

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LABOR MARKET AND THE
RECONSTRUCTION OF WORKERS' MOBILIZATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF
THE SPRING DEMONSTRATIONS OF 1989

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THE SPRING DEMONSTRATION OF 1989

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Title: “The Transformation of Labor Market and the Reconstruction of Workers’ Mobilization: The Experience of Spring Demonstrations in 1989”

This thesis examines the workers’ mobilization in Turkey in 1989 which is known as the “Spring Demonstrations.” The salient characteristics of the demonstrations are that it was the first mass workers’ mobilization after the military intervention in 1980. Workers found different types of demonstrations in order to show their grievances. The experience of the workers during the transformation of the labor market and during the mobilization is the main focus of the thesis. The economic transformation process began in 1980 with the proclamation of the January 24 decisions and accompanied by the military intervention in September 12. The January 24 decisions represent a transition from import substitution industrialization which had been the prevailing strategy for the twenty years, to export-led growth. The economic transformation changed the lives of the workers radically since the labor market began to be dominated by low wages, low job security, flexible employment, de-unionization, military rules, rise of informal sector, privatization and unemployment. This thesis evaluates this transformation process which led the workers to mobilize by giving the focus on their perceptions and experiences.

1989 also saw the beginning of a widespread labor movement triggered by the blocking of collective bargaining brought about by the uncooperative stances of employer and employee unions. Surprisingly, given the spontaneous, local, and autonomous nature of the demonstrations, they resulted in not insignificant improvements in the working conditions of the masses. Given the ban on the right to strike in this period, the so-called “Spring Demonstrations” differed from the previous labor movements. Yet workers found many ways to air their grievances within gaps in the law or, sometimes, contrary to the law. Their actions were colorful, brave, and creative: they went to the hospital collectively, boycotted meals, grew mustaches and beards, symbolically sold their children to illustrate their inability to meet family obligations or sued for mass divorce claiming they were unable to maintain a family. In this thesis, workers’ agency, their strategy, cultural practices, resistance tactics, and “cultures of solidarity” among workers are evaluated in cultural terms inspired by E.P. Thompson.

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Başlık: Emek Piyasasının Dönüşümü ve İşçi Hareketinin Yeniden İnşası: 1989 Bahar Eylemleri Deneyimi

Bu tez “Bahar Eylemleri” olarak bilinen ve 1989 yılında Türkiye’de gerçekleşen işçi hareketini incelemektedir. Bu eylemlerin birkaç göze çarpan özelliği vardır: Bu eylemler 1980’deki askeri darbeden sonra ilk toplu işçi hareketi olduğu gibi, aynı zamanda işçilerin şikâyetlerini dile getirmek için farklı yollar bulduğu eylemlerdir. İşçilerin hem emek piyasasının dönüşümü hem de hareket esnasındaki deneyimleri bu tezin odak noktasıdır. Ekonomik dönüşüm süreci 24 Ocak kararlarının açıklanması ve 12 Eylül’deki askeri darbeye birlikte 1980 yılında başlamıştır. 24 Ocak kararları son 20 yıldır izlenen ithal ikameci sanayileşmeden ihracat bazlı büyümeye geçişi simgeler. Bu ekonomik dönüşüm işçilerin yaşamını kökten değiştirmiştir. Dönüşümle beraber emek piyasasında düşük maaşlar, iş güvenliğinin azalması, esnek istihdam, sendikasılaşma, askeri kurallar, kayıt dışı sektörlerin artışı, özelleştirme ve işsizlik hüküm sürmeye başlamıştır. Bu tez işçileri harekete iten bu dönüşüm sürecini ve bu süreçte işçilerin kendi algılarını ve deneyimlerini incelemek için bir girişimdir.

1989 yılı büyük bir işçi hareketinin başlangıcıdır. Bunun nedeni ise işveren ve işçi sendikalarının işbiriksiz tutumlarının sonucu toplu sözleşmenin tıkanmasıdır. Bu eylemlerin, anlık ortaya çıktığını, lokal ve özerk olduğu düşünürsek, eylemler beklenin aksine toplulukların çalışma koşullarında hiç de azımsanmayacak önemli gelişmeleri beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu dönemde grev yapmaya getirilen yasağı düşündüğümüzde, “Bahar Eylemleri” daha önceki işçi hareketlerinden farklılaşır. İşçiler şikâyetlerini dile getirmek için yasa boşluklarından yararlanarak ya da bazen yasalara karşı gelerek birçok yöntem bulmuşlardır. Onların bu hareketleri renkli, cesur ve yaratıcıdır: toplu olarak hastaneye gittiler, yemekleri boykot ettiler, bıyık ve sakal uzattılar, çocuklarını bakamadıklarını göstermek için sembolik olarak çocuklarını sattılar, ailelerini bir arada tutamadıklarını iddia ederek toplu boşanma için mahkemeye başvurdular. Bu tezde işçilerin faaliyetleri, onların stratejileri, kültürel davranışları ve işçiler arasındaki dayanışma E.P. Thompson’dan ilham alınan kültürel terimler altında incelenmektedir.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A Forgotten Past

This thesis scrutinizes the Spring Demonstrations that took place in 1989 by focusing on the salient characteristics of the demonstrations. First of all, the Demonstration were the first collective and widespread workers' mobilization after the military intervention of September 12, 1980. It began in the public sector due to the blockage of the collective bargaining process between workers' unions and employers' unions. However, the private sector also was inevitably affected. Secondly, the demonstrations were widespread considering both places and sectors. They did not only take place in Istanbul but overall Turkey from Giresun to Diyarbakır, İzmir and so on. They also encompassed different sectors, from transportation to automobile, from petroleum to high ways. Thirdly, the demonstrations were partially successful considering the rise in the wages at the final stage. Workers from the public sector achieved to get on average a 142% nominal rise in their wages. Last but not the least, it was during the Spring Demonstrations that workers, for the first time found different and noteworthy ways to show their grievances and followed alternative tactics to resist: they went to the hospital collectively, boycotted lunches, grew beards, shaved off their hair, sued for a mass divorce, made slow-down strikes, sold their children hypothetically.

The endeavor in this thesis is designed in two major layers: The first layer is to reveal the conditions that paved the way for a mass mobilization to take place. In other words, I will draw out the dynamics of the labor market transformation which began on January 24th 1980, with the declaration of the new economic package accompanied by military intervention on September 12, 1980. The two strongly interconnected major decisions changed the economic and political system fundamentally. In fact, the two decisions symbolized the grand transition of the economy from import substitution industrialization to export-led growth strategy. The import-substitution period of 1960-1980 basically was marked by the compromise between labor and capital. The export led growth strategy reversed this relationship between labor and capital strongly: the compromise was broken down and such issues as low wages, de-unionization, flexible employment... began to prevail in the labor market. Namely, as an effort to present the first layer and the associated aim, I will present and analyze the elements of the transformation of the labor market and the effects of this transformation on the working class.

The second layer is designed to form the basis of this thesis. In this layer, I will examine the process of the demonstrations by focusing on the experiences of the workers who attended the demonstrations. In this part, I carried out an ethnographic research in order to understand the dynamics of the demonstrations. The demonstrations were colorful and creative since workers found different ways to air their grievances and to attract the publics' attention. The demonstrations were examples of the workers' solidarity, which transcended social and political positions or habits of the thought of the workers. This is an astounding phenomenon considering how politically polarized

the nation had been up until just a decade earlier: there were multiple numbers of demonstrations in different sectors and different workplaces just for supporting a protest in one, and different types of strikes. These were the demonstrations where the artificial boundaries between workers were removed. That is to say, all of the workers from different political views, leftist or rightist, conservative or liberal, from different backgrounds, from different regions acted in concert, organized together in order to achieve a main goal. In this part of the thesis, I will try to uncover experiences by detailing the relationship between workers and unions, workers and workers, the process of organizations and the reason behind the new tactics which led to a success. However, even though the Spring Demonstration could be considered as one of the largest labor movements in Turkey, widespread, colorful and creative they nevertheless sank into oblivion and became part of the forgotten past.

Though there are a number of studies that consider Spring Demonstrations as a reaction to the application of neo-liberal policies,¹ they overlook the experiences of the workers. However, these experiences led the workers to find different ways in order to make their voices heard. Apart from academic interest, people generally do not remember the Spring Demonstrations or they need some extra information to recall.

¹ Yıldırım Koç, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi Tarihi* (İstanbul: KaynakYayıncıları, 2003), pp. 284-286; Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi, s.v. "Bahar Eylemleri."; Feroz Ahmad, "The Development of Working-Class Consciousness in Turkey," in *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*, ed. by Zachary Lockman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 158; Günseli Berik and Cihan Bilginsoy, "The Labor Movement in Turkey: Labor Pains, Maturity, Metamorphosis," in *The Social History of Labor in the Middle East*, ed. by Ellis Jay Goldberg (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 50-64, p. 55; Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, "Labour: The Battered Community," in *Strong State and Economic Interest Groups: The post 1980 Turkish Experience*, ed. by Metin Heper (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), pp. 57-70, p. 65; Mahmut Üstün, "Türkiye İşçi Sınıfına Bakarken," *Praksis* 8, (Fall 2002), pp. 227-254, p. 247; Mustafa G. Doğan, "When Neo-liberalism Confronts the Moral Economy of Workers: The Final Spring of Turkish Labor Unions," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 11, (2010), Available [online]: <http://ejts.revues.org/index4321.html>

I chose to study and analyze the dynamics of the path that led to the rising of the Spring Demonstrations and the experiences of the workers within as the subject of this thesis for several reasons: First of all, the Spring Demonstrations differed from previous labor movements with their presentation of new ways of resisting. I believe understanding the conditions that generated such different forms /methods should help understand the dynamics/evolution of the labor movements. Though, economic transformation is an important component of explaining the reasons for the demonstrations it insufficient to explain the content of the demonstrations. At this point, I believe, in order to understand the dynamics of the demonstrations, one should look beyond the economic factors. For this reason, first of all, this thesis benefited from the E.P.Thompson, who brought cultural analysis into class analysis. Second of all, it is also fed by the approach which tries to combine the new social movements and labor movements. New social movements, separate from the labor movements by arguing that the labor movements were phenomena of the nineteenth century that only took place for economic motives.

As a result, in this thesis “class” is evaluated neither as “category,” nor as “structure” but as a historical phenomenon. And also this thesis is an attempt to overcome the boundaries between social movements and labor movements, claiming that the Spring Demonstrations took place not only for economic reasons, but as a reaction to both the application of neo-liberal policies and the attitude of the government.

The second motivation is directly related to the situation of the labor market today. Currently, the labor market is dominated by flexible forms of employment,

mainly the subcontracting system, with its low job security, low wages, informal employment, and de-unionization... One may argue that the roots of such characteristics/elements can be traced back to the 1980s. However, it is quite rare that we see a strong and widespread labor movement as we saw in 1989. The question in my mind while I was conducting my research was why workers' mobilizations are so rare today, although the conditions are quite similar to those of 1989. As a result, this thesis is an attempt to trace back the labor market transformation and to uncover the dynamics that led workers' to mobilize in such a great extent in 1989.

Finally, this thesis finds its theoretical roots from the inspiring works of E.P. Thompson, which gives the main focus to workers' agency. Workers are not evaluated as passive subjects determined by external conditions; on the contrary, they are the subjects in the making of history. How workers experienced and perceived the labor market transformation and also the mobilization process is the backbone of this thesis.

Methodology

In the pursuit of the answers to the restructuring patterns in the framework elaborated above, field research was performed with the workers and union leaders who joined the demonstrations and lived through the processes. I made 20 interviews. They were semi-structured in-depth interviews allowing the respondent to give details from their experience of daily lives in the factories and during demonstrations. The main concern of this thesis is to reveal the conditions that led workers to mobilize sometimes on their own, independent from their unions, sometimes against their unions and

sometimes in concurrence with unions. The questions were designed to get the information about the processes and the situation within the factories between 1980 - 1989, and about how they organized demonstrations, how the employers reacted after the demonstrations took place, and what kind of protests did made, what happened during those demonstrations and so on. They were also asked about unforgettable memories during the demonstrations.

In-depth interviews were conducted with workers and union leaders from different sectors and these interviews aim to show the diversity and color of the demonstrations. It was also important to understand the “solidarity” noted above, which exceeds the artificial boundaries between workers, and made them act together in concert between the different sectors. However, I could only manage to talk with workers and union leaders in Istanbul. Although there was such a constraint, this thesis nonetheless opens a way to invite the Spring Demonstrations to be studied in different regions also. I could only manage to talk with workers and union leaders in Istanbul. This delimited nature of this thesis nonetheless gives a way the word to invite the Spring Demonstrations to be studied in also different regions. I conducted interviews with workers and union leaders who were unionized in *Tümtis*,² *Petrol-İş*,³ *Haber-İş*,⁴ *Hava-İş*,⁵ *Tek Gıda-İş*,⁶ *Birleşik Metal-İş*,⁷ *Türk Harb-İş*,⁸ *Yol-İş*,⁹ *Kristal-İş*,¹⁰ *Belediye-*

² *Tümtis: Türkiye Motor Araçları Sendikası: The Motor Vehicle Workers' Union of Turkey.*

³ *Petrol-İş: Türkiye Petrol Kimya Lastik İşçileri Sendikası: The Petroleum, Chemical, Rubber Workers' Union of Turkey.*

⁴ *Haber-İş: Türkiye Posta, Telgraf, Telefon, Radyo ve Televizyon İşçileri Sendikası: The Postal, Telegraph, Telephone, Radio and Television Worker and Servicemen's Union of Turkey.*

⁵ *Hava-İş: Türkiye Sivil Havacılık Sendikası: The Turkish Civil Aviation Union.*

İş,¹¹ *Tez Koop-İş*,¹² *Deri ve Kundura İşçileri Derneği*¹³ which were deeply involved in the demonstrations. Additionally, I made interviews with people that also worked on the labor issue and who were interested in providing data.

Without a doubt, considering the widespread nature of the demonstrations, data from in-depth interviews would be only partially sufficient to understand the overall picture since they could only focus on some unions, to explain and understand the Spring Demonstrations, before and after. Thus in order to get more information about the demonstrations, I scanned the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* during the years 1989-1993 and several magazines, *Yarın*, *Alınteri*, *Sokak*, of the time when they published articles written by workers. I organized the data from newspapers in order to understand in which sector the demonstrations had begun and which sectors followed the demonstration wave. Of course, there may have been many that were not reported on by the newspapers; nonetheless I gave place from the biggest one to the smallest, local one. Hence, it is also possible to see which unions were deeply involved in the demonstrations

⁶ *Tek Gıda- İş: Türkiye Müskirat Tütün ve Yardımcı İşçi Sendikaları Federasyonu*: The Tobacco, Alcohol, Food Industry and Supplementary Workers' Union of Turkey.

⁷ *Birleşik Metal-İş: Birleşik Metal İşçiler Sendikası*: The United Metal Workers' Union.

⁸ *Türk Harb-İş: Türkiye Harb Sanayi ve Yardımcı İşkolları İşçileri Sendikası*: The Union of Defense Industry and Allied Workers.

⁹ *Yol-İş: Türkiye Yol Yapı İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası*: The Construction Workers' Trade Union of Turkey.

¹⁰ *Kristal-İş: Cam, Çimento, Seramik ve Toprak Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası*: The Cement, Glass and Soil Industries Workers' Union

¹¹ *Belediye-İş: Türkiye Belediyeler ve Genel Hizmetler İşçileri Sendikası*: The Turkish Municipal and General Workers' Union

¹² *Tez Koop-İş: Türkiye Ticaret, Kooperatif, Eğitim, Büro ve Güzel Sanatlar İşçileri Sendikası*: The Commerce and Cooperative, Education, Office and Fine Arts Workers' Union of Turkey

¹³ The Leather and Shoe Workers' Association

how many workers attended the demonstrations, what was the reason for the demonstrations, by also tracing the data from newspapers. Thus while limiting the geographical scope to Istanbul, I tried to pull in information on demonstrations of different sizes, sectors and time frames, studying the evolution and flow of the demonstrations and their diversity in terms of content.

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis has three main chapters. The second chapter presents the theoretical background of this thesis. I will focus on the approaches to labor studies. Two general approaches will be elaborated: Labor studies which put “culture” into the class analysis, and the studies which combine both labor movements and new social movements.

In the third chapter, I elaborate on the labor market transformation by focusing on salient characteristics such as low wages, de-unionization, worsening working conditions and perceptions and experiences of workers related to the labor market transformation, as well as the reflections of the 1980 military intervention. The macro-transformation of the labor market, which did not influence workers directly at first place, such as the decline of the agricultural sector and internal migration, unemployment and the rise of the informal economy are also evaluated in this chapter.

In the fourth chapter, I focus on the experience of the Spring Demonstrations starting from the blockage of collective bargaining in 19 March 1989. I evaluate the workers’ protest against their own unions, the unity of the workers, the organization

process of the demonstrations and more importantly I elaborate the new ways of resistances and solidarity demonstrations.

In the conclusion chapter, the important results of the demonstrations are taken into account and the meaning of the passive resistance is evaluated. Moreover, the motives for further improvement of this study are also listed as concluding remarks.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Perspectives on Class since 1980s

During the 1970s, many scholars scrutinized labor with what Joshi calls “socialist dreams and visions of social transformation.”¹⁴ Studying class, in that context, was more than an academic project. Class, as a subject, was seen as an emancipator; however this situation changed in the 1980s. As Joshi argues, the dreams of socialism faded away due to neo-liberalization, causing “declining employment in large industries, the trend towards the casualisation of labor and weakening of trade union movements.”¹⁵ Since the 1980s, neo-liberal economic policies began to dominate throughout the world. Free market discourse has established its hegemonic discourse both in the economic and social areas. As a result of the impacts of globalization, Beneria writes “economic restructuring has made possible further decentralization of production, both geographically and within firms. Institutional changes from downsizing and outsourcing to changes in work organizations, skill requirements, and transformations in the composition of the workforce are deep.”¹⁶ As a result, these huge economic transformations have been accompanied by the changing forms of

¹⁴ Chitra Joshi, *Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and Its Lost History* (London: Anthem press, 2005), p. 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁶ Lourdes Beneria, “Changing Employment Patterns and the Informalization Dimensions,” *Geneva: International Labour Office*, (2001), p. 1.

employment. The boundaries between formal and informal sectors have been blurred. Accordingly, the erosion of employment security has been witnessed.¹⁷ In addition, the welfare systems of states have decreased gradually as result of what Standing calls “growing privatization of social protection and an individualization of social security.”¹⁸ As mention above, all of these transformations, which naturally affect the condition of labor, have been accompanied by hegemonic globalization discourse. In our globalization age, the concept of flexibility has become a key point. The durability, routine time, “rigid” state institutions all have started to be considered as old, useless, and hierarchical.¹⁹ In other words, the flexible, un-regular type of employment reverberates through the hegemonic discourse or vice versa. This hegemonic environment affected the academy also in opposite ways in the 1980s. Labor movements all over the world declined, emancipation and earlier frameworks about ‘class’ began to be re-considered.

In the 1980s, it was assumed that labor movements were in general and severe crisis. Since labor movements were in crisis, there was a decline in labor movement studies as well. Those crises were seen as long term and structural and closely related to the globalization process mentioned above. Aristide Zolberg argues that “with post-industrial society, the workers to whose struggles we owe the ‘rights of labor’ are rapidly disappearing and today constitute a residual endangered species.”²⁰ Manuel

¹⁷ Guy Standing, “Global Feminization through Flexible Labour: A Theme Revisited,” *World Development* 27, no. 3 (March 1999), pp. 583-602, p. 584.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.584.

¹⁹ Richard Sennett, *Karakter Aşınması, Yeni Kapitalizmde İşin Kişilik Üzerindeki Etkileri* (Ayrıntı Yayınları: İstanbul, 2008).

Castells, as well as Aristide Zolberg, also indicate that the working class was no longer the emancipator subject of the future; instead non-class based identity movements would be the emancipator subject aiming to rebuild the social institutions of civil society.²¹ The fall of the class caused neo-liberal thinkers to fill the gap with challenging arguments about class identities. Giddens and Beck became the architects of removing class from the analysis social science by claiming that class is an ascriptive category rather than modern. They insisted on “individualization.” According to Beck, “the individual him/herself becomes reproduction unit for the social in the life world, and class loses its sub-cultural basis and is no longer experienced.”²²

Rather than class, individualization was now at the front. Their “individuals” are embedded in social relations therefore they are not independent from the structure; on the other hand, they can choose their own identities. This individuality, according to them, is a product of global and social conditions, thus it has occurred due to the loss of security inherent in a de-traditionalized, globalized world system.²³ At this point, the individualization of Beck and Giddens enables life narratives and begins to be interested in identities. At this point, it becomes more attractive to talk about identities - gender, race, ethnicity- rather than talking about class. This approach divides the unity and collectivity of the class by emphasizing individuality.

²⁰ Beverly J. Silver, *Forces of Labor, Workers' Movement and Globalization since 1870* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 2.

²¹ Ibid., p.2.

²² Cited in Mike Savage, *Class Analysis and Social Transformation* (California: Open University Press, 2000), p. 103.

²³ Ibid., p.10.

On the other hand, Beverly Silver, though she accepts the silence of the working class movements considering the process of globalization, the hegemony of neo-liberal discourse, and contemporary labor market situation as mentioned above, still gives the leading and emancipator role to the working class. She argues that labor is now faced with an international regime that threatens and subordinates profits to the livelihood of all which is not just an exploitation and exclusion of one over the other.²⁴

How to Evaluate Class and Class Movement?

The essential features for any Marxist analysis of class are that “*classes are defined in relationship to other classes*”²⁵ within a given system of production. The class struggle therefore is assumed to be persistent until a new system emerges based on different social relations of production. In Marxist analysis, class is a historical agent that can change the system of exploitation. Therefore, class is “simultaneously an objective and subjective phenomenon, both something independent of members’ consciousness and something expressed in conscious thought and practice”²⁶ However, it is argued by new social historians that there are different patterns for each country considering class formation.²⁷ Katznelson writes,

²⁴ Silver, p. 179.

²⁵ Rhonda F. Levine, Scott G. Mc Nall, Rick Fantasia, “Introduction,” in *Bringing Class Back in: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*, eds. by Rhonda F Levine, Scott G Mc Nall, Rick Fantasia, (Boulder: Westview Press), p. 3.

²⁶ Ibid., p.3.

²⁷ Ira Katznelson “Introduction,” in *Working Class Formation, Nineteenth Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, eds. by Ira Katznelson, Aristide Zolberg (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 9.

Working-class formation as a process is not identical from country to country (or from place to place within countries). The histories of national working classes are composed not only of workplace relationships, trade unions, or the visible leadership of workers' movements and organizations.²⁸

There are four main levels or layers that determine the different formations of the working class: first, capitalist economy development, in other words, proletarianization. Second, "social organization of society lived by actual people in real social formations," that are to say, work settings and labor markets. Third, disposition. Disposition, in Thompson's view, "disposition to behave as a class, to define themselves in their actions and in their consciousness in relation to the other groups of people in class ways."²⁹ Last but not least, collective action, the disposition to behave, organizing an act through movements to affect society and the position of the class within it. The four levels of analyzing class, the class studies groups under three main institutions and their relations with classes: economic, social and state.³⁰

Without a doubt, this evaluation of class and class formation is directly related to the class evaluation of E.P.Thompson's 'junction term'. Therefore, this approach makes it possible to correlate between the structure of class analysis in macro-economic terms and the lived experience of class both in workplaces and beyond the workplaces where people are disposed to act in class ways and class based action.

²⁸ Ibid., p.9.

²⁹ Ibid., p.18.

³⁰ Katznelson, p. 282. Katznelson argues that economic institutions refer to the internal analysis of capitalist and class development: how working class history is affected by the variations in the patterns of work and labor market. Social institutions refer to the capitalist development and proletarianization for sources of variation in the linkages between the level of class, like religion, demography, family patterns, cultural traditions... Lastly state institutions mainly refer to the formation of the national state and the character and organization of it. Different formations of different classes reflect also the formation of the working class movements. While state/ nation state building process plays a crucial role in Germany considering the formation of working class in Britain we see the importance of trade unions and trade councils.

E.P. Thompson evaluates class as a historical phenomenon; neither as “category” nor as “structure.” According to him, the working class does not occur at a specific appointed time; however, it is present in its own making. That is to say, class is a relational concept that can be understood with an analysis of historical formation and the social reproduction its conditions of existence. This making process, on the other hand, is not and can not be independent from experience. That is to say “working class struggle.” This experience encompasses quite different, dissimilar and unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and consciousness. In order to understand class struggle one should look beyond the economic relations, or cultural relations in which “working class experiences” and “worker’s agency” take place. Thompson writes “Class consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas and institutional forms”³¹

Class formations... arise at the intersection of determination and self activity: the working class “made itself as much as it was made”. We cannot put ‘class’ here and ‘class consciousness’ there, as two separate identities, the one sequential upon the other, since both must be taken together- the experience of determination and the ‘handling’ of this in conscious ways. Nor can we deduce class from a static ‘section’ (since it is a becoming over time) nor as a function of a mode of production, since class formations and class consciousness (while subject to determinate pressures) eventuate in an open-ended process of relationship- of struggle with other classes- overtime.³²

The role of human agency is closely involved in his conception of class. Thus “making” a class is an active process that is shaped by the struggle rather than a passive process of being created by structural conditions. Therefore, the way of people’s perception and interpret action of their material condition and the way they react against

³¹ E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 8.

³² Katznelson, p. 10.

it, are influenced by the cultural factors. These cultural factors shape peoples' "lived experience both within and outside the production process."³³ In his analysis, neither "class" nor "culture" is a static term; rather they are both dynamic. The effects of culture are fundamental in shaping the class identity and development of class relations.

According to him, class can not be understood without seeing it as a social and cultural formation in a historical period. Thus the working class is not given in a specific frozen period, but it is being made on the road. To understand the class one should look beyond economic relations. At this point, the life experience of workers, their families, and neighborhood gain importance that working class becomes subject to make the history.

E.P. Thompson, has brought "culture" into the historical analysis of class and class movements. It is possible to argue that the culturalist line in class analysis has begun to take place, though not always in the same way as Thompson's. However, his contribution highly has affected the working class ethnographies.

Rick Fantasia, similar to E.P.Thompson, rejects the distinction between class-in-itself and class-for-itself; therefore claims that the class consciousness emerges during the class struggle; they could not be separated.³⁴ He criticizes American sociologist by arguing that they evaluate class and class consciousness as it was fixed and static thing and could be measured by survey methodology.³⁵ According to him, by using survey they miss the most important and interesting dynamics of class relations and experience. He argues that the analysis of class consciousness should be based on

³³ Hagen Koo, *Korean Workers, The Culture and Politics of Class Formation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 9.

³⁴ Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 10.

³⁵ Rick Fantasia, "From Class Consciousness to Culture, Action, and Social Organization," *Annual Review of Sociology* 21, (1995), pp. 269-287, p. 270.

actions, organizational capabilities, institutional arrangements and the values that arise within them rather than surveys which takes consciousness as an abstracted thing from the context of social action. He argues that “class consciousness essentially represents the cultural expression of the lived experience of class an experience shaped by the process of interaction these collectivities in opposition to one another”.³⁶ Culture here indicates ‘peculiar and distinctive way of life of the group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in mores and customs, in the uses of objects and material life’.³⁷ He evaluates class consciousness not as a pure combativity, nor pure passive dispersal, nor pure industrialized apparatus; but as a wide range of cultural practices generates in social struggle. The social action creates and reveals the solidarity among workers. By integrating class consciousness and class struggle with one another, he embeds the cultural expressions in the collective action rather than argue that it was emerging outside of the people. Moreover he creates an area for empirical investigation. “Cultures of solidarity” therefore, refers to tactical activities, organizational forms, and institutional arrangements that are constructed by workers: “They are neither ideas of solidarity in the abstract nor bureaucratic trade union activity, but cultural formations that arise in conflict, creating and sustaining solidarity in opposition to the dominant structure.”³⁸

Following the culturalist view, David Montgomery also argues that one cannot talk about a working class without referring to socially prescribed differences such as gender, race, religion, and nationality since they have influenced workers’ behavior in

³⁶ Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p. 14.

³⁷ Ibid., p.16.

³⁸ Ibid., p.19.

powerfully different ways. Thus if one wants to understand working class consciousness and solidarity s/he should focus on different voices that are sometimes in harmony but mostly conflicting with one another; not only “the voice of working class”. As he writes, class consciousness not only takes place in the workplaces but also outside the work. Class consciousness is embedded in the daily lives of the workers. Moreover, he sees class consciousness also as a project in which workers, working class activists and some individuals from other strata who link their aspirations to the workers’ movement insistently. They sought to foster a sense of unity and purposiveness among their fellow workers through the spoken and printed word, strikes, meetings etc. for the “emancipation of labor.”

He evaluates this project with reference three points: “the human relationship that wage labor generated at the work place, changing structures of economic and political power fashioned by the evolution nineteenth century competitive industrial capitalism into twentieth century capitalism, and the diverse styles of thought and activity by which working class activists sought to interpret and improve the society in which they lived.”³⁹ Thus he focuses on the less well-known strikes by claiming that it is not possible to understand them without referring to the workers’ own codes of ethical behavior. So that, as he says, examining their codes and solidarities inevitably carries us to the relations outside the economic relations of factory.

Michael Burawoy also tries to put a culturalist approach in his study but in a different way. He is against the view that class consciousness takes place outside the production relations; he argues that it occurs in workplaces, inside the factory. However,

³⁹ David Montgomery, *The Fall of House of Labor* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 2.

he does not basically consider class consciousness as workers' relations to the means of production, but the experiences of workers within the production. According to him industrial sociologists paid attention to social control and harmony; however, they missed the dynamic of relations in the factory. On the other hand, as Burawoy stresses "activities on the shop floor cannot be understood outside the political and ideological realms of the organization of production."⁴⁰ He tries to show how factory culture, the relations between workers and managers, affects the process of production. By looking at the relations between the workers and managers, he tries to find out the dynamics of the workplace and answer the question why workers work as hard as they do. The answer is the manufacturing consent, in other words, the games that workers play to have fun in the work place on the one hand; and on the other hand the games causes workers to work harder even in the exploitive nature of social relations in the workplace.⁴¹

Thinking Together: Social Movements and Labor Movements

The question of 'when and how a social movement takes place' has been a crucial and main concern among social scientists who are also engaged in social movements. Without a doubt there is no one answer of this question; therefore, the different answers has been a distinctive contribution to the social movement discipline. Sociologists have produced number of important studies seeking the social origins of

⁴⁰ Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.xi.

mobilization. These studies possibly could be evaluated in four categories: the crowd approach, the rationalist approach, mobilization paradigm and the political process approach.⁴² The crowd approach views protests as irregular and irrational.⁴³ They see the mobilization of people as the “myth of the madding crowd,” which is abnormal and outside the range of normal human motivations and experiences. This tradition focuses on the abnormal situations that pave the way for mobilization. The rationalist approach has its roots in the economist Mancur Olson, arguing that the human are rational and therefore, before engaging in a collective action, individuals try to estimate their personal costs and benefits. In this way, the individuals do not attend a collective action to support the public good; on the contrary, they could enjoy “free ride” having any benefit from the outcome of the collective action without paying any cost.⁴⁴ The mobilization paradigm, unlike the crowd approach, evaluates protest as a regular part of politics and the protestors as normal people pursuing reasonable goals. The achievement of the protest is determined by the available economic resources.⁴⁵ Last but not least, one can argue the political process approach lead by Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam. They put more emphasis on politics and the state. Tilly focuses on a broad context, such as urbanization, industrialization and the rise of nation-state without ignoring the material resources whereas Tarrow and McAdam focus on the “political

⁴² James Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 21; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 10-25.

⁴³ This approach is headed by Gustave le Bon, Herbert Blumer, Neil Smelser, Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian.

⁴⁴ The rationalist approach is also adopted by Albert Hirschman, Jon Elster, Michael Taylor and Denis Chong.

⁴⁵ John McCarthy and Mayer Zald are well known theoreticians of this mobilization paradigm.

opportunity structures,” which are defined by Tarrow as “the consistent dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success and failure.”⁴⁶

Besides putting culture into class analysis, another trend in labor ethnographies is to think of labor movements together with social movement literature. The valuable contribution of this literature is to widen the class movement theories and enrich by adding different factors into the analysis of class movement.

Marc Dixon and Vincent J. Roscigno, focus on individual participation to strike in labor movements. They try to “expand the literature by employing rational choice and network perspectives on social movement participation and by analyzing strike mobilization.”⁴⁷ They argue that the participation in collective action could be evaluated by “calculations associated with status position” and “the embeddedness of actors in social networks- networks that may condition decision-making process through information, grievance sharing and identity building or that may more directly pressure individual to act.” Most of the literature considering the workers’ status and strike participation claims that the workers but especially the poor, and those from low status and racial and ethnic minority, are more willing to attend campaigns and strikes and even more fervent in terms of class conscious attitudes. Unlike the literature, their findings are important from the perspective that not only subordinate groups, low status and racial and ethnic minority participate in the strikes, but also skilled and high income workers have the greatest tendencies to strike.

⁴⁶ Jasper, p. 35.

⁴⁷ Marc Dixon and Vincent J Roscigno, “Status, Networks, and Social Movement Participation: The Case of Striking Workers,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 108, no. 6 (2003), pp. 1292-1327, p. 1292.

The study of Dixon and Roscigno is important from the perspective that contrary to the general literature, which gives the preeminent role to the unions for creating solidarity they focus on both the individuals' status and networks and the grievance and experiences shared in the same working unit.

Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, on the other hand, argue that uprising/protest is not freely available to all groups at all times. Much of the time it is not available to lower-class groups at all. The form of the poor people's movement and its impact are all delimited by social structure in ways which usually diminish its extent and diminish its force. Although protest/struggle is not a matter of free choice, it requires a transformation in both consciousness and behavior. According to them, when the system loses its legitimacy, when fatalistic people begin to demand "rights" that imply demands for change and when they believe they have capacity to change their lives, they become defiant. At this point, change in behavior refers to collective defiance. "For a protest movement to arise out of these traumas of everyday life, people have to perceive the deprivation and disorganization they experience as both wrong and subject to redress."⁴⁸ On the other hand, the opportunities for defiance are structured and restricted by the features of the institutions and institutional context in which people live and work.

Rachel Meyer in her research focuses on two collective actions: a worker's strike in an automobile factory and a community based campaign for a "living wage." She focused on the subjectivity and solidarity of the workers and people who attended the campaign and tried to find out how their subjectivity was transformed during

⁴⁸ Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movement: Why They Succeed How They Fail* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1979), p. 12.

collective actions. Without a doubt the concept of “solidarity” plays an important role in both labor movements and social movements. She compared the solidarity among workers and people attended the campaign. Her research mostly was fed from social movement literature, whereas she also criticized the approach due to the fact that they only focus on the reasons for social movements, not the results. She put forward the concept of solidarity, as one of the important consequence of both social and labor movements.

... a successful labor movement must have the capacity to rise above its corporeal or institutional form through a kind of sacred narrative, or myth, and solidarity has been a cornerstone of the foundational myth of labor movements everywhere. Solidarity represents a potent of mythic theme that carries remarkably transcendent qualities. Under certain conditions at certain moments, demonstrations of solidarity can summon spiritual forces in the social world (in groups, in collective activities, and in organizational forms) that are capable of producing extraordinary degrees of selflessness and collective identification.⁴⁹

Mayer argues the appearance and disappearance of solidarity from three perspectives: The first and the most prevalent claim in the literature is that heterogeneity prevents solidarity. Labor unions, for example, due to their heterogenic characteristics and interests face obstacles in organizing collective action. This perspective is persistent in American sociology in understanding the lack of solidarity among American workers. American workers are unable to organize due to “racially distinct and hierarchically ordered local labor markets.”⁵⁰ Not only race but gender, ethnicity, nation and skills of the workers obstruct solidarity among workers.

Second, the solidarity among workers emerges due to the experiences at the “point of production” where “subject to deskilling, and other homogenizing pressures,

⁴⁹ Rachel Meyer, “Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2008), p. 49.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 49.

class awareness have been especially strong.”⁵¹ From this perspective class solidarity emerges within the workplaces due to the experience of exploitation. The experience of exploitation inevitably takes place due to the clash of interests between employers and workers over the control of “labor power.” Last but not least, solidarity has been considered as a project: “it is the outcome of ongoing struggles through which participants come to rework and refashion their identities, around a more expansive understanding of group membership.”⁵² At this point it is important to recall Fantasia and his concept of ‘cultures of solidarity’, cultures of solidarity are lived experiences of workers in collective action. They are not just expressed, but also created by workers:

During the course of these struggles, ‘cultures of solidarity’ were constructed by workers. That is, tactical activities, organizational forms, and institutional arrangements were employed that represented the expression of solidarity and its creation simultaneously in the process of their development. These cultures of solidarity took myriad forms in response to the specific features and demands of particular strikes.⁵³

Towards a Synthesis: Creativity in Labor and Social Movements

Up until now, the concepts of class, class movements and social movements have been evaluated. The line in the literature review here follows a culturalist perspective considering class and, class movements and moreover, tries to evaluate class movements together with social movements. It is important to see all of the dynamics within social/class movements. However, one can still argue that one component in the

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁵² Ibid., p. 49.

⁵³ Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p. 14.

social movement literature is missing: culture. There is also an ongoing literature that evaluates how to put culture into the social movement analysis. As it is argued in the class movement literature that it is an important tool for analyzing the creativity and colorfulness of the demonstrations. It does not mean to neglect structural factors that a movement takes place: “Culture consists of discrete, measurable items, such as beliefs or rituals, but it is also filter through which all action occurs. It should not be contrasted with structural factors, because it is fused with them”⁵⁴

Without excluding structural factors, it is important to look beyond them and see the both “cultures of solidarity,” uniqueness and creativity of the movements. Jasper argues that it is hard to articulate a social movement without seeing cultural meaning in it, since it is embedded in us. For him, it is important to see that for either individuals or groups, the goals and interests are not objectively given without any cultural interpretation. “Who are we humans, who protest so much? Most prominently perhaps, we are symbol-making creatures, who spin the webs of meaning around ourselves”⁵⁵

Thompson’s understanding of culture also should be stressed and it also could be evaluated as the creativity of the workers in a resistance way, thinking together with cultural terms. Class occurs in production relations and during the experience of those determinate situations. The ways of handling those experiences is embedded in cultural terms.⁵⁶ Thus culture brings also the creativity of resistances of workers. He writes that,

Classes determine the way in which this culture is used in everyday practices, while the usage of culture is dependent upon a social logic,

⁵⁴ Jasper, p. xi.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.10.

⁵⁶ E.P. Thompson, “Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?” *Social History* 3, no. 2 (May 1978), pp. 133-165, p. 150.

which is less and less mere transmitter of social differences into conflictual collective action.⁵⁷

Return to the Spring Demonstrations

In the previous section, relations between class, labor movements and social movements were evaluated. The main focus of the theoretical background of this thesis depends on the idea of class and class struggle inspired by Thompson. To emphasize again, for Thompson, the focus should be on the class struggle itself, rather than class. Moreover, class and class struggle besides being economic phenomena, are also cultural. In order to understand class struggle, one must look beyond the economic relations and listen to the experiences of workers which make them “class.” Though Thompson may be a little dated, his definition of “class” is the most appropriate analytical tool for bringing out the important dynamics of the Spring Demonstrations since the ways of demonstrations and tactics of workers can not only be explained by economic factors. Moreover, what is seen in Spring Demonstrations is that the workers’ solidarity and experience created a moment of being “class.” The culturalist approach of Thompson is also the answer the question of how working class movements should be studied: without paying attention to the voices of workers, without listening the experiences of being a class moment, it is not possible to evaluate class struggle.

However, until recently, labor history in Turkey has been dominated by the structural-functionalist theory.⁵⁸ It should be noted that the structural functionalist

⁵⁷ Klaus Eder, *The New Politics of Class: Social Movements and Cultural Dynamics in Advanced Societies* (London, Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1993), p. 2.

theory without a doubt has been deeply influenced by the traditional historical narrative of Western history. This approach assumes that modernization brings urbanization, industrialization and secularization as well as the emergence of the proletariat.⁵⁹ It would not be wrong to say that labor historiography in Turkey is an attempt to adapt this modernization theory to the labor historiography of Turkey.

This modernization theory has three main effects on the labor historiography of Turkey: First, they focus on the evolution of the working class as a political identity as the national progression of history. Second, they only take into account the emergence of working class consciousness. Lastly, it adopts an institutional perspective and spotlight the relation between state and working class. By adapting these perspectives such studies evaluate “classes” as a-historical structures isolated from their own unique historical formation and culture.

Most of the labor movement studies focus on institutions and unions rather than the experience of workers. However, as Güzel argues, now it is time to focus on the subjects and actions.⁶⁰ It is also possible to argue that recently the focus shifted from the modernization approach to cultural approach, which includes issues such as gender and sexuality, ethnicity or race, age and the structure of households, informal social and

⁵⁸ Touraj Atabaki and Gavin D. Brockett, “Ottoman and Republican Turkish Labor History: An Introduction,” *International Review of Social History* 54 (2009) , pp. 1-17, p. 8.

⁵⁹ See: Y.N Rozaliyev, *Türkiye’de Sınıflar ve Sınıf Mücadeleleri* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları: 1979); Oya Baydar, *Türkiye’de İşçi Sınıfı Doğuşu ve Yapısı* (İstanbul: Habora Kitabevi: 1969); Sungur Savran, *Türkiye’de Sınıf Mücadeleleri* (İstanbul: Yordam, 2010)

⁶⁰ Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, “Türkiye İşçi Hareketine Nasıl Bakılmalı?” in *Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Problemler, Araştırmalar, Tartışmalar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), p. 407.

political relations as well as the everyday lives of workers.⁶¹ It also pays attention to the subjectivity of workers, and tries to explain how conditions are perceived by the workers.⁶²

Though, the Spring Demonstrations were one of the biggest labor movements, and the biggest one after 1980, in Turkey, unfortunately, it has not attracted much attention among scholars. There are only a few studies about it, and few articles in the magazines of the time. In the academy, Mustafa G. Doğan, evaluates the Spring Demonstrations, before and aftermath, with the concept of “moral economy” and tries to show, how neo-liberal policies affected the moral economy of the workers. However, he does not focus on the experience of the workers and their perceptions of the process from 1980 until 1989.⁶³ Rifat Çelebi, Can Şafak and also Faruk evaluate the reasons behind the Spring Demonstration, results of the demonstrations and their

⁶¹ Donald Quataert and Eric Zürcher, *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic 1839-1950* (London: I.B. Tauris 1995); Donald Quataert, “Labor History and the Ottoman Empire 1700-1922,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (Fall 2001), pp. 93-109; Can Nacar, “Our Lives were Not as Valuable as an Animal: Workers in State-Run Industries in World War II Turkey,” *International Review of Social History* 54 (2009), pp. 143-166; Alpkan Birelma, “Three Cases of Worker Mobilization in Contemporary Turkey (MA Thesis, Bogaziçi University, 2007); Yasin Kaya, “Class Underground, Class Aboveground: Zonguldak, Mine Workers and Their Unions” (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2009); Ayşe Alıncaçık, “After de-Industrialization, In the Midst of Urban Transformation: The Case of Paşabahçe” (MA Thesis, Bogazici University, 2008); Yiğit Akın, “The Dynamics of Working Class Politics in Early Republican Turkey: Language, Identity and Experience,” *International Review of Social History* 54 (2009), pp. 167-188.

⁶² Metin Özügürlü, *Anadolu’da Küresel Fabrikanın Doğuşu* (İstanbul: İstanbul Halkevleri İktisadi İşletmesi, 2005); Arif Geniş, *İşçi Sınıfının Kıyısında* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2006); Theo Nichols and Nadir Suğur, *Global Management, Local Labor* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Gamze Yücesan-Özdemir, “Başkaldırı, onay ya da boyun eğme?,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 86 (Fall 2000), pp. 241-259; Özge Berber, “Sınıf Bilinci ve Sınıf Kültürü: Seydişehir Eti Alüminyum Fabrikası Örneği,” in *İşçi Sınıfının Değişen Yapısı ve Sınıf Hareketinde Arayışlar Deneyimler* (İstanbul: Sosyal Araştırmalar Vakfı İktisadi İşletmesi, 2005), pp. 91-10.

⁶³ Mustafa G. Doğan. *When Neo-liberalism Confronts the Moral Economy of Workers: The Final Spring of Turkish Labor Unions*. Available [online]: *European Journal of Turkish Studies Online* [21 October 2010]

characteristics.⁶⁴ However, they also do not touch upon the experiences of workers during demonstrations. What I will do, in this thesis, is re-evaluate the demonstrations, by giving great importance to the experience of workers, taking into account the “class” approach of Thompson. This thesis is a modest attempt to contribute the social history of labor in Turkey.

From this perspective, besides the approach of Thompson, I find important in literature which tends to integrate social movements and labor movements. This thesis also attempts to break the distinction between the social movements and labor movements which evaluate labor movements as a phenomenon of the nineteenth century and separates labor movements as an economic phenomenon. At this point it might be useful to recall Karl Polanyi, and the Great Transformation. He rejects the doctrine of the economic nature of class interests and he argues that “the interest of a class most directly refer to standing and rank, to status and security, that is they are primarily not economical but social.”⁶⁵ And yet, in order to be successful in the struggle, it is crucial for class to win the support from outside their own membership. It is directly connected to the fact that their fulfillment of tasks set by interests should be wider than their own.⁶⁶ As we see in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, class struggle is not an old phenomenon, and explaining the struggle with only economic factors is not the best way to evaluate it. This assumption also is valid for evaluating the Spring Demonstrations; they are multi-dimensional. Even economic factors such as low wages are extremely

⁶⁴ Can Şafak, “1989 İlkbahar Eylemleri Üzerine Gecikmiş Düşünceler,” in *Yeni Açılım* 19 (1989), pp. 21-29; Rıfat Çelebi, “89 Bahar Eylemleri,” *Yeni Açılım* 16 (1989), pp. 5-29; Faruk Pekin, “89 Baharı İşçi Eylemleri Üzerine,” *Birikim* 2 (Summer 1989), pp. 19-21.

⁶⁵ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) p. 161 ,

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

important. Looking beyond the economic relations brings an analytical perspective. I argue that the process of the transformation of the labor market in 1980 until 1989 affected the everyday lives of the workers severely. Without a doubt, this situation was not independent from the economic factors. However, the accustomed practices of the workers, for instance union rights, high wages which they were enjoying during import substitution industrialization, reversed radically with the 24 January decisions and the coup d'état. It also should be added that the situation in the factories also changed; flexibility and sub-contracted workers began to prevail in the labor market. To sum, this transformation of the labor market and its effects became the mobilizing power of the workers.

This approach is deeply influenced by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward's argument that for people to become defiant their everyday lives must be affected and it requires a change in both consciousness and behavior. On the other hand, the context in which the movements take place has a crucial role, since it determines the character of the demonstrations. As a result, I focus on the economic, politic, and social context in which the demonstrations took place. On the one hand, I focus on the experience of the workers and how they perceived transformations; on the other hand, I pay attention to the context in which demonstrations occurred. However, due to the unique characteristics of the Spring Demonstrations, as workers invented new ways to resist, without a cultural approach, both in labor and social movements, this thesis would be insufficient. The meanings of the demonstrations could not be understood only with economic factors.

CHAPTER III

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LABOR MARKET AND ITS PERCEPTION BY THE WORKERS

The 1980s years in which neo-liberalism began to prevail both in economic and ideological terms all over the world. This period is defined as a “decade of change” which directly affected the conditions of the labor market.⁶⁷ Crompton, Gallie and Purcell write that these “changes” included “changes in the organization of production and productive activity (particularly those associated with the growth of service dominated- in employment terms- economies); the impact of technological change and information technology; and the decline of the ‘male breadwinner’ –feminization of labor- (or single earner model of employment and household).”⁶⁸ Due to these changes and reconstruction, the relationship between capital and labor inevitably altered. Economic decisions began to be made in favor of the capital accumulation of world capitalism.⁶⁹ Capital became more internationalized so that the capacity of states to control national economies eroded.⁷⁰ In sum, this process led to a decline in what Camaroff describes “in the importance of domestic production in many once

⁶⁷ Rosemary Crompton, Duncan Gallie and Kate Purcell, “Work, Economic Restructuring and Social Regulation,” in *Changing Forms of Employment: Organizations, Skills and Gender* (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 3.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.3.

⁶⁹ Erinç Yeldan, *Küreselleşme Sürecinde Türkiye Ekonomisi, Bölüşüm, Birikim ve Büyüme* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), p. 14.

⁷⁰ Cited in Jean and John L. Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming,” *Public Culture* 3, no. 31 (2000), pp. 291-343, p. 300.

industrialized countries-which along with the worldwide rise of the service sector and the feminization of the workforce, has dispersed class relations, alliances and the antinomies across the four corners of the earth”⁷¹

The “decade of change” considering the transformation of the labor market was marked in Turkey by the two strongly interconnected major decisions which changed the economic and political system radically: The first one was the proclamation of the 24 January decisions in 1980 that put an end to the import substitution industrialization system which, until then had been the prevailing strategy since the 1960s. The second one is the military intervention, the coup d’état, on 12 September 1980, nine months after the proclamation of the economic package. As a result, 1980 left its mark on the history of Turkey as a crucial moment. The dynamics of the economic package and military intervention, the relationship between them, their effect on labor market and workers, and how the package was perceived by workers will be evaluated in this chapter.

A Decisive Moment: 1980

Transformation of the Labor Market at the Macro Context

At the end of the 1970s, Turkey was going through both severe economic and political crises. The economic depression affected every part of society severely from the working classes to industrialists as well as the masses. The unionized working class was struggling to protect the real wages against the unprecedented and unfamiliarly high inflation. The industrialists on the other hand, were in an environment where economic

⁷¹ Comaroff, p. 300.

growth stopped and high inflation prevailed. The traditional mechanisms for sharing the surplus (credits, exchange rationing, tax incentive) seemed to have lost their significance. Illegal stockpiling and black marketing could not be managed by traditional industrialists, therefore they had to find other ways to increase their surpluses: to reverse the relationship between capital and labor in favor of capital.⁷² Lastly the government was in a fiscal crisis. Due to the balance of payment deficits since the mid-1970s, the development of the export sector had failed and endangered import-substitution industrialization in which the state economic enterprises had played a significant role. The stabilization programs were often met by the resistance by labor.⁷³ While the contradictions between capital and labor grew sharper, Turkey, as the final straw, was hit by the petroleum crisis. Like in many developing countries, the huge debt crisis had led to the acceptance of the neo-liberal policies through Structural Adjustment Program in Turkey. One of the major requirements of the program that had been pushed by the IMF and World Bank was the refusal of protectionism. Both the effect of the world economic crisis and the high tension between capital and labor (after twenty years of compromise) were among the reasons why Turkey entered into tough times at the beginning of 1980s.

On the January 24th 1980, in order to overcome the crisis in economy a new economic package was declared. With the new economic package, the import substitution industrialization came to an end in Turkey. A new economic policy, export-led growth, began to be applied. With export-led growth policy, Turkey also became a

⁷² Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908-2007* (Ankara: İmge, 2010), p. 146.

⁷³ Ümit Sakallıoğlu Cizre, "Labour: The Battered Community," in *Strong State and Economic Interest Groups: The post 1980 Turkish Experience*, ed. by Metin Heper (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), p. 59.

component of a globalized world in which the national economies integrated into a world market. This integration began with the transformation of 1980-1983 and was completed in 1989-1990. In this process, first, product/commodity market opened to foreign markets and the import regime which was protected by the trade quotas was liberalized. Furthermore, the exchange rate, following a high rate of devaluation, was left to float. Such policies became important mechanisms for industry to be directed towards export promotion. This transformation was followed by the liberalization of the national financial market (Liberalization of the capital account of the balance of payments) and its integration with external finance centers. As a result, Turkey satisfied the conditions of a fully open economy at the beginning of the 1990s.⁷⁴

The transformation of the economy strongly affected the conditions of the working class and worsened their situation since the policies required the weakening of the power of the unions and the working class. The abandonment of the import substitution industrialization policies meant that the working class was no longer protected by the state. The new ideology which glorified the market came with unemployment, layoffs, subcontracted employees, home-based work, and piece-work contract. Formal employment and real wages decreased as well as the states' spending on social rights and social security. The rights to pensions and health insurance began to erode slowly.⁷⁵

The important point here is, of course, the change in the logic of the economic policy of the state: during the import substitution industrialization, the working class had been seen as a demand component of the domestic market. This logic had brought it

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.25.

⁷⁵ Çağlar Keyder, *Ulusal Kalkınmacılığın İflası* (İstanbul: Metis, 2004), p. 34.

unprecedented rights from right to unionize, to the opportunity to be represented in the parliament,⁷⁶ to a high rate of unionization to high wages which gave them the opportunity to integrate with the system. However, at this point it is important to say that those opportunities created a “labor aristocracy” parallel to the division within the bourgeoisie.⁷⁷ Workers who were employed in the large-scale manufacturing factories or state enterprises enjoyed those rights whereas in small industries they lacked rights that were mostly gained through labor organizations: there was no collective bargaining right, no right to strike. Moreover, employers found ways to avoid social security regulations. As a result, this transformation of the labor market and the resolution of the large-scale manufacturing enterprises and state enterprises at first directly affected the workers in those factories. This situation also explains why the Spring Demonstrations largely took place in state enterprises and large manufacturing factories.

Since the new economic package destroyed the compromise between the state, working class, and manufacturing bourgeoisie and reversed the relations against labor, the first reaction came from the unions and workers. The unions and workers resisted the application of the new policies. Yıldırım Koç argues that since the economic package proclaimed by the Justice Party (JP),⁷⁸ the trade unionists who were close to the JP were more timid, the leftist trade unionists in the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions⁷⁹ were more active in criticizing the 24 January decisions.⁸⁰ The number of

⁷⁶ Workers Party of Turkey (TİP) found a chance to go the Turkish Parliament in 1965. Moreover most of the members of the party were trade unionists.

⁷⁷ Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), p. 196

⁷⁸ Adalet Partisi

⁷⁹ Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu

strikes increased to 176 in 1979 and 220 in 1980 whereas it was 59 in 1977. 24,900 workers involved in strikes in 1979, and the number increased to 33,800 in 1980. This picture approves the argument that the 24 January decisions were encountered by a strong opposition of workers and unions.⁸¹

The Perceptions of Workers about the Military Intervention

Besides the rising opposition of workers and unions, the political tension in both streets and parliament was high. The armed conflict between different fractions of political groups was sharpened and the compromise between the two political parties, Republican Peoples' Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) (CHP)⁸² and Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*) (AP)⁸³ disappeared. The military decided that it was no longer possible to govern the country with the existing political and economic system.⁸⁴ At 04:30, in the morning of the 12 September 1980, claiming that the managing bodies of the country no longer conduct their duties efficiently, the military junta declared that the Turkish Armed Forces had seized control of the administration of the country. They also announced that the Turkish Parliament was suspended, cabinet was discharged and all of the diplomatic privileges of the parliamentarians were canceled.

⁸⁰ Yıldırım Koç, *Teslimiyetten Mücadeleye Doğru Türk-iş: 1980-1992* (İstanbul: Öteki, 1995), p. 26

⁸¹ Fikret Şenses, "Labour Market Response to Structural Adjustment and Institutional Pressures: The Turkish Case," *METU Studies in Development* 21, no.3 (1994), pp. 405-448, p. 424; *Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi 1981-2000*, 4th ed., s.v. "1980'li Yıllar ve Sonrası."

⁸² Republican People's Party

⁸³ Justice Party

⁸⁴ *Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi 1981-2000*, s.v. "1980li Yıllar ve Sonrası"

Two radical unions, DİSK⁸⁵ and MİSK⁸⁶ were closed down and their properties were confiscated.⁸⁷ Only TÜRK-İŞ,⁸⁸ which supported the military government after the coup d'état was allowed. Without a doubt, closing down the unions, especially DİSK, directly was related to the elimination of opposition against the new economic policies which required low-wages, cut in the support of state in social rights and social security and distorting formal employment for guaranteeing fast export-led growth. Thus, it is possible to say that the military not only intervened the political life, but also the economy in order to eliminate the opposition of the unions and workers against the application of the new economic policies.

As the economy and the political system were being re-structured, by the military government, a huge wave of arrests began to take place right after the coup d'état. That arrests encompassed respectable people: union leaders, worker leaders, legitimate politicians, journalists, legists, academics and so on. It is possible to say that the military government played a crucial role in “disciplining labor” and re-creating a safe place for the industrialist via non-economic methods, that is to say, military, legal and managerial methods.⁸⁹ One of the most important impacts of the military government to both the economic and the political life of Turkey is without a doubt, a new constitutional law which was introduced in 1982. Military government blamed the

⁸⁵ *DİSK: Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* :Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey

⁸⁶ *MİSK: Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*: Confederation of Nationalist Workers in Turkey

⁸⁷ Eric Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2008), p. 403.

⁸⁸ *TÜRK-İŞ: Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*: Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions

⁸⁹ Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat*, p. 148.

1960 constitutional law that they thought of as “extra emancipatory” and saw it as the reason behind the conflict in society.⁹⁰ As a result, a new constitutional law was prepared. The situation of the workers was deeply affected by the new constitutional law since the new “Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lockout Act” abolished their most effective weapons. It should be noted that workers found themselves situation in which de-unionization and de-politization began to prevail, where the economic and political rights were minimized.⁹¹⁹²

Twenty-two years later, when workers and trade unionists were asked about the reasons behind the Spring Demonstrations, they largely cited as the beginning point with 12 September 1980. As the new laws and regulations began to be conducted in the labor market, in practice, the result was deeper: workers were not only deprived of most of the opposition mechanism as the unions were closed, but they were faced with the harsh repression of the regime. A phrase by the president of TİSK⁹³ then, Halit Narin, was recalled by all the workers and union leaders that I interviewed. It symbolizes the transformation of the labor market: “For the twenty years the workers have laughed and the employers have cried. Now, the time has come for the employers to laugh.” Since the unions were closed down and collective bargaining right was suspended, during 1980-1985, collective bargaining was ended by the High Board of Arbitration. Workers recall the process as “Collective bargaining was signed but no one had ever heard about

⁹⁰ Zürcher, p. 405.

⁹¹ Cizre, p. 560 .

⁹² The influence of the new acts on working class will be discussed in the ‘de-unionization’ section.

⁹³ *TİSK: Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*: Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations

it. We saw it on the notice board of the workplace, or we read it in the newspaper, or we watched it on T.V.”⁹⁴

The pressure of the military regime also caused fear in society since all the political actors were put in jail by the junta and they underwent torture.⁹⁵ Atılay Ayçin tells: “Custodies, long lasting tortures and half-dead bodies which were found in the streets put a lot of fear and repression on people in general, workers in particular. In work places, generals, colonels were appointed as employers. They also put pressure on workers that every attempt of protest was labeled as illegal.”⁹⁶

On the other hand, the thread of layoffs was an important factor that prevented workers from protesting any injustice, inequality both in workplaces and in general. Nuri Ağçicek; “Representatives of workplaces, workers’ leaders, unions’ leaders were put in jail. Fear prevailed among us. We were wondering about who would be the next, who would be called by our employer, who would be gone by tomorrow.”⁹⁷ Any attempt to protest the injustice applications in the workplaces was repressed harshly: “The wages were low, there were contraventions related to working hours, resting times, etc; however, every attempt to protest it ended up with either layoffs or torture caused

⁹⁴ Levent Dokuyucu interview by author, tape recording, 8 February 2011. “*Toplu sözleşme imzalanmış, kimsenin haberi yok! Ya iş yerindeki panolardan haberimiz olurdu bizim, ya televizyonda izlerdik ya da gazetede okurduk.*”

⁹⁵ Zürcher, p. 405.

⁹⁶ Atılay Ayçin, interview by author, tape recording, 14 November, 2010. “*Gözetular, uzun süren işkenceler, sokaklarda bulunan yarı baygın bedenler, insanların, özellikle işçilerin üzerinde büyük baskı oluşturdu. İş yerlerine albayların, subayların işveren olarak atanması baskıyı arttırdı. İş yerlerinde en küçük haklı çabamız bile, işverenler tarafından illegal ilan edildi.*”

⁹⁷ Nuri Ağçicek, interview by the author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 19 January 2011 “*İşyeri temsilcileri, sendikacılar, işçi liderleri herkes hapisteydi. Korkuyorduk, sıradaki kim, işveren yarın kimi çağıracak, kim yarın gitmiş olacak?*”

by a baseless, groundless notifications.”⁹⁸ The Spring Demonstrations are evaluated by the workers also as a crack in the system of fear which relieved society. It was a moment of explosion.

The workers and union leaders evaluated the coup d'état in 1980 as it was directly related to the destruction of workers' rights. The common evaluation was that “the coup d'état was made in order to make the application of 24 January decisions possible and easier”. Ercan Atmaca explains:

We, as the 170 members of DİSK, responded the 24 January decisions with strikes that we set up tents on E-5 for days. As a result of the opposition, military excused the armed conflict between leftists and rightists. It was very interesting that the first move of the military was to restrict the premiums of the workers and to freeze the wages of the workers. This explains why the coup d'état was made nine months after the declaration of the 24 January decisions.⁹⁹

Levent Dokuyucu describes the period of the military intervention as “the period in which everything that had belonged before 1980 was illegal and forbidden.”¹⁰⁰ So that, one of the most important motto of the demonstrations was “we want our rights back.”¹⁰¹ Yet, it should be kept in mind that the political tension softened by the referendum which was held in 1987. The politicians of pre-1980 were given back their

⁹⁸ Atılay Ayçin: “Ücretler düşüktü, çalışma zamanları, dinlenme zamanlarıyla ilgili ihlaller vardı. Tabi protesto etmeye çalıştık. Ama her çabamızın sonunda işten çıkarmalarla ya da asılsız ihbarlar sonucu uzun işkencelerle karşılaştık.”

⁹⁹ Ercan Atmaca, interview by author, tape recording, 3 February 2011. “24 Ocak kararlarına biz grevlerle cevap verdik. 170 DİSK üyesi, e-5 boyunca grev çadırları kurduk. Dolayısıyla bunun önüne geçilmek için, solcuların ve sağcıların hareketleri bahane edildi. Asıl hedeflenen işçi sınıfıydı. 12 Eylül'den hemen sonra çıkarılan ilk iki karar, işçilerin ikramiyelerinin sınırlandırılması, iki ücretlerinin dondurulması. İlginç. 24 Ocak kararlarından sonra, 12 Eylül'ün neden yapıldığı ortaya çıkıyor, 24 Ocak kararlarının uygulamaya geçirilmesi.”

¹⁰⁰ Levent Dokuyucu: “Öyle bir zamandı ki, 1980 öncesine ait ne varsa yasadıışı ya da yasaktı.”

¹⁰¹ “Haklarımızı geri istiyoruz.”

political rights. This referendum was an important momentum considering the political opportunity structures.

The Fall of Employees' Earnings

The new economic package became a hot issue on the agenda of Turkey and it was expected to be as the rescuer of the economy, and a “package of hope.” Worldwide as well, neo-liberal policies were also considered very promising and it was believed the market-based solutions would undermine the conflict between the interest of bourgeoisie and the proletariat.¹⁰² However, at least for the Turkish case, it can be claimed that the neo-liberal policies to fulfill its promises. In Turkey, the distribution of income changed dramatically against labor between 1978 and 1988. With the support of the military government, which eliminated the socio-political conflicts in the adjustment process, the process resulted in wide distributional shifts with unfavorable effects on agriculturalist and urban labor.¹⁰³ Before the application of the economic package, in other words, during the import substitution industrialization period, workers enjoyed high wages, since the aim was to increase domestic demand.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the collective bargaining system which encompassed the right to strike and high levels of unionization guaranteed the increase in real wages.¹⁰⁵ However, this positive picture began to change in 1976 when the regime came under crisis, and with the coup d'état wages

¹⁰² Surhan Çam, “Neo-liberalism and Labour within the Context of an ‘Emerging Market’ Economy – Turkey,” *Capital & Class* 77 (2002), pp. 89-114, p. 91.

¹⁰³ Merih Celasun, “Income Distribution and Employment Aspects of Turkey’s Post-1980 Adjustment,” *METU Studies in Development* 16, no.3-4 (1989), pp. 1-31, p. 3 and p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Keyder, *Türkiye’de Devlet*, p. 185.

¹⁰⁵ Yüksel Akkaya and Mete Çetik, *Türkiye’de Endüstri İlişkileri* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1999), p. 208.

began to decrease dramatically after 1980. The reason behind the dramatic decline in employees' earnings was both to compete in foreign markets where an immense international competition was going on: and also to attract foreign direct investment to the country by offering cheap labor.¹⁰⁶ As a result, as Çam writes, “the real incomes of civil servants shrank by two-thirds, and those of state enterprise workers halved between 1979-1988”¹⁰⁷

Table 1. Real Wages, 1978-1988 (1978=100)

	Averages Public
1978	100
1979	101.3
1980	77.8
1981	83.4
1982	85.1
1983	80.6
1984	71.2
1985	67.9
1986	65.8
1987	70.4
1988	66.5

Source: Tuncer Bulutay, *Employment, Unemployment and Wages in Turkey* (ILO Publications, Ankara: 1995), p. 306

Without a doubt, the application of neo-liberal policies primarily showed itself as the radical decline in wages, as it was perceived by workers. It should be noted again that the collective bargaining until 1985 was ended by the High Board of Arbitration, so that no union activity was allowed in the collective bargaining process. As a result, the corrosion of real wages was inevitable. Approaching 1989, the most salient problem for the workers was without a doubt low wages.

¹⁰⁶ Yeldan, p. 54.

¹⁰⁷ Çam, “Neo-liberalism and Labour,” p. 103.

All of the workers to whom I interviewed started their conversation with the emphasis on the insufficiency of the wages. As they told, they were had a hard time surviving if they were single, or maintain their family if they were married. Most workers were in debt since their wage was even insufficient for subsistence. As a result, most workers, if possible, had a second job. They usually worked in the informal sector, since it was forbidden to get a second job if you worked in the public sector. They usually carried out things like selling textiles at market places, worked in coffeehouses or sometimes they worked as taxi drivers. It is for sure that the problem of wages was the most important thrust for workers to mobilize. Workers complained to their unions about the low wages by saying that they were not able to maintain their families any more, or they could no longer afford to send their children to the school. Uğur Parlak, the founder of the Shoemaker Associations, indicated that the workers complained about the low wages since they caused families to be dissolved. Moreover, as he added, committing suicide, gambling, and alcoholism were among the most important problems of shoemakers. As will be elaborated in Chapter 4, the problem of low wages also reflected on the ways of the demonstrations.

De-unionization

As was indicated above, after the declaration of the new economic package, a huge strike wave took place against it. During the period of 1971-1980, as the accumulation regime went through a crisis, over nine hundred strikes took place. The

most interesting thing about the strikes was that a quarter of them took place in 1980.¹⁰⁸ As the labor corresponded the Structural Adjustment Program with strikes, it became no longer possible to convey these policies without any counter-attack from the state and the government. As a result, Turkey went through an effective de-unionization process after 1980. Ümit Cizre Sakalhoğlu defines the post-1980 development concerning labor with the prefix ‘de’: “de-politicization, de-mobilization, de-radicalization and de-unionization.”¹⁰⁹

The de-unionization process began with the coup d’état. All unions except for TÜRK-İŞ - the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DİSK), the Federation of Nationalist Workers’ Union (MİSK) and the Confederation of Justice Seekers’ Trade Unions (HAK-IS) - were closed down immediately. TÜRK-İŞ, which had always had good relations with the state and the government and which always preferred negotiation to conflict, welcomed the coup d’état and did not oppose the 24 January decisions for a long time. Furthermore, Sadık Şide, the general secretary of TÜRK-İŞ in 1980, became the minister of labor and social security.¹¹⁰ Sadık Şide later became a symbol of commitment of TÜRK-İŞ to the state, especially to the military government. The workers with whom I talked, also did not forget about Sadık Şide’s ministry, and they considered the incidence as a betrayal of TÜRK-İŞ.

TÜRK-İŞ was given permission to operate within months of the coup; however the right to strike and collective bargaining were not restored until 1983. HAK-

¹⁰⁸ Yüksel Akkaya, “Düzen ve Kalkınma Kıskaçında İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık,” in *Neoliberalizmin Tahribatı, 2000’li Yıllarda Türkiye*, eds. by Neşecan Balkan, Sungur Savran (İstanbul: Metis, 2004), p. 150.

¹⁰⁹ Cizre, p. 60

¹¹⁰ Koç, *Teslimiyetten Mücadeleye*, p. 26.

İŞ was allowed to operate in 1981, without the right to strike and collective bargaining, and began to operate in 1983 as a confederation. Furthermore, MİSK was also allowed to operate in 1984. Considering its militant, combative, pro-labor characteristic before 1980, it was DİSK that got the hardest hit from the coup d'état. It was not allowed to operate until 1991 and all its property was seized by the state. Moreover, wave of arrest that hit DİSK led to 1477 trade unionist to be prosecuted by the Military Court and 78 of them were sentenced to death. The case went on for 5 years and in the end, 264 trade unionists were given prison sentences ranging from 5 to 15 years.¹¹¹ The workers also agreed that the military conducted a 'special' treatment on DİSK:

DİSK was the representative of the 'acquired rights' until 1980. DİSK was chosen very carefully by the military government because the military saw that DİSK was not only struggling for economic concerns but they were also trying gather workers around a political, ideological and class-based unionism. They were both arranging demonstrations against fascism and striking radically against the application of neo-liberal policies. So, the state supposed that DİSK would create a crack in the system and it should be prevented before the water leaks. If you look at DİSK now, you cannot see of the trade unionist of the 1980s because they were either dead due to torture and long-lasting prison experience or disabled that they could only manage to live on their own.¹¹²

Muting the opposition of unions was not only done by closing them down but also by passing new legislations. The 1983 Trade Unions Act was so undemocratic that any kind of political act and objectives was forbidden: it was forbidden to establish relations or to act together on an issue with political parties. It was forbidden to receive

¹¹¹ *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, 1st ed., s.v. "DİSK davası".

¹¹² Atılay Ayçin: "DİSK bugüne kadar kazanılmış hakların temsilcisiydi. DİSK 12 Eylülün özenle seçtiği bir kuruluştur, çünkü ordu DİSK'in sadece işçilerin ekonomik çıkarları için değil, siyasi ve ideolojik ve sınıfsal yapısına uygun bir sendikal anlayış için mücadele ettiğini gördü. Hem faşizme karşı hem de neo-liberal politikaların uygulanmasına karşı mücadele ediyorlardı. Yani düzenin bir yerinden bir çatlak oluşturacaktı DİSK ve su ordan sızmaya başladığında önünün alınması güçtü. O nedenle bu çatlak olmadan önce, o çatlak oluşturacak güç ortadan kaldırılmıyordu."

or accept any support, aid or contribution from them. It was a de-politicization process which left the unions alone by isolating them from any kind of political act. Without a doubt, this process contributed to the ideological hegemony of the neo-liberal era. From this perspective, the de-politicized worker who was purified from political issues became the desired worker: one that had left the issue of class behind, but had become an individual on his/her own. In this sense, it was also forbidden to act together with associations, public professional organizations and foundations for political purposes, or to use the name, sign or symbols of any political party.¹¹³

By the Trade Unions Act and Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lockout Act it became even harder to be unionized. The Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lockout Act No. 2822 was changed via the excuse that the old Act (No. 275) had caused a failure in the system by giving way to initiate unnecessary strikes and lockouts, causing forgery and threatening the employers and workplaces and as a result declining the production. The new Act was initiated to remove this failure and aimed at providing peace in workplaces, rearranging the relation between employers and employees and guaranteeing the workers' rights due to "strong unionism" principle.¹¹⁴ However, the new Act brought a new requirement that in order to join a trade union a worker had to bring five copies of the membership registration form, duly completed and signed by the worker and certified by a Notary Public to the union.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Nichols and Sugur, *Global Management, Local Labour*, p. 150.

¹¹⁴ Murat Özveri, "Toplu İş Sözleşme Yetkisinin Belirlenmesindeki Açmazlar ve 2822 Sayılı Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Grev ve Lokavt Yasası" *Çalışma ve Toplum* 2, no. 2 (2004), pp. 81-90, p. 82

¹¹⁵ Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lockout Act No. 2822

Moreover, a threshold system began to be conducted that for a union to get the right of collective bargaining, it had to unionize 10% of the workers in its branch and %50 of workers in the working place. If the employer had more than one work place, the unions had to organize 50% of the workers in each.¹¹⁶ The process did not end at this point: the number of workers had to be confirmed by the Ministry of Labor for a union to get the authority to conduct collective bargaining. This long bureaucratic system slowed down the process of unionization and created opportunities for the employer to raise legal objections to the process of authorization of the unions. The objection of the employer generally blocked the system until the final decision of the court.¹¹⁷ As a result, the attitude of the employers and the Ministry of Labor against unionization created hard times for the workers by detaining them from the rights of collective bargaining. As it is told by workers, from time to time, the unwillingness of the unions to complete the unionization process was mostly considered to be “stabbing workers and the working class in their backs”:

I was working in the retail service of *Türkiye Şişe ve Cam Fabrikaları A.Ş.*¹¹⁸ in 1989. The spring Demonstrations accelerated our unionization process. There were 36 shops throughout Turkey, in different cities and we did not know any other employees. We, 3 people, began to travel Turkey and visited those 36 shops in order to be unionized. We went into shops pretending to be customers and then began talking to the employees. At that time, we were also having hard times in the workplaces since we worked for 12-13 hours, without holidays, *bairams* (official national and religious holidays) or New Year. As a result, we were able to organized 200 employees out of 300. But our union, Tez Koop-İş stabbed us in the back. They did not send our documents on time and with time the employer learnt of our attempt to unionize. 70 workers were forced to resign from the union by the employer. We 3

¹¹⁶ Ibid.,

¹¹⁷ Özveri, p. 85

¹¹⁸ The Factory of Bottle and Glass of Turkey

were dismissed. We struggled for 60 days, but as a result, the employer did not recognize the union and did not hire us back.¹¹⁹

The Trade Unions Act and the Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lockout Act abolished conventional ways for the working class to struggle against the worsening conditions. According to the Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lockout Act, politically motivated strikes, general strikes and sympathy strikes were all declared as illegal as were the slowdown strikes, sit-ins, and similar forms of concerted action. The right to strike was only given when a dispute arose from the collective bargaining process.¹²⁰ With the new regulations and laws, the standard rights such as strike, collective bargaining and unionization rights were given, but with restrictions on the establishment of trade unions and their activities, as Urhan and Çelik write “for the purpose of protecting the integrity and indivisibility of the homeland and the nation, national sovereignty, the Republic, public order, public peace, public interest, public morality and public health.”¹²¹

At this point the concept of “national security” was used to limit the right to strike. National security was defined as “the protection and maintenance of the constitutional order, national presence, and integrity, all political, social, cultural and

¹¹⁹ Seyit Aslan, interview by author, tape recording, 25 November 2010. “Ben 89’da Şişe Cam’ın perakende bölümünde çalışıyordum. Tabi o 89 sürecinden sonra bizim örgütlenmemiz hızlandı. Türkiye genelinde 36 tane mağaza var, bunların hepsi ayrı illerde, hiç kimse birbirini tanımıyordu. Biz 3 arkadaş, biz bütün Türkiye’yi geziyorduk. Her bölgeden her yere gittik. Biz önce alışveriş yapıyormuş gibi konuşuyorduk. O zaman iş yerlerinde problemler yaşıyorduk, çalışma saatleri uzundu. Günde 12-13 saat mağazalardaydık. Özellikle bayram yok, yılbaşı, tatil yok. Bunlar insanlarda önemli ölçüde örgütlenme eğilimine yol açmıştı. Toplam 300’e yakın işçi vardı bizim perakende grubunda çalışan, biz 200’ü aşkın işçiyi sendikalı yapmayı başarmıştık o koşullarda. Ama gel gör ki, sendika Tezkoop-ış bizi arkamızdan bıçakladı, tabiri caizse. Evraklarımızı Ankaraya zamanında yollamadılar, işveren de sendikalaşmaya çalıştığımızı öğrendi. 70 arkadaşımızı sendikadan istifaya zorladı, 3 kişiyi de işten çıkardı. Sonuçta 60 gün direndik ama ne sendikayı tanıdı iş veren ne de arkadaşlarımızı işe aldı.”

¹²⁰ Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lockout Act No. 2822

¹²¹ Betül Urhan and Seydi Çelik, “Perceptions of ‘National Security’ in Turkey and Their Impacts on the Labor Movement and Trade Union Activities” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 11, 2010 Available [online]: <http://ejts.revues.org/index4333.html>

economic interests in international field as well as against any kind of internal and external threats, of the State.”¹²² As a result, strikes and lockouts were not permitted during a state of war or full or partial mobilization, and they could be prohibited in the event of major disasters adversely affecting daily life and temporarily restricted in the case of martial law or “extraordinary emergence of law” circumstances. During the period of 1983-2007, when Act No. 2822 was being implemented, Council of Ministers postponed 27 strikes. The number of the postponed strikes may seem to be low yet it encompassed more than 600 workplaces. ¹²³

Besides the factors evaluated above, there were also other restrictions: Sectors including banking, transportation, petroleum products, utilities and education were not given the right to strike. Yüksel Akkaya evaluates the effects of strikes in the struggle of distribution after 1980 and argues that considering the days lost in strikes the number of workers that attended the strikes and the numbers of strikes, the strikes in Turkey were not very effective quantitatively. Even though the number of strikes peaked during 1989-1992, as he argues, it is hard to claim that those strikes had a negative impact on the economy or enterprises. ¹²⁴

It should be noted that de-unionization was not a unique situation to Turkey; it was a global phenomenon which was caused by the implementation of new technological, socioeconomic, political changes that led to this decline on the level of

¹²² Ibid.,

¹²³ Aziz Çelik, “Milli Güvenlik Gerekçeli Grev Ertelemeleri,” *Çalışma ve Toplum* 3, no.18 (2008), pp. 87-132, p. 109.

¹²⁴ Yüksel Akkaya, “Türkiye’de 1980 Sonrası Bölüşüm Mücadelesinde Grevlerin Yeri,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 86 (Fall 2000), pp. 211-241, p. 237 and p. 238.

unionization. Unions were losing their power and influence.¹²⁵ Doubtless, the decline of the trade unions was not independent of the labor market transformation. The transition from Fordism to post- Fordism came with the high level of unemployment and fragmented the labor market largely: full-time, permanent jobs had been replaced by temporary and flexible type of employment and the “boundaries between the formal and informal sector began to be blurred.”¹²⁶ The power and effectiveness of trade unions declined due to the fragmented labor market.

Working Conditions

The Flexibilization of Employment

While the labor market was transforming, the permanent, full-time employment pattern began to leave its place to more flexible forms of employment. Doubtless, this does not mean that the Fordist type of employment, with permanent jobs encompassing social security vanished completely; the flexible type of employment began to be a prevailing characteristic of the labor market.

In Turkey, the number of temporary employees began to increase significantly after 1980. Like the de-unionization process, flexible employment was also a world-wide phenomenon. Not only in Turkey, but also in many countries the employment structure had shifted “from secure jobs towards temporary ones.”¹²⁷ Çam writes that

¹²⁵ F. Adaman, A. Buğra, A. Insel. 26 February 2008. *Societal Context of Labor Union Strategy: The Case of Turkey*. Available [online]: *Labor Studies Journal Online* [15 March 2008] pp. 168-188, p. 168.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.169.

¹²⁷ Çam, “Neo-liberalism and Labour,” p. 94.

“amongst the EU countries, for example, temporary employment grew from 5% to 8% in the UK, from 4% to 12% in Italy and from %6 to 13% in France between 1985 and 1997. As for Turkey, temporary employment had risen from %5 in 1985 to 14% in 1997.”¹²⁸

Surhan Çam adds that the proportion could have been higher if one considers women engaged in home based production especially in textile industry.¹²⁹ At the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, when the labor movement was at its peak, employers started seeking different ways to decrease the power and effectiveness of the unions. On the one hand, thanks to the labor movements during 1989-1991, wages had increased significantly. On the other hand, employers complained about the rising wages and declining labor productivity. As a result, the solution was to introduce part-time and temporary employment with subcontracting.¹³⁰ Furthermore, by 1986, with the implementation of “quality circles,” Turkey completed its transition from Fordist production to post-Fordist production.¹³¹ As a result of all these transformations, “the ‘happy worker’ of the past, with a stable employment and a strong loyalty to the firm, became less relevant.”¹³² In the end, the labor market was divided into two different patterns of employment: full time, permanent employment enjoying job security, relatively good wages, the right to unionize and social rights; and temporary,

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.94.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.95.

¹³⁰ Akkaya and Çetik, p.58.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.58.

¹³² Beneria, p. 4.

flexible employment that lacked the right to unionize and social rights and that worked under insecure conditions.¹³³

The sub-contracting system and “contract work” are two basic forms of flexible, temporary employment. Those forms of flexible employments are not discussed in this thesis, though they began to be applied during, the 1980s and they prevailed in the labor market after 1990. However, it should be noted that the contract system was even applied in public enterprises which were scheduled to be privatized.¹³⁴ On the other hand, after 1980, workers also got their shares from this transformation. As they indicated in the interviews, employers forced workers to work in positions out of their expertise.

Employers whenever s/he wanted, made us work in different positions that were not our expertise. Actually s/he could not have. But there were no opposition from the unions. Without considering our family situations s/he sent us to another city to work. It was temporary, but we had to go.”¹³⁵

Since workers were forced to work in positions out of their expertise, they made demonstrations against such demands: For example, they refused to work at jobs which were not listed in their original job description. Those demonstrations will be evaluated in Chapter 4, however, it is important to say that they were also against the application of flexible employment forms. There were also many on the job accidents due to the fact that worker did jobs at which they did not have any expertise. Since workers were primarily organized around the problems in the workplaces which were

¹³³ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1989), p. 150.

¹³⁴ Çam, “Neo-liberalism and Labour,” p. 95.

¹³⁵ Ercan Atmaca: “*Mesela işverenin işçiyi istediği zaman istediği yerde çalıştırması. Aslında yapamaz, ama karşısında sendika yok bir şey yok. Aile durumunu göz etmeden, hadi başka şehre gidiyorsun derdi. Geçici ama yapmak zorundasın.*”

usually the neglectful attitude of the employers considering the implementation of health and safety regulations, the pressure of employers, and bad food that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Neither the unions nor the employers gave importance to the implementation of health and safety regulations at work. There were international agreements which Turkey signed, but, the unions were not aware of them. For example, one of our friends was a welder, and he fell and died because there were no safety precautions. One of our friends was also working at the top of an elevator. The machine overturned and he also died. Nobody cared. Employer claimed that the worker himself demanded the position even though it was not a position defined in his contract. Yet, nobody worked in accordance with his/her original job definition. We worked wherever the employer wanted us to work. We knew it was the employer who put him on that machine; in the end the employer claimed that it was his fault.¹³⁶

Workplaces under Military Discipline

When the military intervened into the economics and politics, the military government appointed military personnel to the head of the press, to the boards of trade and unions, and to factories. In factories, especially in state enterprises, the military personnel used their authority to discipline the workers. Their military understanding largely was reflected in the administration of the factories. Some of the workers told that even using the bathrooms was subject to permission. Atilay Ayçin, who was a technician in Turkish Airlines at the time, told of the experience of working under the control of the colonels:

¹³⁶ Nuri Ağçiçek: “Şimdi o zaman sendikalarda iş sağlığı ve iş güvenliğiyle ilgili hiçbir gelişme yoktu ne sendika ilgileniyor, ne işveren. Mesela, Türkiye'nin altına imza koyduğu iş anlaşmaları vardır. Sendikanın haberi yok bu durumdan. Bir arkadaşımız, greynin tepesinde çalışıyordu, greyn devrildi, arkadaşımız yaşamını yitirdi. Sonra ona bile sahip çıkmadılar. Efendim sen oraya kendi keyfinle çıktın çalıştın, iş emrinde sen orda görünmüyorsun dendi. Kaldı ki, iş emrinde gösterildiği yerde çalışmıyor ki herkes, işveren diyor şuraya git, buraya git şunu yap. Ama sonuçta iş kazası olduğu zaman da suçu işçiye atıyorlar”

My unit was administered by an old retired colonel. He saw us as his soldiers. He had a whistle in his hand and every time he blew it, he wanted us to gather and listen to him. Moreover, there was a corridor led to the hangar. He drew lines, as in the traffic, and asked us to walk straight when there was a straight line. Yet, when the lines were intermittent, we were allowed to change lanes”¹³⁷

As the administrative mind was different, the punishment tactics of the military personnel were also different. Hasan Kaçkır, from a brewery which was also a state economic enterprise, tells a story of about his friend who worked in the transportation corps: “When the driver of the inner-city was late, the officer punished him by taking a stroll two times around the arena where all the buses stop. Of course, everybody saw. He was an officer, he thought that way. He did not think of cutting the salary.”¹³⁸ In military enterprises, such as dockyards, sewing workshops, the influence of the military administration was more salient. The military administration in dockyard of Taşkızak, for instance, burnt the votes after the union elections.

In 1989, we as the workplace committee were opposed to the existing administration of the union. All we wanted was to have in-union democracy and democratic elections. But they did not put our names on the lists. We went to the commander of the workplace and asked for him to put our names on the list. He asked who we were how many we were and he threw us out. We boycotted that election and did not let anybody to vote. Then he put our names in the list. However, during elections, soldiers intervened and a clash took place. Workers were in the cafeteria and they were shouting “we are workers, we are right, we will win”; ‘we want syndical democracy.’ It was amazing. Then the intelligence officer came and declared that the commander had canceled the elections. And

¹³⁷ Atılay Açıncı: “Bizim iş yerinin müdürü, emekli bir albaydı. Bizi de askerleri gibi görürdü. Elinde de düdüğü vardı. Şey dedi, ben düdüğü çaldığımda herkes dönüp bakacak. Nedir mesela, bizim bakım hangarları, koridor var hangara giden. Şimdi tıpkı karayolları gibi, kesintisiz ve kesik kesik çizgiler var, kesintisiz çizgilerin olduğu yerde yürüdüğünde, öbür tarafa geçmeyeceksin, geçebilmen için kesik kesik çizginin olduğu yere gelmen lazım.”

¹³⁸ Hasan Kaçkır, interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, Turkey, 10 December 2010. “Orada da işe geç gelenlerin, orası cunta subaylarının yönetimindeydi. Ceza verirdi biliyor musun, etrafında iki tur koşacaksın diye. Subay ya adamın kafası öyle çalışıyor. Yani, senin mesainden, parandan keserim diye değil.”

they burnt our votes. Later, the elections were repeated and we gained 90 percent of the votes in the workplace.”¹³⁹

At the Background

Without a doubt, the transformation of the labor market was not only restricted by the elements that were discussed above. Those elements in the first place, directly affected the workers' lives. However, besides those factors, the labor market continued transforming gradually, yet in the background. By saying in the background I do not mean that they did not affect workers life but, they took place more slowly as they were not the primarily concerns of the workers. On the other hand, they are important changes since they began to be initiated in the 1980s. The decline of the agriculture sector, its relation with internal migration, unemployment and the rise of informal sector are evaluated as the components of the transformation of the labor market, in the background.

The Decline of the Agriculture and Internal Migration

Beginning from 1980, agriculture in Turkey also underwent transformation. Between, 1945 and 1988, as Üstün Ergüder writes, “the country has become less

¹³⁹ Nuri Ağçıçek: “89’da biz iş yeri komitesi olarak mevcut sendikal yönetime muhalifiz. Ve bütün istediğimiz demokratik bir seçimin yapılması. Listeye bir baktım, bizim isimlerimizi koymamışlar. Ben komutana gittim, komutanım dedim, söyleyin bizim de isimlerimizi yazsınlar dedim. Komutan, siz kimsiniz, kaç kişisiniz, dedi, kovdu bizi odasından. Biz de öyle olunca, seçimleri boykot ettik, kimsenin de oy kullanmasına izin vermedik. Böyle olunca komutan bizim de isimlerimizi ekletti. Sonra oy kullanma sırasında, askerler işçilere müdahale etti, olaylar çıktı. Ben bir gittim yemekhaneye, inanılmaz, nasıl bir coşku, işçiler “işçiyiz haklıyız kazanacağız!”, “sendikal demokrasi isteriz” diye bağıryorlar. Sonra istihbarat subayı geldi, komutanın seçimleri iptal ettiğini söyledi. Ortaya sac koydular, ve oyları yaktılar. Sonra seçimler tekrar yapıldı, iş yerinin %90’ını biz aldık.”

agricultural and less rural.”¹⁴⁰ The transformation of the agriculture was also a component of the IMF and World Bank policies, which required decreases in agricultural subsidies by the state. After 1980, the support of the state of the agriculture sector was seized, causing it to become more open and sensitive to the market forces.¹⁴¹ According to Boratav during the period of 1978-1988, peasant farmers experienced their worst days. Prices decreased sharply in of the deepest decrease in Republic’s history.¹⁴² The state support to the agriculture also decreased significantly that “the ratio of support purchases by public agencies of agricultural output to agricultural value-added had declined from 20.4 % in 1976 to an annual average of 12% during 1980-1986”¹⁴³

In 1989, besides industrial workers, peasant farmers also arranged meetings against the policies of the government yet; such incidences were not widespread and frequent. Sharp declines in agricultural prices also led peasant farmers to mobilize.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, exports gradually stopped depending on the agricultural goods that the share of agriculture in the Turkish Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell from “about a half in the 1940s to a quarter in the early 1980s.”¹⁴⁵ The dissolution of the agriculture sector caused massive internal migration during 1980s. After 1980, the majority of the population began to live in urban areas. During 1960-1980 the proportion of those living

¹⁴⁰ Üstün Ergüder, “Agriculture: A Forgotten Sector,” in *Strong State and Economic Interest Groups: The post 1980 Turkish Experience*, ed. by Metin Hepar (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), p. 71.

¹⁴¹ Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye’de Sosyal Sınıflar ve Bölüşüm* (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1991), p. 50.

¹⁴² Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat*, p. 166.

¹⁴³ Korkut Boratav, “Contradictions of ‘Structural Adjustment’ Capital and State in Post-1980 Turkey,” in *Society and Politics in Egypt and Turkey*, eds. by Ayşe Öncü, Çağlar Keyder, Saad Eddin İbrahim (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1994), p. 160.

¹⁴⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 29 August 1989.

¹⁴⁵ Üstün, p. 74.

in the rural areas declined from 68 percent to 58 percent¹⁴⁶ whereas in 1950, 84 percent of the population had been living in the rural areas. This amount declined to 40 percent in 1988.¹⁴⁷ This process was also accelerated by the mechanization program which was introduced to increase agricultural output and export.¹⁴⁸

Another important factor, considering the internal migration after 1980, is the Kurdish question. According to Çam, there is a strong relation between the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies and the Kurdish uprising in the South East of Turkey.¹⁴⁹ As he argues, there were two reasons that caused the Kurds to migrate: The first one was related to the decline in the smuggling activity. Until 1980, smuggling was one of the main economic activities of the Kurds since the geography of the region was not appropriate for agriculture and there were no other economic activities since the governments failed to improve regional economic conditions. However, with the application of the neo-liberal policies and trade liberalization, smuggling activity declined.¹⁵⁰ The second reason was the privatization of the meat and animal food industries and later freeing meat imports. The worsening economic situation attracted the Kurds to engage with the Kurdish Workers Party. During the 1990s the war between the state and Kurdish Workers Party was intensified; as a result the state forced thousands of people to migrate to the cities.

¹⁴⁶ Çam, "Neo-liberalism and Labour," p. 98.

¹⁴⁷ Üstün, p. 75.

¹⁴⁸ Çam, "Neo-liberalism and Labour," p. 98.

¹⁴⁹ Çam also adds that the Kurdish question could not be simplified to neo-liberal policies.

¹⁵⁰ Though there is no certain data about this issue, İsmail Beşikçi, a Kurdish author claims that the smuggling activity declined due to the application of neo-liberal policies.

Privatization, Unemployment and Rise of the Informal Economy

It was claimed that the shift from import substitution industrialization to market-based, export-oriented strategy would remove what Şenses calls “the relative factor of price distortions and lead to a reallocation of resources towards relatively labor-intensive activities.”¹⁵¹ However, during the decline in the agricultural sector and increase in internal immigration, non-agricultural sectors, service and industry, failed to create new job opportunities. Though massive layoffs began to take place intensively after 1990, due to the privatization program, 300,000 workers were dismissed from state-led enterprises between 1986 and 1996.¹⁵² Privatization was without a doubt, one of the most influential requirements of the Structural Adjustment Program. The privatization programs were designed to reduce the size and scope of the state and strengthen the market.¹⁵³

The first major wave of privatization took place in 1988 and after 1988 the process gained momentum. The problems of the state enterprises that were listed included what Öniş describes as “the absence of autonomy and managerial incentives, frequent interference from politicians and bureaucrats, and the failure of the state-enterprise sector to provide incentives for the managerial elite that would encourage productivity and efficiency increases.”¹⁵⁴ For privatization it was also claimed that it

¹⁵¹ Fikret Şenses, “Structural Adjustment Policies and Employment in Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 15, (Fall 1996), pp.65-93, p. 65.

¹⁵² Çam, “Neo-liberalism and Labour,” p. 100.

¹⁵³ Ziya Öniş, “The Evolution of Privatization in Turkey: The Institutional Context of Public-Enterprise Reform” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 2 (May 1991), pp. 163-176, p. 163.

would improve, business performance and the hand higher living standards of workers by linking employees' interest and profitability of the enterprise.¹⁵⁵ However, the effect of the privatization was quite severe: between 1985 and 1997, the employment in the public sector economic enterprises dropped from 750,000 to 500,000 and union density in such companies diminished from 70.6 percent to 45.7percent. Likewise, the union density amongst the workers who were covered by social security institutions decreased from 55 percent to 40 percent.¹⁵⁶ Privatization caused massive layoffs, created unsecure jobs by accelerating the implementation of “subcontracted” workers, caused sharp declines in employees' earnings since the unionization was dismantled. The effects of privatization on the labor market were serious, and inevitably encountered the resistance of the workers. The workers received privatization process as a thread against their jobs, since it was not guaranteed that there would not be layoffs or income losses.¹⁵⁷ The struggle against the privatization started intensely after 1994. This thesis do not encompass this process; however, it should be noted that workers who experienced Spring Demonstrations, recall the struggle against the privatization hand in hand with the Spring Demonstrations since privatization began to take place intensely right after the fall of the workers' mobilization in 1993.

Of course, the rise of automation and the introduction of new management techniques played important roles in the privatization process since they were designed

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.164.

¹⁵⁵ Surhan Çam, “Job Security, Unionization, Wages and Privatisation,” *The Sociological Review* 47, no. 4 (1999), pp. 695-714, p. 696.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.699.

¹⁵⁷ Sallama Shaker, *State, Society and Privatization in Turkey, 1979-1990* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Centre, 1995), p. 35.

to cut labor costs and increase labor productivity.¹⁵⁸ While the unemployment rate was rising during the 1990s, the informal sector was also widening.¹⁵⁹ Such an outcome was largely due to the fact that, the new incomers, migrants to the urban areas did not have any opportunity to find formal jobs. Consequently, they were employed in low-paid, irregular and informal jobs. As a result of this ongoing transformation, joblessness, informal employments and recurring unemployment became permanent characteristics of the labor market.¹⁶⁰ Without a doubt, the rise of the informal economy also was related to flexible forms of employment. Workers, who worked in the informal sector, did not have the opportunity to enjoy the right to unionize, access to health and unemployment insurance and social security. Özdemir and Özdemir write that some of the informal sector activities were “car repair; bus and taxi driving; domestic painting and repairs; maintenance of grounds and buildings; personal services in private residences; operation of small retail shops; street cleaning and maintenance; street vending of products and services; textile piecework at the home; and various transport and haulage jobs.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Çam, “Neo-liberalism and Labour”, p. 100.

¹⁵⁹ Mümtaz Peker, “Internal Migration and the Marginal Sector,” in *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey*, eds. by E. Kahveci, N. Suğur and T. Nichols (Londra: Mansell, 1996), p. 10.

¹⁶⁰ Ayşe Buğra, and Çağlar Keyder, “New Poverty and Changing Welfare Regime,” *Journal of European Social Policy* 16, (August 2006), pp. 211-228, p. 216.

¹⁶¹ M. Erel Özdemir, G. Yücesan Özdemir, “Rethinking the Informal Labour Market in Turkey,” *South-East Europe Review* 3 (2004), pp. 79-92, p.80.

The Awakening of Workers: 1986-1988

Up to this point, the transformations of the labor market and their effects on workers have been evaluated. While the market was transforming against workers and labor, the workers remained silent for 4 years after the coup d'état. The first strike took place in dockyards in Tuzla in 1985; however, it did not create an overwhelming impression on both the working class and the society. However, first strong opposition began to take place in 1986. Workers entered the New Year with a huge workers' meeting that took place in İzmir. It was the first workers' meeting since 1980. 70,000 people, from workers to students, and civil servants, attended the demonstrations. The aim of the demonstration was to criticize the government. Workers, students, civil servants demanded the resignation of the government and shouted as "government resign!", "Freedom to DİSK" and "a new constitutional law."¹⁶² Furthermore, even the meeting arranged by TÜRK-İŞ workers criticized the attitude of TÜRK-İŞ since they were supported the military government and did not oppose the decisions of new economic package and were deaf to the workers problems for a long time. As a result, the workers began not to trust their unions. During the speech of the chairman of the TÜRK-İŞ, workers turned their back and hissed at him. By meeting, the workers began of speak out their demands.

Another big event, which was imprinted strongly on workers' minds, was the strike of NETAŞ (Northern Electric Telecommunication A.Ş), which took place in the private sector. It was the first and most influential strike after 1980. The strike was organized by Birleşik Metal-İş, and it had a great positive influence on the workers since

¹⁶² "İzmir Mitinginin Ardından," *Yarın*, no. 56 (Nisan 1986), pp.1-45, p. 34.

the common idea of among the workers and trade unionist was that it was not possible to go on a strike under the existing laws. As a result, the NETAŞ strike was seen as the revival of the working class and its struggle. The public at large also supported the strike; well-known artists visited the strike scene and showed their supports to the workers. The soul of solidarity also revived with the NETAŞ strike that all unions connected to TÜRK-İŞ visited the strike camp, as well as HAK-İŞ. International unions also showed their support. ¹⁶³

The NETAŞ strike was followed by the Derby and Dora strike in 1986. Workers entered 1987 with the strikes of Petrol-İş in 63 factories, most of which were private businesses. The 63 Strikes, as it was called, was made by 20,000 workers, half of them employed in the state enterprises that did not have the right to strike by the law. ¹⁶⁴ In 1986, different ways of showing grievances of workers began to be found at the grass root level to make their voice heard and attract the public's attention. They collectively went to the hospital in order to affect slowdowns, refused working overtime, and held lunch boycotts. ¹⁶⁵ Also in 1987, Türkiye Deri-İş ¹⁶⁶ went on a strike in the leather processing sector, in Zeytinburnu, Istanbul. It was followed by Tümtis, which went on a strike in warehouses also in 1987. Last but not least, the Migros strike, which was organized by Tez Koop-İş became an important symbol of the workers' struggle considering the silent years after the coup d'état. The workers entered 1989 with a strike

¹⁶³ "Netaş Grevi," *Alınteri* 1 (January 1987), pp. 1-54, p. 14; "Otomobil İşçileriyle Dayanışma," *Yarın* 64 (January 1986), pp. 1-54, p. 26.

¹⁶⁴ *1950-2000, 50. Yılında PETROL-İŞ*, (İstanbul: PETROL-İŞ Yayın, 2000)

¹⁶⁵ Berik and Bilginsoy, p. 55.

¹⁶⁶ *Türkiye Deri-iş: Türkiye Deri İşçiler Sendikası: The Shoe, Leather, Saddle and Harness Making and Tanning, Furriery, Glue and Intestine Processing Workers' Union of Turkey.*

at SEKA,¹⁶⁷ which was the paper producer of the country, organized by Selüloz-İş.¹⁶⁸ It was the first strike at SEKA in its history. It lasted 131 days.

The common features of those strikes were they were organized by more pro-labor more radical unions connected to TÜRK-İŞ or independent from it. They changed the negative climate which had hung over working class since 1980. Workers were encouraged by those developments and the solidarity among workers began to revive again.

Concluding Remarks

1980, without a doubt, was a decisive moment in the history of Turkey. Two strongly interconnected major decisions changed the political and economic system of Turkey fundamentally. The first one is January 24 decisions (economic package), which were proclaimed by the government to cope with the economic crisis in 1977-1979. The economic package represents a transition from the strategy of import substitution industrialization, which until then had been the prevailing strategy, to export-led growth. The second one was the coup d'état nine months after the proclamation of the economic package. The coup d'état first aimed to eliminate the opposition of the workers and unions against the economic package since it directly bulldozed the economic and social rights of the workers. And second, it aimed to stop the armed conflict between the

¹⁶⁷ *SEKA: Türkiye Selüloz ve Kağıt Fabrikaları*: The Paper and Cellulose Factory of Turkey

¹⁶⁸ *Selüloz-İş: Türkiye Selüloz Kağıt ve Mamülleri İşçileri Sendikası*: The Pulp, Paper and Paper Products Workers' Union of Turkey

political fractions that rose gradually. Thus it can be said that the military took control of the country in order to cope with both economic and political crises.¹⁶⁹

After the coup d'état and the new economic package, the working class mostly lost its dynamics to oppose: the unions were closed down, unions and workers' leaders were put in jail or sent into exile, the right to strike was abolished. With the new constitutional law in 1982, the standard rights of the unions, the right to strike, collective bargaining and unionization were recognized with some considerable restrictions due to the "national security." In 1983, even when the regime was civilized under the Motherland's Party government, the pressure on the working class continued. As a trade union, only TURK-IS which supported military after the coup d'état was allowed.

The application of the new economic package squeezed workers under high inflation. With the new "Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lockout Act" unionization became harder. The right to strike was also restricted. Political strikes were banned and workers were only given the right to strike if a dispute arose during collective bargaining process. In short, the economic and political rights of the workers that they had enjoying during import substitution industrialization were destroyed by the new economic package followed by the coup d'état. Workers found themselves in a condition where de-unionization and de-politization began to prevailed, and economic and political rights were minimized.

Depending on the workers' narratives, it is possible to say that the situations within the factories were not pleasant either. Working hours were not regulated, so that

¹⁶⁹ *Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi 1981-2000*, 4th ed., s.v. "1980li Yıllar ve Sonrası"

workers labored long hours sometimes without overtime pay. The job definition of the workers was not determined exactly so that employers could make workers work or could send them in different departments or jobs, or even the employer could send the workers to different factories and in different cities. Moreover, employers did not implement the working conditions law which covered health and safety at work. Apart from those, it is probably safe to say that the commanders who were appointed by the military government to the head of press, board of trade and unions, and the factories were still in charge and did not hesitate using their power and authority.

However, in those circumstances the workers of NETAŞ did manage to go on a strike in 1986, which influenced workers positively and gave them courage to go on a strike even with the new laws. While the workers were gathering around their grievances little by little, in 1989 huge labor unrest took place. Considering the radical transformation of the labor market discussed above, one may argue that the Spring Demonstrations did not occur in a moment, but were a process. Workers were resisting against the policies which changed their situation and everyday lives radically. From 1980 to 1989, workers faced circumstances which had been unprecedented until then. Since their opposition mechanisms had been unusable for a long period of time, it took 9 years for workers to re-organize and oppose the applications of new policies. As Piven and Cloward argue, for people to become defiant, their everyday lives must be affected severely, and they had to feel the power that they could redress the situation. Thus how workers' lives changed during the labor market transformation was elaborated in this chapter and in the next chapter I evaluate how the Spring Demonstrations took place.

The political and economic context is important in the sense that, it gives us clues about why the workers resisted in the way that they resisted.

CHAPTER IV

THE EXPERIENCE OF SPRING DEMONSTRATIONS

This chapter examines the experience of the Spring Demonstration and mainly focuses on the personal narratives of the workers and union leaders who lived through the demonstrations in 1989. Although the Spring Demonstrations took place intensely in March, April and May in 1989, they peaked in 1991 with the Great Miner's March, and began decreasing in 1992-1993. Thus, it is possible to say that the wave of Spring Demonstrations lasted until 1993. Therefore, the memories of the workers and union leaders covered the period of 1989-1993. It should be noted from the beginning that due to the time restriction and hardness of reaching workers- probably most of them are retired by this time- I was able to talk mostly with workers and union leaders who are located in Istanbul. Moreover, it should also be kept in mind that most of the people who were leaders of workers then work as union chairmanships now since the wave of Spring Demonstrations carried them to the chairman of the unions. I made in-depth interviews with 20 workers and took care that they be from different sectors and unions.

The data for this chapter, besides from in-depth interviews, were also collected from the newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*,¹⁷⁰ which gave the news about working life the most comprehensively.

This chapter begins with a milestone in the Spring Demonstrations, the blockage of collective bargaining. They continue with the demonstrations of workers against their unions in order to protest the passivity of unions as perceived by many

¹⁷⁰ Republic

workers. The workers at that time were upset and disappointed by the passivity of their unions during the collective bargaining process. That is to say, the workers all together attended the demonstrations leaving behind the political boundaries among themselves. Last the chapter focuses on the togetherness of workers.

The organization of the demonstrations was essential under the circumstances where most of the unions turned a deaf ear to the demands of workers and were not struggling strong as was thought by the workers. Therefore, the workers formed their own organizations sometimes independent from their unions and sometimes in cooperation with pro-labor unions. Later, the chapter continues with the new ways of resistance, going to the hospital collectively, boycotting lunches, shaving off their hair collectively, growing beards, symbolically selling their children to illustrate their inability to meet family obligations or suing for mass divorce, claiming they were unable to maintain a family, and the demonstrations that were organized for solidarity. Last but not least, the response of the employers to the demonstrations was also evaluated in this chapter. I try to reflect the atmosphere and experiences of workers during demonstrations.

The Predicament of the Workers: The Blockage of Collective Bargaining

The transformation of the labor market and how it affected workers were detailed in Chapter 3. The transformation of the labor market process was the backbone of the Spring Demonstrations, as it was argued in Chapter 3, workers' lives changed radically after the coup d'état and January 24 decisions. To summarize, in 1989

workers were crushed under high inflation. Besides due to the military regimes, the trade union activities either suspended or they were closed down. As a result, the workers lacked any mechanism to defend themselves against the worsening conditions both in wages and new working conditions in the factories. Military personnel appointed by the military government became the heads of the factories at which workers work under high levels of pressure. In addition, since the flexibility began to be applied, irregularity in the workplaces prevailed.

Workers cumulated their grievances little by little up until 1986. As workers explained, from 1980, all little attempts to protest the employer or the conditions within the factory were harshly repressed. Starting from 1986, workers were searching ways to turn those local grievances into mass collective movements. During 1986-1988, a few strikes took place, especially marked by NETAŞ. In 1986, the strike of NETAŞ had a positive impact on workers in that they were encouraged by the achievement of going on a strike with the existing laws. The workers started to organize around the same grievances and experiences and in three years, the opposition both against government and their own unions grew bigger and turned into a massive movement by March 1989. Here I focus on how the events of the Spring Demonstrations of 1989 were triggered, followed by a few short examples of the first actions.

Workers entered 1989, which was the year for the renewal of the collective bargaining in the public sector, encompassed 600,000 workers from different sectors, with strikes which actually began in 1988 with no sign of agreement. They were such long lasting struggles that at the beginning of January, the SEKA strike was on its 120th

day and it encompasses 20,000 workers both in the private and public sector.¹⁷¹

Another strike took place for 183 days at Hurma Electronic.¹⁷² Moreover, until March 1989, there were little protests every four or five days since 1989 was the year for the renewal of the collective bargaining. In some sectors, the collective bargaining process began earlier; therefore workers began to protest the uncooperative stances of employers. However, they were local protest which had not diffused the all over Turkey yet. For instance, Hava-İş conducted collective bargaining for Atatürk Airport in Istanbul in January and workers already began to make a lunch boycotts in order to protest the negative improvements in the process, which would be the most common demonstration after three months.¹⁷³

The protests were not necessarily related to the collective bargaining, but they were also against the dismissal of workers, or against the neglectfulness of employers about the regulations of workers' health and safety at work. For instance, in Eskişehir in a sugar factory, workers sat in front of the administration office of the factory to protest the employer since two co-workers had died in a work accident. Two thousand workers attended the demonstrations.¹⁷⁴

As the employees' earnings fell radically, workers encountered with high cost of living from 1980 to 1989. The burden of the high inflation caused many workers to have hard times for sustaining their subsistence. As a result, at the beginning of March, workers from different sectors, glass, brewery and leather, arranged a public

¹⁷¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 2 January 1989.

¹⁷² *Cumhuriyet*, 4 January 1989.

¹⁷³ *Cumhuriyet*, 7 January 1989.

¹⁷⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 13 February 1989.

demonstration on Workers' Right and Democracy in Istanbul. While workers were struggling against the high cost of living and protesting the expensiveness of life, their target was directly the government. They shouted "workers unite!"¹⁷⁵, "Özal resign!"¹⁷⁶ and "we want one year collective bargaining."¹⁷⁷ Without a doubt, the high cost of living showed its effect as the prices especially of food continued to rise. Newspapers reflected the expense of the food to the public with the headlights of "there is a fire in the kitchen,"¹⁷⁸ which means prices were high to afford. During the demonstration, workers protested the governments and the expensiveness of life by eating grass that they had plucked from the ground.¹⁷⁹ It meant that they had nothing to eat but than grass.

The demonstrations locally began to take place little by little in the private sector and also in municipalities before the public sector. Workers protested both the layoffs and uncooperative attitudes of employers during the collective bargaining process. For instance in Lassa-Brisa, workers boycotted lunches in order to protest layoffs, and the demonstration did affect the decision of the employer. Though they could not stop the layoffs however, their solidarity and decisive struggles forced employers to reduce the number of workers who would be dismissed.¹⁸⁰ The uncooperative stances of employers most of the time was criticized by workers since the workers perceived the employers' attitudes as the reason behind the blockage of the

¹⁷⁵ "İşçiler birleşin!"

¹⁷⁶ "Özal istifa"

¹⁷⁷ "Bir yıllık toplu sözleşme istiyoruz"

¹⁷⁸ "Mutfakta yangın var!"

¹⁷⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, 5 March 1989.

¹⁸⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 25 January 1989.

collective bargaining. They were trying to influence the decision making process in the collective bargaining with their resistance. For instance, at the beginning of February, in İzmit, 900 workers the Kordsa factory (private sector) started boycotting lunches and decided to not to work overtime for an indefinite period of time in order to protest the employers.¹⁸¹

Without a doubt, different sectors made different kinds of demonstrations which they thought as the most effective and influential for themselves. Since the right to strike was forbidden in the transportation sector, the bus drives in Istanbul arranged a demonstration in order to protest both the high cost of living and the ignorance of the employers to the struggle of workers for surviving in that circumstances. In the demonstrations, 500 drivers made slowdown strikes and drove buses with 30km/h in the city.¹⁸²

To note again, 1989 was the year for the renewal of the collective bargaining which had been made biennially. TÜRK-İŞ made an important decision at the beginning of the year and formed a “central coordination council” which was responsible for conducting the collective bargaining process in the name of unions and workers. Twenty-seven unions and trade unionists involved in this council that they decided to synchronize the strikes and unite the disputes in collective bargaining. Due to this decision, the timeline of the strikes and disputes came closer to paving the way for a collective reaction. Starting from March, when the collective bargaining process started, the demonstrations were intensified; since the collective bargaining encompassed approximately 600,000 workers from different sectors. The crucial decision of TÜRK-

¹⁸¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 22 February 1989.

¹⁸² *Cumhuriyet*, 23 February, 1989.

İŞ set the stage for three months of intensified demonstrations. In the first place, a dispute occurred due to the fact that the TİSK and TÜRK-İŞ could not agree on the rate of increase in workers' wages. On 19 of March, the process blocked and as a result, everyday three-four resistances began to take place all to criticize the uncooperative attitude of employers, to warn non pro- labor stances of the workers' unions and also to strengthen the position of workers' unions in the collective bargaining process. For instance, only four days after the blockage of the collective bargaining, eight demonstrations took place in different sectors and in different parts of Turkey: workers from glass factories in Kırklareli and Lüleburgaz met in the middle of the two factories since they were 2 km away from each other. Their employers were the same employer and the two factories went on a strike factionally. They celebrated the right to strike with drums and clarions and shared the feelings of solidarity. They shouted as “We are on strike no matter what you say!”¹⁸³ and called for a general strike; “workers to general strike!”¹⁸⁴.

Petrol-İş on the other hand, organized a lunch boycott in all factories that it was organized. As it was reflected to the newspaper, 11, 000 workers attended the lunch boycott whereas one-third of the attendants went to the hospital, collectively. Though the new ways of resistance will later be evaluated in this chapter, it should be said that one of the most important demonstrations was to go to the hospital collectively. They declared themselves sick and ask for permission from the doctor of the workplace. After, they walked to the hospital. While they were away for. The so called, treatment, the production at the workplace stopped. It was a new way to stop work and made

¹⁸³ “Grevdeyiz işte var mı diyeceğin?”

¹⁸⁴ “İşçiler el ele genel greve”

slowdown strikes. It was also a new way for workers to gather around and undertake resistance together. In addition, going to the hospital collectively made the demonstrations visible to the public. They were not restricted to the workplaces but they reached to the streets and became visible. It was an effective way for workers' voices to be heard. For instance, again on 23 March, 1500 workers from Pendik dockyard went to the hospital collectively and the production stopped for three hours; moreover, the demonstration turned into a march of workers. The point here is that, starting from March, new ways of resistance and demonstrations spread so quickly that, with the help of synchronization of strikes and uniting disputes, the workers finally got the chance to resist against the policies of the government, the 24 January decisions and the coup d'état as a block after nine years of silence.

It should be noted again that the Spring Demonstrations mostly took place in the public sectors. However, inevitably the private sector also was affected by the collective mobilization of workers. At first sight the reason behind the demonstrations seems to have been the low wages and the blockage of collective bargaining; however, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, the pressures in the factories, working conditions and nine years for struggling to survive in radically changed circumstances, made the demonstrations inevitable. The coup d'état created a shock effect on workers that all the when they realized existing right during import substitution industrialization had been destroyed. Workers had enjoyed high wages thanks to to high level of unionization and right to strike. When the unions were closed down or suspended in order to implement the January 24 decisions, the situation was reversed considering the workers. Even though the regime was civilized in 1983, with the new regulations;

unionization became harder, the job security though did not vanish completely left its place to unsecure, flexible jobs. As Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward argue, “for a protest movement to arise out of these traumas of everyday life, people have to perceive the deprivation and disorganization they experience as both wrong and subject to redress.”¹⁸⁵ Considering workers in 1989, they were deprived of existing rights; moreover in that condition they were trying to survive with low wages.

At this point, it is important to see that the reason to push workers to mobilize was not only the low wages, but the effect of radical change on workers’ lives. They began to work in unprecedented conditions which had not been on the agenda up until 1980. Besides, the motivation behind the workers was to get their rights back since one of the most important motto of the demonstrations was “we want our rights back.”

Protests against Unions

The examples above would give the impression that workers’ grievances were addressed primarily to workplaces, to the employers or the managers of production and this is mostly true. Yet there were also many cases of actions directed at the trade unions of which workers were members. The demonstrations against the trade unions also indicate the decisiveness of the workers in their struggle; therefore one can talk about a movement which went beyond that of the unions. In this sense, the Spring Demonstrations were grassroots demonstrations in which the motivation, determination and the spiritedness of the workers became the most important characteristic of the demonstrations. The reasons for this and some relevant actions are given below. It was

¹⁸⁵ Piven and Cloward, p.12.

a quite common perception of the workers that the demonstrations took place despite the negative attitude of the unions. They came at the point that the unions sometimes tried to prevent workers from organizing demonstrations. On the one hand, workers sometimes pushed their unions in order to force them to take a decision of resistance and also thrust them to be more pro-labor and more active in collective bargaining.

The workers were criticizing their unions for being passive and for neglecting the problems of the workers. For instance, the workers of the dockyards, Camialtı, Haliç and İstinye, went to the hospital collectively for the protest due to the break of the collective bargaining process. The workers walked to the hospital and said that they chose to go for passive resistances since the union rights and freedoms had been destroyed. They also criticized their unions by indicating that “we are workers who earn 150.000 TL a month. Most of us do not have the money to go back home. It is obvious that the unions which are representing us are submissive, their struggle to be elected to the union administration is more important than our struggle for surviving.”¹⁸⁶

By means of the Spring Demonstrations, it would not be wrong to say that workers could crack a little bit of the union bureaucracy within Turk-Is and also other unions connected to the confederation.¹⁸⁷ Most of the time, the workers criticized their unions for being unconcerned with the problems of the workers. Thus, during the Spring Demonstrations they not only struggled against the employers and their attitudes in the collective bargaining process but they also struggled against their unions. Nuri

¹⁸⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March, 1989. “Bizler ayda 150.000 TL alan işçileriz. Çoğumuzun eve geri dönecek dolmuş parası yok. Bizi temsil eden sendikaların hali ortada, teslimiyetçiler. Onlar için yönetime yeniden seçilmek bizim mücadelemizden önce geliyor”.

¹⁸⁷ After 1987 to 1990, especially after Spring Demonstration, in the branches half of the chairmen changed, in head quarters 97 of 196 administrators; and the 15 of 132 union chairmen changed. (Koç, *Teslimiyetten Mücadeleye*, p. 14).

Ağçiçek, from the dockyard of Taşkızak, tells the story of how they broke in to the union, Harb-İş, and forced union administration to take a decision of resistance when the process of collective bargaining stopped:

Those days were critical days for collective bargaining and we got the news that the process had stopped. Our union was located in Cağaloğlu, we organized the workers and after work we decided to go to our union. We walked to Kasımpaşa and took the small boats in order to cross Haliç. You had to see that, there were tens of small boats on Haliç. We crossed Haliç, and there were policemen waiting for us. They tried to stop us, but we did not. We went to the union. However; they locked it. They did not let the workers to come in! Yet, the workers were decisive and we achieved to step in the union. We were very crowded; we did not have enough space in the hall. We were very excited at that time. The other administrators in the unions tried to calm down the workers but the workers were very nervous. The head of the union was in Ankara for the collective bargaining. I talked to him on the phone. I said to the chairman that we were very decisive; we would not go anywhere without a decision of demonstration. We wanted to strengthen our unions' hand in hand with the collective bargaining. We decided to grow beards. Since we were a military workplace, that demonstration was very effective.”¹⁸⁸

Not every demonstration against unions was peaceful as in the Nuri Ağçiçek's example. For instance, in Kırıkkale, a thousand workers broke into their unions after the dispute in collective bargaining and broke chairs and tables.¹⁸⁹ There were also more peaceful and meaningful demonstrations: workers in the thermal plant in Muğla sent

¹⁸⁸ Nuri Ağçiçek: “Toplu sözleşmenin en kritik aşamasında, sözleşmenin çıkmaza girdiği haberini alıyoruz. Bizim sendika şubemiz Cağaloğlundaydı. İşçiyi örgütledik akşam iş çıkışında sendikaya gideceğiz. Kasımpaşaya yürüdük, Kasımpaşada kayıklarla karşıya geçtik. Nasıl bir izleseniz, denizin üstünde onlarca kayık. Karşıya geçince tabii, polis müdahale etmeye çalıştı. Biz uslu uslu sendikaya kadar gittik, bu sefer de sendikayı kapatmışlar, yani işçiyi sendikaya sokmuyorlar. Fakat işçi o kadar kararlıydı ki, bir şekilde o barajı aşarak şubenin içine girmeyi başardık. Müthiş bir coşku ve heyecan var. Zaten salona sığmadık, dışarı taşık. O zaman şube başkanı da Ankara toplu sözleşmedeydi. Diğer yöneticiler işçilere bir şeyler izah etmeye çalışıyorlar fakat işçi tepkili. Şube başkanıyla telefonda konuştum. Başkan dedim, işçiler çok kararlı toplu sözleşmeyi hızlandırmak ve lehimize çevirebilmek için, sendikayı güçlendirmek için eylem yapalım. Biz o zaman sakal bırakma eylemi kararı almıştık. Ve telefonla şube başkanından da onay aldık ve bu bizim iş yerinde çok etkili oldu.”

¹⁸⁹ Cumhuriyet 15 March 1989.

telegrams to their unions and explained that they wanted their rights.¹⁹⁰ Workers sometimes walked to their unions and in front of them shouted that they wanted their chairman's resignation.¹⁹¹ Besides the renewal of the collective bargaining, 1989 was also the year for the general congresses of TÜRK-İŞ and also other unions that were associated to TÜRK-İŞ in which elections took place.

Yıldırım Koç and Faruk Pekin argue that since the chairmen of every union had a concern to be re-elected, he was more interested in the workers' problems.¹⁹² This could be mostly true; yet it should not be missed that the agenda of Turkey in 1989 was mostly the problems of the workers. Not only trade unionist but also politicians began to make politics on the problems of the workers. As a result, it is possible to say that the decisiveness of the workers was effective in the sense that they forced trade unionist and made them change their attitude towards more pro-labor attitudes.

One for All, All for One

Doubtless, experiencing nearly the same conditions for nine years brought workers together and enhanced the solidarity among them. The decisions on the content and logistic of the actions also paved the way for reviving the soul of solidarity. First the uncooperative approach of employers and then the unions themselves became the targets of actions. The togetherness of the workers set the stage for the new ways of

¹⁹⁰ *Cumhuriyet* 19 April 1989.

¹⁹¹ *Cumhuriyet* 7 April 1989.

¹⁹² Faruk Pekin, "Türk-iş Genel Kurulu, Bir Başka Bahara mı?" *Birikim* 9 (October 1990), pp. 56-62.

organization, which will be evaluated in the next section. The point here is that the problems of the workers gathered them together and as a result, workers could avoid the attack of the employers, capital and state for the first time after 1980 as a block. One of the special features of the Spring Demonstrations was that workers were able to overcome the political boundaries between them. It should be mentioned again that it was a great success considering the radical polarization in the society right before 1980. They all said that they struggled together, and they achieved together. Atılay Ayçın described the atmosphere as:

It was really interesting that even though there were different political opinions, there was only one aim. No one tried to impose his/her political ideology on the others. I have to say it again, there was only one target: how working class could rise to its feet again? If you gather around a common aim, your thoughts would always be positive. This happened in the Spring Demonstrations.¹⁹³

The workers told me proudly that the unity of the workers, from conservative to liberal, leftist to rightist was worth. Nuri, leader of the workers, referred to the importance of giving confidence to them: “Our success came from the fact that we all did it together with the workers. We made decisions together, we gave them confidence that we were struggling for all of us without any prejudice. From religious to leftist, we were struggling against injustice”.¹⁹⁴ They told me that the attendance at the demonstrations was 90 % most of the time. However, sometimes the workers did not attend the demonstrations since they were scared to lose their jobs. The unity of the

¹⁹³ Atılay Ayçın: “İlginçtir. Farklı politik görüşler olsa da, tek bir amaç vardı. Hiç kimse kendi görüşünü diğerine kabul ettirmeye çalışmadı. Tekrar söylemek gerekirse, tek bir amaç vardı, o da işçi sınıfı nasıl ayağa kalkar. Ortak bir amacınız olunca, düşünceler de hep pozitif oluyor. 89 böyle bir şeydi.”

¹⁹⁴ Nuri Ağçıçek: “Bizim en büyük başarımız, bu hareketi hep birlikte yapmamızdı. Kararları birlikte aldık, bir dayatma olmadı. Hepimiz için, hiç önyargı olmadan mücadele ettiğimiz güvenini verdik. O güven olmasa olmazdı. Sağcısı solcusu, adaletsizliğe karşı mücadele ettik”.

workers without a doubt created good memories in the workers' lives, considering the Spring Demonstrations. The common attitudes of the workers strengthened the demonstrations even though the workers had different political insights. This situation legitimated the struggle for taking their rights back. The necessity of the struggle was internalized by all workers, and created a new experience. Memet Çelik, tells his experience of 1May in 1989 when it was forbidden to go to Taksim Square. However, the workers insisted on celebrating 1st of May in Taksim Square and they did:

I never forgot that day. I saw three or four workers, they were carrying bags. I warned them that the demonstrations was illegal, it was better for them to not to carry illegal poster or some weapon or whatever. I did not want them to got in trouble. They replied to me that they were fasting and if the police would take them to the police station they would break their fasting with the foodstuffs and pray with the rugs in their bags. Even those religious workers were in the 1 May.¹⁹⁵

Unfortunately I was only able to interview one conservative worker. Tayfun Kocatürk tells the process of the Spring Demonstrations in his factory:

The leftist workers were the majority in our workplace. However, we did the demonstrations all together. They never said 'you are conservative or rightist you'd better step aside'. I remember our walking to Alibeyköy; we linked our arms together, leftists and rightists. However, sometimes more conservative workers did not want to attend the demonstrations. They told me that they were both afraid of losing their jobs and communism to come because sometimes leftist workers shouted as hammer and sickle. I remember a rumor they told me: In Russia the revolution took place due to a lunch boycott of students and they were afraid that the same thing would happen here. I told them that we had to be together, the employers should see us together; otherwise, we would split up and employer would think we were not strong enough. Then some of them came to the demonstrations.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Memet Çelik, interview by the author, tape recording, 10 January, 2011. "*O mitingi hiç unutmuyorum, 3-5 tane işçi arkadaşı gördüm, torbalar var ellerinde, bakın çocuklar dedim, zaten yasadışı bir eylem, yasadışı bir pankart, suç aleti falan olmasın, başımız belaya girmesin, diye uyardım. Hiç beklemediğim bir cevap aldım. Abi dediler, biz orucuz, ola ki polis bizi gözaltına falan alırsa, burada bizim iftarlıklarımız ve namaz seccademiz var. Bu dindar işçiler bile, 1 mayısa gelmişti*".

He also told me about a solidarity demonstration that he attended:

We went to see the workers who were dismissed from the municipality of Kağıthane. A solidarity night was arranged but I do not remember who arranged it. There was a group of leftist workers, they welcomed us. We entered the hall and workers were playing instruments and singing. It was a good night.

Undoubtedly, the unity of the workers both strengthened the demonstrations

and made them more influential. Moreover, this unity increased the confidence of the workers since every worker in the factory attended the demonstrations and created stronger solidarity among them. Mehmet Turp told me that in the collective bargaining process they did all kinds of demonstrations. They went to the hospital collectively, growing beards, etc. However, their employers wanted a strike vote. He told me that they lost the strike vote and some of the workers cried. Nevertheless, that was a turning point for them as he indicated that it made them stronger and after that, they acted all together and never split up again.

The solidarity among workers disapprove of the individualistic approach of neo-liberal thinkers Giddens and Beck which was evaluated in Chapter 2. For Beck, “the individual him/herself becomes reproduction unit for the social in the life world, and class loses its sub-cultural basis and is no longer experienced”¹⁹⁷ However, as it is argued by American sociologists, such as Offe and Wiesenthal, ethnicity, gender and

¹⁹⁶ Tayfun Kocatürk, interview by the author, tape recording, 6 February 2011. “*Bizim işyerinde solcular çoğunlukta idi. Ama öyle, sağcısı burada dursun solcusu burada dursun, bu bizim işimizdir gibi bir şey yoktu. Hep beraberdik. Mesela o Alibeyköy yürüyüşünü hatırlıyorum. Her şeyden arkadaşımız vardı. Sağcısı solcusu. Kol kola girip yürümüştük. Bazen daha muhafazakâr arkadaşlar eyleme katılmak istemezlerdi. Hem işlerini kaybetmekten hem de komünizmin gelmesinden korkuyorlarmış. Çünkü solcu arkadaşlar dışarıda bağıyor mesela orak çekiç diye. Bir ağabeyin anlattığı bir söylenti vardı, Rusya’da öğrenciler, yemek eylemiyle devrim yapmış demişti mesela, biz de Rusya gibi mi olacağız. Sıkıntıya girerdi. Pek girmek istemezdi ama çok zor ikna ederdik. Gel abi, derdik, ne alakası var komünizmle, birlik beraberlik olsun, hepimiz yürüyelim, derdik. Bizi beraber görsün işveren de ayağını ona göre uzatsın, yoksa bölünürsek ne yaparız. O zaman bir kısmı gelirdi”.*

¹⁹⁷ Savage, p. 103.

race, undermine class solidarity. What we see in the Spring Demonstrations is that after a short period of radical polarization of society before 1980, workers, both male and female, without excluding their identities (religious and ethnic) managed to act together. It is important to realize and remember ethnic, religious or gender differences can and could be overcome.

From Local to Nationwide: The Organization of Demonstrations

The organization of the Spring Demonstrations is crucial as it paved the way for demonstrations to be widespread and highly organized. The demonstrations began to take place little by little in work places. At the beginning, they were mostly related to the problems of working conditions in the workplaces. In order to change the poor conditions, the workers organized in two different ways: first, they organized in the unions which were more pro-labor.¹⁹⁸ Second, they organized their own workplace committees mostly independent from their unions.

It is possible to argue that political parties were neither before the demonstrations took place, that is to say, in the organization process of the demonstrations, nor during the demonstrations very influential/effective. However, it should be noted that most of the workers' leaders were members of the socialist or communist party.¹⁹⁹ That is, individually some workers and leaders were in fact party members, yet the political parties themselves were not visible at the demonstrations. This situation was evaluated by workers in two different ways: on the one hand, some

¹⁹⁸ Petrol-İs, Yol-İs for example.

¹⁹⁹ Especially TKP.

of workers agreed that the absence of the radical/leftist political parties affected demonstrations positively: without political parties, the workers organized on their own and there was not a big authority above them. The absence of an authority united workers under organizations which were only formed by the workers and made them stronger. On the other hand, some of them criticized the socialist movement for the lack of authority. They argued that the Spring Demonstrations could have gone one step further so that they would gather workers and the demonstrations under a big umbrella which would have the potential to shake the system from its roots; but it could not. Consequently, according to some trade unionists²⁰⁰ the lack of socialist movement caused workers to be not politicized enough to criticize capitalism directly and its effects.

However, the Spring Demonstrations should not be underestimated as there was the absence of socialist political organization. The demonstrations achieved some of their purposes, much as the workers gained 142% increase in their wages. Moreover, the political impact of the demonstrations was important that it paved the way for the fall of the government.²⁰¹

The first step of the organization of the demonstrations was the workplace committees and workplace units. Workplace committees, as I indicated earlier, were formed to deal with the problems of workers directly within the workplaces. They were usually formed to answer all of the different problems of the different branches. As a result, workplace committees split into branches: every unit in the factory chose its own representative, and those representatives formed workplace committees. As a result, the

²⁰⁰ Hasan Gülüm, trade unionist in Belediye-İş, and İsmail Hakkı Kurt educationist in Petrol-İş.

workplace committees or workplace units were also mechanisms for criticizing unions for being ignorant to the workers' problems. To illustrate, in Turkish Airlines where Hava-İş was organized the workers founded committees as "democratic unity" whereas in the Tekel brewery, where Tek Gıda-iş organized "democratic oppositional unity" which conducted a strong opposition against the unions. Nuri Ağaçiçek from the dockyard of Taşkızak tells:

Our workplace committee was independent from the union, Harb-İş. Workers could not go to their own unions. Can you believe that? The unions' attitude was unacceptable so that we founded our unity. It was based on the units of branches. We were 3000 workers within the factory and 2000 of them were unionized. Those 2000 workers were working in 32 different units. Thus, every unit chose its representatives and we built a committee of workplace. Those units were the subcommittees of the committee of the workplace.²⁰²

In the workplaces where the unions' attitude was more pro-labor, the unions and workplace committees acted together. In a pharmaceutical plant, called White, Petrol-İş, which was a more democratic union comparing to the other conservative unions, was organized. Mehmet Turp was the workplace representative of the union and he says:

When I became a representative, we understood that as 3 representatives we could not do it alone. Therefore, we decided to form a committee. Every unit was based on their branches like baby food, packaging and tabloid. Each unit chose a representative and those representatives constituted the committee. The workplace committees made our jobs easier and strengthened our organization. Because, for example, we discussed a problem in the committee, after that every representative went back their units and told the problems that we had discussed in the committee. They also discussed the situation in their units and made decisions. Those decisions were reported or retold to us by the

²⁰² Nuri Ağaçiçek: "Bizim işyeri komitemiz sendikadan bağımsızdı. İnanır mısınız, işçiler o dönem kendi sendikalarına dahi gidemiyorlardı. Sendikanın tutumu kabul edilemezdi, biz de kendi komitemizi kurduk. Biz şöyle örgütlenme modeli belirledik, 3000 kadar çalışan, 2000 kadar sendikalı işçi vardı. Bu 2000 işçinin çalıştığı 32 birim vardı. Biz bir iş yeri komitesi oluşturduk ve bunun altında da her birimin birim sorumlusu olacak şekilde çalışma başlattık. 32 birimde ayrı ayrı örgütlendik."

representatives. After that the committee made decisions, every representatives went back to their units for operating it. It was a very democratic decision-making process. Everybody knew what was going on in the factory. All workers were in the process of decision making. Lastly, we, as the committee, were presenting the problems to our union and the union was pressing on the employers for our demands to be accepted.²⁰³

In the workplaces where there were no unions, the organizations were made by the leaders' of the workers. The role of workers' leaders was important in that they were the backbone of the demonstrations both in the unionized and non-unionized working places. Aysel Bölücek, who was working as contracted personnel in the municipality of Ankara, in 1989, says:

Not every Friday, but we had Friday meetings in the cafeteria of the workplace to discuss the situation both in the workplace and also in the country. We, as the leading workers, made tours around the buses, which took workers from home to work and work to home, to inform workers about the meeting. We discussed problems and decided on the demonstrations. To be sure that everybody learnt about the demonstration decision, we put notice on the walls or sometimes we used the megaphone of the workplace.²⁰⁴

It should be noted that the most salient characteristics of the workplace committees was the fact that they made decisions with the workers with the workers' consent. This is the reason what the workplace committees were strong against the

²⁰³ Mehmet Turp, interview by the author, tape recording, 25 November 2010. “*Temsilci olunca biz, dedik ki bu sadece 3 kişinin yapacağı iş değil, hemen bir iş yeri komitesi kurduk. Her kısımdan örneğin, mamadan, ambalajdan, tablet, bristel dediğimiz kısımdan, böyle üretim alanlarının her birinden 1er tane arkadaş komiteye geldiler. Her kısım kendi seçti temsilcilerini. İş yeri komitesi bizim işlerimizi kolaylaştırdı ve örgütlülüğümüzü geliştirdi. Çünkü tartıştığımız sorunları arkadaşlar gidip kendi kısımlarında konuşuyorlardı, ondan sonra, temsilcilere ortak bir değerlendirme yapılıyor ve karar alınıyordu. Karar almadan sonra uygulamak için tekrar kendi kısmına dönüyordu. Çok demokratik bir uygulama vardı, işçiler karar alma süreçlerine katılıyordu. Herkes ne karar alınacağını çok iyi biliyordu, tabandaki işçi de, bu temsilciye yansıyor. Temsilci biriken sorunları sendikaya götürüyor, sendika da taleplerimizin kabulü için işverene baskı yapıyordu.*”

²⁰⁴ Aysel Bölücek, interview by the author, tape recording, 23 January, 2011. “*Her cuma değil ama cumaları yemekhanede toplantılar olurdu. Hem işyerindeki hem de ülke genelindeki sorunları konuşmak tartışmak için Biz öncü işçiler olarak, servis araçlarını dolaşırdık, işçileri toplantıdan haberdar etmek için. Sorunları konuşur, eylem kararları alırdık. Herkes öğreysin diye iş yerlerine duyurular da asardık, megafonu kullanıp anons yaptığımız da oldu.*”

negative attitude of the employer. Of course, the leading workers and their attempts to organize workers were quite important. They organized workers by determining the problems in the factory and telling those problems to the workers. Thus, the opposition movement started to deal with the problems in the factories. The leading workers used those problems properly to organize the workers and encouraged them to struggle.

Ercan Atmaca expressed that workers' leaders were trying to attract workers to the struggle by giving provocative and motivating speeches in the work places. They also organized meetings, and called workers to attend the meetings. In the meeting they were discussing the problems of the workers and possible solutions for them. Besides the unions, there were associations. Shoemakers were organized in the "Association of Shoemakers". One of the founders of the association, Uğur Parlak, told me about the process of organization:

Our fundamental problems besides low wages were insurance and employers' unconcerned attitude of implementing health and safety regulations at work. In small ateliers, the workers lived through fatal diseases and sometimes deaths. We used so many volatile substances such as Benzol, which was substandard in Europe, and those substances were directly affecting the human health in a bad way. Thus, we started protesting the employers because of these problems. We were trying to get our basic rights back, such as lunch at the factory or service buses which picked us from home and bring to the workplace.²⁰⁵

Although the demonstration began to take place in the factories and they were local from the very beginning, they went into widespread demonstrations with the organizations of regional committees. Regional committees were founded in Istanbul,

²⁰⁵ Ercan Atmaca: "Bizim temel olarak sorunlarımız, sigorta, işçi sağlığı iş güvenliği hükümlerinin uygulanmaması, bunun sonucunda, ağır hastalıklar, ölümler yaşanması, küçük atölyelerde. Benzol diyebileceğimiz, uçucu katkı maddelerinin Avrupa standartlarının çok çok üstünde insan sağlığını direkt etkileyen özellikleri nedeniyle, biz daha fazla bunlardan etkileniyorduk. Bu sebeplerle işverene karşı örgütlenmeye başladık. Yemek, servis gibi temel insani, kazanılmış hakları, biz yeniden kazanmaya çalışıyorduk."

Kocaeli and İzmir, where the industrialization was intense: such as Topkapı, Beykoz, İkitelli. Moreover, the leading workers were trying to unite the factories from the same branches. Mehmet Turp pharmaceutical plant called White says:

There were other pharmaceutical plants in the same region. We were acting in concert. If we had a problem in the factory, inevitable it reflected to the other plants. They came to visit us and we went to visit them a lot. We gathered in meetings and shared our problems. We created solidarity among us. For instance, during collective bargaining process they did not want an article related to the discipline committee to change. They came to us, and we decided to struggle together. We also insisted on the same article against employer. We became more powerful with the regional committees.²⁰⁶

Nuri Ağçıçek, the leader of workers in dockyard explains:

Our first organization took place in the dockyards. Our union, Harb-İş organized in military workplaces, such as dockyards, sewing workshops, maintenance and repair and it had 6500 members in Istanbul. We as the opposition against unions, first indicated our syndicate targets, we printed brochures. Second, we discussed our organization model: workplace units and workplace committees. We arranged a meeting with other military workplaces and told them our organization model. They also applied the model, so that we became organized in the whole military workplaces.²⁰⁷

Last but not least, these regional organizations went one step further and formed a “Platform of Unions” in Istanbul. The Platform of Unions was constructed by the workers’ leaders both in the pro-labor unions and also outside the unions. Ercan

²⁰⁶ Mehmet Turp: “Bölgede başka ilaç fabrikaları vardı, bütün ilaççılarla ortak bir hareket halindeydik. Bizdeki bir sorun mutlaka onlara yansıyor, biz onları ziyarete giderdik, onlar bizi ziyarete gelirdi, örneğin bizim yaptığımız bir genel toplantıda onlar da gelir konuşma yaparlardı. Bir dayanışma içerisinde olurdu ilaç fabrikaları. Yani sıkıntı olduğunda, toplu sözleşme dönemlerinde, ya da bize derlerdi ki, disiplin kurulu maddeleri var bizim çok önem verdiğimiz, işverene karşı, o madde için greve çıkacağız, siz bunu direteceksiniz, biz de direteceğiz, gibi. Bölge komiteleriyle daha da güçlendik.”

²⁰⁷ Nuri Ağçıçek: “İlk örgütlenmemiz tersanede oldu. İstanbul’da Harb-iş o dönem tersane, dikimevleri, bakım-onarım, sahil güvenlikte örgütlüydü, 6500 üyesi vardı o zaman İstanbul şubesinin. Deniz Kuvvetlerine bağlı Taşkızak tersanesinde başladık. Biz sendikaya muhalefet olarak, önce kendi sendikal ilkelerimizi belirledik, nasıl bir sendika hedeflediğimizi ortaya koyduk. Bu çerçevede bir takım broşürler bastık. İkinci noktada da, örgütlenme modelini tartıştık: iş yeri birimleri ve işyeri komiteleri. Diğer iş yerleriyle birlikte toplantılar yaptık ve örgütlenme modelimizi anlattık. Onlar da uygulamaya başlayınca bütün tersanelerde örgütlü olduk”.

Atmaca, who had been the spokesman of the platform for three years, described this process:

Before the formation of “Platform of Unions” the representative of workplaces and the leader workers made several meetings at the place of Otomobil-İş. There were like 400 combative and revolutionist workers’ leaders. Their common point was that they were willing to conduct a struggle in favor of the working class. Therefore, we arranged meetings, not every week but every several weeks, we discussed about what should be done, and how should be done. We organized collective movements. Those leaders were not only from the more democratic unions, but also from different sectors which were organized neither in unions nor in associations. It was understood that the struggle could have been more powerful if both the unionized and non-unionized workers had acted together. We went to the organize industrialist area; we organized 1500 workers from there. They formed a unity of workers and joined Platform of Unions”. We all together formed the “Platform of Unions.”²⁰⁸

The Platform of Unions was an attempt to gather unions together and to coordinate the demonstrations from a more central place. This attempt helped movements to become widespread and more importantly strengthened the solidarity among the unions and the workers. Everyone unionized or not unionized was welcomed to the Platform so that it also contributed to struggle to be more organized. The workers knew where there was a problem; the communication between the different factories was established. Solidarity demonstrations also became the backbone of the widespread demonstrations since workers were informed about the problems about different sector and factories. In the Platform of Unions, unions and workers together discussed the problems and tried to find solutions together.

²⁰⁸ Ercan Atmaca: “Sendikalar platformu kurulmadan önce, iş yeri temsilcileri, işçi önderleri, Otomobil-iş sendikasında bir araya gelirdik. Bunlar ağırlıklı olarak devrimci, öncü işçiler. Şimdi bunların birleştikleri noktalar, işçi mücadelesi. Biz bir araya geldik, her hafta değil belki ama zaman zaman, ne yapılabilir, nasıl yapılabilir diye düşündük, tartıştık. Kolektif eylemler düzenledik. Sadece demokratik sendikalarda örgütlü işçi önderleri değil, sendikalı sendikasız, derneklerde örgütlü bütün işçi liderleri vardı. Şunu öğrendik, bu sadece örgütlü işçilerin yürüteceği bir mücadele değil, örgütsüz işçileri de katmak gerekir. Bu nedenle, şubeler platformu olarak sanayi sitelerine gittik, ve 1500 işçi örgütledik. İşçilerin birliğini oluşturduk o bölgede, oradan temsilciler seçtik, şubeler platformuna katıldılar”.

One can argue that the Platform of Unions integrated theory and practice since the members of the Platform of Unions went to industrial regions and work places which were not unionized, listened to the workers' problem and integrated them in the Platform of Unions to struggle in a more organized way. As it was indicated earlier, it was an attempt which made an important contribution to the process yet its contribution was limited. The most organized union was still TÜRK-İŞ since it was the biggest confederation in Turkey. Other unions from time to time arranged big demonstrations nationwide which contributed to the process. For instance TÜRK-İŞ organized a lunch boycott nationwide with the attendance of 18 unions connected to it. The reason behind the demonstrations was to give a notice to employers' considering their neglectfulness about health and safety at work which was one of the main problems of workers. 35 thousand workers attended the demonstrations.²⁰⁹

Tes-İş,²¹⁰ which were organized in the energy, water and gas sector and did not have right to strike, also organized a lunch boycott to protest the dispute in the collective bargaining. As was reported by newspapers 86, 000 workers attended the demonstration.²¹¹ Besides nationwide lunch boycotts, 39, 000 workers in 27 different sugar factories refused to get on the busses which took them to work in the morning and walked to their working places.

The demonstrations, though they first began locally, later with the attempts of the workers by showing their decisiveness and pushing their unions to be more

²⁰⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, 16 February 1989.

²¹⁰ *Tes-İş: Türkiye Enerji Su ve Gaz İşçiler Sendikası: the Energy, Water and Gas Workers' Union of Turkey*

²¹¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 5 April 1989.

demanding, constituting mechanisms such as workplace and region committees, and with the help of pro-labor unions by forming up an organization of Platform of Unions, the demonstrations became widespread. The secret of the achievement of demonstrations lay behind the decision-making mechanism that involved everyone working without paying attention to their ethnic, religion and gender differences, as it was perceived by all workers. Another important thing to note is that the new kinds of resistances, such as boycotting lunch, going to the hospital collectively, refusing to get on the buses and more, were decided by committees of workers. The creativity of the workers considering the new ways of resistances will be evaluated in the next chapter.

New Ways of Resistance: Passive Resistance

The Spring Demonstrations left their mark on history with the creativity of the workers considering new ways of resistances such as boycotting lunches, going to the hospital collectively, growing beards, shaving half of their hair and mustaches. These new ways of resistances were radically different from the conventional resistances, most commonly strikes, which had taken place before 1980. As a result, one can talk about a break between the resistances before and after 1980. At this point the concept of “repertoire of collective action” is important in the sense that Charles Tilly argues, that there are innumerable ways for people to pursue their collective goals and various forms of demonstrations belongs the repertoire of a century. Yet, the repertoire of collective actions is open to innovation and diffusion. Though changes take place slowly, it is a

natural process.²¹² When a repertoire of collective action comes into being, it includes “the standards of rights and justice prevailing in the population, the daily routines of the population, the populations’ internal organization, its accumulated experience with prior collective action, and the pattern of repression in the world to which the population belongs.”²¹³

At this point it is possible to argue considering the Spring Demonstrations that structural obstacles led workers to find different ways to resist since the right to strike was given when a dispute arise from the process of collective bargaining moreover, the public demonstration was prior to permission which usually refused by the governor of the city were restricted by the new regulations with the new constitutional law in 1982. As a result, the conventional struggling ways were blocked by the state and government and these were no more available means for workers to resist against the economic and political policies that had been applied since 1980. The daily routines of the workers and the populations’ internal organization were highly interconnected that the common experiences of the problems²¹⁴ in the workplaces led people to organize in workplace committees in which they conducted the decision making process in order to attempt to solve the problem. As was discussed in Chapter 3, in 1986, ‘63 Strikes’ took place which were organized by Petrol-İş and involved 20,000 workers in which 10, 000 workers who did not have right to strike resisted by boycotting lunches, and conducting sit-down and slow-down strikes. The point here is that not all the new ways of resistances suddenly were invented in 1989; however, they were also an accumulation

²¹² Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 156.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p.156.

²¹⁴ Which were detailed in Chapter 3.

of the experiences of the prior experiences. The new ways of resistance were quite simply that workers utilized the gaps of the system and also the law. Of course, they made some demonstrations also against the law; however, since they managed to get the public opinion's attention positively, the demonstrations of the workers were legitimate.

As a result, this section of the thesis evaluates the different ways of resistance by focusing on the creativity process; in other words, meanings of the resistance and where they came from, and also the experiences of the workers during demonstrations.

The reasons behind the occurrence of a new “repertoire of collective actions,” as it is listed above, do not answer the question of what the new ways of resisting would be, in other words the content of the resistances. Though the restrictions on the Collective Bargaining, Strike and Lockout Law was an important factor for a new repertoire of collective actions to take place, there were also other factors rather than structural obstacles. As the workers told me, the ignorance of the press allowed the workers to find different ways to resist. The press had not been interested in workers' problems and struggles for a long time, as a result, creative, different demonstration were also made to get the public's attention the issue and the problems of workers and labor world. Atilay Ayçin explains:

The Bergama workers resisted for days, but it did not appear in any newspapers. But one day, they walked Beyoğlu Street half naked with the brooms in their hands, it took the press' attention. Thus, those colorful demonstrations were also made to attract both the public and people who could have the authority to solve the problems.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Atilay Ayçin: “Bergama işçisi günlerce direndi. Ama basında hiç yer almadı. Ama bir gün bir yarı çıplak yürüdüler Beyoğlu'nu, ellerinde süpürgelerle, o zaman basının ilgisini çekti. Böyle renkli eylemler hem basının hem de sorunu çözebilecek otoritelerin ilgisini çekmek için yapıldı”.

Since creative demonstrations found a place in the newspaper and attracted public's attention, they spread quickly.

It is possible to separate the demonstrations into two kinds: the first one is demonstrations directly related to the production process and the other one is symbolic demonstrations. First I evaluate the demonstrations which aimed to stop production. Considering stopping of the production, one of the most influential demonstrations was going to the hospital collectively with the permission from the doctor of the workplace. It was a totally legal and legitimate demonstration: workers went to the doctor of the workplace and said they were sick. They collectively asked for a dispatch note to go to the hospital. With their dispatch notes, they walked to the hospital collectively. They walked for kilometers, they enhanced these demonstrations by slogans such as: “work, bread and freedom,”²¹⁶ “we are workers, we are right and we will win.”²¹⁷ Inevitably, while the workers were away going to hospital, the production stopped for an hour or two. Nuri Ağçiçek, labor's peer from the dockyards, tells his experience:

It was one of our most effective demonstrations. We went to the hospital with other branches in the region. Near us, there were dockyards of Camialtı and on the other way there were maintenance and repair and sewing workshops. First we went out of the factory, we met with Camialtı workers. The place which we passed through was a narrow corridor. There were walls on two sides. The police came from the opposite site, and blocked us. We were 2,000 workers. At the very moment, sewing workshop came behind the police and the police were squeezed between two crowded and angry group of workers. The tension was high. A little turmoil took place and 18 workers were wounded. As the leaders of the workers, I tried to calm down the workers. There was a truck in the park. I went up to the top of the truck and said that the demonstration was over, it had achieved its goal, and we had to go back to the factory. It had been 2 hours since we had left. In the evening, we

²¹⁶ “İş, ekmek , özgürlük”

²¹⁷ “İşçiyiz, haklıyız, kazanacağız.”

were both on national and international TV channels. My relative from Germany called me and said that we were also on TV in Germany.²¹⁸
Another worker, Hasan Gülüm tells about going to the hospital demonstration.

He was a worker at the municipality, and went to the demonstrations of dockyard workers:

In 1989, there was a debate on TV about the workers who had walked bare foot. I was in that demonstration for solidarity with the dockyard workers. I was really impressed that the workers without a doubt climbed over three barricades. Workers from sewing workshops broke the barricades which had been erected by the police. On the one hand, I was witnessing; on the other hand, I was also climbing over the barricades. The workers were all bare foot.²¹⁹

Another important resistance which was related directly to the production was to start working late. Workers went to work a half hour late. Moreover, they sometimes stopped working for an hour or two. Slowdown strikes were also very common. These struggles were not as influential as strikes; however, they disturbed employers without a doubt. These were small demonstrations as, on the one hand, they slowed down the production process and caused even a little harm to the interest of the employer; on the other hand, they discredited the employers since it was forbidden to do so. Those types of demonstration were quite common. For instance, in municipalities bus drivers started

²¹⁸ Nuri Ağçıçek: “Bu da bizim en etkili eylemlerimizden biri oldu. Vizite eylemi yaptık bölgedeki diğer işyerleriyle beraber. Tam bizim tersanenin çıkışının bir tarafında Camialtı tersanesi var, diğer tarafında da bakım onarım var. Dar bir yoldan geçiyoruz, iki tarafında da duvar örülü. Bir baktık, polis bizim önümüzü kesti. Düşün 2bin kişi koridora dizilmiş. Tam o arada, dikimevi arkadan geldi. Polis sıkıştı iki grubun arasında kalınca. Bir kargaşa oldu, yan tarafta demir mazgallar vardı, onlar devrildi, 18 arkadaşımız yaralandı işçi. Biz orada işçiyi sakinleştirmesek nahoş şeyler olacak. Komite sözcüsüydüm ben, kenarda kamyon vardı, onun üstüne çıktım. İşyerinden çıkalı da 2 saat olmuştu, arkadaşlara eylem amacına ulaşmıştır herkes iş başı yapsın dedim. O arada da yabancı bir heyet gelmiş oraya, yabancı TV’ler de oradaydı. Akşam Almanya’dan bir akrabam aradı, beni TV’de görmüş.”.

²¹⁹ Hasan Gülüm, interview by the author, tape recording, 8 January 2011. “89 ilk bahar eylemliliklerinde tvde işçiler yalınayak yürüdü tartışması vardı, ben de o yürüyüşteydim, tersane işçileri yürümüşü harb-işe bağlı. . O yürüyüş beni inanılmaz etkilemişti, inanılmazdı. 3 barikat üst üste açıldı, üstelik dikimevi işçileri barikatları kırarak ilerliyordu. O barikatların işçiler tarafından nasıl aşıldığına ben de ilk defa tanıklık ediyordum, hem de ben de aşıyordum. İşçilerin ayaklarında ayakkabı yoktu, herkes pantolonunu sıvamıştı.”.

working two hours late whereas in Iskenderun and Karabük 24, 000 workers made slowdown strikes before going to strike. TEK workers for example, developed new ways of resistances related to their own production process. Since they were working in two shifts, the production continued for 24 hours. However, they stopped working overtime, and as a result 8-hour time gap occurred. Moreover, they did not get on broken vehicles unless they were fixed.²²⁰

Workers, besides collectively going to hospital, found other kinds of demonstrations methods in order to gather together. They sometimes refused to get on the buses which took them from home to factory and from factory to home. For example, when their shifts ended, they did not take the bus, but walked to the center of the city for kilometers. In the morning, they took the buses to go to the factories. However, they got off the bus at the entrance of the factory and walked with their units. By doing so, they were able to gather together collectively and also shouted slogans in order to get the employers' attention. Without a doubt, with the creative and new ways of demonstrations, workers achieved to get both the public's and the press' attention. Within this framework, the demonstrations were successful.

Besides those demonstrations, workers blocked the traffic for hours. This kind of demonstration was also very effective. Although it did not cause any harm to the employer, it usually alarmed the city administration and forced the authorized people to solve the problem. It attracted public's and employers' attention. Hasan Gülüm narrated the day when they blocked the traffic:

After the Spring Demonstrations, it was 1992, if I am not mistaken. We could not get our wages for three months and we made a strike of halting working for 60 days and the press did not pay attention. We were

²²⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 7 March 1989.

thinking of doing something influential. Afterwards, one of our friends proposed to block the traffic, especially E-5.²²¹ If we could block it for half an hour, it would be enough. We discussed about how to do that and we decided to do it with garbage trucks. There were 22 drivers we had to convince. We went to their houses and talked with them. The plan was that they would block the street and we would cover them with one thousand workers. When the vans stopped, one of our friends would go to hide the keys. That was the plan. We organized 19 of the drivers. And we did block the main street for forty minutes. The chief of police came and begged to us to open the way. It was the first time that I saw a chief like that. During the evening, all news mentioned us. And in the morning, the representatives were called to go to Ankara.²²²

The relation between the organization of the demonstrations and the problems in the factories and workplaces was crucial. The third opponent of this relation was the creative/passive demonstrations. Workers organized in workplace committees and decided to protest the working conditions little by little. The boycotting lunch demonstration at first occurred as a result of the problem of food in the factories. It was either spoiled or not enough. The workers were complaining about that their employers even put bread on the table counting the slices. Thus, every worker had to eat, two or three slices of bread. Moreover, there were some occasions when the workers were poisoned from spoiled food. Some murmurs and grumbles started within the workplaces and the workplace committees decided to boycott the lunches. When the lunch boycott made an overwhelming impression on the press, this kind of demonstration was quickly

²²¹ One of the main highways in Istanbul.

²²² Hasan Gülüm: “92ydi yanlış hatırlamıyorsam, işçiler 3 aydır maaşlarımızı alamıyorduk. 60-70 gündür iş durdurma eylemi yapıyorduk biz bu konuyla ilgili ve kamuoyuna hiç yansımamıştı. Biz de öyle bir eylem yapmalıyız ki diye düşündük. O zaman bir arkadaşımız dedi ki, E5i kapatalım, yarım saat kapatsak yer yerinden oynar. Nasıl yapalım diye düşündük. Sonra çöp arabalarıyla yapmaya karar verdik. Sonra, 22 tane çöp arabasındaki şoförü bizim ikna etmemiz lazım. Evlerine gittik, konuştuk. Plan, arabalar duracak, birisi anahtarları alacak, bütün işçilerin çalıştığı yerde yapacağız eylemi, böylece işçiler de eylemi destekleyecekler. Kamyoncu arkadaşları da koruyacağız. 19 kamyon şoförünü ikna etmiştik. 40 dakika yol kapalı kaldı. Sonra biz eylemi yaptık, hareket amiri geldi, bize yalvarıyordu, ben ilk defa bir amiri öyle gördüm. Akşam olduğunda bütün TV’ler bizden bahsetmişlerdi. bizi ve temsilcilerimizi Ankara’ya çağırmişti”.

adapted by different workplaces. The workers that I interviewed indicated that the lunch boycotts were a form of notice to the employers to see that something was going wrong within the factories. Lunch boycotts were a relatively easy way of showing grievances collectively. On the other hand, it did no harm to the employers. In other words, the productivity of the factory or the interest of the employer did not diminish due to the lunch boycotts. That is, lunch boycotts had a symbolic meaning that questioned the employers' authority and legitimacy. For the workers, it was a kind of disregard, civil inattention meaning that "we are not obeying you; we are not eating your food."

However, the boycotting lunch demonstrations turned into a widespread, organized movement later, and they also were organized by the unions. For instance, Petrol-İş organized a lunch boycott in petrochemical plants due to the break in the collective bargaining process. Workers boycotted lunches and refused to get on the buses which took them to the workplaces. Seven thousand workers attended the demonstrations.²²³ The unions made schedules for the demonstrations; they step by step were carried out. For instance, Turk Metal- Is firstly organized a lunch boycott in the workplaces of Mechanical and Chemical Industry Cooperation. According to plan, after the lunch boycott, they started to grow beards and go to the hospital collectively.²²⁴

Growing beards within the workplace, just like lunch boycotts, had a symbolic meaning. Normally it was forbidden to grow beards in the public institutions enterprises. As I could follow in the newspapers, the first passive resistance as growing beard took place in the military workplaces, the dockyards. Without a doubt, growing

²²³ *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March 1989.

²²⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 23 March 1989.

beards in the workplaces where commanders and officers were the employers, and where they controlled the factory with almost military discipline, was very disturbing for the military rulers. Similar to the lunch boycotts they also were made to attract the public's and employers' attention. Growing beards was also one of the important symbolic demonstrations which that spread throughout the country. Mehmet Turp the workplace representative of the union in pharmaceutical plant White, says:

We were making these kinds of demonstrations because we wanted the employer to hear our voices. Especially growing our beards was not welcomed by the employers. They were very upset because they produced pharmaceutical products. They were very careful about cleanliness. They even wanted to fire workers because of growing beards. However, we grew beards for 15-20 days. We were trying to make them uncomfortable by those practices. We were reactive and we wanted them to see it. We also did a lot of lunch boycotts.²²⁵

Though I separated the demonstrations, workers did not. They did combine demonstrations and made different demonstrations at the same time. For instance, petroleum sector workers did one of the most influential and the longest of passive resistances. 11,000 workers attended the demonstrations in which they grew beards, they went to the hospital collectively, they did not do overtime, and did not do any other jobs which were not in their job descriptions.²²⁶

One of the important demonstrations of the workers was selling their children symbolically to illustrate their inability to support their family needs or sued for mass divorce claiming that they were unable to maintain a family. Aiming to protest the break

²²⁵ Mehmet Turp: “Tepkimizi bir şekilde iş verene duyurmak için böyle eylemler yapıyorduk, sakal bırakıyorduk, sakal işverenin bizim orda çok kızdığı bir şeydir. Çünkü ilaç üretiliyorlar, çok dikkat ettikleri bir şeydir ve sakal yüzünden işçileri işten atmak bile istemişlerdir. Ciddi rahatsızlıkları vardı, sakal bırakma konusunda. Ama biz 15-20 gün sakal bırakıyorduk, mesela, onları oradan sıkıştırmaya çalışıyorduk. Tepki duyuyorduk, bunları anlamalarını istiyorduk. Yemek boykotunu çok yaptık”.

²²⁶ Cumhuriyet, 7 April 1989.

in the collective bargaining process, 120 highway workers put their children up for sale. They said to newspapers: “we did everything we could, we went to the hospital collectively, grew beard, made slowdown strikes for the increase in wages in order to live humanly. Now we are selling our children. If rich families want to buy our children, they are welcomed because we cannot afford to look after them. Our wages are insufficient. We want their future to be safe.”

As it was reported in newspapers workers went to the Court of Peace and left their petition of divorce. And they left quietly.²²⁷ Without a doubt this demonstration attempted to gain the public’s sympathy by showing the extent of the workers’ poverty and despair. Moreover, Yol-İş workers from Diyarbakır also sued for a mass divorce in order to show their inability to maintain a family with those wages.²²⁸ Without a doubt, being a breadwinner in the family, sustaining a family and being able to maintain the situation was the most important motive in this demonstration. They were not against the patriarchy; on the contrary workers hung on this custom to be continued and tried to impress the public by showing how the economic situation worsened their condition in the family. They wanted the days back in which their labor was enough to maintain a family. There were any other symbolic demonstrations such as wrapping bread with bloody shirts and sending it to the Council of Ministers in order to symbolize their hunger. Moreover, workers made silent protests and talked neither with officers or managers nor among themselves.

Undoubtedly, one of the salient feature of the Spring Demonstrations is the creativity of the workers and the demonstrations. The reason for the creativity of the

²²⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 18 May 1989.

²²⁸ *Cumhuriyet*, 17 May 1989.

demonstrations could be evaluated as the structure of the system which did not let workers use conventional resisting tactics, such as legal strikes. However, it is not sufficient to explain the symbolic demonstrations. Considering symbolic demonstrations, they fit better the concept of Fantasia, the “cultures of solidarity.” As he argues, when a strong a bureaucratic system, as in the case of Turkey, sharply limits the workers’ solidarity, the “cultures of solidarity” tends to emerge when the routine conditions are challenged and workers seek or are forced to rely on their mutual solidarity. These cultures of solidarity, are not revolutionary in the Marxian sense, however, “they may in certain activities express a consciousness that though short of will or capability to make revolution, represents a transformative associational bonding that can shape class relations in significant ways.” Thompson also emphasizes that the resistances do not necessarily become revolutionary; on the contrary they may be aiming to defend existing customs. He argues that under the symbolism of protest, there are some more acute problems. Considering the sixteenth and seventeenth century and the protests such as wife-sale, the problem underneath is the conscious conflict of capitalist logic and non-economic customary behavior. The resistance took place due to the thread of capitalist logic to the customary usage, and sometimes, the familial organization of productive relations and roles.²²⁹To put it in his words: “The plebian culture is rebellious, but rebellious in defense of custom. The customs defended are the people’s own, and some of them are in fact based upon rather recent assertions in practice” As in Thompson’s case, without a doubt, the symbolic resistance of the workers, indicated the more serious problems of workers underneath. The workers tried

²²⁹ Thompson, *The Making*, p. 155.

to resist the new ways of working that came with neo-liberalization and also tried to defend their customs.

Solidarity Demonstrations

One of the noticeable characteristic of the Spring Demonstrations was that workers reinvented/re-found the importance of solidarity. As they overcame the boundaries between them, as was elaborated in the previous sections, the solidarity among them strengthened. Doubtless, the solidarity strikes also were banned moreover; it was also forbidden to celebrate the strike in the strike place. Before 1980, strike tents were built in the strike place and workers with drums and clarinets celebrated the decision to strike. The strike place would never be empty so that workers felt the spirit of solidarity, and also felt that they were not alone. With the Spring Demonstrations, the workers not only visited the strike and showed their support but unions also made solidarity demonstrations. The solidarity between co-workers also was strengthened in this process. Workers together fought against any kind of injustice that had been visited upon their colleagues. Since the mass layoffs began to take place, workers also struggled against dismissals of their friends. It is hard to argue that every solidarity demonstrations achieved its aim especially considering the layoffs; however, they had little influence on the decisions of the employers. The solidarity among people were not only increased the courage of the workers, but it also turned into a material support which was very essential for workers, especially who were on strike. Aysel Bölücek, contracted worker in municipality, says:

Unlike today, we did not withdraw our wages from the ATMs but we were paid by pay clerks. Every pay day for two years until I quit, we collected money for solidarity for resistances or for workers who were dismissed and for their families. There was a strike somewhere for sure; it always was in that period. Our solidarity did not remain only as moral support but also became material. If you gave something from yourself, it would be easier for you to embrace the resistance. Because you knew, some day it might happen to you, you may also go on strike. Then, you knew you would not be hungry, workers would bring you a package of pasta or butter.²³⁰

Mehmet Turp, from pharmaceutical plant, said that they also collected money for solidarity. He indicated that it created a solidarity spirit among the workers. He added that collecting money disturbed the employers since it gave employers the sense of anytime workers were ready for strike; they were strong and prepared enough to go on a strike. Under those circumstances, visiting a strike place or organizing a solidarity demonstration were important all by themselves even they were forbidden, on the one hand. On the other hand, material support and workers' sacrificing from their own wages without a doubt had an important impact on workers that they felt more safe. Besides collecting money for solidarity, workers also arranged visits for solidarity with strikes. Hasan Kaçkır tells his story and what happened after the solidarity visit for a strike at the Coca Cola factory:

In 1991, we, as the Democratic Opposition Unity, went to visit the strike at the Coca Cola factory with four buses. It was a huge factory which had three different gates. We got off the buses and opened our poster; we began to shout for solidarity. We walked around every gate and we cheered the workers up. We and also the workers on strike were very excited. At that time, it was forbidden to excite workers at the place of strike. Later, we left the place. The police blocked our way and said that

²³⁰ Aysel Bölücek: “Şimdiki gibi maaşımızı bankamatikten çekmiyorduk. o zaman her birime mutemetler maaşımızı getirir, imza karşılığı bize verirdi. İşten ayrılana kadar, işçiler için para toplanmamış tek bir maaşım olmamıştır, işten atılan işçiler, direnişteki ve aileleri için. mutlaka bir yerlerde bir grev vardır, hep oldu o süreç içerisinde. Dayanışmamız sadece maneviyatta kalmadı, maddi bir dayanışmaya da dönüştü. İnsanlar kendilerinden bir şey verince, o direnişi daha fazla sahipleniyordu. Yarın bir grev yapmak zorunda kaldığında, yalnız kalmayacağını evine 1 paket makarnanın, bir paket margarinin gelebileceğini biliyordu”.

the employer had complained about us. We went to the police station. We were about 120 workers; they sent 100 of us free. 20 of us spent the night at the police station, the other day, they also sent us free. 3 months later, we paid 77 TL as fine.²³¹

The solidarity with the strike of Iskenderun-Karabük Iron and Steel factory was remarkable. It was possible to understand from the newspapers that the workers, politicians, public, shopkeepers, that is, everybody supported the strike. The decision for the strike was a very hard process for both the workers and the union. The factory planned to go on strike on the 22 March with 24,000 workers, after the dispute in collective bargaining. However, on the 22 March it was declared that the strike would be postponed for two months due to the national security by the Council of Ministers. On the other hand, if a factory did not go on strike in two months after the decision, the right to strike was no longer available. The dispute would be transferred to high board of arbitration.²³² This meant that de facto there was no right to strike.

This decision of the Council of Minister was met with strong opposition. The chairman of the Independent Çelik-İş Metin Türker, chairman of TÜRK-İŞ Şevket Yılmaz, chairman of Democratic Leftist Party Bülent Ecevit and the chairman of SHP Erdal İnönü criticized the decision severely.²³³ Even Şevket Yılmaz warned the government and for the first time called workers to take revenge in the local election

²³¹ Hasan Kaçkır: “1991 yılıydı, Coca Cola grevi vardı. Biz Demokratik Muhalefet Birliği üyeleri, kalktık 4 otobüs fabrikaya gittik. Büyük bir alanı, ve 3 kapısı var. Biz indik otobüslerden pankartımızı açtık, kapılardan dolandık, böyle olağanüstü bir şey. Büyük bir coşku. Grev yerinde insanları heyecanlandırmak suç, hem para hem hapis cezası var. Bir turumuzu attık, otobüslerimize bindik, polis bizim yolumuzu kesti. İşveren şikayet etmiş, polis karakoluna, gittik. 120 işçi kadaydık, 100 kadarımızı bıraktılar. Yirmimiz geceyi karakolda geçirdik. Sonraki gün bizi de bıraktılar. 3 ay sonra 77TL ceza ödedik.”

²³² *Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 1989.

²³³ *Cumhuriyet*, 23 March 1989.

which would be held in 26 March.²³⁴ In this period, passive resistances intensified. Iron and steel workers made passive resistances continuously for 36 days.²³⁵

The opposition of the public to the decision of postponement of strike was successful considering the rescission of decision on the 15 April.²³⁶ Iskenderun and Karabük Iron and Steel factory went on strike on the 4 May.²³⁷

The solidarity with the strike of Iskenderun and Karabük Iron and Steel factory was astonishing. From the shopkeepers of Iskenderun and Karabük to HAK-İŞ supported the strike very effectively. For instance HAK-İŞ organized a lunch boycott in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir on the 90th day of the strike.²³⁸ Aliğa Petkim members of Petrol-İş also organized a lunch boycott with 3.500 workers.²³⁹ TÜRK-İŞ arranged a solidarity meeting in Karabük for Iron and Steel workers on 29 August. It had a significant importance that TÜRK-İŞ for the first time arranged a solidarity meeting for the non-member union of TÜRK-İŞ.²⁴⁰

Besides unions and workers, public and shopkeepers also supported the strike. After the postponement decision, shopkeepers closed their shutters and closed their shops.²⁴¹ The next day, the shopkeepers continued their solidarity and half of the day they closed their shops. Some restaurants in Karabük gave free lunches to the workers

²³⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 24 March 1989.

²³⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 29 March, 1989.

²³⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 15 April 1989.

²³⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 4 May 1989.

²³⁸ *Cumhuriyet*, 2 August 1989.

²³⁹ *Cumhuriyet*, 3 August 1989.

²⁴⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 29 August 1989.

²⁴¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 25 March 1989.

since the workers were boycotting lunch in the factory.²⁴² Moreover, some supermarkets offered credit sales to the workers. Shared taxis, *dolmuş* (mini bus), carried workers who came out after night shift, for free.²⁴³

In the Spring Demonstrations and afterwards, workers were not only in solidarity with strikes but, they were in solidarity with also their co-workers. Workers struggled and made demonstrations for their friends who had been dismissed or mistreated by employers or directors. The solidarity among workers who worked in the same factory was also strong. Solidarity was an inevitable component of the struggle and workers were aware of it. They tried to prevent employers from being injustice against workers and also for this injustice to prevail. Seyit Aslan tells how they struggled against the employers' attempt to fire their co-worker:

One of our friends was fired for the reason that employers thought he had stolen something. We did not know if it was true or not. However, we thought that the employers could accuse one of us some other day. We decided to obviate the attitude of the employer and force the employer to take our friend back to work. Thus, we stopped production for three days. So the employer did. It became a tradition in our factory. One day, the foreman hit our female friend. We wanted the employer to fire the foreman. Again, we resisted for three days, we stopped production, and the foreman was dismissed.²⁴⁴

Solidarity strikes also attracted the press' attention as they reported on the solidarity demonstrations for workers who had been dismissed. In 1989, the dismissals began to take place frequently. As a result, the demonstrations for workers who were

²⁴² *Cumhuriyet*, 26 March 1989.

²⁴³ *Cumhuriyet*, 20 April 1989.

²⁴⁴ Seyit Aslan: “*Bizim bir arkadaşımızı eşofman çaldı diye işten attılar, tabi biz de bilmiyoruz doğru mu değil mi. Şimdi öyle bir şey ki, arkadaşımız onu yapmış olsa bile biz şu mantıkla hareket ettik: yarın bir gün bu suçlamalar başka türlü de gelebilir, bunun önünü almak lazım, bizim bu ark. İşe geri aldirmamız lazım. Biz 3 gün üretim yapmadık, böyle arkadaşımızı işe aldirdik. Yine bir gün bir usta başı bir kadın arkadaşımıza, şöyle bir vurmuş ama vurmuş. Biz bunu gelenek haline getirdik, 3 gün üretimi durdurduk, ya bu arkadaş gidecek bu iş yerinden ya gidecek. Çıkarttırdık o usta başım*”.

dismissed increased. For example, in Istanbul, in the Topkapı region, workers who were from different factories but had the same employers, protested dismissals by going to the hospital collectively and stopped production for hours.²⁴⁵ Workers also made lunch boycotts and made sit-down strikes for criticizing the employers' being responsible for the layoffs. Workers also made solidarity demonstrations in order to support the collective bargaining process of other factories and sectors. For instance, 600 highway workers went to the hospital collectively in order to support the struggle of Tekel workers. They also went to visit Tekel workers and brought them flowers.²⁴⁶

The solidarity demonstrations were also as crowded as if it had been the workers' own demonstrations. For instance 25,000 workers from municipalities went to the hospital collectively even though they had completed their own collective bargaining process. As it was written by newspapers, workers explained the reason of the demonstrations as to support the other workers whose collective bargaining process continued and to protest employers and the government.²⁴⁷

Workers not only supported each other in their tough days, but also helped each other in the organization process of demonstrations. Hasan Gülüm from the municipality of Bakırköy says:

We were organizing a demonstration which included 25,000 workers. We were going to print leaflets but we did not have money. The janitors of the managers were our friends. After the managers left their offices at 5 pm we told the janitors to wait for us, and they did. We waited outside of the room, and inside they copied leaflets. We did not only copy our

²⁴⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 11 August 1989.

²⁴⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 13 April 1989.

²⁴⁷ *Cumhuriyet*, 15 April 1989.

leaflets but every ones' who wanted. After, we delivered them to the workers.²⁴⁸

The associations were also in solidarity with each other. Uğur Parlak from the association of shoemakers tells how they overcame their problems with the help of other associations and public workers:

We were in solidarity with the other associations and we asked their help in order to overcome our most important problem: informality. 90%-95% of the workers in leather, textile, confections, and shoemaking sectors were working informally. We started a scan in the region with financiers and public workers of the SSK. The public workers helped the process: for example, finance office came on day later and fined them with astronomical prices. Either the employer would recognize the social and economic rights of the workers, or s/he would close the workplace. Most of the employer accepted the situation and gave us our rights. It should be noted that we achieved it together with public workers and the association of public workers.”²⁴⁹

Without a doubt, the support of public opinion and students had an importance considering the demonstrations. As was mentioned, though the demonstrations were not legal, they were legitimate. Workers agreed on that especially university students supported the demonstrations by delivering leaflets in front of the factory to help the organization of demonstrations and let workers know about the demonstrations faster; or they came to the demonstrations.

As Ahmet told me, one university student, Engin Egeli, was shot during the demonstrations and he died. He mentioned this occasion as one of the toughest days of

²⁴⁸ Hasan Gülüm: “25 bin işçinin katıldığı bir eylem düzenliyorduk. Biz bildiri basacağız ama paramız yok. Müdürlerin odacılıklarını yapanlar da bizim arkadaşımızdı, müdürler giderlerdi saat 5ten sonra. Biz de çalışan arkadaşlara bizi beklemelerini söylerlerdik, onlar da beklerdi, sonra bildirileri odadan çoğaltırlardı.biz de onları alır, işçilere dağıtırdık”.

²⁴⁹ Uğur Parlak, interview by the author, tape recording, 15 December 2010. “Dayanışma içerisinde olduğumuz örgütlerden bizim en kronik sorunumuzu , kayıt dışılığı çözmek için yardım istedik.. O dönem, deri, tekstil, konfeksiyon, kundurada kayıtsız çalışan işçi %95 civarındaydı. Biz ilişkide olduğumuz maliyecilerle, SSK çalışanlarıyla, memurlarıyla bir tarama başlattık bölgede. Örneğin maliye bir gün sonra geliyordu ve çok astronomik cezalar yazıyordu. Ya işçilerin ekonomik demokratik sosyal haklarını tanyacak, ya da kapatacak. Böyle bir süreç işlettik. Nitekim birçoğu kabul etti bu durumu. Kamu çalışanları derneğiyle, SSK çalışanlarıyla, maliye çalışanları derneğiyle ilişkide olduğumuz için böyle bir dayanışmamız vardı, böyle başardık”.

his life that he could barely overcome. Moreover, the university students organized panels in order to discuss the situation of the demonstrations and working class. University students also boycotted lunch for solidarity with workers.²⁵⁰ One could mention public support, but not in a usual way: the public did not go to the demonstrations with workers; however, they clapped their hands while workers were walking,²⁵¹ or they hit pots and pans to show their support.²⁵² The public's support was extremely important in that it encouraged the workers to continue the demonstrations. Most of the workers told me that things would have been different, in other words, could have been worse, if the public had not supported them. The support of the public also paved the way for the government not to neglect the problems of workers. All together they forced government to improve the conditions of the workers. One of the journalists, Atilla Özsever told me about his opinions about the public support that according to him, the whole society had been under pressure for nine years, including shopkeepers and other people. The economic transformation mostly had crushed workers but it also had affected all parts of society. Beside economic transformation, the pressure on society as well caused the public to support the demonstrations. When the journalists could not get their wages from the employers they also struggled and stopped working for hours. As he mentions, in two or three hours the journalist became more decisive about getting their money. And after that, they sympathized the struggle of the workers.

²⁵⁰ *Cumhuriyet*, 20 April 1989.

²⁵¹ *Cumhuriyet* 13-14 April 1989.

²⁵² *Cumhuriyet*, 21 April 1989.

“Solidarity” is also one of the most important meaningful concepts in considering the Spring Demonstrations. As James Jasper argues, the collective effervescence gives participants the feeling that they can accomplish changes, that they have both individual and collective power.²⁵³ So that, the solidarity without a doubt, gave workers the feeling that they could achieve their aims together and they were not alone. Unlike the view which supposes that heterogeneity undermines solidarity, workers achieved the creation of solidarity not only on the shop floors in the organizations of production, but also beyond them. It would be not wrong to argue that the solidarity had began within the gates of the factory, due to the same experience of deskilling, homogenizing, impoverishment; it transcended the production, factory level, and reached also to society.

The Response of the Employers to the Demonstrations

Without a doubt, the demonstrations did not always continue smoothly. Though the Spring Demonstrations were successful in gaining the support of the public, they encountered the power of the employers and also the state. The employers and state not only tried to stop the demonstrations directly but also tried to provoke workers from inside and to divide the movement and break the solidarity among the workers. Sometimes the police interfered with the demonstrations, sometimes the employers did so.

The employers had their own strategies to prevent demonstrations and to break the solidarity. First of all, the employers punished workers who attended or organized

²⁵³ Jasper, p. 220.

the demonstrations, after the demonstration. For instance, the workers were sent to the discipline committees, or into exile. Aysel Bölücek, a worker in the municipality in Ankara says:

After 1 May, employers started disciplinary proceeding to workers who attended the demonstration. We protested this decision and made sit-down strike. Nothing happened directly afterwards; however, they sent me to the wholesale market three months later. It was an exile because that job was not appropriate for a female worker. I could do nothing there. The employer did that to separate the workers from each other to break the solidarity between us.²⁵⁴

Ahmet also describes the attitude of employer: “The employers warned us that if we attended the demonstrations, our three-daily wages would be cut off or s/he could send us to the disciplinary committee.”²⁵⁵

Without a doubt the most influential weapon of the employers was to discharge workers. It was not very common during the Spring Demonstrations. However, afterwards the workers were dismissed owing to their attempts for unionization.²⁵⁶

Besides the punishments after attending demonstrations for the workers, the employers sometimes did prevent workers from attending demonstrations. They did not let workers to go to the hospital collectively, or put pressure on the workplace doctors²⁵⁷ to not to give workers dispatch notes. Moreover, they put psychological pressure on the

²⁵⁴ Aysel Bölücek: “1 mayıstan sonra işveren 1 mayıs’a katılanlara disiplin soruşturması açtı. Biz de bu kararı protesto için oturma eylemi yaptık. Hemen sonrasında bir şey çıkması, ama beni 3 ay sonra belediye haline sürgüne gönderdiler. Bu bir sürgündü çünkü orada bir bayanın yapabileceği iş yok. İşveren işçileri birbirinden ayırmak için yaptı bunu”.

²⁵⁵ Ahmet Yaman interview by author, tape recording, 8 February 2011 “İş veren bizi uyarırdı, eğer eylemlere katılırsak 2-3 yevmiyemizi keseceğini söylerdi. Ya da disiplin soruşturması açacağını söyleyerek korkuturdu.”

²⁵⁷ Cumhuriyet, 23 March 1989.

workers to not to grow beards for instance. Tayfun Kocatürk explains the pressure of the managers on the workers:

We started growing beards. Two days later our beard became visible, and the manager came by me and said ‘Tayfun, are you also growing your beard? Why do you do that? Do not do that.’ I said everybody was growing his beard. He told me back that it would not be to my advantage. It would be better if I stopped. By saying those, he continuously tried to break our resistance.²⁵⁸

Employers also tried to break the solidarity among workers by different tactics related to the demands of the workers. Hasan Kaçkır, one of the leaders of the workers, from the brewery says:

We were working in insufficient conditions where the worker’s health and safety at work was neglected by the employer. We demanded protective equipment. I went to the employer and told our demands. He said, ‘I would give them to you, but not the others, do not tell the others’. Of course, I went to my friends and told them, they also asked for the same things. The other time, we demanded protective garments and he said that he could give only one and we had to wear it by turn. But then everyone asked again and we got it. It was written in the occupational safety and health regulation; he had to give them to us.”²⁵⁹

In addition, employers used ethical differences among workers in order to split them up.

In the shoemaking atelier, we were working together with Gypsies and Kurds. We were in harmony, we had no problems. By that time, I was the representative of the Association of Shoemakers, we demanded coal from the employer. He shouted at me first. And then he told me ‘Look Uğur, we are from the same city, we are *hemşeri* (people from the same

²⁵⁸ Tayfun Kocatürk: “*Mesela sakal bırakma eylemi yapıyoruz, başladı sakallar çıkmaya, yanına gelir sen de mi katılıyorsun eyleme der. E Abi, arkadaşların hepsi katılıyor. Bence senin kesmen de fayda var Tayfun, iyi olmaz derdi. İşte yapacağımız bir eylemi kırmaya çalışırdı.*”

²⁵⁹ Hasan Kaçkır: “*İş yerinde sağlıkla ilgili bir şey yapılmıyor, işveren işçi sağlığı ve iş güvenliğine önem vermiyor, çalışma koşulları o günün koşullarına uygun değil, koruyucu eşyan yok. Biz tabi bunlardan yola çıkıyorduk. İşveren de şöyle diyor, sana veririm ama ona vermem, diğerlerine söyleme. Ben tabi gidip söylüyordum arkadaşlara, siz de aynısını yapın diyordum. Başka bir sefer koruyucu kıyafet istedim. Bir tane vereceğim diyordu o da, ama atölyedeki arkadaşlarla yıkayıp yıkayıp giyeceksiniz. Sonra herkes istedi, böylece aldık. İşçi sağlığı iş güvenliği düzenlemesinde yazıyor, vermek zorunda.*”

city), I would give it to you willingly, but not to some Gypsies and Kurds.²⁶⁰

In 1989, the Kurdish movement was at its peak as well as the labor movements. People died every day; there was an ongoing struggle in the southern east of Turkey and public opinion was very sensitive about this issue. As Seyit Aslan told me, employers also used the label of “separatist” in order to divide the workers. He explained that after they were organized in a textile factory and they had the right for collective bargaining. However the employer made propaganda to the other workers by saying that they were not nationalist but separatist, they could not be trusted, and they could not be followed.

As was stated before, the police also intervened in demonstrations and tried to prevent workers from walking, protesting. They sometimes arrested workers and union leaders. However, most of the time the workers resisted giving their leaders to the police. During demonstrations sometimes people who supported worker were beaten and arrested by the police. For instance, one student was beaten and arrested since he attended the demonstration of workers who were going to the hospital collectively.²⁶¹ Sometimes even the walking of the workers was prevented by the police. They did not give up and continued their demonstrations at the workplace by conducting sit-down strikes.²⁶² Sometimes they struggled until their co-workers or union leaders’ who had been taken by the police, were set free. For instance in Kayseri, 3.500 workers wanted

²⁶⁰ Uğur Parlak: “Atölyelerde Türkü, Kürdü, Romen’i birlikte çalışırdık, hiç problemimiz yoktu, o zaman öyleydi, uyum vardı. Kömür talebinde bulunduk işverenden. Ben o zaman Kunduracılar Derneği başkanıydım, önce bana bağırdı çağırırdı. Sonra da bana, ‘bak Uğur’ dedi, ‘biz hemşeriyiz, sana seve seve veririm ama o Kürde, Çingene’ye vermem.”.

²⁶¹ *Cumhuriyet*, 14 April 1989.

²⁶² *Cumhuriyet*, 15 April 1989.

to walk to the hospital; however, the police blocked their way. When the workers insisted on walking, the police took the union leader and some of the workers into custody. The workers held on sit-down strike on the road, in front of the hospital. The chief of police came and announced that the workers and union leader would be set free. After the announcement, the sit-down strike ended.”²⁶³

Concluding Remarks

The spring demonstrations were the most colorful and creative workers’ mobilization in the labor history of Turkey. Without a doubt, the way that they resisted was not independent from the economic and political context of the country at that time. Since the conventional ways of struggling, such as strikes were restricted, workers found different ways to show their reaction against the transformation of the labor market. Yet, their reactions also were not independent from cultural meanings, but on the contrary, were embedded in the culture. Though the structural obstacles explain the reason of different ways of struggling, it is insufficient in the sense that the meanings for the demonstrations and how they were evaluated and the perceived by the workers could not be understood without a cultural perspective. A Cultural perspective, in other words, looking beyond the economic relations, gives a chance to listen to the workers’ voices and makes it possible to understand the process from their experiences and perceptions. With the Spring Demonstrations, the workers managed to overcome all kinds of (religious, political...) boundaries between and acted in concert. The

²⁶³ *Cumhuriyet*, 18 April 1989.

demonstrations first began due to the block in the collective bargaining process which encompassed approximately 600,000 workers in public enterprises. Since the workers were already highly organized in both unions and workplace committees, when the process became blocked they were able to act as a block for the first time after 1980. Though the workplace committees were first founded to deal with the problems in the workplaces, with the attempt of pro-labor unions and workers' leader, they turned into regional committees and the latest the Platform of Unions, which were organized especially in İstanbul but also in other regions of Turkey. Workers via the Platform of Unions strengthened their organization and became powerful against the employers.

It is possible to separate the demonstrations which took place during the Spring Demonstrations. The first one was the demonstrations directly related to the production process which aimed to stop it; such as going to the hospital collectively, not working overtime, slow down strikes. They were very influential in the sense that they harmed the interests of the employers. The second one was the symbolic demonstrations such as boycotting lunches, growing beards, shaving off hair, suing for a mass divorce and selling children. They were both "cultures of solidarity," which Fantasia defines as the peculiar insurgent cultural formations in a collective way during their mobilizations. The reason underneath the demonstrations could not be restricted only to the labor market transformation; however, the problem was deeper. The logic of the neo-liberal policies threatened the customs and everyday lives of the workers which they had conducted for years. Their role in the family as the breadwinner was threatened severely since they could not afford to maintain a family or send their children to school. Besides, their role socio-economic position in the society worsened after the

transformation. They struggled to “get their rights back” and also to go back to their socio-economic situation as it was before. Moreover, since workers experienced nearly the same process for year, they became closer, and the “solidarity” became one of the most important concepts explaining the Spring Demonstrations. Solidarity among the workers not only remained spiritually but turned into material support which gave power to the workers to continue struggling for their rights.

The result of the Spring Demonstrations is remarkable. After struggling intensely for three months, in collective bargaining they acquired 142% nominal rise in their wages. Their conditions also improved considering social aid such as aid for education, children and family.²⁶⁴ Apart from material improvements, the Spring Demonstrations forced politicians to be more concerned about workers’ problem. Workers became the focus of the opposition. It is possible to say that the demonstrations also affected the general elections held in 1991, which the coalition between Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) and True Path Party took over the government from Motherlands’ Party. So that, one can argue the defeat of the Motherlands’ Party in the elections.

In addition, the rise of labor movements in 1989 paved the way for the unionization of public workers. The July Demonstrations began to take place in 1990 and led to the foundation of the Confederation of Public Workers’ Unions in 1995. After the July Demonstrations, working class history was marked by the Great Miners’ March in 1991. The Zonguldak basin was the coal mining center of the country and in the middle of the 1980s, it became the focal point in the privatization debates. Due to the blockage of collective bargaining at the end of the November 1990, 42.000 workers went on strike in Zonguldak. Considering the debates of privatization, the chairman of

²⁶⁴ *TURK-IS* (Ankara: Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, May 1989)

Türk-İş declared that he would not go to work on 3 January 1991. In fact, he was calling for a general strike. As the negotiations continued the head of the Genel Maden-İş Sendikası, invited miners to walk Ankara, in order to end the collective bargaining process in favor of miners. Miners walked to Ankara without necessary logistics of a winter march. However, they were stopped by military in the third day. As a result, the negotiations did not end with a significant rise in their wages. However, the Great Miners' March was the peak of the labor movement which started in 1989. Aftermath, the labor movement continued but not intensely.

Last but not least, the grass roots Spring Demonstrations, even if not much cracked the union bureaucracy. A considerable number of trade unionists changed after the Spring Demonstrations and workers chose more pro-labor workers to be their union leaders.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this thesis were examined the dynamics of the Spring Demonstrations, by giving the main focus to the experiences of the workers. I conducted several interviews with workers and union leaders to grasp how the labor market transformation affected workers' lives both inside and outside of the workplaces. I also tried to understand how the Spring Demonstrations began to take place, how it turned into a collective, widespread labor movement and why the workers resisted in the ways they did.

This thesis, first elaborated different approaches on class and labor studies. The "class" was described as a historical phenomenon inspiring from E.P. Thompson. According to E.P. Thompson, "class" is not independent from "class struggle". In order to understand the struggle, one should look beyond the economic relations, in other words, cultural relations in which the experiences of working class are handled in cultural terms. However, the approach of E.P. Thompson does not necessarily ignore the economic relations.

Two different approaches are elaborated considering labor studies: the first approach is culturalist approach which puts cultural analysis into class analysis. At this point the concept of Rick Fantasia, 'cultures of solidarity' enriched this thesis. Fantasia defines "cultures of solidarity" as the 'peculiar insurgent cultural formations in a collective way during workers' mobilizations.' At this point it is possible to argue that new ways of resistances of workers that are analyzed in this thesis, are good examples

of “cultures of solidarity” and could be evaluated as reactions of workers against their experiences within the transformation of the labor market.

Without a doubt, taking “class” as a historical phenomenon has a meaning: the “class” in the Spring Demonstrations which was struggling hard to defend its customs, differed from the “class” before the economic package and the military intervention of the early 1980s. This does not imply of course, existence of two different ‘classes’. On the contrary, it indicates a historical transformation of class. The new type of resistances, that is to say, passive resistance indicates a structural change both in the nature of work and culture and the traditions of the working class. The dreams of revolution, challenging the capitalist system as a whole and the motivation of changing the world as before 1980 were mostly replaced by clinging to customs which were radically effected with the application of neo-liberal policies.

It was not only the transformation of labor market that led workers to mobilize, but also the threat of neo-liberal logic to everyday lives of the workers. For this reason, workers sued for mass divorce in order to show that they were not able to maintain a family anymore, and sold their children hypothetically since their role in the family as the “breadwinner” was shaken.

The second approach in labor studies that this thesis is to think labor movements and social movements together. There are several studies which try to cross the boundary between new social movements and labor movements. The new social movements differ itself from the labor movements claiming that the labor movements is nineteenth century phenomenon in which workers were struggling only with economic motives. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward try to combine labor movements and

social movements by using the political opportunity structure model in analyzing labor movements. They argue that the social context in which a movement takes place affects the success or failure of the movement. Moreover, when a system loses its legitimacy, people begin to demand their rights and a change to take place. A protest rises out from the traumas of the everyday lives of the people which they are willing to redress.

In 1989, the displeasure with the government was high, considering not only the workers, but also society since the support for the public to the demonstrations was also high. One may argue that the political and social context paved the way for a movement to take place, on the one hand. On the other hand, the nine years of transformation affected the workers' lives significantly. They encountered situation which had been unpredictable until the time: the military intervention and the new economic package together bulldozed all the existing rights of the workers, and any mechanism to oppose was also blocked by the military government. The trade unions were closed down, their properties were confiscated, union and workers' leaders were put in jail or sent into exile, and the right to strike was suspended. With the new constitutional law in 1982, standard rights of the unions, right to strike, collective bargaining and unionization were recognized with some considerable restrictions due to "national security". In 1983, even when the regime was civilized under the Motherland's Party government, the pressure on the working class continued. As a trade union, only TÜRK-İŞ, which supported military after the coup d'état, was allowed. However, as it was perceived by the workers, TÜRK-İŞ was deaf to the problems and demands of the workers. The employees' earnings decreased significantly, unionization became harder, the working conditions in the factories reversed that many accidents began to take place frequently.

At this point, it is safe to say that the compromise between the capital and the labor, which was one of the main characteristics of the import substitution, altered in favor of capital and labor was left weaponless against this counter-attack of capital. Yet the experience of the workers for nine years, drew workers closer. The workers overcame the boundaries among themselves and the solidarity in the workplaces was strengthened. The solidarity began in workplaces yet, it spread first to nearby regions and then to the whole of Turkey. Workers founded workplace committees, region committees as a further step and as the last step they gathered around the Platform of Unions. Solidarity did not remain among workers, but spread to the public, which showed its support of the workers.

Starting out from the fact that the two approaches on labor studies are highly interconnected, in this thesis Spring Demonstrations were evaluated by taking into account both historical, economic processes and also the culturalist approach. New resisting strategies took place since the traditional ways of struggling, such as strikes were restricted. Workers found different ways both in order to overcome the restrictions and to stop production process and also to attract the public's and press' attention. One may argue that the main reason for demonstrations to take place is the influence of labor market transformation to the lives' of the workers and threaten their customs. Yet this approach is insufficient to explain the content of the demonstrations and, to reveal the historical transformation of the working class. The culturalist approach gives an opportunity to grasp the problems underneath, which corresponds to the fact that workers were trying to get their rights back and also trying to cling on to and defend their customs. The aim of the demonstrations was to get their rights back, whereas the

target was the government which workers found responsible for the transformation. At this point, it should be kept in mind that the new ways of resistances show us the changing forms of working class politics. The conventional ways of resistance were not efficient to get the public's and press' attention. One may argue that the role of media began to be very significant in politics and in the lives of people.

There were important dynamics which paved the way for Spring Demonstrations to take place: First of all, it should be noted again that the Spring Demonstrations began in public enterprises. So that, it is safe to say that the number of workers organized in unions in public enterprises were significant. Though, workers had to push their to be more pro-labor, one can still argue the effectiveness of unions. Second of all, workers who worked and experienced the working environment before 1980 were still working in 1989, they were not retired yet, they personally lived through the transformation process. They could compare the situation of workers before and after 1980. They were the engine and important components of the Spring Demonstrations and they also conducted the process. They became the natural leaders in the workplaces. Third of all, workers who organized in DİSK before 1980, therefore those who were more militant and combative, transferred to TÜRK-İŞ. And those workers pushed TÜRK-İŞ to be more demanding and pro-labor. They did not only influenced TÜRK-İŞ, but also their co-workers. Last but not least, it is safe to say that; in 1989, the characteristics of the labor market (low wages, flexible employment, informality) did not prevail as they do today. Those dynamics of Spring Demonstrations are important considering the rise of labor movements in 1989.

This thesis is a modest attempt to contribute to the labor studies in Turkey. Doubtless, participants in the Spring Demonstrations investigated in this study, are only a small sample of the participants, considering the widespread nature of the demonstrations. Yet, I could only interview with workers who were inclined to shape the process of mobilization and workers' leaders who were already in the organization process of the movements. It should be added that since the demonstrations were widespread the experiences of these workers may fail to signify the general situation.

This study can also be developed and extended in several aspects. Firstly, due to the expansion of the demonstrations and limited time, I could only make in-depth interviews with workers in Istanbul. Thus, I could only evaluate a small sample of workers' solidarity. It would be very complementary for this thesis to elaborate the other demonstrations that took place in different parts of Turkey. Secondly, this study can be enriched by adding in a gender dimension. As the consequence of the difficulty of setting a connection with the workers, since most of them are retired now, I could only reach the male workers and trade unionists of the time. However, what these male workers suggested that the female workers were also deeply involved in the demonstrations. Yet, in this thesis, female workers' experiences could not be reflected. To make a long story short, this thesis has its own blanks waiting to be filled.

Bourdieu argues that the preference to talk or not to talk about class is a political act. As the empirical data show we are now living in an era of great inequalities. For this reason, not to talk about class does carry a political meaning: it does not challenge; however it does maintain the existing inequalities. Bourdieu, moving one step forward, argues that not to talk about class makes this inequality

invisible. According to him, class is a reality even if is not being told.²⁶⁵ In this perspective, one should rethink about to not to talk about ‘class’. However, there have been also attempts to put ‘class’ analysis back into the contemporary and historical perspectives. So that writing about working class history and bringing class back in the contemporary and historical perspectives can still be evaluated as a political act.

²⁶⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, “What Makes Social Class on the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups?” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32 (1987), p. 2.

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