habib, the party's Assistant Scribe was Doctor Lebib, the party's Cashier was Cemal and the party's Deputy Cashier was Salim. The members of the party were Mehmet Sait, Teacher Osman Nuri, Teacher Abdullah, Attorney Cemil El-Subûti, Retired Colonel Hamdi, Captain Seyit Ali and İbrahim Bey. Although the Social Democratic Party does not leave a deep trace in Turkish political history, it is a remarkable political structure for the history of Turkish democracy; because it has a source identity in terms of showing the concepts of social democracy and social policy that are frequently emphasized by humanities today that began to be discussed in Turkey since the Ottoman era. In other words, the concept of social democracy and one of the first attempts to establish policies to be developed in this direction was carried out by this party. Therefore, the party is not a target point in the history of social democracy, but it is a signpost on the way to the goal. The Social Democratic Party, like many other political parties established during the armistice period, lost its functionality after the 1919 elections and withdrew from Turkish political life and it failed to turn into a long-term political structure. On the basis of the most original sources reached within the scope of this research, the Social Democratic Party and the party program were analyzed from various perspectives and various evaluations were made on these issues.

#### Keywords

Social Democratic Party, Social Democracy, Turkish Democracy History, Hasan Rıza, Elections of 1919

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### Öz

*Sosyal Demokrat Fırkası, mütareke döneminde kurulan siyasi fırkalardan biridir. Fırka, o dönemde büyük ümitler beslenen Wilson İlkelerini temel alarak Osmanlı Devleti'ni çağın ihtiyaçları gereğince geliştirmek amacıyla kurulmuştur. Partinin merkezi İstanbul'dur. Sosyal Demokrat Fırkası'nın kuruluşu için 22 Aralık 1918'de resmî başvuruda bulunulmuştur. Partinin başkanı Öğretmen Doktor Hasan Rıza, Başkan Vekili Kazım, Başkan Vekili Emekli Tuğgeneral Halit, Genel Sekreter Yorgaki Habib, Kâtip Yardımcısı Doktor Lebib, Kasadar Cemal ve Kasadar Yardımcısı Salim'dir. Fırkanın üyeleri ise Mehmet Sait, Öğretmen Osman Nuri, Öğretmen Abdullah, Dava Vekili Cemil El-Subûti, Emekli Albay Hamdi, Kaptan Seyit Ali ve İbrahim Beylerdir. Sosyal Demokrat Fırkası, Türk siyasi tarihinde derin bir iz bırakmamakla birlikte Türk demokrasi tarihi adına kayda değer bir politik yapıdır. Çünkü günümüzde beşeri bilimciler tarafından üzerinde sıkça durulan sosyal demokrasi ve sosyal politika kavramlarının Osmanlı döneminden itibaren Türkiye'de tartışılmaya başladığını göstermesi bakımından bir kaynak hüviyeti taşımaktadır. Diğer bir ifadeyle sosyal demokrasi kavramı ve bu yönde oluşturulacak politikaların tesis edilmesi yolunda ilk girişimlerden birisi, bu fırka tarafından gerçekleştirilmiştir. Dolayısıyla parti, sosyal demokrasi tarihi araştırmalarında bir hedef noktası olmamakla birlikte; amaca gidiş yolunda tam bir işaret levhasıdır. Sosyal Demokrat Fırkası, mütareke döneminde kurulmuş olan diğer birçok siyasal parti gibi 1919 seçimlerinden sonra işlevselliğini yitirmiş ve Türk siyasi hayatından çekilmiştir. Uzun soluklu bir siyasi yapı hâline dönüşmeyi başaramamıştır. Bu araştırma kapsamında ulaşılan en orijinal kaynaklar temelinde Sosyal Demokrat Fırkası ile fırka programı çeşitli açılardan analiz edilmiş ve bu konularda muhtelif değerlendirmelerde bulunulmuştur.*

### Anahtar Kelimeler

*Sosyal Demokrat Fırkası, Sosyal Demokrasi, Türk Demokrasi Tarihi, Hasan Rıza, 1919 Seçimleri*



## INTRODUCTION

Social Democracy is a concept that was first used in workers' unions in Europe towards the middle of the 19th century. The 1848 Revolution had a profound impact all over Europe and in Berlin. In order to defend the law of the oppressed working classes, a concept called social democracy was introduced by intellectuals and leaders. Social democracy emerged after the completion of some phases in the process of historical development in Western economics. The Western world first experienced mercantilism and then tended towards liberalism. Social democracy was born within liberalism and as a reaction to it. However, when the concept of social democracy was first used, it had no meaning in today's sense. The concept gained its current meaning from the second half of the 20th century to today. It was used in earlier times to express different political movements that were quite distant from each other (Saritaş, 2006, p. 5, 6).

Indeed, social democracy has shown a colorful development both horizontally and vertically during the historical development process. In the period from the middle of the 19th century to the present, it has been observed that social democracy is defined and interpreted in a wide range as much as possible by the intellectuals who defend this idea or fall outside of this idea. Although there is no doubt that social democracy has been changing identity from past to present, there is no consensus on exactly what it means today, as compared to what it meant yesterday. (Emrealp, 1991, p. 14).

It is seen that the concept and content of social democracy has not evolved during the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey period as in western countries<sup>1</sup> since Turkish social democracy has not experienced the industrial transformation experienced by Western countries, and has not witnessed serious worker movements and trade union activities. However, even before 1908, there were always groups that wanted to rely on the working class and produce policies through them. The state has always been skeptical to the existence of these groups. They did not allow them to work as legal structures to enable their democratic transformation within themselves. Since the time of the Ottoman Empire, socialism was accepted as an undesired ideology by statesmen. With the decision taken by the 2nd International<sup>2</sup> in 1896, it became a principle that all nations had the right to determine their own future. The Ottoman State, which contains many different ethnic and religious groups, thought that the decision of the 2nd International would have very dangerous consequences for itself. For this reason, the statesmen didn't lean towards social democratic ideas and formations in the state. Nevertheless, the workers' movements for economic purposes have increased significantly in the state, especially after the announcement of the 2nd Constitutional Monarchy which directly contributed to the development of the idea of social democracy and led to the emergence of various political organizations to defend this idea. After the workers' movements started to develop in the country, political formations such as the People's Party, the Ottoman Socialist Party, the Labor Union Association and the Ottoman Democratic Party tried to produce policies in favor of the working class after 1908. During the Armistice period, the political structures such as Turkey Socialist Party of Workers and Farmers, the Ottoman Labor

<sup>1</sup> Advocating the concept of social democracy in Turkey remained weak liberal literature. In other words, intellectuals who advocate liberalism could not adequately analyze the concept of social democracy on the basis of scientific criteria and share their results with the public. For detailed information, see. (Yılmaz, 2005, p. 158).

<sup>2</sup> International Labour Federation.

Party, the Socialist Party of Turkey and the Social Democratic Party, have embarked on the political scene to form a policy around concepts such as social democracy and workers' rights (Saritaş, 2006, p. 173, 189).

The Social Democratic Party, on which we will make various evaluations, is a political party<sup>3</sup> established in the Ottoman State (Armaoğlu, 2014, p. 275) within the cosmopolitan structure (Yavuz, 2017, p. 283) of the armistice period, which was defeated by the First World War. By the end of 1918, the Ottoman State, called as "sick man" in the eyes of Europe, was about to die. There was anger in the country against the pressure of the Union and Progress administrators (Lewis, 2008, p. 323). After the signing of the Mudros Armistice Treaty on October 30, 1918, the political influence of the Union and Progress Party was completely broken which brought a period of political relief throughout the country. The disappearance of tension and oppression in the political scene also started the establishment process of many parties. In this process, political parties were set up acting in line with very different political goals and ideas.<sup>4</sup> One of the political parties established within this structure and climate of the armistice period was the Social Democratic Party.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted, however, that the Social Democratic Party was first established during the Second Constitutional Era. The rulers of the party consisted of four Greeks, two Turks, two Armenians, two Bulgarians and two Jews. The party also published a media organ published in Turkish and Greek called "*Irgat-Ergatis*" at that time. The Social Democratic Party, which was established during the armistice period and we made various evaluations within the scope of our research topic, has the same name as this political structure; but it is not clear whether there is a link between the two political entities. Bulgarian historians Stefan Velikov and Mete Tunçay state that there is a connection between the Social Democrat Party established during the armistice period and the Social Democratic Party established during the second constitutional period without fail (Tunçay, 1991, p. 128).

In a document we encountered in the Directorate of State Archives of Turkey during the investigations we made in connection with this research topic, the name of the "*Social-Democratic Party*" was mentioned regarding an immigration incident in the Bulgarian geography. It was an example of an official letter from the "*Bulgarian commissioner*" (Parlatır, 2014, p. 918) dated 10 November 1907<sup>6</sup>. "*Social Democratic Party*" is mentioned among the phrases, "*The number of people who want to emigrate to America in the emirate and the state is increasing day by day, and some of the supporters of the Social Democratic Party are promoting group migration of Bulgarian workers based on a method, as a result of which an increase from day to day appears....*" (BOA. A.MTZ.04/161.6, p. 1; BOA. A.MTZ.HR.64, p. 2). Based on all of the information contained in this document, the information that a political structure called "*Social-Democratic Party*" within autonomous Bulgaria encouraged Bulgarian workers to migrate to America is clearly reached. In our opinion, the phrase "*Social-Democratic Party*", which is

<sup>3</sup> For a current evaluation about the armistice period and the developments in the Ottoman Empire during this period, see (Ünal, 2019, p. 92-110).

<sup>4</sup> About the concept of Political Party see (Uzun, 2010, p. 7).

<sup>5</sup> The weakening of the political and military authority of the Committee of Union and Progress has great influence in the emergence of many social and democratic parties, especially the Social Democrat Party, after World War I. However, in the general sense, the innovation process that started with the period of the New Ottomans, especially the Union and Progress Association, has contributed significantly to the development of concepts such as democracy and social democracy and workers' rights. On the other hand, it is clear that the reform movement in Turkey, became intertwined with the French Revolution and the French enlightenment and got its strength from the concepts that these movements gave birth to innovation and transformation movements in Turkey, was carried out a bit by the Young Turks Union and mostly by Committee of Union and Progress. Committee of Union and Progress is ultimately a class and a mass movement. For further information see (Kahraman, 1993, p. 47).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ttk.gov.tr/genel/tarih-cevirme-kilavuzu/> (Accessed on 18.02.2020.)

included in the official records of the state, proves that the Social Democratic Party was definitely established in the 2nd Constitutional Era. Although Bulgaria gained its independence in 1908, it was an autonomous principality still attached to the Ottoman State in 1907 when the document was prepared (Bakacak, 2016, p. 44).

However, it is also useful to underline that the Social Democratic Party was established for the first time in the Second Constitutional Period and could not turn into an effective political structure. A new political party with the same name was established during the armistice period. However, there is no concrete evidence that there was a connection between the Social Democratic Party founded in the name of the previous party and the party established in 1908. It can be argued that there is a connection between the two parties only through the interpretation that there is no scientific basis for such a claim, which is almost impossible to prove in the light of the available sources (Tunçay, 1991, p. 128).

The Social Democratic Party did not leave a deep mark on Turkish political history. But it is a value for the history of Turkish democracy since it has a source identity in terms of showing the concepts of social democracy and social policy that are frequently emphasized by humanities today that began to be discussed in Turkey since the Ottoman era. In other words, one of the first attempts to establish the concept of social democracy and policies to be developed in this direction was carried out by this party during the armistice period. Therefore, although these opportunities and activities are not a target point in the history of social democracy, they can be considered as a sign for the researches carried out in this field (Akıncı & Usta, 2015, p. 43).

There are many political formations in Istanbul that tried to be effective especially by participating in the general elections of 1919 during the process of opening up the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara on April 23, 1920. One of these political parties is the Social Democratic Party. This political organization could not stay on the political scene for a long time like many parties of armistice period. There are many political parties that were established in the period of armistice but whose political life ended after the occupation of Istanbul by the Allied Powers on March 16, 1920. The Social Democratic Party is one of these political structures.<sup>7</sup>

Within the scope of this research, the establishment, development and political activities of the Social Democratic Party were examined. Another issue that is emphasized in relation to the research subject is to present the political program of the party and to analyze it from various aspects. The Social Democratic Party is a popular destination in the history of Turkish democracy. It has not been able to achieve a large part of its goals set in the party program. However, with its declaration published before the 1919 elections, it contributed to bringing social democratic ideas to the agenda in Ottoman political life. It is evident that socialist and social democratic ideas could not develop as much as in Western countries in Ottoman State where social and political structure was based on traditional foundations. However, it is worth mentioning that a political structure such as the Social Democratic Party emerged even in the late periods of the Ottoman State and that it had revealed an ideal by publishing a 12-item party program.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed evaluation of the 1919 elections, see (Tan Baykal et al, 2018, p. 229).

<sup>8</sup> Elections of 1919 were made according to the "Temporary Deputy Election Law" of July 20, 1918 and the decree of October 7, 1919. According to the law, every sanjak is an election circle. Elections are held in two degrees. The number of lawmakers pertaining to the sanjak is calculated as a deputy for every 50.000 male population. For further information see (Demirel, 2017, p. 39-60).

Twelve-item party program is an extremely valuable source of information in terms of reflecting the perspective of social democratic politicians on the developments and social issues in the country. By looking at the party program of the Social Democratic Party, it is possible to evaluate the ideas of the social democratic intellectuals of the period regarding to the political situation of the Ottoman Empire and to the social structure during the armistice period. Therefore, the said party program is also an extremely important resource that has not been emphasized so far in order to analyze the intellectual structure of the armistice socialists.

While doing this research on the Social Democratic Party and its program, primarily all the fundamental books and articles related to the subject were examined, subsequently relevant newspapers and magazines such as *Alemdar*, *İfham*, *İkdam*, *Katkı*, *Söz*, which contain very important information about the party and its program, were rigorously reviewed. It should be stated at this point that the number of resources related to the subject is extremely low. Although there is basic information about the part in the study called "*Armistice Era Political Parties in Turkey 1918-1922*" written by Tarık Zafer Tunaya, the work does not include a detailed evaluation, especially on the program of the party. In Mete Tunçay's work called "*Leftist Movements in Turkey Documents-I (1908-1925)*" there are important documents about the party as well as some interesting comments not found in Tunaya's work. Within the scope of this research, some new evaluations were made on the Social Democratic Party and its program with the help of new resources that can be accessed based on the information provided by Tunaya and Tunçay (Tunaya, 1986, p. 230-234; Tunçay, 1991, p. 125-140).

### **Social Democratic Party**

The Social Democratic Party is one of the political groups established during the armistice period. The party was established in order to transform the Ottoman State according to the needs of the age within the framework of Wilson Principles, which are accepted by the various organs of the state and most of the nation (Atabay, 2015, p. 63). While the center was in the private apartment with number 104 on Kebir Street in Şişli, Istanbul, it was later moved to İsmail Pasha Passage on Hamidiye Street in Sirkeci. An official application was filed on December 22, 1918 for the establishment of the Social Democratic Party. The head of the party was Hasan Rıza, who was both a teacher and a doctor, Deputy Chairman's of the party were Kazım and Retired Brigadier General Halit, the party's Secretary General was Yorgaki Habib, the party's Assistant Scribe was Doctor Lebib, the party's Cashier was Cemal and the party's Deputy Cashier was Salim. The members of the party were Mehmet Sait, Teacher Osman Nuri, Teacher Abdullah, Attorney Cemil El-Subûti, Retired Colonel Hamdi, Captain Seyit Ali and İbrahim Bey (Tunaya, 1986, p. 230, 232).

The party, which was established after the Russian Revolution broke out in 1917, regarded itself as part of the Second International. During the preparations for the establishment of the party, a relationship was established with the Second International located in Brussels and various programs were brought from there. The news given by some press organs due to these developments regarding the union of Social Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party was rigorously denied by Social Democratic Party. As a matter of fact, the following information is included in the statement titled "*From the Social Democratic Party*" sent to the newspaper *Alemdar*, published on the same newspaper on October 31, 1919: "*In your copy on Tuesday, October 28, 1919, there was a news stating that the Social Democratic Party delegates were sent to the National Liberal Party for a union. This news has misled you and this is falsified news. How do people enjoy announcing and publishing such groundless news in newspapers? Sir How can the Social Democratic Party benefit from contact with a small party that follows the principles of nationality, given*

*that it is a socialist party and has been tasked with applying the principles of democracy? This is also illogical. I kindly ask you to correct this lie and to make a publication about our party based on the documents that will be presented as sealed from the central committee of our party from now on. I would like to invite honorable Alemdar newspaper to recognize the Social Democratic Party very seriously and resolutely in its own principles, and present my high regards, sir.”* (Alemdar newspaper, October 31, 1919, p. 1).

In this respect, the Social Democratic Party has positioned itself in a different place in terms of the political trends it has followed compared to other parties established during the armistice period. The Party considered itself as a socialist formation inclined and firmly adhered to democratic principles. The Party was recognized as the first undertaking with socialist doctrine in Turkey in the European sense (Saritaş, 2006, p. 184).

There is no exact clarity about the role played by the Sultan Vahidettin during the establishment of the party. In the information transferred to Tarık Zafer Tunaya by Cemil Alpay, it was said that Vahidettin was applied for the establishment of the party and the formalities were accelerated in this way. However, Lütfi Simavi put forward an opposite view on this matter. According to Lütfü Simavi, the party chairman Dr. Hasan Rıza and his deputy chairman and retired Brigadier General Halit arrived at the flat of his palace (Devellioğlu, 2001, p. 558) where the sultan accepted the deputies and other persons on February 20, 1920, but they were not accepted by the sultan (Lütfi Simavi, 2007, p. 386). Therefore, it does not seem possible to reveal whether the sultan had a positive or negative attitude during the establishment of the party from the information given in the sources (Tunaya, 1986, p. 231). However, Lütfi Simavi chaired the office of deputies and other persons in the palace during the period of Sultan Reşat Han and Sultan Vahidettin. For this reason, the information given in this regard should be considered more accurate (Lütfi Simavi, 2007, p. 386).

The Social Democratic Party could not organize a serious organization outside of Istanbul. Unlike many political parties, the Social Democratic Party does not have a newspaper to express itself and provide information about its activities to large masses.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the party does not have any media. On the other hand, the budget of the party has an extremely insufficient structure, which has prevented it from showing great development. It is not possible for a party with insufficient budget to make many investments that may be beneficial for it, such as organizing activities throughout the country (Tunaya, 1986, p. 231).

The Social Democratic Party held two major congressional meetings. In the second of these meetings, Doctor Hasan Rıza Bey lost the presidency. The information contained in the sources is very superficial about the intellectual dimensions of the discussions that took place in the party, which is known to have very serious internal conflicts. Although the Social Democratic Party was one of the political structures that were established during the armistice period and did not show great development, it had a different opinion from many other parties due to the ideas it defended which contributed to the party's frequently mentioned name. The party has participated in inter-party initiatives, as far as possible. In the reply to the intellectual Ahmet Rıza Bey, party members reported that they were planning to send a representative who would operate in line with the Wilson Principles to Europe (Söz newspaper, February 2, 1919, p. 2).

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Hüseyin Hilmi published a newspaper called *İştirak* in 1910. The newspaper touched upon the workers' problems and became the publication of the Ottoman Socialist Party. When the affiliate newspaper was closed, the Socialist newspaper was published this time by Hüseyin Hilmi. During the armistice period, the Social Democratic Party failed to express itself to the masses by publishing such a similar newspaper. See (Yalçın, 2004, p. 159).

The Social Democratic Party was represented by the party president during the First Sultanate Council.<sup>10</sup> The party was founded at a time when the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies was closed and it did not have the opportunity to be represented in Parliament. Therefore, the feature of determining some targets but not being able to demonstrate a strong will in order to realize these, which is one of the most basic and classical features of the political parties operating outside the parliament, was also valid for this party. One of the most important goals of the party was to achieve success in the 1919 elections.<sup>11</sup> In these elections, Dr. Hasan Rıza was nominated as the chairman, Halit and Kazım Bey as the deputy chairman, Yorgaki Habib as the secretary general and İbrahim as the accountant. The party did not succeed in these elections, which it entered with great hopes. Indeed, no Social Democratic Party candidate was able to become a deputy in the elections. (İfham newspaper, October 23, 1919, p. 2; İkdam newspaper, November 26, 1919).

In the second half of 1919, the Social Democratic Party, the Turkish Socialist Party and Turkish Workers-Farmers' Socialist Party united to constitute Worker Socialist Party. However, the agreement between these parties could not be continued in the long term (Tunçay, 1991, p. 128). The party considered organizing workers and small artisans and providing coordination among them as an assignment imposed by international socialism. He engaged in various discussions on socialism (Katkı Periodical, 1975, p. 11-13). The Social Democratic Party lost its functionality after the 1919 elections and became invisible in Turkish political life like many other political parties established during the armistice period. The party failed to turn into a long-term political structure (Çavdar, 2013, p. 183-193).

#### **The Declaration of the Social Democratic Party**

The Social Democratic Party issued a declaration approximately ten months after its establishment. This declaration, which was announced by the party, is an election declaration that was created in order to have an impact on the public in the 1919 elections rather than an establishment declaration. By establishing the most important issues of the country, the party founders were trying to find best solutions for the real and rational needs of Turkey at that period. As can be understood from the declaration of the Party, Social Democratic Party identified the concept of democracy as the most important destination in Turkey that should be reached. The party also expressed democracy as "*popular sovereignty*" and regarded it as the most important source of hope for the future of the country and the nation. For this reason, it is clearly stated in this declaration that the Social Democratic Party plans to demonstrate the will to establish democracy in municipalities and other institutions, especially the state administration (Güner & Kabataş, 1990, p. 244).

In said declaration, the founders the Social Democratic Party have addressed the issue of how to build democracy in Turkey and how the issue will be rooted, and also they expressed their expectations from the citizens. Accordingly, the following evaluations were made in the declaration of the party, which includes the most basic political arguments to be based on the political scene and the political aims it wants to achieve:

<sup>10</sup> In order to save the country from falling apart and ensure an acceptable peace treaty, Padishah Vahidettin and Grand Vizier Damat Ferit felt the need to organize a meeting in which representatives of different sections would attend. This meeting, which was held at the request of the Sultan, was called the Sultanate Council. The main purpose of meeting such a congress is to create the impression that the government has the support of the people while going to the peace conference. For more information see (Turan, 2013, p. 156-158).

<sup>11</sup> Minorities also carefully followed the general elections of 1919. However, Armenian, Greek and Jewish minority groups, who followed a policy in cooperation with the occupying states during the armistice period, did not contribute to the healthy implementation of these elections. For an important assessment of the view of minorities to the 1919 elections, see (Tek, October 23, 1919, p. 1).



*Citizens! The safest and most certain hope for the future welfare of the country and nation is democracy, the sovereignty of the people that has been confirmed by the principles of Mister Wilson. Statement of Grand Vizier Rıza Pasha is sufficient evidence of this. For this reason, the time to implement democracy, which is accepted by all nations with deep affection and safety, has already come. Advocacy of democracy occurs with the presence and abundance of representatives of Social Democrats in the Assembly and municipal offices. Those deputies must be guarantors to ensure the lives and all the mandatory needs of all workers, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, captains, engineers, blacksmiths, operators, civil servants, in short all professionals and industry, and the well-being of the poor in the public. Citizens! The time has come. The fundamentals of the world have changed completely in every country and democracy has started to rule. When the parliamentarians dissolve at the beginning of the ballot boxes, you, the workers, vote for the Social Democratic Party candidates, so that your deputies in the Assembly will increase, your law will be defended, Democracy can be fully implemented. Let time warn us all, our law can be defended. Let's be active, open-minded, alert-minded and active in this election (İfham newspaper, October 23, 1919, p. 2).*

As can be seen, the Social Democratic Party emerged after the First World War with the devoutness and determination to fill an important gap within the general political situation (Ünal, 2009, p. 34, 35) of the armistice period and against the troublesome problems (Atatürk, 2003, p. 1) faced by the Ottoman State. Democracy is the safest port for the country, as well as the most hopeful object for the future of the country according to the Party. Unlike past systems and political experiences, the Party believed that a full democracy should be established in the country in order to put the future of the Ottoman State on a solid ground. According to them it is evident that it is time to apply democracy in the country. The idea stating “The determination of the destiny of each nation with its own will, and to be independent”, which emerged as 14 articles on January 8, 1918 by Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States of America, after World War I and appeared as a light of hope on behalf of the countries, such as the Ottoman Empire, whose future was unknown, was included in the Social Democratic Party declaration and was taken into consideration in many other declarations (Güner & Kabataş, 1990, p. 244).

In the declaration of the party, the issue of how this value would develop and flourish in the Ottoman State was mentioned besides the importance of the concept of democracy. According to the party, Social Democratic Party lawmakers were needed to defend democracy both in the Parliament and the municipal offices. The greater the number of these deputies, the more powerful it was to be able to represent democracy in relevant institutions; because owing to the deputies to be sent to the parliament, the Social Democratic Party promised that it would provide the most basic needs of all professional groups, especially of the working class, and ensure the welfare of the poor. According to the party, the First World War I had changed the world order drastically. According to the founders of the party, the real winner of the war was democracy. In the declaration published just before the 1919 elections, the Social Democratic Party asked the workers to vote for the party candidates when they came to the ballot boxes for the parliamentary elections.<sup>12</sup> According to the party, the more social democratic-minded deputies were elected, the stronger the representation of the working class in parliament, and

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<sup>12</sup> İbrahim Sarıtaş declared that the party did not participate in the general elections of 1919 in his work titled “*Social Democracy from Past to Present*”. However, the party issued a declaration on October 23, 1919, and the Social Democratic Party, in the elections, asked the people to vote in favor. For this reason, this information given by Sarıtaş is not correct. See (Sarıtaş, 2006, p. 184).

thereby their rights would be defended. This would contribute to the development of democracy. Thus, he asked the fellow working class to be as active as possible in these elections. When evaluated in general, the importance of the concept of democracy, the value that this concept could bear for the Ottoman State and what was expected from the working class, which was the target group of the party in the 1919 elections were mentioned in the Social Democratic Party declaration (İfham newspaper, October 23, 1919, p. 2).

### **Evaluation of the Program of the Social Democratic Party**

The program of the Social Democratic Party consists of 12 items. The party's program was published one day after the official establishment date of December 22, 1918, that is, on December 23, 1918. In the program, evaluations were made on many topics. When looking at the scope of the items in the party program, it was seen that many general titles were brought to the fore, especially how to institutionalize within the party. When these general titles are subjected to a certain classification, it can be seen that some items of the program are extremely close in terms of content. In particular, there is a serious content link between the articles regarding the procedures and principles within which the institutionalization will be carried out. It was observed that the following issues were emphasized in the said party program: Principles to be followed during the organization and development of the group, the duties and works of the party management committee, the policies to be put forward in line with the aims of the party and the demands of the working class, issues on which of the boards in the organization will implement the party program. Under these general headings, the policies to be followed by the party are detailed (Tunaya, 1986, p. 232-234).

The first 5 articles of the Social Democratic Party have a structure that includes various evaluations on how the party will be organized and on what procedures and methods it will develop. The fact that the first 5 articles of the 12-item program of the Social Democratic Party, which started its political life with an idealist perspective, is fully organized for the organization shows that the party wants to have a long-term political experience. The items in the program related to the organizational work of the party are as follows: (Tunaya, 1986, p. 232-234).

*Article 1: A social democratic party was established, with its headquarters in Istanbul. Anyone who accepts the underlying party program may be involved in the party regardless of race or sect.*

*Article 2: The administrative committee of the party consists of 13 founding members. Their duties continue for approximately 1.5 years until the beginning of July next year, and a general meeting is held at the beginning of July every year, and the administrative committee is renewed by election. It is appropriate to re-elect those leaving the board of directors.*

*Article 3: The persons who will be included in the party will sign the acceptance document and the recommendations and testimony will be added with the signatures of the 3 members of the party and then the registration and admission will be accepted by the decision of the board of directors.*

*Article 4: Those who are included in the Social Democratic Party will pay 1 lira as the entrance fee to the party box and will undertake to provide an amount of not less than 10 kurus each month.*

*Article 5: Civil administration in accordance with the rights and justice will be carried out by the administrative committee about those who show relaxation and laziness in their material and moral commitments without any justification (Tunçay, 1991, p.*

125).

According to the statements given here, all Ottoman citizens who accept the 12-item party program can become a member of the Social Democratic Party regardless of their race and sect. Therefore, the party declares that it will recognize everyone as an equal status member without making any distinction between citizens, provided that the program it proposes is accepted. Thirteen of the founding members constitute the administrative committee of the party. The people in this committee work for 1.5 years. The board of directors is renewed by elections in July of every year. There is no obstacle in the re-election of those leaving the board of directors. Citizens who want to enter the Social Democratic Party have to sign the acceptance document and get the reference of three people who have already joined the party. After these transactions are carried out, the exact registration process is carried out by the board of directors. Those who enter the party will pay 1 lira as the entrance fee, and they are obliged to pay this fee to the party, not less than 10 kurus each month. If the entrants take a step back from their material and moral commitments without serious reasons, necessary actions will be taken by the administrative committee within the justice mechanism (Sarıtaş, 2006, p. 185).

One of the issues that are emphasized in the program of the Social Democratic Party is related to the duties of the party management committee, the activities to be carried out by the committee and the activities to be carried out for the development of the party. According to the party program in question, one of the most important authorities of the Social Democratic Party is the administrative committee. This delegation is the institution that will fully sustain the party and move it forward. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that three items of the 12-item party program are devoted to this issue. The following items are included in the party program regarding this issue: (Tunaya, 1986, p. 233).

*Article 6: The duties of the Board of Directors are firstly to apply the program of the party, to try to strengthen and expand the genuine ties with the social democratic parties in other countries and to join the international organization in all circumstances. The secondary duties of the board of directors are to receive and accept the revenues of the party and spend it for the purposes of the party within the program, to give the general assembly regular information with a report every year about the actions, activities, revenues and expenses of the party and to fulfill the decisions taken by the general assembly, and to make sure that the transactions and negotiations are carried out well.*

*Article 7: In order for the negotiations and transactions to be carried out properly, the Board of Directors selects one chairman, one vice chairman, one secretary general, one deputy secretary general, one cashier and one deputy cashier among the group. Their duties will be explained by a special regulation. If the board of directors deems necessary, it invites the general assembly ahead of time and every minute. If a written and justified request including extraordinary invitation to the board of directors occurs with the signatures of 30 members, the general board of board of directors is obliged to invite to the meeting immediately.*

*Article 8: Once the general assembly is established, they appoint two clerks to organize and facilitate the negotiations, and the head of the board of directors chairs the general assembly. However, the secretary general maintains his place (Tunçay, 1991, p. 125, 126).*

Accordingly, the first task of the board of directors has been determined as to fully implement the party program, to connect with social democratic parties in foreign countries, to

develop these ties as much as possible and to join the 2nd International. The second task of the board of directors is to collect the revenues of the party, spend it in line with the goals and objectives of the party, inform the general assembly every year about the actions, activities, revenues and expenses, and ensure that the decisions taken by the general assembly are fully implemented, and to perform all kinds of works and processes perfectly. Board of Directors selects one chairman, one vice chairman, one secretary general, one deputy secretary general, one cashier and one deputy cashier among the group. A regulation containing the work and procedures to be carried out will be published in the future. The board of directors is authorized to gather the general assembly of the party when it deems necessary. As a matter of fact, when the administrative committee is applied with the signatures of 30 members and a justified reason is given, the administrative committee is obliged to gather the general assembly immediately. When the general assembly convenes, two people can be appointed as officers to organize the meetings and to make things easier. The head of the board of directors also chairs the general assembly. As you can see, the board of directors is almost the backbone of the Social Democratic Party. It is the most basic institution that sustains and directs the party (Sarıtaş, 2006, p. 185).

The issue of increasing the position of the working class in society, which the Social Democratic Party adopted as the main argument on the political scene and declared that it will make efforts to realize it as a party, is another important issue that has been included in the party program. The party has already emerged with the ideal of applying the principles of social democracy in the Ottoman State. Therefore, improving the positions of workers, labors and farmers who are in the lower level in the society is a main discussion topic for the Social Democratic Party. The matters included in the party program regarding the policies to be followed for workers, labors and farmers are as follows: (Tunaya, 1986, p. 233, 234).

*Article 9: The aims of the party are to regulate the demands of workers, labors and farmers and to ensure cooperation, to transform the whole organization into social democratic principles, and to organize the economic and political organization on this basis, to bring the companies and associations of the capitalists into conformity with the principles of social democrats, to establish mutual treaties, agricultural, industrial and economic unions in this way, to form a common unity of unions, and even to regulate these principles, to establish partnerships with the international social democratic general organization, to establish cooperative associations for the protection of workers' entire law and especially against capital owners, to ensure workers' livelihood and rise, and to provide financial and moral assistance to them and their families in all kinds of accidents, to determine the execution of the elections every year by the method of negotiation, and to determine the dominance and order of the social democratic foundations in the entire organization and installation through members who will be included in the elections in the general assembly and municipal councils.*

*Article 10: It is mandatory to verify and explain the general assembly majority of Article 9 and the general amendments of international social democratic congresses* (Tunçay, 1991, p. 126).

The Social Democratic Party has regarded itself a duty to deal with the problems of the lower-level groups within the Ottoman social structure. However, the party is aware that the will must be put forward to solve these problems. In this context, the group aims to determine the demands of the workers, to work, to cooperate between workers and farmers, to determine the whole system in the country in accordance with social democratic principles, and to make

associations and enterprises in line with social democratic principles. The party also aims to establish agricultural, industrial and economic unions, to enable these unions to act together, and to establish partnerships with the international social democratic general organization, to establish charity associations and to increase the level of welfare in order to protect the entire law of the working class against capital owners, to provide financial and moral assistance to workers and their families in any accident that may occur, and to make social democratic principles dominant in working life. These issues, which are mentioned in the 9th and 10th articles of the party program, can also be expressed as the foundation of the Social Democratic Party (Saritaş, 2006, p. 184, 185).

Hasan Rıza, the founder of the Social Democratic Party, wrote an article including his views on socialism, especially social democracy and the Social Democratic Party. According to Hasan Rıza, who has a connection with the 2nd International, socialism can be summarized in three basic principles; to ensure that workers are united in the international arena and act jointly, to organize the working class as a party to strengthen the state, to strengthen the working class economically, to transform the owners of the capital into social and economic contributors. According to Hasan Rıza, these principles should be the basic functions of socialism. Therefore, the aim of the Social Democratic Party is to put the elements that can be collected in these three principles into action.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Social Democratic Party, socialism is a system that tries to protect the weak and set the slaves free from slavery. Socialism is the only possible way to get back the rights of the workers, who constitute the lowest level of society, from the capital owners and to save workers from captivity according to the party (Katki Periodical, 1975, p. 12).

Article 11 of the Social Democratic Party states in which authority of party has the power of making changes in the party program. According to the statement, "*Article 11: Changing the other articles of this program shall be done by the votes of the majority of the general assembly. The board of directors cannot change any of these articles.*" (Tunçay, 1991, p. 126). Changes in any article of the party program take place in line with the decisions to be taken by the majority in the general assembly. Party management committee does not have the authority to change any item of the program (Tunaya, 1986, p. 234).

The last article of the party program states that the party headquarters is in Istanbul. As it can be understood from the phrase "*Article 12: The headquarters of the Party is the Capital*" (Tunçay, 1991, p. 126) mentioned in the said article, the party accepted Istanbul as its headquarters. It should also be stated here that the Social Democratic Party, which had to be closed due to the major political and military developments in Istanbul in the ongoing process, could not open a branch anywhere outside the capital (Tunaya, 1986, p. 234).

## CONCLUSION

The Social Democratic Party is a signpost in the history of Turkish Democracy. When evaluated in terms of functionality, the party in Turkey has played a role in bringing democratic ideas to the Turkish intellectual life. When the history of politics and the ideas it defends are taken into consideration, it is seen that the Social Democratic Party has a different intellectual structure than many political parties. Its short political life of approximately sixteen months has prevented the ideals it aims to achieve in a concrete structure. Although the party was one of the nonpersistent political parties of the armistice period, it brought many concepts to the agenda during the armistice period and defended these ideas, especially on issues such as labor and farmer rights, unionism, defense of labor law against capital and the establishment of social

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<sup>13</sup> For further information see (Hasan Rıza, 1920; Tunçay, 1991, p. 128-140).

policies, which were brought up by the parties with socialist views, especially the Ottoman Socialist Party, in previous years.

Ensuring the application of the democratic system in Turkey is among the founding purposes of the Social Democratic Party; because one of the most important goals that the party wants to achieve is the full implementation of democracy in the country. The First World War was won by the group of democratic countries, which led to the bankruptcy of the old system implemented in many countries. According to the founders of the Social Democratic Party, the main element that prevailed at the end of the Great War was not a victorious country, but a new administration model that destroyed the old administrative procedures. The name of this model is democracy, in other words, popular sovereignty. The Social Democratic Party saw this management system as the newest device to serve the welfare of the Ottoman country and to reverse the bad destiny of the nation. However, according to the party, there was a need for a large number of representatives of social democrats, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in the Assembly and local governments in Turkey to lay the basis for the realization of democracy and to implement it. Since the Social Democratic Party saw the application of social democratic principles as the main target to be reached at almost every stage of the state level in Turkey after the establishment of democracy, the party highly valued the 1919 elections and tried to be effective on the public. The party argued that the entire state-run organization should be transformed according to social democratic principles, and that political and economic organization should be built on these principles.

The Social Democratic Party was a political party established following the Mudros Armistice of October 30, 1918, especially after the disappearance of the power of the Committee of Union and Progress and the period of calming down during the armistice period. It has a very different philosophy from other political formations due to the ideas it proposes in its political life. The party's declaration and party program, in particular, have the identity of being a truly original source for analyzing the political conditions of that period and for understanding the ideas of the leading social democratic intellectuals of the armistice period.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

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