

WORKING CLASS FORMATION IN TURKEY, 1946-1962

by

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ABSTRACT

Title: Working Class Formation in Turkey, 1946-1962

This study explores the everyday experiences and changing meanings workers attached to their living and working conditions in Turkey between the end of the Second World War and the early 1960s. A primary target of this dissertation is to explore the politics and ideologies of class as important elements of the historical process from big cities and weaving mills to national domains of social regulation, labor law and trade union policy. The working class appears to have been an active force and also a point of contention during the period which witnessed the dislocation of many producers from agrarian economy to industrial work in urban centers and with the visible expansion of wage labor.

One of the inspirations of this study is specified as the conception of everydayness as an effort to question large structural generalizations and recover specificity. This outlook guided the discussion on the local and quotidian contexts such as the housing conditions in big cities and the new leisure pursuits of working people in which the possibilities of class solidarity were created. In a similar vein, the changing regimes of industrial discipline and its impact on working class identity and culture in specific industries and individual workplaces are discussed in order to recover the diversity of workers' experiences, on the one hand, and to detect elements of resistance and collective action, on the other. The study is concluded by the discussion of the rich terrain of conflict between the state and workers' associations as well as among the latter on the boundaries of class, changing meanings of labor and the role of the associational activity.

ÖZET

Başlık: Türkiye’de İşçi Sınıfı Oluşumu, 1946-1962

Bu çalışma İkinci Dünya Savaşı’nın bitiminden 1960’lı yıllara uzanan dönemde işçilerin gündelik hayat deneyimlerini ve çalışma ve yaşam koşullarını anlamlandırma biçimlerindeki değişimi incelemektedir. Çalışmanın başlıca amaçlarından biri işçi sınıfının büyük şehirler ve tekstil işyerlerinden iş hayatını düzenleyen mevzuat ve sendikal siyasete kadar geniş bir alanda tarihsel sürecin önemli bir unsuru haline geldiğini göstermektir. Birçok üreticinin tarımsal ekonomiden büyük kentlerdeki sanayi işlerine doğru kaymasına ve ücretli emek formunun yayılmasına tanıklık eden dönem içerisinde işçi sınıfı hem faal bir güç hem de farklı aktörler arasındaki çatışmaların bir konusu haline gelmiştir.

Bu çalışma yapısalcı genellemeleri sorgulamak ve özgül tarihsel bağlamları tekrar görünür kılmak amacıyla gündelik hayat kavramsallaştırmasına başvuruyor. Bu bakış açısından hareketle çalışma, işçilerin büyük şehirlerdeki barınma koşulları ve boş zaman faaliyetleri gibi ayrıksı bir sınıf kimliğinin ve dayanışma örüntülerinin ortaya çıkışını mümkün kılan yerel ve gündelik bağlamlara yoğunlaşıyor. Benzer bir biçimde değişen endüstriyel disiplin rejimleri ve bunların sınıf kültürü ve kimliği üzerindeki etkileri, bir yandan işçilerin deneyimlerindeki çeşitliliği ortaya çıkarmak, diğer yandan da direniş ve kolektif eylem imkânlarını tespit etmek amacıyla tartışılıyor. Çalışma, sınıf tanımının sınırları, emeğin değişen anlamları ve sendikaların rolü üzerine devlet ve işçi birlikleri arasındaki farklı fikirlerin ve çatışmaların tartışılmasıyla sonuçlanıyor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The history of the transformation of modern Turkey usually is written in terms of the problems and deficiencies encountered in the transition of political and socioeconomic structures: community to society, authoritarianism to democracy, workshop to factory, peasantry to proletariat. Burdened with the ascendancy of the structural-functionalist theory of the modernization paradigm, modern Turkish history appears to be a narrative of unaccomplished promises and continuing abnormalities.

A primary target of this thesis is to explore the politics and ideologies of class as important elements of the historical process from big cities and weaving mills to national domains of social regulation, labor law and trade union policy between 1946 and 1962. The working class appears to have been an active force and also a point of contention during the period which witnessed the dislocation of many producers from agrarian economy to industrial work in urban centers and with the visible expansion of wage labor. This process shaped not only the emergent labor movement, but also attracted the interest and concern of social reformers, social scientists and politicians who investigated, discussed and expressed opinion on this sense of predicament. Merged with these questions was the issue of the need of manufacturing a stable and productive labor force, the absence of which had been perceived to be undermining the efforts to build an industrial economy since the early years of statist industrialization in the 1930s. Within this historical context, class was a determining

element in the politics of work, defining how workers organized and regarded their everyday experiences in the workplace, shop-floor cultures and resistances, and the meanings they assigned to work and to the social identity of class. Most particularly in the large cities, class also shaped the urban space and its politics, representing the problems associated with the sheltering conditions of working class families and with their new leisure habits which were not always approved by the urban elites and social reformers.

Such an endeavor requires a shift in the perspective of writing labor history in Turkey, which has been wedged in the narrative strictures and structures. A predominant premise of the labor history literature in Turkey is one that sees the working class as relatively inconsequential in the economic, social and political transformations of the country. The reasoning behind that conclusion is simple and familiar to all students of modern Turkish history: first, the notion that the state granted labor rights and freedoms without a protracted struggle from below; and second, the emergent working class prior to the 1960s, vulnerable under the limited character of the capitalist relations of production and repressive and paternalist state policies, could not develop a distinct culture and consciousness of its own. Underpinning such claims is a teleological model which outlines the progressive and unilinear advancement of various levels of class formation as shaped by the movement starting from the expansion of market relations and proceeding towards the organization of working class politics. Turkish labor historiography has trapped itself in narratives that strive to account for the divergence of the Turkish model from the universal model of working class formation.

Abundant examples of this perspective could be cited illustrating both contemporaneous and edited accounts. For example, Yüksel Akkaya examines the sketchy and immature capitalist relations in order to come to terms with weak labor organizations in

Turkey before 1960.¹ In an informative essay on the development of trade union democracy during the 1960-80 period, Mehmet Beşeli concludes that the granting of political rights by the state prior to the political struggle of workers is the most important reason for “the limited role of the union movement in democratic developments.”² In a similar vein, Günseli Berik and Cihan Bilginsoy argue that “the labor movement did not play an active role in the political and economic transformations of the country.” The authors attribute the recognition of a number of workers’ rights after the late 1940s to the ruling parties’ desire to tame and harness labor and control it as an electoral bloc. They argue that the characteristics of industrialization strategies pursued by Turkey in combination with the particularities of Turkish history explain the divergence from the classical model of the working class formation based on the Western European experience.³

Such arguments are particularly commonplace in the analyses of the period covering the years between the end of the Second World War and the early 1960s. In his influential study on the relationship between the state and the bourgeoisie, Çağlar Keyder suggests that “it is the historical underdevelopment of the working class – both as an economic and as a political force – which invites an interpretation privileging the interaction between the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy.” Class struggle, according to this line of argument, was not as yet the mobilizing element in social transformation. The right to unionization, collective bargaining and strikes obtained by workers as well as the widened domain of social security

¹ Yüksel Akkaya, “Çukurova’da Sendikacılık ve İşçi Eylemleri, 1923-1960,” *Kebikeç*, no. 5 (1997).

² Mehmet Beşeli, “1960-1980 Döneminde Sendikacılık Hareketleri İçinde Demokrasi Kavramının Gelişimi,” in *Türkiye’de Sendikacılık Hareketleri İçinde Demokrasi Kavramının Gelişimi*, ed. Alpaslan Işıklı (Ankara: Kalkan Matbaacılık, 2002), p. 237.

³ 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. Ellis Jay Goldberg (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 37.

during the early 1960s emerged as entitlements handed out to workers in accordance with the requirements of the new model of capital accumulation based on inward-oriented import substitution.⁴

Some labor historians tend to neglect or at best overlook the 1950s in their narratives of working class formation in Turkey for they see no significant labor struggles during the period when the right to strike and other collective rights of the workers were denied.⁵ Taking these exemplary studies together, the working class in Turkey appears as a passive recipient of state policies, lacking a consciousness of its own, circumvented by the late development of capitalist relations, and thus only in the half-way of its own formation.⁶

The present study does not simply aim to reverse this argument and claim that the working class was always present there as a self-conscious political agent and whatever social rights introduced in the modern Turkish history were earned by the struggles of the working class movements themselves. But rather it intends to analyze the processes of class formation which occurs in different forms and with different contents due to the impact of both “objective” conditions that are not defined by it and a set of complex contingent and cultural factors. The concept of class formation adopted in this study is not teleological. Rather it is based on the assumption that processes of class formation are never complete and can be reversed. It permits the identification of tendencies and counter tendencies. In this

⁴ Çağlar Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey* (London: Verso, 1987), p. 149.

⁵ See M. Şehmus Güzel, *Türkiye’de İşçi Hareketi, 1908-1984* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996); Yıldırım Koç, “İşçi Hakları ve Sendikacılık,” *11. Tez*, no. 5 (February 1987). For a critical review of the literature on labor during the Democrat Party era, see Hakan Koçak, “50’leri İşçi Sınıfı Oluşumunun Kritik Bir Uğrağı Olarak Yeniden Okumak,” *Çalışma ve Toplum*, no. 18 (2008).

⁶ The arguments of discontinuity in working class formation in Turkey is discussed in Özgür Gökmen, “The State of Labour in Turkey, 1918-1938,” *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen*, no. 33 (2005).

understanding, as Jürgen Kocka remarks, “classes are always in the process of becoming and disappearing, of evolution and devolution.”⁷

Under certain conditions those who hold a common position in the production process may become aware and conscious of what they share. On this basis, they may develop a common social identity, a certain degree of internal cohesion, common experiences and dispositions, common aspirations, interests and loyalties, “something like a common consciousness as a class.” Considered in this way, the working class ceases to be a mere category and develops the characteristics of a group. “The contrast between workers and capitalists becomes a source of tension that is felt and experienced by those concerned. Whether class in this sense came into existence or not and in which way depends on many cultural factors as well as economic, social and political ones that need to be studied empirically.”⁸ Whether and to what extent a working class in that sense emerged, should be studied with respect to places of work and residence, the social origins, family structure, the cultures and life styles, etc., of the group involved.

Yet, still the question remains there. A powerful trend among labor histories, therefore, has been to focus predominantly on the emergence of working class consciousness. In the case of left-wing writers of labor history there is evidence of a long standing preoccupation with the question of why the working class in Turkey lacked this consciousness.⁹ Part of the answer lies in the perception of the concept of consciousness. It seems that the concept of consciousness is regarded in these studies in its Lukacsian or

⁷ Jürgen Kocka, “Problems of Working-Class Formation in Germany: The Early Years, 1800-1875,” in *Working-Class Formation*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 283.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁹ Touraj Atabaki and Gavin D. Brockett, “Ottoman and Republican Turkish Labour History: An Introduction,” *International Review of Social History*, no. 54, Supplement 17 (2009), p. 6.

Second International form. According to Lukacs, the proletariat is either fully conscious (abscribed consciousness) of its real conditions or it is trapped in the reified world of appearances. The proletariat is at one or the other of these extremes.¹⁰

This dissertation aims to transcend this question by centering the discussion on the category of everydayness, which is defined by Harry Harootunian as “the minimal unity that provides its own principle of historical temporality that easily challenges the practice of history-writing as we know it.”¹¹ This dissertation focuses on the quotidian and local contexts in which the possibilities are created for class politics and resistance on the one hand, and conformity and acquiescence on the other.

In the years between the two world wars, everyday life became an object of reflection and investigation in the context of late capitalism of Euro-America, which was characterized by such recognizable developments as rapid modernization and urbanization, the growth of the mass media and consumption, and the “colonization” of everyday by state and capital.¹² Earlier thinkers like Lukacs and Heidegger had presented the everyday as simply a negative category: as the site of dullness and banality, ordinary and trivial repetition. For such early observers, alienation and colonization that steals the voice of individuals defined the everydayness. However, Walter Benjamin had a far different conception of everyday, by

¹⁰ Stedman Jones raises the question of how the proletariat passes from one to the other one of these poles for Lukacs. For him, the answer is that Lukacs remains trapped within the mechanical and fatalistic Marxism of the Second International. This is because, according to Lukacs, for the emergence of the true proletarian consciousness “the final, cataclysmic economic collapse of capitalism” is needed. “The active and practical side of class consciousness, its true essence, can only become visible in its authentic form when the historical process imperiously requires it to come into force, i.e. when an acute crisis in the economy drives it to action. At other times it remains theoretical and latent, corresponding to the latent and permanent crisis of capitalism.” See Gareth Stedman Jones, “The Marxism of the Early Lukacs,” in *Western Marxism: A Critical Reader* (London: Verso, 1977), p. 42.

¹¹ Harry Harootunian, “Shadowing History: National Narratives and the Persistence of the Everyday,” *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2/3 (March/May 2004), p. 181.

¹² Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), p. 4.

which he meant the place of “actualizing.” According to Benjamin, actualizing the historical present implied “putting into practice a political intervention ... rather than merely the space for getting through one day to the next by resorting to tactics of survival that masquerade as forms of resistance. In this sense, the idea of tactics of resistance is simply another name for everyday routines.”¹³ For him the category of everydayness also offered a different historiography in order to “extract from it lost and forgotten promises of the past and possibilities of the future”.¹⁴

In a similar vein, Henri Lefebvre saw in the everyday life the emergence of new emancipatory possibilities at the same time as these were circumvented in other ways. For Lefebvre, everyday certainly consisted of a sequence of regular, unvarying repetition. Everyday life contained largely of unconscious actions and performances. In Lefebvre’s words, “many men, and even people in general, do not know their own lives very well, or know them adequately.”¹⁵ But in this very triviality and baselessness lay the contrary dynamics: in the poverty of routine lay the potential for creative energy and politics. After all, people engage in politics not because of abstract ideological principles, but simply because they want to change their lives. For Lefebvre, then the everyday, even in its most degraded forms, withholds the potential of its own transformation. To unveil this potential of the everyday, “the dialectical nature of everyday,” Lefebvre urges us an interpretive reading and analysis of documents and works (literary, cinematic etc.) for evidence that the consciousness

¹³ Harry Harootunian, “In the Tiger’s Lair: Socialist Everydayness Enters Post-Mao China,” *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3 (2000).

¹⁴ Harry Harootunian, *History’s Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 70.

¹⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 1992), p. 94.

of alienation is born, however indirectly, and that an effort towards “disalienation” no matter how oblique and obscure, has begun.¹⁶

Thus the concept of everyday life poses radical and inventive challenges to the teleological narratives of class. This dissertation adopts the concept in order to distance itself from the model that seeks to outline the progressive advancement of class formation shaped fundamentally by some economic and social structures, and approach a more nuanced, culturally aware presentation of the lives of ordinary working people. A basic theme implied throughout the dissertation is that it is the small catastrophes and small victories in everyday life that lastingly influence workers’ lives and affect their self-perception as a distinct social and political community. It is also such small experiences through which workers assert themselves against the often hostile world surrounding them.

In the last three decades everyday life has become the object of intense historiographical investments. *Alltagsgeschichte* (the history of everyday life) has grown as the most important German historiographical development since the 1970s. In the first instance, following the footsteps of Thompsonian historiography, the history of everyday life involves the marking out of a particular empirical terrain. It involves the history of work, of housing and community life, of the family, and especially of popular cultures and leisure. All these intended to bring “the inner world of popular experience in and out of the workplace” to the agenda of social history.¹⁷

Second, there is an emphasis on subjectivity and experience and on the social production and construction of meaning. This emphasis often is theorized by the turn to

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 66. See also Michael Gardiner, *The Critiques of Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2000) for a systematical examination of Lefebvre’s studies.

¹⁷ Geoff Eley, “Labor History, Social History, *Alltagsgeschichte*: Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday - A New Direction for German Social History?” *Journal of Modern History*, no. 61 (June 1989), p. 315

anthropology and ethnographic analysis to account for the varieties of human experience.¹⁸

The special interest thus is directed towards the ambiguities and contradiction of workers' behaviors and perceptions as they live their lives. According to Alf Ludtke, the leading advocate of the *Alltagsgeschichte* approach:

Alltagsgeschichte concentrates on the forms and meanings of social practice. In question are the ways of perceiving and acting through which people experience and "appropriate" the conditions of their life/survival. The aim is to show how societal demands and inducements are perceived, worked through, as interests or needs but also as anxieties and hopes.¹⁹

This brings *Alltagsgeschichte* closer to the analysis of culture and cultural expressions which are explored as "an element and medium of the active representation and construction of experiences and social relations, and their transformation."²⁰ The proximity of this perspective to the insights offered by the linguistic turn will be discussed briefly below. Suffice to say for now that one of the most promising features of such historiography lies in its attempt to reveal the cultural construction of societal processes as manifest in the everyday circumstances of life.

What follows this, as the third characteristic of *Alltagsgeschichte*, is the search for politics at a more basic level, conveyed by the everyday culture in and outside the workplace. Geoff Eley comments on how this everyday culture and politics are articulated in the works of *Alltagsgeschichte* historians:

The experience of everyday life, as the terrain where the abstract structures of domination and exploitation were directly encountered, encouraged attitudes of

¹⁸ See Hans Medick, "'Missionaries in the Rowboat'? Ethnological Ways of Knowing as a Challenge to Social History," in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Ludtke (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ Quoted in Mary Nolan, "The Historikerstreit and Social History," *New German Critique*, no. 44 (Spring/Summer 1988), p. 58.

²⁰ Medick, p. 53.

independence and solidarity that afforded obvious political potential in a class-circumscribed context of social value and action... In other words, the workers' *Alltag* generated a culture of resistance, which, under circumstances of general social and political crises ... or during smaller local mobilizations, might acquire fuller political meaning. Then the worlds of politics and the everyday could converge."²¹

The dynamism and contradictory character of historical change are linked with what Engels called "the production and reproduction of real life." "In this view," Alf Ludtke suggests, "reconstructions in the history of everyday life involve more than situations recurrent in the daily struggle for survival (and momentary experiencing of workaday events). Rather such reconstructions reveal in particular the way in which participants were –or could become- simultaneously both the objects of history and its subjects."²²

Alltagsgeschichte attempts to deal with the repetitive quality of everyday life, with the problems of contingency and ambivalence in human experience. Moving from the insights of *Alltagsgeschichte* and of the labor process theory, Alf Ludtke manages to portray the German worker in a different light from that which is seen in the most conventional history informed by modernization paradigm. In his work, the average German worker was neither a hero of class struggle, nor a powerless victim of high politics. Rather, Ludtke argues, "German factory workers were simply out to stake their own claim in German society, to obtain or retain as much control over their work as possible, and to have some pleasurable moments in the brief bits of leisure time."²³

²¹ Eley, "Labor History, Social History, *Alltagsgeschichte*: Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday - A New Direction for German Social History?," p. 324.

²² Alf Ludtke, "What is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are its Practitioners?" in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, p. 6.

²³ See Alf Ludtke, "Cash, Coffee-Breaks, Horseplay: Eigensinn and Politics among Factory Workers in Germany circa 1900," in *Confrontation, Class Consciousness and the Labor Process*, eds. Michael Hanagan and Charles Stephenson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

This dissertation seeks to make use of this perspective in several of its chapters. Chapter 2 and 3 discuss the everyday lives of workers outside the workplace. Chapter 2 seeks to understand the daily living conditions in working class districts which lacked basic urban services like piped water and sewers while transportation services were worse, which made walking long distances to work a central experience for most workers. However the meaning workers attached to home differed radically from middle class contemporaries, who forcefully emphasized physical and moral health as the ideal qualities of home. However, the primary drive of workers in building or purchasing a squatter dwelling was to assert control over a significant part of their lives, especially during the period when workers had limited autonomy within the workplace. In this context, neighborhood associations provided the primary mechanism to strengthen group solidarity and articulate the common interests for dwellers.

Chapter 3 seeks to distinguish the cinema, football and coffeehouses as working-class leisures. Modern social thought, from the Frankfurt School's conception of the "culture industry" to Jean Baudrillard's postmodern analysis of "hyperreal and image saturated society", represents leisure as a manipulated way of relating to the world.²⁴ This perspective is not shared in this study. As Lefebvre asserts, modern capitalism provides a vast domain of illusory reverse image through exploding leisure activities. Yet leisure cannot be separated from work and other practices of social life which simultaneously "contain within themselves their own spontaneous critique of the everyday."²⁵ This chapter aims to reveal how working class men and women imposed their own meaning and uses upon new leisure forms in order to transcend the routinization of everyday life. Taken together the analysis provided in these

²⁴ Gardiner, pp. 84-85.

²⁵ Lefebvre, p. 40.

chapters also aims to discredit a key dichotomy of Turkish labor history, depicted between work and non-work which has left out the analysis of the latter from the narratives of working class formation.

Chapter 4 seeks to distinguish the structural transformations in the regimes of factory discipline from the meanings workers imputed on their work and labor. The repetitiveness of production processes, which was decisive for the reproduction of the whole system, was rendered possible in many mills by the introduction of new technology and “scientific management techniques,” and what Lefebvre calls the transformation of “cyclical time” to “linear time” at the point of production by conditions of punch clocks and other instruments of domination.²⁶ Drawing also on the insights of labor process theory,²⁷ this chapter discusses, the solidarities generated by particular kinds of technology and shop-floor labor organization and shared identities created by common confrontation between industrial work experiences in different temporalities.²⁸

Chapter 5 deals with the development of labor law as a set of everyday practices. The chapter employs an anthropological vision of law as a constitutive system that creates conceptions of order and enforces on them. This chapter argues that the role of law, in our case the labor law, is crucial for it is used as to regulate and also legitimate the indigenous production and enforcement of the norms in the everyday functioning of the workplace. It also

²⁶ The transformation of time and its implication for the relations at the point of production was also discussed in Thompson’s “Time, Work and Discipline in Industrial Capitalism” which reveals that with the onset of industrialism production is no longer a self-regulating activity subject to natural requirements of the producer, but subsumed under the requirement that socially necessary labor time reduced to minimum. This meant that the linear repetition and characteristic rhythm of industrial production replaces the rhythmic character of natural time. E. P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past and Present*, no.38 (December 1967).

²⁷ For a review, see Jim Kitay, “The Labour Process: Still Stuck? Still a Perspective? Still Useful?” *Electronic Journal of Organizational Theory* 3, no. 1 (June 1997). Available at http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/vol3_1/kitay.pdf

²⁸ Michael Hanagan and Charles Stephenson, “Introduction,” in M. Hanagan and C. Stephenson (eds.), p. 2.

seeks to scrutinize the ways through which legal norms and institutions produced unpredictable consequences in terms of working class identity and consciousness as the legislation system itself magnified the worker's sense of himself as a worker rather than as a citizen or the nation as a whole.

With its emphasis on the different ways of perception of everyday life and its shaping by socio-cultural meanings, *Alltagsgeschichte* echoes the issues raised by linguistic turn. As a matter of fact, the most prominent feature of working class history during the 1960s and 1970s was its concern with the "totality" of class experience and its materialist inspiration attempting to understand all aspects of human existence in terms of their social determinations. However, this commitment passed into crisis in the 1980s. Indeed, the last three decades have witnessed the rise of a revisionist historiography which has drawn on the linguistic turn to produce a new narrative about the constitution and transformation of collective identities.²⁹ According to the advocates of this approach, the new social history inspired by Thompson failed to analyze properly the ways in which language crucially intervened between social conditions and experiences, and the workers' responses to them.³⁰ In other words, the linguistic turn questions the purported reflective relationship between the real world and its representations and asserts the constitutive role of language in the construction of power relationships and human consciousness.

Many historians on the left were ready to dismiss the linguistic turn for its assumed idealism and concealing agency.³¹ However, linguistic analysis has helped to decenter

²⁹ William H. Sewell, Jr., "Toward a Post-materialist Rhetoric for Labor History," in *Rethinking Labor History*, ed. Lenard R. Berlanstein (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

³⁰ Marc W. Steinberg, "Culturally Speaking: Finding a Commons Between Post-Structuralism and the Thompsonian Perspective," *Social History*, vol. 21, no. 2 (May 1996), p. 49.

³¹ See Neville Kirk, "History, Language, Ideas and Post-modernism: A Materialist View," *Social History*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1994).

subjectivity and, as James Vernon suggests, to apprehend how language endows it with agency by reconstructing the subject as a worker, a woman, a consumer, a socialist and so on. Far from denying agency, linguistic analysis has proved to be helpful in placing the agency at the center of historical study, examining how we are positioned as acting subjects. “To assert that subjects are constrained by the discourses available to them ... is not to be a linguistic determinist. Not only are all languages multivocal, but there are conflicts and tensions between discursive systems, so that it is always possible to play at the margins of those languages, extending their possibilities, appropriating and subverting them in unanticipated ways.”³²

Moreover the linguistic turn also has been helpful for the rethinking of the relationship between the ideal and the material. The orthodox Marxist treatment of the question was that Marx simply reversed the direction of causality between them. However, more novel interpretations of Marx argue that what Marx opposed was not simply “idealism”, but the validity of the very distinction between the material and the ideal. Derek Sayer stresses that “Marx’s critique is less an inversion of the subject/predicate relation than in insistence that such predicates cannot, in the nature of things, be subjects at all. The only subjects of history, he insists, are ‘real, living individuals’ themselves.”³³ If consciousness cannot be regarded as a “living individual” but instead is recognized as an attribute or predicate of “real living individuals” themselves, then the material existence of these individuals can no longer be individualized in ways which exclude their language, identity and consciousness.³⁴

³² James Vernon, “Who’s Afraid of the ‘Linguistic Turn’? The Politics of Social History and its Discontents,” *Social History*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1994), p. 84.

³³ Richard Marsden, *The Nature of Capital: Marx After Foucault* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 21.

³⁴ Derek Sayer, *The Violence of Abstraction: The Analytical Foundations of Historical Materialism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1987), p. 87.

Thus Sayer's interpretation of historical materialism is completely different from the orthodox appreciations that define class as a "purely economic" relation, and then obliges us to seek causal connections between this economic essence of the relationship and the real empirical forms which class identity, language, consciousness and action actually take in history. "But", concludes Sayer, "we can no more conclude from the undeniable fact that there can be no social life without production, the consequence that the mode of production therefore determines any other area of social life, than we could conclude from the equally true proposition that there can be no social life without language, the corollary that social structures are determined by the laws of grammar."³⁵ Therefore it was possible to acknowledge the importance of discursively constructed dimensions of social relations between historical actors. In this sense, language, symbols and cultural conventions have provided the context within which the material and non-material circumstances of workers' lives have been rendered meaningful.

These observations tell something of the context within which Foucault's work was read by historians who looked for an alternative framework for thinking about social history. Foucault criticized Marxist approaches for tending to be overly preoccupied with defining class at the expense of understanding the nature of the struggle and called for studying "the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatus, on a much more minute and everyday level." Such mechanisms of power function as "individualizing strategies" that recognized and constituted "the social" as the main object of science and surveillance. Foucault's conceptualization of "the social" as a target of policy, a site of practice and a discursive product has inspired historians to examine critically the creation of those discourses "concerning society, its health and sickness, its conditions of life,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 148.

housing and habits, which served as the basic core of the social economy and sociology of the nineteenth century.”³⁶

Foucault’s conception of the social as such has been taken as paradigmatic for a variety of areas. So far it has been the feminist historians who have done most to show the benefits of this conceptual repertoire. In a classical essay, Joan W. Scott offers how the process of constructing gender (“the effect of gender”) could be used to discuss class, race, ethnicity, or for that matter every other social process and relationships:

Gender provides a way to decode meaning and to understand the complex connections among various forms of human interaction. When historians look for in the ways in which the concept of gender legitimizes and construct social relationships, they develop insight into the reciprocal nature of gender and society and into the particular and contextually specific ways in which politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics.³⁷

In a similar vein, Kathleen Canning’s work, with a marked emphasis “on the everyday and on the language used by workers,” historicizes the meanings of work through a discursive analysis. Canning defines discourse as both a textual and social relation, “a convergence of statements, texts, signs and practices across different, even dispersed, sites (from courtrooms to street corners).”³⁸ For example, Canning suggests that the discourses on “morality” and “normal family life” for workers represented “a repertoire of bourgeois concerns and also mapped out a domain of sexuality.”³⁹ Feminist historians also have broadened our understanding of experience from simply denoting the realm that mediates between the

³⁶ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 176. Quoted in Eley, “Is all the World a Text?”, p. 217

³⁷ Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 5 (December 1986), p. 1070.

³⁸ Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850-1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), p. 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. x, 11, 100.

relations of production and the development of group consciousness and identity to a more complex apprehension of the concept as “the linguistically shaped process of assigning meaning to events as they are lived by individuals.”⁴⁰

Discursive analysis particularly offers a useful method for reconstructing the everyday experiences of workers, since archival resources rarely allow us to hear the authentic voices of them. It is noteworthy that “the silence of archives” is purported as the most important excuse for escaping the painstaking work of writing the social history of labor in Turkey.⁴¹ By using the tools of discursive analysis, this thesis seeks to point to the groundlessness of this argument.

Along with the history of everyday life, this thesis applies the linguistic analysis in order to reveal the functioning of different and often competing discourses of working class identity in the particular historical context of the late 1940s and 1950s, which was shaped by urbanization, growing private sector activity, the expansion of social welfare regulations, and the relative liberation of the political regime (the transition to multi-party system, increasing trade union activity, etc.). However, while acknowledging the constitutive power of discourses as very central in defining and locating experience, this thesis also assumes Canning’s call to “untangle the relationships between discourses and experiences by exploring the ways in which subjects mediated and transformed discourses in specific historical settings.”⁴² Historical subjects mediate, resist and transform discourses in the process of defining their identities against other subjects.

⁴⁰ William H. Sewell, Jr., “Toward a Post-materialist Rhetoric for Labor History,” p.17.

⁴¹ See, for example, Ahmet Makal, “Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Emek Tarihi ve Tarihçiliği Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme,” in *Ameleden İşçiye* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), p. 56.

⁴² Kathleen Canning, “Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience,” *Signs*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Winter 1994),p. 373.

Chapter 2 discusses the discourses of social reform in Turkey which depicted the housing shortage for working class families as constituting a new social and moral question in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Along with growing anxieties about worker instability reflected in high turnover rates and about low productivity in key sectors of the growing urban economy appeared fears about the working class family- the poor sanitary conditions of homes and the overcrowded living that drew men into taverns and coffeehouses. The narratives of danger about housing conditions of workers ranged from scholarly surveys on poor neighborhoods to alarming representations in the newspapers of epidemics and crime that haunted the newly established *gecekondu* settlements. As the transformation to the multi-party regime after the war itself proliferated the opportunities of political participation a wide spectrum of voices competed to shape this discursive domain.

Chapter 3 traces the different discourses on working class leisure activities. These included politicians, bureaucrats, employers, socialists, trade union militants and particularly leading social scientists. All these groups claimed the right to survey and observe the working class leisure habits in order to define and control the new urban fabric. For middle class observers, for example, cinema salons, stadiums and coffeehouses appeared to be arenas where disorderly and ungovernable behaviors were displayed. However, it is argued, workers effectively sought to preserve their off-work time as a distinct cultural sphere of existence.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore different discourses on the problems of the labor process and the adaptation of the labor power to the requirements of the rationalization of production. Among the different actors who formed the new discursive domain of work were the prominent German social scientists, who came to Turkey after the Nazi seizure of power, and their students. They spoke as “scientific” experts and wrote extensively in journals such as *İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları*, *Çalışma Dergisi*, *İçtimai Emniyet* and *Forum*. They also wrote many books and booklets. Their writings reveal much about both

the living and working conditions of the workers, the characteristic of the labor market, and the philosophy behind the regulation of labor in the period. On the other hand, it is asserted, the rudimentary apparatus and ideology of regulation and reform had the effect of inciting new forms of working class action and language riding on the call for legality and rights.

Finally, Chapter 6 explores the organization and discursive construction of worker identity. Resisting a one-sided view of the working class identity as a discursive construction of the ruling elite, it tries to uncover how the workers defined their place in society. The discursive shift from the term *amele*, an ambiguous term which carried degrading connotations, to *işçi*, which is defined with reference to one's place in the production relations, trade unions and the emergent labor media movement were active actors in drawing the boundaries of class and defining class interests.

In the pursuit of uncovering the everyday lives and the changing meanings of work for laboring people, this dissertation draws on both textual and quantitative evidence, including the scholarly studies of social reformers, parliamentary motions, trade union reports, factory documents from various firms in İstanbul as well as national and trade union press which provide invaluable information about everyday lives of working families. State archives do not provide rich accounts for retrieving the authentic voices of workers. However, they reflect the perceptions of the ruling elite on the life styles and living conditions of working people. They also contain various reports on the technical and managerial problems of production as well as some statistical data about workers.

Finally a note should be made on the terminal dates of this study. The dynamics that were conducive for the creation of a distinct working class culture and identity started in the immediate aftermath of the war: urbanization, the growth of mass media, the expansion of the public sphere, the development of the labor movement, the extension of the off-work time and

the emergence of organized leisure, and the growing concern on the part of capital and state for the rationalization, colonization and homogenization of everyday life.

I brought the research to an end in 1961 with the Saraçhane demonstration of at least 100,000 workers on the last day of the year, for it symbolized the formation of a working class with distinct dispositions, identity and politics. However, the patterns described here often will be found in the following years albeit with significant variations due to the changing political environment in the 1960s. It would have been interesting to see how the politics of the everyday was linked to the institutionalized political activities if the scope of the study had been extended to cover the later periods. This question awaits the attention of future studies.

CHAPTER 2

WORKING CLASS AND THE CITY

Since the nineteenth century, industrial towns and cities have always attracted the attention of scholars and social commentators as the home of the working class people. In his famous study on the British industrial city, Friedrich Engels provided a classical account of the living conditions of the industrial working class in the British industrial city of Manchester. For Engels, it was in the great cities and towns that the concentration of property had reached its highest point and that the influence of this upon the working classes might be more distinctly and openly observed. Moreover, it was here that the traditional way of life had been most radically obliterated. Along with the macrostructure of the city, Engels described the working class districts and their dwellings in detail. In this examination, his purpose was not only to describe it literally as it was, but also to determine whether he could discover in it some kind of corresponding microstructure. The theoretical backdrop of this inquiry was to expose “the manner in which the need of shelter is satisfied furnishes a measure for the manner in which all other necessities are supplied.”⁴³ Therefore the manner in which the need

⁴³ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 180. For an overview of Engels’s work and other literary products on the nineteenth century working class settlements, see Steven Marcus, *Engels, Manchester, and the Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1974).

of shelter is satisfied would tell much about both class formation and state formation; the role of the state with regards to markets, state-society relations, etc.

After Engels, space did not cease to be a matter of concern for working class historians. For example, Gareth Stedman Jones, arguing against Engels' opinion that middle and upper classes abandoned any sense of responsibility for the poor, studied the middle-class influence on the social geography of urban space.⁴⁴ While Eric Hobsbawm drew attention to the importance of locality on the formation of the labor market and working conditions,⁴⁵ Joanna Bourke argued that construction of the class identity can not be understood without constant reference to locality, working class home and neighborhood.⁴⁶

Apart from the works of social historians, the last two decades have witnessed an explosion of empirical research on the spatial aspects of social life. Drawing, on the one hand, on Foucault's treatment of the intersections between power, knowledge and space, and on the other hand, Lefebvre's perception of the relations between space and history, urban sociologists and historical sociologists have directed attention to the ways in which spatial arrangements operate as constitutive dimensions of social phenomena.⁴⁷ From such perspectives historically informed studies on the interplay of space and social action, on how the space became as a site of struggle between social groups have proliferated in the last two decades.

⁴⁴ See Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in the Victorian Society* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976). It is worth noting that in his 1892 preface to the English edition of *The Condition of the Working Class*, Engels admitted that he had been wrong when he had predicted that the industrial city would become the center of working class revolt, since he overlooked the growing middle class interest in the city.

⁴⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, "The Nineteenth Century London Labor Market," in *Workers: Worlds of Labor* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

⁴⁶ Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Culture in Britain, 1890-1960* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁴⁷ For an overview, see Edward Soja, "Writing the City Spatiality," *City*, vol. 7, no. 3 (November, 2003). Soja describes this growing interest in space as "spatial turn".

However, so far the histories of the working class in Turkey have, by and large, ignored the spatial dimension of the working class formation.⁴⁸ One initial argument of this chapter is that any study of working class history which does not take into account the spatial dimension of its subject matter, can not achieve a proper understanding of class formation. This is especially true when we consider the periods of massive migration, rapid urbanization and proletarianization. That is why this chapter is devoted to exploring the socio-spatial dimension of working class settlements, the housing question and the residential segregation between the working classes and the middle classes. Here the aim is to uncover and reveal the relevance and utility of spatial analysis to obtain a better account of the formation of the working class and its culture.

By saying that class formation is a spatial process, we mean that people build forms of organization and identity on territorial bases, and these sites affect the forms of collective action open to them. Spatial arrangements operate as constitutive dimensions of social phenomena in different ways. In this study the concept of space is used, following Kevin Fox Gotham, as “a social construction that shape social action and guides behavior.”⁴⁹ It can not be regarded as static, “a container or neutral backdrop in which action unfolds.”⁵⁰ As Chendoke points out, “space is simultaneously the material context for human activity, but

⁴⁸ For exceptional pieces, see Hakan Koçak, “Türkiye’de İşçi Sınıfı Oluşumunun Sessiz Yılları: 1950’ler,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no.111 (2008). See also A. İçduygu, İ. Sirkeci and İ. Aydınğül, “Türkiye’de İçgöç ve İçgöçün İşçi Hareketine Etkisi,” in *Türkiye’de İçgöç, Sorunsal Alanları ve Araştırma Yöntemleri Konferansı* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1998).

⁴⁹ Kevin Fox Gotham, “Toward an Understanding of Spatiality of Urban Poverty: The Urban Poor as Spatial Actors,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol 27, no. 3 (September 2003), p.723

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.724.

also the product of social processes, and historically-created space molds and influences these processes.”⁵¹

This chapter focuses attention on the ordinary people of these cities; the working men and women who faced the task of dealing with the ramifications of the broad social, political and economic transformations that were taking place all around them. The chapter offers a sense of what life was like for these urban residents, examining the conditions they confronted and exploring their experiences. We consider the myriad ways in which these people responded to the problems of urban life and analyze how these actions affected the politics and dynamics of urban reform at the time. We also analyze the discursive domain of reform which shaped the urban order. Our goal is to offer a deeper understanding of the links between urban conditions, the informal politics of urban working men and women, and how these processes put their stamp on the formation of the working class.

What sorts of houses did working class people live in? Could an average working class family easily find housing for themselves and what was the market like? Were there shortages? And what, in any case, did people consider to be adequate housing? How was the housing question managed? And how was the question of the relationship between health of the public and its housing perceived and reflected in the discourses of politicians and middle-class reformers? Did the governments take action on the housing question? What did the working class neighborhood look like? This chapter will seek to find answers to such questions.

⁵¹ Quoted in Lauren Joseph, “Urban Space and Social Inequality: A Spatial Analysis of Race, Class, and Sexuality in the City,” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Sheraton Boston and the Boston Marriott Copley Place, Boston, MA, July 31, 2008, Available at http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p241492_index.html.

Urbanization and the Housing Problem

Explosive urban growth was a new experience for Turkey in the 1950s. The pace of urban growth had been relatively slow before that decade. Between 1927 and 1950 the urban population increased from 2.2 million to 3.9 million, while the rural population was expanding from 11.4 million to 17.1 million. To emphasize the same point, it is notable that the percentage of persons living in cities increased only one percent, from 24.2 percent to 25.2 percent, between 1927 and 1950.

Accordingly, the labor force employed in agriculture remained as high as 78 percent by 1950 while the share of industrial workforce increased only one percent, from 9 percent to 10 percent between 1927 and 1950 and workforce in services increased from 10 to 12 percent of the total labor force.⁵²

However from 1950 to 1955, the urban figure rose to 28.5 percent, a 3.3 point increase in five years, and reached 31.9 percent in 1960, another 3.4 point increase,⁵³ which represents the movement of around 100,000 people annually if we assume that the birth and death rates remained about the same in city and village. The population of the four big cities rose by 75 percent and one of every 10 villagers had migrated to the cities. This massive population movement significantly shaped the structure of the urban environment as shantytowns and irregular housing spread during the 1950s and 1960s.

The massive population flow from villages to cities after World War II was triggered by a series of economic, social, demographic and political factors. One significant feature of urbanization in Turkey was that it followed the transition to commercial agriculture from subsistence agriculture. On many occasions, the main task of Marshall Aid to Turkey was

⁵² Yahya Sezai Tezel, *Cumhuriyet Döneminin İktisadi Tarihi* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982), p. 101.

⁵³ SIS, *Statistical Indicators, 1923-1990* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1991), p. 8.

defined as that of increasing the agricultural production capacity and the supply of food and raw material to the OEEC countries. As a matter of fact, significant steps were taken after 1948 to improve the infrastructural capacity of Turkish agriculture. Especially after 1950, the DP made agriculture the cornerstone of its policy and used a significant part of the foreign aid to finance the importation of agricultural machinery. Consequently, tractor use increased from 1,750 in 1948 to 31,415 in 1952 and reached 44,144 by 1957.⁵⁴

The mechanization of agriculture reduced the need for manpower, thus limiting the employment opportunities in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, the Democrat Party used American credits to build roads, which played an important role in increasing the population mobility as well as in creating a more tightly knit internal market. However, the most important feature of migration in Turkey was the fragmentation of rural lands.⁵⁵ These trends, when combined with the growing prospects of employment in urban areas, encouraged migration to cities, especially among the sharecroppers who worked as laborers on other people's lands.

Because the economic development was concentrated in the big cities, migration was gravitated to these established urban areas. During the period, 90 percent of all migration was to the cities with more than 100,000 residents. İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara, the three largest cities, added over a million residents during the 1950s.⁵⁶ As the industrial center of Turkey, İstanbul led the way in urbanization. In 1945, when the flood to the city had just started,

⁵⁴ Feroz Ahmad, *The Turkish Experiment in Democracy, 1950-1975* (London: Westview Press, 1977), p. 135.

⁵⁵ When massive migration started in the early 1950s, 62 percent of rural families owned plots of lands of less than 5 hectares. Moreover, 12.2 percent of rural families were landless. See, Alan Duben, *Kent, Aile, Tarih* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p.75.

⁵⁶ In 1927 only İstanbul and İzmir had more than 100,000 residents. By 1940, Ankara, more than doubling over a decade, was added. By 1950, Adana and Bursa; by 1960 four more cities exceeded 100,000. Michael N. Danielson and Ruşen Keleş, *The Politics of Rapid Urbanization* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), p.245, fn.2.

İstanbul had 860,000 inhabitants. In fifteen years the city's population increased to 1.47 million in 1960.

The newcomers to the city faced an acute shortage of suitable low-cost housing. Most private housing was too expensive for the laboring poor. Regular housing was less available for urban newcomers. The flood of rural dwellers generated demands for low-cost housing in the cities that could have been met either by the private market or government.

With regard to the private construction market, the rent control introduced during the Second World War to prevent the exploitation of the war time situation was of immense importance. While the control guaranteed rent levels to sitting tenants and provided a strong incentive for tenants to stay put, for the contractors, it made housing construction an unprofitable investment. After the war, rent controls continued until 1963, though in a flexible manner and against the oppositions of the liberal circles in İstanbul.⁵⁷

On the other hand, a construction boom occurred in the course of the 1950s as the rapidly growing urban entrepreneurial class invested more heavily in luxurious dwellings in order to save the value of their money in an economic environment characterized by rampant inflation. The boom in luxurious dwellings construction would essentially generate land speculation of gigantic proportions in the growing urban centers⁵⁸ which, in turn, created a

⁵⁷ The İstanbul Merchants Association took the leadership of opposition on the basis that the controls damaged the balance between the supply and demand in the housing market. See, for instance, Munis Tekinalp, "Mesken ve İşyeri Buhranları," *Türkiye İktisat Mecmuası*, vol. 7, no. 76 (November 1954); "Kar Hadlerinin Tahdidiyle Hayat Ucuzlatılmaz," *Türkiye İktisat Mecmuası*, vol. 7, no.69 (January 1954). For much of the period rent controls were imposed on the home owners who built their dwellings before 1939, a factor which amplified the segregation of the housing market, see Hıfzı Topuz, "Mesken Davası Kira Kanunu'nun Tadili ile Halledilebilir mi?" *Akşam*, 19 October 1951. Amendments were made to the law concerning rent controls in 1945, 1953 and 1955. But the law stayed in effect until 1963.

⁵⁸ The land speculation in the large cities was so massive that it became an essential source for certain urban entrepreneurs to accumulate capital. For instance, in 1956 it was reported by the Union of Chambers of Commerce that a square meter of land in an upper class residential section of Ankara priced at 10 liras in 1952 was sold for 20 lira in 1953, for 30 in 1954, for 100 in 1955 and for 150 in 1958. See Richard D. Robison, "Turkey's Agrarian Revolution and the Problem of Urbanization," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 3

cruder environment for wage earners who sought suitable low-cost housing. Furthermore, the urban regeneration programs that were run directly by the DP government boosted further the speculative enterprises in the land market.⁵⁹ In an analysis of Turkey's pattern of economic development between 1948 and 1960, James A. Morris wrote: "A spectacular but not especially productive aspect of the development effort of Turkey has been the program of reconstruction of the major cities, especially İstanbul, with particular emphasis on aesthetic qualities rather than function. The considerable amount of luxury housing built in recent years is also of questionable value from the social and economic standpoints."⁶⁰

Another factor that inhibited the opportunity for wage earners to obtain suitable housing was the rapidly increasing prices of construction materials. Bernard Wagner, who came to Turkey as a member of a US AID mission and prepared a report on the housing problem of Turkey in 1955, estimated that the cost of construction index must have increased by 100 percent after 1948.⁶¹ Especially in the second half of the 1950s, when the growing current account deficit put its stamp on import preferences, it became more arduous work to provide the materials, a great part of which were imported goods. In 1954, 48 percent of the

(Autumn, 1958), p. 402. There was a similar rise in the price of other urban real estate. Karpas notes that some lots in Ankara and İstanbul that sold for 50 liras in 1949 went up to 50,000 liras in 1965. Kemal Karpas, *The Gecekondu: Rural Migration and Urbanization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.57. One effect of the construction boom in urban areas was the rising demand for unskilled labor. The newspapers reported that as construction of all types reached unprecedented levels in the early 1950s, virtually anyone could find employment. See, for instance, *Akşam*, 4 May 1954.

⁵⁹ Adnan Menderes would later be called the Baron Haussman of İstanbul by the architects and city planners for his grand urban regeneration projects between 1956 and 1960. Demolition programs, boulevard constructions and coastal fill works in his time radically changed the structure of the city. See Doğan Kuban, *İstanbul: Bir Kent Tarihi* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000), pp. 392-394.

⁶⁰ James A. Morris, "Recent Problems of Economic Development in Turkey," *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Winter, 1960). Though high prices of construction materials were observable as early as 1946. See "Mesken Buhranı Niçin Önlenemiyor," *Cumhuriyet*, 23 September 1946.

⁶¹ Bernard Wagner, "Türkiye'de Mesken Meselesi I," *Arkitekt*, vol. 25, no. 284 (1956), p.78. The second part of the report appeared in the following issue of *Arkitekt*.

cement, 28 percent of the timber and 46 percent of the reinforcing iron used by the construction industry were being imported from abroad. The unbalanced regional distribution of the building materials industry also stimulated the formidable prices.⁶²

The recession of the housing construction sector during the Second World War had encouraged the government to engage in housing production. The involvement of the state in housing can be traced back to Orphan Chests (*Eytam Sandıkları*) in the Ottoman period, which had functioned as a sort of mortgage system to provide shelter for orphans and widows. After 1926, these chests were gathered under the Real Estate and Orphan's Bank (*Emlak ve Eytam Bankası*), which was formed with state capital, but with 45 percent of its stock held privately. In 1946, the Orphan's Bank was transformed to the Real Estate Credit Bank (*Emlak Kredi Bankası*), with the intention of extending subsidized credit and involving in mass housing projects in general.

The first regulation concerning the construction of public financed houses was a 1928 act which authorized the Ministry of Finance to develop housing projects for civil servants.⁶³ This was followed by a number of regulations for providing shelter specifically for civil servants. In 1937, a special fund was established for the same end, and in 1944, the Law on the Housing for the Civil Servants (*Memur Meskenleri Hakkında Kanun*) was adopted according to which several dwelling projects were put into action in Ankara and in some other eastern provinces of the country.

⁶² "İmar Hamleleri ve Gecekonducular," *Forum*, vol. 6, no. 63 (1 November 1956), p.4. In his memoirs, Hayrettin Erkmen, the Democrat Minister of Labor between April 1953 and December 1955, and for a short period of time in 1957, also would emphasize that the workers housing cooperatives suffered chiefly from the difficulties in maintaining building materials. See Birsen Talay (ed.) "Hayrettin Erkmen'in Anıları," *Tarih ve Toplum*, vol. 33, no. 197 (May 2000), p.44.

⁶³ A brief overview of the housing policy in the early republican period is provided in Kudret Emiroğlu and Süha Ünsal, *Kentleşme Yapı ve Konut: 1923-1950 Dönemi* (Ankara: İnşaat Sanayi Yayınları, 2006).

Over and above the initiatives to provide housing for civil servants, there were considerable attempts to provide shelter for the workers of the State Economic Enterprises. As public enterprises in Turkey were located dispersedly in the provinces, most of them small towns in the countryside, the question of workers' attachment to the workplaces had brought onto the agenda the necessity of building residences for the working class families for whom the industrial work was only a sideline in which they engaged temporarily when they needed cash for some purpose. The fact that many workers continued to return seasonally to their native villages had important implications for the development of industrial discipline. It hindered the workers' full commitment to factory life, promoted labor instability and unreliability, and hampered the development of industrial skills.

Apart from that, these enterprises were expected to serve as a model for modernizing the surrounding countryside. Workers living in wretched huts and overcrowded barracks were seen as unfit for the "Turkish culture and character."⁶⁴ Therefore new settlements would be built in a proper scientific and technical sense. In many cases, such as Zonguldak and Burdur, the housing complexes would incorporate facilities such as a school, a laundry, a communal kitchen and recreational areas.

Housing projects for the workers of public enterprises were realized largely in the 1940s. In many Sümerbank factories, a considerable portion of the workers were living in social dwellings by the late 1940s. As of 1945, 44 percent of the workers in the Gemlik Artificial Silk Factory, 35 percent of workers in the Konya Ereğlisi Cloth Factory and Kayseri Textile Corporation, 40 percent of workers in the Karabük and Hereke Woollen and Carpet Factory, and 16 percent of the Nazilli Calico workers were living with their families in the

⁶⁴ For an overview of the political and disciplinary discourse of the architectures on the issue of workers' housing in the early republican period, see Bilge İmamoğlu, "Workers' Housing Projects by Seyfi Arkan in the Zonguldak Coalfield: A Case of Modernization in Early Republican Turkey" (MA Thesis, ODTÜ Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2003), p. 50.

housing complexes constructed by Sümerbank.⁶⁵ Most of these housing complexes also included bachelor lodgings, often built as separate units built closer to the workplace. This spatial segregation of living areas reflected a moral concern to protect the privacy and integrity of family life.⁶⁶ The total number of Sümerbank employees (workers as well as white-collar professionals) accommodated in these lodging dwellings was 6,623 in 1947, a figure which constituted approximately 20 percent of all Sümerbank employees.⁶⁷ However, Sümerbank administration made no attempts to provide shelter for its employees working at the factories in big cities.

On the other hand, private manufacturers did not seem to be interested in providing shelter for their workers. No such institutions as the “factory colonies”⁶⁸ that had been established in industrial England after the mid-nineteenth century appeared in Turkey prior to Halil Bezmen’s cloth factory in the 1950s. As shall be discussed extensively in the third

⁶⁵ Ahmet Makal, “Türkiye’nin Sanayileşme Sürecinde İşgücü Sorunu, Sosyal Politika ve İktisadi Devlet Teşekkülleri: 1930’lu ve 1940’lu Yıllar,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 92 (Spring 2002), p.52; Ahmet Ali Özeken, “Türkiye Sanayinde İşçiyi Barındırma Problemi,” in *İçtimai Siyaset Konferansları İkinci Kitap* (İstanbul: İÜ İktisat Fakültesi İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü, 1950), p. 118. Rebi Barkın’s 1949 report on the “Living and Housing Conditions of Workers in Nazilli” records that there were 265 boarding houses in Nazilli, exclusively for civil servants and foremen. 300-350 workers were accommodated in bachelor pavilions. The remaining 2500 had to pay high rents to stay in the filthy and overcrowded rooms which lacked electricity and running water. See Rebi Barkın, *Nazillide İşçilerin Geçim ve Barınma Şartları*, 13 July 1949. This unpublished report is added into the appendix of the following study: Mustafa Görkem Doğan, “Governmental Involvement in the Establishment and Performance of Trade Unions during the Transition to Multi Party Politics: The Case of Workers’ Bureau of the Republican People’s Party” (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2003).

⁶⁶ See Ali Cengizkan, “İstanbul Silahtarağa Elektrik Santrali Yerleşme ve Konut Yaşam Çevreleri,” in *Fabrika’da Barınmak, Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye’de İşçi Konutları: Yaşam, Mekan, Kent*, ed. Ali Cengizkan (Ankara: Arkadaş Yayınları, 2009), p. 36.

⁶⁷ Sümerbank, *Cumhuriyet’in 25inci Yılı* (İstanbul: Kulen Basımevi, 1948), p. 54.

⁶⁸ Factory colonies were established in late Victorian England by the employers who wished to carve out their influence on the social and political life in working class neighborhood. For an overview, see Mike Sawage and Andrew Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class, 1840-1940* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.61-62.

chapter, Bezmen built houses and amenities such as a music hall, a nursery and even a summer camp for his workers.⁶⁹

Housing Policy for Workers

The absence of a more comprehensive policy approach to the problem of low-income housing did not appear to be a major concern before the end of the Second World War. The acute housing shortage in the large cities was detected for the first time during the War. In İstanbul, Gerhard Kessler notes, a critical shortage of affordable housing emerged in 1942, and grew more severe after the end of the war.⁷⁰ He estimates that the number of people without accommodation must have been about 50,000 people, minimum 10,000 families, in 1948, when the number of legal dwelling constructions was considered. Speculating further on numbers, Kessler concludes that half of the “formally homeless” families lived in creaky dwellings, overcrowded and open to sanitary and moral illnesses, while the remaining half lived in places not covered by permit.⁷¹ In 1947, the head of the State Maritime Administration complained that a population of nearly 2000 homeless people was living under the bridges in destitute conditions, and their number was increasing at unprecedented

⁶⁹ *Gece Postası*, 13 April 1956. It was reported recurrently in the media that providing dorms and social facilities would help to create a “temperate climate” in the private workplaces since they proved to be efficient means to keep the workers attached to their work in the public sector factories. See for example, “İşyerlerinde Bekarlar İçin Pavyon Yapılmalıdır,” *Gece Postası*, 4 October 1955.

⁷⁰ Gerhard Kessler, “İstanbul’ da Mesken Darlığı, Mesken Sefaleti, Mesken İnşaatı,” *Arkitekt*, vol. 18, no. 209-210 (1949), p. 132.

⁷¹ It is notable that the real extent of housing shortage in Turkey was never known. Ernst Egli was worrying in 1955 that the initiatives to tackle with the problem was proceeding in the dark as the required datum were still not provided. Ernest Egli, “Türkiye’de Mesken Problemine Dair Etüd,” *İçtimai Emniyet*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1955), p. 49.

pace.⁷² It was estimated that annually 50,000 dwelling units needed to be produced in the cities with populations over 10,000 in order to meet the housing shortage.⁷³

It is worth mentioning that Kessler also observed the segregation of the neighborhoods along class lines in the city as a recent development in Turkey.⁷⁴ Duben and Behar make the same point by noting that “the class-based differentiation of the urban fabric was a phenomenon that had to wait for the twentieth century, and especially for the post-Second World War period,” although the beginnings of the socio-economic stratification of neighborhoods may be traced back to the years before and after the First World War.⁷⁵ The formation of single-class districts, though desirable as it was the natural consequence of industrial development, was thought to be a dangerous process not only because they did not conform to the aesthetic and social values of the established urban middle-classes, but also because it would be harder to control the inhabitants of these unruly settlements.

Another factor that brought the housing question of the lower classes onto the political agenda was the great transformation of the political environment in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Rapid urban growth and the problems related to that attracted the attention of governmental and party leaders, for the transition to the multi-party regime itself increased the opportunities for political participation. Most striking was the responsiveness of political parties to the housing shortage and poor sheltering conditions of the laboring poor in the wake of the explosive growth of the squatter dwellings in the major cities. Housing for the working class became a central part in debates about social problems and social policy in

⁷² “Köprü Üstünde ve Altında Yaşayanlar,” *Cumhuriyet*, 3 March 1947.

⁷³ Sadun Aren, “Mesken İhtiyacımız ve İktisadi Meseleleri,” in *Birinci İskan ve Şehircilik Haftası Konferansları*, (Ankara: AÜSBF İskan ve Şehircilik Enstitüsü Yayınları No. 1: 1955), p.40.

⁷⁴ Kessler, “İstanbul’ da Mesken Darlığı, Mesken Sefaleti...”, p.131.

⁷⁵ Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *İstanbul Haneleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), p. 31.

those years. Images of affluence and deprivation, status and social class, issues of segregation and community integration were associated strongly with housing.

The ruling party incorporated the provision of low-cost housing as a social policy in its program as early as 1947. The result of the 1946 general elections had made it clear that the party needed to put more emphasis on the social needs of the laboring classes if it was to take hold of a sound base in the urban centers. This issue was held seriously during the 1947 Convention of the Republican People's Party which is commonly perceived as having been a crucial moment at which the general trend of thought on the economic role of the state was reflected. The Convention agreed to amend the principle of etatism in its program by limiting its scope in favor of private capital. The RPP accepted the Democrat thesis that the state activity should be confined to the fields in which public utility was on the front and in operations which provided no profit for private capital.⁷⁶ Yet the provision of housing for workers was considered as an issue that only public authorities could operate on a sufficiently large scale. Therefore two articles about social housing were added to the social policy chapter of the new party program.

Article 90 of the program touched upon the question of social housing, manifesting that the party was well aware of the emerging housing problem in the urban centers. Article 93 stipulated the building of houses with small gardens for workers in regions where industry would be established in order "to bind the employees to their work and home," and "to not separate the peasants from their land when they were employed in factories."⁷⁷

The theme that the workers' link to the soil should be preserved as long as possible in order to prevent social problems that uncontrolled dispossession could cause was a much

⁷⁶ Kemal Karpat, *Turkey's Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 302-303.

⁷⁷ Emiroğlu and Ünsal, p. 114.

repeated issue in the peasantist discourse. It is a well-documented fact that the peasantist ideology, with its strong dislike for urbanization and proletarianization, had been quite influential on the ruling elite of the early republican period.⁷⁸

However, it is worth noting that the idea of providing small plots of agricultural land to workers in order to tie peasant-originated workers to their work in industrial centers was also very familiar to the social policy approach of the time. This social policy approach had been introduced to Turkey by the German economists and sociologists who, after coming to Turkey in the aftermath of the National Socialist seizure of power in Germany, had taken a leading role in the establishment of the İstanbul University Faculty of Economics and influenced greatly the development of the idea of social policy and labor legislation. A neglected point concerning these social scientists is that some of them, like Wilhelm Röpke and Alexander Rüstow, were among the leading representatives of the German Economic Tradition (from solidarism to ordo-liberalism and the theory of social market economy), a tradition which was very occupied with a basic question: how to balance the social and economic problems of the capitalist system in a way different from the American way.⁷⁹

In a review article entitled “New Tendencies in Social Politics,” Orhan Tuna elaborated on Wilhelm Röpke’s influential study, *Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart* (The social crisis of our time) for the purpose of discussing the boundaries of social policy.⁸⁰ According to Röpke, social policy was about the labor question, which was in essence the

⁷⁸ See, for example, Asım Karaömerlioğlu, "The People's Houses and the Cult of the Peasant in Turkey," in *Turkey Before and After Atatürk* edited by Sylvia Kedourie (London: Frank and Cass, 1999).

⁷⁹ For discussions on the German Economic Tradition, see Peter Koslowski, ed., *The Theory of Capitalism in the German Economic Tradition: Historism, Ordo-Liberalism, Critical Theory, Solidarism* (Hiedelberg: Springer, 2000). An overview of Alexander Rüstow’s ideas is also provided in Sabri Ülgener, “Alexander Rüstow, Bir Fikir ve Aksiyon Adamının Arkasından,” *İÜ İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, vol. 23, no. 3-4 (April- September, 1963).

⁸⁰ Orhan Tuna, “İçtimai Siyasette Yeni Temayüller,” *Çalışma*, no. 2 (November, 1945).

total dispossession of the worker. He maintained that until then social politics had reinforced the economies of scale and proletarianization, an approach which had proved to be a fatal mistake. The so-called social reforms (wage arrangements, reduction in the working hours, collective contract schemes, social insurances, etc.) were no cure for the social illnesses. For Röpke, the real solution to the labor question would be the “negation of proletarianization”: “A new model of industrial worker should be created who provides his lunch from his garden and dinner from the lake of Zurich,” he wrote and continued, “only when he is given a plot of land, the proletarian can get free from his status.”⁸¹

In another article, which appeared in the *Çalışma* (Work) Journal, published by the Labor Ministry, the idea of providing housing with garden was put clearly as follows:

We must admit that every working class family ought to have a house and this house have a garden. Noticing that he has been appreciated by another estate of the society, seeing that his needs could be satisfied within his conditions will correct the morality of the worker in the community, and so many social problems will be solved as a matter of course.

In the powerful industrial countries which had experienced many difficulties in this field, there is a conviction that class struggles could be constrained by providing the worker a home and a piece of soil.⁸²

The question of sheltering the laboring classes stayed on the policy agenda of the ruling party well after the 1947 Convention. Several reports discussed in the high echelons of

⁸¹ Franz Oppenheimer, who had intellectual affinity to both Rüstow and Röpke, believed that once land was provided for the wage earner, “surplus labor would dry up, the bargaining power of those employed would rise, wage would move upwards toward a non-exploitive level. The social question would disappear. So too would business cycle, indeed any economic volatility, which Oppenheimer interpreted as an outcome of exploitation and under-consumption.” Dieter Haselbach, “Franz Oppenheimer’s Theory of Capitalism and of a Third Path,” in Peter Koslowski (ed.), p. 72.

⁸² “Her işçi ailesinin bir evi ve bu evin bir bahçesi olması gerektiğini kabul etmek zorundayız. Başka bir zümre tarafından buna layık görüldüğünü anlamak ve insanlık ihtiyaçlarının kendi seviyesi dahilinde tatmin edildiğini görmek işçinin insan cemiyeti içindeki ahlakını düzeltecek ve bir çok sosyal problem kendiliğinden çözümlenecektir. Bu sahada bizden çok daha ileride bulunan ve bundan dolayı pek çok zorluklarla karşılaşarak tecrübeler edinmiş büyük endüstri memleketlerinde sınıf mücadelelerinin önüne işçiyi toprak ve ev sahibi yapmakla geçilebileceği kanaati vardır.” Orhan Alsaç, “İşçi Evlerine Dair,” *Çalışma Dergisi*, no. 2 (November 1945), p. 51

the party give evidence of this. It is interesting to note that these reports, in another aspect, reflected clearly the outlook and concern of the urban established classes towards the lower classes at this initial stage of industrial-urban growth. It is also worth noting that the *gecekondu* was regarded as the home of working classes in these documents.

In his influential study on the rise of the *gecekondu* settlements in Turkey, Karpaz writes that the established middle-class inhabitants, who were clearly dominant in the cities before 1950, regarded the new arrivals as “peasant invaders,” undermining the quality of life in the cities. They associated the migrants with violence and crime, contamination and disease, prostitution and drugs.⁸³ Therefore, in the name of health, morality, security and education, the middle classes claimed the right to survey and observe the working class residences. From the early reports prepared by concerned deputies in the parliament, to those of public health officials, such as Halit Ünal, who warned seriously about the sanitary and moral consequences of the single-room system in the working-class dwellings, or to the detailed studies of foreign scholars on the new low-income districts, such as Hart’s study on the Zeytinburnu,⁸⁴ there were constant attempts to define and control the new urban fabric.

What seems to be reflected in the numerous reports, articles and the news in the press is that the concern for housing was not simply the elimination of the awful material conditions of the poor working-class settlements, but encompassed the morality of the “dangerous classes.” There was a concern about the ungovernability of the “invaders,” In these reports, the fear of the moral descent of poverty into crime against property was observable.

⁸³ Kemal Karpaz, *The Gecekondu: Rural Migration and Urbanization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp.62-63.

⁸⁴ One interesting thing, among many, about the Zeytinburnu survey which was conducted by Charles W. M. Hart and his colleagues in 1962 was that it was financed by the İstanbul Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Industry. That is the clearest evidence of middle class interest in the constant observation and surveillance of the working classes. See Charles W. M. Hart, *Zeytinburnu Gecekondu Bölgesi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası Yayınları, 1969).

Take, for instance, a 1948 report prepared and approved in the general administrative council of the RPP, in which it was emphasized that workers' housing was a social problem as important as their daily wages. The report underlined that the recent statistics of the Ministry of Labor, which recorded the number of workers in İstanbul as 83,338, did not reflect the real number. According to report the real number should have been around 160,000. Including the families, it was stated, the working class population amounted to half of the total city population. The report warned that the housing shortage might provide the basis of great social unrest among this growing class population:

No adequate considerations are provided about the arrangements and measures to be taken on the issue (of workers' housing) in the cities and towns, and even in the large industrial locations. The *gecekondu* housing is the most apparent instance of this situation. *No one can ensure that a community which has built shanties for shelter on land belonging to the state or some private person will not go too far to claim the possession of other assets.*⁸⁵ (Italics mine)

In this sense, the need for acting on housing was perceived not only just as a question of the social, but linked concurrently with the moral regulation of the laboring poor.

The same problem was tackled in another report prepared by Rebi Barkın, the Zonguldak deputy and the head of the Workers' Bureau of the RPP. The report was presented to the General Secretary Tevfik Fikret Sılay in 1947. In this report, Barkın documents in detail the housing conditions of the laboring masses both in the old districts of Eyüp, Topkapı and Üsküdar, and in the new *gecekondu* settlements of Beykoz, Paşabahçe and Kazlıçeşme. Because the amount that the working people could afford to spend for shelter was sharply limited, the report wrote, they lived in extremely crowded conditions: families in cheap single-roomed tenements and single men in bachelor houses called *bekar odaları*.

⁸⁵ BCA Catalog no. [490.453.1867.6] “*Şehir ve kasabalarda hatta büyük endüstri yerlerinde bu konu üzerine henüz yeter derecede tertip ve tedbirler düşünülmemiştir. Gecekondu evleri bunun en açık bir misalidir. Devlete ve hatta hususi şahıslara ait arsalarla barınacak bir kulübe kuran bir topluluğun başka varlıklara da sahip olmağa kadar ileri gitmeği düşünmeyeceklerini kimse temin edemez.*”

Overcrowded, filthy, decaying buildings, poorly heated in winter, suffocating in summer, lacking in toilet and bathing facilities, vermin and rat infested, disease-breeding shanties – this was the image of the poor dwellings in the cities. Moreover, such public services such as street paving, street lighting and the installation of sewer and water lines often were not provided to neighborhoods inhabited by the poor. The working man’s family had most often not enough space, not enough warmth, not enough light, not enough furniture. Barkın warns that “the workers feel themselves as they were strangers of the community”. The concern here was that the impoverished households were coming together, each feeding off the other, which provided an environment for social danger. Therefore, the report concludes, a formal policy approach to the problem of low-income housing is needed urgently:

One dreadful feature of the gecekondu settlements on the social scale is as follows: Those who build houses in these areas are not the owners of the land. These plots of land belong either to the state or to someone else. The man who builds his home does not consider that point. As they start building en masse, and as the state can not respond properly because they behave en masse, they come to think that they could achieve anything when they act together as a group. Could anyone assure that those who have learned to lay claim to land today would not make claim to other wealth tomorrow? Housing question is an issue that the party should place too much stress on.⁸⁶

What was seen as a moral descent from the perspective of middle-class observers was regarded from another perspective as a manifestation of the rise of a new class which would be the bearer of a new society. Take, for instance, a long article appeared in *Nuh’un Gemisi* (Noah’s Ark), a weekly magazine published for nearly seven months by the eminent leftist

⁸⁶ BCA Catalog no. [490.01/1439.08.01]. “Gecekondu mahallelerinin sosyal ölçüdeki bir fenalığı da şudur: Burada ev yapan kimseler evlerine üzerine yaptıkları arsanın sahibi değildirler. Bu arsalar ya devlete veya hususi şahıslara aittir. Evini çatan adam kimin toprağı üzerine ev kurduğunu düşünmemektedir. Bu işe toplulukla başladıklarından ve toplulukla olunca devlet de buna müdahale edemediğinden kendilerinde zaruri olarak toplulukla hareket ettikleri zaman her şeyi yapabilecekleri hakkında bir kanaat uyanmaktadır. Bugün toprağa tesahübü öğrenenlerin yarın yine toplulukla başka varlıklara da tesahüp etmeği derpiş etmiyeceklerini kim temin edebilir? İskan meselesi partinin ehemmiyetle üzerinde durması gereken bir konudur.” For a similar line of argument, see Rebi Barkın “Mesken Buhranı Karşısında Gecekonduların Durumu”, *Hürbilet*, no. 1 (17 April 1948).

writers of the time.⁸⁷ According to the anonymous writer of this article, the *gecekondular* inhabitants are not “morally corrupted, utterly ignorant, sheepish people who are unable to organize themselves,” as they frequently were portrayed by the ruling classes, but “a new generation of Turkish workers and laborers who had learned their lesson in the struggle for living.” They are the “army of the dispossessed, laboring conquerors that have besieged the Byzantium city once again after five hundred years.” This image of conquerors besieging the outmoded city was a far cry from the image of “peasant invaders” ruining what was delicate and select in the city life. “Who are the habitants of these squatter neighborhoods surrounding the city? Tannery worker Ali, rubber worker Hüseyin from Malatya, weaver Mehmet, construction worker Hüseyin from Ordu, janitor Sadettin, and poor university student Necdet... are exemplary of those who will bring down the archaic order of the city and build a new democratic order on this land.”

Whether expressed in a middle-class discourse of upcoming alert or in the discourse of romantic socialism, working class housing and working class neighborhood had become a matter of concern by 1950. As a matter of fact, the public concern for the welfare of the working classes became almost identified with their housing conditions.

In the early 1950s, these concerns for working-class housing also were fueled by recurrent news in the media about epidemics that spread in these settlements that had no running water resources and proper sewage channels. In 1950, a newspaper article reported the application of the Association of Workers of Bakery Products and Bakery Shops to the local health authority in İstanbul about the spread of tuberculosis among the workers of bakery shops. The hard work in airless and lightless places and poor sheltering conditions of

⁸⁷ “Gecekondular,” *Nuh’un Gemisi*, no. 6 (7 December 1949). *Nuh’un Gemisi* was published only 31 issues. The first issue appeared on November 2, 1949. The last issue came out soon after the Democrat’s accession to power on May 31, 1950.

the workers were held responsible for the infection of hundreds of workers. The Association also complained that although a campaign had been started in 1948 by the İstanbul Health Department to make tests in the bakery shops, after two years hundreds of bakeries had not been visited by the municipality doctors.⁸⁸

In the same year it was reported that 30 percent of the inhabitants of Kasımpaşa suffered from tuberculosis.⁸⁹ The number was certainly exaggerated, but there was a truth in that because other testimonies indicated that tuberculosis was like a trade disease for the tobacco workers and most of the tobacco workers in İstanbul lived in Kasımpaşa.⁹⁰

It is interesting to note that that there was another implicit link detected between the health and morality of the working class. In a long article that appeared in *Çalışma Vekaleti Dergisi* (Ministry of Labor Journal) in 1953, Dr. Halit Ünal elaborated this approach with references to the different reports of the ILO. Ünal argued that unhygienic dwelling conditions and inadequate floor space incited the residents to go outside the home, either to the coffeehouses or bar rooms. This, in turn would make the low-income workers spend their money on gambling and alcohol consumption which would lead not only to moral corruption, but also, because they would allocate less money for nutrition, would weaken the body of the workers and leave them vulnerable to the attack of diseases. “It has been discovered that,” Ünal noted, “this was the cause of the death of many working men in France”.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Hikmet Katran, “Fırınlarda Yüzlerce Veremli Çalıştırılıyor,” *Gece Postası*, 16 May 1950.

⁸⁹ Kemal Sülker, “Bu Şehrin Sesi,” *Gece Postası*, 9 December 1950.

⁹⁰ See Mustafa Özçelik, *1930-1950 arasında Tütüncülerin Tarihi* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV Yayınları, 2003). At least 3000 tobacco workers were living in Kasımpaşa in the early 1950s.

⁹¹ Halit Ünal, “Mesken Davası,” *Çalışma Vekaleti Dergisi*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1953), p.28. At the beginning of the century high infant mortality rates and the spread of diseases were linked to crowded conditions in the working class districts in Britain. See Andrew August, *The British Working Class, 1832-1940* (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), pp. 99-100.

In a similar vein Cahit Talas wrote that around 50,000 people died from tuberculosis in Turkey annually, principally because of the poor sanitary conditions and overcrowding in the working class homes. Those conditions drove the working class men out of home to the coffeehouses and taverns while the children and women had to spend most of their time outside the home. Therefore, Talas concluded, poor housing conditions may lead the working class families to degradation and breakup.⁹²

The question of overcrowding as a heavily debated issue was connected explicitly to the moral condition of the working class. What really concerned the observers and scholars of social policy was the fact that many working class families were living in one-room dwellings, a problem which had detrimental consequences on the moral as well as on the sanitary conditions. Official statistics indicated that 22 percent of Turkey's urban families lived in single-roomed dwellings.⁹³ This proportion was higher in the poor neighborhoods of the cities. İbrahim Öğretmen, in his pioneering monograph on the *gecekondu* housing in Ankara, wrote that more than half of the dwellings he examined were single-roomed.⁹⁴ This figure was even higher among the tenants' houses. A later study of the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement on the Gülveren *gecekondu* neighborhood in Ankara would confirm his observations. According to this survey, 48.6 percent of the dwellings in Gülveren were single-roomed.⁹⁵ When Ziyaeddin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, at that time a new professor of sociology at the İstanbul University, conducted a research study on the tramcar workers in

⁹² Cahit Talas, "Mesken Davamız," *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1955), p. 2.

⁹³ See Robinson, p. 401.

⁹⁴ İbrahim Öğretmen, *Ankarada 159 Gecekondu Hakkında Monografi* (Ankara: Ajans Türk Matbaası, 1957), p.36.

⁹⁵ İmar ve İskan Bakanlığı, *Ankara Gülveren Gecekondu Araştırması* (Ankara: 1965), p.32. However, there were significant differences between the irregular settlements. For instance, in Ankara's Çiçinbağları *gecekondu* area, only seven percent of the dwellings were single-roomed. İmar ve İskan Bakanlığı, *Ankara Çiçinbağları Gecekondu Araştırması* (Ankara: 1965), p.31.

İstanbul, what drew his interest particularly about their housing conditions was the prevalence of single-roomed dwellings. One third of the respondents to his survey had reported that they lived in one room dwellings. For Fındıkoğlu, this condition posed a “serious question that should be handled by governmental and private institutions which had always displayed benevolence for workers.”⁹⁶

That overcrowding was particularly high in the working class homes was confirmed by a 1960 sample survey of housing conditions in 20 Turkish cities. According to the survey 33.6 percent of working class homes in Ankara were single-roomed, while the figure was 7.7 percent for civil servants and only 3 percent for self-employed professionals. In İstanbul around 22 percent of wage earners were living in single room dwellings compared to 5 percent of civil servants and only 1 percent of professionals. Similarly, 29 percent of working class homes in İzmir were single roomed while the figure was 5 percent for both public servants and professionals.⁹⁷

Ünal was well aware of the extensiveness of the single-room system and overcrowding in the dwellings of the low income families. Overcrowding was perceived to encourage promiscuity, especially where families took lodgers, and even incest, where large families lived together. Thus the discourse on morality represented not only a repertoire of middle class concerns on the living conditions of laboring classes, but also mapped out a domain of sexuality. After he warned that “the moral defects of sleeping of husband and wife and their children or family members of different sex or non-members of the family in the same room is very obvious,” Ünal referred to the principles set for the number of rooms in the dwellings

⁹⁶ Z. Fahri Fındıkoğlu, *İstanbul'da Şehiriçi İnsan Nakli Meselesi ve İstanbul'da Tramvay İşçilerinin İktimai Durumu* (İstanbul: Kenan Matbaası, 1949), p.163.

⁹⁷ Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *20 Şehirde 1960 Mesken Şartları Anketi* (Ankara: 1962), pp. 19, 61.

by the 1949 report of the UN European Economic Community.⁹⁸ These principles provided that the condition in which

1. two persons over 10 and from opposite genders sleep in the same room
2. more than two persons in a single room,
3. more than five persons in three rooms,
4. more than seven persons in four rooms,
5. more than ten persons in five rooms,

was defined as “overcrowding” (*surpeuplement*).

Again an explicit link between overcrowding, the single room system and morality of the working poor was detected. This link was also causing a considerable amount of labor to be lost.⁹⁹

Housing Policy under the DP Rule

For all that public interest, documents and reports on the housing problem of the working people, the Republican governments did not take action in an efficient manner. There were recurrent reports in the media about the preparations made by the government to provide affordable housing for the workers in İstanbul during the first months of 1950. The governor, Fahrettin Kerim Gökay touched upon the subject on many occasions in the winter of 1950. Gökay heralded the construction of thousands of workers’ dwellings on the hillside of Sütluçe. However Gökay’s words were not found convincing by the workers, since Gökay

⁹⁸ Ünal, pp.27-28.

⁹⁹ Drawing on the British example, Dave Cowan argues that the appropriate juncture for the birth of housing policy appears when the focus on external sanitary and moral condition is linked with the dwellings of the poor. See Dave Cowan, “Our ‘Amateurs in Blue’: Policing the Housing Crisis”, Paper Presented at the Housing Studies Association Conference, Housing and Crime, University of Lincoln, 8-9 September 2005.

was “the man of government” and his promises were made just before the general elections were held.¹⁰⁰

The Democrat Party, which held power on 14 May 1950, took on the housing problem immediately. In fact, there was no direct reference to the housing policy in the DP program, but one short article, Article 88, stipulated that the necessary measures would be taken in order to reform the nutrition, clothing and sheltering conditions of the low income citizens.¹⁰¹ However, one of the first statements of the Democrat Ministry of Labor, Hasan Polatkan, was on the issue.¹⁰² Polatkan affirmed that housing for workers would be regarded as a matter of priority by the new government. He stated that the construction of two or three roomed dwellings was envisaged by the government. However, the government stipulated that enterprises take the initiative in the implementation of these projects, which meant that the state would not be involved in the financing. Polatkan’s short-term office ended in December 1950 when he was replaced by Hulusi Köymen. Yet, Polatkan’s unrealistic approach to the problem was shared by Köymen.¹⁰³

Two state banks, the Bank of the Provinces (*İller Bankası*) and the Real Estate and Credit Bank (*Emlak ve Kredi Bankası*), devoted a large share of their resources to housing and to the improvement of urban services in the 1950s. From 1950 to mid-1957, the Real Estate and Credit Bank alone invested 725 million Turkish liras in housing for 70,000 persons.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ “İşçiler Konuşuyor,” *Nuh’un Gemisi*, no.17 (22 February 1950). See also Abidin Daver, “Halka ucuz Ev Temini,” *Cumhuriyet*, 23 February 1950. A couple of days later Gökay announced to the public that 1000 dwelling units would be constructed for the low-income families immediately after the elections. “İstanbul’da 1000 Halk Tipi Ev yapılacak,” *Cumhuriyet*, 26 March 1950.

¹⁰¹ See *Demokrat Parti Tüzük ve Programı* (Ankara: Doğu Matbaası, 1949).

¹⁰² “İşçiler için Ev Temin Edilecek,” *Zafer*, 14 October 1950.

¹⁰³ Mümtaz Faik Fenik, “İşçileri Süratle Tatmin Etmeliyiz,” *Zafer*, 24 December 1950.

¹⁰⁴ Robinson, p. 404.

The Bank not only provided credits to housing cooperatives, but also got involved in the realization of mass housing projects. However, from the early days of its activities, the Bank came under constant criticism, for the interest rates of its credits were very high and the projects served the middle-class demands of luxurious residents.¹⁰⁵ A well known example of this was the Mecidiyeköy project which initially was started to provide cheap housing for low-income groups, however, turned out to be inhabited by middle-class families.¹⁰⁶ Ataköy and Levent Farm, which were transferred to the Real Estate and Credit Bank from the municipality, also came to be built as luxurious residential districts through proper credit opportunities initially destined for social housing projects.

In 1956, a delegation from the European Economic Community Housing Committee visited İstanbul to prepare a report on the housing problem.¹⁰⁷ At the end of their survey, the delegation concluded that the activities of the institutions responsible for the provision of low-cost housing had failed to serve that end. The dwellings constructed by the concerned institutions were in the luxury category and could be afforded only by those whose incomes were above the average.

Moreover, the credit grants of the Real Estate and Credit Bank were not based on a sound policy. Because the maximum floor space for social housing, which was designed to increase the number of units constructed with the same amount of investment, was not pre-determined, the credits destined for social housing projects were allocated to luxury

¹⁰⁵ Esat Tekeli, "Ucuz Mesken Meselesi," *Çalışma*, no. 2 (November, 1945).

¹⁰⁶ Ayşe Buğra, "The Immoral Economy of Housing in Turkey," *The International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 22 (June 1998), p.308. See also, "Mesken Politikası ve İşçi Sigortaları Fonları," *Forum*, vol. 5, no. 56 (1 September 1956), p.7.

¹⁰⁷ See Zeki Sayar, "Şu Mesken Davamız," *Arkitekt*, vol. 25, no. 283 (1956).

residential projects.¹⁰⁸ This was the case, for instance, in the apartment blocks constructed by the İstanbul Municipality on Atatürk Avenue. The flats were so big that they did not fit within the norms of social housing.

The housing problem for workers was taken more seriously during the office of Hayrettin Erkmen, the third Democrat Minister of Labor between April 1953 and December 1955. The provision of affordable housing for the workers was one of the central issues that the DP played on during the election campaign of 1954. Especially in the large cities, the Democrats were hoping to attract the vote of the workers by manipulating the issue. This idea proved to be successful given that the Democratic motto, “A home for every worker” (*Her işçiye bir ev*), managed to catch the interests of the workers.¹⁰⁹ Later in his memoirs, Erkmen would tell that he focused his energy on two issues during his term. One was on the area of labor legislation in which he sought to make amendments to the Labor Code in order to close the legal loopholes that the employers had manipulated. The second issue that concerned him much was the housing needs of workers. He wrote that, in the ministry, he was personally occupied with the financing needs and material shortages of the workers’ building cooperatives (*işçi yapı kooperatifleri*).¹¹⁰

Building cooperatives for workers had existed well before the 1950s. In 1945, it was reported that there were 57 housing cooperatives in Turkey some of which had been established by the workers.¹¹¹ However, to keep cooperatives running was not easy for workers when access to financial resources was very much closed to them. The cost of living

¹⁰⁸ Zeki Sayar, “Belediyemizin Mesken Davasını Anlayışı,” *Arkitekt*, vol. 24, no. 280 (1955), p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ Vâ-Nu, “İşçilere Ev Vaadi ve Seçim Propagandası,” *Akşam*, 15 April 1954.

¹¹⁰ Birsen Talay (ed.), “Hayrettin Erkmen’in Anıları,” vol. 33, no. 197, *Tarih ve Toplum* (May, 2000), p.43.

¹¹¹ Tekeli, p.49.

indices show that 25 percent of the earnings of the families were spent on housing. The proportion was certainly higher among the working-class families.¹¹² This meant that they could spare only a limited amount of money for the payments of installments.

The workers' housing cooperatives could flourish only after 1953. A law which had made the credits of the Social Insurance Fund available for the workers' housing cooperatives was enacted in 1950. However, it remained ineffective until 1953 when the Social Insurance Fund granted loans reached a level of 12.1 million liras.¹¹³ One year later, the credits granted by the fund more than doubled and rose to 30.6 million liras. These credits were received by 30 cooperatives with 4330 partners. Kemal Avtan provided a list of these cooperatives and total credits used by them in 1955.¹¹⁴ What is interesting about the list is that it demonstrates credit access opportunities for workers in different sectors. Indeed, more than 90 percent of the loans were made available for the cooperatives built by the workers of public enterprises. It seems that from the initial years of practice, the subsidized credit channels of the Fund were, in general, exclusively open to public sector workers who had steady jobs, who were

¹¹² Working class families allocated forty percent of their earnings to nutrition. Bulut Altay, "Ücretler, Fiyatlar ve İşçilerin Durumu," *Forum*, vol. 7, no. 37 (April 1, 1957). Even there were workers who spent more than half of their income on housing. In 1957, one female worker employed as a wagon cleaner at the State Railroads told Kemal Sülker that although she had been working 28 years in the same workplace, her monthly wage was only 110 liras. She paid 60 liras for a single room every month. Therefore she knew that she would never have the chance of saving money to buy a cooperative house. Kemal Sülker, "Devlet Demiryollarında Çalışan Kadın İşçilerin Durumu," *Gece Postası*, 31 October 1956.

¹¹³ "İşçi Kooperatifleri," *Gece Postası*, 15 July 1954. Up to 25 percent of the resources of the old-age insurance fund could be used in financing the housing projects. On the other hand, it was envisaged that a credit that would be given could not exceed the 50 percent of the cost of the construction project. Later this ratio was increased to 80 percent in 1952 and 90 percent in 1954. According to Koç, the first workers' building cooperative financed by the Workers' Insurance Fund was the Kayseri Sümer Building Cooperative which was founded in 1951 by 34 partners. The construction of 53 dwelling units was started in 1952. Yıldırım Koç, "1940'lı ve 1950'li yıllarda İşçi ve Memur Konut Kooperatifleri," in *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Tarihi: Olaylar-Değerlendirmeler* (Ankara: Yol-İş Sendikası Yayınları, 1996), p.224.

¹¹⁴ Kemal Avtan, "Türkiye'de İşçi Yapı Kooperatifleri", *İçtimai Emniyet*, no. 2 (February 1955).

better organized, and more informed about the instruments that could be manipulated to get access to state subsidized credits.¹¹⁵

Severe criticisms were voiced during the period, for the scope of the program was limited to actively insured workers. Wagner wrote in 1955 that the program might reach, at its best, only some 600,000 out of 2 million workers.¹¹⁶ Other criticisms of the insurance fund workers' housing program focused on the management and project designing of the cooperatives. The members and directors of the cooperatives lacked the knowledge and skills about building management and usually made bad choices when they sought contractors and architects. Many cooperatives did not go to architects and preferred the projects which provided stereotype plans and elevations. Consequently, all the projects resembled each other and produced drab and monotonous buildings. 75 square meter houses with two bedrooms, a living room, a bath and a kitchen was a typical housing unit built by the cooperatives. The average cost of construction was calculated to be 14,000 liras in the mid-1950s.¹¹⁷

We do not know the exact number of worker dwellings built through workers' housing cooperatives during the Democrat Party era. As indicated by Keleş, the total number of dwelling units financed by the subsidized credits of the Social Insurance Fund exceeded 200,000 between 1952 and 1984, 7000 units on average per year.¹¹⁸ However, the number of cooperatives and the constructed housing units is well documented for the years after 1962.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Buğra notes that many inhabitants of irregular settlements still do not know about the existence of subsidized credit opportunities. Buğra, *The Immoral Economy of Housing in Turkey*, p. 309.

¹¹⁶ Wagner, p.84

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p.90, 92.

¹¹⁸ Ruşen Keleş, *Kentleşme Politikası* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1996), p.384.

¹¹⁹ See Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu, *Sosyal Sigortalar Konut Kooperatifleri ile İlgili Bir Araştırma* (Ankara: 1973); A. İlhan Eronat, *Türkiye'de Konut Sorunu ve Politikası* (Ankara: AİTİA Yayını, 1977). An article would be added in the 1961 Constitution regarding the public provision of housing for the poor families. The

It is clear that the growth of workers' cooperatives really started to accelerate after the mid-1960s. It is noteworthy that the 1950s witnessed the burgeoning of housing cooperatives for middle-class families and especially for public sector employees. A list provided by Tansı Şenyapılı reveals that the number of housing cooperatives founded between 1950 and 1958 in Ankara was 87. However it seems that only three of them were workers' housing cooperatives.¹²⁰

The confusion about the number of housing units built also was debated in the parliament. In 1956, RPP deputy Tevfik Ünsalan commented that, in a press statement given in 1954, the former Democrat Minister of Labor Hayrettin Erkmen had promised the construction of 10,000 housing units for workers every year. Ünsalan claimed that as of December 1955, the total number of housing units financed by the insurance fund had been 1170. He asked if the minister's promise had been made to deceive the ILO authorities, because Erkmen's related speech had been delivered just before he moved to Geneva for the ILO Congress. The Minister of Labor, Mümtaz Tarhan shortly answered the question by stating that the construction of 3000 housing units had been finished in the 1950-55 period, while 4000 units were still in the construction process.¹²¹

By 1957, the RPP had intensified the opposition against the social and economic policies of the Democrats. Poor housing conditions and enormous increase in rents due to runaway inflation after 1955 were the leading issues the opposition manipulated in the big cities. Between 1955 and 1965 rents in the three major cities of İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir

constitutional reference to the issue: "The state takes measures to provide hygienic housing for the poor and low income families." (Article 49)

¹²⁰ Tansı Şenyapılı, *Baraka'dan Gecekondu'ya, Ankara'da Kentsel Mekanın Dönüşümü: 1923-1960* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), Ek 20.

¹²¹ *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 11, vol. 2, 28 February, 1956, pp.1115-1130.

increased by two and a half.¹²² In the newspapers concerns were expressed that the low income groups had to spend about one third of their income for rent. There appeared recurrent news in the newspapers concerning the workers' complaints about the high rents and the shortage of affordable housing.¹²³

In the general elections of 1957, the RPP would invest much in the housing problem in its election campaign against the Democrats.¹²⁴ For instance, a Republican Party poster in İstanbul read as follows: "A worker's wage is just enough to pay for a room; this is how the government cares for him." In the public meetings organized in the big cities the housing problem was one of the central issues elaborated in the speeches of Republican leaders.¹²⁵ Also the Democrats strived to show that they were still taking the housing problem seriously. Kemal Sülker reported on his page in *Gece Postası* that since the question of workers' housing was one important issue of the elections, the DP included in its candidate list one professional architect, Seyfi Asuroğlu, to assure the workers that the party was keeping the issue at the top of the agenda.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, the recurrent reports in the media about the housing problems were added by implications of infractions being made in the assignment of insurance fund credits. For instance, the influential *Forum* magazine wrote that the allocation of 200,000 liras as credit from the fund to nine high income engineers was a scandalous act, for it meant the subsidization of luxury dwellings.¹²⁷

¹²² Metin Heper, *Gecekondu Policy in Turkey* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi University Publications, 1977), p.13.

¹²³ *Gece Postası*, 25 January and 1 February 1955.

¹²⁴ Kemal Karpat, "The Turkish Elections of 1957," *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 2 (June, 1961), p.447.

¹²⁵ For example, see "Dün İllerde ve Şehrimizdeki Mitinglerde DP'ye Hücum Edildi," *Cumhuriyet*, 9 October 1957.

¹²⁶ Kemal Sülker, "İşçi Adaylar Arasında Mücadele Başlıyor", *Gece Postası*, 4 October 1957.

¹²⁷ "Mesken Politikası ve İşçi Sigortaları Fonları", *Forum*, vol. 5, no. 56 (1 September 1956), p.7.

In the midst of all this, the debate between the government and the opposition party over the number of state supported house construction for workers reappeared in 1957 during the negotiations over the yearly budget of the Ministry of Labor. Upon the verbal question of Tevfik Ünsalan regarding the number of finished and projected workers' housing units, Mümtaz Tarhan stated that the finished housing units after 1953 amounted to 8701.¹²⁸

Construction dates and locations of the buildings were listed as follows:

Ankara	332	1945-1956
İstanbul	1,019	1953-1956
İzmir	100	1955
Bursa	195	1955-1956
İzmit	78	1955-1956
Mersin	42	1956
Konya	81	1955
Kayseri	361	1955-1956
Adana	49	1955
Aydın	260	1956
Eskişehir	270	1956
Zonguldak	200	1956
Etibank	1,330	1956
Community		
Şeker	1.060	1953-1956
Community		
Others	3,223	
TOTAL	8701	

Tarhan also explained that 111 units had one room, 951 units had 4-5 rooms, while the rest were 2-3 room dwellings.¹²⁹

However Ünsalan seemed to be unsatisfied with the answer of the minister. When he took the floor, he convincingly argued that when the amounts of appropriations and

¹²⁸ *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 11, session. 3, vol. 1, 1 February 1957, pp. 6-11. For Kemal Sülker's commentary on this parliamentary discussion, see "İşçi Evleri Hakkında Mecliste Verilen İzahat ve Temenniler", *Gece Postası*, 4 February 1957.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* p.9.

expenditures were regarded, it was unthinkable to assume that 1000 dwelling units had been constructed in İstanbul during the period. According to the numbers provided by the workers' housing cooperatives in İstanbul, the number of dwelling units built in this city could not exceed 544.¹³⁰ In the harsh environment of the parliament, the debate between the parliamentarians broke up with an acrimonious exchange of words.¹³¹ In 1959 the issue was brought to the parliament once again with a written question by Kars deputy Kemal Güven. The Ministry of Labor Haluk Şaman then presented a short written statement to the parliament in which the total number of dwelling units financed by the ministry program was claimed to be 10,000.¹³²

Whatever the real numbers were, it is clear that the policy of public provision of housing remained incapable of meeting the growing demand of affordable housing for the laboring poor. It was especially the laboring families in the big cities that suffered most from poor housing conditions. As noted above, a significant part of the public workers in the Anatolian provinces already was living in social dwellings by the late 1940s. On a trip in the Eastern part of the country in 1952, Bahir Ersoy, the chairman of the Federation of Textile Industry Workers' Trade Unions, was very impressed when he saw that in every city he

¹³⁰ Tevfik Ünsalan announced the names of the cooperatives and the number of dwelling units built by them in İstanbul as follows: Association of İstanbul Trade Unions Housing Cooperative: 200 units, Bakırköy Sümerbank Workers' Housing Cooperative: 114 units, İstanbul Dock Workers' Housing Cooperative: 108 units, İstanbul Gas Workers' Housing Cooperative: 78 units, Beykoz Housing Cooperative: 54 units. In the 1956-1957 Congress Report of RPP İstanbul Organization, it was written that the 1954 election promise of the Democrats, "A house for every worker", proved to be unrealized in the face of the fact that the number of finished dwelling units was only around 500. CHP, *CHP İstanbul İli 1956-1957 Kongresi Raporu* (İstanbul: Refah basımevi, 1957), p.26.

¹³¹ It is noteworthy that overall number of dwelling units produced by building cooperatives in the 1946-1961 period was estimated to be 25 thousand. See TOBB, *Konut Sorunu: Toplu Konut Uygulama Sonuçları ve Son Zamanlardaki Gelişmeler* (Ankara: 1988), p.34.

¹³² *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, session 2, vol.1, 12 June 1959, p. 783.

visited there were housing cooperatives that had been built by workers.¹³³ For example, in Kayseri, the construction of 150 housing units had been finished and many more were in the project phase. In Malatya, the cooperative was preparing to build 900 homes for the workers.

It is an acknowledged fact that labor has not played a major role in urban politics in Turkey.¹³⁴ However, the housing policy was the main urban priority of the unions in this period. The unions generally supported government intervention in local housing and land markets to increase the supply of housing for workers. They sought to expand the limited housing programs initiated by the government and to increase interest in worker housing on the part of the city government. The unions also pressed the central government to revise cumbersome lending procedures in housing programs and increase the amount of funding allocated per worker.¹³⁵ The defense of the interests of their members sometimes led the unions to oppose some housing and land programs developed by the government.¹³⁶ Unions also encouraged the workers to found building cooperatives.¹³⁷ However, most unions were aware that their members could not afford to pay the installments given their monthly family incomes. For instance, a 1958 report of the Iron and Metal Workers' Union (Maden-İş) wrote that the union could not start the establishment of a housing cooperative in the face of the fact that the average cost of a cooperative dwelling unit in İstanbul was around 20-25,000 liras and

¹³³ *Gayret*, 14 February 1952. *Gayret* was the publishing organ of the Kayseri Textile Industry Workers' Trade Union.

¹³⁴ Keleş and Danielson, p.120.

¹³⁵ Kemal Sülker, "Yapı Kooperatiflerine Üye Olanların Ev Sahibi Olması," *Gece Postası*, 7 March 1953; "470 İşçi Evi," *Gece Postası*, 22 February 1953.

¹³⁶ "Bu Memlekette Ciddi Bir İşçi Meskenleri Politikasının Tatbikini Ne Zaman Göreceğiz?" *İşçi Sesi*, 22 October 1955.

¹³⁷ See, for example, "Bira İşçileri Yapı Kooperatifinin Kongresi," *İşçi Sesi*, 18 December 1954; Artun Avadar, "İşçilere Ev Yaptırmak İçin," *Gece Postası*, 2 September 1953; "1000 İşçi Evi," *İşçi Dünyası*, 25 September 1953.

a working-class family needed a minimum income of 500 liras in order to be able to pay for it.¹³⁸

Some Aspects of Everyday Life in the Working Class Districts

This part of the chapter focuses on the working class districts which appeared to dominate the geography of the urban spaces in the 1950s. One main concern here is the physical formation of these districts and the social life it generated as it put its stamp on the urban milieu. Because the period under consideration is characterized by intensive displacements, the domestic experience of workers bears great importance. The meaning of home for laboring men and women was much different from the middle class vision of home discussed above.

It should be noted that in the initial years of the *gecekondu* growth, those settlements were regarded as the home of the working class by observers.¹³⁹ For instance, according to Ekmel Zamil, a prominent writer on social policy and labor issues, the *gecekondus* grew from the necessity of providing shelter for the worker-citizens.¹⁴⁰ It is notable that the emphasis here on the “worker-citizen” was made deliberately because the writer regarded the building of squatter dwellings as a right of citizens who lacked sufficient resources to obtain proper houses.¹⁴¹ Zamil harshly criticized the media coverage of the squatter dwelling as “a site of

¹³⁸ Maden-İş, *11. Büyük Kongre Faaliyet Raporu (7 Ekim 1956-15 Aralık 1957)* (İstanbul: 1957), p. 20.

¹³⁹ In writing this part of the chapter, I also have in mind Korkut Boratav’s call for discussing the *gecekondu* housing in terms of working class formation and culture. See Korkut Boratav, *1980’li Yıllarda Türkiye’de Sosyal Sınıflar ve Bölüşüm* (İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi, 1995), pp. 107-108.

¹⁴⁰ Ekmel Zamil, “İstanbul’da Mesken Meseleleri ve Gecekondular,” in *İçtimai Siyaset Konferansları İkinci Kitap* (İstanbul: İÜ İktisat Fakültesi İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü, 1949), p. 79.

¹⁴¹ The term “squatter dwelling” has a double meaning in Turkey: first it refers to houses built on land which is not owned by the constructor of the house, and second, houses built without any official consent from the authorities, even if the land is owned by the builder. Another characteristic of the squatters is the inferiority of

horror and repulsion,” and of the dwellers as “cunning persons who could deceive anyone.” He openly expressed his admiration for those who built their shelters by themselves: “A citizen who lives under terrible conditions in the *gecekondu* deserves appreciation more than the one who has occupied two-three houses at the same time while the country is suffering from housing shortage. Even he did not receive support of the society, he wanted to save himself by his own resources and take a part in the society. Our sympathies are always with them.”¹⁴²

It is interesting to note that Zadir saw no problem in the sanitation and security conditions of the *gecekondu* settlements. In a visit to the Kazlıçeşme *gecekondu* areas, he observed that “the children were playing in the gardens so happily and cheerfully that one could not help but appreciate with love the people who have created this place under very hard conditions for the well-being of their children.” He also added that the security of the area was provided by only four gendarmeries. “However, there was no need for the surveillance of the official watchmen because, the area was more secure than Beyoğlu. Everyone knows and shows respect to each other. They say that no incidences of thievery and molestation happen here. Young working class girls told me that they felt no fear or distress when they were returning late at night from the factories.”¹⁴³ Zadir’s praise for the orderly

these houses in either construction or comfort. Because they were rapidly built, they were named *gecekondu* (literally, housing built overnight). See Erol Tümerterkin, *Urbanization and Urban Functions in Turkey* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1973), pp. 115-116.

¹⁴² “Kötü şartlar altında *gecekondu*larda yaşayan bir vatandaş, bu mesken buhranında iki üç ev işgal eden bir kimseden daha fazla takdire layıktır. *Gecekondu* kurucusu evsiz barksız bir serseri olmamak için, bir çatı kurmuştur; cemiyetten yardım görmediği halde, kendi imkanlarıyla kendi kendini kurtarmak ve cemiyet içindeki yerini almak istemiştir; Sempatimiz daima bunlarla beraberdir.” Zadir, p.80.

¹⁴³ “Bahçelerinde öyle keyifli ve neşeli oynuyorlardı ki, insan, çocuklarının sıhhat, neş’e ve saadeti için büyük mahrumiyetle buraları meydana getirenleri yeni bir sevgi ile takdir etmekten kendini alamıyordu... Emniyet işleri dört tane jandarma tarafından temin ediliyor, halbuki böyle resmi bekçilere hiç de hacet yok zira burası Beyoğlundan daha emin. Herkes birbirini biliyor ve sayıyor. Hırsızlık ve sarkıntılık vakalarına burada hiç rastlanmadığını söylüyorlar. İşçi kızlar gece geç vakit fabrikalarından hiç korkmadan ve çekinmeden geldiklerini söylediler.” Ibid, p.83.

social life in these settlements, economic contribution of their inhabitants to city life, how these positive aspects were reflected in the improvement of physical environment would be reiterated by many of the individual studies on squatter settlements during the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁴⁴ Zadić concluded his article by openly calling for the legalization of the *gecekondu*.¹⁴⁵

In a similar vein, Hart defines squatter settlements as a peculiar way of satisfying the need for the shelter of the Turkish working class. However, his explanation for the prevalence of the *gecekondu* is rather cultural. In the *gecekondu* studies, including his own, Hart states, “it appears that Turkish people do not prefer the apartments as residents... It seems that the root cause of the problem is the strength of the Turkish family structure and the meaning the Turks ascribed to family privacy... For them the ideal home is a single dwelling, or a group of houses composed of single dwellings, and a man lives here with his family and with the families of his brothers and sisters.”¹⁴⁶

More realistic explanations for *gecekondus* reflecting the dark side of squatter housing settlements were presented by the “view from inside” of those people living there. Before going on discussing the living conditions in the poor districts of working people it is appropriate to produce the argument that squatter settlements as the site of working class home.

¹⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that this approach to squatters was in conformity with the dominant model of urban sociology of the time. Topalov notes that in the 1950s and 1960s, the “traditional working-class neighborhood” replaced the former description of poor urban districts as “slums” or “disorganized areas” in the works of sociologists, anthropologists and social historians. Christian Topalov, “‘Traditional Working-Class Neighborhoods’: An Inquiry into the Emergence of a Sociological Model in the 1950s and 1960s”, *OSIRIS*, no. 18 (2003), pp. 231-232.

¹⁴⁵ In calling for the legalization of the *gecekondu*, Zadić was following his master, Gerhard Kessler in “İstanbul’da Mesken Darlığı, Mesken Sefaleti, Mesken İnşaatı,” *Arkitekt*, vol. 18, no. 209-210 (1949). The article was also published in *Siyasi İlimler Mecmuası* in August 1949. Zadić was also the translator of this article to Turkish.

¹⁴⁶ Hart, p.86.

It already has been noted that due to the massive population movement and the inadequacy of the housing policies, the structure of the urban environment was shaped significantly as shantytowns and irregular housing spread during the 1950s and 1960s. As early as 1948, the number of squatter dwellings was estimated to be 25-30,000. This figure went up to 80,000 in 1953, 240,000 in 1960, and 430,000 in 1965. In the process, the proportion of the population living in squatter houses with respect to the total population gradually increased. The total *gecekondu* population was around 250,000 in 1955, representing the 4.7 percent of the urban population. This figure rose 1.2 million and 16.4 percent, respectively, in 1960.¹⁴⁷

A number of different estimations have been made on the share of people coming from villages in squatter settlements. Şenyapılı overviews these estimations and argues that the studies on the *gecekondu* show conclusively that 80-90 percent of the total population of the *gecekondu* is from rural areas.¹⁴⁸ However, the migrants in the city had little trouble finding a work.

Although the occupational composition of the *gecekondu* communities varied widely from city to city, and even from one district to another, there remained some basic similarities. In the Ankara Gülveren *gecekondu* district survey of the Ministry of Construction and Settlement, 28.9 percent of the household heads were listed as craftsmen, 25.8 as skilled and unskilled workers, 10 percent as public workers and 12 percent as employees of a lower status.¹⁴⁹ Sewell's findings in the Aktepe *gecekondu* neighborhood in Ankara revealed that

¹⁴⁷ Keleş, *Kentleşme Politikası*, p.385.

¹⁴⁸ Tansı Şenyapılı, *Gecekondu: 'Çevre' İşçilerin Mekanı* (Ankara: ODTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi Yayınları, 1981), p.23.

¹⁴⁹ İmar ve İskan Bakanlığı, *Ankara Gülveren Gecekondu Araştırması*, p.33.

about one-third of Aktepe wage earners were skilled workers. 20 percent were classified as unskilled laborers, and an equal number were in trades. Civil servants and public service workers, including policemen, firemen, street sweepers and janitors amounted to 18 percent while another 8 percent were vehicle drivers, several owning their own taxi cabs.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Yasa found that in the *gecekondu* areas of Ankara skilled workers and craftsmen constituted the largest occupational group, representing 27 percent of the household heads. Unskilled workers and public service workers constituted another 26.5 percent. Small merchants and low level civil servants were other large occupational groups, 17 percent and 14.5 percent, respectively.¹⁵¹ By the 1970s three out of four workers in Ankara were estimated to be living in *gecekondu* settlements.¹⁵²

In the İstanbul *gecekondu* settlements the proportion of workers was higher simply because these settlements were industrial areas in the same time. For example in Hart's study in Zeytinburnu, 45 percent of family heads was listed as factory workers employed in the surrounding workshops of Kazlıçeşme, Zeytinburnu, Bakırköy and Osmaniye.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Granville H. Sewell, "Squatter Settlements in Turkey: Analysis of a Social, Political and Economic Problem" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1964), p.91.

¹⁵¹ İbrahim Yasa, *Ankara'da Gecekondu Aileleri* (Ankara: Sağlık ve Sosyal Yardım Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1966), pp.123-128.

¹⁵² Cevat Geray, "Türkiye'de Konut İhtiyacının Karşlanması," in *Türkiye'de Konut Sorunu Semineri* (İstanbul: İktisadi Araştırmalar Vakfı, 1981), p.32.

¹⁵³ Hart, pp.66-67. In Zeytinburnu, virtually everyone could find factory work in the early 1950s. Some migrants became workers even before they could settle properly. In some cases factory owners gave advance payments to the newcomers who wanted to build *gecekondus*. Frequently, workers were allowed to use the waste tin and other waste materials of the factories for building their housing. See Tansı Şenyapılı, *Baraka'dan Gecekondu'ya, Ankara'da Kentsel Mekanın Dönüşümü: 1923-1960* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p.90. Zamil notes that a factory in Kazlıçeşme region helped workers build their *gecekondus* by selling them the necessary construction materials at wholesale prices. The factory even granted credits to its workers for purchasing the materials. Zamil, "İstanbul'da Mesken Meseleleri ve Gecekondular", p.85. Some factory owners made the necessary arrangements with the municipality and other authorities to ease the construction process for the workers. Erhan Acar, "İşçi Konutu Olarak Gecekondu," in *Türkiye Birinci Şehircilik Kongresi 1. Kitap*, ed. Yiğit Gülöksüz (Ankara: ODTÜ Şehir ve Bölge Planlama Bölümü Yayınları, 1981), p. 257.

Tümertekin's survey in the 200 *gecekondu* dwellings in the Bomonti area revealed that 200 men and 87 women dwellers were employed in the industrial plants of Bomonti.¹⁵⁴ He also revealed that 90 percent of the workers who were employed in industries which demanded unskilled labor such as textiles were living in squatter houses. According to a 1962 newspaper report, a great part of the inhabitants of Kuştepe, Mecidiyeköy *gecekondu* area was comprised of workers, most of whom were employed by the İstanbul Electric Tramway, Tunnel, Bus and Trolleybus Enterprise as drivers, ticket conductors and repairers.¹⁵⁵

In Kasımpaşa, Beykoz and Eyüp, where a high proportion of the workers lived, the *gecekondus* appeared as early as 1946.¹⁵⁶ Reşat Tasal, who worked in different positions as a practitioner of law at the Üsküdar judicial court during the 1940s, reminds that the workers of the Beykoz Bottle Glass Factory often started small fires in the forest land around Sultan Çayırı to open spaces suitable for building squatter settlements. In the mid-1940s the fire incidents in the Beykoz forest land were so frequently repeated that the gendarmerie forces could not manage to suppress the movement and arrest the offenders.¹⁵⁷

An interesting point concerning these early studies on the occupational composition of the *gecekondu* settlements is that they usually took no notice of the significance of domestic service job for women. Because domestic workers were excluded from many of the legal

¹⁵⁴ Erol Tümertekin, *İstanbul'da Bir Sanayi Bölgesi: Bomonti* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1966), p. 32. Gecekondu construction mushroomed in Bomonti after the district was declared as an industrial zone in 1955. Before that time, the number of industrial factories in the Bomonti area was 32, including some old but large industrial plants such as Nestle, which was founded in 1928 and the Bomonti Beer Factory, which was founded in 1892. Enjoying their closeness to urban centers inhabiting high income consumers such as Beyoğlu and Şişli, those industrial plants were specialised in producing goods that appealed to the preferences of the westernized, wealthy segments of society. However, the number of industrial plants jumped to 119 in less than ten years after 1955. In the course of the time, composition of the industries diversified from light industries, such as textile, clothing, food and chemicals to metalwork, mechanical and rubber industries.

¹⁵⁵ "Bir Dokun Bin Ah İşit Gecekondudan," *Gece Postası*, 21 November 1952.

¹⁵⁶ Zadil, p.82.

¹⁵⁷ Reşat D. Tesal, *Selanikten İstanbul'a Bir Ömrün Hikayesi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998), p. 178.

protections afforded to other classes of worker, including the provisions of the Labor Law, their number was uncharted. Yet the main reason for the neglect of domestic work in these surveys was that they regarded the head of the household as the main breadwinner. However, in many cases, the contribution of women domestic workers to the family income was higher than that of the men workers. Tümertekin notes that many women who went out to work in middle-class houses in Maçka, Osmanbey and Harbiye, where they did laundry, baby-sitting, cooking and other housework, earned about 20-30 liras daily in the early 1960s. They preferred domestic work because they found factory work more oppressive and boring, and the industrial wages were around 20-25 percent less for women workers.¹⁵⁸

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the *gecekondu* dwellers did not seem to suffer from widespread unemployment. It was acknowledged that the unemployment rate was difficult to determine in the *gecekondu* areas. Nevertheless, Yasa's study covering the large *gecekondu* areas of Ankara asserted that the rate of unemployment among family heads was as low as 3.5 percent.¹⁵⁹ In the Gülveren neighborhood the proportion was only 3.2.¹⁶⁰

In the İstanbul *gecekondu* areas, where the proportion of industrial workers was higher, the unemployment rate increased during the late 1950s as a result of high displacements due to raw material shortages in many industries. When Hart and his colleagues conducted their survey in 1962, the unemployment rate in Zeytinburnu was close to 10 percent. However, as Hart noted, the percentage of those actively seeking work was probably lower when those unwilling to work were discounted from this figure.¹⁶¹ When Halit Kıvanç, a journalist of the

¹⁵⁸ Tümertekin, *İstanbul'da Bir Sanayi Bölgesi: Bomonti*. See also İbrahim Yasa, "The Gecekondu Family", *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 27, no. 3 (1973).

¹⁵⁹ Yasa, *Ankara'da Gecekondu Aileleri*, p.123.

¹⁶⁰ İmar ve İskan Bakanlığı, p. 33

¹⁶¹ Hart, p. 226.

Milliyet newspaper, visited the gecekondu neighborhoods in 1955, what struck him at first sight was the abundance of young men killing time in the coffeehouses or hanging out in the neighborhood. However, he immediately found out that those young men were not unemployed, but worked the night shifts in the nearby factories.¹⁶²

At this point, it is worth noting that the demarcations between industrial work and various unskilled, low-status urban occupations remained very flexible. Zehra Kosova's memoirs bear witness to the fact that the practice of "tramping", of moving to a different location in order to seek work, became significantly less important in the lives of workers, even for those who were employed in trades which were seasonal in nature. For instance, in the 1930s many tobacco workers sought agricultural work on the big farms of Bursa during the off-season in the tobacco industry. Especially in years of severe depression, close to half of the members of the trade society moved locations. However, in the 1950s, this practice of moving location for tobacco workers vanished. They were more attached to the city and found temporary and lower-status works like portaging and shoe-shining when they were laid off.¹⁶³

Like tobacco workers, other laborers who were engaged in seasonal works such as those in food processing, construction works, even those in rubber goods industry too had a quite different experience than the earlier generations. *Gecekondus* offered a "flexible" type of housing for those workers whose occupational experiences were also flexible. In accordance with income and status obtained by the owner through mobility in the labor market rooms, service areas and gardens might be added to a squatter house, a new one might be built adjacent to it, it might be renovated by using construction materials such as bricks and

¹⁶² Halit Kıvanç, "Şehir İçinde Şehir Yaratanlar Arasında," *Milliyet*, 22 August 1955.

¹⁶³ Kosova, p.60.

cement, it might be rented partially or totally, might be torn down and rebuilt or sold.¹⁶⁴

Therefore, the gecekondü-style housing offered the new laboring class an instrument which could be managed both as a method of creating wealth in the good times and as financial security for bad times.

Another example can be given of the tannery workers of Yedikule and Kazlıçeşme. From the late nineteenth century on, three fourth of the leather manufacturing had been made in the Yedikule workshops. According to Erişçi there were almost 50 tanneries in the area which employed roughly 1000 workers in 1937. Seeking an explanation for the misery of the tannery workers,¹⁶⁵ Erişçi states that most of the workers regularly moved between Yedikule and their place of origin:

Local workers of all these factories live disconnectedly either around Topkapı or in affordable neighborhoods like Koca Mustafa Paşa and Samatya. However, half of the almost 1000 workers of tanneries are composed of Anatolian people. Being bachelors, they seek shelter in the inns in Kazlıçeşme, rooms above stores or they share a room in Paşa Akaretler with 4-5 persons. 300-400 of them are from Çankırı, almost 150-200 are Kurds. According to local workers, their strong presence in the industry is due to the fact that they work for low wages and they favor each other. For instance, workers of Çankırı origin have their own coffeehouses and cooks. And still neither the Çankırı origins nor the Kurds have broken off ties with their native villages. They move to the fields in summer and return to factories in winter.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ The term flexibility is offered by Şenyapılı in order to emphasize the fluidity of physical appearance and ownership status of squatters in Turkey. See Şenyapılı, *Gecekondü: 'Çevre' İşçilerin Mekanı*.

¹⁶⁵ Workers were paying one-third of their wages as rent. The average rental cost of one room shared with 4-5 other persons was 4 or 5 liras for a worker. Lütfi Erişçi, "İstanbul'da Amele Mahalleleri", *Yeni Adam*, vol.4, no.177 (20 May 1937), p.4.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p.5. "Bütün bu fabrikaların yerli amelesi Topkapı tarafında veya şehirde Koca Mustafa Paşa, Samatya gibi ucuz yaşanabilen semtlerde dağınık bir halde oturmaktadır. Fakat bilhassa tabakhanelerin 1000'e yakın amelesinin yarısından fazlasını Anadolu çocukları teşkil ediyorlar. Bunlar bekar olup Kazlıçeşme'deki handa, dükkan üstündeki odalarda, Paşa Akaretlerinde 4-5'i bir odada barınmaktadır. Ekserisi 300-400'e yakın Çankırı'lıdır. 150-200'e varan Kürtler de mühimdir. Gerek Çankırlıların, gerek Kürtlerin bu sahada toplanmaları calibi dikkat osa gerektir. Yerli ameleğe göre bu toplanmaya sebep fevkalade ucuza iş kabul etmeleri ve birbirlerini kayırmalarıdır. Filvaki mesela Çankırlıların ayrı kahve ve aşçıları vardır. Aynı zamanda Çankırlılar ve Kürtler köyleriyle münasebeti kesmemişlerdir. Yazın tarlalara gidiyorlar ve kışın dönüyorlar."

Because the tannery workers were engaged temporarily in the work, they were not regarded as part of the life in the district. Grocery and other stores sold them the basic goods at prices 20 percent above the market price. No pharmacy or doctor existed in the neighborhoods surrounding the factories. There was a mosque in the area, but the workers did not seem to be very interested in religious obligations. Erişçi noted that the only leisure activity of these workers was going to the coffeehouses.

However, this picture would change radically in less than two decades. In 1953 there were 6 mosques, a number of movie theaters, medical institutions and a primary school in Kazlıçeşme.¹⁶⁷ By then the number of squatter dwellings reached 15,000. Most of the squatters were young migrants and former trampers who had moved temporarily to the city to work in industry. Having built their houses, they were more attached to the city and to their urban work.

Unserviced land was cheap, if not free, enabling workers with small savings and incomes to build or buy their own homes, and in areas that developed at significantly lower densities than those of the central city. However, daily life was not easy in the irregular settlements. By almost any measure, basic urban services fell short of satisfying basic human needs in all poor districts.

At least until the mid-1960s these areas still lacked piped water and sewers. Not only the *gecekondu* settlements in fringe areas, but also many neighborhoods inhabited by the working poor lacked running water during the period. Around 55 percent of the working class homes in İstanbul were recorded to be not connected to the city water in 1960. The situations

¹⁶⁷ Ümit Deniz, “Gecekondu Babası ile Kazlıçeşmeyi Dolaştık,” *Milliyet*, 22 July 1953; Ümit Deniz, “Herşeyden Önce asayiş Lazım,” *Milliyet*, 21 July 1953. It is interesting to note that the construction of the first movie theater in Kazlıçeşme had been started before that of the primary school. Kemal Sülker, “Valinin 35000 Gecekondu Arasında Yaptığı Tetkikler,” *Gece Postası*, 3 November 1949.

in Ankara and İzmir were even worse. The percentage of working class housing units which lacked running water was 78 in Ankara and 71 in İzmir.¹⁶⁸

According to the estimations of the Ministry of Reconstruction and Settlement, 49 percent of all squatter housing lacked running water, 52 percent were without electricity, and 60 percent had no sewage disposal as late as the mid-1960s.¹⁶⁹ The municipalities refused to bring water because the future status of the *gecekondus* was ambivalent. The houses which had no running water were supplied either from public wells which were only too often affected by seepage either from the sewers or filthy water, or from standpipes which were turned on only for short intervals during the day, or from water barrels in the backyards. Especially in Ankara water ran in the fountains only during a short period in a day because of the chronic shortage of water in the vicinity of Ankara. Collecting and carrying water was usually the work of women. Long lines of women formed before dawn to catch the brief period of running water that flowed from the fountains.

Housework was not easy for working class wives. One physical condition that permeated the entire social environment of the poor was dirt. Streets were unpaved, which were usually mere tracks and often impassable as they got muddy after rain. While dirt was a part of life in the neighborhoods, people made a good deal of effort to keep themselves and their homes clean. Although cleaning efforts were not always completely successful, cleanliness was valued among the residents.¹⁷⁰ Cleaning and tidying up the house occupied the greater part of time of women. At night the streets were unlit and dangerous and did not

¹⁶⁸ DİE, *1960 Mesken Şartları Anketi*, pp. 18,60,72.

¹⁶⁹ Danielson and Keleş, p.138.

¹⁷⁰ For a similar line of argument see Ersan Ocak, "Yoksulun Evi", in *Yoksulluk Halleri: Türkiye'de Kent Yoksulluğunun Toplumsal Görünümleri*, ed. Necmi Erdoğan (İstanbul: Demokrasi Kitaplığı Yayınları, 2002), pp. 97-99.

receive police protection. Housewives were on their own during the day, and there were fears that they were an easy target for hawkers and ruffians.¹⁷¹

In the media coverage of poor settlements, the spread of one-class areas was demonstrated to be particularly alarming. Crime was alleged to be greater on one-class estates. The growing concern displayed in the media about the degeneration of workers in the poor areas of the city and a growing recognition that slum communities were forming as seedbeds of crime and illegal activities reflects, in a certain degree, the middle-class fears about rapidly changing urban space. However, it should be noted that the above-mentioned views of Ekmel Zamil and Gerhard Kessler, which mooted the irregular settlements as realms of security and peace were equally far from reflecting the reality. A women squatter in Kazlıçeşme complained that four gendarmeries in charge of providing the security of the whole area remained incapable and a gang of 60-70 men who had created a system of land speculation had taken over the area.¹⁷² Zeytinburnu residents too stated that the security issue was a major problem and demanded the establishment of a police station in the area instead of the small gendarmerie unit.¹⁷³

Poor sanitary conditions were another feature of the geography of irregular settlements.¹⁷⁴ One journalist observed as a common characteristic of irregular settlements that outside of the houses there were adjoining cesspools and open drains running down the

¹⁷¹ Ümit Deniz, "Herşeyden Önce Asayiş Lazım," *Milliyet*, 21 July 1953; "Gecekondularda Oturanların Bir Teşebbüsü," *Milliyet*, 5 September 1951.

¹⁷² "İstanbul Ekspres Gecekondularda," *İstanbul Ekspres*, 24 January 1952.

¹⁷³ "Gecekondular Şehri," *Akşam*, 19 October 1951; "Gecekondular Mahallesinde Saat 22'den Sonra Sokağa Çıkılmıyor," *Gece Postası*, 9 September 1953.

¹⁷⁴ Ümit Deniz, "Gecekondular Davasında İş Nalı Bulmaya Kalmış," *Milliyet*, 27 July 1953.

streets.¹⁷⁵ Higher disease rates were recorded in squatter areas than better-off locations. As Danielson and Keleş noted, “infectious diseases were more than twice as common in a typical *gecekondu* in İstanbul than in the city as a whole.”¹⁷⁶ Tuberculosis especially among children was the most serious common disease that could be identified in the irregular settlements. Typhoid outbreaks occurred, though not very frequently. Malnutrition was a basic problem because it reduced resistance to all diseases.

The living conditions also were hard in other working class districts. For instance, Kemal Ilıcak wrote of the sheltering conditions of Kasımpaşa, where a large population of dock workers, printers, laborers of automobile fitting shops and tobacco workers lived, as follows:

It appears that Kasımpaşa is a workers’ district. And most of these workers are bachelors. Although this is the case, neither the government nor the municipality and industrial enterprises are taking care of the manner of living of these citizens. These people work all day long for a daily wage of 3 or 4 liras and afterward seek shelter in hostelries, inns and coffeehouses which are in destitute conditions. Every coffeehouse in Kasımpaşa seems to be functioning as a hotel. Providing bachelor hostels for them bears great importance in terms of both labor productivity and welfare for our citizens.¹⁷⁷

At that time the total number of people living in Kasımpaşa was estimated to be 60,000 and the population of tobacco workers and their families was around 5000. Hayk Açıkgöz, a communist party member, wrote extensively on the living conditions of the workers in

¹⁷⁵ Orhan Kuyucaklı, “Pompei Gibi Toprak Altında Kalmaya Mahkum Evler,” *Gece Postası*, 27 September 1953.

¹⁷⁶ Danielson and Keleş, p. 138.

¹⁷⁷ “Görülüyor ki Kasımpaşa geniş miyasta bir işçi muhittir. Bunların ekserisi de bekârdırlar. Böyle olduğu halde ne hükümet, ne belediye ve ne de sanayi müesseseleri bu yurddaşların yaşayış tarzları ile aslâ ve aslâ ilgilenmemişlerdir. Bunlar sabahdan akşama kadar 3 ilâ 4 lira gündelikle çalıştıktan sonra akşamları han, hamam ve kahve köşelerinde çok sefil halde barınmağa çalışırlar. Bunlar için muntazam bekar hanları, mahalleler kurmak hem işin verimi ve hem de vatandaş hayatının değeri bakımından büyük ehemmiyeti vardır.” Kemal Ilıcak, “Kasımpaşa,” *Gece Postası*, 17 September 1952.

Sendika newspaper. Follows is as a piece in which he described the conditions of shelter and the commute for tobacco workers in a sarcastic manner:

Let me briefly portray the condition of Kasımpaşa tobacco workers: A district in dust, mud and moisture; ignored, dirty, narrow streets and blind alleys; entangled ruined dwellings. A room in the pavement with a feeble door and with loose windows. But what a room it is. Father, mother and children all live in this room; here the food is cooked on the fireplace when they come back at night; here they sleep in each others' arms. They get up early before the dawn breaks. Mother, father, children, everyone who is able to work takes the road to the workplace in Ortaköy. It is winter; rainy or snowy. Our tobacco workers go to work on foot, they do not get lazy, they don't get wet, and they don't get tired. The way is short; the hill on which Beyoğlu is built will be climbed over. This easy practice is repeated every day after eight hours of work. (What did they do at work? They chatted on their seats or if they get too bored they sang the song "tütüncü kız" altogether.) In the evening the scenes reappear in reverse order. And they are back in Kasımpaşa.¹⁷⁸

As observed by H. Açıkgöz, the tobacco workers of Kasımpaşa usually walked to work on foot. Walking to work was a widespread experience for workers before the 1960s, in a period when the poor neighborhoods were poorly served by public transit. Transportation was particularly hard for commuters of the fringe areas who had to walk to the end of a car line that would take them to commercial centers.¹⁷⁹ City bus services were inadequate and rarely

¹⁷⁸ "Sizlere kısaca Kasımpaşa tütüncülerini tasvir edeyim: Tozlu, çamurlu, rutubetli bir semt, insan emeği görmemiş dar, pis, çıkmaz sokaklar, içiçe girmiş viran evler. Kapısı, penceresi tutmayan zemin katta bir oda. Bu bir odadır ama pir odadır. Ana, baba, çoluk çocuk burada oturur, işten gelince geceden geceye burada ocak yakılıp, burada yemek pişirilir, hepbirden koyun koyuna burada yatılır. Sabah şafak sökmeden mum ışığıle kalkılır. Ana, baba, çoluk çocuk eli iş tutan herkes Ortaköy'e gitmek üzere yola çıkılır. Kıştır, yağmur, kar yağmaktadır. Onlar yağa dursunlar, bizim tütüncüler üşenmeden, ıslanmadan, yorulmadan! Paltosuz, muşambastız, delik ayakkapla işe yayan giderler. Yol kısadır, Beyoğlunun kâin olduğu tepe çıkılıp inilecektir. İşte o kadar, geldik Ortaköy'e. bu basit ameliye günde sekiz saat çalıştıktan sonra (ne yapmışlardı ki oturdukları yerde muhabbet etmişler veya çok sıkılmışlarsa hep bir ağızdan tütüncü kız türküsünü söylemişlerdir) Akşama tersinden tekrar olunur. Ve Kasımpaşa'ya gelinir. Bütün gün çalışmış, üstelik soğuk ve yağmur altında saatlerce yürümüş yorulmuşlar, ıslanmışlar, üşümüşler, akşam olmuş acıkmışlardır. Sıcak bir yemek ve sıcak bir odada istirahati hak etmemişler midir?" H. Açıkgöz, "Sosyal ve Sıhhi Bakımdan: Tütün işçisi Nasıl Yaşıyor?!", *Sendika Gazetesi* (19 October 1946). Hayk Açıkgöz became a member of TKP when he was a student at the Faculty of Medicine during the WWII. He spent almost three years in prison for being a member of the party before he fled abroad in 1949. His autobiography is provided in Dr. Hayk Açıkgöz, *Anadolulu Bir Ermeni Komünistin Anıları* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2006).

¹⁷⁹ City bus services were made available for Gültepe only after 1963. See Hart, p.105

met the needs of the workers, forcing them to walk long hours to go to work.¹⁸⁰ Especially in the big cities like İstanbul and Ankara the journey took an hour or more each way.

In İstanbul, trams were more heavily used in city transport in the 1940s, but fell out of favor after the mid-1950s. According to data provided by Çelik Gülersoy, the number of trams used in the public service dropped gradually after 1949. In that year 269 cars conveyed 14 million people in İstanbul. The number of trams declined to 229 in 1957 and to 82 in 1961. By the time the number of journeys made on trams decreased to 4.2 million.¹⁸¹

While the importance of trams in public transportation diminished gradually in the 1950s and the cars were finally removed from the system after 1961, the city bus service came to bear the weight of the system. The number of city buses serving in İstanbul was only 29 in 1946. 5.5 million journeys were made on the buses.¹⁸² In 1955, the number of buses in service rose to 196 and the number of passengers transported raised nine-fold, to 50 million. By 1957, the number of buses reached 567 which transported around 90 million passengers.¹⁸³ However, the growing number of buses fell short of satisfying the fast expanding demand for public transport. Major General Refik Tulga, who replaced Ethem Yetkiner as Mayor of İstanbul after the May 27 coup d'état, declared that an additional one thousand buses was needed to solve the transportation problem of the city.¹⁸⁴ It is noteworthy that in Ankara the improvement in the number of city buses lagged behind İstanbul. In 1949, the number of city

¹⁸⁰ Kosova, pp. 125, 136, 143; Orhan Kuyucaklı, "Eyüplüler Vasıtan Dert Yanıyor," *Gece Postası*, 19 December 1956.

¹⁸¹ Çelik Gülersoy, *Tramvay İstanbul'da* (İstanbul: 1989), p.201.

¹⁸² İstanbul Belediyesi Neşriyat ve İstatistik Müdürlüğü, *İstanbul Şehri İstatistik Yıllığı, 1945-1949* (İstanbul: Belediye Matbaası, 1950), p. 60.

¹⁸³ İstanbul Belediyesi Neşriyat ve İstatistik Müdürlüğü, *İstanbul Şehri İstatistik Yıllığı, 1955-1959* (İstanbul: Belediye Matbaası, 1961), p. 149.

¹⁸⁴ "Vali: Daha 1000 Otobüs Lazım Dedi," *Gece Postası*, 22 November 1960.

buses was only 59 in Ankara. The number rose to 107 by the end of 1957, and grew to only 173 by the end of 1963.¹⁸⁵

Many areas in the vicinity of the city did not benefit from transportation services at all.¹⁸⁶ Even the new working class settlements in the city center like Bomonti lacked city bus service.¹⁸⁷ Others who were more fortunate to be on the route of the bus services had to wait long hours at the stations. The workers in Mecidiyeköy complained about the inadequacy of the city bus service. Only four buses served the district and especially in the busy journey times during the day the cars were so crowded that many workers could not take one.¹⁸⁸ There were recurrent reports in the media that a major annoyance of workers in Istanbul was the undersupply of city buses. Workers complained that they often arrived late to work because of the overcrowded buses.¹⁸⁹ The *Gece Postası* newspaper reported that the scarcity of the bus service forced many workers in İstanbul to ride bicycles to and from work.¹⁹⁰

Except during the rush hours bus service was infrequent, so some commuters patronized the *dolmuş* (shared taxi) service. Shared taxi prices were maintained by the local drivers' association and cab fare was high, therefore not very preferred by workers. In 1958, the new cab fares for some routes between working class districts and commercial centers were announced to be as follows:¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Fehmi Yavuz, "Ankara'da Şehir içi Ulaşım Hizmetleri Sorunu" in *Onuncu ve On birinci İskan ve Şehircilik Haftası Konferansları* (Ankara: AÜ SBF İskan ve Şehircilik Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1971), pp.14, 18.

¹⁸⁶ See, for instance, "Topkapı Dışında Oturanlar Belediyeden Vasıta İstiyor," *Milliyet*, 7 August 1957.

¹⁸⁷ Tümertekin, *Bomonti*, p.57.

¹⁸⁸ "Mecidiyeköylü İşçiler Otobüslerden Şikayetçi," *Milliyet*, 25 November 1954.

¹⁸⁹ For instance, Orhan Kuyucaklı, "Eyüplüler Vasıttadan Dert Yanıyor," *Gece Postası*, 19 December 1956. See also "Halkın Sesi", *Milliyet*, 27 March 1953.

¹⁹⁰ "İşe Bisikletle Giden İşçiler," *Gece Postası*, 29 December 1957

¹⁹¹ "Zamlı Dolmuş Tarifesi Dün İlan Edildi," *Milliyet*, 21 October 1958.

Eminönü-Kazlıçeşme: 150 kr

Beyazıt-Zeytinburnu: 120 kr

Şişli-Kasımpaşa: 75kr

Eminönü-Eyüp: 100 kr

Beyazıt-Topkapı: 60 kr

Eminönü-Kasımpaşa: 60 kr

Beyazıt-Taşlıtarla: 100 kr

On the other hand, few workers were able to take advantage of shuttle bus service from home to work. Workers of a packaging factory in Maltepe often spent the rest of the night at the coffeehouses around the workplace after finishing the night shift at 2:30 am since the management refused to provide a shuttle service for them.¹⁹² Probably, only in some of the state factories and in a few private companies were shuttle services made available for workers. For example, the Bakırköy Cloth Factory provided a shuttle service to nearby districts like Zeytinburnu and Osmaniye because there were no alternative modes of public transportation.¹⁹³ Some private industrial plants like the Yenel Weaving Factory in Topkapı also provided service for long-distance commuting workers. However, the Yenel Factory workers complained that the service vehicle was an old truck and tens of workers had to travel crammed into the back of this vehicle.¹⁹⁴

Consequently, for many, walking to and from work was the only option. For instance, Fatma Duyar, a tobacco worker in the Cibali Tobacco Factory, said that she walked between her home in Çukurbostan and Cibali every day: “I earn 85 liras in a month. It is not possible for me to spare money for transportation. So I walk. I have made the way shorter by walking on the side streets. Every day I discover a new street, and every day the distance get shorter.

¹⁹² “Bu İşyerinde Çalışan İşçiler Vasıtasızlıktan Sabahlıyor,” *Gece Postası*, 19 May 1959.

¹⁹³ See Turgay Tuna, *Bir Zamanlar Bakırköy* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996).

¹⁹⁴ “Bir İşçinin Feryadı,” *Tasvir*, 17 January 1949.

(laughs)”¹⁹⁵ High commuting costs, inadequacy of vehicles and inappropriate schedules forced families like the Duyars to live in central districts, even when they wanted to move to a cheaper house in a squatter settlement. The poorest, those either without regular employment or those least able to move away from the commercial centers, were forced by their need to be near the mere chance of a day’s work, to live in the worst crowded areas.

On the other hand, in the working-class districts where they grew up adjacent to factories, the poor commuting conditions aided the development of a strong attachment to the neighborhood. For instance, in Zeytinburnu where 56 percent of men and 64 percent of women commute to work on foot, the residential turnover appeared to be low.¹⁹⁶ Many people moved only short distances when they had to move, and might still have frequented the same local shops and public spaces. This strong attachment to neighborhood also was manifested in the growth of neighborhood organizations that will be mentioned below.

The Meaning of Home for Workers

Commenting on the long and broad history of suburban working class settlements in different countries, Richard Harris argues that home ownership has a far different meaning for workers than it does to any other social group. While middle-class observers often treat home ownership as a goal in its own right, Harris contends, workers commonly view it instrumentally, as a means of evading the uncertain, petty tyrannies of tenancy, as financial security (especially for old age), as a method of creating wealth and even more important as

¹⁹⁵ “İşçinin 24 Saati: Tütün Fabrikası İşçilerinden Fatma Duyar,” *Gece Postası*, 22 June 1956. “Ayda 85 lira alıyorum. Yol parası ayırmama imkan yok. İster istemez yürüyorum. Ara sokaklardan geçerek yolumu kısaltmışımdır. Hergün bir sokak buluyorum ve hergün yolum biraz daha kısalıyor.”

¹⁹⁶ Only 3 percent of workers in Zeytinburnu had to change more than one vehicle when travelling to and from work. Hart, pp.66-67.

an object of self-expression. Having control over one's living space is the prime motive of workers: "It has been above all the desire for autonomy and control that has determined how workers viewed homes."¹⁹⁷

As a matter of fact it is a very hard task to make generalizations about the meaning and role of the home for the working class families in Turkey. This is partly because of the rapid transformation of the urban setting which has been characterized by the commercialization of urban land and speculation of it that have put its stamp over the urban economy since the early 1950s.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, only to speak of manual workers will include people who had different workplace experiences and incomes. However, I believe, Harris' argument still bears validity for our understanding of working class housing in Turkey.

As has been demonstrated above, the middle class view, which was forcefully expressed by reformers and social scientists, emphasized physical and moral health as the qualities of the ideal home. In their vision the privacy of the family and sanitary conditions were critical. However, ownership was not perceived to be crucial for the middle classes and many well-off families who could have afforded to own their own residences preferred to rent. This was a normal attitude in a period when home ownership was not considered to be an investment as it has become today. Yet, for workers to have the title to their own home, in spite of the costs in sanitation and comfort, bore much more significance. Owning a home provided both an opportunity to accumulate wealth, and a modest security for the workers. Especially under the conditions of rampant inflation and rapidly increasing rents, as tenants,

¹⁹⁷ Richard Harris, "The Suburban Worker in the History of Labor," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 64 (Fall 2003), p.10. See also Alan Murie, "Housing," in *The Students Companion to Social Policy*, ed. Pete Alcock et.al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p. 299.

¹⁹⁸ Various studies on the ownership status of the gecekondus have indicated that a significant part of the gecekondu owners were actually those who have used commercial channels of construction. For an overview, see Buğra, "The Immoral Economy of Housing", p.311.

they were at the mercy of landlords, often under the pressure of increasing rent payments and even feeling the threat of eviction.¹⁹⁹ Home ownership also provided a degree of financial security for old age, particularly in the period before pensions and health security became widely available for workers.

As a result, rates of home ownership among workers were higher than their incomes might suggest. In 1960, the home ownership rate for skilled and unskilled workers in İstanbul was above that for self-employed professionals. 39.1 percent of workers were recorded to be home owners in İstanbul, whereas the rate of home ownership was 38 percent for self-employed professionals and 31.6 percent for civil servants. In a similar vein, the rate of homeownership in Ankara was 47.9 percent for workers whereas the rate was 39 percent for self-employed professionals and 25.6 percent for civil servants. In İzmir, where home ownership seems to have been more attainable, 66 percent of workers owned their homes while the figure was 55.2 percent for professionals and 42.5 percent for civil servants.²⁰⁰ It is worth repeating that this phenomenon was not peculiar to Turkey, but can also be observed by the early 1950s in a wide range of countries, including the member states of America and Australia.²⁰¹

Many observers and journalists witnessed the strong desire of the workers to make whatever sacrifices necessary in order to acquire homes of their own. In a series of interviews conducted by Kemal Sülker, many squatters were found to be workers who had been employed at regular jobs for a long period of time, but had to move to the *gecekondu* since

¹⁹⁹ “Bir İşçi Kooperatif Evi Edinmenin İmkansızlığını Anlatıyor,” *Gece Postası*, 1 January 1956.

²⁰⁰ DİE, *20 Şehirde 1960 Mesken Şartları Anketi* (Ankara: 1962), pp. 60, 72. These data are consistent with Harris’ argument that home ownership has been a more important target for the manual working class than by any other social group.

²⁰¹ Harris, p. 17.

they could not afford the high rents in the established districts of the city. For instance, a factory worker, Veli Görgün, told that since he did not want to continue to pay 60 liras every month for a one-room apartment, he took his family and moved to a squatter house in Kazlıçeşme, a *gecekondu* district in which basic urban services fell short of satisfying minimal needs by almost any measure.²⁰²

Another squatter said that with his eight members of the family he had been paying 40 liras for a house in Beşiktaş which had only one room and a hall before they built their own *gecekondu*. Their *gecekondu* was, too, a single-room dwelling, but they knew that it provided them the opportunity to extend the living area with additions and improve the quality of the house in the long term.²⁰³

The primary drive of workers in building or purchasing squatter dwellings was to assert control over a significant part of their lives. In a period when the sphere of union politics was restricted tightly and workplace struggles were relatively weak and immature, the search for gaining control and autonomy over their living space guided their action. Workers were more determined in seeking ownership of homes than other classes whose paid employment offered more space for initiative and autonomy. It may be argued that the workers may have reconciled the limited control they exerted within the workplace in return for securing greater autonomy in their homes.²⁰⁴ Where they could not afford a regular housing, building or purchasing a *gecekondu* was an attractive option. A *gecekondu* was preferable to most workers both because it offered more autonomy and freedom to project the architecture and facility, and also because it was cheaper to attain. As mentioned above, the

²⁰² Kemal Sülker, "Valinin 35000 Gecekondu Arasında Yaptığı Tetkikler," *Gece Postası*, 3 November 1949.

²⁰³ "İstanbul Ekspres Gecekondularında," *İstanbul Ekspres*, 25 January 1952.

²⁰⁴ Harris, p. 19.

average cost of construction of a cooperative house was calculated to be 14,000 liras in the mid-1950s, while an ordinary squatter dwelling was sold at 1300 liras in Kazlıçeşme in 1952.²⁰⁵ Moreover, the drab and monotonous style of architecture and small floor space offered by an average cooperative dwelling unit was another factor which decreased the attractiveness of cooperative houses.

Karpat as well observes “the desire to own property” as a primary reason for squatters to move to *gecekondu*. However, he rightfully states that if the dwellers in İstanbul around 1953-58 had not been granted the title to the land by the ruling Democrat Party hoping for securing votes, and if the *gecekondu* dwellers had not made successful use of political channels for pressuring the government and municipal authorities, the urge to build the *gecekondu* might have been less.²⁰⁶

The legal regulations regarding squatter dwellings have commonly been assumed as amnesty laws which have legalized and also encouraged the irregular settlements in Turkey. The first piece of legislation specifically concerning squatter housing was enacted as early as 1948 with the Law Enabling the Ankara Municipality to Allocate and Transfer Part of Its Land under Special Circumstances and Without Having to Comply with the Provisions of Law 2490.²⁰⁷ As the name implies, this law was exclusively enacted for the Ankara municipal area and intended to improve the already-built squatter houses. With this law, the Ankara municipality was enabled to allocate land to those who wanted to build their own houses and once the building was completed the municipality was to transfer the title on the land. During

²⁰⁵ *İstanbul Ekspres*, 24 January 1952.

²⁰⁶ Karpat, *Gecekondu*, p.89

²⁰⁷ Ankara Belediyesine, Arsa ve Arazisinden Belli Kısmını Mesken Yapacaklara 2490 sayılı Kanun Hükümlerine Bağlı Olmaksızın Tahsis ve Temlik Yetkisi Verilmesi Hakkında Kanun. For a brief account of legislations on squatter housing, see Heper, chapter 2.

the same year another law concerning the encouragement of house construction was enacted which extended the jurisdiction of *gecekondu* amnesty of the previous law to all municipalities. That it had been realized that the *gecekondu* problem could not be solved by legitimizing the already-built dwellings, a new law was enacted after only one year which facilitated the procedures of demolishing houses.

When the *gecekondu* became a major problem in 1953, a law passed that eased the acquisition of title by the established *gecekondus*. According to the law, new *gecekondus* would be destroyed if found in the state of construction. If not, they could be destroyed after legal proceedings, and the builder would be subject to fines. A law in 1959 restated the legal procedure for demolishing squatter houses. However, the course of proceedings often favored the squatters. Once the violation was passed to the court, the builder was usually safe. Every apparatus of delay and manoeuvre was manipulated in the court to save the builder for the simple reason that many people on the lower echelons of the office were living in the *gecekondu* themselves or had close relatives there. As noted above, in some settlements it was estimated that approximately 10 percent of *gecekondu* dwellers came from the ranks of civil servants.

Consequently, despite the abundance of legislations which aimed at preventing new *gecekondus*, their number grew rapidly over the years. Even the demolition campaigns and increased police surveillance of squatter settlements did not make much sense in the face of strong inclinations to acquire a home. As İbrahim Öğretmen's 1957 study revealed, there were even cases where the same house was demolished seven times.²⁰⁸ The pressure against the *gecekondu* dwellers served nothing, but to strengthen the identity group ties.

²⁰⁸ Öğretmen, p.34.

Neighborhood associations provided the primary mechanism to strengthen group solidarity and articulate the common interests for squatters. As irregular settlements grew up rapidly in cities these associations became more important as they served as links between gecekondu dwellers, political parties and local authorities. Gecekondu Beautification Associations (*Gecekondu Güzelleştirme Dernekleri*) were founded for settlement improvement. Furthermore common interests of seeking titles to land were the basis of strong attachment to these neighborhood organizations. Yasa's study exhibited that about one-third of the household heads in the Ankara gecekondu settlements were members of at least one formal organization such as trade unions, professional associations or cooperatives.²⁰⁹ However, neighborhood association membership was the most common form of organization among the squatters.

A *Gecekonduyu Güzelleştirme Derneği* was found in nearly every major squatter settlement in Turkey. In some settlements such as Kazlıçeşme there was more than one beautification associations.²¹⁰ They served as places for gathering, holding meetings, cultural activities and festivals²¹¹ as well as provided channels of formal communication with the authorities and politicians. Karpat observes that these associations, "whose outward purpose is to improve the settlement's appearance, actually functions as a liaison office between dwellers and political parties, and conducts political bargains with city and even national politicians."²¹² There is no doubt that through these associations the gecekondu dwellers

²⁰⁹ Yasa, *Ankara'da Gecekondu Aileleri*, p.212.

²¹⁰ *Gece Postası*, 22 July 1953.

²¹¹ Indeed one of them, Şişli Gecekondu Beautification Association organized a gecekondu beauty contest in 1952. "Gecekondu Güzellik Kraliçesi Seçimi," *Milliyet*, 23 July 1953.

²¹² Karpat, *Gecekondu*, p. 92.

enhanced their organizational capacity and skill to represent and defend the interests of the settlement in political and administrative circles.

The relations of these organizations with administrative bodies were not always cooperative as implied by the system of exchange of property titles for votes which is described by Buğra as “negative reciprocity relations.” During the initial years of their formation, the relationship between the associations and the municipality were rather unfriendly and conflictive. In the early June 1952, the Şişli Gecekondu Beautification Association announced its decision to organize a meeting in Taksim square to call for the legislation of the draft bill concerning the legal status of the squatter dwellings be enacted soon.²¹³ The meeting was held on July 22, despite the governor’s warning that it would be an illegal act. The police harshly dispersed the demonstrators.²¹⁴ One year later the İstanbul Gecekondu Beautification Association headed by Nail Tanyeri held another meeting in Taksim square to protest the mayor Gökay.²¹⁵ This time the security forces did not interrupt the meeting, yet one month after this demonstration of the dwellers, the beautification associations was closed.²¹⁶ However, the associations opened again one year later and thereafter the relations between neighborhood organizations and governmental bodies took on a more accommodating form as the government became more generous in granting titles to the land.

²¹³ “Şişli Gecekodularını Güzelleştirme Derneğinin Mitingi,” *Milliyet*, 10 June 1952. It is noteworthy that four out of seven members of the founding administrative body of Şişli-Mecidiyeköy Gecekondu Beautification Society were laborers in 1959. “Şişli Mecidiyeköy Gecekonduları Güzelleştirme Derneği Ana Nizamnamesi”, *Türkiye Birlik Gazetesi*, 16 January 1959.

²¹⁴ “İzinsiz Miting,” *Akşam*, 23 June 1952.

²¹⁵ “Gecekondu Derneği Dün Taksim’de Miting Yaptı,” *Milliyet*, 17 August 1953.

²¹⁶ “Gecekondular Güzelleştirme Derneği Kapatıldı,” *Milliyet*, 12 September 1953.

On May 6, 1955 a delegation of six squatters from the İstanbul Gecekondu Beautification Association came to Ankara and demanded from the government to show alternative locations for the 5000 *gecekondus* which were to be demolished. Three months later the same association held an assembly to create a federation together with the related associations from Ankara and İzmir. The talks and debates at the assembly revealed the desire of the squatters to integrate to the city. The assembly advised the squatters to wear clean and proper clothes, cut their nails and comb their hair and behave like the established urban middle classes during the meetings with the state officials.²¹⁷

The governments and state officials came to realize that the development of reciprocity networks as an informal redistributive practice served better the purposes of preventing social unrest and legitimizing the established order. While the original drive of the workers in building or purchasing squatter houses was to secure autonomy and assert control over a significant part of their lives, this was not necessarily true of the consequences. The reciprocity ties and the ongoing commercialization of the urban land provided the environment for homeowners to take on more conservative political behavior.²¹⁸

One initial argument in this section was that workers' housing should be understood not only as part of the working class experience, but also as the expression of the aspirations of that class which is also consistent with the politics of workplace. Yet it should be added to the argument that the role of the state and dynamics of local politics also should be included in the picture.

²¹⁷ Şenyapılı, *Barakadan Gecekonduya*, p. 200.

²¹⁸ For a comprehensive study on the development of political behavior in the İstanbul gecekondu settlements, see Murat Cemal Yalçınan and Adem Erdem Erbaş, "Impacts of 'Gecekondu' on the Electoral Geography of İstanbul", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 64 (Fall 2003).

Conclusion

Any study of working class history and culture needs to focus on the interaction between people and environment from a social science perspective. Especially during the periods of massive displacements, the problems pertaining to the housing conditions of laboring families and the residential segregation between classes become important factors that shaped the experiences and identities of working people. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Turkey experienced a massive population flow from villages to cities and an accelerated pace of urban growth. The newcomers in the city faced an acute shortage of suitable low-cost housing. Since most regular housing was too expensive for the laboring poor, they established inferior dwellings in areas around the industrial workplaces. The established middle class residents regarded the new arrivals as invaders who were undermining the security, health and morality of life in the city. In the name of such qualities the middle classes claimed the right to observe and regulate the working class residences. The fears about social unrest that might be generated by the shortage and poor conditions of working class housing were added by the alleged moral defects of life in overcrowded homes in poor districts of the city.

The established links between the dwellings of workers and the external sanitary and moral condition provided the juncture for the birth of housing policy in the early 1950s. The ministry of labor Hayrettin Erkmen took the problem seriously and exerted himself to solve the problem by supporting workers' housing cooperatives. However, the subsidized credit channels for cooperatives were open only to a small segment of working poor. Throughout the decade the housing policy and its outcome were discussed widely in the public. By the early 1960s it was clear that this policy remained incapable of meeting the growing demand of affordable housing for urban working class families.

The low-cost irregular housing spread after the 1950s and the squatter settlements developed as the home of the working class. Although the occupational composition of the gecekondü communities varied from one district to another, almost everywhere the proportion of workers was higher. One important result of the growth of gecekondus was that they made their residents more attached to the city and to their urban work.

The living conditions were hard in all working class districts. Basic urban services like piped water and sewers were lacking in many poor neighborhoods. Transportation services were worse, which made walking long distances to work a central experience for most workers. Poor commuting conditions also supported their attachment to gecekondü neighborhoods where the latter grew adjacent to factories.

The meaning of home for workers differed radically from the middle class vision of home. In a period in which rents increased rapidly and when formal social security was unattainable for most workers, homeownership became very important for workers. It may also be argued that having control over their living space guided their action since they had very limited control in their workplace. As a result the homeownership rate of workers was higher than that of any single group during the period.

CHAPTER 2

WORKING-CLASS LEISURE

Leisure is yet another subject which has received virtually no attention from the working class historians in Turkey. This may stem, in part, from the reluctance of researchers and scholars to handle seriously “non-serious” and “non-academic” subjects like films and plays. Another reason for this neglect of leisure may be the silence of materials when it comes to the issue of the cultural dimensions of working class experience. But the main reason lies in a more general restriction. Until recently, working class history has been perceived as a too narrow field principally preoccupying itself with formal and institutional manifestations of workers, political and ideological background of labor legislation, problems of industrial relations and registering the strikes or strike like actions.

Yet there is a growing consensus among the scholars in recent times on the need to develop research into off-work time and the different ways in which workers have used it. There is a growing recognition of the fact that like the shared experiences of poor working conditions and economic insecurity, poverty and crowded conditions of working class neighborhoods, shared experiences of popular leisure activities sustained the working class

identity.²¹⁹ As Joanna Bourke notes, the “routine activities of everyday life” in and out of work nurtured class identity as a “metaphor for defining oneself and other people.”²²⁰ Leisure may have an enriching function for workers who are alienated by their work by having an opposite character of work. Or it may function as an escape by providing compensatory fantasies of immense and immediate wealth and power. However, in either way, working class men and women associated with others, make leisure choices and define other people as like them or not.

By extending the research to the areas of the social and cultural experiences of workers, historians may provide the basis for looking at the class formation in its totality. Therefore we may move beyond state and elite centric approaches and seek new answers to the perennial questions of labor history pertaining to the weakness of labor based organizations, political behavior of workers etc. Moreover, new questions could be brought forth by studying leisure. How do we come to terms with working class culture? How did the working class culture change as they entered the more commercialized world of leisure in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War? What meaning did workers ascribe to these leisure activities and institutions and in what way did it differ from the values of the middle classes?

Historically, the term leisure has been defined as recreational or discretionary time spent outside the formal demands and requirements of work. Below, three different leisure activities and institutions (cinema, football and coffeehouse) are examined in order to

²¹⁹ There is a vast literature comprising both theoretical and empirical analyses on the relationship between popular recreation and working class culture. For an overview of theoretical discussions on the field, see Ben Carrington, “Introduction: Rethinking Labour and Leisure,” *Leisure Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4 (October 2008). A rather old but not out of date summary of British scholarship on the nineteenth century working class leisure is provided in William J. Baker, “The Leisure Revolution in Victorian England: A Review of Recent Literature,” *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 6, no. 3 (Winter 1979).

²²⁰ Bourke, p.25.

exemplify the working class leisure conduct during the period. Workers could exercise very limited control over their work time in a capitalist setting. However, as is argued below, they effectively sought to preserve their off-work time as a distinct cultural sphere of existence.

At this point it may come to one's mind in what sense the culture described here is distinctively "working class" as opposed to "popular" or "urban". Yet, I find such a dispute terminological so far as the analysis is confined to the city, which had become more industrialized and contained a growing portion of the working class in the course of the period analyzed in this study. Here, it is not suggested that this culture and character of leisure is confined to the workers only. As Stuart Hall writes "there is no separate, autonomous, 'authentic' layer of working class culture to be found."²²¹ However, this part of the chapter argues, by their sheer weight of numbers and dispositions, workers have put their indiscernible stamp on the shape and character taken by this culture and leisure conduct. The examples of cinema and football will illustrate this point.

Adherents of the Frankfurt School critique of culture industry have claimed that commercial forms of leisure precipitated the development of a classless mass culture. This approach is not shared in the present analysis. In the light of the recent sociological and anthropological studies,²²² a preliminary argument of this study is that what is more important

²²¹ Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, (London: Routledge, 1981). Quoted in Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (New York: Verso, 2004), p. 100.

²²² It is worth recalling here E. P. Thompson's treatment of anthropological research. Thompson proposes that historians use anthropological questions to open new areas of research rather than simply and uncritically taking anthropological models which evolved with an inadequate historical component. In this vein he writes, "for us, the anthropological impulse is chiefly felt, not in model building, but in locating new problems, in seeing old problems in new ways, in an emphasis on norms or value systems and upon rituals, in attention to expressive functions of forms of riot and disturbance, and upon symbolic expressions of authority, control and hegemony." E. P. Thompson, "Folklore, Anthropology and Social History," *The Indian Historical Review*, vol.3, no.2 (1978). Quoted in Renato Rosaldo, "Celebrating Thompson's Heroes: Social Analysis in History and Anthropology", in Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland (eds.), *E.P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), p. 106.

than the content of the leisure forms is the *leisure conduct* itself. Working class men and women imposed their own meaning and uses upon the new leisure forms. On the other hand, putting class expression against social control, resistance against containment, autonomy against incorporation would not solve the problem.²²³ These antinomies which had structured most ways of seeing popular culture should be transcended by acknowledging that neither pole existed in real life, “that all cultural creation in capitalist society is divided against itself.”²²⁴

It is also worth acknowledging that despite the importance of themes taken in this study in the working class leisure, a discussion of them does not exhaust the recreational expressions of working class culture in that period. A more comprehensive treatment of this subject would require an examination of other themes such as religious practices and holidays, amusement parks, taverns and pubs, gambling, participant and spectator sports, company-sponsored recreational programs, community associations, and informal visiting patterns. Furthermore, focusing solely on “public” leisure forms fails to shed light fully on the leisure patterns of working class women. Therefore it should be noted that the analysis of the cinema, football and coffeehouse presented in this study is intended as illustrative rather than exhaustive. Further research is necessary to broaden the analysis to other forms of leisure.

A final note should be made concerning the periodization made in this study. The fact that organized leisure is of very recent origin is often overlooked. It flourished with the development of the bourgeois public sphere in the nineteenth century and moved horizontally

²²³ For a perceptive critique of the terminology of the literature on working class culture, see Gareth Stedman Jones, “Class Expression versus Social Control: A Critique of Recent Trends in the Social History of ‘Leisure’,” in *Languages of Class*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 76-89. A powerful critical appraisal of a selection of literature on social control is provided in F.M.L. Thompson, “Social Control in Victorian England,” *The Economic History Review*, vol. 34, no. 2 (May 1981).

²²⁴ Denning, p.99

across national boundaries and vertically to the lower classes in the course of late nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the rationalization of work and the creation of a formal concept of leisure. A sharp distinction between work and recreation began to emerge with the onset of industrialization and urbanization. Yet the transformation of traditional recreational activities and the introduction of organized and commercial leisure activities and institutions was a long process. If economic and social change provided the preconditions of the rise of mass recreation, it was not until working class people began to secure adequate off-work time that organized leisure could become a working class reality.

In Turkey, important steps were taken to increase the off work time after the end of the Second World War. As a matter of fact the major accomplishments of the DP rule concerning the labor legislation were the changes in the regulations about the holidays and off-days of the workers and the salaries to be paid on such days. In 1951, half of the salary was accepted to be paid for the weekend holidays and general off-days. Later, in 1956, this amount was accepted as the full salary. Furthermore, the Democrats enacted another law in 1954 which made it compulsory for employers to give an hour lunch break for the workers living in the cities and towns with a minimum population of 10,000 or more. Therefore, for example, in Turkey the beginnings of widespread working class attendance at movies occurred after the reduction of the working week and the introduction of the weekly holidays in the post-war period. Similarly the achievement of the working class dominance in football was tied closely to the improvement of wages and shortening of the working day. Therefore the 1946-1960 period provides an excellent opportunity to study the rise of popular leisure and the transformation of working class culture in Turkey.

Cinema

Cinema emerged everywhere as a foremost working-class entertainment.²²⁵ In 1910, 70 percent of customers of the New York movie theaters were estimated to be factory workers. At just around the same time, the German working class was already the primary spectator group of the cinema, which was perceived to be the cheapest amusement activity. In England, too, the cinema was observed to be “the most prominent feature of the spare time activity” in the early twentieth century working-class estates.²²⁶ However, one had to wait until the end of the Second World War for moviegoing to become a form of mass entertainment and the primary leisure time activity for the working class in Turkey.

As in most countries, moving pictures first appeared in Turkey in the early twentieth century as a sporadic novelty. By the 1910s, however, movies had found a regular spot on the programs of the major theaters of İstanbul. In these early years of cinema, theaters often exhibited movies as part of vaudeville programs, circus shows or as special representations. Yet with the introduction of more complex films imported from abroad (mainly from France and the United States) with frequent captions and musical accompaniment, large numbers of middle and upper class men and women began to join the moviegoing audience. Grand picture palaces which were built later in that decade in the commercial districts in İstanbul and İzmir, with expansive lobbies, thick carpeting, statues and paintings generally appealed to the well-off families.

According to G. Gilbert Deaver, who wrote a very informative essay on the recreational activities in İstanbul, there were approximately 32 permanent and 12 outdoor

²²⁵ Hakan Kaynar, “Al Gözüm Seyreyle Dünyayı: İstanbul ve Sinema,” *Kebikeç*, no. 27 (2009), pp.192-193.

²²⁶ Andrzej Olechnowicz, *Working-Class Housing in England Between the Wars: The Becontree Estate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). For the German case, see Miriam Hansen, “Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?” *New German Critique*, no. 29 (Spring-Summer, 1983).

motion picture theaters in 1921. Almost half of these theaters were located in Pera and Galata, and the majority of them were owned by foreigners.²²⁷ Most of the cinemas cited by Deaver in İstanbul survived well into the 1930s even though their ownership was taken over by Turkish entrepreneurs.²²⁸ The steady number of the salons bears witness to the fact that the degree of interest in cinema stayed unchanged until the 1940s. The official statistics demonstrates that as of 1931, the number of movie theaters was only 35 in İstanbul and 144 throughout the country.²²⁹ The same statistics show that there were only three permanent cinema salons in Ankara.

The tardiness of the development of a firm cinema industry in Turkey is commonly ascribed to the lack of state interest in the filmic medium. A shared assumption among scholars and critics is that the Kemalist cadres and policy makers of the early republican era did not give enough importance to the power of this communicative medium as their counterparts had.

For instance, while the American elites, cinema critics and scholars were preoccupied with the cinema's power of social integration by the early 1900s, in Germany, where hierarchic class structures persisted along with capitalist modernization, commentators tended to discuss this important medium's collective function in terms of crowd psychology. The Soviet leaders, on the other hand, intuitively appreciated the possibilities inherent in the medium. Lenin repeatedly expressed his faith in the future of the cinema as a weapon for education. It could be used among the illiterates and the medium itself was attractive. People

²²⁷ G. Gilbert Deaver, "Recreation" in *Constantinople Today: The Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople*, ed. Clarence R. Johnson (New York: Macmillan, 1922), pp 264-265.

²²⁸ Burhan Arpad suggests that there were at most 30 movie theaters in İstanbul in the 1930s. Burhan Arpad, *Bir İstanbul Var idi* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2007), p.160.

²²⁹ Ten salons in İzmir, four salons in Adana and Bursa were included in this number. See Serdar Öztürk, *Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Sinema, Seyir, Siyaset* (Ankara: Elips Kitap, 2005), pp. 89-90.

who would not sit through a political lecture would come to see movies.²³⁰ In a similar vein, Trotsky, who hurriedly wrote a book during a time of civil war on the new soviet everyday drew attention on the popularity of cinema especially among the youth and pointed out the potentials of the medium for building a new society.²³¹ However, unlike their counterparts who were keen to manipulate cinema in the process of state building, the propaganda power of cinema was by and large underestimated by the Kemalist circles.

As has been evidenced in a recent study, however, some of the early leaders of the republic too had considered this medium as a “primary tool for propaganda,”²³² and strove to attract the attention of the ruling elite to the possibilities offered by this medium. However, Atatürk and his close circle did not develop any interest in the filmic medium. Moreover, they lacked the financial sources, materials and trained cadres to produce and bring film to the audiences. Therefore the destiny of the cinema in Turkey was left to the hands of the commercial forces from the early times on.²³³

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that around 10,000 people were daily going to a movie in İstanbul, the cinema had become more popular than any other leisure activity by the 1930s. For comparison, it should be noted that in January, 1929 the tickets sold in drama theaters was counted to be only 17,000.²³⁴

²³⁰ Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²³¹ Lev Troçki, *Gündelik Hayatın Sorunları* (İstanbul: Yazın Yayıncılık, 2000).

²³² Serdar Öztürk, *Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Sinema, Seyir, Siyaset* (Ankara: Elips Kitabevi, 2005). See, especially, Chapter 1.

²³³ In 1956 a group of directors who were tempted by realist film movements in the world would complain that cinema was seen solely as an entertainment in Turkey and no one could appreciate the propaganda aspect of it. See Aslı Daldal, *Arts, Politics and Society: Social Realism in Italian and Turkish Cinemas* (İstanbul: ISIS Press, 2003), p. 152.

²³⁴ Kaynar, p. 195.

The expansion of moviegoing into the broader segments of urban population and the emergence of the cinema salon as a center of interclass, mass entertainment was a phenomenon that occurred in the second half of the 1940s. According to the Statistical Yearbooks prepared by the Municipality of İstanbul, 9 million people had attended to the movies in 46 saloons in 1946. By 1951, an equal number of theaters were added to that figure and the number of spectators had increased to 12 million. In 1955 over 21 million spectators had gone to see the shows in 135 cinema theaters and by 1959, the number of spectators had reached 26.2 million and salons had increased to 165.²³⁵ Therefore, it appears that over the period both the number of movie theaters and spectators tripled. Considering the data, we might suggest that annually the number of tickets sold per capita in İstanbul was roughly 16 at the end of the 1950s. However these figures did not include the outdoor cinemas. According to a film historian, the number of outdoor cinemas in İstanbul increased six fold between 1946 and 1963, from 20 to 122.²³⁶

On the other hand we cannot estimate accurately the development of the movie theaters in Turkey. As Burçak Evren notes, studies on the history of Turkish cinema give quite distinct numbers about the development of the movie theaters. In a personal report prepared by journalist-writer Fikret Adil during the second half of the 1940s, the total number of movie-theaters which were located in about 60 cities was recorded to be 125. In the

²³⁵ İstanbul Belediyesi Neşriyat ve İstatistik Müdürlüğü, *İstanbul Şehri İstatistik Yıllığı, 1945-1949* (İstanbul: Belediye Matbaası, 1950); İstanbul Belediyesi Neşriyat ve İstatistik Müdürlüğü, *İstanbul Şehri İstatistik Yıllığı, 1951-1955* (İstanbul: Belediye Matbaası, 1956); İstanbul Belediyesi Neşriyat ve İstatistik Müdürlüğü, *İstanbul Şehri İstatistik Yıllığı, 1955-1959* (İstanbul: Belediye Matbaası, 1961).

²³⁶ Burçak Evren, "Sinemalar", in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol.7 (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1994), pp.8-9. According to one estimation, the number of outdoor cinemas should have been around 50-60 in 1950. See Mustafa Gökmen, *Başlangıçtan 1950'ye Kadar Türk Sinema Tarihi ve Eski İstanbul Sinemaları* (İstanbul: Denetim Ajans Basımevi, 1989), p. 104.

summer, around 50 outdoor cinemas were added to this number.²³⁷ Nijat Özon's classical study on the subject writes that by 1958, the total number of cinemas was 650, including in total 400 thousand seats. Roughly 60 million people were estimated to have attended the movies in the same year.²³⁸ It is worth noting that some other sources claim that the number of cinema salons and movie attendance should have been greater in the late 1950s.²³⁹ Whatever the real figures were, however, it seems apparent that cinema became a significant industry and moviegoing the most popular spare time activity for every segment of society by the 1950s.

The most important explanation for the rapid expansion in theatres lay in the opening of new, cheap movie houses and the development of the working class spectator. A single move made by the government in 1948 decisively changed the adverse conditions which had kept ticket prices for movies high and which had stood as the primary obstacle before the genesis of a native film industry. This attempt of the government, made allegedly in the name of encouraging filmmaking in Turkey, came in 1948 with the reduction in the municipal tariffs on ticket prices, known as *Belediye Eğlence Resmi*, from 70 percent to 25 percent for Turkish films.

With the reduction of municipal tariffs ticket prices for movies fell considerably after 1948. According to the price list prepared by the İstanbul Municipality in 1951, the ticket prices in first-class salons ranged from 45 to 65 kuruş, while 30 kuruş tickets were available

²³⁷ Selections from Adil's report is provided in Gökhan Akçura, *Aile Boyu Sinema* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1995), p. 137.

²³⁸ Nijat Özon, *Türk Sineması Tarihi: 1986-1960* (Ankara: Viaport, 2003), p.205.

²³⁹ Estimations on the number of movie theaters range from 600 to 1200. See Burçak Evren, *Eski İstanbul Sinemaları* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1998), p. 194

in the second-class salons.²⁴⁰ Practically for a working-class couple, going to a cinema in the neighborhood with two children would only cost them their average earnings per hour. Considering that average ticket prices varied between 30 kuruş and 50 kuruş in the late 1930s,²⁴¹ it is apparent that tickets were cheaper in real terms in the early 1950s. In the inflationary economic environment of the 1950s, ticket prices would climb up to 150 kuruş on average in 1958. However, as reported in the *KİM* Magazine the soaring prices would not hit the cinema salons which were “the only social spaces frequented by the poor”.²⁴²

Until the late 1940s domestic film market depended upon foreign imports to a greater or lesser degree. Barely a dozen films were produced by native directors annually in the 1930s. As one film director notes, that French and American made films were often shown in their original language was another factor which kept the lower classes out the cinema saloons.²⁴³ This situation also would change in the course of the next decade. A wave of Egyptian films, which prevailed in the 1940s, had longstanding impact on the film production in Turkey. These films, which were heavy melodramas with musical accompaniment, appealed to the lower classes, especially to the new migrants in the city.²⁴⁴

Given the success of Egyptian films in the box office, profit-oriented Yeşilçam industry produced heavily cheap romantic melodramas. They were plain and easily apprehensible, even by an illiterate audience. Consequently, the film production developed

²⁴⁰ “İstanbul Belediyesinden,” *Milliyet*, 13 July 1951.

²⁴¹ Kaynar, p. 195. Hüseyin Avni, “Halk İçin Radyo ve Sinema,” *Yeni Adam*, no.221 (1938), p.4.

²⁴² “Sinemalar,” *KİM*, 15 August 1958.

²⁴³ Esin Berktaş, “1940’lı Yıllarda Türk Sineması,” *Kebikeç*, no. 27 (2009), p. 235.

²⁴⁴ See Levent Cantek, “Türkiye’de Mısır Filmleri,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 204 (December 2000). For a discussion on the role of Egyptian films in the construction of cultural identity and national cinema, see Ahmet Gürata, “Tears of Love: Egyptian Cinema in Turkey (1938-1950),” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 30 (Spring 2004).

rapidly in the 1950s. While 12 feature films were produced in 1947, the number of productions rapidly grew and reached 131 titles in 1962. Shooting film also became a moneymaking business after the late 1940s, attracting petty merchants even from Kayseri and Adana to İstanbul in order to engage in film production. A film cost roughly 30-35,000 liras and was expected to return a revenue of around 80-100,000.²⁴⁵

Above all, what made commercial leisure activity available for workers was the shortening of the workday. Despite the exceptions and evasions, as in the case of Mahmutpaşa textile workshops, the general trend in industry was toward shorter work hours. Not only were workers more likely to have free time in the evening for commercial entertainment, but the introduction of the weekly holiday and the increasing numbers of legal holidays made visits to cinemas at least one option for a significant portion of laboring mass. Zihni Küçümen remembers the rush of laboring masses to the movie theaters on the weekends:

During the winter months, the children of Ortaköy, tobacco worker residents of the shantytown, Jewish salesmen of Mahmutpaşa, tradespeople, fishermen, young female textile workers all poured into the streets of Beşiktaş on early Sunday mornings to attend a show at the cinema.²⁴⁶

Workers, certainly, used their increased leisure time in a wide range of ways: gossiping with neighbors, watching organized sports, frequenting coffeehouses, organizing neighborhood societies, arguing over trade union strategy, and raising money for housing improvement. Yet for many, going to movies occupied an important portion of their growing,

²⁴⁵ See Adil's report in Akçura, pp. 137-139.

²⁴⁶ Zihni Küçümen, *Si Minör Ortaköy* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1993), p.42. Quoted in Berktaş, p. 234. "Kış aylarında Ortaköy veletleri, rejide çalışan teneke mahallesi sakinleri, Mahmutpaşa'nın Yahudi tezgahları, esnafı, balıkçısı, trikotaj işçisi kızlar Pazar sabahları erkenden sinemaya gitmek için yollara dökülürdü."

but still limited, leisure hours. Cinema was the foremost commercialized leisure activity. As one trade unionist talked of his leisure: “It is always the cinema.”²⁴⁷

Having seen the growing appeal to movies, small entrepreneurs in large cities established cheap, small movie houses in poor districts. In 1950 there were 6 indoor (*Ünal, Yavuz, Geyikli, Zafer, Yıldız, Kiğılı*) and two outdoor cinemas in Kasımpaşa.²⁴⁸ In Kazlıçeşme, the building of the first movie house started before that of the primary school.²⁴⁹ Sewell’s survey showed that an outdoor cinema was located nearby the Aktepe gecekondu neighborhood in Ankara which operated about eight months of the year. 83 percent of the persons interviewed in Aktepe said that they attended shows at the movie house and 52 percent said they did go once or more a month. War films, romantic movies and the western cowboy films were the most favorite.²⁵⁰

The effective system of state censure which was copied from Mussolini’s censure regulations was a major impediment for the development of a realist film movement. The rejection of two village films, screened under the influence of Italian neo-realism, Metin Erksan’s *Karanlık Dünya: Aşık Veysel’in Hayatı* (Dark World: The Life of Aşık Veysel, 1952) and Fikret Otyam’s *Toprak* (The Land, 1953), by the censure committee would demonstrate that shooting realist films would not be tolerated by the government.

At first sight, the strict government censure seems strange in a period when the realist movement in literature gave its most critical outputs. However, this attitude of the government

²⁴⁷ Kemal Sülker, “İşçinin 24 Saati,” *Gece Postası*, 16 July 1957.

²⁴⁸ I have collected the names from Mustafa Gökmen, *Başlangıçtan 1950’ye Kadar Türk Sinema Tarihi ve Eski İstanbul Sinemaları* (İstanbul: Denetim Ajans, 1989) and Kemal Ilıcak, “Kasımpaşa,” *Gece Postası*, 17 September 1952.

²⁴⁹ Kemal Sülker, “Valinin 35000 Gecekondu Arasında Yaptığı Tetkikler,” *Gece Postası*, 3 November 1949.

²⁵⁰ Sewell, pp. 110-111. A famous scenario writer of the time, Bülent Oran, remembers that going to neighborhood movie theater became a group activity in the Gecekondu neighborhood. İbrahim Türk, *Senaryo Bülent Oran* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1998), p.62.

was quite in line with the approach of Mussolini, who believed that in an illiterate society like Italy, cinema was a much more dangerous medium than literature.²⁵¹

Yet, it was not the censure apparatus per se, but the public demand which was the determining factor in the choice of the film's plot. As one renowned scriptwriter, Bülent Oran recalls his personal experience in Yeşilçam:

I already had experiences from the gecekondu and the factory... As I was living among them, I had figured out what the people want from cinema. The lower classes, the poor, the ones who barely make their living; their population is bigger in our country as elsewhere. They are the real patrons of the cinema.²⁵²

The "real patrons of the cinema", lower classes wanted to see melodramas, romance and gangster stories, and profit-ridden Yeşilçam was very receptive to the demand.

"Fantasy escape from reality,"²⁵³ was a commonplace in the movies. Significantly, they were often set in upper-class environments with glamorous women in fashionable dresses, confident men in expensive automobiles and luxurious homes. "There are no hardships of life in the Turkish cinema: No housing shortage, no shanty towns, no black market, and no problems that a newly-wed couple can encounter," wrote Nijat Özön for the 1950s Yeşilçam cinema environment.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Daldal, pp. 148-150.

²⁵² "Zaten gecekondundan, mizahtan ve fabrikadan edindiğim tecrübeler de vardı... Halkın ne istediğini halkla iç içe yaşadığım için keşfetmişim... Yalnızca bizde değil, gelişmiş ülkelerde de alt tabaka, yoksul tabaka, zor geçinen tabakanın mevcudu daha geniş. Asıl seyirciyi de onlar oluşturuyor." Türk, p.190. Oran was working at the Sümerbank Cloth Factory when he started his career as scriptwriter.

²⁵³ I borrow the term from Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, p. 227. See also David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), p.101.

²⁵⁴ Atıf Yılmaz's 1959 movie, "Gecekonducular", which was adapted from a story by Orhan Kemal, was the only film shot in the 1950s which presented the living conditions of gecekondu dwellers. An analysis on the cinematographic presentation of the shanty towns in Turkey is provided in Mehmet Öztürk, "Türk Sinemasında Gecekonducular", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 1. Available at <http://www.ejts.org/document94.html>.

The stories of lower classes would be coopted in the Turkish cinema only toward the close of the 1950s. Until then, films by and large presented a world of material wealth. The suppression of class diversity and the acknowledgement of the specific economic, social and cultural experience of the middle classes was the main feature of the Turkish cinema during the period. The exclusion of the working class and the rise of the particular experience of the middle classes to the level of public representation promoted the ideology of a consumer society. Thus an image of a homogeneous population pursuing the same goals was offered through consumerism.²⁵⁵

The ideal of consumption was also reinforced by the increasingly popular movie magazines.²⁵⁶ Movie magazines (and cinema pages in the daily newspapers) called attention to extravagant homes and lifestyles of the entertainment community as well as to the biographies of Yeşilçam and Hollywood stars who had risen from modest living conditions to positions that were to be envied.

It is noteworthy that the Left took up a skeptical and critical stance towards the filmic medium during the period. A representative essay in that manner appeared in the *Sendika* newspaper in 1946. This was a review essay on the 1946 war movie, “La Bataille du Rail” (The Battle of the Rails), which tells the courageous efforts by French railway workers to

²⁵⁵ For an analysis of cinema in the larger context of mass culture and consumer society, see Jeanne Allen, “The Film Viewer as Consumer,” *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 5, no.4 (Fall 1980). For a critique of the American new labor historiography which argued that the culture of consumption itself underpinned labor organizing efforts, and for an analysis of the role of Hollywood film industry in promoting mass culture, see Michael Rogin, “How the Working Class Saved Capitalism: the New Labor History and *The Devil and Miss Jones*” *The Journal of American History*, vol. 89, no. 1 (June 2002).

²⁵⁶ Some popular cinema magazines were *Sinema*, *Yeni Sinema Gazetesi*, *Sinema 59*, *Sinema Alemi*, *Sinema-Magazin*, *Sinema-Tiyatro*, *Holivut Dünyası*, *Film Dünyası*, *Film Magazin*, *Film-Moda-Spor*, *Seyirci*, *İstanbul Film Postası*, *Ankara Sinemasi*, *Varyete*, *Sinemaç*, *Sinespor*, *Sinefoto*, *Sincap*, *Geçit*, *Caz*, *Prences*, *Senoryo*, *Atraksiyon Mecmuası*, *Şık Perde* and *Beyaz Perde*. With a few exceptions, serious film criticism was practically non-existent in these magazines.

sabotage Nazi reinforcement-troop trains. The film had a great success in Europe and won the Prix International du Jury at the Cannes Film Festival.

The writer of the essay, who used the pseudonym Ucuz Matineci, said he regretted that the Turkish cinema did not produce films like “The Battle of Rails, which depend on real historical struggles of the working people.” According to the writer, because the film production in Hollywood was monopolized by rich merchants who were the enemies of truth, Hollywood could not be expected to produce such films. Unfortunately, the writer continued, “Turkish working class moviegoers who have a significant share in the wealth of both producers and theatre owners are also destitute of realist and enlightening type of films, for our cinema is also controlled by Hollywood.”²⁵⁷

The development of realism in Turkish cinema would emerge in the immediate aftermath of the 1960 coup d’etat. In 1961 director Ertem Göreç and screenwriter Vedat Türkali came together in “Otobüs Yolcuları” (Bus Travelers), filming the story of a group of people fighting for their homes. Ertem Göreç’s “Karanlıkta Uyananlar” (Those Awakening in the Dark, 1964), dealing with the workers of a factory, stands as the first “strike film” of the Turkish cinema. Halit Refiğ’s “Gurbet Kuşları” (Birds of Nostalgia) follows the problems of a family migrating from a rural region to the big town (İstanbul) and Metin Erksan’s “Suçlular Aramızda” (The Guilty Ones Are Among Us) emerges as a "bourgeois melodrama" enriched with striking visual compositions.

Particularly *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* was embraced enthusiastically by the trade unions. Kemal Türkler and producers of the film met many times, and the final scene of the film was shot with the participation of large numbers of workers from Boya-İş (the Painting Industry Workers’ Trade Union). The Turkish Labor Party did not remain indifferent to the film;

²⁵⁷ Ucuz Matineci, “Raylar Savaşı İşçi Aktörlerle Çevrilmiştir..” *Sendika Gazetesi*, 19 October 1946.

Mehmet Ali Aybar, Behice Boran and Çetin Altan congratulated the producers and wrote articles in praise of their bold attempt.²⁵⁸ The film was shown in the trade union clubs and many times Türkali had the opportunity to accompany workers watching the film and talk to them about the message they had wanted to give through the film.²⁵⁹

Whatever the content of the movies were, the reactions of the audience is another matter. Analyzing the relationship between audience and movies is fraught with the usual difficulties of popular cultural analysis. Even if we could see all the films produced in those years we are not able to know exactly, which ones appealed to the working class audiences or how they reacted to the movie on the screen.²⁶⁰

Whatever the degree of control of the middle classes and state over the movie content, the working people were likely to determine the nature of behavior within the cinema salon. It was not the movies themselves, but the moviegoing experience of the workers that generated a shared class experience during the period. The cinema provided a social space for the lower classes. It provided a place apart from domestic and work spheres, where they could freely express their emotions, where people from similar background and status could find company, where women sought escape from duly housework.

In relation with the theater conduct of the new middle class in the mid-nineteenth century, Richard Sennett argues that the “restraint of emotion in the theater became a way for middle-class audiences to mark the line between themselves and the working class.”²⁶¹ While quietness and temperance were modes of behavior valued by the middle class, the working

²⁵⁸ Daldal, p. 191.

²⁵⁹ Kemal Sülker, “Karanlıkta Uyananlar,” *İşçi Gücü*, 15 November 1964.

²⁶⁰ For a discussion, see Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 198-199.

²⁶¹ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Knopf, 1977), p. 206. Quoted in Rosenzweig, p. 199.

class public life was characterized by mutual action, vivacity and active socialization.

Working class behavior styles were accorded with and drew upon earlier modes of popular recreation; workers brought them together when they entered the world of movies.²⁶²

The exhibition of disorderly, ungovernable and spontaneous behaviors was observable in virtually every cinema salon in the working class districts. From the early times of the republic, the theater managers sought to educate their audiences about the rules and conventions to be followed in the theater. Metin And notes that in 1924, Muhsin Ertuğrul posted public notices on the inner walls of the Ferah Theater proclaiming six clauses of “don’ts in the theater.”²⁶³ However, what were seen as unacceptable behaviors in theaters were regarded as part of the usual conduct in cheap cinema salons. Among the middle-class audiences of the first-class saloons of Pera, silence and passive viewership was the norm. However, the working class audiences of the cheap saloons actively joined in the entertainment presented. They often reacted to the movie on the screen by clapping, stamping on the floor, shouting and even by exhibiting violence. For example, in 1955, when the song *Avaramu* in a popular Indian movie played repeatedly in a movie theater, the *Milliyet* newspaper reported, “a group of young people got so angry that they attacked on the saloon owner and beat him up.”²⁶⁴ In another case, in a Beykoz cinema a young man, reported to be exhibiting drunken behavior, attacked the villain on the screen with a knife in his hand.²⁶⁵ As a matter of fact, fights often broke out between young men at the cheap cinema salons which

²⁶² Such patterns of public behavior was also observed among early theater audiences. See Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu* (Ankara: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971), pp. 17-21; Metin And, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu* (Ankara: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1983), pp. 45-47.

²⁶³ Metin And, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 46.

²⁶⁴ “Avaramu Yeni Bir Hadiseye Sebep Oldu,” *Milliyet*, 23 June 1955.

²⁶⁵ “Filmdeki Hayduta Bıçak Çeken Sarhoş,” *Milliyet*, 16 December 1956.

sprang up in the poor districts and particularly attracted lively working class crowds.²⁶⁶

Sometimes projectionists and other workers of the saloons also got involved in the brawls.

Workers of the cinema saloons suffered especially from long working hours that could be very stressful.²⁶⁷

However, in saloons that drew exclusively lower class audience such informal and unruly behavior was not confined to young men. The largest group that frequented the movie theaters was probably the working class wives.²⁶⁸ The movie theaters offered women some relief from their overcrowded homes. Moreover, the movie house provided sociability for the working class women. Going to the pictures was often a group activity for working-class women and housewives; it was a place for meeting with friends where they could chitchat, look after children, eat sunflower seeds or do knitting during the film. The informality in the movie theater provided a space for women where they could both escape from the dully atmosphere of the home, but still fulfill their “responsibilities as housewives.”²⁶⁹ On the other hand, couples preferred the darkness and relative privacy of the cinema. The seats at the back of the salons were generally filled by dating couples or other young people who sought to watch them.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ “Balat’ta Sinemada Arbede,” *Son Saat*, 1 June 1948; “Pendikte Halk Bir Sinemanın Camlarını Kırdı”, *Milliyet*, 6 April 1951; “Sinemada Arbede,” *Milliyet*, 10 September 1951; “Sinemada Kadınlar Birbirine Girdi,” *Milliyet*, 12 December 1959; “Sinemada Başlayan Kavga Sokakta Sona Erdi,” *Milliyet*, 21 July 1957. “Bir Sinemanın Gişe Memuru Müşteriyi Bıçakla Yaraladı,” *Milliyet*, 24 August 1959.

²⁶⁷ “Sinemalarda Makinistler Günde 16 Saat Çalışıyorlar,” *KİM*, 6 June 1958.

²⁶⁸ Işıl Karahasanoğlu, “1950-1970 Yıllarında Türk Sinemasının Temel Özelliklerinin Oluşmasını Sağlayan Toplumsal, Ekonomik, Siyasi, Kültürel Etmenler ve Bunların Türk Sinema Tarihindeki Yeri” (MA Thesis Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Sinema TV Ana Sanat Dalı, 2007), pp.79-80.

²⁶⁹ “Sinemada Kadınlar Birbirine Girdi,” *Milliyet*, 12 December 1959

²⁷⁰ Hilmi A. Malik, *Türkiye’de Sinema ve Tesirleri* (Ankara: Kitap Yazarlar Kooperatifi Neşriyatı, 1933), p. 41; “Öpücük Polisleri,” *Milliyet*, 5 February 1956.

Naturally such lively, yet unruly behavior of the lower class men and women was perceived to be a moral risk for the middle-class observers of the time. For instance, one newspaper proposed the establishment of a special security force in İstanbul which would be built allegedly on the example of the Italian model and which would police the kissing couples at the movie theaters.²⁷¹

Earlier in the 1930s, several observers and social commentators had warned against the moral dangers of cinema. Especially the wide appeal of children and young women to the movie theaters were deemed to cause health problems. For instance, Hilmi A. Malik's influential study put in a certain way that all the scientific experiments that were made in the countries where cinema had become a mass entertainment had shown that the films had detrimental effects on the sleeping habits of young girls and boys. Yet, what was more striking for Malik was the moral corruption observed among some moviegoers. Malik argued that the moviegoers in Turkey could be classified in five groups. The first group of moviegoers was predominantly young people who wanted to see every new film in the cinema. For this group cinema was not an entertainment or leisure activity, yet became a serious disease. The second group consisted of those who visited salons only weekends. This group attended to the movies really for entertainment. The third group of audience went to the cinema only for good films. The last two groups involved those who frequented to the movies to satisfy their sexual desires and those who attended the cinema to watch other audiences. They preferred the box seats, the seats at the back of the saloon, or the darkest divisions of the saloon.

For Malik, these two groups are the most dangerous ones, not only because "they prepare their own tragic ends," but also because their behavior undermine the morality of

²⁷¹ "Öpücük Polisleri," *Milliyet*, 5 February 1956.

children and women who made up about the half of the moviegoers.²⁷² Although the filmic medium could be manipulated as a tool of propaganda, Malik admitted, the moral risks it brought about should be considered more seriously. The cinema according to this early study appealed to people that drift along, those who were not able to protect themselves from the consequences of illegitimate behaviors and conducts exhibited in the films. These people were children and adolescents, social outsiders, employees in growing numbers, and women, across all ages and classes.

However, the even less acceptable behavior of lower class movie audiences for middle class observers was drinking and the use of addictive substances like opium and morphine. When Kemal Ilıcak travelled to the poor districts of İstanbul in the early 1950s, he observed that both the actual physical conditions of the saloons and the morality of the audiences were extremely worrisome. Poor ventilation, dirt, odor and darkness were the common physical characteristics of the cheap movie theaters. However, what was more annoying about the movie saloons pertained to the moral condition of the moviegoers. On the movie theaters of Kasımpaşa, he wrote :

The inhabitants of Kasımpaşa complain about the smoke of cigarettes, the smell of hashish in the winter cinemas. They are particularly annoyed with the Yavuz cinema in which the seats are either broken or very uncomfortable. Tickets of first-class seats are sold at 35 kuruş. However, sometimes they are sold at 45 kuruş. That is because of the lack of adequate municipal control... At the outdoor cinemas, fights break out almost every night. Some smoke hashish, some shoot heroin. After the film one sees many of those who have lost their consciousness and fallen in asleep. After all, the cinemas of Kasımpaşa are worth seeing. Unfortunately, the people of Kasımpaşa have nowhere else to go for leisure.²⁷³

²⁷² Malik, pp. 43-44.

²⁷³ Kemal Ilıcak, "Kasımpaşa," *Gece Postası*, 21 September 1952. "Kışlık sinemada sigara dumanından, esrar kokusundan ve bilhassa Yavuz sinemasında oturacak koltuk bulunmamasından şikayetçiler. Birinci mevki biletler 35 kuruş. Bazen 45 kuruşa satıldığı da olur. Çünkü belediye kontrol etmez... Yazlık sinemaların hemen hepsinde her gece kavga olur. Esrarlar içilir, eroinler çekilir ve film hitamında kanepeler üzerinde sızanlara çok rastlanır. Velhasıl Kasımpaşa sinemaları bir alemdir. Halkın bu sinemalardan başka gidecek yeri de yoktur ki oraya gitsin."

Such unacceptable behavior of the poor classes like shouting, eating, drinking and flirting were incidental of the larger function of the movie theater as a vehicle for “informal socializing.” Bülent Oran recalls that the salons in Kasımpaşa functioned as social centers. Families with children often met at the tea house next to Bahçe Sinema and talked. If they liked “the sound of the film,” they knew that they could enter any time during the show.²⁷⁴ Movie theaters often operated 12 to 14 hours in a day. This state of affairs, however, seemed to worry only the employees. In 1957, the Movie Theaters and Cinema Industry Workers’ Union made an appeal to the Ministry of Labor, demanding the abolition of matinees after 11 pm.²⁷⁵

Movie theaters had various different functions for workers and unions. Because most of the trade unions, which were still small and lacked financial resources, used small offices during the period, meetings and congresses often were convened in the movie theaters. Unions often preferred cheap salons in the districts heavily populated by their members.²⁷⁶

However, it should be added that outdoor leisure was still a limited experience for a significant portion of the urban working class. Not all workers enjoyed the shorter working week and weekly holiday with pay. Many workers had to work overtime to earn their living. Some workers like Ayten Özumut told that going to a movie would be a fantasy in her condition, for she often worked seven days a week.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Türk, p.219.

²⁷⁵ “Sinema İşçileri Haklarını İstiyor,” *Gece Postası*, 26 July 1957.

²⁷⁶ Özçelik, p.153. See also, *Gece Postası*, 8 August 1958; “Tekstil ve Örne Sendikasının Eğlencesi”, *Milliyet*, 21 August 1957. Cam-İş

²⁷⁷ Kemal Sülker, “İşçinin 24 Saati: Ayten Özumut,” *Gece Postası*, 28 June 1956.

Moreover, not all the waking hours spent away from work were really “leisure.” There was first the necessity of travelling to and from work. As argued above, in many cases this came to absorb too much time and the journey under the conditions of poor transportation system was very tiring. There were also the obligations of housekeeping which affect mostly the working wife. Many workers, exhausted by their work and their travelling, came home when the evening already was advanced. They wish to rest; radio and sleep filled their leisure time. Radios were easily the favorite media in the urban Turkey. In 1950 it was reported that there were 263,135 radio devices in Turkey. İstanbul came first by 96,770 device in radio ownership.²⁷⁸ By 1960, the total number of radio devices would increase to around 2 million in the whole country.²⁷⁹ In 1962, 65 percent of interviewees in Sewell’s study listened radio daily and only 10 percent stated that they did not listen at all. The majority preferred Turkish folk music and daily news.²⁸⁰

Football

Football as a mass working class sport was the product of the 1946-1960 period. The game was professionalized officially in 1951 incidentally on the model of the system established in England,²⁸¹ while hidden professionalism started in the immediate aftermath of the war, and in that decade it developed its main pattern – with the professional league matches, the almost complete domination of the game by players of working class origin (paid

²⁷⁸ *Cumhuriyet*, 20 February 1950.

²⁷⁹ Mustafa Albayrak, *Türk Siyasi Tarihinde Demokrat Parti (1946-1960)* (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınları, 2004), p.390.

²⁸⁰ Sewell, p. 113.

²⁸¹ English Professional league was established in 1882. Hobsbawm notes that English professionalism imitated the the USA model of professional baseball. Eric Hobsbawm, *Workers: Worlds of Labor*, p. 202.

a wage, like all workers, though a higher one than the rest), the introduction of state-controlled bookmaking on matches with the establishment of the Spor Toto Directorate in 1959.

Sabahattin Selek, who was known for his energetic efforts in the establishment of the trade unions after 1947 and who was the second important person in charge of the RPP's Workers' Bureau, wrote in the first issue of the publishing organ of the Bureau, *Hürbilek*, his astonishment at the growing working class appeal to football. His observations provide valuable evidence for the rise of the game in the second half of the 1940s as a national, and increasingly working class, spectator sport and for the development of a male football culture:

Every time I come across with a crowd coming out of a stadium on match days, I cannot keep myself from expressing my astonishment at the power which manages to collect so many people together and keeps them standing on foot for about two or more hours. I know workers who travel from Eyüp Sultan to Kadıköy Fener to watch football, but do not bother themselves to attend their union's congress which is held once in a year... I have seen many who do not get enrolled in the trade union or the association which would defend their interests because they do not want to pay 50 kuruş membership fee; yet do not hesitate to pay 100 kuruş every week to watch football game. No need to belabour the point! As of 1946, 325 out of 1357 associations which have been active in Turkey are recorded to be athletic societies or clubs.²⁸²

Compared to the development of cinema, sports had a far different trajectory in Turkey. Whereas the early republican elite by and large underestimated the social and

²⁸² Sabahattin Selek, "Lakaydimiz", *Hürbilek*, no. 1 (17 April 1948). "Maç olduğu günler herhangi bir stadyumdan dağılan kalabalığa rastgeldikçe: Bu kadar insanı bir araya toplayan ve iki saat ayakta tutan kuvvete aşk olsun demekten kendimi alamıyorum. Eyüp Sultandan Kadıköy Fenerine maça giden işçi bilirim; fakat sendikasının senede bir yaptığı kongreye gelmez... Kazancı hakikaten az olduğu için ayda 50 kuruşu kıskanarak menfaatlerini koruyacak cemiyete veya sendikaya girmeyen; fakat maç seyretmek için her hafta 100 kuruşu gözden çıkararak çok kimse gördüm. Uzun söze ne hacet! Türkiye'de 1946 yılında faaliyette bulunan 1357 cemiyetten 325 tanesi spor cemiyeti ve kulübüdür."

It is worth noting that Selek was very active in the publication of the *Hürbilek* and contributed regularly to the journal. Perhaps due to his role in the journal, *Hürbilek* spared its back pages in several issues to sports and news from factory sport programs and organized tournaments between worker clubs.

political uses of the cinema, they were more conscious to utilize the sports and physical education to improve the mental and physical health of the population. As described by Akın, from the early years of the republic the physical training activities were designed as powerful tools of equipping the youth with the necessary skills for military service and industrial development.²⁸³ In order to attain the specified goals, the sport and physical education policies of the early republican regime were directed towards greater state regulation and control. This state control hindered the development of independent sports clubs, however served for the improvement of the capability and sustainability of infrastructure of sports in the country.

In fact, during the early years of the republic the Kemalist elite had no clear opinion about how to handle and manage sport activities in the country. In those early years, the Turkish Union of Sports Clubs (*Türkiye İdman Cemiyetleri İttifakı*) was in charge of organizing the sport activities in Turkey. The Union was established as a voluntary and semi-independent body whose membership was composed of both the representatives of sports clubs and members of the Kemalist elite. Nevertheless, the ruling elite held the critical positions in the administrative structure of the Union to determine the fiscal budget and dictate the state policies to the sports public.²⁸⁴ State hegemony over the clubs via the Union developed over time as the RPP used every opportunity to augment its control over sport activities, and reached its climax in 1936 with the establishment of the Turkish Sports Association (*Türk Spor Kurumu*) which was designated to be a party organ with a separate budget.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ Yiğit Akın, “‘Not Just a Game’: Sports and Physical Education in Early Republican Turkey” (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University Atatürk Enstitute, 2003).

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁸⁵ TSA was the first of the civil institutions to be attached officially to the RPP. For a comprehensive study on the historical development of sports administration in Turkey, see Kurthan Fişek, *Spor Yönetimi: Dünyada ve Türkiye’de Devlet Politikası ve Toplumsal Açıdan Spor Yönetimi* (İstanbul: YGS Yayınevi, 2003). A detailed

During the period, on the other hand, state subsidies for sports were increased, propaganda campaigns were launched to stimulate the interest of the youth in sports, and sports began to be given more space in the newspapers. In 1931 the ruling party began to subsidize sport clubs through the local party branches, and in 1933 it restated the compulsion that each province must specify a certain amount of payment for the organization of sport activities in that province.²⁸⁶ In addition to these efforts state owned companies encouraged their workers to engage in different branches of sports and formed teams including tennis, sailing, rowing, bicycling, athletics, volleyball, wrestling as well as football.²⁸⁷ Thanks to these developments, sports and especially football gained popularity. According to one sport historian, in the early 1930s football became the most popular of all spectator sports so that the stadiums were incapable of accommodating increasingly large crowds during the 1932-1933 season.²⁸⁸ However, it should be noted that there were very few stadiums in İstanbul at that time and the capacity of the largest did not exceed 12-15 thousand. Nevertheless, those who could not attend the matches at the stadiums were informed of the scores and detailed description of the games thanks to the growing coverage of the games in the daily media. Furthermore, the first ever live radio broadcast of a football match was made in 1934 and after that event the listeners were informed more easily of the matches.²⁸⁹

story of increasing state patronage over sport institutions in the single party era is provided in Cem Atabeyođlu, *Sporda Devlet mi? Devlette Spor mu?* (Türkiye Milli Olimpiyat Komitesi Yayınları, 2001).

²⁸⁶ Akın, p .57.

²⁸⁷ For a brief presentation of sport activities in Sümerbank, see *Sümerbank (11.7.1933 – 11.7.1943)* (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1943).

²⁸⁸ Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *Evvel Zaman İçinde Türkiye’de Futbolun Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Doyuran Matbaası, 1979), p. 33.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 38.

Another turning point in the establishment of state hegemony over physical training activities and sports was the enactment of the Law for Physical Education (*Beden Terbiyesi Kanunu*) and the foundation of the General Directorate of Physical Education (*Beden Terbiyesi Genel Müdürlüğü*) in 1938. The intention behind the enactment of the Law was expressed as to maintain a greater level of centralization in order to provide more efficient instruments to develop sports and physical education on the national scale. The General Directorate, on the other hand, would serve so as to increase the physical and moral capabilities of the citizens according to national and revolutionary aims. On this ground, roughly 200 clubs were either established, or merged with other clubs, or ultimately closed by the decrees issued by the Council of Ministers between the years 1938 and 1946²⁹⁰.

The Law gave the state a powerful role in the implementation and control of physical activities because it introduced a legal requirement for all youth to attend physical exercise sessions in their spare time. Although the content of the Law was more comprehensive, the obligation was based on the application of certain sets of physical education movements at least four hours a week. All male citizens between the ages 12 and 45 and female citizens between the ages 12 and 30 were obliged to attend the training sessions organized by the would-be established youth clubs. After a 1940 decree on the application of the Law these clubs would be organized in a more militaristic manner to serve as institutions to prepare the youth for national defense. In order to ensure a healthy supply of recruits and draftees these institutions became involved in the well-being of the young population.

Another regulation made by the law, which is more important for our concern here, was the sport obligation for workers in order to provide them with the necessary mental and physical skills to increase their productivity and the will to work. Article 21 of the Law for

²⁹⁰ Fişek, p. 312.

Physical Education stipulated that factories as well as banks and commercial institutions which employed more than five hundred employees were obliged to establish youth clubs and have their workers do certain physical exercises.²⁹¹ Infact, the wording of the Law which obliged the institution of physical training sessions for factories with more than five hundred workers was practically excluding the greater part of industrial enterprises in the country. However, as was discussed above, many state-owned factories and several private establishments which came under the scope of the law introduced sporting facilities and activities.

It is no coincidence that the provision of the law pertaining to the physical training obligation for workers was issued in the context of growing public concerns for the protection of the productive capacity of the workers employed in the newly established state-owned industrial establishments. The advantages of sports and physical education in maximizing the labor capacity had begun to be emphasized more boldly from the late 1930s on.²⁹² Expressed often within a nationalist and solidarist framework, it was argued that the protection and augmentation of the physical strength of the worker, who was at the same time a citizen, a soldier and a father of his family was the duty of the state in order to achieve national targets. Advocates of the physical training programs for workers, like Sadi Irmak, who would be the first Minister of Labor in Turkey, wrote frequently in this period to convince those who were suspicious of the necessity of providing physical education for the laboring masses.²⁹³ In a report on the German sport system, Irmak suggested that every industrial plant in Turkey

²⁹¹ Ibid., 310.

²⁹² See Akın.

²⁹³ Sadi Irmak wrote several articles for this purpose in the *Kırmızı-Beyaz* sports magazine in the autumn of 1942. See, for example, Sadi Irmak, "Çiftçi ve İşçinin Spor İhtiyacı," *Kırmızı-Beyaz (Bitaraf Spor Mecmuası)*, vol. 6, no.250 (12 October 1942).

should build sporting facilities and fields, and should include physical training in their social programs if the country was to be successful in its efforts at industrial development, simply because of the fact that industrialization required well trained, healthy bodies and minds.²⁹⁴

After the war ended, sports officials, public health authorities and policy makers continued their writings on the positive effects of physical training and sports on the increased productivity and efficiency of workers who, if left alone, were inclined to spend their time and energy by frequenting unhealthy coffeehouses and taverns.²⁹⁵ In another article appeared in the *Çalışma* journal, Mehmet Önder emphasized the same point, arguing that successful industrial management depended on the ability to organize the leisure time of workers. “A worker certainly looks for a place for creation in his off-work time. If the establishment has provided him the field and spirit for sports, he fills his leisure with plays such as volleyball, tennis, football and wrestling. If it has not, the first places where the worker would visit are the coffeehouses or taverns. Everyone could anticipate the detrimental effects of these places on the health and morality of the worker.”²⁹⁶

Önder also suggested that every worker should be directed to perform in different fields of sports according to their job in the production process. Those who engaged with manual works should be encouraged to play volleyball, basketball, boxing and swimming. For workers whose jobs required leg and foot strength, football, tennis and athletics were more

²⁹⁴ Sadi Irmak, *Alman Spor Teşkilatı Üzerine Bir Tetkik* (Ankara: CHP Konferansları Serisi, Kitap 7, 1939).

²⁹⁵ See, for example, Hüsamettin Berles, “İşçilerde Yorgunluk ve Bıkkınlık,” *Çalışma*, no. 13 (December 1946).

²⁹⁶ Mehmet Önder, “İşçi ve Spor,” *Çalışma*, no. 14 (January 1947), p. 43. “İşçi işyerinden çıkar çıkmaz, muhakkakki dinlenecek ve eğlenecek bir yer arar. Eğer müessesenin bir spor yeri varsa ve işçilere spor ruhu aşılanmışsa, serbest zamanını orada voleybol, tenis, futbol, güreş gibi sporlarla geçirir. Böyle bir teşekkül ihmal edilmişse işçinin ilk gideceği yer kahvehane veya içkili yerlerdir. Bu gibi yerlerin işçi sıhhat ve ahlakına ne kadar zararlı olduğunu tahmin etmek güç değildir.”

suitable. Intellectual workers also should attend sport activities. Table tennis, shooting, hunting, mountain climbing and fencing were recommended activities for them.²⁹⁷

The anonymous writer of the *Hürbilek* wrote in the first issue of the journal directly for the workers and reminded them that engaging in sports was a national duty for them, and that it was as important as their engagement in production:

When he puts down his screwdriver, hammer, plumb; puts off the workwear and enters the field with the uniform on his back; the Turkish worker is a valuable asset that can achieve great accomplishments. Turkey in the age of machines is looking for such workers... Take, for example, England. The Arsenal football team which is one of the greatest of all times is nothing more than a club founded by dock workers. One of the most popular right wingers of the world, Stanley Mathews, is a motorcar mechanic. Well, Turkish worker, you should not neglect your duty to do sport beside your holy duty. You are obliged to do this.²⁹⁸

The growing public concern about the productivity of labor force and the enactment of physical training obligation for workers brought sport and production gymnastics into the agenda of factory social programs. As one might expect, the State Economic Enterprises pioneered these efforts.

The sporting facilities provided by these enterprises were not well recorded. Activity reports and archival resources about companies only provide some limited information on the financial transfers made for sporting activities.²⁹⁹ Yet some hints can be found from the sports

²⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 44

²⁹⁸ “İşçi ve Spor”, *Hürbilek*, 17 April 1948. “Elinden tornavidasını, çekicini, pergelini, şakülünü bırakıp sırtındaki tulumunu çıkaran Türk işçisi, sırtına giydiği formasıyla sahaya çıktığı zaman, bu sahada da büyük başarılar elde edebilecek bir kıymettir. İşte makineleşmiş asrın Türkiyesi böyle işçiler aramaktadır... İngiltereyi ele alalım. Bugün, dün, yarın en maruf takımlardan biri olan Arsenal, sadece tersane işçilerinin kurduğu bir kulüpten başka bir şey değildir. Yine dünyanın en meşhur sağ açığı olan Stanley Mathews bir otomobil tamircisidir... Evet, Türk işçisi, mukaddes vazifenle beraber asla spor denilen varlığı da ihmal etmemelisin. Buna mecbursun.”

²⁹⁹ For instance a 1946 report recorded the overall amount of financial transfers made for the sporting activities in Sümerbank enterprises. According to the report around 1.44 million liras were spent for sports in 1945. However no details were provided in the report concerning, for example, the distribution of this money between different establishments and between different fields sports. *Sümerbank* (Ankara: 1946), p. 68.

pages of *Hürbilek* and sport magazines from which we can obtain some information on sporting activities of these enterprises. For instance, Neriman Tekil, who was herself a member of the administrative committee of the Defterdar Youth Club, reported that the annually organized sport events of the Sümerbank General Directorate had started on April 4, 1948 with a football tournament which had hosted fourteen teams from different Sümerbank enterprises. The first round matches were held at the Fenerbahçe stadium on the presence of a large group of spectators. The final match was played in Ankara and the champion team would win the Sümerbank Cup.

According to the report Defterdar, Kayseri and Nazilli teams stood out among others. The Defterdar team had renowned players such as Muhlis, Faik, Adnan and Haydar, and was considered to have the best chance of winning by commentators. The Kayseri team was another favorite of the commentators that year. Kayseri had strengthened its team with eight new players from Kasımpaşa. Sümerbank sport events also included wrestling and athletics. According to the report first elections in the field of wrestling would be held between 22 and 28 April in İzmir. Numerous wrestlers from Sümerbank enterprises all over the country were expected to take part in the competition. Tekil noted that the championship in athletics was organized for the first time in that year and the program included only 4000m. races. However, nine racing events were organized in İstanbul in 1947 and the successful teams in those races would compete for the championship in Ankara.³⁰⁰

It seems that these societies also benefited from the financial support of the government. It is a well-documented fact that the RPP government regularly made payments to the newly established trade unions after 1947 in the hope of securing the loyalty of these associations to the party and the regime. However, we have little knowledge about the

³⁰⁰ Neriman Tekil, "Sümerbank Kupası Maçları Devam Ediyor," *Hürbilek*, no. 1 (17 April 1948).

financial transfers made to workers' sport societies between 1947 and 1950. Yet a short list provided by Sülker regarding the payments made to different worker associations show that sport societies also received financial support, though this was probably a small sum. For instance, the Defterdar Youth Club only received 2000 liras between 1947 and 1949 from the money accumulated in the funds of discipline fines paid by workers in the state factories.³⁰¹

By the second half of the 1940s, workers' sport societies had spread to almost every corner of the country where the state industrial establishments were located. Mehmet Önder listed some of the prominent workers' sport societies in 1947. These societies included:

Ankara:	Ankara Gücü, Maske Gücü, Demirspor
İstanbul:	Sümer Spor, Beykoz Spor
Eskişehir:	Hava Gücü and other factory sport societies
Kırıkkale:	Kırıkkale Team
Kayseri:	Sümerspor
Kocaeli:	Kağıt Spor
Konya-Ereğli:	Sümer Spor
Seyhan:	Milli Mensucat Team
Malatya:	Malatya Mensucat Team
Zonguldak:	Kömür Spor and other teams ³⁰²

Each of these societies had several teams formed by different departments at the workplace. For instance Kayseri Cloth Factory had four football teams established by the yarn department, the directorate, the machine shop, and the weaving department.³⁰³ Women workers' teams were organized separately. Competitions with other women teams were organized to encourage women to attend sport activities. Every sporting society had its own

³⁰¹ Kemal Sülker, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Tarihi* (İstanbul: Tüstav Yayıncılık, 2004), p.90.

³⁰² Önder, p. 44.

³⁰³ *Idid.*

uniforms, colors, badges and membership cards, all of which seem to be intended to enhance the workers' identification with their companies.³⁰⁴

On 7 August 1948, the headline on the front page of *Hürbilek* featured all four wrestlers of the Turkish team who had won the championships at the London Olympic Games who were workers employed in large industrial plants. The media coverage of this big success, according to *Hürbilek*, had by and large overlooked this fact. Gazanfer Bilge was a full-time fitter, Celal Atik was a carpenter, Yaşar Doğu was a welder, and Nasuh Akar was a worker in the Railway Repair Shop in Eskişehir. The accomplishments of these workers in the field of wrestling had shown the abilities of Turkish workers in the field of sports.³⁰⁵

The Defterdar Youth Club and the Adalet Textile Factory Youth Club were two sport societies founded by two large industrial undertakings in İstanbul. The Defterdar Youth Club, was established in 1941, however it was formally registered as a sports club in 1944. The motive behind the establishment of the club was described by the factory managing director Ömer Lütfü Sukan as to “strengthen the friendly relations between workers and ensure that they make good use of their leisure time.”

The Defterdar football team won the Fourth League championship in 1948 and the Third League championship in 1949. In 1950 the team won the first place in the Second League Group B and played against Adalet to win the League championship. The Defterdar squad was composed of qualified workers employed in different workplaces at the factory.

³⁰⁴ H. İbrahim Uçak, “Demiryollarında Sportif Faaliyetler ve Ankara Demirspor Kulübü,” *Kebikeç*, no. 11, (2001), p. 48.

³⁰⁵ “Kilolarında Dünya Şampiyonu Olan İşçilerimizin Dördü de İşçidir,” *Hürbilek*, 7 August 1948. Just months after his arrival from the London Olympic events, Gazanfer Bilge suddenly became ill and days later doctors diagnosed him as tuberculosis. In his column in the *Türkspor* magazine, Selami Akal would write that it was a shame for the sport authorities since they could not provide Bilge a proper dwelling. Bilge, like many of his co-workers were living in an unsanitary, poor dwelling unit. Selami Akal, “Dünya Şampiyonu Gazanfer Bilge ve Üç Sual,” *Türkspor*, vol. 4, no. 90 (17 January 1949), p.16.

Players were granted leave of absence two days a week in order to practice in Eyüp stadium. The Club also had title-holder players in the fields of wrestling, boxing, handball and athletics. Among them, Ferhat Barış, who was employed as a full-time welder in the factory, held the national record in the 1500m race.³⁰⁶

The Adalet Textile Factory Youth Club was one of the few sport societies established by a privately held industrial company. It was established in 1946 in order to comply with the provision of the 1938 Law pertaining to physical training obligation for workers. “However”, the managing director Atıf İlmen explained, “we wanted to make the best of what we can in the field of sports and we did not regard the requirements of the Law as drudgery.”³⁰⁷ By saying that, İlmen, as a good businessman motivated by capitalistic mentality, was certainly meaning specializing in one field of sports. He knew that football was becoming to be one of the most popular spectator sports and was aware of the commercial opportunities it provided. Therefore he was ready to invest money in this new promising sector. Between 1950 and 1951, Adalet Spor signed contracts with ten players from Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş and Galatasaray teams. The media welcomed these transfers as it was believed that such moves would attract more attention to the game and increase the ticket-office returns.³⁰⁸ Before the acknowledgement of open professionalism those players who joined the Adalet team had been employed as workers in the Adalet textile plant. İlmen noted that their intention was to provide the necessary industrial skills for those talented players in order to guarantee their living conditions after they would leave the fields.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁶ A. Babür Ardahan, “Defterdar Gençlik Kulübü,” *Türkspor Alemi*, no. 5 (19 February 1951); Nejat Altav, “Bir Müessesese Kulübü Defterdar,” *Milliyet*, 27 March 1952.

³⁰⁷ A. Babür Ardahan, “Adalet Mensucat Gençlik Kulübü,” *Türkspor Alemi*, no. 4 (12 February 1951), p. 7.

³⁰⁸ Halit Talayer, “Adalet Kulübünün Açmış Olduğu Kampanya,” *Milliyet*, 20 June 1951.

³⁰⁹ Ardahan, “Adalet Mensucat Gençlik Kulübü,” p. 19.

As has been suggested, football distinguished itself among other games as the most popular spectator sport as early as the mid-1930s. Working class men not only watched the games, but for several reasons increasing numbers of people flocked to play football in the years after the War. Nor were unions asleep to this new craze. Several trade unions after 1947 formed their own teams and organized matches with other workers' teams. For instance, the Eyüp Textile Workers' Union, which was one of the first unions organized after the legalization of unions, had two football teams in 1948.³¹⁰ The Beykoz Leather and Shoe Industry Workers' Union and Paşabahçe Ethanol Industry Workers' Union teams also came up with working men and labor organizers eager to play.

According to *Hürbilek*, at the 19 May celebrations held in Beykoz, the trade unions also took part in the organizations. The Beykoz Leather and Shoe Industry Workers' Union athletes formed a pyramid by standing on each others' shoulders and other union athletes ran in 100m and 200m heats while women workers played volleyball matches.³¹¹

It should be emphasized that playing sports was not simply a habit imposed by middle class reformers or state elite upon, or taught to the working class organizations. It was also a habit which some working class groups were perfectly capable of developing for themselves when "the objective conditions" were provided and valuing in its own right as one of the attributes of decent living.

³¹⁰ "Eyüp-Haliç Mensucat İşçileri Sendikası Futbol Takımı ile Haliç Takımı Maç Yaptı," *Hürbilek*, 1 May 1948.

³¹¹ "19 Mayıs Spor Bayramı Güzel Geçti," *Hürbilek*, 22 May 1948. Beykoz district also accommodated the Beykoz Youth Club which was sponsored chiefly by the Sümerbank Shoe Factory in Beykoz. In fact Beykoz Sports Club was one of the oldest sports societies established in İstanbul. It was founded by a select group of students in the İstanbul Industrial School in 1908. After 1940 the society changed its name and became the Beykoz Youth Club. The late 1940s and 1950s were golden decades for the club. The football team competed in the 1. League during the period and the basketball team became the first champion of the basketball league. The club also had success in the fields of sailing and rowing. In 1948 the football squad of Beykoz contained many worker players from the Shoe Factory and the club was headed by the assistant manager of the same factory, Enver Atafırat. See Melih Caner, "Beykoz Gençlik Kulübü," *Türkspor (Haftalık Spor Mecmuası)*, no. 80 (8 November 1948).

It is noteworthy that the trade union press and reports do not give us many clues about the outgrowth of these sports societies after 1950. It seems reasonable to argue that after the introduction of professional team sports, as performance became increasingly important and the state seldom provided support to these workers' societies, the workers' sport movement might have completed its mission.³¹² If labor sports were to become an imitation of popular team sports, working class players and athletes might be excused for choosing the latter as it offered higher quality facilities, teams and spectacle.

As suggested above, in the new era after the Second World War more and more workers found the time, money and energy to participate in sports. In the meanwhile football began to gain the characteristics of a spectacular mass sport and lost its functions of improving public health and equipping the people with certain abilities. The enactment of the 1946 Law on Associations bestowed the sport clubs the legal entity status which released them from the tutelage of the state. The promulgation of the Act for Professionalism in 1951 marked only the acknowledgement of "hidden professionalism" supported by the increasingly competitive football clubs at least from the mid-1940s. In 1952 three professional football leagues were established in İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara. When professionalism officially entered the sports system, it introduced a new understanding of sports as a professional discipline that required regular training,³¹³ full-time concentration, and rational organization for clubs and players. So the game became faster and more attractive to paying customers. Therefore the number of clubs rose more rapidly after 1950s. According to sports statistics more than forty percent of the sport clubs which are still active today trace their roots to the

³¹² For a similar argument concerning the trajectory of workers' sports organizations in Europe and America, see Robert F. Wheeler, "Organized Sport and Organized Labour: The Workers' Sports Movement," *Journal of Contemporary History*, no. 2 (April, 1978).

³¹³ Before the institution of professionalism, the routine training programs of football players often included two days in a week practices. See *Türkspor*, no. 80 (8 November 1948).

1940-1960 period. By 1940, there were 25 sport clubs in İstanbul. During the 1940s, 38 clubs were added to this number. However, between 1950 and 1954, 45 and between 1955 and 1959, 30 new sports clubs were established in İstanbul.³¹⁴

The acknowledgement of professionalism came as the result of decade-long discussions over the merits of amateurism and the possible moral consequences of professionalism. The early republican elite and proponents of the “national sports movement” were strongly hostile to professionalism since the latter was considered to be inimical to the idea of developing the average capabilities of the whole generation through sports and physical education. Professionalism, it was argued, would serve only the creation of a few select athletes.³¹⁵

Earnest attention was given to the issue in the First Physical Education and Sports Council which was held on 18-24 February 1946, collecting a large group of persons from the ranks of club representatives, public health authorities and policy makers. Representatives of State Economic Enterprises were also present in the meeting. The opponents of professional sports came mainly from the circle of Kemalist elites, who argued that it was immoral to play for pay. According to Mümtaz Tarhan, for instance, sports had been handled in Turkey “in order to cultivate generations for the army, not to provide income for some people who live from hand to mouth.”³¹⁶ Mingled with the nationalist discourse of the time, Tarhan’s and his supporters’ speeches exhibited class prejudices against the proletarianization of the games. Sports like education and schools, were a means to impose the predetermined notions of what are suitable habits and attitudes to the ignorant portions of the population. Another defender

³¹⁴ İstanbul Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı, *İstanbul Külliyyatı, Cumhuriyet Dönemi İstatistikleri: Kültür ve Spor, 1930-1995* (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1997), pp. 88, 407.

³¹⁵ Fişek, p. 295.

³¹⁶ *Birinci Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Şurası, 18-24 Şubat 1946* (İstanbul: İbrahim Horoz Basımevi, 1947), p. 187.

of amateurism emphasized that the ongoing discussion was all about morality when expressing his yearnings for the times when all players had the financial means to buy their own equipment.³¹⁷ Professionalism, according to this group, would throw the principles of fairness and good temper away and force the teams and players to play not for the game's sake but for the sake of winning in order to please the paying customers.

The advocates of professionalism, on the other hand, came from the ranks of the General Directorate of Physical Education, retired sportsmen and, of course, from representatives of the sports clubs. This group argued that the sportsmen who came increasingly from lower class backgrounds simply were unable to find time for practice, travel, and even for the game itself unless their expenses were paid. The acknowledgement of professionalism would satisfy the players and raise the quality of games. "After all," Ali Sami Yen, the founder of the Galatasaray Club, noted, "professionalism is all about maximizing the enjoyment of spectators. Only by professionalism the degree of enjoyment can be increased to levels that amateur sports cannot attain."³¹⁸ Moreover, other supporters of professional sports suggested, although it was forbidden to play for pay, the payments merely went under the table. Entrepreneurs, rich club owners felt no discomfort about paying their players as they paid their business operatives. To the alarmists who insisted that playing for pay was degrading the "spirit of sports," Burhan Felek argued that it was not a shame to have professional players. This hidden professionalism (*maron profesyonellik*) was a degenerating force for both players and club managers, and caused allegations of game-fixing. The development of hidden professionalism was particularly threatening the sporting activities in

³¹⁷ Ibid, p. 190.

³¹⁸ Ibid, p. 180.

schools, in economic and public institutions and in army.³¹⁹ After a long debate, the Council reached a relatively middle of the road agreement whereby amateurism would principally stay as a norm, yet clubs were allowed to make contracts with players.

The professionalism debate continued in the pages of newspapers and magazines after the council meeting.³²⁰ Five years later, the crisis came to a head when the Adalet Club signed contracts with players of powerful İstanbul teams one after another.³²¹ The death-knell of upper and middle class dominance of football sounded in 1952 with the formation of the professional league. As the supporters of professionalism had argued in the Sports Council, professional play was the natural outcome of increasing appeal of the masses and increasing commercialization of football. It was observed in the immediate aftermath of the war that football had become the ruling passion of the majority of the urban population, surpassing boxing, horse racing and rowing although these too had large followings from all classes.³²² The entrance fees to the stadiums probably fell in the early 1950s,³²³ however, total revenues from the game increased considerably as more people paid to enter the grounds to watch the

³¹⁹ See the talks made by Burhan Felek and Eşref Şerif Atabey. Ibid, pp. 186-187; pp.198-199.

³²⁰ For example, see Ahmet İhsan, "Açık Konuşalım!..", *Türkspor Alemi*, no. 26 (16 July 1951). "Futbol bugün büyük para getiren bir vasıta haline gelmiştir. Akli başında bir futbol maçına yerine göre yirmi beş binden fazla seyirci gelmektedir. Bir günlük hasılatı 50-60 bin lira ile ölçülen maçlar yapılmaktadır. Bu vaziyet karşısında, bu kadar muazzam paranın kazanılmasında yegâne amil olan futbolcuları artık 'amatör' olarak çalıştırmağa imkan yoktur. Ve bu imkansızlıktır ki senelerden beri 'amatör' futbolcularımıza, 'masarifati umumiye' faslından aylık, haftalık, ikramiye, yol parası gibi isimlerle para veriliyor. Bu işin çıkar tarafı profesyonellik talimatnamesini bir an evvel çıkarmak(tır). Bunu yapamadığımız takdirde ne futbolcu alışverişine son verebiliriz, ne kulüplerimize sükun ve huzur getirebiliriz."

³²¹ "Büyük Kulüpler-Adalet Mücadelesi Devam Ediyor," *Türkspor Alemi*, no. 20 (4 June 1951). Adalet Club also pioneered the institution of professional management in sports clubs. Hiçyılmaz, p. 63.

³²² "İstanbul'da Boks Sporü Ölmektedir", *Türkspor*, no. 83 (29 November 1948).

³²³ İhsan Karaali, "Bravo Ankaralılara", *Kırmızı-Beyaz*, no. 5 (27 October 1952).

events. One sports magazine reported in the late 1952 that the İstanbul league recorded its biggest gate after the institution of professionalism with around 300,000 spectators.³²⁴

Professional or not, football meant something of remarkable importance to the male working class people of the big cities in the post-war period. As the quotation made from Sabahattin Selek reveals, for many middle-class observers of the time, the reasons underlying the working class attraction to sports were inexplicable. It is a much harder task for the historians since the limited available sources provide no hints about the meaning working masses attached to it. We never hear the voices of partisan supporters themselves in the pages of newspapers or reports, at best they are transformed into statistical facts.

Obviously state-sponsored programs, urbanization, the rationalization of the work process, and the gradual improvement in wages and hours provided the opportunity; yet they did not compel participation. Why were workers so readily attracted to sport when the opportunity presented itself? What meaning did sports and especially football come to bear for the growing working population in the large cities?

We can seek answers to these questions on a more general and hypothetical level. Some sociological and anthropological studies of leisure argue that recreational activities compensate people for some shortcoming in their work experience. According to this line of argument, often referred as the “compensatory” thesis, the intensity and barrenness of work under the capitalist mode of production increasingly tended to reduce job satisfaction.³²⁵ Routinized, rationalized and sedentary working experience of modern urban society deprived

³²⁴ “Profesyonel Likte Hasılat Rekoru,” *Kırmızı-Beyaz*, no. 11 (8 December 1952). Between 1952 and 1959 there were three separate Professional leagues established in İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir. The National League was established in 1959 with 17 teams from the three cities. See Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu, *Türk Futbolunda 50 Yıl* (Ankara: 1973).

³²⁵ For an overview, see Steven M. Gelber, “Working at Playing: The Culture of the Workplace and the Rise of Baseball,” *Journal of Social History*, vol. 16, no. 4 (Summer 1983).

workers of some psychological and social fulfillment. Through involvement in sport, workers might seek escape from monotony and dreariness of daily life and their alienating job environment and find excitement, risk and uncertainty.

Besides the social and psychological change of pace that sports provided for workers, it also offered a feeling of community and group solidarity. Countering the isolated, atomized organization of social life in the urban-industrial setting, sports also might provide the basis for collective participation. In the void created by the decline of traditional recreations, sports offered new sites of sociability, group action and collective identity.³²⁶ Along with movie theaters and coffeehouses, Sunday afternoon football matches made possible a new sense of belonging and a ritualistic involvement in a larger group. The creation of identity lay at the root of team partisanship with all the cultural values and rituals, codes of honor and shame, and communal patterns of behavior and consumption that accompany it.

What Clifford Geertz says on the meaning of Balinese cockfight game for the large group of spectators may also be applicable to workers' attraction to football game. Geertz argues that the games plays a dual role. On the one hand, the game functions as a metaphor that reflects and clarifies the broad themes of social life. According to Geertz, cockfight as a game "is 'really real' only to cocks – it does not kill anyone, castrate anyone, reduce anyone to animal status, alter the hierarchical relations among people, or refashion the hierarchy; it does not even redistribute income in any significant way. What it does is what, for other peoples with other temperaments and other conventions, *Lear* and *Crime and Punishment* do; it catches up these themes – death, masculinity, rage, pride, loss, beneficence, chance – and, ordering them into an encompassing structure, presents them in such a way as to throw into relief a particular view of their essential nature... An image, fiction, a model, a metaphor, the

³²⁶ Wheeler, p. 193.

cockfight is a means of expression; its function is neither to assuage social passions nor to heighten them, but in a medium of feathers, blood, crowd, and money, to display them.”³²⁷

Therefore the game itself represents and renders comprehensible the everyday lives and struggles of those who watch it.

On the other hand, according to Geertz, the cockfight ground also provides spaces where spectators could identify themselves with the cocks and exhibit aggressive and rowdy behavior that were otherwise severely repressed.³²⁸ Similarly, football crowd violence and disorderliness has been part of the working-class male culture from the very beginning of the emergence of football as a popular game. The policy-makers and middle class observers were more responsive to violent acts and documented carefully the unruly behaviors of the spectator masses. For instance, when a brawl broke out between the fans and the football players of the Galatasaray and Güneş clubs during a match on 4 July 1937, the state had to take serious measures against the rivalry and violent acts between the clubs.³²⁹ The fights and other such events in the matches, the RPP leaders believed, damaged the spiritual authority of the party.

However, the violent acts in the stadiums could not be repressed by police surveillance; blind partisanship, hooliganism, fights, the abuse of referees, gambling, profane team songs and other such “unsporting” features were wholly central to the match-day experience for these supporters. One unsympathetic commentator complained in 1952 that every week during the match times the play grounds looked like dumping sites where

³²⁷ Clifford Geertz, “Notes on the Balinese Cockfight” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 443-444.

³²⁸ I am grateful to Steven Gelber for leading me into the work of Geertz and to this line of reasoning. Gelber, p. 7.

³²⁹ For other examples, see Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, “Bir Mit: Eski Centilmen Futbol Dünyası,” *Tamsaha*, no. 5 (March 2005).

spectators threw anything they could obtain from the peddlers like soda pop bottles and food. Every week it was common to read in the newspapers the reports of players, referees and spectators badly injured because of these incidents.³³⁰ The same commentator wrote in *Türkspor* magazine that some gate crashers were responsible for the increasing incidents of fights and crudeness in the matches by causing overcrowding in the stadiums. He naively believed that if black marketing could be prevented these undisciplined acts also might be prevented.³³¹ However, not every sports journalist shared his optimism. In the late 1940s and early 1950s there were recurrent news in the media about “the growing public concern about the increase in violence acts in football generally” and “the amount of damage caused by rowdy spectators.”³³²

Particularly, assaults against referees were alarming. The same issue of *Türkspor* magazine was featuring the latest incidence of violence in the stadiums in which one referee was beaten severely by partisan supporters after a game between Eyüp and Elektrik teams. Two weeks later another act of violence took place which would remain as one of the biggest shames in Turkish football history. During the Defterdar- Elektrik match on 7 November 1948, a player who went crazy with the referee’s decision to dismiss him from field attacked the referee and brutally hit him several times on his head.³³³ It is worth noting that this player was Adnan from the Defterdar squad and was probably a worker in the Defterdar Cloth Factory as other members of his team. Beaten up severely, the referee of the game, Fikret

³³⁰ Sulhi Garan, “Çöplüğe Döndürülen Futbol Sahalarımız,” *Milliyet*, 7 December 1952.

³³¹ Sulhi Garan, “Bedavacılar Savaş Açılmalıdır,” *Türkspor*, vol. 4, no. 79 (1 November 1948).

³³² See, for instance, Halit Tanyeri, “Bir Stadyomun Çilesi,” *Milliyet*, 25 October 1951.

³³³ “Yurtta Türkspor,” *Türkspor*, vol. 4, no. 80 (8 November 1948). For details of the event, see Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, “Hakem de Öldürmüştük! Bir Futbol Hakemi Fikret Kayral’ın Acı Sonu, 1948,” *Tamsaha*, no. 19 (May 2006).

Kayral, had to postpone the match and go to the hospital. Unfortunately, his condition grew worse and worse every day and finally he died three weeks after the events.

The sports public was shocked with Kayral's death. Adnan was arrested immediately afterwards and sentenced to imprisonment. Sulhi Garan wrote in his column that Kayral's death was the result of the tolerance of the authorities to such acts of violence that appeared every week in every stadium. Kayral also was noting that it would be no surprise if such incidents reoccur in the near future.³³⁴

It is interesting to note that four years later Sulhi Garan's prediction was proved to be correct and Garan himself would be the victim of supporter attacks during a game played between Galata and Adaletspor in the Vefa Stadium. Galata supporters who were dissatisfied with the score rushed to the field after a debated decision of the referee and brutally attacked him. Upon the event, the İstanbul Committee of referees made a statement declaring that such an assault on a renowned referee like Garan was unacceptable. The committee also announced that İstanbul referees would not officiate Galata matches after that incident.³³⁵

Many studies on the history of sports in Turkey justifiably argue that sports were vigorously promoted by state as a leading instrument of muscular Turkish nationalism which would convey the moral and social virtues of productivity, disciplined society, respect for rules, and appreciation of the team spirit. Nevertheless, the nationalist, middle-class reformist influence was a thin veneer, and the working classes rapidly appropriated the game as an important part of their self-determined culture. The limited available data suggest that instead of being shaped by sports, young workers actually shaped the sports (as players as well as

³³⁴ Sulhi Garan, "Fikret Kayral Vefat Etti," *Türkspor*, no. 83 (28 November 1948).

³³⁵ "Dayaklı Maç Hakkında Komite ve Hakemlerin Kararı," *Akşam*, 2 January 1952.

partisan supporters) according to their own needs and culture. This was clearly evident in the popularization of football. As argued above, the working classes had accepted the outward forms of what may have been intended by the reformers as a social control device, and supplied their own lively, unrestrained, many times violent content. It was a working class takeover, as supporters as well as players, which was strongly assisted by the commercialization of the game through the rise of professional, paid players, a sports media and the commercial expression of team loyalties in caps and badges in the team colors.

The Coffeehouse

If football became an important focus of local communities and going to matches an important part of working class life styles, of course exclusively for men, the coffeehouse was, and remained, the centre of much of working class male culture. As early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, the coffeehouse had a virtual monopoly as a meeting place for men from all classes. Alternatives to coffeehouses were taverns, public baths (*hamam*), and mosques; yet none of them could take the place of coffeehouses where men could gather without problems at any time of the day and at the same time drink a beverage that was religiously and morally proper.

The coffeehouse provided the workers a variety of services: It was a place for relaxation and entertainment, for enjoying one another's company, for informal or organized discussion and debate; a shelter to sleep at nights; a meeting saloon for neighborhood societies, trade unions and political parties; and an office for getting new jobs. In line with these functions the coffeehouse had three important roles in a growing urban environment: it

was a neighborhood center, an all-male establishment and a transmitter of working class culture and politics.³³⁶

The long history of coffeehouses in Turkey is well documented. The first coffeehouse was opened in İstanbul as early as mid-sixteenth century and became a principal locus of socialization. For many centuries it served as places of social communication and information. As one historian wrote on the social aspects of the institution: “(C)offeehouses were the most commonly observed socializing venue in İstanbul. Looking at the example of İstanbul and the distribution of these settlements, we encounter an extensive communications network and system for the conveyance of cultural information that encompasses the whole city with nodes located in every district.”³³⁷

By the mid- nineteenth century, the institution itself was stratified according to the status of its customers. Some of them which were located in the highly commercial centers were refined, elegant and commercial places and served as elite literary establishments. Others, moderately decorated, were merchants’ social institutions and served as centers of communication and business transaction. Yet the greater numbers of them were known as “neighborhood coffeehouses,” located in the vicinity of newly growing industrial establishments and in small lanes among poor neighborhoods.³³⁸

³³⁶ In this respect, coffeehouses in Turkey had great similarities with the Parisian cafés, Chinese teahouses and American saloons. For comparison, see W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability among the French Working Class* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1996); Qin Shao, “Tempest over Teapots: The Vilification of Teahouse Culture in Early Republican China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 57, no. 4 (November, 1998); Jon M. Kingsdale, “The “Poor Man’s Club”: Social Functions of the Urban Working Class Saloon,” *American Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 4 (October 1973).

³³⁷ Ekrem Işın, “A Social History of Coffee and Coffeehouses” in *Tanede Saklı Keyif, Kahve*, ed. Selahattin Özpabalıyıklılar (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2001), p.31.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 37.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, as Turkey's major cities were experiencing a massive population increase, the importance and popularity of the neighborhood coffeehouse grew bigger as the place of communication and sociability within the new migrant groups.³³⁹ Early witnesses to the migrant settlements in Turkey report the mushrooming of coffeehouses with great astonishment. When Lütfi Erişçi visited the new settlements that were growing around the industrial establishments of Yedikule, what struck him first was the proliferation of coffeehouses before any other social institutions. In his lively portrayal of the social life in Yedikule, coffeehouses appeared to be principal venue of the leisure activities of the new migrant workers.³⁴⁰ Each migrant group frequented its own coffeehouses where they received the latest news from their hometowns, rested between factory shifts, exchanged information about employment opportunities and even found temporary shelter for those who had newly arrived to the city.

There were other observers who noticed that a growing number of urban residents frequented coffeehouses. Particularly workers' attendance at the coffeehouses was remarkable. Many articles that appeared in *Çalışma* journal dwelled on this point. For instance, İhsan Atabarut noted that because there were no state sponsored cheap hostels provided for workers, new migrants desperately found shelter in the unsanitary coffeehouses,

³³⁹ Unfortunately there are no reliable data about the number of coffeehouses in the urban Turkey. In 1935 İstanbul Coffeehouse Keepers Association announced that the number of coffeehouses in the city was around 2500. Considering the population increase and the growing appeal to coffeehouses one may assume that the figure might be around 7-10 thousand in the late 1950s. Depending on the village statistics we may assume that there were around 20-25 thousand village coffeehouses in 1960. Brian W. Beeley "The Turkish Village CoffeeHouse as a Social Institution," *Geographical Review*, vol. 60, no. 4 (October 1970), pp. 476-477. Even today there are numerous estimations ranging between 350-500 thousand.

³⁴⁰ Lütfi Erişçi, "İstanbul'da Amele Mahalleleri," *Yeni Adam*, vol.4, no.177 (20 May 1937), p.4. For a similar observation, see Kemal Sülker, "Valinin 35000 Gecekondu Arasında Yaptığı Tetkikler", *Gece Postası*, 3 November 1949.

which hindered their productivity.³⁴¹ Another observer, Mehmet Önder was warning that if the attempts to promote sporting activities for workers failed, the increasing number of workers would become customers of the coffeehouses which people often frequented for gambling.³⁴²

A neighborhood coffeehouse was typically a single-storey structure. It was often located down small lanes and alleys or on a small square and around which were also clustered the neighborhood's mosque and shops. The main part of the room contained wooden tables and chairs, a transistor radio, some decks of cards and a backgammon board, and a small hearth where the hot beverages were cooked. The walls displayed a variety of posters, pictures and announcements; included among these might be job advertisements and notices about neighborhood affairs.

As suggested above, coffeehouses were information centers and forums where customers came to make gossip, to exchange information and speak out their opinions. This feature of the institution probably made it an appealing place. However, coffeehouse keeping was often an unprofitable business enterprise. The customers were poor and prices were low; yet the competition was tremendous.³⁴³ As one might suppose, the great proportion of the coffeehouses were run by lower class patrons who might be retired teachers, policemen or working class men themselves,³⁴⁴ a situation which played an important role in weakening the state policy of exerting control on working class life and culture. Many of the coffeehouses were small businesses. Yet many of them hired helpers. These helpers and apprentices often worked long hours and received low wages. In 1953 a group of "coffeehouse workers" wrote

³⁴¹ İhsan Atabarut, "İşçi Evlerinin Sosyal Esasları Hakkında," *Çalışma*, no. 5 (February 1946), pp. 57-58.

³⁴² Mehmet Önder, "İşçi ve Spor," *Çalışma*, no. 14 (January 1947), p. 43

³⁴³ "Kahveciler," *Türkiye Birlik Gazetesi*, 17 April 1959.

³⁴⁴ Salah Bırsel, *Kahveler Kitabı* (İstanbul: Nisan Yayınevi, 1991), p.136.

a petition to the Mayor of İstanbul stating that they worked 14-15 hours a day in inhuman conditions and asked for the scope of regulation concerning the right to mid-day break be extended to cover coffeehouse employees.³⁴⁵ Yet it is noteworthy that most of the coffeehouse keepers preferred to use household labor. Certainly women did not work in the coffeehouses, yet small children were the most suitable helpers to their fathers in operating the shops.

Attendance in the neighborhood coffeehouse varied noticeably from day to day and hour to hour. On the weekdays, many working men visited the place for a glass of tea on their way to the work at dawn. Workers returning from night shifts also made brief visits at these hours. In working class districts like Zeytinburnu, Yedikule and Eyüp, coffeehouses also were crowded during the middle of the day by workers who stopped for some relaxation before turning to factories.³⁴⁶ After eating their evening meal at home many left again for the coffeehouse and spent the greater part of the evening there. This pattern was broken on Sundays when coffeehouses were generally crowded by those who sought an escape from the colorless atmosphere of the home.³⁴⁷

Part of the coffeehouse's attraction lay, certainly, in its function as a second home. What Jon M. Kingsdale says on the working class saloons of American cities also can be adapted to Turkey's neighborhood coffeehouses: If the middle class male retired to his living room after dinner to relax, the workingman retired to the neighborhood coffeehouse to meet his friends, relax and maybe play a game of cards or backgammon.³⁴⁸ Working class men generally regarded the coffeehouse as their own private place, rather than as a public

³⁴⁵ "Öğle Tatiline Riayet Etmeyen Müesseseler," *Gece Postası*, 4 November 1953.

³⁴⁶ Halit Kıvanç, "Şehir İçinde Şehir Yaratanlar Arasında," *Milliyet*, 22 August 1955.

³⁴⁷ For a literary description of working class coffeehouse habit, see Hasan İzzettin Dinamo, *6-7 Eylül Kasırgası* (İstanbul: May Yayınları, 1971).

³⁴⁸ Kingsdale, p. 476.

institution. That some particular coffeehouses were frequented by specific occupation groups was another factor that enhanced coffeehouse friendships. For instance, some coffeehouses in Eyüp and Balat were patronized especially by weavers, while some others in Kasımpaşa were predominantly visited by tobacco workers.³⁴⁹

Social life in coffeehouses was relatively intimate, informal and open. The coffeehouse was a comfortable social club where problems were discussed and debated and informal decisions were reached, where the poor could borrow from the saloon keeper, and a secret place for gambling.³⁵⁰ Workingmen played games and music, ate and even slept there. Many coffeehouse keepers let their homeless customers sleep on the tables or on backless, wooden benches set against the walls of the shop at nights. Compared to cheap, filthy boarding houses where men slept in dormitory style in long row bunks, the coffeehouse was more hospitable place to spend the evenings.³⁵¹ As one journalist reported, in the late 1950s newcomers to the city could spend the night in the coffeehouses of Tophane and Yenışehir if they paid only 25 kuruş.³⁵² More important than the actual facilities was the informal sociability provided in coffeehouses. Customers of a coffeehouse generally had something in common with each other. Neighborhood ties, common occupation or ethnic background all worked to stimulate group feelings and awareness.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ Orhan Taşan, "Eyüp Kraathanelerinde Dokumacıların Sözleri," *Gece Postası*, 16 August 1956; Özçelik, *Tütüncülerin Tarihi*, p. 56.

³⁵⁰ See, "Defterdardaki Kanlı Hadise," *Milliyet*, 16 February 1955.

³⁵¹ Birsnel, p. 136. In Kasımpaşa many coffeehouses served as cheap hostels to bachelors who came to town to seek job. See "Semt Semt İstanbul," *Gece Postası*, 20 September 1952. Not only the coffeehouses, but many restaurants in Kasımpaşa functioned as bachelor houses at nights. See Orhan Kuyucaklı, "Kasımpaşa'da Bekar Odaları," *Gece Postası*, 15 April 1953.

³⁵² Vedat Akın, "İstanbul'da Batakhane Var mıydı, yok muydu?" *Gece Postası*, 13 August 1960.

³⁵³ However, this does not mean that patrons of a coffeehouse always constituted a harmonious community. In more than a few cases, coffeehouses in poor districts became the scene of grave fights and skirmishes among customers and keepers. For example, see "Kahve'de Kanlı Kavga," *Akşam*, 28 April 1954; "Kasımpaşa'da

In politics, too, coffeehouses played an important role by providing politicians a means to contact and organize workers. Especially after the late 1940s, the politicization of the civil society brought the institution on the fore of political confrontations between the competing parties. Being a working class social center, the coffeehouse provided a natural stage for politicians and an excellent base for organizing votes. Both the governing parties and the opposition organized meetings in the coffeehouses. Party local branches in the working class districts frequently organized meetings and held their congresses in the coffeehouses.³⁵⁴ The Democrats were particularly inventive about manipulating the coffeehouses as sites of political propaganda.

A report prepared for the RPP Central Committee by Rebi Barkın provides an excellent example of the creativeness of the Democrat politicians in bringing politics to the neighborhood coffeehouses. The writer of the report provides detailed information about the Democrat politicians' propaganda activities among workers in the working class districts. According to this report, in the summer of 1948, a member of the administrative committee of the DP Eyüp branch together with two correspondents from *Tasvir* and *Sonsaat* – both pro-DP newspapers- and a doctor made visits to coffeehouses located in the broad area between Eyüp and Cibali.³⁵⁵ Those visits lasted about two months. During the visits the Democrats sought to get into contact with the workers and listen their grievances. Moreover, Barkın reported,

Meydan Muharebesi,” *Milliyet*, 24 December 1952; “Dün Kasımpaşa’da Bir Kişi Öldü”, *Milliyet*, 30 January 1955; “Bir Sigara Yüzünden,” *Milliyet*, 5 January 1955; “Defterdardaki Kanlı Hadise,” *Milliyet*, 16 February 1955.

³⁵⁴ See, for instance, “DP’nin Kasımpaşa’daki Toplantısı,” *Gece Postası*, 24 January 1954; “Siyasi Partilerin Dünkü Toplantıları,” *Gece Postası*, 26 October 1953; “Köylü Partisi’nin Eyüp’teki Kongresi,” *Milliyet*, 15 August 1955; “Milletvekillerinin Eyüp’teki Temasları,” *Milliyet*, 26 August 1951.

³⁵⁵ I have looked for the series of interviews in the collections of both *Tasvir* and *Sonsaat* from Summer 1948 to Winter 1948-49. Unfortunately I could not find this interesting series of interviews with workers. It seems likely that the writer of the report made a mistake in narrating the course of the events.

Tasvir and *Sonsaat* printed those interviews “in an exaggerated and dramatized manner.” The newspapers were announcing the names of the coffeehouses that the group would visit one day before the meetings. The newspapers particularly promised that the ill people who came to these coffeehouses would be examined by a doctor and offered medicine. Barkın also reported how the Workers’ Bureau of the RPP reacted to this propaganda campaign: “We sent workers affiliated to the trade unions to the coffeehouses where the visits took place. And we made them tell that workers could not be hooked with such tricks. We broke their harmony. If we did not have trade unions and workers attached to the Party, this campaign might have made great progress in Eyüp.”³⁵⁶

Some coffeehouses also served as private employment offices. An early study on the Ankara gecekondu neighborhoods revealed that only 1 percent of the bread winners of the gecekondu households had found their first job in the city through the State Employment Agency. Neighborhood and kinship ties proved to be more efficient in placing one to a job.³⁵⁷ In the late 1940s, the coffeehouses which sprang up in the vicinity of the State Employment Agency in Karaköy were places where the unemployed visited for asking about new job openings from brokers. According to one report, employees of the Employment Agency collaborated with these brokers by allocating some worker demands to these middlemen. The broker used to sell the suitable job to the unemployed and share his profit with his partner at

³⁵⁶ BCA [Catalog No. 490.01/1439.08.01]. “*Tasvir ve Sonsaat gazetelerinin muhabirleri Demokrat Parti’nin Eyüp İdare heyetinden bir kimse ve bir de hekim ile birlikte Eyüpten Cibaliye kadar sıra ile yolun iki kenarından kahveleri gezerek işçilerle temas etmeğe, bunların dertlerini dinlemeğe koyulmuşlar ve bu dertleri mübalağalı bir tarzda bu iki gazetede neşretmeye başlamışlardı. Ziyaretlerin hangi kahvede olacağı daha önceden gazetelerde ilan olunuyor ve işçilerden hasta olanlara bedava bakılacağı ve ilaç verileceği vaid ediliyordu. Bu ziyaretler 2 ay kadar devam etti. Biz sendikalara bağlı işçileri ziyaret günleri kahvelere gönderdik ve evvala doktoru ayıplamadan başışlayarak işçilerin böyle yemlerle avlanmayacağını söyledik. Ve işçilerin ahangini bozduk. Eğer bize bağlı işçiler ve sendikalar olmasaydı bu hareket de Eyüpte çok inkişaf edebilirdi.*”

³⁵⁷ Yasa, *Ankara’da Gecekondu Aileleri*, p.120.

the Agency and with the coffeehouse holder who opened his shop to the broker for this illegal act.³⁵⁸

Another report stated that an officer was proposing the applicants meet him later in the evening at the “Trabzonlular Kahvesi” in Tophane, where he said he would offer new and suitable job opportunities.³⁵⁹ In one of the early surveys on the employment conditions of workers in İstanbul small-scale industry, Orhan Tuna noted that stonemasons, bricklayers, construction carpenters, painters and floor layers frequented particular coffeehouses in the city to meet co-workers in the same trade and inform each other about job openings.³⁶⁰

Trade unionists in general had mixed feelings about coffeehouses. Union members were regular customers and many union meetings were organized in neighborhood coffeehouses. The friendly and relaxing atmosphere of the shop certainly attracted unions. Coffeehouses welcomed small unions and offered their rooms at prices below market level for chapter meetings and congresses. Even the relatively large unions which had regular offices often met with their members at the coffeehouses near the workshops or factories. Union organizers probably had a keen appreciation of the decisive importance of these places for working class life, culture and politics. However, union militants and organizers also feared the dulling effect of the intimate and open environment of the coffeehouses on working-class consciousness.

It is interesting to note that when asked about their free time activities, the unionists’ usual answers were such as reading books, watching football, going to movies or attending union meetings. In my research through the pages of newspapers and union press I never

³⁵⁸ *Nuh’un Gemisi*, 14 October 1949.

³⁵⁹ Ümit Deniz, “Münevver Bir Genç İş Aradı Fakat Bulamadı,” *Milliyet*, 14 September, 1953.

³⁶⁰ Orhan Tuna, *İstanbul Küçük Sanayii ve Bugünkü Meseleleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Yayını, 1950), p. 153.

came across a single union organizer who admitted that he visited coffeehouses. This ambivalent stance towards coffeehouses echoes the middle class perception of the coffeehouse as fostering idleness. According to the cultural elite of the time, coffeehouses were not such places that a respectable working class member might frequent. As will be discussed right below, social reformers and the new cultural elites never understood the appeal of the institution and were extremely hostile of the “intimate anonymity”³⁶¹ provided in the coffeehouses.

Similar observations also apply to the socialist movement during the period. For socialists, even very isolated and few in number, coffeehouse contacts did create conditions in which intimate relations often developed. The small groups socializing in the coffeehouse demonstrated face-to-face contact based on familiarity and propinquity. In hard times, when “conspiracy” and secrecy was at the fore, remote coffeehouses were suitable meeting places for party militants. In times of direct action, on the other hand, coffeehouses provided perfect links between the movement and the working class.³⁶² However, like union organizers, socialist organizers also worried about the moral decay promoted through the coffeehouses. Frequenting places like coffeehouses, taverns and barrooms were inimical to the ideal of individual advancement of the worker centered on working class institutions of trade unions and worker clubs. In one of his few writings on the condition of the working class in İstanbul, İsmail Bilen (political pseudonym, Marat) , then the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Turkish Communist Party, mentioned of the neighborhood coffeehouses of İstanbul in a dismissive and disgusting manner:

³⁶¹ I borrow the term from W. Scott Haine, p. 150.

³⁶² See Rasih Nuri İleri, *Kırklı Yıllar 2: 1944 TKP Davası* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV Yayınları, 2003); Aclan Sayılğan, *Türkiye’de Sol Hareketler (1871-1973)*, (İstanbul: Otağ Yayınları, 1976), p. 577; “Şehrimizde Komünizm Tahrikçileri,” *Milliyet*, 7 February 1951.

Do not look for a club, a bookstore or any other place like these in the working class districts in İstanbul! Yet you can find a drinking saloon in every corner and many coffeehouses in every neighborhood. These places are dens of vice.³⁶³

In another aspect, the coffeehouse played another important role in the political life of the city. These multifunctional spaces provided both place and a pretext for close police surveillance and control. It is a well documented fact that coffeehouses had always been seen by governments as sites of unruly and immoral behavior and seedbeds of political disorder. Towards the end of the sixteenth century there began a series of decrees banning the consumption of coffee and ordering the closure of coffeehouses in İstanbul. Recurrent edicts ordering the closure of coffeehouses came one after another until the mid-seventeenth century. However such prohibitions and coercive measures were bound to fail in the face of growing economic and social impacts that the coffeehouse had on the everyday life of urban centers.³⁶⁴ However, this did not mean that the governing elite abandoned any sense of responsibility and concern for the coffeehouses. From the nineteenth century on the governments deployed finer mechanisms that would keep them under surveillance and control.³⁶⁵

The early republican cultural elites were disdainful of the traditional decadent and lazy coffeehouse and everything it stood for. The new emergent cultural elites considered these places part of the vanishing past and a negative influence on the new Republican age. On every occasion this group of social reformers and western-oriented intellectuals had attacked

³⁶³ İsmail Bilen, *Savaş Yolu* (İstanbul: Savaş Yolu Yayınları, 2004), p.83. “İstanbul’un bütün işçi mahallelerinde, kulüp, kitabevi filan arama! Ama her köşe başında bir meyhane, her mahallede bir sürü kahve var. Bu yerler birer batakhanedir.”

³⁶⁴ Işın, p. 33.

³⁶⁵ See Cengiz Kırılı, “Kahvehaneler ve Hafiyeler: 19. Yüzyılın Ortalarında Osmanlı’da Sosyal Kontrol,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 83 (Winter 1999-2000).

the coffeehouses as outmoded and harmful to the cultural targets of the Republic. As such promotions did not undermine the appeal of coffeehouse, they launched campaigns in the mid-1930s to “modernize” the existing coffeehouses and its culture.³⁶⁶ Of course, there were other measures propagandated in the various campaigns: to limit the total number of coffeehouses, to restrict the licences to specific areas and to use regulations and police enforcement to make the coffeehouse a more orderly place. These campaigns were not restricted to the early republican period, but continued as well after the Second World War.

It is important to note that the offensive against the coffeehouse and its values was equally a defence of a set of modernist, bourgeois values that this outmoded institution seemed to be threatening. The coffeehouse generally was considered a social ill associated with the past. With the development of modern schools and factories and the establishment of a modern concept of time, the rhythm and norms of life were undergoing redefinition. In the self-conscious moral universe of the new cultural elites, a “normal” pattern of life meant going to work or school in the morning and coming home in the evening; being educated and productive in a formal fashion. In such a world, leisure for leisure’s sake was not acknowledged. Coffeehouses were seen as part of the nonproductive work and held responsible for the decadent people who wasted away their lives. Many observers and social reformers warned about the implicit link between coffeehouse frequenting on the one hand and health and morality of the working class on the other.

In an aforementioned article which appeared in *Çalışma Vekaleti Dergisi* in 1953, Dr. Halit Ünal elaborated this approach with references to the different reports of the ILO. He argued that unhygienic dwelling conditions and inadequate floor space incited the residents to

³⁶⁶ Serdar Öztürk, *Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Kahvehane ve İktidar (1930-1945)* (İstanbul: Kırmızı Yayınları, 2006), pp. 248-267. This study focuses on the control and inspection processes of the coffeehouses in the single party period.

go outside the home, either to the coffeehouses or bar rooms. This, in turn made the low-income workers spend their money on gambling and alcohol consumption, which led not only to moral corruption, but also, because they would allocate less money for nutrition, weakened the body of the workers and left them open to the attack of diseases.³⁶⁷ It is particularly important to note that not more than a few middle class moralizers of the time could observe as clearly as Dr. Ünal that the poor housing conditions of the urban working class men forced them into outdoor leisure activities.

Even worse than promoting idleness and inactivity, coffeehouses were held responsible for sheltering unruly characters who were engaged in indecent and unlawful activities. Coffeehouses in remote lower class districts and in poor neighborhoods were automatically considered to be potentially indecent places. Such activities were tolerated by some coffeehouse keepers for the added business they were expected to attract.³⁶⁸ It was reported that coffeehouse owners and customers deliberately chose remote locations to engage in unlawful activities and to avoid policemen. Consequently, there was a great concern about controlling these places which spread across the city.

It is worth mentioning the legal foundation of state inspection and control over the coffeehouses. Legal regulations that concern licensing and policing of coffeehouses dated back to the 1930s. The 1937 Law on Police Organization provided the police broad authorities concerning the surveillance and control of coffeehouses including the power to close any shop deemed a threat to the political or moral order. Furthermore, some earlier regulations had put strict measures on the management of coffeehouses. A 1930 bylaw prohibited the sheltering of bachelors and strangers in the coffeehouses at night. Another bylaw dating from the early

³⁶⁷ Halit Ünal, "Mesken Davası," p.28.

³⁶⁸ "Dört Kişi Kahvede Kumar Oynarken Yakalandı," *Gece Postası*, 13 November 1953; "Kasımpaşa'da Meydan Muharebesi," *Milliyet*, 24 December 1952.

1930s stipulated that the names and addresses of female employees of coffeehouses would be reported to the police. Coffeehouse keepers also were obliged to report the suspicious persons and criminals to the police. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which defended the regulation coffeehouses, in some neighborhoods of the urban centers they had become the homes of vagabonds and rambles. Therefore the control over such places should be stricter than ever.³⁶⁹

Furthermore, there were numerous reports in the media during the late 1930s that the secret police and spies recruited from among the local people were frequenting the neighborhood coffeehouses in order to prepare reports about improper conversations and behavior.³⁷⁰

During my research at the Prime Ministry Archives in Ankara, I found five intelligence reports prepared in November and October 1956. These reports include three to six pages and contain day to day records of brief talks and comments on various social and political issues. They consist of numbered paragraphs, each of which corresponds to the notes taken by the informer of a conversation or an individual opinion uttered in public places. The reports I found were collected in the Prime Ministry Private Secretariat archives, but they give no clue about who the informers were, how the reports were prepared or to whom the reports were presented. However, it appears that the inspection reports were recorded by informers in charge of listening to anything talked about in public spaces such as city buses, streets, tailor shops and coffeehouses. Workers, students, the elderly, and passengers of the train were the main groups whose words were written in the inspection reports. That the reports do not register the names, the title, the address and the occupation of those whose words were

³⁶⁹ Öztürk, *Kahvehane ve İktidar*, pp. 451-453; Halim Alyot, *Türkiye'de Zabıta* (Ankara: Kanaat Basımevi, 1947), p. 933.

³⁷⁰ Öztürk, p.453.

recorded make one think that they were not part of the inspection activity conducted by the secret police in order to find out the perpetrators of subversive political discourse or potential criminals.

It is interesting to note that these characteristics of the reports resemble the nineteenth century journals studied by Cengiz Kırılı.³⁷¹ But it is not clear what purpose these inspection reports really served. In the early nineteenth century, when other means of capturing the public opinion was virtually non-existent, the journals were a valuable source for the government, which wanted to get informed about what was being talked in the public. However, in 1950s Turkey, most of the information submitted in the inspection reports could be reached easily through the media and the workings of the parties and civil society.

For instance, take these two records conveying talks made by two different worker groups in İstanbul. One of these reports was recorded in a coffeehouse located in a working class district in İstanbul. The report states that “In a coffeehouse located in a working-class district, a group of workers’ chat on the unemployment problem has been heard.” The workers were worrying about the rising unemployment in İstanbul. They also were arguing that the time had come for the government to acknowledge workers’ right to strike and that the unions remained too weak to claim the basic rights of the workers.³⁷² These views were expressed openly many times in the trade union press during the 1950s. In another report it was recorded that some members of the trade unions in İstanbul were disturbed about the recent news in the media that the unions in İzmir would be closed by the government. However, the report recorded, the unionists were soon relieved and pleased by the declaration

³⁷¹ Cengiz Kırılı, “Kahvehaneler ve Hafiyeler: 19. Yüzyılın Ortalarında Osmanlı’da Sosyal Kontrol,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 83 (Winter 1999-2000); “Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire,” in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Editors), (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004).

³⁷² İstihbarat Raporu (Date: 14/9/1956) BCA Catalog no. [030.01.68.426..4].

of the Minister of Labor that such an act was out of question for the unions in İstanbul.³⁷³ This issue also was reflected in the media, and the brief information in the report did not include any detail about the protagonists or the course of the event.

It should be noted that some inspection reports really included important information for the government. For instance, about two-thirds of an inspection report which was apparently prepared right after the 6-7 September events contained information about the minorities in İstanbul. The report presented some conversations between different people of Jewish and Greek origins, reflecting the anxiety and fear of the minority groups in İstanbul after the 6-7 September events.³⁷⁴ Yet it appears that this was an exceptional case and the bulk of the information presented in the inspection reports was of the type that could easily be reached through media.

Coffeehouses were spied on not only for informative reasons, but they were closely inspected and controlled by police forces. As discussed above, social life in neighborhood coffeehouses was relatively intimate, informal and open. While these characteristics attracted clients, they also raised concerns about order and social control. Particularly the unlawful activities -including gambling, smoking hashish, employing small children- permitted by coffeehouses in lower class districts conveyed a sense of moral laxity in the literate public. Fahrettin Kerim Gökay, the governor of İstanbul between 1949 and 1957, fought passionately against the coffeehouses during his term in office. Gökay was a biological psychiatrist and a firm prohibitionist.³⁷⁵ He believed that coffeehouses were among such places where addictive

³⁷³ İstihbarat Raporu (Date: 27/10/1956) BCA Catalog no. [030.01.68.427..2]

³⁷⁴ İstihbarat Raporu (Date: ?/9/1956) BCA Catalog no. [030.01.68.427..2].

³⁷⁵ See Fahrettin Kerim Gökay *İçki ve Melekat-ı Ruhiye: Melekat-ı Ruhiye Üzerinde Tesirat-ı Külküliyenin Psikolojik Mesahası* (İstanbul: Kader Matbaası, 1923); *Sağlık Düşmanı Keyif Verici Maddeler* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1948).

elements could be traded easily and used. During Gökay's term in the office, the police frequently inspected the coffeehouses. The primary targets of these inspections were the shops located in the narrow streets and passageways of the neglected poor neighborhoods.

A search through the pages of newspapers of the period reveals that inspection campaigns were more intense in working class districts like Kasımpaşa, Eyüp, Topkapı and Zetinburnu.³⁷⁶ Occasionally the governor himself attended the inspections. It is interesting to note that Gökay's inspections generally covered the coffeehouses in the vicinity of industrial undertakings. For instance, a newspaper report on November 1, 1950 wrote that Gökay started an inspection campaign in the factories and the coffeehouses located around them in the broad area covering Unkapanı, Fener, Eyüp, Topkapı and Aksaray. Gökay ordered the closure of several coffeehouses which permitted children to come in to play games of chance.³⁷⁷ Only months later, he started another round of inspections in the same districts.³⁷⁸ These inspection campaigns were welcomed by the newspapers and Gökay was praised as the most popular and hard-working personage of the town.³⁷⁹

Following his takeover of the governor's office, Mümtaz Tarhan also proved resolutely hostile to the coffeehouse. Tarhan could not leave a mark during his term as Minister of Labor, but he would be remembered as the governor who banned spitting on the street and cleaned up the city of unlawful coffeehouses which were known as "children's gambling

³⁷⁶ See, for instance, "Kahvehanelerde Teftiş," *Gece Postası*, 5 November 1951; "Zeytinburnunda 6 Kişi Kumar Oynarken Yakalandı," *Milliyet*, 26 July 1955; "Eyüp'te Bir Hadise," *Milliyet*, 7 June 1951; "Kasımpaşa'da 6 Kumarbaz suçüstü Yakalandı," 25 February 1953.

³⁷⁷ "Vali Dün Birçok Yerleri Teftiş etti," *Milliyet*, 1 November 1950.

³⁷⁸ "Vali Gökay Dün Şehrin Muhtelif Semtlerini Teftiş Etti," *Milliyet*, 9 April 1951; See also Orhan Özkırım, "Gökay'ın İki Yılı," *Milliyet*, 24 October 1951.

³⁷⁹ "İstanbul'un En Popüler ve Çalışkan İnsanı Kimdir?" *Milliyet*, 21 November 1953.

houses.”³⁸⁰ During Tarhan’s short term in office which lasted less than six months, the controls in the coffeehouses were tightened and the total number of legal licences was restricted. Notwithstanding the petitions of the coffeehouse keepers, Tarhan strongly opposed the opening of new shops in the city. If allowed, he believed, “the new shops would be opened in dark and isolated locations and would spread dullness and laziness to the whole city.”³⁸¹ He also imposed punishments on coffeehouse keepers who allegedly withheld exchanges. The governor’s massive offenses on neighborhood coffeehouses might have worried the shop keepers and the clients, but certainly pleased the middle class public.³⁸² It seems that the governors’ crusades against the neighborhood coffeehouses tied them closely with the city’s elite in the search for middle-class respectability and the interest in a settled and stable urban community. The coffeehouse thus became an area of conflict on which complex forces of class and values struggled.

Coffeehouse sociability was not static; rather it was able to adapt to changes in the urban milieu. The working men, it has been argued in this part of the chapter, developed a distinctive culture around the coffeehouse which was an ingredient part of the working class identity transmitted through the generations. It was the the place of communication and sociability within new migrant groups; an address where newcomers to city can meet, an office to seek job offerings, a safe and warm place to shelter at night. Workers’ coffeehouses were highly differentiated from the cafes frequented by middle and upper class men and women by their physical appearance and distinct culture of the constituents. It has also been argued that the coffeehouse rituals and friendships, intimacy and anonymity provided the

³⁸⁰ <http://www.istanbul.gov.tr/?pid=68>

³⁸¹ Ümit Deniz, “Vali 4 Saatte 256 Defa El Sıktı”, *Milliyet*, 19 January 1958.

³⁸² Ümit Deniz, “Tarhan 6.5 Saat Hiç Oturmadı, Çalıştı”, *Milliyet*, 20 January 1958; “Vali Bir Kahvede Halkın Derdini Dinledi”, 22 January 1958.

building blocs for social movements. Workers used personal and intimate relationships associated with the institution to organize in various forms; from trade unions to neighborhood organizations. It also provided them a place to welcome politicians, establish patronage relationships through which community members could find short-term solutions to personal problems.

Concluding Remarks

It is not surprising to see that those who have power, authority and influence seek to use these to protect the state of things which gives them power. Unsurprisingly power groups manipulated diverse means to “civilize” the working people in moulds shaped to fit the needs of modern, developing society.

There were of course many efforts made, some by organized movements and campaigns, some by movements of opinion in the powerful elite operating through the press and public authorities, designed to control and regulate all manner of things seemed to them as degenerate and decadent forms of popular amusements. Reformers were not against leisure altogether, yet they sought to ensure that it was used in uplifting and improved ways and that people should learn to find happiness in orderly, healthy and morally proper recreations.

That the working class leisure patterns defeated the legal regulations which were so defended by the cultural elites and emerging urban middle classes provides the key to understanding why the elites were never able to dominate effectively the nonworking lives of the working class. Movie theaters, playgrounds and coffeehouses were too much integral parts of the working class world to be repressed easily by legal means.

Rather than positioning themselves perpetually on the receiving end of outside forces and influences of a middle class, a remote and powerful state and a set of technological imperatives, the working people themselves generated their own values and attitudes suited to the rhythm and opportunities provided in the growing urban life. Furthermore, as has been argued, they managed to impose their own values and dispositions on cultural institutions.

However, it would be also wrong to argue that working class leisure habits were altogether antagonistic to the middle class or elite perception of modern urban life. Nor were all of the recreational activities of the masses disapproved of by the elite. For instance, visiting amusement parks and beaches were two of the most popular recreational activities for the greater part of the working class families. The plot of land reserved for public parks in İstanbul increased considerably in the early 1950s. Gülhane Park was designated especially as an amusement park rather than a public garden. In such park areas workers had the space to use their leisure time as they pleased. The first zoo in İstanbul was established in the Gülhane Park in the early 1950s.³⁸³ Furthermore, the Municipality of İstanbul offered many other events ranging from small concerts to competitions to attract the city population to parks. From the 1950 on the municipality held a Flower Fest every year in Gülhane Parkı, a week long festival which attracted hundreds of thousands of people to the park. One municipal report wrote that it was the Municipality's pride to accommodate two million visitors in the park between 22 May and 15 July 1954.³⁸⁴ Also, the public beaches in Moda, Fenerbahçe and Bostancı were frequented by working class families as well as middle and upper class residents of these districts.³⁸⁵ The municipality also opened the Florya Recreational Facility in

³⁸³ "Şehrin En Ucuz Eğlence Yeri," *Gece Postası*, 22 June 1954.

³⁸⁴ İstanbul Belediyesi, *7 Yıl İçinde Vilayet ve Belediyece Yapılan İşler, 1949-1955* (İstanbul: Belediye Matbaası, 1956), p.121.

³⁸⁵ Kemal Sülker, "İşçinin 24 Saati," *Gece Postası*, 26 July 1956.

the early 1950s, which also became a popular place where people often came even from remote districts by train.³⁸⁶

Counter to the theories which claim that the new forms of mass recreational activities of the twentieth century increasingly blurred the represented notions of class and undermined the traditional working class identities in favor of market-oriented consumerist society, it was argued above that the working classes took over the emerging or existing cultural institutions and exerted their own values and dispositions on them. As shared experiences of popular leisure activities assisted to sustain the working class identity, studying leisure provides us the basis for looking at the working class formation in its totality.

³⁸⁶ 7 Yıl İçinde Vilayet ve Belediyece Yapılan İşler, 1949-1955, p.139.

CHAPTER 3

THE ORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION, MODES OF CONTROL AND THE WORKERS' RESPONSE: THE EXAMPLE OF TEXTILE INDUSTRY

This chapter explores the working conditions and terms of production in the shop floor during the late 1940s and 1950s. Special attention is given to the textile manufacturing sector simply because in the course of the period it occupied a fairly important position in the Turkish economy. By the early 1960s, the sales of the cotton textile sector alone, which included the ginning, spinning, and weaving cotton, were 12.3 percent of all manufacturing sales and 62 percent of all textile sales. The sector had 14.9 percent of the paid employees and wages paid to them contributed 15 percent of all wages.³⁸⁷ However, references will be made to other sectors and the historical transformation of the labor process in general.

This chapter examines the transformation of production relations and culture within the workplace, and the contributions of modern managerial techniques. Since class as an organizing concept is intimately bound up with relations of production, any definition of a

³⁸⁷ David Edward Kunkel, "Market Structure, Conduct and Performance: The Turkish Cotton Textile Industry as a Case Study" (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972), pp. 9-11.

working class must engage the allocation of roles in production. This chapter takes a closer look at the microworlds of production such as labor process, technology and the impact of labor market character on the creation of shop floor relations. These micro structures and processes, it will be suggested, shaped workers' lives in two significant ways: first, by providing a stage for the construction of identities; and second, by providing a field of action conditioning responses to policy prescriptions on the shop floor scale. The cultural forces impinging on the production relations will also be considered. Of those forces the operation of family and gender influences is particularly important. Especially, when the point at issue is an industry where female labor bears an undeniable significance, it is an unavoidable task.

Below the analysis begins with depicting a general picture of the textile industry, followed by an outline the essential features of the workforce in the industry. The third part of this chapter elaborates on the introduction of "scientific management" (especially piece-rate compensation systems) in large industrial undertakings, and its implication on the transformation of the labor process and workplace culture. The final part of the chapter focuses on an example of the application of such managerial methods in one particular textile mill and the workers' reaction against it.

The Development of the Industry

In the 1920s, Turkey was an importer of textile goods while exporting its raw cotton and other natural textile fibers. This situation did not change much in the late 1920s and early 1930s despite some increase in production due to the importance attached to the industry by the government. Government support of the industry started as early as mid-1920. In 1925, the Bank for Mining and Industry (*Sanayi ve Maadin Bankası*) was established and took over the existing government factories (including the only cotton textile plant in Bakırköy and the

woolen mill in Defterdar, which was the most modern industrial plant in the country in technological terms). The enactment of a new law for the encouragement of industry in 1927 aimed at the achievement of more suitable conditions to prospective investors wanting to establish new plants. According to the law, public purchase of clothing items could be sold at prices 10 percent more expensive provided that they were made with locally manufactured fabrics. In 1929, the Customs Law was enacted which contained customs and tariff barriers especially for the protection of textile production. This was followed by some other tariff restrictions in 1931.³⁸⁸ The encouragement and protection of the industry showed its effect in the production increases recorded between 1927 and 1932. While local production met 23 percent of total consumption in 1927, it satisfied 40 percent of the country's textile goods consumption in 1932.

The establishment of Sümerbank in 1933 gave a new momentum to the state-led industrialization activities. Between 1933 and 1950, six large mills were established in Ereğli, Kayseri, Nazilli, Adana, Malatya and Bakırköy (re-established). In this period the number of private sector mills amounted to 32. However, with a few exceptions privately held mills were small capacity undertakings compared to public sector plants. The private sector looms were a total of 2428 as compared to 3091 of the public sector in 1949.³⁸⁹

In the 1950s, the industry grew rapidly under the conditions of idle capacity. The government production was under the provision of Sümerbank, which owned and operated as many as fifteen textile mills and shared ownership in ten other plants in the late 1950s. The former group included nine cotton mills and six factories which produced woolen and worsted

³⁸⁸ See Morris Singer, *The Economic Advance of Turkey, 1938-1960* (Ankara: Turkish Economic Society Publications, 1977).

³⁸⁹ TMMOB Makine Mühendisleri Odası, *Türkiye'de Pamuklu Tekstil Sanayiinin Tarihsel Gelişimi ve Bugünkü Durumu* (İstanbul: 1976), p. 33.

goods.³⁹⁰ Yet within the decade, Sümerbank no longer dominated the industry. As an industry which was relatively more labor intensive and appealed to a mass domestic market, textiles attracted private entrepreneurs more than any other sector. Private wool and cotton manufacturing also were encouraged strongly by the government. Taxes on industry, which were based on the number of looms operated, were decreased, import quotas for machinery were increased greatly and the Industrial Development Bank of Turkey (*Türkiye Sınai Kalkınma Bankası*) was established to help financing private initiatives. This Bank which financed 400 private enterprises from 1950 to 1959 became the leading source of low cost foreign exchange credits and was instrumental in securing machinery for many textile firms.³⁹¹

In response to these and other incentives, a large number of new private textile factories were established in the early 1950s and many existing plants were modernized. While in the early 1950s state production exceeded by a wide margin private factory production in both cotton cloth and wool yarn, in the mid-1960s the state's overall share of wool and cotton textile production was reduced to about 25 percent.³⁹² At the end of the 1950s, private undertakings owned 73 percent of the cotton spindles, 69 percent of cotton looms, 70 percent of woolen spindles and 82 percent of woolen looms.

During the period textile firms were not able to benefit from economies of scale. More than half of the weaving mills owned less than 100 looms. In the late 1950s it was reported

³⁹⁰ Singer, p. 278.

³⁹¹ Edward C. Clark, "The Emergence of Textile Manufacturing Entrepreneurs in Turkey, 1804-1868" (MA thesis, Princeton University, 1969), p. 85-86. Among the various branches of the industry, textiles took the lion's share from IDBT credits with 50 million liras between 1950 and 1955. Non-metallic minerals and food processing industries followed with respectively 29 million and 23 million liras. Zvi Y. Hershlag, *Turkey: An Economy in Transition* (The Hague: Van Keulen, 1958), p.244.

³⁹² Ibid.

that only four large mills in İstanbul had more than 500 looms.³⁹³ The interior structure organization of plants was primitive and the great majority of managers were without the necessary knowledge of modern management and control techniques. High productivity expressed by the formula “physical production/number of workers” was unobtainable. The fact that the plants were profitable in spite of this was a result of high market prices and large demand.

In addition to the large scale production units, there were a number of small hand loom units scattered throughout the country. There were reported to be 3,799 small scale establishments producing cotton textiles. The small scale cotton weavers had an average of 2.5 person engaged who were usually owners or unpaid family workers. The SPO estimated that in 1964 there were 15,000 hand looms which accounted for only 11 percent of the total production capacity of 706 million meters.³⁹⁴ While small scale manufacturing and hand weaving was spread across the country, large scale factories increasingly became concentrated in the big cities. In 1956 around 37 percent of cotton weaving looms and 34 percent of spindles were in İstanbul.³⁹⁵

Almost all of the machinery used by the industry had been imported from Europe and Russia. However, there were also mills that manufactured their own looms from local materials and only imported the automatic shuttle machines. These looms were somewhat slower, but some employers preferred them for they saved foreign exchange. It is noteworthy

³⁹³ “Tekstil Sanayiindeki Kriz ve İstanbul Tekstil Sendikasının Teşebbüsü,” *Forum*, vol. 12, no. 134 (September, 1959); “Mensucatta Buhran,” *Forum*, vol. 10, no. 113, (15 January 1958).

³⁹⁴ Kunkel, p. 27

³⁹⁵ TMMOB Makine Mühendisleri Odası, p.41.

that, compared to other developing countries in the Middle East, Turkey appeared technologically progressive in textiles. Turkey's looms were 75 percent automatic.³⁹⁶

By the end of the 1950s the production of cotton yarn had reached 92,000 metric tons compared to 29 metric tons in 1948. Cloth production was at 527 million meters compared with 128 million meters in 1948. According to official statistics this expansion in cotton manufacture implied an excess capacity of about two-thirds of what domestic capacity could bear.

Woolen products with a capacity of nearly 40 million kilograms in 1960 found themselves in an even worse position in this regard. Demand limitations aside, an added problem confronted woolen products in that after 1955 the government restricted the import of foreign wool. As a consequence insufficient stocks of raw materials further contributed to the tendency of the industry to experience idle capacity. Many woolen manufacturing mills failed to operate at more than fifty percent capacity at any time after the mid-1950s. Even so, excessive profits were recorded in textiles mills in the sector were expected to obtain 40 percent return on investment as compared to 30 percent in the rest of the economy. The industry enjoyed a high level of protection resulting in relatively high consumer prices. Those firms which had the imported wool allocated to them, on the other hand, enjoyed super-normal profits.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁶ Türkiye İş Bankası, *Türkiye'de Pamuk İpliği ve Pamuklu Dokuma Sanayii Hakkında Rapor* (Ankara: 1966), p. 6.

³⁹⁷ Singer, pp. 279-280.

The Labor Force

Along with the huge production increases, employment in textiles raised permanently during the period. The number of workers employed in weaving workplaces which were covered by the Labor Law climbed 87 percent, from roughly 55,000 to 103,000, between 1950 and 1962. About same number of men and women were employed in garment, stocking and mule spinning during the period. This meant that roughly 30 percent of the industrial work force was employed in textiles. With regards to sectoral differentiation, the private sector employment raised 140 percent while the public sector employment recorded only 15 percent increase throughout the period.³⁹⁸ The geographical concentration of the industry illustrated above was matched by the geographical concentration of the work force; according to a 1954 survey, 27,000 of the employed lived and worked in İstanbul.³⁹⁹ They represented a slightly increasing proportion of the total factory population through the late 1940s and 1950s. If textile industry was central to the economic life of İstanbul during the period, it was more central for certain parts of the city. Many large-scale firms were concentrated in Eyüp and in the broad area between Bakırköy and Yedikule.⁴⁰⁰ Three big firms (Defterdar, Bakırköy and Mensucat Santral) employed about 32 percent of the textile workers in İstanbul. The largest 29 mills employed approximately 71 percent of workers in the industry.⁴⁰¹ The textile workers' union was far and away the largest union in the city taking over 20 percent of all union members in early 1950. The İstanbul Textile and Weaving Industry Workers Trade

³⁹⁸ TMMOB Makine Mühendisleri Odası, p. 39.

³⁹⁹ Sabahattin Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Yayını, 1956), p. 120.

⁴⁰⁰ According to Fındıkoğlu, Eyüp alone accommodated around 11 thousand textile workers in the early 1950s. Ziyaeddin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, *Sümerbank Müesseselerinden Defterdar Fabrikası* (İstanbul: Türkiye Harsi ve İçtimai Araştırmalar Derneği Neşriyatı, 1955), p.34.

⁴⁰¹ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler*, p. 131.

Union had over 10 thousand members in 1951 and continued to grow in the course of the decade.⁴⁰²

For women workers alone, the trend was the same: 29.5 percent of all women employed in plants under the coverage of the Labor Law in İstanbul worked in textiles in 1950. This ratio underlines the significance of female labor for the industry since the overall weight of women in the industrial work force was only 20 percent. To emphasize the same point, it is noteworthy that in 1950, women workers composed 40 percent of the total workforce in textiles. In İstanbul this ratio was approximately the same by 40-45 percent.⁴⁰³ When the young female workers under the age of 16 were included in the picture, the proportion raised over 45 percent of the total number of workers in the industry. Looking at the data we can conclude that the early 1950s witnessed the feminization of the industry.

The factors that led to the feminization of textiles were twofold. First, employers believed that female workers were reluctant or disinclined to organize in unions and participate in workplace struggles.⁴⁰⁴ This was reflected in the low figures of female membership in trade unions. Yet, the belief that female workers refrained from workplace struggles was not always true. Avni Erakalın recalls that one of the major strikes during the period was organized and led exclusively by women in a wool spinning mill established in Rami. It was a unique action in the 1950s, for the female workers stopped work for more than

⁴⁰² İstanbul Textile and Weaving Industry Workers Trade Union was the second largest union in the country after Ereğli Coal Miners Trade Union. See Muhaddere Gönenli, "Türkiye'de Sendika Hareketleri," *Çalışma Vekaleti Dergisi*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1953), p. 68.

⁴⁰³ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler*, pp. 135-137. According to another study the proportion of female workers in the industry was no less than 60 percent. See Ekmel Zamil, "İş ve İşçi Bulma Hizmeti; Mahiyet ve Vazifeleri," in *İçtimai Siyaset Konferansları 4. Kitap* (İstanbul: İÜ İktisat Fakültesi İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü, 1951), p. 31

⁴⁰⁴ See Cahit Talas, "Verimliliğin Arttırılmasında Psikolojik ve Mesleki Amillerin Rolü," *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Mecmuası*, vol. 7, no. 1-4 (1953); Sedat Toydemir, *Türkiye'de İş İhtilaflarının Tarihçesi* (İstanbul: İÜ İktisat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1951), p. 12. One textile employer told that he no longer hired men since they instantly got enrolled in the union. "Erkek İşçi Almayan Bir Mensucat Fabrikası," *Gece Postası*, 26 August 1954.

a week against the management pressure, and arbitrary arrests and aggressive treatments of the police.⁴⁰⁵

The primary factor behind the feminization of the industry was probably the cheapness of female labor. There is relatively little information about the wages of women, though the surveys of 1954, 1956 and 1957 contain valuable data. According to these surveys made by State Statistical Institute, the ratio of females' wages to males' wages in textile manufacturing was 0.72 in 1954, 0.69 in 1956, and 0.75 in 1957.⁴⁰⁶ Actually, wide disparity between wages for men and women was not peculiar to textiles. In tobacco and food processing industries the situation was worse. In tobacco industry women earned 60 percent, in food processing they earned 49 percent of what men made.⁴⁰⁷ However, these figures represented averages. The wage differential between men and women often grew when they were assigned to different jobs. In some textile plants wage gap between men and women grew as big as 125 percent. In a textile mill in Bakırköy, for instance, women spinners earned 75 liras in a month while male over-lookers and foremen in the same department earned 180 liras in 1947.⁴⁰⁸ With this state of affairs female worker demands of employers increased rapidly for quite a long time during

⁴⁰⁵ One remarkable feature about the strike in Rami Lanteks mill was that the majority of the women who organized and took part in this struggle were immigrants from Bulgaria who had come to Turkey in 1951/52. Avni Erakalın, interview by author, tape recording, Aksaray, İstanbul, 20 May 2010. The strike broke up upon the firing of the foreman İsmail Türkbey who was laid off when he stood as a candidate against "the man of the employer" in the elections for becoming workers' representative in the mill. The strike was perceived as an astonishing event in the media for the determination of women to protect and bring the foreman back in the factory. These 59 militant women complained that the employer had fired the foreman without just cause and declared that they were ready to do ten years in prison, but would not bow to the pressures. After 17-18 days of strike and resistance, the employer stepped back and took İsmail Türkbey back to work. See "Grev, Grev, Gene Grev!", *KİM*, 29 Mayıs 1959. According to *Cumhuriyet* the number of women who went on strike was 52. "Lanteks Fabrikasındaki Hadise", *Cumhuriyet*, 26 May 1959. About ten months later, workers in Lanteks raised another successful collective labor dispute for a general wage increase. In the first round of negotiations they attained 15-20 percent rise for different wage scales. *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örme Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1959-1961 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Alpaslan Matbaası, 1961), p. 33.

⁴⁰⁶ Tuncer Bulutay, *Employment, Unemployment and Wages in Turkey* (Ankara: ILO Publications, 1995), p. 276.

⁴⁰⁷ Ahmet Makal, "Türkiye'de Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Kadın Emegi", *Çalışma ve Toplum*, no. (2010/2) p. 29.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

the period. In 1950, it was reported that 81 percent of all work demands submitted to the Employment Office was for female workers.⁴⁰⁹ Male workers were highly disturbed by employers' preference for women. One trade unionist told that even the heaviest, extra duty jobs began to be given to female workers because of the growing wage gap between men and women in the industry.⁴¹⁰

The high demand for female labor continued until 1959 when the 1942 decree of the Coordination Committee which enabled the employment of women in the night shifts was finally terminated.⁴¹¹ The Coordination Committee was established during the war in order to oversee the implementation of the National Security Law. The 106 numbered decree of the Committee endorsed that the protective measures regarding female workers in the Labor Law and Hygiene Law could be suspended and working hours of women and children could be extended in a number of industries as well as in textiles. The decree was put into effect one more time in 1955 against the opposition of unions, and remained in force for four years. When the decree was finally annulled on May 1959, many female workers were laid off from the industry, which had already been suffering from raw material shortages and decreasing consumer demands.⁴¹²

The proportion of child workers in the industry fluctuated between 15 and 25 percent depending on the different definitions made in surveys for the child labor.⁴¹³ Children were

⁴⁰⁹ Ekmel Zadi, "İş ve İşçi Bulma Hizmeti," p. 31.

⁴¹⁰ "Ücretlerde Cinsiyet Farkı ve Gece İşçilerinin Durumu," *Akşam*, 2 Ağustos 1951

⁴¹¹ According to Labor Code, Article 50 women and children could not be put to work in the night shifts in any circumstance. Muhaddere Gönenli, *Fransa'da ve Türkiye'de Kadının Çalışma Şartları Üzerine Mukayeseli Bir Tetkik* (Ankara: Son Havadis Matbaası, 1955).

⁴¹² Kemal Sülker, "Kadın İşçiler ve Gece Mesaisi," *Gece Postası*, 7 May 1959; "İhbar Ediyoruz: Tekstil İşçileri Kanuna Aykırı Çalıştırılıyor," *Gece Postası*, 29 May 1959. The influential *Forum* magazine reported that the unemployment in textiles reached as high as 25 percent in the late 1956. "İşsizlik Var mı, Yok mu," *Forum*, vol. 5, no. 60 (15 September 1956).

⁴¹³ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler*, p. 141.

often employed in preparation departments (shaping and carding departments) and the work they performed was always exhausting. In the Karamürsel Cotton Textile Mill workers said that child workers employed in the shaping department walked around 40 kilometers in a day when tending machines and carrying heavy bobbins.⁴¹⁴

This comparatively high ratio of female and child employment in the industry was affected particularly by the prevalence of family hiring in textiles. Observations by contemporaries confirm the quantitative findings revealing that the family played an enduring role in the organization of work within the mills. For example, Kemal Sülker noted that about half of the employed in the textile sector came from the same family.⁴¹⁵ Sülker's report might be a bit exaggeration, but all the evidence reveals that the family hiring system was a prevalent feature of the industry throughout the period. The family was simultaneously a unit of economic support and a unit of exploitation. The families whose members all worked in the mill were comparatively well off and had some economic security across generations.⁴¹⁶ On the other hand, kinship ties were utilized effectively by employers for control and production purposes. In the workplaces where extended family networks prevailed, the patrons did not usually directly supervise the production process, but rather had it done by a worker foreman, a person both friendly with the employer and very close terms with the workers.⁴¹⁷ This

⁴¹⁴ "Karamürsel Mensucat Fabrikası İşçileri Nasıl Çalışıyorlar, Ne Söylüyorlar?" *Gece Postası*, 14 November 1949.

⁴¹⁵ Kemal Sülker, "Tekstil Asgari Ücretine İşverenlerin Tespit Ettiği 3 İtiraz," *Gece Postası*, 22 February 1958. The extent and importance of this phenomenon in textile sector has been particularly emphasized in the French and British labor historiographies. See William M. Reddy, "Family and Factory: French Linen Weavers in the Belle Epoque," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1975). For a historical narrative on German female workers in textile mills, see Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850-1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

⁴¹⁶ Kemal Sülker, "İşçinin 24 Saati," *Gece Postası*, 22 March 1954.

⁴¹⁷ Alan Debetsky, "Kinship, Primordial Ties, and Factory Organization in Turkey: An Anthropological View," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3 (July 1976), p. 441.

pattern of recruitment was preferred frequently by small scale employers. The consequences of this inclination shall be discussed in detail below.

It is noteworthy that there was a certain gender demarcation crystallized around machinery. Most women and also children were employed in the spinning mills or in the spinning departments of integrated plants. Some other female workers worked in weaving factories often as darners, carders and reelers rather than as weavers, since weaving required a stable and trained workforce and was often reserved for skilled or semi-skilled male workers. The foremen and over-lookers were almost always men. Actually the main determinants of skill were age and duration of service in the industry, and women workers tended to stay short time in the mills compared to men. However, gender demarcation within the mill was not necessarily a barrier before the joint action of workers as was the case in Lanteks wool spinning mill where, as we have seen, the foreman was male and the operatives were almost exclusively women.

The skill profile of workers is very problematic. Zaim listed 10-38 percent of workers as skilled, 20 percent as unskilled and the remaining as semi-skilled in textiles. However, it is necessary to add immediately that these categories were not based on any solid grounds by Zaim. As Zaim himself noted, no “scientific studies” had been made in order to develop a skill profile of workers in the 1950s.⁴¹⁸ Yet it is not hard to understand how workers thought of themselves and each other. The highly skilled and unskilled in a textile mill were service personnel and auxiliary workers respectively. However, by their sheer weight of numbers and performance, weavers were the most significant group regarded as “highly skilled” by both workers and employers. Of course, weavers never functioned as independent artisans and the discretion content of their work was minimal and limited almost exclusively to questions of

⁴¹⁸ Zaim, p.145.

pace. Moreover, they witnessed to the degradation of their work in the course of the decade with technological modernization in the industry. Yet, combined with the difficulty to gaining access to their ranks and their higher level of education, the limited autonomy that the weavers could enjoy elevated them in the eyes of their fellow workers. Weavers were usually the most experienced workers in the mills; their duration of work was often longer and the scarcity of their labor had always been felt in the market during the period.⁴¹⁹ Weaving looms often broke down due to the use of low quality yarn, power cut-outs and lack of standardization both in machines and in other raw materials that were used in production. Experienced weavers were expected to fix the machines whenever a problem occurred at the point of production. Weaving required hard labor. Weavers had to be strong enough to carry cloth batches and be able to work with full concentration under the deafening noise of the machines. 80 percent of weavers who served more than ten years in trade were known to be suffering from noise-induced hearing loss. Cotton fiber filled the air in some shops and people who worked in them constantly suffered from respiratory disorders or diseases such as tuberculosis.

The physical difficulties and skill demands of the work put weavers in a relatively advantageous position in the shop floor bargaining process. As one trade union militant said, they were also the ones who took the leading role in shop floor struggles and in the organization of workers in the trade unions.⁴²⁰ We shall see below that the most significant shop floor struggles during the period turned around the employers' constant attempts to impose managerial control and discipline over the weavers' work practices in order to

⁴¹⁹ A brief look at the advertisements in *Milliyet* and *Gece Postası* reveal that weavers with scarce trade had good employment prospects.

⁴²⁰ Avni Erakalın, interview by author, tape recording, Aksaray, İstanbul.

improve productivity, and weavers' responses to retain their control over the pace of the work.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, contemporaries conceived that the backward structure of industrial wages reflected Turkey's early stage of industrial development.⁴²¹ The statistics shows that while the average real wages in textiles fell sharply by 41 percent between 1938 and 1943 due to the war, they underwent a gradual recovery until 1948/9. Probably with the positive effect of the election of a new government in 1950 as well as with the boosting of demand for textile products during the Korean War, average real wages made a peak in 1951/52. After that period, real wages recorded slight reductions until 1954 to the same levels in 1950.⁴²²

In 1954, the minimum wage in textiles was determined for the first time in İstanbul by a local commission set up by the Ministry of Labor. The commission consisted of the regional labor director, two representatives of workers and employers, an attendant from the municipality, and a delegate from local chamber of commerce.⁴²³ Notwithstanding the recurrent calls of the union to set the minimum wage at 70 kuruş per hour, the commission determined it as 50 kuruş per hour.⁴²⁴ This was close to the 45 kuruş per hour proposal of the

⁴²¹ Rebi Barkın, "İşçi Gündelikleri ve İşçinin Geçim Davası", *Hürbilet*, no. 3 (15 May 1948).

⁴²² Sabahaddin Zaim, "Türkiye Mensucat Sanayiinde Ücretler", in *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları Sekizinci Kitap* (İstanbul: 1955), p. 39. Yet it is worth mentioning that the real wage increases in textiles after the war fell behind the increases in overall industrial wages. It seems that "the surplus army of labor" created by the mass migration to the cities had kept the wages low in this sector which required a limited number of trained labor force.

⁴²³ Adana deputy Rıza Tekeli complained in the parliament that three members of the minimum wage commission in Adana represented employers, for the attendant from the municipality was also an employer and a member of the chamber of commerce. Therefore, Tekeli argued, the decisions of the commission had always been in favor of employers. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 11, vol. 7, 26 February 1959, p. 1049.

⁴²⁴ Article 32 of the Labor Code stipulated that the regulations be made to fix the minimum wages rates (by the hour, day, week or at piece rates) by the Ministry of Economy in view of economic and social requirements. However not until 1951 did the governments made any attempts to set minimum wages. In early 1954 minimum wages were determined in six cities including İstanbul, İzmir and Seyhan for for workers employed in textile, tobacco processing, cotton ginning, flour and bread, oil and soap, and media industries. By 1958, however, minimum wage practice covered 29 cities for workers employed in 18 sectors including rubber works, leather

employers' delegates.⁴²⁵ Four years later, in February 1958, the minimum wage commission convened again to overview the practice and set new minimum wages.⁴²⁶ In the meantime, textile workers' trade unions were complaining that wages were too low in the industry and worker households would still be worse off economically unless a substantial increase in minimum wages took place. On the other hand, employers represented by the İstanbul Chamber of Industry argued that since family hiring was prevalent in the industry minimum wage for children could be much lower.⁴²⁷ After the first round of meetings the commission set the minimum wage for textile workers as 100 kuruş per hour without discriminating between child and adult workers. However, the textile employers were not ready to admit defeat quietly. The Chamber of Industry appealed to the Ministry of Labor in the very heat of the moment and a delegation of textile employers travelled to Ankara to lobby among the politicians. In the face of this pressure, the ministry could not hold strongly to the decision taken by minimum wage commission. On 14 March the Ministry of Labor announced that the minimum wage for textile industry was to be 80 kuruş for adults and 65 kuruş for children.⁴²⁸ According to one estimation, the minimum wage in textile sector was roughly half of the

and shoe, cement and lime industries, sand and stone pits, and ship crew. See Minister of Labor Hayrettin Erkmen's speech in GNA. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 11, vol. 2, 31 January 1958, pp. 599-600. It is interesting to note that at least in one sector workers managed to convince employers to make collective bargaining contracts and fix minimum wages. According to the contract made between Petroleum Workers Trade Union (Petrol-İş and employers in 1958, the minimum daily wage was fixed at 856 kuruş. See "Petrol-İş Kolundan Asgari İşçi Ücreti Çalışmaları", *Petrol-iş*, no. 10 (November 1958).

⁴²⁵ "İşçi Ücretlerinin Tespiti İşinde Mühim Merhale," *Gece Postası*, 25 May 1954.

⁴²⁶ The commission ought to convene and revise the minimum wages in 1956. However, the employers appealed to Minimum Wage Appeal Commission in Ankara and hindered the determination of new wage levels. See "Tekstil işçileri Asgari Ücret Davasının Artık Hallini İstiyor," *Gece Postası*, 6 June 1957.

⁴²⁷ Kemal Sülker, "Mensucat İşkolunda Asgari Ücret Meselesi," *Gece Postası*, 9 February 1958; "Tekstil Asgari Ücretine Sanayi Odasının Tespiti Ettiği Üç İtiraz," *Gece Postası*, 22 February 1958.

⁴²⁸ Kemal Sülker, "Asgari Ücret Tespiti ve İşverenler," *Gece Postası*, 1 March 1958; "Asgari Ücretler," *Gece Postası*, 14 March 1958.

average wage in overall manufacturing sector in 1958.⁴²⁹ After that year real wages recorded a slow and steady movement upwards throughout the decade.

Business fluctuations had immediate effects on employment levels and wages. “The great wave of unemployment in textiles,” for instance, drove wages down in many cotton mills in 1956-57.⁴³⁰ Collective labor disputes for wage increase did not soar as much as one might expect. Yet this was only because the trade union had seen that the arbitration system without the right to strike did not create positive results for workers.⁴³¹ Nevertheless, conflict could not always be confined within official parameters. Infact, the textile sector was in the first place in the league of collective labor disputes during the decade. Most of these disputes were over pay in some way or other. According to the lists provided by the textile workers’ trade union nearly ninety percent of labor disputes were about pay. As will be discussed in length in the following chapter, collective disputes between workers and employers were settled through the functioning of a conciliation/arbitration mechanism. Although the process was very complicated and excluded certain segments of the working class population, workers could manipulate successfully the mechanism to increase their incomes. According to the

⁴²⁹ Makal, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, p. 498.

⁴³⁰ “Tekstil İşçileri Umumi Zam İstiyorlar”, *Gece Postası*, 14 May 1957; “Tekstil İşçileri Asgari 720 Kuruş Almalı”, *Gece Postası*, 20 May 1957. A report prepared by the Ministry of Labor in 1956 provides a detailed list of workplaces that laid-off their workers. According to the report 5770 textile workers were displaced only during the first eight months of 1956. It also was noted that another 2000 workers were laid-off from the small scale textile workshops located in Mahmutpaşa. BCA [Catalog no. 30.01.0.0/ 87.544.10]

⁴³¹ “Bir yandan kolektif akıterleri doğuracak GREV HAKKI’nın verilmesi için lüzumlu şartlara henüz kavuşulmadığını iddia eden makamlar diğer taraftan tatbikatından sorumlu buldukları Tahkim müessesesinin keşmekeşliğine seyirci kalmaktadırlar. İşverenler Hakem kurullarının kaplumbağa süratine güvendikleri için eski devirlerde olduğu gibi sendika ile uzlaşmağa ehemmiyet vermemekte ve sosyal meselelere vukufı tam olmayan hakem kurulları mensuplarının bu anlayışlarına dayanan çalışmaları nedeniyle hallerinden memnun yaşamaktadırlar. Bu durum sendikamızı uzun uzun düşündürdüğünden “işsizlik krizi esnasında ihtilaf çıkarmama konusunda aldığımız prensip kararının da tesiriyle” toplu iş ihtilafına fazla rağbet edilmemiştir.” *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örne Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası, 1956-1957 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Sulhi Garan Matbaası, 1957), p.7.

statistics provided by the textile trade union, about 75 percent of industrial disputes settled through arbitration mechanism in 1956-57 wholly or partly ended in favor of the workers.⁴³²

However, it is a well documented fact that in some large scale private mills as well as in public sector mills fringe benefits and production bonuses contributed dramatically to the earnings. For example, in late 1940s and in 1950s fringe benefits composed around 20-30 percent of the earnings of employees in Sümerbank establishments.⁴³³ Moreover, their tax burden was lower than that of private sector workers. In the Adalet Mensucat, workers complained about the unfair distribution of the tax burden between these two sectors. The income tax rate paid by workers at the Adalet Mensucat was 7 percent, while the rate was 5 percent for the workers in the nearby Sümerbank Defterdar mill.⁴³⁴

Broad differences between the wages of workers were another characteristic of the industry. According to one observer, the hourly earnings of male workers fluctuated between 62 kuruş and 228 kuruş in the second half of the decade.⁴³⁵ It was reported that in some companies up to 70 percent of workers earned less than the average earnings in early 1950s. For instance, in the Bahariye Textile Mill, which was one of the first large scale private mills established in Eyüp, 71 percent of workers were paid less than the average wage level in the factory. In the Adalet Mill from the same region the ratio was around 45 percent. In Nurullah

⁴³² Ibid., p. 21.

⁴³³ Ahmet Makal, "Türkiye'nin Sanayileşme Sürecinde İşgücü Sorunu, Sosyal Politika ve İktisadi Devlet Teşekkülleri: 1930'lu ve 1940'lı Yıllar", *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 92 (Spring 2002), p. 49. See also Şefik Ungun, "Devlet İşletmelerinde Ücret ve Munzam Ücret Mahiyetindeki Sosyal Yardımlar", *Mensucat Meslek Dergisi*, vol. 3, no. 9 (September 1950). However, we should also note that there were wide wage differences between Sümerbank establishments across the country. These differences which were due to different compensation schemes in practice were heavily criticized by the trade unions throughout the period. See, *TEKSİF III. Kongre 9.8.1953 – 3.9.1958 Dönemi Raporları* (İstanbul: 1958), pp. 46-48.

⁴³⁴ "Adalet Mensucat Fabrikasında," *Hürbilet*, 31 July 1948. İzmir Trade Unions Association demanded that a certain amount of workers' earnings be exempted from taxes to maintain equal treatment both to workers and tradespeople. "İşçilere de Esnaf gibi Vergi Muaflığı Lazım," *Gece Postası*, 23 November 1957.

⁴³⁵ Z. Y. Hershlag, *Turkey: The Challenge of Growth* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. 319.

Narin's cotton weaving mill in Bakırköy, up to 90 percent of the workers earned less than the average earnings. In factories which depended heavily on female labor or employed new migrants from the village, the wage gap tended to be bigger.⁴³⁶ The wide wage dispersion between men and women, the high-skilled and the low-skilled, new migrants and established workers undoubtedly had adverse effects on the collective acting capability of the workers in the shop floor.

Wages always had been low and wage disparity always had been great in the industry. But not all workers were totally dependent on wage. Many divided their time between field and factory. For some workers industrial work was only a sideline in which they engaged temporarily when they needed cash for some purpose.⁴³⁷ Many others traveled between factory and field. Especially during the harvest season it was hard to keep these workers at the factory. It is a well recorded fact that until 1950s village and factory existed in a symbiotic relationship. They had to. Excluding the old imperial capital, public mills were all constructed in small provincial cities and towns.

The "peasant-worker" phenomenon has been a popular research subject among the labor historians who are tempted to work out whether the labor force during the early republican era exhibited a "working-class consciousness" or a "peasant mentality".⁴³⁸ However, these were not the categories which contemporaries often used in order to try to understand the situation. Contemporaries often regarded the issue with reference to low labor productivity and economic inefficiency caused by high labor mobility. Admittedly strong

⁴³⁶ The employer of the Adalet Mensucat pointed to the fact that many firms preferred to employ new migrants since they paid less to them. Atif İlmen, "İşçi Sendika Hareketlerinde Unutulan Esas Dava", *Mensucat Meslek Dergisi*, vol. 2, no. 3 (March 1949), p.71.

⁴³⁷ Nusret Ekin, *Türkiye'nin Sanayileşmesinde "Köylü – Şehirli İşçi"ler* (İstanbul: Sermet Matbaası, 1960).

⁴³⁸ See, for instance, Yıldırım Koç, "Türkiye'de 1923-1950 Döneminde Daimi İşçi Sıkıntısı," *Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi*, vol 18, no. 168 (June 1994).

links between factory and field curtailed the industrialization efforts because mills tended to work to the agricultural calendar and it was virtually impossible for managers to instill industrial discipline to those workers who could easily quit the work.⁴³⁹ Many observers of the time, industrialists as well as experts, believed that rationalization of the industry was the foremost issue to be tackled if Turkey were to become an industrial country. Labor productivity had to be increased and labor force had to be geared towards obtaining the rhythm and discipline of industrial work. The peasant-worker phenomenon was discussed by these observers under such a broad agenda.⁴⁴⁰

Depending on the writings of these early observers, recent studies of early republican period class formation accept the fact of high rates of labor turnover and absenteeism and stress the fact of the workers' connections with the countryside as being responsible for this historic lack of permanent attachment to factory employment.

There are numerous examples of high worker mobility in textile mills reflected in turnover rates. At the Kayseri Textile Factory, the staff was renewed five times between 1935 and 1940. At the Woolen Cloth Factory in Bursa the turnover rate was 64.8 percent in 1941.⁴⁴¹ The ratio for the workers who had left their job in one of the important enterprises of the period, İstanbul Mensucat Santral was 67 percent in 1947 and 64 percent in 1948. The ratio of workers who started to work in the same enterprise in the same period was 57 percent

⁴³⁹ A classic account of the importance of the link between the rural economy and industry in the Tsarist Russia, is provided in Theodore H. von Laue, "Russian Peasants in the Factory 1892-1904," *The Journal of Economic History*, vol.21, no.1, (March 1961). For the implications of the problem on efforts to increase labor productivity during the NEP period, see Chris Ward, *Russia's Cotton Workers and the New Economic Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴⁴⁰ Nusret Ekin, *Türkiye'nin Sanayileşmesinde "Köylü – Şehirli İşçi"ler* (İstanbul: Fakülteler Matbaası, 1970).

⁴⁴¹ Yıldırım Koç, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Tarihi, Olaylar- Değerlendirmeler* (Ankara: Yol-iş Sendikası Yayınları, 1996), p. 70.

in 1947, 76.5 percent in 1948 and 45 percent in 1949. In a spinning mill in Yedikule 59 percent of workers left the job in 1949.⁴⁴²

This view of the industry, however, changed dramatically during the 1950s. Still many workers kept their ties with the land. Any mill was likely to be shut down or go to reduction in force due to shortages of raw materials or machine parts or because of some sudden downturn in the economy at large. Wage dependency left the working class family dangerously exposed and therefore a hold in the land still seemed to be a sound form of insurance for some workers. Yet the growing influx of workers in the course of the 1950s created new networks of kinship and *hemşerilik* (the institution of fellow- townsman relationships) in the city. Such primordial relationships were put into service to strengthen the bonds of the workers to the urban space and the industrial work.⁴⁴³ Personalized recruitment, family hiring system and patriarchal bonds in many small scale private mills provided security belts for workers against the uncertainties of the market environment. The family hiring system was particularly prevalent among the immigrant families who came from Bulgaria in 1951 and 1952. Employers preferred immigrant families equally because most of them lived close to the mills, they were often more productive and some of them were exempt from taxes for a number of years. Therefore they were more attached to the industrial work than any other group.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² Nusret Ekin, “Memleketimizde İşçi Devri Araştırmaları ve Neticeleri,” in *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları 9-10-11. Kitap* (İstanbul: 1960), p. 153. For other examples from textile mills see, “İş Kanunu ile İlgili Henry Stevens’in Raporları”, BCA Catalog no. [30.01/23.130.1].

⁴⁴³ See Debetsky, “Kinship, Primordial Ties, and Factory Organization in Turkey”.

⁴⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that in a relatively new survey on the organization of production and the application of management techniques in textile manufacturing firms in Bursa, it was observed that managers and employers tended to employ immigrant families from Bulgaria since immigrants were believed to be more efficient at the point of production and more loyal to the firm compared to native workers. Theo Nichols and Nadir Suğur, *Global İşletme, Yerel Emek: Türkiye’de İşçiler ve Modern Fabrika* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p. 100-101.

If those possessing land had some insurance since they were not completely wage dependent, those with a house in the city were equally fortunate since they were free of urban overcrowding and rack rents.⁴⁴⁵ A 1950 survey of the Employment Office found out that the mobility of workers in İstanbul was in decline as squatter settlements were growing around industrial plants.⁴⁴⁶

Undoubtedly the number and proportion of operatives drawn from the peasantry changed from city to city and from factory to factory. In the mills established in provincial towns the proportion was much higher than in mills established in large cities.⁴⁴⁷ Fındıkoğlu's monographic study on the Defterdar Mill reveals that many working class families of Eyüp had been permanent settlers in the area for decades and turnover rates were low in a remarkable manner in the textile plants of Eyüp area. Even among those families who came recently to the city, very few families had interest in the rural economy.⁴⁴⁸ Particularly in the Defterdar mill turnover rate was as low as 33 percent in 1951 and 20 percent in 1958 and was still dropping after that year.⁴⁴⁹ Average labor turnover for public sector textile mills in İstanbul was calculated at 7.3 percent in 1963.⁴⁵⁰ One important factor that kept turnover rates low in public sector mills was the effective incentive methods employed in order to encourage

⁴⁴⁵ As seen in Chapter 1, having title to their own home bore much more significance for workers than for any social group. As a result, rates of home ownership among workers were higher than their incomes might suggest. In the late 1950s, the home ownership rate for skilled and unskilled workers in İstanbul was above that for self employed professionals.

⁴⁴⁶ Ekmel Zaidil, "İş ve İşçi Bulma Hizmeti, Mahiyeti ve Vazifeleri," in *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları 4. Kitap* (İstanbul: 1951), p.27.

⁴⁴⁷ See Sakıp Sabancı's Speech in *Tekstil Semineri, 12-14 Temmuz 1971* (Ankara: Sümerbank Yayınları, 1971), p. 45.

⁴⁴⁸ Fındıkoğlu, pp.15-16.

⁴⁴⁹ Ahmet Seyfettin Şimşek, *Feshane Mensucat Fabrikası* (İstanbul: Öztürk Basımevi, 1960), p. 59.

⁴⁵⁰ Kunkel, p.34

workers to serve long periods in the mill. In Sümerbank plants particularly each worker was paid a seniority premium according to the length of service.⁴⁵¹

Admittedly, turnover rates were significantly different among the private textile mills. A later survey revealed that labor turnover rates in the cotton textile combines in İstanbul varied between 18 percent and 50 percent.⁴⁵² According to the survey, however, the role of the social origin among the reasons for labor turnover was significantly low. The industry encountered some problems in recruiting a stable and qualified labor force for a number of other reasons.

While it is true that some workers had been on the shop floor for a long time and others had come only recently, it is not possible to deduce workers' responses by appealing to a set of social antecedents. High labor turnover in individual mills, on the other hand, is clearly compatible with low rates of departure from the industry. In other words labor turnover in individual mills must not be correlated automatically with a return to the countryside. To the extent that observers were accurately reporting labor turnover, they were only reporting what went on in individual mills with which they had experience. It was impossible for them to identify the destination of a worker who departed. Moreover, as one contemporary who studied the issue noted, even if there had been a high labor turnover in the industry it is possible that it was generated by a very small segment of the working force.⁴⁵³

However, very few studies provided evidence for the continuity of labor force in the industry. Akarlı's study revealed that male workers left the mills usually when they found

⁴⁵¹ Şimşek, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁵² Hüseyin D. Akarlı, "A Comparative Study of Wage Administration Policies and Problems of Public and Private Sector Cotton Textile Mills in İstanbul" (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1968), p. 43.

⁴⁵³ Nusret M. Ekin, *Sanayimizdeki Yüksek İşçi Devrinin Tesirleri ve Bu Hususta Alınabilecek Tedbirler* (İstanbul: Sermet Matbaası, 1960), p. 23.

jobs which were more highly paid and offered better working conditions.⁴⁵⁴ Zaim's study confirmed that in textile mills of İstanbul high rates of labor turnover largely were due to the shifting of workers from plant to plant.⁴⁵⁵ Among the reasons for the termination of employment contracts, layoffs took the first place in Defterdar by 20-32 percent during the period.⁴⁵⁶ Moreover, although forbidden by law, lock-outs were integral to the industrial life in the 1950s. Employers could lock-out workers during seasonal crises or in order to deter them from the demands of wage increase or from any other "excessive" demands related to workplace conditions and terms of employment.⁴⁵⁷

For women, however, leaving the mill often meant leaving the industry since marriage and childbirth were the major reasons among women for quitting the mill.⁴⁵⁸ Maternity was the major factor for the termination of employment contracts of female workers. In 1956, for instance, maternity was as high as 29.1 among the reasons for quitting the job.⁴⁵⁹ Compulsory military service often came the third on the list. However, only 5 percent of workers in 1951

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴⁵⁵ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler*, p. 314.

⁴⁵⁶ Şimşek, p. 65.

⁴⁵⁷ "40 Tütün İşçisine Ansızın Yol Verildi," *İstanbul Ekspres*, 10 August 1952; "Lastik İşkolunda Bir Lokavt Hadisesi," *Cumhuriyet*, 17 November 1959; "Açıkta Kalan 750 İşçi", *Gece Postası*, 14 June 1954.

⁴⁵⁸ One of the personnel managers observed that female workers often left the mill in the autumn time, for it was the time for young women to get married. Akarlı, p.44.

⁴⁵⁹ Contemporaries often emphasized that the lack of day nurseries and breast-feeding rooms at the mills left women with no choice but quit their jobs after marriage. According to one observer only two tobacco factories in Cibali and Üsküdar provided day care service in 1946. See Celal Dinçer, "Kadın İşçilerimiz, Kreş ve Çocuk Yuvası İhtiyacımız," *Çalışma*, no. 8 (July 1946). Infact a 1953 decree of the council of ministers made it obligatory for large undertakings to establish nurseries in two years. However in 1957 only in a few private sector mills nurseries had been opened. See "İşverenler Kreş Yapmak İstemiyor", *Gece Postası*, 17 Kasım 1957. In the Defterdar Mill a nursery was opened as late as 1956. "Defterdar Mensucat Fabrikası", *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* cilt 8, p. 4344. In 1959, it was reported that a nursery was reopened very recently in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Cotton Mill. "Bakırköy Fabrikası Kreşinde 90 Kadar İşçi Çocuğuna Bakılıyor", *Gece Postası*, 1 January 1959. On the other hand, it is worth adding that some contemporaries disclaimed the link between day nurseries and job continuity. Henri Stevens, who wrote extensive reports on labor law reform, noted that he had seen no direct relationship between the social provisions and turnover rates in the workplaces he traveled. Even in large factories where nurseries had been established, women partially benefitted from the service. See İş kanunu ile ilgili Henry Stevens'in raporları, BCA [Catalog no. 030.01/ 23.130..1].

left the mill in order to move to the village in the harvest time. This ratio was nearly zero in the mid-1950s, but climbed again in the second half of the decade.⁴⁶⁰

Turnover rates were higher in the mills established in countryside compared to those in industrial cities; in private mills compared to public establishments; in large scale factories compared to small scale workshops; and among women compared to men. One survey in the mid-1950s suggested that about 60 percent of male workers in İstanbul stayed in the same workplace for five or more years. This was perceived as an improvement in the eyes of many contemporaries.⁴⁶¹

So far the remarkable development of textile industry and the workforce it generated in the post-war period has been examined. Particular stress was given to the ways which operatives were divided by gender, trade, skill and commitment to factory work. But there is no contradiction here. Workers were clearly capable of perceiving a community of interest and acting in concert when threatened by incompetent, heavy-handed employers and the novel stimulus of market forces. Below we shall have a closer look at the working class experiences inside the factory on the shop floor. We hope to see how the labor process which had undergone a profound transformation in the period shaped the working class culture and struggles.

Organizing the Production: Labor Discipline and Scientific Management in Mills

In this part of the chapter the organization of work – that is, the labor process- in textile workplaces will be explored. We hope to show here that the reconstruction of labor

⁴⁶⁰ Şimşek, p. 65. For the figures of 1948-1949, see Başbakanlık Umumi Murakabe Heyeti, *Sümerbank-Defterdar Yünlü Sanayii Müessesesi 1949 Yılı Raporu* (Ankara: 1950).

⁴⁶¹ Ekin, *Sanayimizdeki Yüksek İşçi Devrinin Tesirleri*, p. 25.

processes and of cash-earnings, of breaks, of articulation of needs and anxieties should enable a specific understanding of particular workers' lives and politics. The primary subject matter of the discussion will be the weavers in textile mills. Yet to understand their particular experience of the labor process it is necessary to take a closer look at the experiences of weavers employed in small manufacturing units. In doing this we do not aim to make simple comparisons. It will be argued that the working conditions and the labor process in small manufacturing shops and the labor market structure generated in small manufacturing (in our case, "Mahmutpaşa weaving shops") had broad influences on the labor process in larger textile mills. In other words small manufacturing and factory production fed one another throughout the period and this situation had comprehensive implications on the structuring of labor process and working class action on the shop floor.

In such a research, the characteristics of the contexts can be derived from contemporary reports given by outsiders, or occasionally by participant observers, as well as from the memoirs of those involved. But it also can be derived from evidence which was produced with seemingly technical purposes, such as factory regulations, machine accounts and wage systems.

The reconstruction of the labor process during the period came with the introduction of the scientific management techniques in large scale plants in the industry. That is why we are beginning the section with a deliberation on such techniques that aimed to establish managerial control and discipline on labor power in order to maximize productivity. Particular emphasis will be given to the importance of piece rates compensation schemes not only because the wage policy was the foremost instrument in the hands of scientific management to instill in workers a greater sense of time discipline, but also because it became a source of ongoing grievances among workers, and frequent rate cuts which fed the feeling of insecurity and injustice in workers provided a drive and pretext for action on the shop floor. In other

words, the struggle between the capitalists' interest to speed up production and the workers' concern for retaining control over the pace of the work became a vital issue with the introduction of scientific management techniques in the industry.

Scientific management, which has been associated with Taylorism, had been in the air long before the 1950s. Taylorism as an idea had been introduced to Turkey probably in the late 1930s and was translated into some kind of reality in the early 1940s. But only in the early 1950s, when economies of scale was achieved to a certain degree and more capital-intensive technologies were employed, could scientific management techniques flourish in a more full sense.

Scientific management, in essence, is an attempt to apply the methods of science to the increasingly complex problems of the control of labor in rapidly growing capitalist enterprises. Taylor's work belonged to this chain of development of management methods and organization of labor throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Many elements of which Taylor wrote were not new with the Taylor system. The thrust towards standardization of tools and tasks, the increased use of semiskilled and unskilled workers were tendencies that had long been evident in American economic development. Payment by result systems had also been in use long before Taylor. The piece rate itself was a carry-over from the old putting out system where merchants and master craftsmen subcontracted to smaller craftsmen to complete the product at home. In the nineteenth century it was embraced by the employers as a practical instrument for stimulating intensified work.⁴⁶² Even in Turkey, in the Feshane mill a very small proportion of workers worked in piece rates as early as

⁴⁶² For this point, see Joel Mokyr, "The Rise and Fall of the Factory System: Technology, Firms and Households Since the Industrial Revolution," Paper prepared for the Carnegie-Rochester Conference on macroeconomics, Pittsburgh, November 17-19, 2000. Available at <http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~jmokyr/pittsburgh.PDF>.

1915.⁴⁶³ Yet the significance of Taylorism was, as Richard Edwards suggested, that “it showed the possibilities of applying corporate resources to the control problem in a more systematic way.”⁴⁶⁴

Taylor’s work began in the 1880s, but it was not until the 1890s that he began to lecture and publish results. By the turn of the century his ideas won him a strong following among capitalists and managers. The spread of the Taylor approach was in no way limited to the United States and England. Within a short time it became popular in all industrial countries and also gained adherents in less industrialized countries.⁴⁶⁵ The approach came to Turkey probably through the German scholars, who built the industrial relations discipline at the İstanbul University in the late 1930s. In Germany, the Taylor approach was known simply as *rationalization*.⁴⁶⁶

In Turkey, too, the Taylorist techniques became known as rationalization. Industrial magazines began publishing introductory essays on Taylorism in the late 1930s. By the early 1940s, there were a plenty of articles published on academic journals for promoting the rationalization movement. Especially the Taylorist wage systems were attractive to rationalizers. Flat rates led to the unproductive use of capital, contended one rationalizer; workers might be at their machines for only five out of an eight hour shift. On the other hand, an operative paid by piece rates was not late for work, did not spend the working time visiting

⁴⁶³ Mustafa Erdem Kabadayı, “Working in a Fez Factory in Istanbul in the Late Nineteenth Century: Division of Labour and Networks of Migration Formed Along Ethno-Religious Lines,” *International Review of Social History*, no. 54 (2009), Supplement, p. 76.

⁴⁶⁴ Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 98.

⁴⁶⁵ See David Kucera, “Labor-Management Relations in Twentieth-Century Japan: A Review Essay,” *International Labor and Working Class History*, no. 58 (Fall 2000).

⁴⁶⁶ Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), p. 91.

other departments or chatting with friends, nor did he leave his work often and often for a smoke.⁴⁶⁷

As has been noted the piece rate wage systems was a primary method for strengthening the employer's hand in the struggle to speed up production. Marx saw piecework as the form of wage payments most suited to industrial capitalism because it ensured a maximum intensity of labor and stimulated competitive bidding between workers.⁴⁶⁸ However, the historical experiences made it clear to the employers that when it is not supported by other mechanisms of control, workers, who had the private information about the nature of their jobs, were able to regulate piece-work and so turn it from an instrument of subordination to one of resistance.⁴⁶⁹ Richard Edwards summarizes the historical record as follows:

Managers' disability to control soldiering resulted from their inadequate knowledge of the actual techniques of production. Most of the specific expertise -for example, knowledge of how quickly production tasks could be done- resided in workers...

Piece-rates always carried the allure of payment for actual labor done (rather than labor power), thus promising an automatic solution to the problem of translating labor power into labor. Two difficulties intervened to spoil this solution. [First,] paying workers only according to their self-established pace ... became unattractive if it meant that the machinery ran at less than full speed; in this case the piece-rate

⁴⁶⁷ See, for instance, Fahri Perkin, "Fabrikalarda Verimin Arttırılması," *Endüstri*, vol. 23, no. 8 (April 1938); Burhan Ergin, "Taylor ve Sistemi," *İktisadi Yürüyüş*, no. 119 (1944); Burhan Ergin, "Taylor'un Hem İşçiyi Hem de Patronu Memnun Eden Fikirleri," *İktisadi Yürüyüş*, no. 123 (1945); Ahmet Ali Özekan, "İstihsal Cephesinde Tasarruf: Türkiye Devlet Sanayiinin Rasyonalizasyon Problemlerine Bir Bakış," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, no. 2 (1943); Sadi Günel, "İşin İşçiye Göre Ayarlanması," *Çalışma Dergisi*, no. 12 (1946); A. Kemal Karadayı, "En İyi Randıman Nasıl Alınabilir? İşçi ve Ustabaşı Münasebetlerinin Islahı," *Çalışma Dergisi*, no. 8 (June 1946); Sait Kandan, "Rasyonelleşme ve Çırak Yetiştirme Meselesi," *Çalışma Dergisi*, no. 9 (July 1946).

⁴⁶⁸ "Piece-wages allow the capitalist to make a contract for so much per piece with the most important worker – in manufacture, with the chef of some group, in mines with the extractor of the coal, in the factory with the actual machine-worker – at a price for which this man himself undertakes the enlisting and the payments of his assistants. Here the exploitation of the worker by capital takes place through the medium of the exploitation of one worker by another. Given the system of piece-wages, it is naturally in the personal interest of the worker that he should strain his labour-power as intensely as possible; this in turn enables the capitalist to raise the normal degree of intensity of labor more easily... It is apparent that the piece-wage is the form of wage most appropriate to the capitalist mode of production." Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume I* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 695-697.

⁴⁶⁹ A discussion on the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the labor process as a formative influence on the development of labor in society is provided in Richard Price, "The Labour Process and Labour History," *Social History*, vol. 8, no. 1 (January 1983).

would cut down on the labor cost, but it would not necessarily bring profits. Thus, capitalists could never be indifferent to the workers' pace.

[Second,] piece-rates always contained an incentive for workers to deceive employers and restrict output. Since the pay structure was necessarily anchored on some expectation of how quickly a job could be done, the system clearly led workers to make jobs appear to take as long as possible.⁴⁷⁰

Therefore as long as management depended upon its workers for information about how fast the job could be done there was no way to make piece rate method deliver its promise.

This inherent ambiguity of piece-work was well recognized by Taylor. To overcome this ambiguity, Taylor offered the "scientific study of work" as a new independent source of knowledge, for he believed that unless management knew in detail how production occurred, precise direction of work tasks was impossible. The "time study" method was developed as part of his effort to gain control over the job. Time study may be defined as the measurement of elapsed time for each component operation of a work process; its prime instrument is the stopwatch calibrated in fractions of an hour, minute or second. This method of determining standards pursued by managers was complemented soon afterwards by a new line of development by Frank B. Gilbreth, one of Taylor's most prominent followers. His concept of "motion study" comprised the investigation and classification of the basic motions of the body, regardless of the particular and concrete form of the labor in which these motions were used.⁴⁷¹ Together "time-motion studies" would become popular and be effectively used to reduce the consumed time and the number of motions in performing a task in order to increase labor productivity.

⁴⁷⁰ Edwards, pp. 98-99. For other accounts of the history of failed attempts to install piece rate compensation systems, see Robert Gibbons, "Piece-Rate Incentive Schemes," *Journal of Labor Economics*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1987).

⁴⁷¹ Braverman, p. 173.

The interest with rationalizing the production process in Turkey did not remain limited to research papers. During the war time, when labor shortage became a more acute problem and labor productivity further decreased due to increased mobility, the Sümerbank and Etibank factories initiated attempts to improve rationalization. To force up productivity, a variant of individual piece rates, the Bedaux system, was introduced in most of these state owned factories in 1942/43. In the Bedaux system, first, the standard time for a job was determined by time and motion studies. Each minute of allowed time was called a point. Then a standard number of points were specified for the completion of each job. This system enforced the managerial control of the work process by enabling the management to record the output of any worker or department in units which showed at once if production was up to the standard the management desired.⁴⁷² As in other systems of payment by result, the Bedaux system aimed at maximizing labor productivity by rewarding workers for achieving tasks which was set at a high level. An International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) report wrote with enthusiasm about these early experiences with scientific management in 1951 as follows: “In recent years progress has been made in increasing the productive efficiency of state factories in terms of productivity per hour. This was particularly true during WWII when increased production could come only from better use of available facilities. This progress is in part attributable to the activities of PM’s High Control Board which sends specialists to study plant efficiency.”⁴⁷³

For example, in the workplaces of İzmit Sümerbank Cellulose Industrial Corporation, the time rates remained to be the principal wage system. Yet in 1942 wage policy underwent a

⁴⁷² We will return to this issue below when discussing the shop floor conditions in Santral Mensucat and Deferdar mills.

⁴⁷³ IBRD Economic Mission to Turkey, *The Economy of Turkey*, (Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1951), p. 114.

sea change and growing number of workers were paid by piece rates and received production premiums after that year. By 1945, more than half of the workforce was already paid by the piece.⁴⁷⁴ Likewise in the Bakırköy and Defterdar mills, more than half of the workers were working in piece rates at the end of the war.⁴⁷⁵ Although in a more limited scale, some large scale private sector mills also applied Taylorist innovations at around the same time.

However, early accounts of these experiments with Taylorist wage systems were not optimistic of the results. According to some observers if there were any gains from piece rates in these plants, it was very limited. For one thing, the system was complicated and employers often grew impatient long before the final elements were ready to be installed. In many firms managements, under pressure to obtain results, began taking shortcuts and the full system was never installed. Only a few firms, noted Özek, adopted proper scientific management, which included the progressive sub-division of work tasks, time and motion studies and more piecework. Moreover, scientific management envisaged a much more active role for managers and engineers in allocating and supervising work than was found under the old system. But the factories in Turkey lacked the sufficient number of professionals who knew the new management techniques.⁴⁷⁶ In comparison with the Western Europe countries, technicians

⁴⁷⁴ Uygur Kocabaşoğlu et. al., *SEKA Tarihi: Türkiye Selüloz ve Kağıt Fabrikalarının Tarihsel Gelişimi* (Ankara: Ajans Türk, 1996), p. 147.

⁴⁷⁵ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi*, p. 176.

⁴⁷⁶ Railway workers' experience with "work evaluation program" started in 1955. However the financial requirements to apply the program were not met and managers were not trained properly to understand and install the novelties. Consequently the recurrent attempts of managers to apply scientific methods remained unsuccessful to meet the desired ends. In a later article workers were complaining of the results of these unsuccessful attempts as follows: "*Değerlendirme sisteminin D.D. Yollarında çalışanlara uygulanmak istenmesi bize kalırsa yanlış bir harekettir. Çünkü bu sistemin ancak seri imalatta bulunan fabrikalarda tatbik edildiği takdirde istenilen randımanı vermektedir. Oysaki iş şartları değişik ve seri bir imalat sistemi içinde bulunmayan D. D. Yolları işçilerine bu sistemi tatbik etmek hiçbir zaman arzulanan randımanı vermemektedir... Fikirlerimiz yanlış anlaşılması. Biz işçiler olarak her türlü yeniliği sever ve kabul ederiz. Ancak bu memleket işçilerinin hayatına uygun olmayan bir sistemin de zorla tatbik etmek istenilişi karşısında hiçbir zaman susmayacağımızı, hatalı noktaların giderilmesi hususunda yapıcı tenkidleri yapmaktan geri durmayacağız... 35-40 bin işçinin ve bir o kadar da aile efradının geçim sıkıntısı içinde kalmalarına sebep olan bu sistemin işçilere yararlı olabilecek*

were always scarce even though many foreign engineers and experts were invited to the country from the second half of the 1930s onwards.⁴⁷⁷ Consequently, managements of many state-run enterprises abandoned piece rate compensation schemes in most of the departments in the factories. In the Defterdar mill, for instance, the proportion of workers paid at piece rates fell to 48 percent in 1948 and further to 37 percent in 1954.⁴⁷⁸ Foreign operated large undertakings which had the opportunity to make use of the know-how of foreign managers and engineers were probably more successful in introducing Taylorist innovations in the labor process.⁴⁷⁹

There were other problems which hindered the success of scientific management in the mills. Some of them might stem from the unstable labor markets. Under scientific management, wages were individualized and, through the device of piece rates, geared to each unit of output. Each worker was assigned an output quota, or norm, and outstanding work performance, defined as production above the norm, was to be rewarded. In theory, as more and more of the workforce moved over to piece rates, wages could become a powerful lever for raising productivity. In practice, however, managers and especially foremen, desperate to hold onto the “scarce” labor power, readily credited workers for fictitious work and, in any case, could award supplementary payments and bonuses to workers to make up for deductions that resulted from the failure to fulfill norms. For instance in Çıkvaşili Textile Mill established in Bakırköy, this was exactly the reason of the failure of the piece rates wage system. The

*şekilde işleyebilmesini sağlayacak tedbirlerin alınmasını beklemekteyiz.” Mehmet Gökğür, “Demiryolu İşçileri ve Değerlendirme Sistemi”, *İşçinin Sesi*, 5 September 1960.*

⁴⁷⁷ Ahmet Ali Özeken, “Türkiye’de Sanayi İşçileri,” in *İçtimai Siyaset Konferansları Birinci Kitap* (İstanbul: 1948), p.76. Şefkati Türkekul, “Tekstil Mühendisleri İşbaşında,” *Mensucat Meslek Dergisi*, vol 4, no. 5 (May 1951). See also Alfred Isaac, “Ücret Sistemleri,” in *İçtimai Siyaset Konferansları İkinci Kitap* (İstanbul: İÜ İktisat Fakültesi İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü, 1949), p. 55.

⁴⁷⁸ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi*, p. 176.

⁴⁷⁹ See, for example, “General Elektrik Türkiye Ampül Fabrikası,” *İşçi Gazetesi*, 10 March 1952.

employer had to abandon the new arrangements in the face of the rising worker frustration manifested in the higher turnover and growing unrest in the plant. To keep the workers at work the engineers and foremen had to revise and modify the rates again and again which rendered the whole system meaningless.⁴⁸⁰

There were still other complications which emanated from the lack of standardization of the tools and materials used in production; problems we may call of “technological idiosyncrasy.”⁴⁸¹ In a textile factory established in Aksaray the management failed to establish a proper Taylorist wage policy because it depended on imported thread and the problems encountered in foreign exchange rationing was making it virtually impossible to standardize the raw materials used in production. This lack of standardization meant different productivity and output levels in every cycle of production. It proved to the managers that imposing piece rates under this condition only fed the workers’ sense of unreliability and threatened the work peace on the shop floor.⁴⁸²

An additional source of idiosyncrasy resulted from the employment of machines of different ages and of different types. In such cases, workers in spinning and weaving departments might have to spend more or less time to clean or repair their machines, for example. Weaving looms often stopped since weavers found themselves rejoining broken threads more or less frequently. Additionally weavers might have to modify their work practices in response to variations in the quality of semi-finished goods received from other departments or factories. Under such conditions, the machinery deviated from the

⁴⁸⁰ Zaim, *İstanbul’da Mensucat Sanayiinin Binyesi*, p. 188. “Çıkvaşılı Fabrikası 130 İşçisine Yol Veriyor,” *Gece Postası*, 6 Ocak 1957.

⁴⁸¹ I borrow the term from Chris Ward, “Languages of Trade or a Language of Class? Work Culture in Russian Cotton Mills in the 1920s,” in Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Gregory Suny (eds.), *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 197.

⁴⁸² For other examples, see Zaim, *İstanbul’da Mensucat Sanayiinin Binyesi*, p. 188.

standardizing and deskilling intentions and became idiosyncratic. In the Jakarlı Textile Manufacturing Corporation established in Samatya, the reason for the abandonment of piece rates wages scheme was the lack of standardization. Since the speed and physical condition of the machinery and other equipment did not match with each other, the total output of each operative changed from day to day. This rendered impossible on the part of management to fix rates for any job.⁴⁸³ Frequent power cuts in mills, which were common in the 1950s, were another source of delays in the production process and ruined the efforts of standardization.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the rationalization and productivity problems in Turkish industry came to the fore once again on the discussions pertaining to the industrial organization. Early experiences with scientific management were not very successful, yet the ground for applying it was developing rapidly after the end of the war. As we have seen above, many existing mills were being modernized⁴⁸⁴ and a number of large private mills were being established.⁴⁸⁵ The new imperatives to capital intensive productivity pressed upon employers to demand and exercise a greater degree of direct managerial control. Moreover since the end of the war a more stable labor force was developing in the big urban centers of the country which could be subjected to management control and work discipline more easily.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p.193.

⁴⁸⁴ Many weaving mills obtained newer technology machines in the late 1940s and early 1950s, financed partially by the credits extended by IDBT. See Clark, pp. 85-86. Avni Erakalın remembers that most of the new machinery (automatic looms) in textiles were imported from Germany. However, those employers who received credits from the Marshall Plan Private Enterprise Fund had to purchase US made machinery.

⁴⁸⁵ According to Braverman, Taylorism was applicable in particular situations and in particular industries where the scales of production were adequate to support the efforts and costs involved in rationalizing them. It was for this reason above all that Taylorism coincided with the growth of production and its concentration in ever larger corporate units in the latter part of the nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries.

⁴⁸⁶ David Montgomery argues that it was after immigrants to the US had accustomed themselves to the discipline of industrial work and had learned the rules of the game that scientific management gained widespread appeal among managerial classes, even it failed to eliminate restrictive practices. See David Montgomery, *Workers'*

The need to apply Taylorist methods in Turkish industry to exert labor discipline and productivity also was discussed in the National Assembly in the early 1950s. During the parliamentary talks on the 1951 Ministry of Labor budget, some deputies expressed their anxiety about the low labor productivity recorded in industrial plants and the negative effect of this situation on the development of modern industry. This was most vividly expressed by Maraş deputy Emin Soysal as follows:

If we are to apply Taylorism in our factories, barely twenty percent of our workers could be successful under that system. This is my personal opinion that when you watch a cellulose or brick worker on job in our country, you will see that the work that can be finished in two hours by a European or an American worker, takes the complete day of our workers.⁴⁸⁷

In the meantime there were recurrent reports and articles in the newspapers concerning the problems of low labor productivity, high unit labor costs and irrationality of the compensation systems used in the industry. For instance, Cevat Nizami wrote in *Hürriyet* newspaper in October 1950 that decreasing labor costs were the major economic problem of the country. This was especially important in the face of the backward structure of industrial wages. According to Nizami in order to improve labor productivity, which was the only way to reduce labor costs, scientific management techniques and rationalized compensation methods should be applied more broadly in industry.⁴⁸⁸ In a similar vein, in

Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology and Labor Struggles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), especially chapter 2. Montgomery provides an insightful discussion of the American experience with workplace rationalization and particularly the powerful sense of constant change felt by workers. In a similar vein Chris Ward argues that in the Russian setting Taylorism as a practice was most successful in the parts of the country where labor was more settled and links to the land became more loose. See Ward, p. 208

⁴⁸⁷ TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, term 4, session 4, vol 24-2, 25 December 1950, p. 1243. “Taylorizmi biz fabrikalarımızda tatbik etsek bizim işçilerin o sistem dahilinde yüzde 20’si ancak iş sahasında muvaffak olabilir. Bir kağıt veya tuğla amelesini seyrettiğiniz vakit rasyonel çalışan Avrupa veya Amerika işçisinin 2 saatte yapacağı işi bizimki asgari sekiz saatte yapabiliyor dersem bunu takribi olarak ve kendi kanaatim olarak söylediğimi takdir buyurursunuz.” For similar observations on Zonguldak coal mine workers, see Asım Us, *Hatıra Notları* (İstanbul: Ekspres Matbaası, 1966), pp. 272-274.

⁴⁸⁸ BCA [Catalog no. 490.01/204.812.2].

another article that appeared in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper “the question of raising productivity” was also identified as the most serious problem of the industry. The author suggested that the “scientific knowledge which had been in use in the West for the last 25 years” be applied in Turkey in order to “integrate labor power in the industry in the most productive way.”⁴⁸⁹

Conventionally, the textile industry was the principal locus of applications of scientific management and piece rates. Competitive bidding was forcing first and foremost the textile industry to adopt scientific management techniques. An ILO survey showed that by 1950, piece-work had become the principle method of payment in textile industry in a wide range of countries including the developing countries such as Egypt, India, Uruguay, Bolivia and Brazil. In developed countries such as the United Kingdom, the USA, the Netherlands and Switzerland the spinning, knitting and weaving sections of the wool and cotton industries worked nearly without exception on the basis of piece-rates.⁴⁹⁰ Furthermore, cross country comparisons indicated that labor productivity in the Turkish textile industry lagged far behind that in the European countries. A later OECD report for European conditions provided insights as to what sized units were economical. The report recommended that in an optimum weaving mill a single worker could handle from 25 to 40 automatic looms depending on the type of material to be produced.⁴⁹¹ In Turkey, however, weavers even in large scale plants handled 2-12 looms, depending generally on the “workplace customs” and on the type and age of the machines used in the mill. Therefore the weaving textile industry was under a heavy pressure to take measures for improving efficiency and productivity.

⁴⁸⁹ Nizamettin Ali Sav, “İşçi Meselelerimiz,” *Cumhuriyet*, 30 August 1948.

⁴⁹⁰ International Labor Office, *Payment by Results* (Geneva: 1951), p.78.

⁴⁹¹ Kunkel, pp. 77-78.

In the pages below the application of scientific management techniques on specific cases in the industry and the reaction it induced in the shop floor among workers will be analyzed. Special attention will be put on the weavers since their trade was considered to be more a skilled and highly paid profession than any other job in the sector. The limited discretionary power that the weavers enjoyed annoyed the employers who wanted to increase the productivity in their factories.

But before, to understand the tug of war between employers and weavers, we need to have a closer look at the weaving trade during the period. Below the implications of the persistence of small scale weaving industry for working class formation and for the specific experiences of weavers will be briefly discussed. The persistence of small manufacturing centered around Mahmutpaşa narrowed down the labor market for employers who sought to recruit experienced weavers and thus became a very important factor that enabled weavers in the larger undertakings to act and resist more effectively against the managerial control techniques. A “dual labor market” existed for experienced-skilled weavers during the whole period.

The labor process prevalent in the Mahmutpaşa small weaving shops is also interesting to explore for it points to another mode of labor control in which the push for increasing productivity was provided not by technological change, but by more despotic ways of intensifying work and lengthening the working hours.

Mahmutpaşa Weavers: Working in Small-Scale Production

A small scale enterprise usually is defined in terms of the number of workers employed. Another definition classifies small firms as those that primarily use family labor and apprentices. Still other definitions rely on the amount of finance required to start the business or the technological capacity of the firm. Here we use the first definition since the

national statistics and other studies in Turkey often adapted this criterion. For instance, the Turkish Commercial Code and the Transaction Tax Law defined small scale firms as those which employed less than five persons without taking into account whether they were family members or not. The 1936 Labor Code did not make any definition, yet by covering those workplaces which employed ten or more persons, it implied that small-scale enterprises employed less than ten persons.⁴⁹²

After 1945 it became ordinary to use “number of workers” criteria and define a firm as small scale if it employs less than ten persons. According to the estimations of the Ministry of Labor, there were at least 100,000 weavers in small manufacturing units in 1945.⁴⁹³ This figure was much bigger from that of the 1920s and was affected particularly by the curtailment of imports and the shortage of labor in big industry during the war years. During the war the national income declined by two or three percent annually. The private manufacturing sector confronted difficulties principally because of problems in securing imports. However, small manufacturing in textile, especially small-scale weaving firms, profited both from the decline in imports and the low labor productivity in the state sector. At the end of the war small manufacturing accounted for 25 percent of the total cotton textile production in Turkey. State production also managed to increase its output during the war.⁴⁹⁴ However, still one fourth of the textile production was provided through imports. In the

⁴⁹² See Samet Ağaoğlu, “Küçük Sanat Davası,” in *Türkiye Ekonomisinin Başlıca Meseleleri*, ed. Türk İktisat Cemiyeti (Ankara: Recep Ulusoğlu Basımevi, 1944), pp. 164-166; Orhan Tuna, *İstanbul Küçük Sanayii ve Bugünkü Meseleleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Neşriyatı No. 462, 1950), pp. 45-49.

⁴⁹³ *Çalışma Bakanlığı'nın İlk Yılı ve Hedefleri (5 Yıllık İş Programının Esasları)* (Ankara: Akın Matbaası, 1946), p.65. In the same year the number of hand looms in Turkey was estimated as 50 thousand. Necati Topçuoğlu, “Memleketimiz El Tezgahı Dokumacılığı Çalışmalarına Genel Bir Bakış,” *Çalışma Dergisi*, no. 3 (January 1946), p. 30.

⁴⁹⁴ Çağlar Keyder, “Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and in Republican Turkey, ca. 1800-1950” in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 147.

meantime older handlooms in small shops in big cities were replaced by pedal control looms and increasingly by more advance technology power looms.⁴⁹⁵ It seems that the dynamics of the industry in the aftermath of the war further supported the small manufacturing. The growth of mechanized spinning and the consequent increase in thread production served to preserve, and probably stimulate, the small scale weaving shops. For that simple reason a historical account of the working class in Turkey should incorporate the implication of the persistence of small scale weaving for working class formation and for the specific experiences of weavers in Turkey. As shall be discussed below the persistence of small scale weaving shops also had broader impacts on the historical development of labor relations and shop floor struggles of workers in larger weaving mills.

The Mahmutpaşa small scale weaving industry, too, was the product of wartime economic conditions.⁴⁹⁶ A report presented to the RPP General Secretariat in 1948 provides valuable information about the economic capacity of the weaving mills in the region. The report was prepared by four weaving mill employers who claimed to be the representatives of the “small employers in the Eminönü district.” Allowing for slight exaggeration, the data presented here clearly exhibit the importance of small weaving industry in Mahmutpaşa. According to the report, in 1948, the number of cotton and wool weaving looms employed in the Mahmutpaşa workshops was around 240. The figure included the handweaving looms, yet the great majority was power looms. The report maintained that the number of power looms in Mahmutpaşa was equal to that number in Defterdar factory, yet the production efficiency was 50 percent greater than both Defterdar and Hereke Sümerbank establishments. Moreover,

⁴⁹⁵ İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin “Savaşmayan Ülkenin Savaş Ekonomisi: Üretimden Tüketime Pamuklu Dokuma” in *Cumhuriyetin Harcı, 2. Kitap* (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), p.443; Muhlis Ete, “Türkiye’de Pamuklu ve Dokuma Sanayi,” *İktisadi Yürüyüş*, no. 54 (March 1942).

⁴⁹⁶ Kemal Sülker, “Mahmutpaşa’da İşçi ve İşverenlerin Çeşitli Derdi Var,” *Gece Postası*, 6 August 1952.

the report argued, this small scale manufacturing in the district amounted for the 35-40 percent of woolen cloth production in the country.⁴⁹⁷

The industry in Mahmutpaşa soared up in the early 1950s. According to the data provided by Mahmutpaşa Small Textile Industry Employers' Union,⁴⁹⁸ small weaving workplaces outside the scope of the Labor Code in the district amounted to 400 and the number of automatic looms was roughly 500 in 1954. 2300 workers were employed in these small shops which hired 1-3 persons.⁴⁹⁹ About an equal number of workers were estimated to be employed in other branches of textiles in the district. It is noteworthy that since the workplaces which employed 4-9 persons were included in the labor code after 1952, these figures left out many shops which could be regarded as small scale firms. According to Zaim, there were in the total about 900 textile manufacturing shops in the region by the mid-1950s.⁵⁰⁰ At about the same time Sülker wrote that there were around 8,000 workers employed in the Mahmutpaşa weaving shops and in other branches of textiles that were outside the scope of the Labor Law. Employers, Sülker argued, divided their workshops once again after 1952 to keep the number of workers below four.⁵⁰¹

By using the available archival resources and reports as well as newspaper articles we can bring into open the patterns of trading and the organization of labor process in the

⁴⁹⁷ BCA Catalog no. [490.01/1447.28.2]

⁴⁹⁸ It is interesting to note that at the head of the Mahmutpaşa Small Textile Industry Employers' Union was Sabahattin Selek whose name was respectfully accredited by Sülker for his efforts in the establishment of trade unions after 1947, even in a period when his efforts were not very much supported by his party. Selek was also active in the establishment of the Workers' Bureau of the governing party and became the editor of its publishing organ, *Hürbilek*, in 1948.

⁴⁹⁹ Sabahaddin Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler* (İstanbul: Sermet Matbaası, 1956), p. 120.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 147.

⁵⁰¹ Kemal Sülker, "Mahmutpaşa Dokuma İşçilerinin Ezeli Derdi," *Gece Postası*, 16 January 1956.

Mahmutpaşa small-scale weaving industry. In a 1947 report prepared by the National Assembly Commission which travelled across the country and visited tens of workplaces, small-scale industry in Mahmutpaşa region occupies a large space.⁵⁰² According to the report, in almost all shops sanitary conditions were awful in Mahmutpaşa. Most of the shops were located in old inns and *hamams* that had been constructed in the Byzantine or Ottoman times.⁵⁰³ High humidity and lack of fresh air were common characteristics of the shops. The majority of the shops were ice-cold in the winter and not lit properly. Baths, resting places, dressing rooms and toilets were, for the most part, nonexistent. Excessive manipulation of child labor was another typical feature of Mahmutpaşa plants. A deputy who wrote the pages concerning the working conditions in Mahmutpaşa in the report expressed his feelings as follows:

Having seen these textile workplaces, I need to confess my embarrassment for my objections to Ministry of Labor Legal Advisor Mr. Muslih Fer's legal arguments for extending the coverage of the Labor Law to those workplaces which employ three persons. Yet now I am in a position to demand the protection of even a single employee through the legal legislation of the Ministry of Labor, for he needs to be protected from this ruthless exploitation because he is the asset of the nation.⁵⁰⁴

What was most striking about these shops, however, was their phenomenal and endless efforts to evade the provisions of the Labor Code. About half of the firms in Mahmutpaşa,

⁵⁰² BCA Catalog no [490.01/728.495.5]. "Bazı Bölgelerdeki Fabrika İşyerleri Ve İşçilerin Genel Durumu Hakkında BMM Çalışma Komisyonundan Bir Grubun Hazırladıkları Rapor."

⁵⁰³ Workers cited some of the names of these inns where the most awful health and safety conditions prevailed: Uğurlu Han, Büyük Valde Han, Yeni Han, Yeşil Han, Abut Efendi Hanı. See Kemal Sülker, "Beşbin Mensucat İşçisi Durumlarını Açıklıyorlar," *Gece Postası*, 15 August 1949.

⁵⁰⁴ "(B)u mensucat yerlerini gördükten sonra mecliste Çalışma Bakanlığı'nın üç amele çalıştıran iş yerlerine kadar İş Kanununun Çalışma Bakanlığı Hukuk Müşaviri Muslih Fer'in kanuni müdafasına karşı bu iş yerlerini görmemiş olmam dolayısıyla sert ettiğim itirazlardan dolayı şimdi utanır vaziyette olduğumu bildirmek vicdanımın bir ifadesidir. Ben hatta şimdi bu yerleri gördükten sonra yaralı bir insan sıfatıyla amele adedini hesap etmeyerek bir kişi dahi çalışsa kendi hayatı ve milletin malı olmak hesabıyla imha israftan korunma kasdıyla Çalışma Bakanlığının mevzuatı arasına girmesini istemek vaziyetindeyim." BCA Catalog no. [490.01/728.495.5]. "Bazı Bölgelerdeki Fabrika İşyerleri Ve İşçilerin Genel Durumu Hakkında BMM Çalışma Komisyonundan Bir Grubun Hazırladıkları Rapor."

wrote the report, were small undertakings employing between five and nine workers. Yet an equal number of firms were larger factories and workshops employing 10 to 50 workers. These larger factories or workshops, which should have been subject to the Labor Code, were divided into several firms among shareholders or relatives of the owner in order to escape the regulations of the Labor Code. In such a way great majority of employers managed to keep their firms outside the scope of the Code. For instance, the Yakutuledo Textile Firm was divided into two manufacturing shops between the owner and his wife, each employing nine workers. Therefore the employer evaded both the Labor Code and the obligations of the transaction tax.⁵⁰⁵

Manipulating child labor was one common strategy employed in Mahmutpaşa in order to lower the labor costs and ensure a higher rate of return.⁵⁰⁶ Employers especially preferred the young sons of the workers for they paid them half the wage paid to adult weavers. In times of high demand ordinary labor might also be supplemented by labor of unpaid female family members as well as child labor. By manipulating child labor manufacturers could also evade the payment of transaction tax.⁵⁰⁷ Children often had to work at the looms long hours in order

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ The employment of children was regulated by the Public Health Law of 1930 as well as Labor Law as regards to age, occupation and working hours. Children under the age of 12 were forbidden to be employed in industrial undertakings. Those under the age of 16 might not be employed in any work for more than eight hours. Persons under 18 might not be employed in underground or underwater work, or in any industrial work during the night. See, Ahmet Makal, “Çocuktum, Ufacıktım: Türkiye’de 1920-1960 Döneminde Çocuk İşçiliği.” in *Ameleden İşçiye* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), pp. 330-331.

⁵⁰⁷ Workers were equally annoyed by the high transaction tax during the early 1950s which entailed a growing demand for child workers in the labor market. Child labor not only threatened jobs, it was also regarded as a moral danger. The below speech delivered by a unionist in the congress of the İstanbul Textile and Weaving Workers’ Trade Union in 1950 was typical in that manner:

“In all respects we observe the unfavorable effects of the transaction tax on the lives of working families. The law concerning the transaction tax restricts our job opportunities, threatens our jobs. It has become fashionable to employ little children among some of the employers due to the taxes. Some employers prefer young girls. There are some who seduce these poor little girls. The other day I read a report in the evening newspaper telling the story of an employer who has been brought to justice for seducing two little girls.” (*Muamele vergisinin aile*

to help their families and learn the trade. Early observations made by Gerhard Kessler⁵⁰⁸ and Orhan Tuna on the exploitation of child labor in small scale weaving shops provide an ample picture. Tuna's :

Aside from the very low wages, this exploitation stems from the unsanitary and uncontrollable working conditions... Generally each shop contains 5 to 8 looms, a condition which is worsening the ventilation of the narrow and dark workplaces. It is very difficult to depict the working conditions of these hundreds of children because of the cruelty it represents. One can see hundreds of them ranging between the ages of 9 and 10. Mostly, these children with pale eyes, scarred faces and weak bodies are no more than 14. One can observe repeating head and foot movements in these children as the result of monotonous and pedestrian nature of work performed without adequate nourishment. They move back and forth repeatedly.⁵⁰⁹

The massive manipulation of child labor consolidated the patriarchal organization of these workshops. Adult males dominated the weaving occupation.⁵¹⁰ Family hiring was an important foundation of this unit and many weavers brought their sons into the trade through apprenticeships. Women, too, were used to set up machines, wind the warp and tend machines. Specific tasks and wages were associated with sex and age, with unskilled work

hayatı üzerindeki fena tesirlerini her an görüyoruz. Muamele Vergisi Kanunu iş sahalarımızı daraltıyor. Çalışmayı tehdit ediyor. Bazı işverenlerin vergi korkusundan küçük çocuk çalıştırma işi moda haline geliyor. Bazı işverenler küçük kızları tercih ediyorlar. Ne yaptıklarını bilmeyecek yaşta iş hayatına dökülen kızları işgal edenler görülüyor. Geçen gün bir akşam gazetesinde yanında çalıştırdığı iki kızı işgal eden bir iş verenin adaletle teslim edildiğini okudum.) Kemal Sülker, "Mensucat İşçileri Şikayet ve Dileklerini Etraflıca Belirtti," *Gece Postası*, 7 November 1950.

⁵⁰⁸ Gerhard Kessler, "Türkiye'de Çocuk Say'ı," *İş Mecmuası*, vol. 9, no. 34 (April 1943).

⁵⁰⁹ Orhan Tuna, "Sanayide Çocuk Say'ı ve Çocuk Say'ının Korunmasına Matuf Mevzuat," *İş Mecmuası*, vol. 9, no. 34 (April 1943). "Bu istismar ücretlerin azlığından başka, bir de çalışma şartlarının son derece gayri sıhhi ve kontrolsüz olmasından tezahür etmektedir... Umumiyetle her dükkanda 5-8 tezgah vardır ki bu hal dar ve karanlık çalışma yerinin hava vaziyetini pek ağırlaştırmaktadır. Dükkanlarda görülen yüzlerce çocuğun çalışma vaziyetini anlatmak fecaati dolayısıyla pek müşküldür. Umumiyetle gözleri hasta, yüzleri yaralı ve vücutları cılız olan bu yavruların yaşları 14'ü geçmemektedir. 9-10 yaşlarında yüzlerce çocuğa tesadüf edilir. Gıdasız çalışmanın muttarit ve yeknesak gidişine katlanan bu çocuklarda, işlerinin itiyat ettirdiği ve çalışmadıkları zaman da mütemediyen tezahür eden baş ve ayak hareketleri görülür. Dururken sallanmaktadırlar."

⁵¹⁰ In this manner the weaving occupation resembled much more to the French and American cases than the English where traditionally the weavers were predominantly women. For a comparison between English and French cases, see Alain Cottureau, "The Distinctiveness of Working-Class Cultures in France, 1848-1900," in *Working-Class Formation*, Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (eds.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

going generally to women and children. The sexual division of labor was most prominent in the textile shops of Mahmutpaşa.⁵¹¹ In this way employment relations resembled Burawoy's ideal-type of patriarchal factory regimes.⁵¹² Employers assented to such employment schemes since they both saved considerable time and helped to maintain the loyalty of skilled male workers. The family hiring and immediate control over production relative to larger plants affirmed claims to a working class masculinity which was centered on freedom and independence. This particular situation was also reflected in the male-dominated membership structure of the trade union in Mahmutpaşa.⁵¹³ The family hiring system had also effect on the form of skill acquisition as fathers would frequently train their sons in the skill of their job. Since there are no detailed studies on the subject, we may only suppose that this system of informal training within the family must have led to high degree of occupational continuity in the trade.

Although weavers were highly productive, the technical and organizational aspects of production posed several persistent problems for employers. First of all, after the end of the war there was little technological advancement in the Mahmutpaşa workshops and therefore work discipline could not be imposed through mechanization as was the case, as will be seen, in larger companies. Secondly, the narrow labor market of skilled and experienced weavers bestowed the workers substantial control over the pace of production. Therefore the

⁵¹¹ Kemal Sülker, "Tekstil Asgari Ücretine İşverenlerin Tespit Ettiği 3 İtiraz," *Gece Postası*, 22 February 1958. Sülker notes that about half of the employed in the textile sector came from the same family.

⁵¹² In patriarchal regimes, Burawoy defines, "production apparatuses were based on, or imitative of, the domination of the father over other members of the family. More specifically, the patriarchal regime involved a collaboration between subcontractor and employer, so that the former offered and organized the labour of the family or proto-family in exchange for changes and support of the autonomous domination of the patriarch over women and children who assisted him... From the point of view of cotton masters, patriarchal apparatuses of production had the advantage of containing struggles between subcontractor and his helpers by relying on family bonds..." Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production* (London: Verso, 1992), p. 93.

⁵¹³ Avni Erakalın, interview by author, tape recording, Aksaray, İstanbul, 20 May 2010.

employers could increase labor productivity only through resorting to force⁵¹⁴ and extending the working time. Therefore, weavers' vision of their work must have invoked a permanent change during the period. The very rare testimonies suggest this by descriptions of injustices committed by employers. These pressures began very early and might operate openly by means of specification of ever more restrictive schedules and deadlines.

Most of the time, it should be noted, these pressures came into play implicitly by the mechanism of subcontracting. According to one survey, around 85 percent of the manufacturers in Mahmutpaşa entered into subcontracting arrangements either with independent traders or with big firms in the industry who provided the yarn and other raw materials. Most of the manufacturers got a majority of their orders from wholesale merchants.⁵¹⁵ In the textile sector the predominant form of subcontracting relationship involved the provision of raw materials at the beginning of the job. Payment at the end was based on the length of the cloth woven at a preset price per meter.

Other than wholesalers, also big firms established subcontracting arrangements with small manufacturers of Mahmutpaşa. For instance, it was reported in early 1951 that Adalet Mensucat mill downsized its production unit in weaving department and increasingly had recourse to small scale manufacturers.⁵¹⁶ It appears to be the case that large-scale firms

⁵¹⁴ Beating and ill-treatment were particularly directed to the weakest (children, auxiliary workers, temporary workers etc.). Many employers abused their employees simply because they thought they could. They thought the employee would never leave them, and if they did, they were replaceable. There were examples in which the employer severely beat up his workers and received punishment for his act. Yet, the employers often got off cheap from such charges. The penal system often sentenced them to pecuniary punishment. See *TEKSİF III. Kongre 9.8.1953 – 3.9.1958 Dönemi Raporları* (İstanbul: 1958), p. 24.

⁵¹⁵ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler*, p. 147.

⁵¹⁶ “İşsizlik Meselesi Yeniden Ciddi Bir Mesele Olarak Ele Alınmalıdır,” *Gece Postası*, 8 January 1951. Adalet Mensucat had 80 wool weaving looms. According to the report even though the employer laid off half of the weavers, the output of the factory did not decrease. The employer preferred to go outsourcing probably for two reasons. First, labor productivity was greater in Mahmutpaşa due to concentration of qualified weavers in the district. Second, the employers could evade the transaction tax by making subcontracting arrangements with small-scale workshops. For many observers transaction tax was the major factor that impeded the development of large-scale firms since the 1930s. However, during the DP government period the transaction tax rates would

increasingly found it cheaper or easier to have portions of their product subcontracted to small scale firms in Mahmutpaşa on either a full-time basis or per item basis; which might have provided another avenue of survival for the small scale producers of Mahmutpaşa. On the part of large scale factories, subcontracting arrangements may have freed them from the more technical problems concerned with production, process improvement and labor supervision and enabled them to devote more attention to financial and marketing problems.

It is worth noting that such subcontracting relations with wholesalers and big manufacturers forced the small employers to increase output by putting more pressure on the weavers through long working hours and imposing tacit deadlines. It also explains, as we shall return below, the vitality of a dual labor market for weavers.

There was no standard workday in Mahmutpaşa. There were no clocks and no official time keepers. Work often started very early in the morning and continued until late in the evening. While many workplaces were closed about nine in the district, the door keepers of these inns kept doors open and workers started the work again after eleven in the evening.⁵¹⁷ In times of high demand the working time were expanded as much as 16 hours in a day.⁵¹⁸ Weavers expressed the conditions in the shops to the journalists in the most dramatic manner. For weavers Mahmutpaşa was a big “grinding mill”, smashing and crashing the bodies and souls of thousands of workers everyday:

be reduced regularly. See Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1993), p. 454.

⁵¹⁷ The labor law provided for a maximum 48 hour working week and a working day of eight/nine hours, with a maximum of three hours overtime. The weekly rest period was 38 hours minimum.

⁵¹⁸ It is worth noting that shoemakers who shared the inns of Mahmutpaşa with weavers also were subjected to the same working conditions. However with their strong unions “Mahmutpaşa question” became identified solely with weavers. For a brief description of working conditions in shoemaking shops, see Kemal Sülker, “Geceleri Zorla Mesai Yaptırılan Ayakkabıcılar,” *Gece Postası*, 26 May 1954. See also Hadi Malkoç, “Han Bodrumlarında Çürüyen Kundura İşçileri,” *Sendika Gazetesi*, 7 September 1946. According to Malkoç, the number of shoemakers working in the inns and in the basements of the worst buildings of İstanbul was approximately ten thousand.

We work in a cave. That is why our skin is so yellow. We are all skin and bones because we work 16 hours in a day. Will you believe when we say that we are afraid of seeing a doctor? Because we know that he will say, “you have tuberculosis” and we do not want to hear this terrible fact.⁵¹⁹

Many examples of 13 hours of child work were presented by the unionist workers in the 1950 congress of the Mahmutpaşa branch of the textile workers’ union. Workers also complained that since they were not included in the Labor Law, their right to weekend and festive holidays was not recognized.⁵²⁰ In times of low demand or raw material shortage, however, employers might easily show them the door.⁵²¹

Then how did the weavers accept the terms of working conditions in Mahmutpaşa? Why did they go along with even 16 hours of working day in suffocating, damp and dirty workshops? Why did they not quit jobs? These questions are quite valid ones when we consider that there had always been high demand for experienced weavers in the labor market throughout the 1940s and 1950s. A significant portion of employer applications to the Employment Office was for weavers. Even in the late 1950s, when unemployment in textiles was on a rise due to foreign currency shortage as an outcome of the 1958 Stabilization Program,⁵²² the newspapers were full of job advertisements given by manufacturers who were

⁵¹⁹ “Biz mağarada çalışıyoruz. Rengimizin sarılığı bundandır. Bir deri bir kemik kalmışsak bu her gün 16 saat çalışmamızdandır. Doktora gitmeye korktuğumuzu söylesek inanır mısınız? Çünkü bize “Veremlisiniz” diyeceklerini biliyor ve bu korkunç hakikati duymak istemiyoruz.” Kemal Sülker, “Mahmutpaşa Mensucat Atölyelerinde İnleyenler,” *Gece Postası*, 14 August 1949. Weavers emphasized the unsanitary conditions in the workplaces on every occasions. In one workplace an ill-looking weaver cried out the collective demand of workers: “A sanitary campaign should be started in Mahmutpaşa. Workers should be rescued.” See “Beşbin Mensucat İşçisi Durumlarını Açıklıyorlar”, *Gece Postası*, 15 August 1949. Evidences reveal that workers were well aware of the link between tuberclosis and the terrible working conditions in shops. This is exemplated in the words of one weaver who suffered from tuberclosis: “Tuberclosis is welcomed to the workplace which evades from the labor law.” Kemal Sülker, “Büyük İşçi Röportajı,” *Gece Postası*, 17 Ekim 1951.

⁵²⁰ See “Basından İşçi Haberleri”. BCA Catalog no. [490.01/204.812.2].

⁵²¹ Hıfzı Topuz, “İşsizlik Davası Ne Zaman Halledilecek,” *Akşam*, 7 February 1952.

⁵²² In 1959, New York Times reported that of 10,770 workers in İstanbul industrial plants covered by the Labor Law, 1000 were laid off as of the end of 1958. There were 1050 workers working half time and 500 were threatened by lay-offs. In 1959 around 300 textile establishments in İstanbul have reduced production by 80

looking for experienced weavers.⁵²³ The unqualified workforce was a long-term problem for the industry and worried the employers well after 1950s. Few large plants trained unskilled workers in their own training departments before putting them to work in actual production. Many firms were unable to establish expensive training schemes. Even in the early 1970s there was only one school in Turkey which offered vocational training in textiles. The Sultanahmet Art School, which had been founded in 1939, had a small department for training weavers.⁵²⁴ From time to time the Employment Office opened night classes to train weavers, yet it was unable to meet the growing demand in the market.⁵²⁵

What attracted workers to the Mahmutpaşa shops was, probably, the high wages offered to experienced weavers. In the late 1940s an experienced weaver could earn as much as 8 liras in a day, which was twice the price paid to the weavers in many big factories. Another survey in 1954 discovered that the average daily earnings of weavers in Mahmutpaşa textile shops was 930 kuruş. This was the maximum wage offered in textiles and was particularly due to the high proportion of experienced and qualified weavers in the district.⁵²⁶ Another survey conducted by the textile workers trade union in 1953 found out the average daily wage level in Mahmutpaşa was around 788 kuruş, while it was 556 kuruş in the rest of the industry.⁵²⁷

percent and laid off 3000 workers. In İzmir, 1120 workers were reported to be laid off in textiles. See “Jobless Increase Worrying Turks,” *New York Times*, 14 January 1959.

⁵²³ Despite the growing unemployment in textiles, Kemal Sülker wrote, “the weavers are on black market”. Kemal Sülker, “İşsizlerin İstanbul’a Akımı Davası,” *Gece Postası*, 1 May 1958.

⁵²⁴ Sabahattin Zaim’s Speech in *Tekstil semineri, 12-14 Temmuz 1971* (Ankara: Sümerbank Yayınları, 1971), p. 30.

⁵²⁵ İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu; Sedat Nurova, “İş Kurumları”, *İşçi Gücü*, 15 November 1951.

⁵²⁶ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler*, pp. 234-235.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 213-215.

When asked about their daily earnings, weavers seemed to be quite aware of their advantageous position when compared to weavers in the big factories; they even complained more about long working hours and the high-speed rhythm of the work. As one worker told in 1949: “Every day we shuttle back and forth eight thousand times. Some of us earn as much as 8 liras in a day, but damn that earning. It is not worth of it.”⁵²⁸

Despite these words of a unionist worker, it seems that higher earnings in the small shops kept workers seeking jobs in Mahmutpaşa.⁵²⁹ Avni Erakalın, who had been one of the leading organizers in the Mahmutpaşa branch of the Textile Workers’ Union in the early 1950s, before he became the general secretary of the same union, confirms this observation by saying that Mahmutpaşa weavers never preferred to leave the district for job offerings from larger plants since they were always paid better for the extra work in Mahmutpaşa shops. He also added that that some employers made the weavers partners to evade the Labor Law after 1952, might have enhanced the loyalty of workers and strengthened their ties to the firms.⁵³⁰ In effect, as shall be discussed below, the persistence of small manufacturing in Mahmutpaşa and its contractionary effect on the labor market for weavers throughout the period had also determining effects on the shop floor strategies of employers and reactions of workers in big firms.

Yet this did not mean that weavers totally bowed to the working conditions imposed on them. Mahmutpaşa weavers struggled to improve their conditions and forced the employers to go for a reduction in the work-day throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s.

⁵²⁸ Kemal Sülker, “Beş bin Mensucat İşçisi Durumlarını Açıklıyorlar,” *Gece Postası*, 15 August 1949.

⁵²⁹ It is interesting to note that Ayhan Aktar’s study on working conditions in small textile firms in Bursa during the early 1980s reveals similar findings. According to the study weavers in small shops work longer but earn more compared to weavers in big mills. Ayhan Aktar, *Kapitalizm, Azgelişmişlik ve Türkiye’de Küçük Sanayi* (İstanbul: AFA Yayıncılık, 1990), p. 246.

⁵³⁰ Avni Erakalın, interview by Barış Alp Özden, tape recording, İstanbul, 20 May 2010.

“The cause of the Mahmutpaşa weaver,” as it was often acclaimed in the concerned public, was one of the most important struggles during the period.⁵³¹ Since many workplaces fell out of the sanctions of the labor legislation, the weavers could not manipulate legal channels like collective labor disputes. Yet they organized to get into action. By 1952, many Mahmutpaşa weavers were organized under the İstanbul Textile and Weaving Workers Union⁵³² and made out a declaration stating that they were determined to struggle for a change in the Mahmutpaşa shops. They stated that if they were left with no choice except to go into hunger strike, they would not hesitate to start that.⁵³³ Meanwhile there were recurrent reports in the press of the efforts of the textile union to contain the temper of the workers who threatened to stop the work collectively.⁵³⁴ In 1953 weavers started a campaign for “8 hours work, 8 hours recreation and 8 hours sleep.” In the meantime Textile Workers Union sent letters to deputies of İstanbul, asking them to bring the cause of the Mahmutpaşa weaver to the agenda in the National Assembly.⁵³⁵ TEKSİF regarded the issue as a collective conspiracy of the employers in Mahmutpaşa and made several attempts to attract the interest of the political parties.⁵³⁶ A group of İstanbul deputies visited the workplaces in the districts and observed the working conditions in the inn basements and dark galleries.⁵³⁷

⁵³¹ “İş Kanununa Muhalif Hareket Edenler,” *İstanbul Ekspres*, 8 November 1952.

⁵³² In 1952, around 1400 workers were enrolled in the Mahmutpaşa branch of the Textile and Weaving Workers’ Union. Mahmutpaşa was the fourth largest branch in İstanbul.

⁵³³ “Yakında Bütün İşçiler Açlık Grevine Başlayacak,” *İstanbul Ekspres*, 11 March 1952.

⁵³⁴ “Dokumacı İşverenler ile İşçiler Arasında İtilaf,” *Milliyet*, 11 October 1952; “İşçilerin Açlık Grevi Teşebbüsü,” *Milliyet*, 15 March 1952.

⁵³⁵ “Mahmutpaşa İşçileri And İçti: 8 Saat Çalışacaklar,” *Gece Postası*, 5 October 1953

⁵³⁶ *TEKSİF III. Kongre 9.8.1953 – 3.9.1958 Dönemi Raporları* (İstanbul: 1958), p. 24.

⁵³⁷ Kemal Sülker, “Mahmutpaşa’da İşverenlerin de İşçilerin de Çeşitli Dertleri Var,” *Gece Postası*, 1 August 1953.

In the meantime three union militants, Avni Erakalın, Şaban Yıldız and Celal Beyaz, were making visits to shops after midnights. Erakalın tells that these visits had two aims. First, they were trying to convince the weavers to stop work after a maximum of twelve hours. Second, they were seeking to annoy the employers and force them to close the shops. However, these visits often were interrupted by the intervention of the police and sometimes ended at the police station.⁵³⁸ After several attempts of the union and weavers, the municipality determined to restrict the working day by one o'clock at night⁵³⁹. But even this was ineffective. In 1952, special control teams were organized under the authority of the municipality to check the workplaces after the midnight. These teams were given the authority to write down reports about the workplaces which were open after one o'clock and many reports were sent to prosecution.⁵⁴⁰ Upon this, the Mahmutpaşa Power-Operated Small Scale Industry Weavers' Cooperative initiated the movement of a group of small shops to remote places in Rami-Topçular, where the employers believed they could get escape the pressures of the union and midnight controls of the municipality.⁵⁴¹ By the end of the 1954 a new small weaving industry area with 200 power looms had been established in this place.⁵⁴²

However, the establishment of an alternative industrial area did not slow down the growth of Mamutpaşa, which had a comparative advantage over Rami-Topçular due to its closeness to Sultanhamam textile market. Wholesale merchants preferred to continue business

⁵³⁸ Avni Erakalın, interview by author, tape recording, İstanbul, 20 May 2010.

⁵³⁹ "Mahmutpaşa İhtilafı Vilayette İncelendi," *Gece Postası*, 8 October 1953.

⁵⁴⁰ At the first of these irregular controls some 30 workshops on Mahmutpaşa slope and Caferağa street were detected as not complying with the regulations of the Law on Weekly Rest Day. "İş Kanununa Muhalif Hareket Edenler," *İstanbul Ekspres*, 8 November 1952.

⁵⁴¹ *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örme Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1953-1954 Senesi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Faik Paran Matbaası, 1954), pp. 12-14; "Topkapı Dışında Dokuma Sitesi Kuruluyor," *Milliyet*, 1 November 1954; "Mahmutpaşa Dokuma Atölyeleri Taşınacak," *Akşam*, 30 May 1954.

⁵⁴² Zaim, p. 148.

with Mahmutpaşa weaving manufacturers. By 1956, around 8000 workers were employed in nearly 1000 small scale workshops in the district.

By that time workers were still suffering from unlawful practices of employers. 12-16 hours of work was still common in the shops and the paid weekend holiday was not applied by the majority.⁵⁴³ The municipality put an end to unannounced night controls in the mid-1954 when the authority to check the workplaces was transferred to the police.⁵⁴⁴ The neighborhood police were reluctant to push the employers to conform the law probably because they had established links to the employers.⁵⁴⁵

In the second half of the 1950s, nothing much had changed in the Mahmutpaşa workplaces. Around 4000-5000 weavers were still suffering from long hours of work in the dark and airless shops of Mahmutpaşa in the late 1958.⁵⁴⁶ Yet, the struggles throughout the years had effects of raising consciousness and articulated their collective demands. From the mid-1950s on weavers were more determined to support the right to strike which was beginning to be perceived as the only effective and powerful way to defend the cause of labor. On the 1956 congress of the union, one weaver enthusiastically called for a campaign to

⁵⁴³ Kemal Sülker, “Mahmutpaşa Dokuma İşçilerinin Ezeli Derdi,” *Gece Postası*, 16 January 1956; “Mahmutpaşa’da İş Kanunu Hala Neden Yok,” *Gece Postası*, 17 June 1957.

⁵⁴⁴ In the mid-1954 Mahmutpaşa weavers made a last attempt by applying to Ministry of Internal Affairs for restricting the working hours in small scale shops. Yet, the ministry did not even respond to weavers’ demands. “Dokuma İşçileri,” *İşçi Sesi*, 15 May 1954.

⁵⁴⁵ “Mahmutpaşa’da Kontrol Ekipleri İş Bıraktılar,” *Gece Postası*, 27 April 1954. Avni Erakalın remembers that even the police commissioner, Hüseyin Çelebi, who was responsible for the trade unions in the İstanbul Security Directorate had become an employer in Mahmutpaşa during the crisis of the mid 1950s when some employers had to sell their looms on the spot.

⁵⁴⁶ “Mahmutpaşa Dokumacıları Bugün Toplantı Yapıyor,” *Gece Postası*, 23 Ekim 1958.

legalize strikes. “We who are competent on working the most delicate machines are also able to make use of the instrument of strike in the most effective and proper way.”⁵⁴⁷

In the rest of this chapter how the economic and social factors prevailing in the weaving industry put its stamp on workplace culture and labor struggle when joined with newly introduced scientific management techniques will be discussed. Against Taylor’s claim that scientifically managed shops would never suffer a strike, eliminated the conflict between workers and unions and rendered trade unions unnecessary, we shall see that in practice attempts to introduce Taylorism was met with strong labor opposition and drew workers to organize in the union.

Scientific Management in Mensucat Santral and Workers’ Response

Thus for capital the logic of the labor process is to seek to increase labor productivity by extending strategies and techniques of “real subordination”⁵⁴⁸ in order to bring labor more completely under its control. But since the labor process only can be performed by humans and not by automatons then those men and women constantly struggle over the limits at which control begins and ends. Therefore the labor process, to quote Price, “is above all else a social

⁵⁴⁷ “Tekstil İşçileri Grev Hakkı İstiyor”, *Milliyet*, 28 May 1956.

⁵⁴⁸ The distinction between “formal” and “real” subordination of labor to capital is made by Marx in his analysis of the changing character of labor process in the transition from manufacture to modern industry. In this analysis the subordination to capital becomes real in the sense that it rested not solely upon the structure of the ownership but also upon the degree of capitalist control of the production process. For the relevance of these categories in the historiography of labor, see Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), especially introduction.

process in which the technical characteristics of a particular work environment shape and condition the forms of struggle for authority and control.”⁵⁴⁹

Saying this implies a couple of postulates concerning the relationship between resistance and subordination. First of all, this relation should be conceived as a dynamic process rather than a static system in which any side of the relationship cannot be completely successful forever. It is always necessary to remember that the forces which demanded managerial control of labor are not abstract categories frozen in time, but part of a continually moving historical dynamic. The second point, which can be derived from the first, implies that control is never guaranteed and the techniques and technologies employed never foreclose the possibility that they can be challenged and modified by worker resistance. As Burawoy notes, the social function of technology as a means of establishing control is well recognized in the labor process literature; but less investigation has been directed towards the role of the class struggle in shaping workplace relations.⁵⁵⁰ Having this in mind, this section of the chapter aims to suggest an alternative avenue to study working class struggles. Following Price, who suggests that the struggle over control of the labor process is a struggle inherent in the logic of capitalist production itself, we argue that shop floor bargaining, unofficial movements and resistances, informal structures at the workplace can be alternative areas to study working class action and subjectivity. Such an analysis challenges one of the the basic premises of the labor historiography in Turkey, which regards the period as “silent years” in terms of working class struggle.

⁵⁴⁹ Richard Price, “The Labour Process and Labour History,” *Social History*, vol. 8, no. 1 (January 1983), p. 63.

⁵⁵⁰ Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production*, p. 41. According to Burawoy, Braverman and labor historians who accepted his approach limited their analyses to objective features of work under capitalism, leaving the impression that the lived experience of work was one of increasing misery as workers lost control over the labor process, but not theorizing objectivity. In addition they made a common mistake by acknowledging management as so successful in expropriating knowledge and power that whatever workers’ consciousness, the class played little role in shaping workplace struggles.

To begin with, we need to depict an overall picture of the technological foundation and the production process in large scale textile undertakings. The equipment and production chain of a typical large scale weaving mill in Turkey during the period was as follows: as they entered the factory, tightly packed bales of raw cotton or sheep fleeces were stripped down on openers where the material were sorted and classified. Then the raw material moved to stretching frames which beat and crushed the material onto large drums. From here cotton or fleece wool was sent to carding frame rooms where fibers were combed into parallel lines prior to primary spinning. When cotton moved into preparatory department, first it went to drawing frame rooms and second it went to flyer frame rooms which produced rovings for final spinning. Then roving bobbins were transported to fine spinning halls where self-acting mules or ring frames spun fine threads of diverse thickness appropriate for various types of weaving. Finally, thread was sent to weaving which was established as a separate department. In weaving departments, where 25-30 percent of the operatives worked, most looms were single-shuttle or multi-shuttle power looms.⁵⁵¹

The first thing to note about all this equipment is its advanced age before the early 1950s. In Santral Mensucat, for instance, most of the looms had been obtained from Germany when the mill was established in 1929. In Defterdar, most of the weaving looms were much older. Many weaving mills obtained newer and high speed technology machines in the late 1940s and early 1950s thanks partially to the credits extended by IBRD. In 1950, IBRD was put in charge of directing the Marshall Plan Private Enterprise Fund which aimed to help finance the foreign exchange requirements for the establishment or expansion of private

⁵⁵¹ See Şimşek, *Feshane Mensucat Fabrikası*, pp.23; *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8, s.v. “Defterdar Mensucat Fabrikası,” pp. 4341-4344; *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 4, s.v. “Bakırköy Bez Fabrikası”, pp.1905-1906.

industrial enterprises.⁵⁵² Santral Mensucat was one of the first mills that received credits from this fund. In the early 1950s technological infrastructure of the mill was completely renewed with the import of modern machinery from the US.⁵⁵³ In 1951 Santral Mensucat had 232 advance technology automatic looms. In the same year 680 full time operative and auxiliary workers were employed in the mill. In a couple of years 168 new looms were added to this number. Yet the number of workers remained roughly the same.⁵⁵⁴

Santral Mensucat was the only private mill in İstanbul which established a sound scientific management system as early as 1942 under the auspices of Swiss engineers.⁵⁵⁵ The stop watch, incentive bonuses and other discipline techniques were introduced to the firm between 1942 and 1944 by these engineers. With the Swiss engineers, the employers of the firm Refik and Fuat Bezmen told a journalist in 1951 that the productivity rate in the mill had increased from 35 percent to 75 percent in less than two years.⁵⁵⁶ These engineers came from the branch office of the Bedaux Company in Stockholm. The Charles E. Bedaux Co., which was established in 1916, utilized work accounting and control methods generally derived from Taylorism. By the eve of Second World War, the Bedaux Company had grown into a European headquartered multi-national consulting firm with branch offices in diverse cities

⁵⁵² Tolga Tören, *Yeniden Yapılanan Dünya Ekonomisinde Marshall Planı ve Türkiye Uygulaması* (İstanbul: Sosyal Araştırmalar Vakfı, 2007), p. 246.

⁵⁵³ Serpil Yılmaz, "Fuat Bezmen'in 100'üncü Yılında 'Güzel ve Çirkin Öyküsü,'" *Milliyet*, 5 May 2009.

⁵⁵⁴ S.S.A., "Yedikule: Mensucat Santral Fabrikası," *Mensucat Meslek Dergisi*, vol. 4, no. 6 (June 1951), p. 193.

⁵⁵⁵ It is worth reminding that Santral Mensucat was one of the three largest textile mills established in İstanbul. The other two were Defterdar and Bakırköy mill both owned by state. These three big firms employed about 32 percent of textile workers.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; Akarlı, p. 46.

such as Paris, Milan, London, Berlin, Stockholm, Sydney and New York. At its height, the Bedaux system was used to control the labor of 675,000 workers in 720 companies.⁵⁵⁷

Like Taylor, Bedaux' stated goal was the increase of profits through cutting unit labor costs and increasing productivity. It was principally a method of speeding up the already mechanized, subdivided and simplified labor of semi-skilled and unskilled industrial operatives, generally introducing only minor changes in the work process as such. What it primarily did was to alter the management of production, the direction, evaluation and incentive of work, changing the relationship between workers and foremen, and enabling upper management to see statistically how much was produced by each and every worker on the shop floor.⁵⁵⁸ The heart of the Bedaux system was the standardization of production quotas. Each job was specified and evaluated. The workers were categorized into different groups according to their skill, effort, responsibility and superintendence, and the wage was adjusted according to this job evaluation system.

In Mensucat Santral, the primary group that worked on piece rates was the weavers and the operatives in printing shops. The operatives in other departments and auxiliary workers – the set-up man, inspector, truck driver, and foreman – were on time rates. In the piece rate system established in Santral Mensucat the earnings of the weavers was divided as a basic wage and bonuses. Some weavers initially thought this as a means to earn more money, until they discovered that for such jobs the promising wages were impossible to obtain.⁵⁵⁹ Bedaux engineers were brought to the mill without consulting the workers.

⁵⁵⁷ Yves Levant and Marc Nikitin, "Charles Eugène Bedaux (1886-1944): 'Cost Killer' or Utopian Socialist?" *Accounting, Business & Financial History*, vol. 19, no. 2 (July 2009), p. 171.

⁵⁵⁸ For the practical uses of Bedaux system on the shop floor, see Jeremy R. Egolf, "The Limits of Shop Floor Struggle: Workers vs. the Bedaux System at Willapa Harbor Lumber Mills, 1933-1935," *Labor History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Spring 1985), pp. 200-202; See also ILO, *Payment by Results*.

⁵⁵⁹ Avni Erakalın, interview by author, tape recording, Aksaray, İstanbul, 20 May 2010.

Workers' experience and intelligence were not utilized in devising methods for improving the production process. The basic wage was often conceived as "formality" by the workers, since it did not constitute a guaranteed minimum. While some workers' earnings might be increased with Bedaux incentives, the hourly wages (wage incomes per unit of output) were invariably reduced.

Second, the hourly wage was a disciplinary mechanism. Workers knew well that they could not afford to be ill with an hourly wage that low. Set aside the minimum wage, the earnings were directly proportional to the number of pieces produced. Each piece had a price, supposedly fixed at a rate that would allow operators to make their hourly wage, which was pegged at an output of a hundred percent. By following the directions of the blueprint, workers found that it was impossible to produce the pieces at a rate which would earn them their hourly wage. Moreover, the piece-rate system did not allow any time for setting up, getting pieces checked and other contingencies. To make the hourly wage, let alone a living wage, operatives had to break the rules and safety regulations by increasing speeds and feeds, and taking dangerous short-cuts. Only in this way an operative could produce over a hundred percent.⁵⁶⁰ The premium system also was used to enhance managerial control through giving more power to foremen and superintendents. A high bonus was paid to the foreman or the section superintendent in whose department the maximum number of wefts in a given month was woven. By awarding bonuses to the foremen, Mensucat Santral was managing to control the workforce through a high level of supervision and therefore could turn out high quality production.⁵⁶¹ On the part of workers, the cooperation at work led to continuous and frequent

⁵⁶⁰ Kemal Sülker, "Mensucat Santral'de Anlaşmayı Bozan İşverendir," *Gece Postası*, 24 June 1954.

⁵⁶¹ Akarlı, p. 49.

contact and immediate exchange between the operatives and the foremen. In this way workers actually paid the foremen for speeding up them.

The workers' unrest at Santral Mensucat magnified in late 1953, when the management laid off the elected worker representative, Rıza Güven. The 1950 amendments to the Labor Code had provided some legal security for worker representatives against the pressures of the employers. According to the regulation a worker representative could have recourse to Provincial Arbitration Committee (*İl Hakem Kurulu*) if he/she was fired. If the committee adjudicated that the behavior of the employer was unjustified, the representative was to be accepted back to his work in the company.⁵⁶² Nevertheless, notwithstanding the protective regulations of the law, there were recurrent reports in the press about the increasing pressure of the employers on worker representatives. Between the years 1950 and 1953, 16 of the total 45 labor disputes delivered to the Provincial Arbitration Committee (the third stage of the collective labor dispute settlement procedure) in the textile industry were about dismissal of representatives.⁵⁶³ The laying-off of Rıza Güven, however, attracted the attentions of a wider public in Santral Mensucat, for Güven was a well-know trade unionist and still executed the vice presidency of the İstanbul Textile and Weaving Industry Workers' Trade Union.⁵⁶⁴

What made the case more disturbing particularly for the workers was that the employer of Santral Mensucat did not allow Güven to return to his work in spite of the Committee decree. It seemed to be the case that the employer was particularly uneasy about Güven's presence in the workplace. Güven was a tough unionist. He had raised at least five individual

⁵⁶² Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye'de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri, 1946-1963* (İstanbul: İmge Yayınevi, 2002), pp. 345-346.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁵⁶⁴ "İşçileri Sendikadan Soğutmak İsteyen İşveren," *Gece Postası*, 18 April 1954.

labor disputes against the company since 1951; and all of them had been concluded on behalf of him.⁵⁶⁵

By 1954, there was high tension on the shop floor level in Santral Mensucat. In this context the decision of the management that the weavers would operate more machines at a time became the straw that broke the camel's back. Investment in standardized, higher technology machines coincided with the intensification of work per operative. As Marx argued for the mid-nineteenth century England, machinery was adopted to intensify labor and produce more in a shorter time: "This occurs in two ways: the speed of the machine is increased, and the same worker receives a greater quantity of machinery to supervise or operate."⁵⁶⁶ Both of these things were observed from the late 1940s in Turkey (with a century's delay), with improved engines, higher running engines and more looms per operative.

Until then, in the Santral Mensucat mill a weaver operated four, six, eight or ten looms according to qualification of the operative or the age and type of machines for which he was responsible. In March 1954, the management presented a new blueprint, according to which the number of looms operated by each weaver would be doubled. Even some workers had to operate 24 looms at the same time. The management defended its decision by declaring that it was a justified act, for all "scientific studies" had proven that a weaver could tend up to 130 machines at a time. In the European countries, the average was 70 looms per weaver. In the United States each weaver operated 100 looms. Even in one Sümerbank plant established in Halkapınar, one weaver tended up to 48 looms.⁵⁶⁷ In the Sümerbank Bakırköy Cotton Cloth

⁵⁶⁵ "İşçi Mümessilinin İşverene Açtığı Dava," *Gece Postası*, 19 May 1955.

⁵⁶⁶ Marx, *Capital vol. I*, p. 536. Quoted in Robert Gray, *The Factory Question and Industrial England, 1830-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 215.

⁵⁶⁷ "Santral Mensucat'ta İhtilaf," *Akşam*, 17 June 1954.

Mill the speed-up program that provided performance and speed enhancement started in 1950 after the technological infrastructure of the mill had been modernized.⁵⁶⁸ In early 1953, weavers who had been working 12 looms were assigned to operate 18 looms in the same mill.⁵⁶⁹ Therefore, the managers of Santral Mensucat argued, the competitive conditions in the market were compelling them to take this step. However, the workers were noticeably less pleased with the changes brought by the management, which would “force the last piece of effort out of workers at the smallest possible cost in wages.”⁵⁷⁰

It is worth adding that the piece rates system was not imposed exclusively on weavers. Workers in the printing shop also worked at piece rates. However, the most overt resistance to the system was led by weaving men with many years of local pre-Bedaux work experience (actually, most of the operatives of the printing shop quit the mill in the first couple of weeks after the introduction of the speed-up program).⁵⁷¹ As has been noted, the weaver’s trade was considered to be more a skilled, prestigious and highly paid profession than any other job in the sector. Moreover the persistence of small manufacturing centered around Mahmutpaşa narrowed down the labor market for employers who sought to recruit experienced weavers. Some workers even referred to weavers as a labor aristocracy. Of course weavers never functioned as independent artisans, and the discretion content of their work was minimal, limited almost exclusively to questions of pace and intensity. But combined with the difficulty of gaining access to their ranks and their higher level of education the small degree of

⁵⁶⁸ Kemal Sülker, “Üç Misli Büyüyen Fabrika İşçi Sayısını Pek az Arttırdı,” *Gece Postası*, 28 January 1951; “Bakırköy Sümerbank Pamuklu Sanayii Müessesesinde Bir Gün,” *Gece Postası*, 24 January 1951.

⁵⁶⁹ “Bakırköy Bez Fabrikası,” *Gece Postası*, 9 January 1953. The speed-ups and compensation system applied in Sümerbank textile factories were criticized in several reports presented to the third congress of the Federation of Textile Workers’ Trade Unions (TEKSİF). See *TEKSİF III. Kongre 9.8.1953 – 3.9.1958 Dönemi Raporları* (İstanbul: 1958).

⁵⁷⁰ Kemal Sülker, “Mensucat Santral Fabrikasında Anlaşmayı Bozan İşverendir!” *Gece Postası*, 19 June 1954.

⁵⁷¹ “Tekstil Sanayinde Tatbik Edilen Bedo Sistemi ve Çeşitli Mahzurları,” *Gece Postası*, 20 April 1954.

autonomy that the weavers could enjoy in the early years of the factory's existence elevated them in the eyes of their fellow workers. Their discretionary power on the job they performed was the real point that annoyed the employer in respect to productivity. In the early 1950s, it seems, the management for the first time seized the opportunity to impose more time and work discipline on weavers (and break the relative power of weavers in the bargaining process on the shop floor) with the employment of standardized modern machinery cum the Bedaux system.

The weavers' response to Bedaux speed-ups and increased performance controls and calculations was strong. The unionists were distressed that the new methods undermined amicable working conditions. By individualizing wages and speeding up work pace, workers were forced to race each other. Some unionists were particularly anxious about the exhausting character of working on many machines at the same time. Many believed that the system was unfair to the workers as a whole. Older workers could not move fast enough and the young and inexperienced workers failed to achieve efficiency norms. Süreyya Kara Aslan, a weaver and active union militant at the Yedikule branch pointed out that for many workers in the weaving and printing departments, this was the reason for quitting jobs.⁵⁷² The exhausting nature of the pace of the work was revealed by one worker as follows:

I have no strength in my knees. Tending 24 machines all along eight hours means running 40 kilometers a day. When I complain to the foremen, they say 'You may work or leave; the door is over there.' Those who claim their rights have been fired. They have chanted something called bonus; if you are absent from work even one day, they cut the bonus from the wage. Then you lose 60 liras at once.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² Ibid.; Kemal Sülker, "Mensucat Santral Fabrikasında Anlaşmayı Bozan İşverendir," *Gece Postası*, 19 June 1954.

⁵⁷³ "Dizlerimde derman yok. Sekiz saat 24 tezgahla uğraşmak günde 40 kilometre koşmak demektir. Ustalarımıza şikayet ediyorum: "Bakarsan bak, bakmazsan kapı orda!" diyorlar. Haklarını arayanlar işlerinden çıkarılmıştır. Sürprim diye bir şey tutturdular; ayda bir gün işe gelmeyince bu sürprimi kesiyorlar. Aylık birdenbire 60 lira azalıyor." "Tekstil Sanayinde Tatbik Edilen Bedo Sistemi ve Çeşitli Mahzurları," *Gece Postası*, 20 April 1954.

Some others were concerned that the long arm of speed-ups disrupted family and social life outside the work. One worker said: “I arrive home dead beat. Men are so overworked that they cannot even go to bed with their wives at night.”⁵⁷⁴

Not surprisingly, there were fierce struggles over the calculation and assignment of norms and considerable invention in the measurement and recording of output - so much invention that although a large majority of workers theoretically worked above their norms, production at the plant continually fell below the preexisting levels.⁵⁷⁵ Yet, although the impact of the differentiated wage policy on labor productivity may have been questionable, its effect on the understanding of workers was plain. Workers were individualized and their performance was measured on a percentage basis, which permitted ready comparisons. The most apparent and sharpest effect of the system on workers’ lives was the falling earnings. For this very same reason the bulk of the trade unions had declared their hostility to piece rate compensation systems.⁵⁷⁶

For many workers, piece rates made the “cash nexus” extremely fragile.⁵⁷⁷ In the congress of the Yedikule branch of the textile workers’ union, many weavers contended that even if they worked harder on more machines their monthly earnings decreased noticeably. For instance, Ayhan Arda told that while he had received around 280 liras in a month when he was tending 12 looms, his earnings had decreased by 40 liras after having started to operate 20 looms. Another weaver, Osman Türker said that his monthly earning dropped from 250 to

⁵⁷⁴ Avni Erakalın, interview with author, tape recording, Aksaray, İstanbul, 20 May 2010.

⁵⁷⁵ According to Erakalın the efficiency in the mill fell by 50 percent after the first month of the application of speed-ups.

⁵⁷⁶ Özçelik, *1930-1950 Arasında Tütüncülerin Tarihi*, p. 159.

⁵⁷⁷ “Yedikule Tekstil İşçileri Ücret Sistemini Kötüledi,” *Gece Postası*, 19 April 1954.

192 liras after starting to operate ten machines instead of four. Still other workers contended that the system was erratic in its application and no one could anticipate his wage earnings before seeing the payrolls. The ups and downs in cash amounts drastically limited one's ability to assure his or his family's survival.⁵⁷⁸

These experiences of unevenness of variation and of incalculability which directly affected the ability to plan for the immediate future, was the major source of unrest among all the laborers who worked in piece work. For example, in another private weaving mill established in Topkapı, Maltepe, frequent reductions in piece rates which started with the speeding up program compelled the weavers to do overtime work.⁵⁷⁹ In Defterdar, where the Bedaux system had been put into practice much earlier, workers frequently felt the burden of work intensification and rate cuts which left their end of month earnings in complete haziness.⁵⁸⁰ The looms frequently broke down and the warp yarn was often rotten. Weaving looms often stopped since the weavers found themselves rejoining broken threads and repairing the machines. Under such conditions the output of each operative changed from day to day. The weavers told that this put greater pressure on them to speed up work when machines were repaired: "I earn 200 lira in a month, I have been working for nine years in this

⁵⁷⁸ "Tekstil Sanayinde Tatbik Edilen Bedo Sistemi ve Çeşitli Mahzurları," *Gece Postası*, 20 April 1954.

⁵⁷⁹ Kemal Sülker, "Yenen Mensucat Sanayii İşçilerinin Derdi Çok," *Gece Postası*, 9 August 1952; "Yemen Mensucat Sanayii İşçilerinin Şikayetleri Var," *Gece Postası*, 9 January 1952. For another example of "rate busting", see Hayati Haçerlioğlu, "Bakırköy Fabrikasında," *İstanbul Ekspres*, 26 January 1952.

Historical experiences reveal that firms appear to be unable to abstain from rate cutting principally because of competition. Once a new technology was introduced in a new firm, other firms would follow the innovating firm. These firms could always undercut the innovating firm by starting up a new operation, teaching the new techniques and setting a lower piece rate. Even if individual firms and workers wish to protect piece rates, the forces of competition overwhelm them. See Huberman, p. 395.

⁵⁸⁰ Kemal Sülker, "Defterdar Mensucat İşçileri Hayat Pahalılığından Şikayetçi," *Gece Postası*, 11 February 1951; "Sümerbank Defterdar İşçilerinin Ücretleri," *Gece Postası*, 11 January 1957; *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örne Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası, 1959-1961 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Alpaslan Matbaası, 1961), pp. 46-59.

plant. Ask me, how I make my living, how I earn this money. To make up this 200 liras, I do not take a pause for going to the toilet. Life is very hard. Defterdar has lost its taste.”⁵⁸¹

Another “first class” weaver said that he earned less because of frequent stops in the weaving department. However, Defterdar weavers lacked the powerful instruments to claim a wage increase. Workers were divided along party attachments or affiliations.⁵⁸² Furthermore the strongest trade union of İstanbul, the İstanbul Textile and Weaving Industry Workers Trade Union, represented only a minority of workers in Defterdar. The Technical Textile Workers Trade Union, which was established in 1955 as a second union in Defterdar, recruited most of the members of this union. However, none of the unions could gain the majority in the workplace which was required to raise collective labor conflicts. Consequently, Defterdar workers could not get a rise after 1953 and the wage and premium scales in the factory deteriorated until 1959.⁵⁸³

In the absence of the right to strike or government sanctioned negotiations, the fight against the Bedaux system in Santral Mensucat proceeded through grievance meetings, unofficial attempts to bargain with government, and shop floor activity. The workers held a mass meeting on May 25, 1954. The strong participation evidenced the vitality of workers’ cohesion in the workplace and their fear of further work degradation. The participants

⁵⁸¹ “200 lira alıyorum ayda, 9 senelik işçiyim. Nasıl geçiniyorum ve bu ücreti nasıl alıyorum, benden sor. 200 lirayı tutturabilmek için helaya gitmiyorum. Geçim çok güçleşti. Defterdar fabrikasının tadı kaçtı.” See “Defterdar Mensucat Fabrikaları İşçileri Çok Dertli,” *Gece Postası*, 7 January 1956.

⁵⁸² Kemal Sülker, “Defterdar Mensucat’ta Birçok Hasta İşçi Doktora Gidemiyor,” *Gece Postası*, 12 February 1951.

⁵⁸³ *İstanbul Teknik Mensucat İşçileri Sendikası 1955-1956 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: 1956), pp. 2-5; “Sümerbank Defterdar İşçisinin Ücretleri,” *Gece Postası*, 11 January 1957; “Defterdar İşçisinin Son Yıllardaki Kayıpları”, *Gece Postası*, 30 April 1957. Unfair distribution of premiums was another source of complaints in Sümerbank Facories. Some workers like Mustafa Kalaycıgil from Sümerbank Kayseri Textile Factory expressed their disappointment with the wage system in verses: “İstihsal yüksekte, satış yerinde/ Yine zavallıyız, yara derinde/ Derdimiz söylenir dillerde dilde/ Adalet derdi var, derdim primde”. Mustafa Kalaycıgil, “Derdim Primde,” *Gayret*, 9 June 1951.

complained that the actions and efforts of the union directors proved to be inefficient to deal with the situation in Santral Mensucat and decided that three more workers would be added to the four Santral Mensucat workers who took office in the İstanbul Weaving and Textile Workers Union board of directors. Thus Santral Mensucat would have seven of the twenty directors of the union. Moreover, the participants decided on the presentation of a petition to the factory management demanding the removal of the speeding-up program and a general increase in wages.

The immediate response of the employer to this petition was the firing of seven workers who had been elected to the union board of directors. On the following day, when workers were informed about this decision, 23 weavers stopped the machines at the beginning of the night shift, at four p.m. Others, voluntarily or not, followed them. The employer called the police, announcing that the workers' move was an illegal act of strike. When the friction between workers on one side and management and the police on the other took the form of physical violence, the union directors intervened and started the negotiations with Bezmen brothers in order to finish this de facto work stoppage.⁵⁸⁴ The resistance in the mill lasted three days, when finally, on April 29, the union gained a significant concession. According to the protocol signed by Fuat Bezmen on the part of employers and Bahir Ersoy on the part of the authorized trade union, the seven unionist workers would be taken back to work and the number of machines tended by any worker would not be more than ten. Thus, the unionists

⁵⁸⁴ “Kazlıçeşme’de 1000 İşçi Greve Teşebbüs Etti”, *Milliyet*, 27 April 1954; “Mensucat Santral İşçilerinin Grevini Sendika Önledi”, *Gece Postası*, 27 April 1954. It is interesting to note that there was a disagreement between newspapers about whether the case in Santral Mensucat could be identified as a strike or a lockout. See “Mensucat Fabrikasındaki Lokavt Hadisesi”, *Akşam*, 28 April 1954.

believed, a moderate pace of work would be restored in the mill and wage cuts would be prevented.⁵⁸⁵

However, the course of the events revealed that the early optimism of unionists was simply naïve. By June 1954, the speed-up program was still in practice and workers were still tending as many as 24 machines. Moreover, workers saw that the wage system had become more unfair after the introduction of the speed-up program. According to workers, it had become “so bizarre that while one weaver, Ali, who tends eight looms received 803 kuruş, another weaver, Ayhan who tends 24 looms earned 603 kuruş.”⁵⁸⁶ On June 7, almost spontaneously, that is to say, without factory-wide preparatory meetings to organize action, weavers stopped a certain number of the machines which they thought running them went beyond their physical endurance. Those weavers who had been operating 24 looms stopped 12 of the looms; and all other weavers stopped half of the looms for which they were responsible.⁵⁸⁷ By this act, the workers also pointed out their perception of fair and reasonable work load and pace.

The management’s reaction to workers’ action was much harder this time. When the grievance committee met with the factory management, it was clear that both parties regarded the locus of power to determine work pace as the central point of contention. In the meeting, the factory management made it clear that it would not make any compromise about the speeding up program to which the employers had invested much hope to improve the competitiveness of the firm. After a short discussion with the representatives of weavers who refused to run the machines, Fuat Bezmen invited the Regional Labor Director Bedii

⁵⁸⁵ Avni Erakalın, interview with author, tape recording, Aksaray, İstanbul, 20 May 2010; “Santral Mensucat Fabrikasında İhtilaf”, *Akşam*, 24 June 1954.

⁵⁸⁶ “Mensucat Santral İhtilafı Had Safhada,” *Gece Postası*, 17 June 1954.

⁵⁸⁷ “Santral Mensucat Fabrikasında İhtilaf,” *Akşam*, 16 June 1954.

Süngültay to the factory on the eighth day of the weavers' resistance. The management's claim was that the weavers had initiated another strike action after two months.

According to press reports, Süngültay's meeting with workers on June 15 took place in a stretched atmosphere. He did not listen to workers' grievances, but instead threatened that if they did not get back to work, he would start legal proceedings against the weavers on a charge of going on strike. The employer, who took courage from the attitude of the regional labor director, invited police in the factory and announced that the labor contracts of 87 weavers who stopped the work were terminated and these weavers should leave the workplace immediately. Upon that, workers appealed to the trade union claiming that the employer's act was a lockout. They also demanded from the ministry of labor arbitrate the conflict and argued that the employer violated the labor law in many ways including the employment of little children in very hard works.⁵⁸⁸ On the very next day, the employer sent a press release to newspapers declaring that there had been no labor dispute raised by workers in the workplace and the factory management were on good terms with the workers in general. Among almost 1200 workers employed in the mill, wrote the press release, only 87 weavers, who were not willing to comply with the workplace rules, were creating the trouble.⁵⁸⁹

That labor and management were confronting each other for the first time as organized social forces also contributed to the intensity of the struggle. Union leaders Celal Beyaz and Avni Erakalın accompanied the workers to every negotiation with the employer and labor directorate. The İstanbul Textile and Weaving Industry Workers Union made continuous calls for urgent common action to other trade unions. The İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance made recurrent attempts to attract the support of İstanbul deputies of working class origin and to the

⁵⁸⁸ "Santral Mensucat Fabrikasında İhtilaf," *Akşam*, 16 June 1954; "Santral Mensucat 100 işçi Daha Çıkardı," *Gece Postası*, 16 June 1954.

⁵⁸⁹ "Santral Mensucatta İhtilaf Yok," *Akşam*, 17 June 1954.

intervention of Ankara.⁵⁹⁰ On the other hand, other textile employers in İstanbul declared their support of the Bezmen brothers and, according to the claim of the İstanbul Textile and Weaving Industry Workers Trade Union chairman Bahir Ersoy, they were instigating the Bezmen family to use every means possible to break the resistance of workers.⁵⁹¹ Moreover, the Bezmen family had established relations with the ruling party through their uncle Nazım Bezmen, who was newly elected as a İstanbul deputy from the DP. According to unionists, Bezmen used this political link successfully to manipulate the police force and the Ministry of Labor against the weavers. For more than a week the factory gates were blockaded by the police against the union leaders as well as the weavers who were laid-off. In the meantime the managers in the firm forced the workers to resign from the union if they did not want to lose their jobs.⁵⁹² This move of the management showed that the employers still were not ready to recognize the union as an actor in labor negotiations.

The anti-Bedaux struggle forged class solidarity among workers. Only a few days after the termination of employment contracts of 87 weavers, workers from many different industries launched a fund raising campaign for these brave and determined weavers. Workers in Bakırköy and Eyüp districts announced instantaneously that they would donate their daily wages for once for the brave workers of Santral Mensucat.⁵⁹³ This was a very meaningful campaign because in the absence of strike funds (trade unions were still so weak that they

⁵⁹⁰ *İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliği 1954-1956 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Rıza Koşkun Matbaası, 1956), p. 40. In 1954 elections two workers were elected from the DP list in İstanbul. They were Naci Kurt and Ahmet Topçu. See "Parti Listelerinde Yer Alan İşçi Adaylar ve Aldıkları Oylar," *Gece Postası*, 6 May 1954.

⁵⁹¹ Kemal Sülker, "Mensucat Santral Hadisesi İle İlgili Mütalealar," *Gece Postası*, 13 July 1954.

⁵⁹² "İşçileri Sendikadan Çıkarmak İçin Baskı Yapılıyor," *Gece Postası*, 20 June 1954.

⁵⁹³ "Mensucat Santral İhtilafı," *Akşam*, 23 June 1954; "İşçilerin İşe Alınması Cereyanı Kuvvetlendi," *Gece Postası*, 23 June 1954.

could not financially help their members in such times), strikes required a very strong sense of solidarity among the workers.

The solidarity campaign with Santral Mensucat weavers was a unique example in this sense during the period. The campaign became so successful that after almost a month later the İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance decided to support this campaign.⁵⁹⁴ In August the campaign was more successful.⁵⁹⁵ At the end of the month, a substantial amount of money was collected in the fund. Some unions, including the Bottle and Glass Workers Trade Union, the Ministry of National Security Workers Trade Union and Maden-İş, promised to grant more money.⁵⁹⁶

In the meantime an unexpected, but very valuable support to the resistance came from the National Youth Committee of Turkey (*Türkiye Milli Gençlik Teşkilatı, TMGT*). In its 1954 congress, the Committee accepted a resolution on the situation in Santral Mensucat. The resolution adopted that the movement in Santral Mensucat was the cause of youth and homeland as much as the cause of labor. “The Turkish youth,” the resolution wrote, “supports the workers, for the compensation system applied in the mill exhausts physically and emotionally both the workers and the young.”⁵⁹⁷

The workers were already using such a discourse in order to attract the attention of a wider public on the issue. In an earlier press release and in the application document to the Regional Labor Directorate workers reported that the worst feature of the labor process in the

⁵⁹⁴ “Sendikalar Birliğinde Mensucat Santral İhtilafı Görüşüldü,” *Gece Postası*, 20 July 1954.

⁵⁹⁵ “İşten Atılan İşçilere Teberru Yarışı Başladı,” *Gece Postası*, 2 August 1954.

⁵⁹⁶ “İşten Çıkartılan Mensucat İşçilerine Teberrüler,” *Gece Postası*, 31 August 1954.

⁵⁹⁷ Avni Erakalın was invited to the congress as the representative of the Federation of Textile Workers Trade Unions (TEKSİF) where he made a speech on the working conditions in general and the situation in Santral Mensucat in particular. See “Milli Gençlik Teşkilatı Yıllık Kongresi Dün Yapıldı,” *Milliyet*, 18 July 1954; “Milli Gençlik Komitesi Bir Tebliğ Neşrediyor: Bedo Sistemi Protesto Edilecek,” *Gece Postası*, 17 July 1954; Kemal Sülker, “İki Beyanname ve Bir Protesto,” *Gece Postası*, 27 July 1954.

factory was that “young people as early as 14 are employed in these shops. By making them tend 24 looms at once, the employer is responsible for the weakening bodies and deteriorating the physical health of the young generations.”⁵⁹⁸ With that support from the prestigious Kemalist youth organization, the workers justified their resistance by combining their interpretation of Kemalist purpose of protecting the health and improving the bodies of rising generations with their sense of proper workplace ethics.⁵⁹⁹

However, against all public pressure to revise its decision and settle for a compromise, the Santral Mensucat management was very decisive to continue the speeding up program and smash up any resistance to it. Furthermore the trade union delegation which visited the Minister of Labor, Hayrettin Erkmen, in Ankara to ask for his intervention returned empty-handed by his unsympathetic response.⁶⁰⁰ Having seen that the counter offensive of the factory management was growing beyond the limits that can be confronted by a single union, the textile workers trade union decided to submit the issue to the Alliance of İstanbul Trade Unions in the early July. The intention of the union was to convince the Alliance to issue a declaration that condemned the employer vigorously for his hostility towards the union and to organize a mass meeting with other unions in İstanbul.⁶⁰¹ However, the internal balance of powers within the Alliance was very complex in the early 1950s. In effect it had been locked

⁵⁹⁸ “Mensucat Santral İhtilafı: Çalışma Vekilinin Hakemliği İsteniyor,” *Gece Postası*, 18 July 1954.

⁵⁹⁹ It is worth noting that the relationship between National Youth Organization of Turkey and trade unions became much closer after 1954. In 1955 TEKSİF became a member of the TMGT and attended many national and international meetings with this organization. In September 1956, TMGT prepared a “commission report on the problems of young workers” where the foremost demands were reported as the restriction of the working week to 40 hours for young workers and the recognition of the right to strike for the working people as a whole. See *TEKSİF III. Kongre 9.8.1953 – 3.9.1958 Dönemi Raporları*, pp. 67-69; 125-128.

⁶⁰⁰ “Santral Mensucat Fabrikasında Çalışan İşçilerin Durumu,” *Milliyet*, 6 July 1954. It is noteworthy that it was a routine practice for trade unions who sought to settle disputes to send delegations of workers to Ankara to talk personally to the minister of labor or other authorities in the ministry. Sometimes such appeals served the purpose. But many times they fell on deaf ears, and some unionists in time learned how to organize themselves more effectively to advance their interests.

⁶⁰¹ “Mensucat Santral İhtilafı Yeni Bir Safhaya Girdi,” *Gece Postası*, 6 July 1954.

into impotence for a long time by the ongoing rivalry between pro-DP and pro-RPP unionists, and the dominant current in the Alliance did not want to engage in an open confrontation with the big capital.⁶⁰²

In the first meeting of the board of directors it became clear that the resistance would be deluded with false promises of compromise. Seyfi Demirsoy, who was at the head of the Alliance, believed that the problem in Santral Mensucat could be solved for most of the workers except four or five weavers who were considered to be real troublemakers by the employer. He proposed the formation of a dispute settlement commission with the participation of respectable experts and public officers. Seemingly more radical union leaders in the Alliance, such as Yusuf Sidal, appealed that such an act would not have any benefit, but reveal the weakness of the labor organization. Sidal proposed to make a strong declaration showing the unity of unions and charging the employer for the injustices made against weavers.⁶⁰³ But union leaders continued to insist that the interests of the two sides (labor and capital) were fundamentally in harmony, and that they sought to resolve such disputes by dealing personally to employers.

After a long debate, trade union leaders agreed on the establishment of a commission formed by Bedii Süngütay (Regional Labor Director), Prof. Ferit Hakkı Saymen (İstanbul University), a representative from the Alliance of National Solidarity (a society established in 1953 by middle-class intellectuals for fighting against extreme currents), Seyfi Demirsoy and

⁶⁰² A later debate which took place in the pages of *Gece Postası* targeted this group of trade unionist. The debate was triggered by the statements of some unionists which belamed others as the “labor aristocracy” described as forming a certain distinctive strata of the working class who are beter paid, better treated and generally regarded as more “respectable” and politically compliant and docile than the mass of the working people. The labor aristocracy who filled the top ranks of trade unions were accused of turning their back to the needs and problems of the working class. See Kemal Sülker, “Aristokratlaşan İşçiler Hakkında Çeşitli Görüşler,” *Gece Postası*, 23 January 1957.

⁶⁰³ “Mensucat Santral Hadisesi İle İlgili Görüşler ve Teklifler,” *Gece Postası*, 13 July 1954.

Mahmut Yüksel (trade unionist).⁶⁰⁴ Now both workers and union leaders pinned their hopes on the functioning of this commission. However, Sidal's warnings proved to be true when nothing seemed to happen and no explanation was ever made by the commission. Protracted meetings behind the doors sapped all the energy and power of the workers' resistance. There was a widespread conviction in the concerned public that the Alliance was intentionally wasting the time of workers.⁶⁰⁵ The textile workers union wrote a sharp letter to the Alliance accusing it of being negligent and showing insufficient attention to the situation in Mensucat Santral.⁶⁰⁶ Some workers even claimed that the commission and the Alliance had been bribed by the employer.⁶⁰⁷

Consequently, despite the protracted struggle, the workers did not succeed to get back to work, let alone to remove the Bedaux system. Moreover, according to a newspaper record dismissed weavers could not find new jobs in other textile mills because they had been blacklisted by the manufacturers.⁶⁰⁸ By the early September, Santral Mensucat file was closed for most of the unionists.

The defeat of the weavers can be explained by a number of factors. The labor process and market forces do not wholly determine the power and form of workers' struggle; we must also consider the degree of unity among the workers and other features of workplace relations between the employer and workers. First, the case in Santral Mensucat shows that the work experience on the shop floor promoted both a sense of collective identity and, at the same

⁶⁰⁴ "Birlik Yönetim Kurulunda Geçen Dikkate Değer Mütalealar," *Gece Postası*, 14 July 1954.

⁶⁰⁵ See "Santral Fabrikası İhtilafı Devam Ediyor," *Milliyet*, 19 July 1954.

⁶⁰⁶ "Tekstil Sendikasının Şikayeti," *İşçi Sesi*, 24 July 1954

⁶⁰⁷ Kemal Sülker, "İki Beyanname ve Bir Protesto," *Gece Postası*, 27 July 1954. The Alliance would later deny such allegations. See Kemal Sülker, "Mensucat Santral Hadisesi Karşısında Sendikalar Birliği," *Gece Postası*, 26 August 1954.

⁶⁰⁸ "Mensucat Santral'den Çıkarılanlar Şimdi Hiçbir İş Yerine Alınmıyorlar," *İstanbul Ekspres*, 27 July 1954.

time, a corresponding sense of individualism. The transformation of the firm in the 1940s and early 1950s had a decisive impact on the size, character, the technology, the modes of organization, and the outlook of the workers. As the workers became more sharply delineated as a specific social group with a particular role in the production process, they began to see themselves and to be seen by others in a new light. The strong representation of the Santral Mensucat workers in the trade union board of directors gained in early 1954 marks the existence of class identity among these workers. On the other hand, weavers who were primarily affected by the Bedaux system constituted only a small proportion of workers in the mill. The spinning section workers and auxiliary workers who made up the majority in the mill were still paid at time rates. These workers participated in the anti-Bedaux struggle only for a short time. The sexual division of labor within the textile industry probably played a crucial part in determining the intensity as well as failure of the industrial struggle in Santral Mensucat.

Secondly, like most manufacturing firms during the period, Santral Mensucat was a family firm, whose owners played an active role in the management. In these circumstances it was possible for employers to maintain something of a personal relationship with their employees. Fuad Bezmen always endeavored to be physically close to his employees. He was present in the mill frequently enough to observe most of the workers. He tried to show a personal concern for their private and family lives and assisted them financially when necessary. He used to spend lunch breaks with the workers and even associated with some of them after work hours. The social welfare department of the factory provided cloth support for workers and their families twice a year. Even remuneration sometimes was determined by non-work factors. Personal problems, extra family expenses or the marriage of a worker were sometimes more important factors in receiving promotion than productivity and “job

evaluation.”⁶⁰⁹ These occasions probably provided an exchange of employer’s benevolence with workers’ loyalty and helped to smooth the workplace culture, which worked counter to the inflexible formality of scientific management.

Despite the apparent failure of the weavers’ struggle, it may have helped to prevent the use of the Bedaux methods in other departments of the mill. However, the informal strike changed the lives of workers in a significant way. The direct action by the weavers spurred the Santral Mensucat employer, sensitive to public relations and probably anxious to avoid the repetition of such struggles in the mill. After weathering the crisis in 1954, Bezmens engaged more heavily in paternalistic practices in an effort to exert authority.⁶¹⁰

In the 1950s paternalism and deference appeared as important features of employment relations, relative to more recent periods. Many employers relied on paternalism and benevolent conduct in increasing productivity and worker loyalty. For instance the employer of the Vakko cotton printing mill organized entertainment activities to build company loyalty and decrease oppositional class politics. One of these occasions, for example, took place in the midst of wage negotiations between the employer and the authorized trade union in mid-1956. The employer organized an entertainment in one of the most popular music halls and the following day the workers withdrew their signatures from the application document prepared for raising collective labor dispute. The frustration of the trade union was expressed in the activity report of the board of directors in 1957 as follows:

The fact that the banquet organized by the employer in the Maçka Şark Night Club during which a lot of alcohol was consumed also played a part in the change of mind

⁶⁰⁹ Nurten Erk Tosuner, “80 Yıllık Sanayici Fuad Bezmen 100 Yaşına ‘Tertemiz’ Giriyor,” *Hürriyet*, 27 April 2009; “Bezmen İşçilerle Yiyor,” *Gece Postası*, 9 January 1958; “İşçilerin Yediği Yemeği Tercih Eden Adam,” *Gece Postası*, 9 January 1959.

⁶¹⁰ Historical accounts reveal that paternalism become more practical in workplaces in which managerial claims of labor control are confronted with workers’ resistance. See Irene Padavic and William R. Earnest, “Paternalism as a Component of Managerial Strategy”, *The Social Science Journal*, vol. 31, no. 4 (1994).

of the workers multiply our despair. The fact that the employer achieved to save himself from the pay raise by spending a small sum to buy champagne for the workers must be a concern for us. Our members who were drunk that night must sober up when they realize that they did not get any pay raise since then and the delay in the payments of the minimum wage differences.⁶¹¹

Such paternalist policies intended to harmonize relations between workers and management and act as a balm to class conflict. For some other employers paternalist programs sought to decrease turnover rates and encourage workers in habits associated with middle class respectability.

It is hard to employ workers, that is, to say to make them work in the most efficient way and with a sincere commitment to the company, especially in this era. No worker can commit himself to his job unless he loves his boss like a father and feels that his boss treats him like a son... In order to make a worker reach maximum efficiency one must make him love his chore and from time to time one must appreciate and congratulate him.⁶¹²

However, most paternalism was personally exercised and never cohered to a hegemonic culture. A few larger manufacturers sought to create paternalistic regimes by acts of informal benevolence including ambitious provisions of health service and sponsoring social activities. Fuad Bezmen was maybe the most preeminent industrialist to provide a paternalist workplace environment in the 1950s:

⁶¹¹ “İşçilerin bu dönüşü yapmalarında iş verenin Maçka Şark gazinosunda verdiği içkili yemeğin de tesirinin olması üzüntüyü bir kat daha arttıracak bir olaydır. İşçiye vereceği zammun küçük bir kısmı ile şampanya içirmesi ve mütebakisinden kurtulması bizlere bir dert olmalıdır. İçki ile sarhoş olan üyelerimizin o zamandan beri zam almamış olmaları, asgari ücret farklarını hak edememeleri, kendilerini uyandırmış olsa gerekir.” *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örme Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1956-1957 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Sulhi Garan Matbaası, 1957), p. 17.

⁶¹² “Hele bu zamanda işçi kullanmak, yani işçiyi müesseseye candan bağlı ve en verimli bir şekilde çalıştırmak kolay iş değildir. İşçi patronunu bir baba gibi sevmez ve patronun kendisine evlat gözüyle baktığını sezmezse, mümkün değil kendini layıkıyla işine veremez... Azami randıman almak için işçiyi işini sevdirmek ve daima olmasa dahi muvaffakiyetinden dolayı takdir ve tebrik etmek lazımdır.” See “Hayatta Muvaffak olmuş İşadamlarımız-50’lerden Sanayici Portreleri” in *75 Yılda Çarkları Döndürenler* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1999). Quoted in Koçak, “Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı Oluşumunun Sessiz Yılları: 1950’ler”, p. 112.

They called me ‘father Fuad’ in the mill. I started giving lunch to workers for the first time in private mills. Because one day I was told that one of my best workers did not come to work. They said he was ill. I sent a doctor to his home. I wanted to guarantee that they eat healthily and keep proper diet. I always ate with them. I provided interest free loans for those who wanted to buy apartments. The first collective agreement was made in my factory. I made it available to workers to go for vacation at the recreational facilities of my company in Üsküdar. We were content with each other. We were earning money, giving workers’ share.⁶¹³

Especially the recreational facilities established in Üsküdar-Paşalimanı were appreciated by many contemporaries. Even the *Gayret* magazine which was published by Textile Industry Workers’ Trade Union in Kayseri praised Bezmen for his benevolence and humanitarian behavior toward his workers.⁶¹⁴ In 1958, upon the invitation of social welfare director of the Santral Mensucat, Kemal Sülker visited the camp during the special camp festival which was held once in a year. Sülker seemed to be fascinated by the extent of the social services provided and the orderly, clean environment of the camp. The shelters were new and comfortable; the beds and sheets were clean and were comparable to those in middle class houses. There were beautiful playgrounds for children and Turkish classical music concerts which took place at the music hall entertained adults in the evenings. The statue of Halil Ali Bezmen, the founder of Santral Mensucat, gave the impression that he was present among them, watching proudly his respectable, deserving workers enjoying their decent

⁶¹³ “Fabrikada bana “Fuad Baba” derlerdi. İşçilerine İlk yemeği veren benim. Çünkü en iyi işçilerimden birinin birgün gelmediğini öğrendim, hasta dediler. Evine doktoru gönderdim. Sonra her hasta olanın evine doktoru gönderdim. Düzenli beslenmelerini ve ihtiyaçları olan kaloriyi almalarını istedim. Her zaman işçilerimle aynı yemeği yedim. İlk toplu sözleşme benim fabrikamda imzalandı. Ev almak isteyen işçilerime faizsiz para verdim. Üsküdar’daki şirket tesislerimde 15 gün tatil yaptırдыm. Ben de memnundum, işçilerim de. Para kazanıyorduk. İşçilerimizin hakkını da veriyorduk.” Nurten Erk Tosuner, “80 Yıllık Sanayici Fuad Bezmen 100 Yaşına ‘Tertemiz’ Giriyor,” *Hürriyet*, 27 April 2009.

⁶¹⁴ Kemal Yılmaz, “Örnek İşveren,” *Gayret*, no. 113 (20 August 1953).

holiday.⁶¹⁵ Workers' contentment and satisfaction with the camp was reflected in a poetry performed by a worker:

It is Monday, we arrived at our camp
Let us say Maaşallah to our new complex
May God make it permanent to us
Thanks to master Hakkı, his labor is memorable
Long live our factory
We are protected and supported⁶¹⁶

These policies had tangible benefits to workers. However, it should be remembered that elements of both paternalism and "market despotism"⁶¹⁷ were present at all levels of the employment relationship in Santral Mensucat. They were added to other features of the industrial culture, embodying the outcomes of conflicts in the first half of the decade. Workers furthermore sought to press on management new institutional forms for the regulation of industrial relations: they called for an organized representation of their interests through the trade unions; they sought the right to strike, and the removal of the unjustified Bedaux system. Yet, when the company decided in 1954 to extend management control by crushing the weaving shop and by introducing scientific management techniques, workers could not stand against this grand campaign, despite a protracted struggle. The company had made a sizeable investment in infrastructural modernization and clearly intended to end the

⁶¹⁵ "Fabrika yaz kış bütün işçilerini onar gün kampta dinlendirmektedir. İşçiler çalışıyormuş gibi ücret ve primlerini alıyorlar. Beton pavyonlar – bizzat müşahede ettim – tertemiz. Karyolalar yepyeni. Yatak yogan orta halli bir aileninkiler ayarında. Kamp çamlar arasında boğaza Boğaza hakim bir yerde. İşçiler arasında en ufak bir gürültü, anlaşmazlık, huzursuzluk yok... Kampa, kimsesiz çocuklar yurdunda barındırılan 22 çocuk onar gün araya ikişer ikişer misafir ediliyorlar... Öte yanda mensucat sahiplerinin büyükleri Halil Ali Bezmen'in büstü duruyordu. Sanki muvaffak bir eseri gururla seyrediyor gibiydi." Kemal Sülker, "İşçi Dinlenme Kampı ve Sosyal Yardım Faaliyeti," *Gece Postası*, 11 July 1956. See also "Paşalimanında Paşalar gibi Eğlenen İşçiler," 13 April 1956.

⁶¹⁶ "Günlerden Pazartesi biz geldik kampımıza/ Maaşallah diyelim biz bu yeni yapımıza/ Hüda daim eylesin onu hep yanımıza/ Hakkı usta sağolsun emeği unutulmaz/ Yaşasın Fabrikamız/ Sağlamdır Arkamız"; Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ For the term, see Burawoy, *Politics of Production*, ch. 2.

relative autonomy of the weavers in the production process. The Bedaux system offered an opportunity to break the workers' control of their jobs and to entrench a group of obedient productive workers. It is reasonable to argue that despite the reality that these workers represented ultimately little threat to employer, the management intrinsically viewed worker autonomy as potentially threatening both to its own control of the labor process and, in the end, to capital's control generally. In Santral Mensucat, as elsewhere, management determined to end that threat, and they did it successfully.

Conclusion

The scientific management system introduced in the early 1950s in a few large firms affected very few people directly; for example, hardly more than ten percent of workers worked at piece rate compensation schemes.⁶¹⁸ But it was merely the most visible part of a multifaceted reorganization of the firm in social, technical and financial terms. The new industrial framework attempted to achieve an arrangement of the workplace allowing for a smoother flow of products, a more logical sequencing of operations to avoid loss of time, and technological modernization. However, as noted above, technological modernization in a factory meant a better-controlled factory. This reorganization of workplace was accompanied by the development of a wage system more suited to the regulation of time and productivity. Wage policy was crucial to instill in workers a greater sense of time discipline.

Control issues were reflected in worker attempts to influence the pace of work by demanding the restoration of daily pay, by contesting any requirement that the workers operate more machine tools at a time, by contesting overtime, and by challenging

⁶¹⁸ See Sabahaddin Zaim, *Bölge ve Şehir Planlaması Yönünden İstanbul Sanayi Bölgeleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Yayını, 1971), pp. 296-299.

management generally over the issue of time by seeking a reduction in hours. For management, the problem turned on gaining control over labor productivity, and in part, the employers sought to do so by manipulating forms of remuneration. Both the managements in state factories and private factories hoped to achieve a more disciplined and productive work force through such capitalist incentives to hard work as monetary inducement. But in so doing, the management encroached upon what labor viewed as humane pace of work.

Workers were well aware that piece rates constituted a real challenge to themselves. When stripped off of its “scientific” veil, it attempted to remove the decisions over work pace and sequence from the bargaining between foremen and workers - bargaining in which workers participated and exercised some power. In order to impose the new scientific standards, management had to break the workers’ power to resist. On the other hand welfare capitalism attempted to convince workers that harmony, not conflict, would bring rewards to workers. The intensification of work and tighter discipline coincided with the celebrated rise in living standards of working class families and increased legislative reform during the period. In many workplaces such as Santral Mensucat mill paternalism and deference also played an important role in establishing factory discipline and gaining workers’ loyalty to the workplace.

Managerial programs that imposed centralized expertise on workers are the essence of Taylorism, but Taylorism came to be implemented in a very decentralized manner in Turkey during the 1950s. The decentralized character of the system is embodied by piece rate compensation programs typically led by foreign experts, as was the case in Santral Mesucat. The decentralized aspects of Turkish labor-management relations were a response to Turkey’s status as a late developer and the fragmented character of labor markets.

CHAPTER 4

LAW, LABOR PROCESS AND WORKING CLASS EXPERIENCE

Over the course of the 1940s and 1950s many employers such as the textile manufacturers tackled the problem of subordination of labor. In the previous chapter, some of the managerial strategies and methods that were employed at the shop floor level in order to overcome the problems of governance in the capitalist labor process were scrutinized. It was argued that experiments with such strategies in some workplaces shaped working class experience and action in some unprecedented ways. In order to complement the picture, we should add to this analysis another perspective which focuses on the role of law in facilitating and securing productive discipline.

This perspective is chiefly inspired by the contemporary studies on the anthropology of law which has grown since at least the late 1970s. The contemporary anthropology of law has put special attention to the ways that law constructs and deconstructs power relations. As Sally E. Merry suggests in a wonderful review on the literature, “law is no longer only a mode of social control and dominance; it is also a constitutive system that creates conceptions of

order and enforces on them.”⁶¹⁹ The constitutive theory of law attempts to understand the ways in which law forms identity and experience and, in turn, is constituted by the everyday interactions that give law a meaning.⁶²⁰ Moreover, law as an ideology contributes to the social construction of the world as fair and just and at the same time provides a language for resisting that order.

Another inspiration to this perspective comes from Michael Burawoy’s argument that the problem of subordination involves not just the labor process per se, but the larger political apparatuses of production in which it is nested. That is to say, production is socially and politically organized, and law plays central role in this process. According to that argument, contrary to the labor theorists who have often depoliticized production, “political process always operates at the very center of the labor process by defining the juridical actor, both individual and collective.”⁶²¹ Through the law, private and state actors (in our case, inspectors, Ministry of Labor officers and managers) intercede in the apparatuses and processes of production.

In two related aspects, the law was crucial to overcome the problems of governance in the capitalist labor process. First, it performed a coercive function by imposing direct legal sanctions against workers who exercised their collective economic strength on employers. Second, it was used as to legitimize, but also to regulate and reform, the indigenous production and enforcement of norms in the workplace. Without the legal environment

⁶¹⁹ Sally Engle Merry, “Anthropology, Law, and Transnational Processes,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992), p. 360.

⁶²⁰ See Carroll Seron and Frank Munger, “Law and Inequality: Race, Gender ... and, of Course Class,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 22 (1996), pp. 195-196.

⁶²¹ Burawoy, *The Politics of Production*, p. 63.

created by various state and non-state legislation, the program of industrial discipline could not have been conducted effectively.

Recently, this perspective has been elaborated by Marc W. Steinberg, who emphasizes that state has never been “external” to the production process and concentrating on law as playing role at the macro level of institutions often conceals the micro dimension of law as a set of everyday practices.⁶²² Steinberg suggests that we should focus attention to how legal institutions partly constitute both the ways in which the labor relation can be conceived and the strategies by which capitalists can subordinate workers. He argues that the historical materialist accounts of the labor process and history provide a satisfactory analysis of the transformation of social and technical relations of production with the advent of modern industry and the rise of machinery, yet, in general, “fail to evaluate the ways in which law is used as a means of domination within the production process to insure value extraction.”⁶²³ Following Steinberg, we may conclude that a socio-legal dimension should be added to the theory for attaining a better understanding of the experience of exploitation in the labor process. The relevance of law for the history of the labor process also is emphasized by Richard Price in a relatively old but not out of date article in which he argues that a social history of labor law can detect deeper continuities in law and its relation to statutes through the period of capitalist development.⁶²⁴

From this point of view, this chapter seeks an analysis of the role of law in the historical construction of production process. Asserting that law is the primary site upon

⁶²² Marc W. Steinberg, “Capitalist Development, the Labor Process, and the Law,” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 109, no. 2 (September 2003), p. 454.

⁶²³ Marc W. Steinberg, “Marx, Formal Subsumption and the Law,” *Theory and Society*, vol. 39, no. 2 (March, 2010).

⁶²⁴ Richard Price, “The Labour Process and Labour History,” *Social History*, vol. 8, no. 1 (January, 1983), p. 70.

which authoritative social relations are constituted, the chapter shall argue that legal history—in this case the history of labor law—is of fundamental importance to the labor history. However, the object of this chapter is not an anatomy of law. Nor does it aim at the diagnosis of ills and the prescription of alternative possible reform programs. Its object rather is to investigate law in terms of the social relations and, therefore, the power relations persisting in the society. These are relations in which law is actively implicated both practically and conceptually. Interpreting the social history of labor law in this light is of crucial importance particularly for a study which focuses on a period when great steps were taken in terms of legal structuring of labor relations. It has been well documented by the industrial relations literature that the 1946-1963 period in Turkey is one that the legal infrastructure of workplace labor relations was constituted.⁶²⁵

It is commonplace to acknowledge that there has been a close affinity between the state and labor law. Yet labor law cannot and should not be confined to the set of norms authoritatively pronounced by state institutions – the legislative and courts – and enforced by state officials – judges, arbitration authorities, and inspectors – mandated to employ state’s powers of coercion. Notwithstanding all assumptions of state policy and action, a great part of the labor law is not exclusively state law. As H.W. Arthurs underlines: “The ‘web of rules’ governing the complex and dynamic relationship we call employment includes strands of state law, to be sure, but also explicit contracts and implicit understandings, custom and usage, patterned behavior, cultural assumptions, power relations, and technological imperatives. The state alone – even if we wanted to – could neither replicate nor restrict the variety and

⁶²⁵ A democrat deputy underlined during a parliamentary debate in 1958 that the total number of legislations concerning labor issues enacted during the last seven years of DP government came to 92. This number far exceeded that of 1923-1950 period, which was just about 60. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 11, session 1, vol. 4, 27 February 1958.

volatility, spontaneity and subtlety, power and precision of this web of rules”⁶²⁶ Therefore, the following analysis also should incorporate the function of “private law of employers” in constructing labor discipline in order to wring the most value from workers.

In this chapter we shall demonstrate this expanded perspective through an analysis of three connected themes: i) the role of inner regulations as private law, ii) the performance of labor inspectorate in monitoring and supporting the implementation of labor legislation, and iii) the functioning of arbitration mechanism as the only legitimate channel of resolving collective labor disputes. We shall explore how these three subjects constituted a power relationship between employers and workers that provided the former with the potential for considerable control. We shall also analyze how the social embeddedness of manufacturers within the local elite provided them with access to and power to manipulate the legal system as a means of labor control.

However, to be sure, workers were not just passive subjects of control through the legal system. Obviously they had far less capacity to intervene in the codification and, especially, interpretations of the laws. Yet, as Thompson observed of eighteenth century English law, the very centrality of the law as a force of order and class power makes it an arena, not of consensus, but of conflict. From within the legal system, for example, workers aired their demands for the extension of social justice and equity. Over time, Thompson noted, the law thus served at once as a powerful hegemonic force for the established class power and as a brake on the self-interest of the ruling classes.⁶²⁷ Moreover, legal norms and institutions gave way to unpredictable consequences in terms of working class consciousness.

⁶²⁶ H.W. Arthurs, “Labour Law without the State?” *The University of Toronto Law Journal*, vol. 46, no. 1 (Winter, 1996), pp. 2-3. See also Merry, p. 358.

⁶²⁷ E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), pp. 260-269.

The legislation system itself magnified the worker's sense of himself as a worker rather than as a citizen or the nation as a whole. It also points to the margins where the legitimate action for workers starts and ends.

Inner Regulations

The significant role of factory inner regulations for subordinating labor has been a neglected issue in the labor process literature. However, the first elaborations on the subject date back to as early as Marx. Even he did not develop a broader perspective necessary for a complementary analysis of the law in capitalist relations of production, Marx made some references to the place of factory regulations in the development of capitalist labor process. In Marx's words:

In the factory code, the capitalist formulates his autocratic power over his workers like a private legislator, and purely as an emanation of his own will, unaccompanied by either that division of responsibility otherwise so much approved by the bourgeoisie, or the still more approved representative system. This code is merely the capitalist caricature of the social regulation of the labor process which becomes necessary in co-operation on a large scale and in the employment of common instruments of labour, and especially machinery. The overseer's book of penalties replaces the slave-driver's lash. All punishments (in capitalist production relations) naturally resolve themselves into fines and deductions from wages.⁶²⁸

Obviously Marx's analysis of factory legislations was written to describe the "satanic mills" of mid-nineteenth century England where the production process was controlled by the factory owner in a more "despotic" manner behind the factory gates. However, the historical account proves that inner regulations played an important role in every particular experience of capitalist development. In the Turkish experience we can also see that inner regulations were put into service for furnishing the employers with greater control and disciplinary power over their workers. As Orhan Tuna wrote the inner regulations had the character to be

⁶²⁸ Marx, pp. 549-550.

“principal employment contract” between workers and employers. They rendered employers discretionary power over the conditions of employment.⁶²⁹

The inner regulation guide was in practice a labor contract which included specific rules in a work shop. According to the 1936 Labor Code (Article 29) all workplaces to which the Code applied were obliged to prepare inner regulations (*dahili talimatnameler*) which set the work safety, sanitary and disciplinary standards to which workers would be subjected. The Code stipulated that inner regulations also should include conditions of employment, which are usually determined by collective agreements, where the system of collective bargaining exists. As early as 1937, one permanent industrial journal, *Endüstri*, warned that the employers should not manipulate the inner regulations so as to circumvent the Labor Law and impose heavy conditions on workers through these documents.⁶³⁰ The worry was that employers were trying to put workers in a straightjacket and impose unfair tasks and disciplinary punishments through these regulations.

The Labor Code also stipulated that the inner regulations be prepared by the workplace managements and submitted for approval to the Regional Labor Directorates (before 1946, this authority was the Ministry of Economy) before coming into effect in the workplaces. However this did not necessarily change the employment of inner regulations as “private

⁶²⁹ “(M)evzuat Hükümlerinden de anlaşılacağı gibi, iç yönetmelik tek taraflı bir tasarruftur ve mevzuat hükümlerine aykırı olmamak şartıyla münhasıran işveren tarafından tanzim ve tadil edilmektedir. Haiz olduğu bu hükümleriyle işçilerin, işyerlerinde yürürlükte bulunan istihdam şartlarının tespitinde hiçbir iradeleri, rey ve fikirleri, hatta hiçbir arzu ve temennileri bahis konusu değildir. Başka bir ifade ile, bu rejime göre işveren tam manasıyla “kendi evinin efendisi”dir. Bizzet tanzim ve değiştirme yetkisine haiz olduğu iç yönetmeliğe dilediği çalışma şartlarını koyar ve dilediğini çıkarabilir. Nitekim bahis konusu ettiğimiz tebliğlerde, Çalışma Bakanlığınca iç yönetmeliklere derci zaruri görülen hususlar dışında, ‘işverenin ayrıca koymak istediği iş şartları varsa’ ibaresi bu görüşü teyit etmektedir. ” Orhan Tuna, *Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Düzeninin İktisadi ve Sosyal Tesirleri* (Ankara: Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı Yayınları, 1969), p. 21.

⁶³⁰ “İş Yerleri için Dahili Talimatnameler Yapılırken İşçiler Hakkında Vicdani ve İnsani Duygular Daima Göz Önünde Bulundurulmalıdır,” *Endüstri*, vol. 23, no. 3 (November 1937), p. 70.

legislations”⁶³¹ by employers. Workers and trade unions frequently expressed their annoyance and discomfort with the disciplinary punishments and other severe measures that were put in inner regulations.

During the period, workers under factory discipline were dismissed, fined heavily or locked out for the day for a whole variety of infractions. These included arriving a few minutes late in the morning, entering the factory by using the door of officers, being absent from their machine, cleaning or fixing machines by themselves, eating or talking to others during the work and engaging in other forms of disorderly conduct. Even workers on piecework were often subject to strict discipline. For example, in the Mensucat Santral and Kartaltepe Mensucat mills, workers who were a few minutes late were locked out for the day.⁶³² Infact, expropriation of some minutes by starting late in the morning, by cleaning the machines themselves or leaving the machine for a brief chat with friends were not generally influenced by any intention of being resistant. However, their breaking with time schedules or disciplinary regulations partly affected the factories’ work process and order. These expropriations and withdrawals interfered with the managements’ efforts to devote the entire operational time to production of commodities. The detailed factory inner regulations mirror how far the workers’ silent transgressions were perceived as resistance and punished by the managements.⁶³³

⁶³¹ Bob Fine, “Law and Class,” in *Capitalism and the Rule of Law: From Deviancy Theory to Marxism*, edited by B. Fine, R. Kinsey, J. Iea, S. Picciotto, and J. Young (London: Hutchinson, 1982), p. 44; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal, 1890 to 1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 68; Steinberg, “Capitalist Development, Labor Process and the Law”, p. 447.

⁶³² *Mensucat Santral Türk Anonim Şirketi İċyönetmeliđi* (İstanbul: Hüsnütabiāt Basımevi, 1950), p. 10; “235 Mensucat İşçisi İş İhtilafı Çıkardı”, *Gece Postası*, 13 December 1950.

⁶³³ Such illegal breaks with the demands and requirements of the factory system were multifaceted situations. Resistance could be practiced then. However, such small acts of reappropriation of time and space of one’s own at work were especially important as it allowed an independent shopfloor culture to form. Alf Ludtke, thus, contrasts forms of enjoyable timewasting at work with the entitled breaks which were theoretically “reproductive

In a cement factory established in Zeytinburnu, workers who were five minutes late in the morning were fined one hour's wage. Those who came to work more than one hour later had to pay a fine of half day's wage.⁶³⁴ In one factory if a worker was not there by starting time, he lost his machine with the wage and bonus earnings for the day.⁶³⁵ Leaving the machines for any reason while they were running and fixing or cleaning them during the work time were also acts that entailed the punishment of workers. Inner regulations, therefore, were designed on the one hand to destroy pre-industrial habits and moralities and on the other to inculcate attitudes of punctuality and responsibility with work routines.⁶³⁶ In order to guarantee strict punctuality, the inner regulation guides of the Mensucat Santral and General Elektrik companies wrote that the factory clock was set according to the national time announced on the radio.⁶³⁷

Discipline systems penalized workers for various other infractions. In a rope and landyard producing factory established in Anadoluhisari (*Anadoluhisar İp ve Halat*

work", used practically for recharging one's own strength for the following hours at the workbench. It is in the illegal breaks (acts of walking around, talking, or even day dreaming) that workers demarcated a kind of autonomous space and a niche of time for self-directed activity. In Ludtke's words, "these were moments of actively taking distance not only from capital's domination at the workplace, but also from fighting or resisting the restrictions of one's own needs and interests – immediate joyful 'depense' (expenditure of time on the spot) without any calculation of effects or outcomes. The workers then were with themselves by actively neglecting the consequences of their social intercourse, at least for some minutes, or perhaps only seconds." See Alf Luedtke, "Cash, Coffee-Breaks, Horseplay: Eigensinn and Politics among Factory Workers in Germany circa 1900," in *Confrontation, Class Consciousness and the Labor Process*, eds. Michael Hanagan and Charles Stephenson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 80.

⁶³⁴ *Zeytinburnu Çimento Fabrikası Dahili Talimatnamesi* (İstanbul: 1947), p. 13.

⁶³⁵ *Türkey Endüstri ve Ticaret A.Ş. İstinye Kibrit Fabrikası Dahili Talimatnamesi* (İstanbul: 1956), p. 11.

⁶³⁶ An illuminative discussion on the introduction of time efficiency in Japan factories through factory regulations is provided in Hashimoto Takehiko, "Punctuality and the Introduction of Scientific Management in Japan", *Japan Review*, no. 14 (2002).

⁶³⁷ *Mensucat Santral Türk Anonim Şirketi İçyönetmeliği*, p. 4; *General Elektrik Türk Anonim Ortaklığı Ampul Fabrikası Dahili Talimatnamesi* (İstanbul: 1954), p. 13. In an earlier version, Mensucat Santral inner regulation document wrote that the starting and finishing hours was adjusted according to the clock of the Yedikule train station. *Mensucat Santral Dahili Talimatnamesi* (İstanbul: Resimli Ay Matbaası, 1938), p. 7

Fabrikası) the inner regulation guide wrote that “bringing any reading material such as newspaper, novel and magazine into the factory is strictly forbidden and required punishment.”⁶³⁸ As İbrahim Yalçınoğlu, who was a prominent trade unionist in Malatya, told, using the wrong door in a factory sometimes could result in losing one’s job: “One worker was given the sack in Malatya. I asked them (the management) the reason of its dismissal. They said they had fired him because he had entered the workplace by using the door allocated to the officers. Can you believe that? People used to be fired because of using the door of the officers.”⁶³⁹ In the Sümerbank Textile Factory in Kayseri one worker was punished for using a route prohibited to workers for going to the dining hall. What drew the strongest reaction of workers was that this poor worker also was beaten by gatekeepers for the same infraction.⁶⁴⁰

In another textile mill established in Bomonti (Kiryako Pamukoğlu and Sons Textile Mill), it was reported that 36 workers were penalized in one month for various infringements. Among them five workers were penalized for talking in the toilet and two workers were penalized for wasting water while two other were penalized for eating on duty in the weaving room. Another worker was fined for getting weighed while working on the weaving loom. The total fines collected from workers came to approximately 125 liras.⁶⁴¹ In docks and railway repair shops, workers’ conduct with associates and superintendents were strictly governed through internal regulations. Workers could be fined for “showing disrespect or

⁶³⁸ Lütfi Erişçi, *Sosyal Tarih Çalışmaları* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV Yayınları, 2003), p. 113. Erişçi remarks that the guide forbids not just reading in the factory during work, it also forbids bringing reading materials into the workplace.

⁶³⁹ Gözde Yirmibeşoğlu, “Trade Unionism in Turkey: The Self-Understanding of Türk-İş and Its Role in Society and Politics (1950-1982)” (Ph.D. diss., Middle East Technical University, 2007), p. 90.

⁶⁴⁰ “İç Hizmetler Şefliğinin Dikkatine,” *Gayret*, 16 June 1951.

⁶⁴¹ “Her gün Ceza Alan İşçiler,” *Gece Postası*, 17 March 1956.

becoming saucy” with supervisors. Using ill language and disorderly behaviors could also be used as pretexts to penalize workers.⁶⁴² In a survey on trade unions in İzmir, Z. F. Fındıkoğlu observed that the foremost grievances of tramcar workers concerned the disciplinary rules of the company. A few minutes of stops at the stations for drinking water or buying cigarette would cost a loss of 200 kuruş for tramcar drivers. Workers who were fined for such infractions also lost their share in non-productive bonuses.⁶⁴³ Tramcar workers in İstanbul succeeded in persuading the management to amend the stringent disciplinary codes in the internal regulations after a protracted struggle.⁶⁴⁴

One trade union militant said that inner regulations were “prepared as to the employers’ sweet will without consultation to workers.” For this reason, these regulations regarded the workers as “loyal slaves” depriving them even from satisfying their basic needs such as going to toilet or taking a brief break to smoke cigarette.⁶⁴⁵ Factory discipline was designed in part to increase workers’ effort beyond that which they would freely supply to firms. One textile mill in İstanbul did not let workers to go out of the plant during the lunch breaks even it did not provide lunch. Workers were coerced to do shopping from a specific grocery which had an access from factory court. Workers demanded that the unions should collectively deal with the “inner regulations problem” immediately.⁶⁴⁶ In the Tekel tobacco

⁶⁴² *Devlet Demiryolları ve Limanları İşletme Umum Müdürlüğü İşyerlerine Mahsus Yeknesak Dahili Talimatname* (İstanbul: Haydarpaşa Demiryollar Matbaası, 1939), p. 24.

⁶⁴³ Z. Fahri Fındıkoğlu, *İzmir’de İşçi Sendikaları Hakkında Sosyolojik Bazı Müşahedeler* (İstanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1952), p. 12.

⁶⁴⁴ “İETT İşçileri Dahili Talimatnamesinde Değişiklik,” *Gece Postası*, 19 November 1956.

⁶⁴⁵ Kemal Sülker, “Büyük İşçi Röportajı: Fabrika İç Yönetmeliklerinden Şikayet Eksik Olmuyor,” *Gece Postası*, 17 November 1951.

⁶⁴⁶ Kemal Sülker, “Büyük İşçi Röportajı: Kaplan Mensucat Fabrikası İşçi Mümessilleri Ne Diyor?” *Gece Postası*, 9 July 1949.

processing factory established in Üsküdar, workers were not allowed to move out into the factory courtyard during the lunch breaks. They had to spend the breaks in the warehouses, which was very annoying because of the heavy and dizzying nicotine smell, and intense humidity in the air.⁶⁴⁷

The textile Workers Union demanded that the inner regulation guides should be all the same and a commission consisted of both workers and employers should evaluate the violations of the rules.⁶⁴⁸ In a similar vein the İstanbul Tobacco Workers' Union also demanded that worker delegates should be incorporated in the preparatory process of inner regulations.⁶⁴⁹ Still some other trade unions complained that the inner regulations were frequently revised by the employers without any consultation with workers and outside the knowledge of the Ministry of Labor.⁶⁵⁰

Factory managements also manipulated inner regulations to force employees to work overtime. Since factory regulation guides were rarely checked by the authorities, employers could make such requests depending on the “factory codes.”⁶⁵¹ It seems that the injustices arising from inner regulations hit rubber industry workers the most. In the mid-1950s there were some 180 middle- and large-scale workplaces in İstanbul employing about 7-8 thousand workers in the industry. The workplaces in the industry operated from July to December. A period of six or seven months after December was known as “dead time” or “season” when workers were discharged without any payment. This treatment, workers believed, was

⁶⁴⁷ “Üsküdar Tekel Tütün Fabrikası İşçileri,” *Gece Postası*, 25 April 1952.

⁶⁴⁸ Kemal Sülker, “İşyerleri İç Yönetmelikleri İçin Teşebbüsler,” *Gece Postası*, 4 February 1956.

⁶⁴⁹ Mustafa Özçelik, *1930-1950 Arasında Tütüncülerin Tarihi*, p. 131.

⁶⁵⁰ İş yerlerinde Çalışma Şartlarının Vekaletçe Tespiti İsteniyor,” *Akşam*, 6 May 1955; “İç Yönetmelikler İşçiden Habersiz Değiştirilmemeli,” 22 July 1957; “İşyeri İç Yönetmelikleri Tek Taraflı Olarak Bozulamaz,” *Gece Postası*, 16 Temmuz 1958; “İç Yönetmelik İstenmiyor,” *İşçinin Sesi*, 12 September 1960.

⁶⁵¹ For example, see “Yemen Mensucat İşçilerinin Dertleri Çok,” *Gece Postası*, 9 August 1952.

certainly against the law. Yet, employers claimed the right to kick-off workers without any feeling of responsibility because “the season” was installed in the inner regulation guides.⁶⁵² In one rubber-tire factory established in Topkapı an article put in the inner regulation guide enabled the employer to relocate and scale down the wage of any worker to the minimum level whenever he wished. On the basis of this article, which was inimical to the content and essence of the labor law, workers argued, the employer could resort to any trickery and manipulation to enforce workers to leave the factory without any claim for compensation.⁶⁵³ The case of rubber industry workers reveals that factory regulations were not only functional for exerting labor discipline on the shop floor, but also for circumventing job security. When the Petroleum, Chemical and Rubber Industry Workers’ Trade Union (Lastik-İş) appealed to the Ministry of Labor to cancel “seasons” from the inner regulations, the ministry replied that the seasonal closures and unemployment were customary practices in the industry and workers who got a job in rubber workplaces were supposed to have accepted the terms of employment. Therefore, the ministry concluded, there was no need for revision in the inner regulations.⁶⁵⁴

Still some other factory owners manipulated inner regulations for repudiating payments to their workers. For example, a leather factory owned by Nilco Oriettas and Yani

⁶⁵² “Nevzad Akdeniz İç Yönetmeliklerin Tek Taraflı Hazırlanmış olduğunu Etraflıca Belirtiyor,” *Gece Postası*, 15 August 1951; “Lastik ve Kauçuk İşçilerinin Sezon Şikayetleri,” *Gece Postası*, 1 July 1952. The dead time in industry was a concern to 6-7 thousand workers in İstanbul. “Lastik ve Kauçuk İşçilerinin Karşılaştığı Güçlükler”, *Gece Postası*, 2 July 1951.

⁶⁵³ Esat Adil Müstecabi, “Türk İşçisi ve Ücret Köleliği”, 1950. This article is provided in BCA Catalog no. [490.01/ 204.812].

⁶⁵⁴ “Lastik işkolunda yapılan tetkikler sonunda Avrupa ve Amerika’da mevsim tatillerinin yapıldığı tespit edilmiştir. Buna mukabil memleketimizde bu işkolunda da çalışma teamülü böyle teessıs etmiştir. Bu itibarla işyerlerine giren işçi esasen bu sistemi peşinen kabul etmiş sayılır. Bunun tabii neticesi olarak işyerlerinin gayri faal bulunduğu devrelerde işçiye hiçbir ücret ödenmez.” Sedat Ağralı, *Günümüze Kadar Belgelerle Türk Sendikacılığı* (İstanbul: Son Telgraf, 1967), pp. 73-74. See also “İşçiler Muvakkat İşçi Kaydının Kaldırılmasını İstedi,” *İstanbul Ekspres*, 7 March 1954.

Kefalas closed the shop for Christmas holiday on 25 April 1952. On the next day, workers demanded that payment be made for this short holiday, since according to the Labor Code half of the daily wage should be paid to workers on holidays. However, Oriettas and Kefalas argued that the Christmas was not recognized as a holiday in the inner regulations and refused to make any payments.⁶⁵⁵

Labor discipline usually started at the gates of the factory. Since the managements were always suspicious of theft of tools, raw materials and products, they put in the inner regulations that workers were to be searched when leaving the workplace. In the İstinye Matchmaking Factory, for instance, workers who refused to get searched at the factory door were laid-off according to factory rules.⁶⁵⁶

Many changes that attended management's concern with greater time discipline further contributed to the workers' sense of encroachment. The automatic punch clocks which withdrew the free time before the beginning of work and after lunch were particularly offensive. At issue were changes in the heretofore accepted norms of factory life which had never been codified before in the work rules. In the Sümerbank Ereğli Factory workers complained that they were obligated to punch in and out four times in a day which was not only a real burden for them, but also injurious for it showed the management's distrust in its operatives.⁶⁵⁷ On the other hand, there were also cases where the workers tried to use this weapon of employers against them. In the Bahariye Textile Factory, for example, one important complaint of the workers was that because of the absence of time cards to punch in

⁶⁵⁵ "Fabrika İçi Yönetmeliklerde Kanuna Aykırı Hükümler Var," *Gece Postası*, 16 January 1953.

⁶⁵⁶ *Türkey Endüstri ve Ticaret A.Ş. İstinye Kibrit Fabrikası Dahili Talimatnamesi*, p. 12.

⁶⁵⁷ "Konya'ya Gelecek Olan Cumhurbaşkanı'na Sunulmak Üzere Hazırlanmış İşçilerin Dert ve Dilekleri," BCA Catalog no. [030.01/112.710.4].

and out, they were not able to prove the overtime work for which the employer had been refusing to pay.⁶⁵⁸

As has been suggested, the inner regulations were the primary instrument in the hands of the employers to exert discipline on the shop floor. Under discipline workers were rewarded not only according to their output, but also based on their behavior in the workplace. The historical evidence suggests that the disciplinary mechanism of inner regulations was used widely as instruments of economic regulation during a period when modern managerial techniques had not fully developed and when firms still suffered from the lack of a stable and permanent labor force which could lead to unexpected shifts in the business cycle.

Concurrently, the discipline became more severe especially in privately owned workplaces. Inner regulations, which were imposed by the employer on the newly hired worker, were very detailed and lengthy; hygiene and security measures were added to all others. Many workplaces, which had preserved comparatively large areas of freedom, were subjected to more rigorous schedules with strict control over comings and goings. This fostered growing protests related to industrial discipline.

Inner regulations sometimes became the targets of collective labor disputes. In a conflict raised by the İstanbul Weaving and Textile Industry Workers Trade Union in a workshop established in Küçükpazar, the demand was the removal of an article in the regulation guide which stated that temporary workers could be employed.⁶⁵⁹ Workers who were employed temporarily were deprived of many of the rights enjoyed by the regular-fulltime workers, such as social security, work security and the right to raise labor conflicts. It

⁶⁵⁸ Kemal Sülker, "Bahariye Mensucat Fabrikası İşçileri Dertlerini Anlattı," *Gece Postası*, 28 January 1956; "Bahariye Mensucat'ta Fazla Mesai," *Gece Postası*, 30 March 1956.

⁶⁵⁹ "Sendika Haberleri," *Gece Postası*, 11 February 1956.

is noteworthy that manipulating temporary workers was an ordinary tactic for employers in particular branches of industry. Hiring half of the needed labor force as temporary workers could secure them from annoying collective labor disputes, since trade unions could raise collective labor disputes only in workplaces where they represented more than half of the employees.⁶⁶⁰

In the İleri textile mill established in Zeytinburnu workers raised a collective labor dispute in 1960 claiming that the inner regulation guide furnished the employer with “unlimited potency.” According to the inner regulation guide, the employer had the full authority to add new shifts, alter the work hours and change the payment methods. As soon as the management got informed about the preparations of the workers, the employer of the mill laid-off the worker representative, Hatice İnanç.⁶⁶¹ However, the interesting point of this particular incident was that the course of the events revealed the state’s positive attitude towards the employers’ claim to set the terms of employment relationship arbitrarily. Despite all the aggressiveness of the employer, the workers of the İleri textile mill managed to bring their grievances to the Provincial Labor Directorate. However, the labor directorate rejected the workers’ appeal without any hesitation. This act showed the state’s unwillingness to intervene in the “private law” established by employers in order to discipline their workers.⁶⁶²

In a similar vein, the High Arbitration Committee often favored the employers when workers raised collective labor conflicts about inner regulations. For example, in mid-1954 the Committee rejected the appeals of workers in two textile mills confirming that factory

⁶⁶⁰ For different examples, see “Kanuni Haklara Karşı Yeni Hile: Muvakkat İşçi,” *Gece Postası*, 30 May 1957.

⁶⁶¹ It is noteworthy that Hatice İnanç was one of the few female worker representatives elected by workers in a textile mill.

⁶⁶² *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örmeye Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1959-1961 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Alpaslan Matbaası, 1961), pp. 38-39.

legislation was the private domain of employers.⁶⁶³ We lack sufficient data about the distribution of cases brought to the High Arbitration Committee among matters of dispute. Yet, the data collected by Orhan Tuna on the decisions of the İstanbul Provincial Arbitration Committee reveals that the great majority of industrial disputes raised by workers for the alterations of working conditions were rejected by arbitration authorities between 1959 and 1963.⁶⁶⁴

On the other hand, the historical evidence reveals that workers in state-owned firms gained considerable ground towards the end of the 1950s in terms of influencing the preparation process of the inner regulations. For example, the Tobacco, Liquor, and Food Processing Trade Unions Federation, which was organized in the workplaces of General Directorate of Monopolies, managed to put its members' demands in the new inner regulation guides prepared in 1959. With the changes in the guide, inner regulations were brought into conformity with the protective provisions of the Labor Code.⁶⁶⁵

Labor Inspection

Whereas it is a neglected issue in the Turkish labor historiography, many historians recognize that the establishment of central labor inspection was of great importance in advancing nineteenth and early twentieth century social and legal reform. For instance, Parris maintains that inspectors played a leading role in the improvement and regulation of labor

⁶⁶³ "Yüksek Hakem Kurulu'nun Son Kararları," *Gece Postası*, 25 June 1954.

⁶⁶⁴ Tuna, *Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Düzeninin İktisadi ve Sosyal Tesirleri*, p. 39.

⁶⁶⁵ Yıldırım Koç, *Türkiye'de İşçiler ve Sendikalar (Tarihten Sayfalar)* (Ankara: Türkiye Yol-İş Sendikası Yayınları, 2000), pp. 54-55.

legislation in Britain, including the development of their own powers.⁶⁶⁶ Marx also acknowledges the role of inspection in the development of social regulation and reform.⁶⁶⁷ The nature of the occupation provided the inspectors an insight into the terrible working and living conditions of the laboring poor. Interactive relation between workers and inspectors in the workplaces helped to improve these conditions after the mid-nineteenth century in England. By the last quarter of the century their jobs were insulated from changes in political administration and their occupation had become a reformist profession, with its own schools and traditions. In a similar vein, Russian factory inspectors had the right of investigation and conciliation, and their authority over the factory managers was so great that their work became very influential in the enforcement of workplace legislation during the late Tsarist regime. Jacob Walkin argues that “It is apparent that the inspectors were chiefly attracted by that phase of their work which enabled them to assist the weak and downtrodden working class, and ... despite many obstacles and difficulties over which they had no control, they succeeded in doing a commendable job.”⁶⁶⁸

Labor inspection in Turkey, however, was established as late as in 1936 by the Labor Code. The institution was envisaged in the Labor Code to be one important mechanism mediating directly between Ministry of Labor and workers. Article 56 and 92 of the Labor

⁶⁶⁶ Harry Parris, “The Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal Reappraised,” *The Historical Journal*, vol.3 (1960).

⁶⁶⁷ Marx gives many examples of courageous legal proceedings prepared by factory inspectors against the pressure of the employers. Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), especially chapter 10, pp. 389-410. Bartrip, taking a contrary position, argues that the importance of inspection has been exaggerated since “the resources allocated to the new agencies were too small to allow them to achieve much in terms of enforcement” and “their impact on government policy was limited.” P. W. J. Bartrip, “British Government Inspection, 1832-1875: Some Observations,” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 25, no.3 (1982), p. 605. However, it must be noted that there is a certain consensus among British historians about the positive role of inspectors in advancing labor reform.

⁶⁶⁸ Jacob Walkin, “The Attitude of the Tsarist Government Toward the Labor Problem,” *The American Slavic and East European Review*, vol.13, no.2 (April 1954), p.171. See also F. P. Pavlov, “Ten Years of Experience (Excerpts from Reminiscences, Impressions, and Observations of Factory Life),” in *The Russian Worker, Life and Labor under the Tsarist Regime*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnel (London: University of California Press, 1983).

Code foresaw, in accordance with other examples in the world, that labor inspectors fulfill a number of functions in the system.⁶⁶⁹ Above all, labor inspectors were held responsible for monitoring and supporting the implementation of the provisions of labor legislation. It was maintained that a strong labor inspection institution was the prerequisite for the labor legislation to become effective in the industrial life. Labor inspectors were endowed with the authority to make controls in the workplaces upon their own will or workers' complaints. The primary duty of inspectors was to mediate in the second stage of the collective dispute settlement system. At the first stage of the conciliation mechanism, the workers delegates and the employers were to make an attempt to solve the dispute. If the parties failed to secure a voluntary agreement, the inspectors were to visit the workplace and continue the efforts to solve the problem. According to the "Instructions to Labor Inspectors" guide, the very aim of inspectors' mediation was to achieve a "peaceful" agreement between entrepreneurs and workers. It was also the duty of the labor inspector to accompany and control the worker representative elections in the workplaces. Finally, the labor inspectors made financial and administrative auditing of the trade unions. Therefore, the inspector was envisaged to be both an advisor, a supervisor and an enforcement agent, with an overall mission of guidance. With such broad powers, labor inspectors could have significant effects on the employment terms and conditions of workers. Labor inspectorates were frequently the only state authority with direct access to enforce labor laws in the workplace.

A 1956 report prepared by the Ministry of Labor reveals that the number of worker complaints delivered to Regional Labor Directorates rose steadily during the course of the 1950s. The number of complaints increased from roughly 11,000 in 1952 to 13,500 in 1955,

⁶⁶⁹ İ. Hakkı Yeniay, "Muhtelif Memleketlerde ve Bizde İş Teftişi," *Çalışma Dergisi*, no. 10 (1946); Orhan Tuna, "İş Hayatının Teftiş ve Murakebesi," *Çalışma Dergisi*, no. 12 (1946).

representing 20 percent increase during the period.⁶⁷⁰ The report reveals that while greater amount of these complains were transferred from the Labor Directorates to the labor courts, the workload of labor inspectors was also potentiated. The statistics show that inspector visits to workplaces upon worker complaints increased considerably after 1952. While the average number of visits per month was recorded to be 284 in 1952, this figure increased to 415 in 1956. Added to this number, 200 visits took place to arbitrate collective labor disputes, 252 to control the worker representative elections and 288 visits were made for auditing the trade unions.⁶⁷¹

While these figures provide some idea about how intense the work of the labor inspectors was, they do not provide a clue about the effectiveness of these inspections. Archival material and newspaper reports throughout the 1950s provide numerous examples to test the effect of the inspector visits in the workplaces on workplace relations. For example, in early 1954 workers of a roofing tile factory applied to the Labor Directorate on the grounds that they were not paid for the Sundays and overtime work. Upon this appeal a labor inspector made investigations in the factory and recognized that the workers' claim was true. However, even months after the investigation had taken place, the workers said, the employer was still disregarding the decision that payments be made to the workers immediately. Moreover, the complainants were laid off right after the inspector's visit.⁶⁷²

In numerous letters sent to the authors of newspapers workers were expressing their discontentment with the work of inspectors. The Yunus Cement Factory Workers, for instance, wrote that inspectors never listened to their complaints in their visits to the factory

⁶⁷⁰ "Dördüncü Üç Aylık Devre İstatistikleri," *Çalışma Vekaleti Dergisi*, no. 4 (1956).

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² "Çeşitli Şikayetleri Olan Tuğla İşçileri," *Gece Postası*, 6 June 1954.

and they always contented themselves with talking to the managers and employer.⁶⁷³ In another case the employer's disrespect for the inspectors' operations was particularly noticed. Some union activists claimed that the employers were too comfortable during the inspections and even did not refrain from assaulting on the worker representatives in the presence of the inspectors.⁶⁷⁴ In 1959, the Leather and Tannery Workers' Trade Union initiated collective labor disputes in several leather factories located in Kazlıçeşme for the employers did not fulfill the legal obligations of providing safety and hygiene in the workplaces. The Kazlıçeşme leather factories were noted by the concerned public for their awful workplace conditions. They were poorly ventilated, malodorous and dark places, overrun with big rats. Many employers did not provide proper working clothes and separate places where workers could eat their lunches. It was an obvious fact that the working conditions of leather factories did not comply with the provisions provided in the Hygiene Act and Labor Code. However, the workers complained, the labor inspectors did not even walk through the departments in the factories and did not bother themselves with talking to the suffering workers. The inspectors, as they often did, just talked with the employers and wrote their reports according to their statements. However, the unionist workers did not give up easily, and made frequent calls to the Regional Labor Directorate in İstanbul and Ministry in Ankara to reexamine the situation in Kazlıçeşme. With their efforts, finally, the Regional Labor Director made a visit to the leather factories in the region in company with the unionists. Having seen the terrible employment conditions, the report in *KİM* magazine reported that the director had to admit

⁶⁷³ "Yunus Çimento Fabrikası İşçileri," *Gece Postası*, 16 March 1951.

⁶⁷⁴ "İş Müfettişleri," *Gece Postası*, 31 October 1951.

that the workers were legitimate in their demands, and decided on the closure of one shop “as a warning to others.”⁶⁷⁵

Still other workers were more worried about the ineffectiveness of the inspection system in forcing the employers to respect the rules and protecting workers against the arbitrary acts of factory managers. The union activists who were employed in the State Economic Enterprises in the provincial cities were particularly concerned about the rareness of inspections and the lack of compulsiveness. As one activist railway worker from Eskişehir recalled of the labor inspection system:

The future of a worker was not clear. If a worker complained about an inspector from Ankara about the worn out clothes at the workplace and blamed the employer for not providing new ones, you could not find this worker again in his place. They used to send such workers to another place to work or discharge them from the employment. We had no idea about their future. Everything was done in a mysterious way.⁶⁷⁶

One letter written by the chairman of the İstanbul Food Industry Workers’ Trade Union, Zühtü Tetey, for the Ministry of Labor in 1948 provides a good case for the functioning of the inspection mechanism on the shop floor.⁶⁷⁷ The letter narrates the history of an inspection exercised in a rice milling factory in Ayvansaray. According to the letter, about two months before the factory owner Ahmet Çanakçı had demanded the workers to work 11 hours a day for 8 hours wage. He also threatened that anyone who complained about the situation would be fired immediately. Upon that situation, workers’ legal representatives made several efforts to reach out to the employer and warn him about the workers’ grievance.

⁶⁷⁵ “Teftiş Meselesi,” *KİM*, 15 June 1959.

⁶⁷⁶ Yirmibeşoğlu, p. 96.

⁶⁷⁷ See “İşçiler ve Sendikalarla İlgili Umumi Evrak.” BCA Catalog no. [490.01/1439.06.01].

Yet, after seeing that all these attempts came to nothing, the workers asked the trade union to deliver the complaint to the regional directorate and call an inspector.

After several attempts of the union, the letter maintains, a labor inspector was sent to the factory on January 3, 1948. However, the whole inspection process was be a charade from the beginning. The worker representatives found out accidentally that the regional directorate had informed the employer about the visit two hours before the inspector came to the factory. Having learned that, the employer organized three men in the factory to meet and talk to the inspector. Two of these three men (Hasan Çanakçı and Hüseyin Çanakçı) were close relatives of the employer (Ahmet Çanakçı). The third man was an old worker doing auxiliary work in the factory and he still worked 8 hours probably because of his close relationship with the employer. The interviews took place in a protected room and the workers who wanted to see the inspector were precluded by the employer's guards. Even the representatives could not see the inspector. Workers who had seen that the trade union had failed to defend their right, Tetey concludes, prepared their resignations. The letter ends with an allusive question: "If the words and actions of the unions were that ignorable, why did the government enact Law No. 5018 regarding the trade unions and make those high-sounding words about the importance of unions?" It was also admitted by the Ministry of Labor that employers often were informed beforehand that the inspectors would visit their workplace. It was observed more than once that inspectors were going to factory inspections with the private vehicles of employers.⁶⁷⁸

In many cases, the labor inspectors proved to be incompetent at applying the provisions of the Labor Code. A number of strategies were developed by the employers in order to evade these provisions. One strategy deployed by the employers was to depict the

⁶⁷⁸ Makal, *Türkiye'de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1946-1963*, p. 379.

real number of the workers less than it really is. For instance, Kemal S. Sunar, himself an inspector, argued that in the textile sector many employers had been hiding some of their workers in specially designed wardrobes. In these wardrobes the workers worked long hours without fresh air. Thus these employers could argue that their enterprises were not included in the law since they employed fewer than ten workers.⁶⁷⁹ Trade unionist frequently witnessed cases where the factory owners resorted to different tactics in order to prevent inspectors from doing their jobs.⁶⁸⁰

Many unions voiced their grievance about the prejudice of labor inspectors against the workers' demands. The Iron and Metalwork Workers' Union (Maden-İş) criticized the inspectors more than once on the grounds that they used their authority to protect the private interests of employers.⁶⁸¹ Many unions complained about the inspectorate and demanded a fundamental change in the system. On several occasions, the İstanbul Tobacco Workers Trade Union demanded that trade union representatives with equal authority and power of inspectors should be enabled to participate in factory inspections.⁶⁸²

According to the Federation of Textile Workers' Unions, inspectors were generally indifferent to workers' problems. When they were not acting on the employers' side, they often manufactured excuses for delaying the inspections or not giving strict decisions. In such an example inspectors were called on to visit the Vakko Cotton Print Factory by the Federation. The inspectors, however, did not make the visit to the factory. Upon that occasion the Federation made a second attempt and asked the Labor Directorate the reason for that delay. The answer was intriguing. The inspectors had allegedly gone to the address of the

⁶⁷⁹ Kemal Sahi Sunar, "İş Kanununa Direnen İş Verenler," *İktisadi Yürüyüş*, vol. 21, no. 337 (1956), p. 9.

⁶⁸⁰ See Ersoy, *İşçi Gözü ile İşçi ve İşveren Münasebetleri*, p. 5.

⁶⁸¹ "İş Müfettişlerinin İşçi Haklarına Olan Titizlikleri Azalıyor," *Gece Postası*, 29 April 1955.

⁶⁸² Özçelik, *Tütüncülerin Tarihi*, pp. 131, 159.

factory, yet could not find the workplace, which was in fact quite a large establishment in Feriköy. It came to be the case that the employer had changed the place of the entrance door and the inspectors who were left helpless had turned back because they had not been able to find the door number.⁶⁸³

Trade unions also were concerned about the manipulation of the broad authority of the inspectors over themselves. Such concerns peaked in the mid-1950s when trade unions launched a big campaign to press on the new government to make amendments in the Labor Code. The chairman of the Hotel, Restaurant and Entertainment Places Workers' Trade Union (OLEYİS) stated that the inspectors were intimidating the union activists with constant visits to trade union bureaus.⁶⁸⁴ It was also reported that other unions also were complaining about the increasing threats raised by the Ministry of Labor of legal action to inspect the unions and close them down.⁶⁸⁵ When the tension between the unions and the government escalated once again in 1957, the inspectors did not hesitate to close down several unions and seven trade unions associations on the grounds that they were too involved in party politics.

Labor inspection encompassed many issues, such as hours of work, wages, safety, child labor, workers' representation system and labor disputes. An efficient and effective labor inspectorate needed to be well funded, well staffed and well organized. In the Turkish case none of these qualities existed in the inspection system. From the early days of its inception, the labor inspectorate was poorly funded and understaffed. The labor inspectorate was originally founded within the Work Bureaus, which had been established between 1936 and 1937 in 15 provinces to control and survey the implementation of the Labor Code. After

⁶⁸³ "Köşe Kapmaca Oynayan Kapı," *Gece Postası*, 21 April 1957.

⁶⁸⁴ BCA Catalog no. [490.01 /204.812.2].

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid. See also "Sendikaların Teftişi," *Forum*, vol. 6, no. 62 (15 October 1956), p. 7.

1946 these bureaus were linked directly to the Ministry of Labor and renamed the Provincial Labor Directorates.⁶⁸⁶ The Labor Directorates staffed very few inspectors who had different educational backgrounds and did not receive proper training on labor issues.

The inefficiency of the inspection system also was reflected in the ministry reports. Henry Stevens, for example, who worked as an advisor in the Ministry of Labor for 21 months, prepared a special report on the problems of the labor inspectorate in Turkey with special references to the English system. In this report Stevens argued that the budget allocated for the Ministry of Labor was so poor that it did not allow allocating sufficient funds to employ more inspectors and train them properly. Stevens drew attention to the potentiating duties of the inspectors endowed by the labor legislation. The Directory for Protecting the Health and Safety of the Workers, which had been prepared in accordance with the regulations of the Hygiene Act and Labor Code together involved 92 articles with numerous supplementary provisions. Moreover, there were other directories concerning the hours of work and overtime work, and one directory concerning the factories and workplaces operated by the state and public enterprises. When added together it made up an intricate and voluminous “Legislation of Factory Inspection.” According to Stevens, proper training was vital to the process of strengthening labor inspection since labor inspectors had such an important part in the promotion of workplace safety and prevention. Not only did they enforce labor laws in the workplace, but they also worked to improve safety through non-putative means. However, Stevens suggested, the knowledge level and the training background of the inspectors in Turkey were not sufficient to advise on issues such as the proper ventilation system against toxic gases or regulations concerning factory buildings.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁶ Niyazi Acun, “Yeni İş Kanunu Tatbik Sahasına Girerken,” *Yarım Ay*, no. 49 (1937), pp.20-21.

⁶⁸⁷ “Report no. 10: Fabrika ve İşyerlerinin Teftişi, 23 July 1946,” in Henry Stevens’ın Raporları, p. 194. BCA Catalog no. [030.01/23.130.1]. Stevens came to Ankara in January 1946 upon the invitation of the recently

In 1950, the new Democrat Minister of Labor, Hulusi Köymen, admitted that given the organizational and financial weakness of the organization, the ministry was like an “idler roller.” The Labor Directorates were “a far cry from fulfilling their duties properly.” He also promised that the new government would take the necessary steps to increase the funds allocated to the inspectorates and improve the capability of the inspectors by equipping them with core knowledge in law, administrative science, psychology and technology.⁶⁸⁸ The Ministry of Labor made some attempts in the early years of the decade to train labor inspectors. For instance, in 1953 one labor newspaper reported that four inspectors had been sent to France and Switzerland for six months in order to serve their internship.⁶⁸⁹ Yet it appears that such efforts to train inspectors were handicapped by the limited financial means of the ministry. By the end of the decade, very little improvement had been recorded in terms of technical means provided to inspectors. In 1958, it was reported that the Ministry of Labor had only three vehicles allocated for inspectors’ factory visits.⁶⁹⁰

This was also true with regards to the personnel cadre of the ministry. In 1951 it was reported that only 29 labor inspectors were serving in the İstanbul Provincial Labor Directorate. These 29 inspectors were responsible for monitoring and supporting the

created Ministry of Labor for making recommendations about the labor legislation. Together with another English expert who came to Ankara about at the same time, Charles Hector Lefebure, Stevens played an active role in the preparation of legal texts about social insurance schemes and trade unions. Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, “Çalışma Bakanlığı’nın Kuruluşu: Çalışma Hayatında İngiliz Etkisi,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, vol. 9, no. 50 (February 1988).

⁶⁸⁸ BCA Catalog no. [490.01/204.812].

⁶⁸⁹ “Dört iş Müfettişi Avrupa’ya Gönderilecek,” *İşçi Gazetesi*, 11 May 1953.

⁶⁹⁰ *İçtimai Meseleler: 1958 Bütçe Müzakerelerinde CHP Milletvekillerinin Tenkit ve Teklifleri* (Ankara: CHP Genel Sekreterliği Araştırma ve Dokümantasyon Bürosu Yayın No. 4, 1960), p. 69. See also Orhan Taşan, “Bedii Süngütay ve Bölge Çalışma Müdürlüğü”, *Akşam*, 2 April 1956.

implementation of labor legislation in more than 2000 workplaces.⁶⁹¹ However, in 1958 the situation was not better. The scope of the labor code was extended to cover 5000 workplaces in İstanbul and the work load of inspectors increased significantly. However, the provincial directorate in İstanbul functioned with only 27 officers and 28 labor inspectors in that year.⁶⁹²

Questions about the deficiency of the labor inspectorate were aired several times in the parliamentary talks. For instance, during the negotiations on the 1956 budget of the ministry of Labor, Tevfik Ünsalan, Malatya deputy of the RPP, argued that the vacant positions indicated the ignorance of the governing party towards the surveillance and control of workplaces. According to Ünsalan, more than twenty positions in the Ministry of Labor had waited vacant for a long time for appointments. Ünsalan also said that although ILO had established a Labor Institute in İstanbul, the ministry did not make use of this institute for training labor inspectors.⁶⁹³

Being a labor inspector was not such an attractive career option for university graduates to take. According to one report, the average salary of inspectors was about 200 liras in the mid-1950s. For this simple reason, argued in the report, the vacant positions in the inspectorates could not be filled with young and dynamic university graduates.⁶⁹⁴ Similar suggestions were also made in the parliament in 1959 by RPP deputy İsmail İnan who had served as the vice president of Türk-İş in 1952-1953:

⁶⁹¹ “Çalışma Bakanlığı İşçiye Faydalı Olmaktan Çok Uzaktadır,” *Akşam*, 24 March 1951. See also, *İstanbul Akaryakıt İşçileri Sendikası 1954 Çalışma Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Faik Paran Matbaası, 1954).

⁶⁹² Kemal Sülker, “5000 İşyerine Sadece 28 Müfettiş Bakıyor,” *Gece Postası*, 29 January 1958. It is interesting to note that after 50 years, Turkey is not better off in terms of workplace control. According to a press release of the Association of Labor Inspectors in 2008, the number of inspectors in charge of monitoring and controlling about one million workplaces scattered around İstanbul is only 100. This press release is available at <http://www.davutpasayinutma.org/d/?p=148>.

⁶⁹³ *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, term 10, vol. 10-2, 28 February 1956, p. 1117.

⁶⁹⁴ See *Maden-İş Sendikası 1956-1957 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: 1957).

It is virtually impossible to find a single individual at the Ministry who devoted himself to this job. It is obvious that the prosecution and organization of such a work, which is of exceptional importance and necessitates exceptional technical qualification, is unattainable with people who continuously change position in the Ministry. I kindly request from the minister of labor. Inspection mechanism should be conditioned by extra requirements different from those charged for other official posts. An inspector is a person who is in charge of appraising the rights of worker as an individual or collective whose demandable claims may amount to hundreds of thousands liras. In the end we are all human beings. It would not be right to leave such a work worth of a million or 500 thousand to the inspector who gets 250-300 liras as salary and who does not feel himself in safe.⁶⁹⁵

Sülker wrote that many young inspectors were looking for positions in the private sector after two or three years of service in the Ministry of Labor. Once they left the department, it was just a matter of time for inspectors to receive job offerings with high salaries. Inspectors who resigned from the ministry and get employed in private sector might receive as high as 2000 liras as salary.⁶⁹⁶ It also was reported that some inspectors were tempted by bribes.⁶⁹⁷ During the office of Bedii Süngütay several inspectors were exiled from the İstanbul Provincial Labor Directorate to other directorates since they had been involved in bribery. However, recurrent reports in the media predicted that corruption and malpractice continued to haunt the institution in the late 1950s.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁵ “Vekalet teşkilatında kendisini bu işe vakfetmiş tek bir şahsa tesadüf etmek adeta imkansızdır. Fevkalade mühim, fevkalade teknik hususiyeti olan böyle bir işin böylesine mütemadiyen kadro ve şahıs değiştiren insanlar tarafından takip ve tanziminin imkansızlığı aşıkardır. Ben Sayın Vekilden rica ediyorum. Teftiş mekanizmasını memur statüsü dışında bir takım şartlara bağlamak lazımdır. Bir müfettiş, işçinin toplu veya ferdi yüzbinlerce liraya taallük eden hakkını tesbite memur edilen kişidir. Netice itibariyle insanız arkadaşlar. Bir milyonluk, 500 bin liralık bir işi 250-300 lira aylıklı ve hayatından emniyet duymayan bir müfettişe bırakırsak bunda isabet olmaz.” *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 11, vol. 7, 26 February 1959, p. 1047.

⁶⁹⁶ “İşçiler Geçinmekte Zorluk Çekiyor,” *Gece Postası*, 30 April 1956.

⁶⁹⁷ Kemal Sülker, “İki Müfettişin Rüşvet Alması ve Hatra Gelenler,” *Gece Postası*, 28 November 1956.

⁶⁹⁸ “Teftiş Meselesi,” *KİM*, 15 June 1959.

Collective Labor Disputes and Conciliation/Arbitration Mechanism

A large chapter of the 1936 Labor Code was devoted to regulations concerning labor disputes and their settlement. As is well known, the Code treated strikes and lockouts as alike and prohibited them all together. However, the definition of a strike was not including every collective stoppage by the workers. A collective stoppage was not regarded as strike unless a specified minimum number of workers was involved in the act. This minimum varied with the size of the undertaking, rising to 100 in those employing 500 persons or more; but only 3 workers needed to be involved if the result was the stop of the work of the whole undertaking or an essential part of it. In prohibiting strikes, the Labor Code was to a large extent merely sanctioning the then existing position.⁶⁹⁹ Moreover, this attitude was already embodied in the political program of the ruling party and based on the prevailing ideology which emphasized the solidarity and harmony of the citizens, and regarded the members of different economic groups as representing different occupations, but not as belonging to rival classes.

The Labor Code did not merely define, prohibit and punish strikes and lockouts. It also provided employers and workers with a procedure by which their disputes might be adjusted. According to the Code, the collective disputes between the workers and the employers were to be settled through the functioning of a conciliation/arbitration mechanism. The Labor Code Article 77 dictated that a labor dispute was to be regarded as a *collective labor dispute* if it happened in an industrial workplace which “by the nature of the work required employing 10 or more workers,” and if it was supported by at least one-fifth of the employees.⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁹ Oscar Weigert, “The New Turkish Labor Code,” *International Labor Review*, vol. 35, no. 6 (June 1937), p.770.

⁷⁰⁰ Orhan Tuna, *Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Düzeninin İktisadi ve Sosyal Tesirleri*, pp. 23-25.

The subject of the collective labor disputes was often wage demand, but naturally the sole problem of the workers was not wages. Actually, the *individual labor disputes* were the site of resolution of problems about labor contract, occupational health and safety, employment periods, and weekly and annual holidays. However from time to time such problems became subjects to collective labor disputes.⁷⁰¹ Nevertheless, the individual disputes raised by workers outnumbered the collective labor disputes throughout the period. For example, in İstanbul, while 65 collective labor disputes were raised in 1952, 7865 individual labor disputes occurred. 7609 of them were concluded by the organs of the Ministry of Labor, and the remaining 265 were transferred to the labor court.⁷⁰² Labor courts were established in 1950 with the enactment of the Labor Courts Act (No. 5521), and were composed of one employers' representative and one employees' representative and presided over by a judge appointed for the case. The labor disputes were initiated either by the worker or the employer, and some trade unions with good finances (like the Metal Workers' Trade Union) normally paid the worker's legal expenses and occasionally a union attorney presented the worker's case if he is a member of that union.⁷⁰³ In effect, there were many grievances about the functioning of the system during the period, especially concerning the number and efficiency of the labor courts. Because the worker was normally reluctant, for fear of reprisal, to sue his/her employer for individual grievances arising in the course of the individual employment contract, the majority of the cases brought before the labor courts were initiated by workers

⁷⁰¹ Some writers have claimed that individual disputes also may be settled through arbitration like collective labor disputes if the employer and the employee both agree to resort it. However this has been a contentious point in the history of labor law and the view has not been accepted by the majority of the jurists. See Toker Dereli, *Labour Law and Industrial Relations in Turkey* (İstanbul: Menteş Kitabevi, 1998), p. 169.

⁷⁰² Bedi Süngütay, "İstanbul'da İş Kanununun Tatbik Edildiği İşyerleri, İşçi Sayısı ve İş Uyuşmazlıkları," *Çalışma Vekaleti Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (1953).

⁷⁰³ *Türkiye Maden, Madeni Eşya ve Makine Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası Faaliyet Raporu (7 Ekim 1956-15 Aralık 1957)* (İstanbul: 1958), p. 16.

whose labor contracts had been terminated already. Moreover, there were recurrent reports in the media that there were suits that had been under justice for as long as three years. Labor courts, where they had been established, were inadequate to handle the growing numbers of cases.⁷⁰⁴ The focal point of the analysis in this part of the chapter, however, will be collective labor disputes, since it was the latter that became a site of protracted struggles between workers and employers and left a mark on working class consciousness.

According to the Labor Code, the collective disputes between the workers and the employers were to be settled through the functioning of a conciliation/arbitration mechanism. This mechanism was considered to be a four-stage procedure in the law.⁷⁰⁵ According to Article 78, at the first stage, which was called conciliation (*uzlaştırma*), the worker delegates and the employer or his representatives should make an attempt to solve the dispute. If the parties failed to secure a voluntary agreement, the departmental officials from the Regional Labor Directorate (RLD, *Bölge Çalışma Müdürlüğü*) were to continue the efforts to solve the problem. Article 81 proposed that the RLD was to send officials to the workplace and a second meeting called final conciliation (*kesin uzlaştırma*) was organized with the parties. If they also failed, the dispute was to be brought before the Provincial Arbitration Committee (PAC, *İl/Vilayet Hakem Kurulu*). According to Article 82, this committee was established at the local government office and consisted of the governor or his assistant, the highest ranking official responsible for the execution of the Labor Code, the administrator of legal issues (*İl Hukuk İşleri Müdürü*), and two experts who were to be chosen collectively by the other three members of the committee. The authority of the committee was binding over the parties of the

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.; Kemal Sülker, “İş Mahkemesi Kafi Gelmiyor”, *Gece Postası*, 5 June 1957.

⁷⁰⁵ Mesut Gülmez, “Ellinci Yılında Birinci İş Yasası Üzerine Bazı Notlar,” *Amme İdaresi Dergisi*, vol 19, no. 2 (June 1986), pp. 146-149; See also *Resmî Gazete*, 15 June 1936, p.6624.

dispute. However, a party who was dissatisfied with the decision could carry the case to the High Arbitration Committee (HAC, *Yüksek Hakem Kurulu*) within twelve days.

The members of this last committee were one of the second chairs of the council of state assigned by the prime minister, one professor elected by the Minister of Labor (before 1945, selecting organ was Ministry of Economy), the general director of labor under the Ministry of Labor, a director of the Ministry of Economics, the legal director under the Ministry of Justice, and the legal advisers of the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁷⁰⁶ The HAC was the last stage of the arbitration system and the final decision of this authority was binding on the employer and all the workers in his undertaking. Once settled by arbitration award, a question might not be the subject of another collective dispute until 26 weeks had elapsed. It also was laid out in the Labor Code (Article 86) that the award from the committee's decisions could be extended by the cabinet to other workers laboring in similar conditions. As will be mentioned below, the conciliation/arbitration mechanism was manipulated consciously by some workers albeit the process was very complicated. Relations, institutions and norms within the system were all intensely contested, since the defining characteristic of labor law is its attention to conflicts and cooperation between different economic and social interests.

The Labor Code became effective in June 1937, one year after its enactment by the assembly. Some instances in the same year showed that the workers who had been employed in the enterprises that were subject to the provision of the Labor Code made several attempts to make use of the possibilities created by it. For example, Hüseyin Avni wrote in *Yeni Adam* magazine that “the workers have already started to claim their legal rights against the

⁷⁰⁶ Ferit H. Saymen, “İş İhtilafları ve Hal Yolları,” in *İçtimai Siyaset Konferansları Kitap 2* (İstanbul: İÜ İktisat Fakültesi İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü, 1949), pp. 109-115.

employers.”⁷⁰⁷ Avni recorded that a factory owner complained to him that the workers who had been very obedient and docile before the enactment of the labor code were asking questions to him every day about the reasons of the delay in regulating the conditions of work in accordance with the code.

Another instance was from a leather factory which did not comply with the eight hours of work day. In the factory, the workers had stopped the work and declared that they would not work until the employer had accepted their legal rights. In response, the factory owner, claiming that there was a strike, called the police. However, the Work Bureau inspectors who came to the factory with the police observed that the factory did not comply with the code and the working time exceeded 48 hours in a week. In consequence of the inspection the factory owner received an official warning.⁷⁰⁸

The Work Bureaus were established between 1936 and 1937 in 15 provinces to control and survey the implementation of the Labor Code. These were directly linked, first, to the Ministry of Economy and, after 1945, to the Ministry of Labor. In 1945 they took the name Regional Labor Directorates. The government appropriated 100,000 Turkish liras from the 1937 budget for the operations of these bureaus.⁷⁰⁹ We have very limited knowledge about the operations of these bureaus before the establishment of the Ministry of Labor. For instance, the Eight Work Bureau was established in Antalya in August 1937. In less than one year it registered 104 enterprises in Antalya, Isparta and Burdur that were included in the Labor Code. According to inspector Necmi Algün, the Eight Bureau managed to secure a considerable number of regulations of the Labor Code, including the 48 hours of work, in

⁷⁰⁷ Hüseyin Avni, “İş Kanunu Nasıl Tatbik Ediliyor?” *Yeni Adam*, vol. 4, no. 201, (1937), p.4

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ Niyazi Acun, “Yeni İş Kanunu Tatbik Sahasına Girerken,” *Yarım Ay*, no. 49 (1937), pp. 20-21.

these enterprises.⁷¹⁰ We know less about the workers' relations with the work bureaus.

Hüseyin Avni notes that after one year of its operation individual complaints of workers about more than 100 employers were accepted by the İstanbul Work Bureau and these employers were taken to the court.⁷¹¹

Despite that other provisions of the Labor Code became effective in 1937, the conciliation/arbitration system was put into force two years later, on 24 March 1939, with the release of the Bylaw Concerning Labor Dispute Conciliation and Arbitration. Even after that day only a limited number of cases was brought before provincial and high arbitration committees until 1950. Between 1939 and 1946, only ten cases were brought to the high arbitration committees, the final stage of the mechanism.⁷¹² According to Nuri Özsarı, who became the third minister of labor in the DP government, the total number of collective disputes submitted to the HAC before Democrats' accession to power on 14 May 1950 was only 26. However, Özsarı added, "the number of cases brought to the HAC between May 1950 and the end of 1951 has been recorded as 108 which clearly reveals the rising of consciousness in workers to claim their rights."⁷¹³ The DP's accession to power had certainly affected the industrial relations and enhanced the self-confidence of workers. The following words of a trade unionist are telling in this connection: "Workers gained personality in 1950. Taking the DP's support for granted, they started to resist against the oppression in the workplaces. During the RPP period, the doorkeeper of the minister was like the minister himself. In the DP period it became possible for the worker and the trade unionist to come

⁷¹⁰ Necmi Algün, "İş Kanunu Birinci Tatbik Yılına Tamamlarken," *Türk Akdeniz*, vol. 2, no. 9 (June, 1938), p.4.

⁷¹¹ Avni, p.4

⁷¹² Sadri Aksoy, "İş Kanunumuza Göre İşçi ve Patron İhtilafları," *İktisadi Yürüyüş*, vol. 10, no. 188 (1947). pp. 9- 12.

⁷¹³ "İşçiler ve Sendikalar," *Akşam*, 9 January 1952.

into contact with the minister.”⁷¹⁴ However, the primary reason behind this ever-mounting temptation to manipulate legal ways of conflict resolution should be traced in the evolution of codes and trade union strength throughout the period. After 1950, the number of collective disputes raised by workers soared by almost ten times. According to statistics, the number of collective disputes brought to the HAC raised every year after 1950 and amounted to 1412 in 1963; the year when the right to strike and lockout was recognized finally.⁷¹⁵

As Sabahaddin Zaim has underlined, during the pre-1950 period in which real wages were very low, workers’ aloofness towards attempting collective disputes did not stem from the fact that there was no need to apply to the conciliation mechanism, but rather because they were deprived of this mechanism. Many workers refrained from raising collective labor disputes, since even the rumor of a collective dispute in a workplace might endanger the job of workers. Especially worker representatives were under the pressure and constant surveillance of employers.⁷¹⁶ Worker representation was the only channel for workers to start and continue a collective labor dispute before 1950. Even after 1951, when trade unions were furnished with the authority to raise industrial conflicts in workplaces, worker representatives continued to mediate a significant portion of labor disputes. Between 1951 and 1958, 311 out of 855 industrial conflicts were issued by worker representatives.⁷¹⁷

The crucial amendment in the labor law which gave a new momentum to labor grievances was made with Law No. 5518 in 1950. The novelty of this law was that it provided

⁷¹⁴ “İşçiler 1950 yılında kişiliklerine kavuştular. İşçiler DP’ye güvenerek işyerlerindeki baskıya karşı kafa tutmaya başladılar. CHP döneminde Bakanın kapıcısı bile bakan gibiydi. DP döneminde ise işçinin ve sendikacının Bakanla görüşmesi mümkün oldu.” Yıldırım Koç, *Türk-iş Tarihinden Portreler: Eski Sendikacılardan Anılar-Gözlemler* (Ankara: Türk-İş Yayınları, 1999), p. 82. Quoted in Koçak, “Türkiye’de İşçi Sınıfı Oluşumunun Sessiz Yılları”, p. 112.

⁷¹⁵ Makal, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, p. 507.

⁷¹⁶ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler*, p. 333.

⁷¹⁷ Makal, p. 506.

job security for the worker representatives who were the compulsory mediators in the collective labor disputes, and it allowed the trade unions to participate in raising industrial conflicts, namely to be the mediators in place of the worker representatives, from which trade unions had been deprived up until then.⁷¹⁸ After 1950 the power and influence of trade unions on workplace disputes escalated since they became more interventionist in representative elections. Trade unions established their power on the shop floor through worker representatives. Most of the worker representatives were elected among the ranks of trade union members.⁷¹⁹

According to Law No. 5518, the meaning of the security was that a worker representative could have recourse to PAC when he or she was fired. If it was judged by the committee that the behavior of the employer was unjustified, the representative was to be accepted back to the company. However, the power of this piece of legislation should not be exaggerated. Historical evidence reveals that after 1950, employers' pressure on worker representatives and unionist workers continued like before. Pressure on representatives or unionist workers often came into being when preparations for a collective dispute on the shop floor had been heard by the employer. In such circumstances employers might use every trick to keep workers away from representatives, such as sending representatives on compulsory leave.⁷²⁰ When the Metalwork and Machine Workers Trade Union (Maden-İş) raised a collective labor dispute in an auto-oil factory, the employer punished the worker representatives and cut their premiums.⁷²¹ At Yeşilköy airport, a worker representative was

⁷¹⁸ İlhami Coşkundeniz, "Toplulukla iş İhtilafları, Hazırlanması ve Yürütülmesi Meseleleri," in *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları 7. Kitap* (İstanbul: İÜ İktisat Fakültesi İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü, 1955), p. 65.

⁷¹⁹ "Sendikaların Tuttuğu İşçiler Seçimleri Kazanıyor," *Maden-iş*, 27 April 1957.

⁷²⁰ "Cibali Tütün Fabrikasında İşçi Mümesilleri Toptan İstifaya Kalkıyor," *Gece Postası*, 4 December 1957.

⁷²¹ "İşçi Mümesillerine Cephe Alan İşveren," *Gece Postası*, 12 July 1954.

fired without severance pay upon the decision of the Petroleum Workers Trade Union (Petrol-İş) for raising a conflict for wage increase.⁷²² In a textile factory established in Bakırköy, upon a labor conflict for 50 percent wage increase, the employer offered 5 percent and collected signatures of some workers by force, declaring that they had given up the conflict. The Textile Workers Trade Union declared the invalidity of the signatures.⁷²³

In many cases employers' pressure upon representatives started during the first stage of the conciliation mechanism. Representatives who refused to come to terms with employers' resolutions at the first round of meetings were threatened or frequently fired before the RLD officers came to the workplace.⁷²⁴ It seems to be the case that employers were pretty much untroubled by laying off worker representatives. Law No. 5518 did not provide any deterrent punishment for dismissals and PAC's reemployment decisions often took very long time. For instance, worker representative İbrahim Doğan from the supermarket retailer Migros had to wait more than 8 months for the reemployment decision of the PAC after having been fired. During this period he could not find any other job.⁷²⁵ The chairmen of the Federation of the Textile Industry Trade Unions complained in a conference organized by reformist social

⁷²² "Yeşilköy Havaalanı İşçileri Toplulukla İhtilâf Çıkıyor," *Gece Postası*, 22 July 1954. For other cases of firing the representatives and workers, see "Zorla İhbarname İmzalatılarak İşçi Mümessili Çıkarılmış," *Gece Postası*, 2 January 1955; "Bir İşçi İşten Çıkarıldı," *Gece Postası*, 26 January 1955; "Motörlü Taşıt İşçileri Valiyi Hakem Seçti," *Gece Postası*, 20 January 1956; "Bir İşçi Mümessilinin İşine Son Verildi," *Gece Postası*, 13 April 1956; "6 İşçinin İşine Nihayet Verildi," *Gece Postası*, 3 May 1956; "Sendikalı İşçilere Hala Baskı Yapılıyor," *Gece Postası*, 12 September 1957. For other kinds of repression, such as to prohibiting the representative to leave the loom for hearing the complaints of the workers, see "Defterdar Fabrikasında Mümessillere Baskı Var!" *Gece Postası*, 21 April 1956.

⁷²³ "İşçilerden Zorla İmza Alan İşveren," *Gece Postası*, 28 April 1954.

⁷²⁴ "Kilit ve Nur Madeni Eşya Fabrikalarında Baskı," *Maden-İş*, 22 April 1960.

⁷²⁵ "8 Aydır Durumu Belli Olmayan İşçi Mümessili," *Gece Postası*, 26 September 1957.

policy experts in 1954 that some employers were blacklisting the activist workers to keep them out of their workplaces.⁷²⁶

The decisions of the PAC were crucial for the fate of the worker representatives. However, the struggle did not cease with a sole judgment. In a textile mill established in Kuruçeşme the employer did not recognize the PAC's decision of reemployment of the worker representative Altan Bulan. Despite recurrent calls from the trade union, the employer insisted that he would not take Bulan back to work. Moreover, he also refused to pay the accumulated wages of this worker. The trade union was helpless before the uncompromising attitude of the employer, but could only apply to the RLD that the latter should be penalized for lockout action.⁷²⁷

When the Zonguldak Mine Administration declared that the representative status of Mehmet Alpdünder, a dissident mine worker, was invalid and laid him off, repercussions of this act among workers was unpredictable. Trade unions promulgated strong messages that condemned the administration and declared the solidarity of workers with Alpdünder.⁷²⁸ In 1959 another incidence which occurred in a cement factory established in Zeytinburnu drew harsh response from workers. In this case, the representative Ali Rıza Erdem was fired because of his efforts to organize workers in the trade union. When this was heard on the shop floor, workers stopped the work on the night shift, and 130 out of the total 170 workers of the factory made it clear to the employer that they would not start the engines until Erdem was put back to work. On the following day, the police swooped down on the factory and arrested

⁷²⁶ Ersoy, *İşçi Gözü ile İşçi ve İşveren Münasebetleri*, p. 5

⁷²⁷ "İşyerine İade Edilen İşçi Mümessili," *Gece Postası*, 13 January 1956.

⁷²⁸ Adil Aşçıoğlu, "İşçi Dayanışması," *KİM*, 6 March 1959. See also "Alpdünder Beraat Etti," *Cumhuriyet*, 3 November 1959.

the workers who were denounced as the protagonists of this illegal act. Five workers later reported that they had been beaten in the police station.⁷²⁹

The pressure was exercised especially upon active and famous unionists. The chairman of the Leaf Tobacco Processing Workers' Union (*Yaprak Tütün Bakım ve İşletme İşçileri Sendikası*) was fired from the Austrian Tobacco Firm and could not find a job. Employers made it manifest that only if he had resigned from the union would they employ him.⁷³⁰ This was a common tactic, there were many reports of workers fired or forced to leave because of being union members.⁷³¹ It was, for instance, illustrative that Kemal Türkler, the chair of İstanbul Iron and Metalwork Workers' Union, and Ruhi Yümlü, the general secretary of the same union, were fired from the enamel metal factory owned by Sıtkı Bütün in February 1955. The employer argued that the reason for dismissals was the stagnation of business, not his hostility towards the trade union. After futile negotiations the case were brought to the Provincial Arbitration Committee. In fact, Türkler had been fired from the same factory 1.5 years earlier and returned to his job through the judgment of PAC.⁷³²

The representatives were regarded frequently by the workers as their sole channel to seek legal remedy. On the other hand, employers saw them as potential threats to workplace peace and industrial discipline. Therefore representative elections were crucial moments for both workers and employers. If the man of the employer was elected, workplace terror might begin and most of the workers might be left without any legal channel.⁷³³ For example,

⁷²⁹ Ağralı, pp. 74-75.

⁷³⁰ "Sendikalı İşçilere Hâlâ Baskı Yapılıyor," *Gece Postası*, 5 April 1954.

⁷³¹ For example, see "Shell Kumpanyası İşçi Çıkartıyor!" *Gece Postası*, 15 May 1954. And also, Refik Sönmezsoy, "Zeytinburnu Çimento İşçi Sendikasına Baskı Tazelendi," *Gece Postası*, 19 February 1955.

⁷³² "Bir Sendikannın Başkanı İle Genel Sekreteri İşten Çıkarıldılar," *Gece Postası*, 22 February 1955.

⁷³³ Adil Aşçıoğlu, "Temsilci Seçimleri," *KİM*, 24 April 1959.

workers from a yarn factory in Bomonti complained that the representative was in collaboration with the boss, did not hear the demands, and did not let the inspectors talk with the workers.⁷³⁴ Süreyya Aslan who worked in a hosiery established in Topkapı sent a letter to *Gece Postası* in which he detailed how the representatives who are backed by employers could launch “a reign of terror” in the shop floor against the dissident workers. Aslan reported that the representatives cut off his way and threatened him a number of times because he opposed the management’s plan to cut the wages arbitrarily. Aslan also told that he could not get to sleep at nights out of fear of getting beaten by the representatives.⁷³⁵ In the Tekel Box Factory established in Cibali, workers suffered from poor communication with their representatives. The representatives were all foremen who had been elected with the support of the factory manager. They were blind to the workers’ problems and often perceived their function as to dictate the management’s instructions to the workers.⁷³⁶

The representatives were elected once in two years in a workplace. In some workplaces elections took some form of a festival. The voting boxes were prepared, flags were hung and the workplace was decorated with flowers and other adornments. This was exactly the case in the Santral Mensucat mill during the election days in 1957. In this workplace the representative, Hakkı Cengiz, had completed his twentieth year as a representative in the same mill and was expecting to be elected for the tenth time since

⁷³⁴ “Bir İşveren ve İşçi Mümessilinden Şikayet,” *Gece Postası*, 30 May 1956.

⁷³⁵ “Bir Fabrikada Sendikalı İşçilere Karşı Tertipler,” *Gece Postası*, 7 April 1954.

⁷³⁶ Kemal Sülker, “Tekel Kutu Fabrikasında Çalışan İşçilerle Röportaj,” *Gece Postası*, 18 July 1949.

1937.⁷³⁷ Cengiz might have held the record in this connection, but there were several other workers who had served at least ten years as worker representatives.⁷³⁸

As has been noted, unionist workers and representatives ran into great troubles during the conciliation phase of collective dispute resolution. In this phase state officials' intervention in the process was minimal and workers were unprotected against the assaults of employers. However, as we shall discuss in a moment, workers and trade unions often sought dispute resolutions at the initial stages of the process. In other words, they did not prefer to use the arbitration mechanism if they could come to terms with employers during the negotiation phase. This had remarkable effects especially on the public sector trade unions which produced a reconciliatory culture in their relations with the state. Direct lobbying among the politicians and bureaucrats in Ankara, which is symbolized in the expression, "there is Türk-İş in Ankara," became an important mechanism for such unions. The trade unions with good relations with the government were also awarded financial assistance. The ministry of labor, Mümtaz Tarhan, intimated that 600,000 liras had been spent from the ministry budget to support the trade unions between 1954 and 1956. These allocations were criticized severely by the concerned public, since they were not based on any objective criterion.⁷³⁹ Thus confrontation with employers, including the larger one, government, was hardly an option for these unions. The clientelistic relationship between the DP government and Türk-İş-affiliated unions foreshadowed the future right-wing governments' attempts to create a corporatist exchange.

⁷³⁷ Kemal Sülker, "İşçi Mümessilliğinin Mühim Bir Safhası," *Gece Postası*, 28 April 1954. It should be noted that this occasion is perfectly in accordance with paternalist relations established in the mill.

⁷³⁸ "Sendikaların Mümessiller için Yapacağı Toplantı," *Gece Postası*, 29 April 1957.

⁷³⁹ "Çalışma Vekili Mümtaz Tarhan Bütçe Encümeninde Konuştu," *Maden-İş*, 16 February 1957.

For some other trade unions, however, negotiations in the conciliation phase did not mean seeking compromise and making concessions, but it was the arena in which the workers' "marketplace bargaining power"⁷⁴⁰ could be asserted. This was particularly the case for metalworkers. The knowledge of the productive techniques monopolized by skilled and semi-skilled workers and the key role they played in the organization of production gave them leverage to extract comparatively high wages from employers. That is to say, the marketplace bargaining power of metal workers was accrued mainly from the possession of scarce skills.

According to an early assessment of *Hürbilek* magazine, small workplaces which depended on qualified workers dominated the metalwork industry.⁷⁴¹ Moreover, metalworkers also enjoyed the close attention of their unions. The Maden-İş union distinguished itself among others by its well-established organizational structure, professional organizers, employment service agency provided for union members, and mobile "thunderbolt teams" which could respond promptly to workers' denunciations and appeals. By 1956, Maden-İş was organized on a national scale and had enrolled over 6700 workers.⁷⁴² According to the 1956-57 Activity Report of the Maden-İş Board of Directors, 87.59 percent of all collective labor disputes raised by metal workers during the period were settled in the conciliation and

⁷⁴⁰ I borrow the term from Beverly J. Silver, who contemplates on the distinction made by Erik Olin Wright between associational and structural power of workers. Marketplace bargaining power is the first subtype of structural power which results directly from tight labor markets. According to Silver, marketplace bargaining power can take several forms including "(1) the possession of scarce skills that are in demand by employers, (2) low levels of general unemployment, and (3) the ability of workers to pull out of the labor market entirely and survive on nonwage sources of income." See Beverly J. Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 13.

⁷⁴¹ See "İşçi ve Esnaf Teşekkülleri: İstanbul Demir ve Madeni Eşya İşçileri Sendikası," *Hürbilek*, 24 April 1948. The historical evidence also reveals that unemployment in this sector was comparatively low. On the other hand the marketplace bargaining power of workers was lowest in seasonal industries such as construction works and tobacco processing where the jobs required minimum skill and the reserve army of labor is abundant.

⁷⁴² *Türkiye Maden, Madeni Eşya ve Makine Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası Faaliyet Raporu (7 Ekim 1956-15 Aralık 1957)* (İstanbul: Vakıf Matbaası, 1958), pp. 4-5, 24; İmren Aykut, "Türkiye Maden-İş Sendikası," *İktisat Dergisi*, vol. 2, no. 7 (1965), pp. 24-25; "Maden-İş İş ve İşçi Bulma Teşkilatı Kuruyor," *Maden-İş*, 1 March 1957.

final conciliation phases in favor of workers. 70.84 percent of the disputes were settled in the first round of negotiations between the employers and the union while 16.67 percent were settled in the final conciliation which took place with the participation of RLD officials. Only 12.49 percent of disputes were sent to arbitration committees.⁷⁴³ According to another report which appeared in *Maden-İş* magazine in early 1959, the trade union managed to secure good wage increases in industrial conflicts which were settled by conciliation. The report revealed that the union achieved 100-150 kuruş hourly wage increases in five workplaces in recent months.⁷⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that these wage increases were bigger than the minimum hourly wages received by textile workers in İstanbul.

However, most of the labor disputes could not be settled in the conciliation phase and were assigned to arbitration authorities. The table below presents the distribution of cases settled in different phases of the dispute resolution mechanism. The data were collected by Orhan Tuna from the İstanbul PAC. This is the only collection of data available for the pre-1963 period. The data are meaningful because İstanbul received around 40-50 percent of all industrial disputes during the period.

⁷⁴³ *Türkiye Maden, Madeni Eşya ve Makine Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası Faaliyet Raporu (7 Ekim 1956-15 Aralık 1957)* (İstanbul: Vakit Matbaası, 1958), p. 16-17.

⁷⁴⁴ “İş İhtilafları Önemle Takibediliyor,” *Maden-İş*, 31 January 1959.

Table 1. Distribution of Cases Settled in Different Phases of the Dispute Resolution Mechanism

Years	Disputes settled in conciliation and final Conciliation	% of disputes settled in Conciliation	Disputes settled in PAC	% of disputes settled in PAC	Disputes transferred to HAC	% of disputes transferred to HAC	Total
1960	4	4.61	19	21.85	64	73.54	87
1961	9	5.86	24	20.82	112	72.82	145
1962	17	10.02	32	19.02	118	70.06	167
1 January -18 July 1963	12	19.68	21	34.57	28	45.75	61
Total	42	9.13	96	20.87	322	70.00	460

Source: Orhan Tuna, *Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Düzeninin İktisadi ve Sosyal Tesirleri* (Ankara: Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı Yayınları, 1969), p. 26.

As the table indicates, only 9.13 percent of collective labor disputes raised in İstanbul were reconciled through the negotiations between workers and employers. 20.87 percent of disputes were settled by the PAC while 70 percent were assigned to the HAC for final order. These figures reveal that more than ninety percent of all collective disputes could not be resolved in the conciliation phases. The great majority of the cases were brought to the last authority of the compulsory arbitration system. Therefore we should take a closer look at the activity and functioning of the arbitration committees, especially the HAC, to explain why the employers tended to transfer the disputes to the arbitration authority.

The first point to note about the HAC decisions, although puzzling at first sight, is that the committee meetings often ended up with wage increases. As noted above, the great bulk of labor disputes were about wage demands. The limited information about the HAC decisions between 1939 and 1958 reveals that roughly 67 percent of collective labor disputes

assigned to high arbitration authority was solved “with full or partial satisfaction of workers’ demands.” Since the great bulk of labor disputes involved wage demands, this meant that about two-thirds of the collective conflicts ended in wage concessions. This was emphasized by Celal Bayar in his opening speech of the GNA in November 1952: “The efforts of High Arbitration Committee, which is the final competent authority for collective labor disputes that could not be settled in provincial arbitration committees, operated to the benefit of regulation of relations between workers and employers. As the result of the Committee’s decisions, 10,182 workers either received wage increases varying between 25 and 50 percent or benefited from daily food allowance.”⁷⁴⁵

From the viewpoint of the government, the functioning of the system was useful for legitimizing the search for officially recognized state neutrality in industrial conflict. The arbitrary and interventionist nature of the injunction, according to this line of argument, unfairly disrupted the normal and healthy combat of the marketplace. When the grievances of private sector workers mounted in 1959 in the wake of considerable wage increases in the public sector, Ministry of Labor Haluk Şarman said:

We as government could not compel the employers to increase the wages of their workers. This can only happen in countries governed by dictatorial or totalitarian regimes. Workers in private sector could make their demands for wage increase by raising collective labor disputes through their representatives or trade unions that they are enrolled.⁷⁴⁶

Şarman also said that he was not in favor of the practice of setting compulsory minimum wages which interfered with the price mechanism. This approach reflected the well established liberal hatred against any form of state intervention in industrial relations. That

⁷⁴⁵ “İl Hakem Kurullarında intaç olunmayan toplulukla iş uyuşmazlıklarının son hal mercii olan Yüksek Hakem Kurulunun mesaisi, işçilerle işverenlerin karşılıklı münasebetlerinin nizamlanmasında müessir olmaktadır. Bu Kurulca alınan kararlar neticesinde (on bin yüz seksen iki) işçi, (yüzde yirmi beş) ile (yüzde elli) nispetinde ücret zammı görmüş veya ücretsiz yemek yardımından faydalanmıştır.” Quoted in Makal, pp. 507-508.

⁷⁴⁶ “Hususi Sektörde Çalışanların Ücretlerine Zam Davası,” *Petrol-İş*, no. 21 (April 1959), p. 6.

labor and capital as equal forces negotiated the price of wages in equal terms was the basic premise of that approach.

The argument for the alleged success of the labor dispute mechanism to advance the workers' wages also was used to pass over the growing demands of the unions for the recognition of the right to strike. The conciliation/arbitration mechanism, according to this line of argument, was a proper substitute of collective bargaining and the right to strike.

Mehmet Ünalı, the spokesperson of the DP group, indicated this in the most straightforward manner during a parliamentary speech in 1954 on the government's perspective of labor reform:

During the decade spanning from 1939 to 1950, only 41 collective disagreements declared by the workers took place whereas during the five years of our government and thanks to the democratic climate created by us 553 collective disagreements took place and 379 of them, in other words 71 percent, were resolved to the benefit of workers. I guess these figures would give a satisfactory idea about how much we achieve in augmenting the workers' wages to offset the deterioration of their living conditions. Someone mentioned pressure: it is possible to perceive from these facts how the rights and benefits that have required violent confrontations and class struggle in other countries to materialize have been obtained by our workers through a consistent social policy and under the conception of social justice.⁷⁴⁷

The grievance arbitration system also was approved by employers for it provided a framework of ceaseless production instead of interrupting strikes. A series of interviews with employers which appeared in *Gece Postası* reveals that employers were very supportive of the

⁷⁴⁷ "1939-1950 arasındaki 10 senelik bir devre zarfında işçiler tarafından çıkarılan toplulukla iş ihtilaflarının miktarı 41 iken iktidarımız zamanında işçi sendikalarına ve işçi temsilcilerine sağlanmış olan demokratik hava içinde beş sene zarfında 553 ihtilaf çıkmış ve bunlardan 379'u işçi lehine neticelenmiştir ki bunun nispeti yüzde 71'dir. Bu da işçi ücretlerinin geçim şartlarına intibak ettirilmesi hususunda ne kadar ileri gittiğimiz hakkında kâfi bir fikir verebilir sanıyorum. Baskıdan bahsettiler: İşte arkadaşlar başka memleketlerde sınıf mücadeleleri ve sert çarpışmalarla elde edilmiş olan hak ve menfaatlerin memleketimizde düzenli bir sosyal politika ve sosyal adalet mefhumları içinde nasıl halledildiğini burada görmek kabildir." TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, term 10, session 2, vol. 10, 28 February 1956.

existing system against the trade unions' recurrent requests for the acknowledgement of the right to strike.⁷⁴⁸

Whether the real gains provided by arbitration committees might have been, workers often felt victimized by the official administration of the system. This sense of being stalled and mistreated was especially caused by lengthy delays in the prosecutions of the High Arbitration Committee. Newspaper accounts and trade union reports are full of cases in which conflicts submitted to that HAC had waited for final resolution for long time. Although, according to the related decree, the time granted to arbitration committees was 15 days for reaching a solution, workers often waited about six months for a resolution. In the Boyateks textile mill established in Eyüp, for example, the workers' appeal for a lunch allowance had waited for the decision of HAC for seven months.⁷⁴⁹ One year later, on 20 December 1950, Boyateks workers induced another industrial dispute for 50 percent wage increase. The PAC convened and adjudicated a 15 percent increase. However, the employer brought the case to the HAC, which overruled any wage increase for the Boyateks workers. The HAC's decision was declared to the union after 370 days passed over the starting day of the dispute.⁷⁵⁰

A labor conflict raised by bakery workers in İstanbul had been in the arbitration process for about a year in the late 1955.⁷⁵¹ A conflict raised by the Haydarpaşa Rail Car Plant workers was not resolved after two years of delay in the arbitration committees.⁷⁵² By April 1956, only 36 labor conflicts were concluded by the HAC out of over 60 conflicts that had

⁷⁴⁸ "Bir İşveren Gözü ile Sosyal Mevzular ve Grev Hürriyeti," *Gece Postası*, 8 May 1955.

⁷⁴⁹ "İstanbul Sendikaları Hakem Kurulu Kararlarından Şikayetçi," *Milliyet*, 15 July 1954.

⁷⁵⁰ *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örne Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1956-1957 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Sulhi Garan Matbaası, 1957), pp. 9-10

⁷⁵¹ "Fırın İşçilerinin İhtilafı Bir Yıldır Tahkimde," *Gece Postası*, 13 November 1955.

⁷⁵² "İki Yıldır Sürüklenen Bir İş İhtilafı Var," *Gece Postası*, 14 July 1957.

been transferred to the committee between August and October 1955.⁷⁵³ Especially after 1954 the delays of the arbitration decisions became more recognizable and a matter of great concern among the trade unions. Since workers of a workplace could not raise another dispute until 26 weeks had elapsed over the completion of one dispute, lengthy delays in the system often meant big financial losses for workers.

It seems to be the case that textile workers, maybe only because of the sheer quantity of their numbers, suffered most from the slowness of the HAC decisions. By 1956, the collective labor conflicts raised in three large industrial textile plants in İstanbul had been waiting in the arbitration committees for 23 months.⁷⁵⁴ The 1956-1957 activity report of the İstanbul Textile and Weaving Industry Workers Union stated that the compulsory arbitration mechanism “which once availed workers to advance their earnings ceased to function properly because of lengthy delays in the provincial and high arbitration committees.”⁷⁵⁵ The union had launched a “collective labor dispute raising campaign” in 1955 to advance the wages in the industry en masse, however failed to secure gains for this reason.⁷⁵⁶ The report asserted that increasing numbers of workers were becoming alienated from the unions because of these delays since many of them could not benefit from the results of committee decisions for they might leave the job while the conflict for which they appealed to the authorities lay a long time in wait for final resolution. Having committed itself to work within the framework of labor laws and institutions, the trade union felt itself left with little strategic recourse in the face of overwhelming adversity. For this reason union leaders seethed with

⁷⁵³ “Yüksek Hakem Kuruluna İhtikal Eden İhtilaflar,” *Gece Postası*, 24 April 1956.

⁷⁵⁴ Ağralı, *Günüümüze Kadar Belgelerle Türk Sendikacılığı*, p. 53.

⁷⁵⁵ *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örne Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1956-1957 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu*, p. 7.

⁷⁵⁶ See “20 bine Yakın İşçi Tarafından Açılan Kampanya Gelişiyor,” *Milliyet*, 25 August 1955.

resentment against the treatment of union appeals by the HAC. They even maintained that they had no hope of advancing workers' rights and earnings within the system:

While, on the one hand, asserting that the necessary conditions for the recognition of right to strike have not been established yet, the authorities, on the other hand, sit back and watch the chaotic situation of the institution of arbitration. Since they rely on the characteristic snail's pace of the arbitration committees, employers do not bother themselves, as they used to, with seeking a middle ground with unions, and enjoy the fruits of the work of arbitration committee members who don't have a good grasp of social problems. This state of affairs has long worried our union, which as a consequence, has come to a decision of not raising many collective labor disputes during the unemployment crisis.⁷⁵⁷

The table below shows us some examples of collective labor disputes waiting for final judgment order in the HAC which are provided in 1959-1961 activity report of the textile trade union:

Table 2. Some Examples of Collective Labor Disputes Waiting for Final Resolution in the HAC

A.Hisarı Kendir Fabrikası	263 days	İstanbul Pamuklu Sanayii	319 days
Tekstil Dokumacılık Ltd. Şti	222 days	Dükan İplik Fabrikası	325 days
Kuruçeşme Tekstil Fabrikası	222 days	Yener İş Fabrikası	439 days
Bahariye Çikvaşvili Fabrikası	222 days	Rekor İdrofil Pamuk Fabrikası	340 days
İleri Mensucat	187 days	Kot Pantolon Atölyesi	276 days
Osman Etan Havlu Fabrikası	187 days	Modern Mensucat Fabrikası	294 days
Havlu İş	254 days	Develi Kendir Fabrikası	279 days
Kaplanca Mensucat	273 days		

Source: *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örne Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1959-1961 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Alpaslan Matbaası, 1961), pp. 45-46.

⁷⁵⁷ *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örne Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1956-1957 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu*, p. 7. "Bir yandan kolektif iş akitleri doğuracak grev hakkının verilmesi için lüzumlu şartlara henüz kavuşulmadığını iddia eden makamlar diğer taraftan tatbikatından sorumlu buldukları Tahkim müessesesinin keşmekeşliğine seyirci kalmaktadırlar. İşverenler Hakem kurullarının kaplumbağa süratine güvendikleri için eski devirlerde olduğu gibi sendika ile uzlaşmaya ehemmiyet vermemekte ve sosyal meselelere vukufları tam olmayan hakem kurulları mensuplarının bu anlayışlarına dayanan çalışmaları sebebiyle hallerinden memnun yaşamaktadırlar. Bu durum sendikamızı uzun uzun düşündürdüğünden 'işsizlik krizi esnasında ihtilaf çıkarmama hususunda aldığımız prensip kararının da tesiriyle' toplu iş ihtilafına fazla rağbet edilmemiştir."

1961-1962 activity report of the union reveals that the problem regarding the delays continued until the removal of the arbitration mechanism in 1963. The conflict raised in the İpek weaving mill had been waiting in the committees for 442 days. In eighteen other workplaces collective labor disputes had completed 250 days in the committees. According to the report these lengthy delays practically deprived workers from the only mechanism to advance their rights since when the HAC decisions did not satisfy workers, they would have lost a year to raise another collective dispute.⁷⁵⁸

Another trouble with the arbitration mechanism for the unions stemmed from the composition of the arbitration committees. As noted above the PACs did not involve the representatives of the workers and employers as conflicting parties. The unions contended that this situation particularly hit the workers: first, because the lack of qualified authorities in many of the provincial committees brought along material mistakes as well as procedural errors, which in the end leads to lengthy delays in the provincial committees⁷⁵⁹; secondly, because one of the parties in a collective dispute is normally the state when the dispute is raised in public enterprise, the authorities in the PACs could not stay objective before the conflicting demands and interests of the parties.⁷⁶⁰

The composition of the arbitration committees was reorganized in 1954 with Law No. 6298. However, the related statute which was necessary for the application of the regulation was not issued until late 1958. The law foresaw the representation of the parties seemingly on

⁷⁵⁸ *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örme Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1961-1962 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu*, (İstanbul: Ülku Matbaası, 1962), p. 21.

⁷⁵⁹ İlker İnan Akçay, "Türkiye'de Emegın Bir Mücadele Aracı Olarak İş İhtilafları: 1936-1963," *Çalışma ve Toplum*, no. 25 (2010/2), p. 48.

⁷⁶⁰ *İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birlięi 1954-1956 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Rıza Koşkun Matbaası, 1956), p. 24.

equal terms. The PAC would consist of a judge, the regional labor director, and two representatives of workers and employers. In the same manner, the HAC would also contain two representatives both from workers and employers. However, this was also found unsatisfactory by the unions. They criticized the election method of the committees. According to the law, the employer representatives would be chosen jointly by the chair of PAC and the regional labor director among the candidates presented by the local chamber of industry and commerce. However, the worker representatives would be chosen directly by the chair of PAC. In a similar vein, the workers who would attend the HAC were to be nominated from among the worker representatives of the workplaces established in Ankara, but selected by the Minister of Labor. This was criticized for it would preserve the tutelage of the ministry over the arbitration committees.⁷⁶¹

Still another source of worker complaints stemmed from the lack of consistency between the decisions of the PAC and the HAC. As early as 1951, Orhan Tuna, who was then a member of the İstanbul PAC, pointed to that problem. The two committees often gave very different decisions about the same case. The broad diversity of viewpoints between the two committees often functioned against workers.⁷⁶² Workers believed that the HAC adjudicated every conflict to their disadvantage. In mid-1953 trade unionists observed that the HAC was abnegating simply all increases given by the PAC. Upon the growing grievances, the İstanbul Alliance of Trade Unions organized an indignation meeting at Taksim Kristal Music Hall on 16 August 1953. Speakers delivered harsh words and declared their resentment against the injustices caused by the committee's decisions. After the meeting some of the speakers and

⁷⁶¹ Akçay, p. 48; Kemal Sülker, "Demokratik Düzene Aykırı Bir Tahkim Nizamanamesi," *Gece Postası*, 6 January 1956.

⁷⁶² Orhan Tuna, "Tahkim ve Uzlaştırma Sistemimiz Hakkında Bazı Mülâhazalar," *İş Dergisi*, no. 11 (1951), pp. 204-205.

the Alliance's board of directors were turned to prosecution.⁷⁶³ The workers' sense of being mistreated and downtrodden by the arbitration authority continued until the removal of the system in 1963.⁷⁶⁴

According to Ağralı, a typical labor dispute followed this course of events in the mid-1950s:⁷⁶⁵ The labor dispute, which was started by a trade union was initially transferred to the PAC after several weeks of foot dragging by the employer.⁷⁶⁶ The wage increase demanded by the union was usually about 20-30 percent. The PAC would probably set the increase at 15 percent. Then the employer appealed to the HAC for, he argued, he was either paying already above the market price for the labor, or the financial situation of the firm did not allow him to pay more. After a long period of delay that could exceed from six months to a year and a half, the committee was likely to conclude the dispute with a five or ten percent increase in wages. By the time workers were deprived of the opportunity raise another dispute against the same employer to increase their earnings.

Whatever may have been the pitfalls of the system, it was the only and indispensable legal channel for workers to protect and advance their rights against the employers. What is most striking is that a substantial portion of the working population was excluded totally from the system. Most elements of the labor law system were based on a paradigm of industrial employment which prevailed in key economic sectors in the industrialized world of the 1930s.⁷⁶⁷ The paradigm envisaged that an ideal-type worker with relatively long job tenure

⁷⁶³ *İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliği 1953-1954 Devresi 14 Aylık Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: Faik Paran Matbaası, 1954), pp. 13-14.

⁷⁶⁴ See, *İstanbul Tekstil ve Örmeye Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası 1961-1962 Devresi Faaliyet Raporu*.

⁷⁶⁵ Ağralı, p. 53.

⁷⁶⁶ For details of such tactics, see Toydemir, *Türkiye'de İş İhtilaflarının Tarihçesi*, p. 19.

⁷⁶⁷ The scope of the 1936 Labor Code was limited in three dimensions. First of all agriculture and sea and air transport were excluded. Secondly, it applied only to manual and partly manual labor, with the reservation that

would perform standardized tasks under the direction of hierarchical management within an expanding economy of relatively large-scale production units. Obviously this paradigm never captured all of the varieties of employment to which postwar labor law applied. Indeed this was the source of considerable tension within the system. For example, the pattern of short-term employment in rubber-works, and construction sector effectively foreclosed access to lengthy procedures such as union certification, mediation, and grievance arbitration. Instead unions resorted to unpredicted resistances and top-down organizing through pressing on the government and to investigate employment law and labor law violations. Cyclical employment in seasonal industries such as construction led to unexpected struggles in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Employment in construction nearly doubled in the course of the 1950s as a consequence of the ambitious infrastructural investments of the DP government.⁷⁶⁸ Construction workers were not covered by the Labor Law. Job accidents due to the negligence of employers were part of the everyday life in the construction sector. There was no standard workday; during the summer, high season for the sector, the workday extended to twelve or thirteen hours, while in winter, workers remained idle with scarce opportunities for employment.⁷⁶⁹ A vast number of construction workers were migrants who came to the cities from different regions of the country. Those who worked on larger projects were provided

the conditions of mental labor needed to be regulated by a special act. Lastly, only those enterprises which by the nature of the work required employing 10 or more workers were subject to the code. According to Oscar Weigert, who was a German expert invited to Turkey to assist in the drafting and application of the new labor legislation, the regulations were drawn on the expectation that casual and seasonal works would be replaced by full-time industrial employment in the long-run. See Weigert, p. 755-756. In the course of 1950s, the scope and coverage of the labor law expanded to include seamen working in ships and the industrial undertakings which employed more than 4 workers. But still the Labor Code covered only the minority of the total workforce by the end of the decade.

⁷⁶⁸ Tuncer Bulutay, *Employment, Unemployment and Wages in Turkey*, see table 7.A

⁷⁶⁹ Kemal Sülker, "İnşaatta Çalışanların Hazin Hali," *Gece Postası*, 23 November 1957.

accommodation in over-crowded, dirty and stuffy barracks constructed by some private employers. But many construction workers could not find stable shelter. The Democrat deputy of Ordu, Refet Aksoy, complained in the parliament that many construction workers in Ankara sought shelter in the coffeehouses or worse on the baseboards even during the winters.⁷⁷⁰ For all that workers could not benefit from state arbitration to advance their rights because of the short-term seasonal nature of employment contracts. Moreover, only a small portion of construction workers were enrolled in trade unions. Of the 470 industrial disputes that appeared in İstanbul between 1959 and 1963, only 7 belonged to the construction sector.⁷⁷¹

When an American construction company which had been developing a housing estate in Ankara laid off 550 workers without severance pay in late 1959, workers had no option other than to organize a spontaneous action to claim their rights. The Hamilton Company did not even pay the accumulated earnings of the workers who had labored in strenuous conditions for six months. Workers were led by the grassroots organizer and the chairman of Ankara Construction Workers Trade Union, Tahir Öztürk, who became known as Fukara Tahir by the workers. Fukara Tahir was a migrant worker and became a populist leader who would be a key figure in the struggles of construction workers in the 1960s. His uncompromising militancy, his radical style and militancy, all reflected the type of leadership expected by construction workers. On November 2, 550 workers marched to the Ministry of Labor after a fiery speech by Tahir. On their way, they clashed with police forces, broke the blockades, and finally managed to walk through the populated streets of the city and arrived at the ministry. After long negotiations with the ministry authorities, the RLD promised the

⁷⁷⁰ *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 10, vol. 23, 26 February 1952, p. 1088.

⁷⁷¹ Tuna, *Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Düzeninin İktisadi ve Sosyal Tesirleri*, p. 42.

workers to sue the company for engaging in lockout.⁷⁷² About three years after this successful protest, on 3 May 1962, 5000 thousand construction would make a similar march to protest the unemployment in construction sector, but this time to the National Assembly. Tahir talked to the presidents of the GNA and the newly established Senate, and demanded that working hours be reduced to eight hours in the industry. This protest would be known as the “march of the hungry” or the “barefoot march”.⁷⁷³

There were still other obstacles which prevented workers in particular workplaces from benefitting from the collective labor disputes system. For example, the age restriction to enroll in the trade unions precluded many workers from pursuing a strategy of manipulating legal channels. According to the 1950 Bylaw on Arbitration, trade unions could raise collective labor disputes only in workplaces where they represented more than half of the employees. However, the 1947 Trade Unions Law (No. 5018) stipulated that the unions could not enroll workers younger than 19. Therefore, in many workplaces in which child workers constituted the majority, *Petrol-İş* Magazine claimed, it was impossible to raise industrial conflicts for wage increase.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷² Adil Aşçıoğlu, “Bakanlık Önünde Toplananlar,” *KİM*, 7 November 1959; “Ankara’da Polislerle İşçiler Arasında Dün Cereyan Eden Hadise,” *Cumhuriyet*, 3 November 1959.

⁷⁷³ See İsmet Demir, *Grev ve Direnişler Üzerine: Anılar-Deneyler İşçi Sınıfı Mücadelesinden Bir Kesit (1962-1975)* (İstanbul: Diyalektik Yayınları, 1994), p. 24; Aziz Çelik, *Sina Pamukçu ile Sendikalı Yıllar: Maden-İş, TİP, Türk-İş ve DİSK’ten Anılar* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV Yayınları, 2010), pp. 101-105; “Yapı İşçileri Ankara’da İzinsiz Yürüyüş Yaptılar,” *Cumhuriyet*, 4 May 1962.

⁷⁷⁴ “Hususi Sektörde Çalışanların Ücretlerine Zam Davası,” *Petrol-İş Dergisi*, no. 21 (April 1959), p.6

Conclusion

This chapter revealed the significance of law, for studying the working class formation. The analysis of inner regulations reveals that the everyday workings of the law were crucial in the constitution of labor control in the production process in a period when labor legislation was in the process of being made. Managements' concern with greater punctuality and work discipline reflected in the inner regulations contributed to the workers' sense of encroachment and fostered growing protests of the worker unions. Our analysis also reveals that the legal authority was disinclined to intervene in the "private law" established by employers in order to exert discipline in this historical conjuncture when the legal infrastructure of state controlled labor relations was in the process of construction. Issues of control and conflict were structured through the ongoing micropolitics of positioning and legitimation.

Labor inspection was one of the great novelties introduced by the Labor Code. The institution became more important in the immediate aftermath of World War II with the foundation of regional labor directorates. It was envisaged to be an important mechanism for monitoring and supporting the implementation of the provisions of labor legislation. However, the analysis presented above reveals that the inspection system remained ineffective in enforcing the provisions of labor legislation on the shop floor. It lacked the institutional power in terms of both financial capacity and human resources. Consequently, the profession failed to develop its own ethos and inclusive culture where every member of the profession could regard his or her role as advancing the conditions of working masses. While the inspectors in the British and Russian experiences became a powerful ally of the working class

movements, in the Turkish case labor inspectors could not insulate themselves from the pressures of the factory managements and public administration. Workers were well aware of the collaboration between the inspectors responsible for labor issues and the employers.

The legalization of labor relations and implementation of new social policies took place in a period of explosive growth in law making in general. These laws and policies envisioned a sea change in the institutional relation between the actors in production (managers, workers, trade unions, inspectors and public institutions). As the next chapter shows the legalization of labor relations gave way to the popularization of the notion of rights. The grievance machinery constituted workers as industrial citizens with rights and obligations.

The institutional reform process in the field of labor law had significant implications in terms of working class politics and action. Although it was still a work in process, the rudimentary ideology and apparatus of legality had the effect of inciting new forms of working class action and language riding on the call for legality and rights. Raising and prosecuting collective labor disputes undoubtedly provided self-confidence and collective training for organized workers. Considering that 1104 industrial disputes were raised by workers between 1951 and 1960,⁷⁷⁵ we may assume that tens of thousands workers lived this experience. On the other hand, the workers' seizure of rights rhetoric meant that their activism was at least partially channeled into, and restrained by, the state's new regulatory machinery and its discourse of legality.

⁷⁷⁵ Makal, *Türkiye'de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, p. 507.

CHAPTER 5

WORKING CLASS LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND POLITICS

In the previous chapters it was revealed that a critical language which unraveled the conflicting interests between workers and employers developed during the period. The social relations and conflicts centered on work and off-work experiences manifested itself in the formation of a distinct class culture. This chapter will examine more the ideas and accompanying languages of workers. The political culture on which the working class language was built also will be discussed.

The late 1940s and 1950s witnessed the emergence of an urban working class in the sense of an amplitude of men and women sharing a common class position. It also has been argued in the previous chapters that there emerged a working class in the sense of a social category with distinct culture and with the propensity to organize in class specific forms. The development and transformation of the language of class provide one indicator about what people felt and thought, about their experience, self-identification, consciousness, aims and collective actions. The first section of this chapter is reserved for an analysis of the transformation of the concept of class in the first half of the twentieth century. It is argued that the late 1940s and 1950s were crucial years in which the terms of class were established definitely. What follows is a brief examination of working class collective action during the period.

One particular strike incident, the İzmir dock workers' strike, is analyzed to reveal its constituent role in the formation of class identity. The remaining part of the chapter focuses on alternative visions of class during the period. As emphasized above, this was a period in which great steps were taken in terms of legal and institutional structuring of labor relations with the establishment of government departments, laws and regulations and the establishment of trade unions.

Here we need to add the structuring of the political party system. Along with these institutional transformations, a new discourse on the working class was emerging from within these institutions. These influences had restrictive effects on the formation of distinct class culture and identity. On the other hand, the experience of economic and social developments in the course of the late 1940s and 1950s opened channels which enabled workers to advance the struggle and challenge the legitimacy of the established order in which workers suffered from all kinds of deprivations. Through these channels, it is argued, a more radical working class identity and politics emerged by the early 1960s.

Language of Class: Transformation of a Concept

Until the final years of the nineteenth century the concept of worker was not prominent in the social and political language in contrast to general categories like *ahali* (people) and in contrast to occupational corporate categories (like *esnaf*). Workers were organized in and represented by guild-like organizations which had been part of the Ottoman scene for many centuries. Unions and syndicates came late in Ottoman history as part of the tide of European capital penetration in the late nineteenth century. Unlike guilds these organizations were illegitimate in the eyes of the state and largely were associated with the foreign corporations

established in the Ottoman land.⁷⁷⁶ During the strike wave of 1908, many unions were created in the act of striking and often died when the strikes were over.⁷⁷⁷ The brief legal existence of unions came to an end with the legislation of forbidding such organizations in the public sector.

The concept of *amele* became prominent probably in the final years of the nineteenth century to designate both the skilled and unskilled workers in the post-guild systems of production in the early factories and the members of some of the trades like porters' which were modernized in the 1890s.⁷⁷⁸ *Amele* was an ambiguous concept and continued to be so in the twentieth century until it finally disappeared from the political vocabulary in the late 1940s. As a matter of fact most industrial workers of the urban centers came from artisanal backgrounds where they had acquired sufficient skills to enable them to get into the newly founded factories. When the government sent workers to Germany for training during the World War I, they were either craftsmen (*usta*) or students. Such people tended to identify with their craft or, at best, with a rudimentary sense of class as members of a social category of laboring men sharing similar material conditions.⁷⁷⁹ Along with *Amele*, *ahali* (people), *avam* (common people), *ahad-i nas* (a synonym of *avam*) and *fakirler sınıfı* (the poor class) were other terms used frequently in the social and political vocabulary of the period.

The ambiguity of the concept of *amele* was benefited for political reasons both by the Union and Progress cadres and later by the Kemalists. Inspired by the corporatist and populist

⁷⁷⁶ Donald Quataert, "The Social History of Labor in the Ottoman Empire, 1800-1914," in *The Social History of Labor in the Middle East*, ed. Ellis Jay Goldberg (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 28-29.

⁷⁷⁷ See Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "The 1908 Strike Wave in the Ottoman Empire," *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, vol. 16, no. 2 (September 1992).

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid. , p. 30.

⁷⁷⁹ Feroz Ahmad, "The Development of Working-Class Consciousness in Republican Turkey, 1923-1945," in *Workers and the Working Class in Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839-1950*, eds. Donald Quataert and Eric J. Zürcher (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1995), p.76.

social thoughts, the Unionists found guild consciousness useful to manipulate and mobilize and therefore encouraged the organization of guild-like bodies. Beginning from February 1910 to the end of the War, the Unionists organized many workers in trade and artisans' associations (*esnaf cemiyetleri*).⁷⁸⁰

By the early 1920s there were several labor organizations bearing the labels of *işçi* or *amele* in their names. *Beynelmilel İşçiler İttihadı* (founded principally by Greek and Armenian workers) and *Türkiye İşçi Derneği* (associated with the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey) were two leading organizations inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution. Another and more important organization was the *İstanbul Umum Amele Birliği* founded in 1922.⁷⁸¹ It was influential first among tramway workers, but later gained a certain standing among a certain number of trades. The documents produced by these organizations reveal that the concepts of *amele* and *işçi* still were used interchangeably. However, workers were equally aware that the ambiguity of the concept of *amele* hindered the possibility of workers to advance their distinct interests and targets, and to improve their organizational power.

This was explicitly expressed in the report which was prepared by the *Amele Birliği* and presented to the chairmanship of the İzmir Economic Congress of 1923. The report wrote that since the meanings ascribed to the concepts of *amele* and *esnaf* were not clearly defined, the authorities organized workers with shopkeepers and artisans in the same associations in order to control this force and deprive them of the right to form independent syndicates

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid. The list of these associations is provided in Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat (1908-1918)* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982), pp. 401-402.

⁷⁸¹ Erdal Yavuz, "The State of Industrial Workforce, 1923-1940," in *Workers and the Working Class in Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839-1950*, eds. Donald Quataert and Eric J. Zürcher (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1995), p. 102.

together with the right to strike.⁷⁸² Despite the efforts of the Kemalists to control and guide the workers' group,⁷⁸³ workers managed to put forward their program and showed a spirit of independence during the Congress. As the first article of their program, workers proposed to designate male and female workers as *işçi* instead of the commonly used vague term of *amele*.⁷⁸⁴

In contrast to the concept of *amele*, which was used as a very broad and general category, usually in phrases like “*fırın esnafı amelesi*”, “*tramvay amelesi*” or “*hamal amelesi*”⁷⁸⁵, including journeymen and masters, domestic and factory workers and sometimes even agricultural workers, the term *işçi* slowly began to be used by journeymen and different types of workers as a means of self-categorization. In using the word they tried to express what they had in common across occupational and corporate distinctions in contrast to employers.⁷⁸⁶ This occurred first in the radical and socialist organizations formed by workers and intellectuals in the large cities. However, the meanings attached to the term *işçi* were always contentious. During the 1930s the term was usually used to point to the poverty and suffering of laboring people, rather than their role in the production process. In a series of

⁷⁸² “Memleketimizde esnaf ve amele tabiri vazıhan ve kanunen tarif edilmemiş olduğu için bu müphemiyetten bil-istifade amelenin en büyük bir kısmının kontrolü ve esnaf namı altında cem ile inkişaf ve terakkilerine sed çeken Şehremaneti'nin bu selahiyetinin ref'i ile ameleye grev yapmak salahiyet-i kanuniyesini haiz sendikalar teşkil etmesini müsaade etmek, yani hal-i hazırda mer'i-yül icra olan 19 Ağustos 325 (1909) tarihli Cemiyetler Kanununu bu esas üzerinde tadil eylemek.” See, “İstanbul Umum Amele Birliği'nin Türkiye İktisat Kongresi'ne Sunduğu Rapor,” in A. Gündüz Ökçün, *Türkiye İktisat Kongresi 1923 İzmir: Haberler, Belgeler, Yorumlar* (Ankara: AÜSBF Yayınları, 1981), p. 165.

⁷⁸³ For example, they placed Aka Gündüz, who was not even a worker but a publicist who gained prominence during the Young Turk era, at the head of the workers' group.

⁷⁸⁴ For an analysis of workers' program, see M. Şehmus Güzel, “İktisat Kongreleri ve Toplumsal Siyaset,” in *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi (Yazılar-Belgeler)* (İstanbul: Sosyalist Yayınlar, 1993), p. 125.

⁷⁸⁵ See Ökçün, p. 164.

⁷⁸⁶ According to Ahmad, the term *patron* had gained prominence among the workers employed in modern sectors by the end of the war for designating bosses whose interests were in conflict with workers. Ahmad, “The Development of Working-Class Consciousness”, p. 78.

interviews with workers from different industries and trades which was published in *Cumhuriyet* a few months before the promulgation of the Labor Code in 1936, workers were described as “those who barely make their living” (*günü gününe yaşayanlar*). This phrase was also the title of this series which was prepared by renowned socialist journalist Suad Derviş.⁷⁸⁷ The title reflected not only the perception of middle class observers on workers, but also the self-identification of workers with poverty.⁷⁸⁸ This was also in line with the paternalist mood of the period in 1936 when discussions over the long-delayed Labor Code were finally on the agenda of the parliament.⁷⁸⁹

However, the term *amele* did not disappear from the political vocabulary easily. Yet the concept was redefined to include exclusively unskilled individual toilers without having a qualified occupation, often to denote migrant workers whose real interests lay in agriculture, not in modern sectors of the city. For instance, in 1937, Lütfi Erişçi wrote of the laborers who came new to city to seek work as *ameleler* and of the districts that they sought for shelter as *amele mahalleleri*.⁷⁹⁰ Even the socialist *Sendika* magazine described the strike of the İzmir dock workers as the strike of “*liman ameleleri*”.⁷⁹¹ The magazine, on the other hand, was careful about using the term *işçi* when reporting about more established segments of the working class. However, the middle class observers and state authorities were still not so much attentive about distinguishing between *işçi* and *amele* in their political vocabularies.

⁷⁸⁷ “Günü Gününe Yaşayanlar” started on 3 April 1936, and was completed on 1 May 1936. See also Nadir Nadi, “Günü Gününe Yaşayanlarımızı Düşünelim,” *Cumhuriyet*, 1 May 1936.

⁷⁸⁸ See Özçelik, p. 148. The phrase was still in use in the early 1950s among some workers and unionists to designate the position of workers in the society. See Kemal Sülker, ??

⁷⁸⁹ Barış Alp Özden, “The 1936 Labor Code and the Problem of Reproduction of Labor in the Early Republican Period”, unpublished paper.

⁷⁹⁰ Lütfi Erişçi, “İstanbul’da Amele Mahalleleri,” *Yeni Adam*, vol.4, no.177 (20 May 1937), p.4.

⁷⁹¹ “İzmir Liman Amelesi Zam Talebinde Bulundular,” *Sendika*, no. 6 (5 October 1946).

During the negotiations over the 1947 budget of the Ministry of Labor in the parliament, for example, most deputies used the terms *işçi* and *amele* in the same speech, sometimes for denoting skilled and unskilled laborers separately, but often interchangeably.⁷⁹²

In the years following World War II, however, a significant transformation of the political and social language in relation worker issues occurred. By the mid-1950s, the term *amele* was no longer in use in the political vocabulary. When the minister of labor Mümtaz Tarhan used the term once during a speech at the National Assembly, this single act caused many trade unions to protest him severely.⁷⁹³ In contrast to the word proletarian,⁷⁹⁴ which most workers did not like to use for self-identification, the concepts of *işçi* and *işçi sınıfı* were clearly established as positive terms of the emerging labor unions and their movement.

This transformation of the language of class was made possible and accompanied the proliferation of unionization across many sectors of the workforce. In 1948 only 15 percent of the workforce covered by the Labor Law was unionized. By the end of the decade, however, about 35 percent of the workforce covered by the Labor Law had been enrolled in unions which bore the name of *İşçi Sendikası*. In absolute numbers, this means that the trade union membership rose about six-fold, from 52,000 to 280,000. During the period, the number of trade unions increased from 49 to 432.⁷⁹⁵ Even pop musicians had established a trade union in 1950. When the ministry of labor refused to recognize the union on the grounds that

⁷⁹² “Bütçe Müzakereleri Dolayısıyla B. M. Meclisinde İrad Edilen Söylevler,” *Çalışma Dergisi*, no. 14 (January 1947), pp. 51-65.

⁷⁹³ *İşçi Sesi*, 3 March 1956

⁷⁹⁴ “Proletarian” was a dangerous word associated with class struggle and internationalism which was both hated and forbidden by the regime. In a speech after the foundation of the Ministry of Labor, the first officer at this post Sadi İrmak maintained that the ministry would attach utmost importance to preclude the development of the feeling and condition of proletarianization among workers to keep them away from foreign ideologies and guarantee the spread of national feelings. See Suat Seren, *Çalışma Bakanlığı: Kuruluşundan Bugüne Kadar* (Ankara: TC Ziraat Bankası Matbaası, 1947), p. 51.

⁷⁹⁵ Makal, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, p. 276.

musicians are not workers, the chairman Behçet Ölmeztürk argued that “we are workers using our manual and intellectual labor. We are workers; because a drummer of a band first uses his intellectual labor to manage the beat time, then he becomes worn out like a construction worker who has trowelled all day long. The weariness of fingers of a pianist is the outcome of his manual effort. We have the right to organize a union. We belong to the working class. We have many problems.”⁷⁹⁶

The period under consideration also witnessed the flourishing of a labor media movement. Yüksel Akkaya counts 45 newspapers and journals published either by trade unions or by private entrepreneurs for working class readers in the 1946-1960 period. The geographical distribution of these newspapers reflected the distribution of the wage earning urban working class across the country. Most of these newspapers were short-lived. 39 percent of them had been published for less than one year. Only 26 percent survived the financial and managerial difficulties and lived more than two years.⁷⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the importance attached to the media by workers was well represented by the fact that so many newspapers owned by trade unions began publishing in this period. They found an audience by covering recent news from unions and workplaces, reporting governmental policies on labor and trade unions, and publishing letters and any kind of information sent by workers. It appears that they performed a remarkable mission of disseminating the key ideas of the workers’ discourse, which surely were understood by workers and adapted by them according to their particular needs and circumstances.

⁷⁹⁶ “Hafif Batı Musikisi Mensupları Sendikası,” *Gece Postası*, 23 July 1951.

⁷⁹⁷ Yüksel Akkaya, “Türkiye’de Erken Dönem Sendikal Basın: 1946-1960,” in *Cumhuriyet’in Hamalları: İşçiler* (İstanbul: Yordam Yayınları, 2010), pp. 141-142. The number of labor and union newspapers and journals was probably more than Akkaya could detect. For example Akkaya writes that even the city accommodated a huge working class population he is surprised to see that Kayseri workers/unions did not publish any newspapers or journals during the period. However, *Gayret*, which was the official publishing organ of the Kayseri Textile Industry Workers’ Union, was published throughout the 1950s starting from 1951.

For established workers who called themselves *işçi*, the concept had lost its traditional degrading connotation by the middle of the decade. Rather it had gained a forceful anti-corporatist and anti-particularistic connotation that expressed generalized claims for recognition and equality.⁷⁹⁸ “We are far away from the times when workers were degraded,” wrote one worker in 1960: “Until yesterday one might find workers who denied that they were workers. These people used to sell their labor, yet identified themselves with other categories. Why? Because they undervalued workers and they thought it was shameful to labor. But now we have arrived at a consciousness that makes one feel grateful to be a worker.”⁷⁹⁹

The writer continues the article by defining the concept of worker as an inclusive concept which covers the great part of the society under the umbrella of one class:

The head cook is a worker. Those who pay insurance premiums are workers. Those who plough others' land with their means of production are workers. The night watchmen are workers. The variety artist is a worker for 'he is made to repeat the movements that are trained to him'. The janitor, the furnace stoker, the telephone operator, the cashier, the storekeeper, the journeyman, the checker are all workers. Whether one is worker could not be understood by regarding the official post or label of his work. It could be understood by the content of his work determined by labor contract... According to recent figures the number of workers is on the average 541,934. During the high season the number rose highest to 618,775... If the laws did not recognize a distinction among the populations of different urban areas, include all the workers who perform intellectual labor, and cover all the employees of agricultural sector, then this figure would rise at least to 17 million. In one sense we are all workers and we are all laboring.”⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁸ For a similar line of argument see Yiğit Akın, “The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics in Early Republican Turkey: Language, Identity and Experience,” *International Review of Social History*, no. 54, Supplement 17 (2009), pp. 173-174.

⁷⁹⁹ Cahit Umut, “Hepimiz İşçiyiz...” *İşçinin Sesi*, 3 October 1960.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid. “(A)şçıbaşılar işçidir. Kendilerinden sigorta primi kesilenler işçidir. Kendi aracı ile başkasının toprağını çeken kişi de işçidir. Gece bekçisi işçidir. Daktilo işçidir. Varyete artisti “öğrendiği belli figürleri ekrar etmeğe alışmış” olduğundan işçidir. Odacı, kaloriferci, santral memuru, muamele memuru, veznedar, ustabaşı, ambar memuru, kontrolcü işçidir... Bir kimsenin işçi olup olmadığı memuriyetine ve yaptığı işin adına bakılarak kararlaştırılmaz. Hizmet akdi sebebiyle yaptığı işin mahiyetine bakılır... Son rakamlara göre işçi sayılanların adedi ortalama 541.934'tür. En yüksek rakamı bulan ayda işçi sayısı 618.775 olmuştur... Eğer kanunlar şehir

This recognition of class as an inclusive category against the official definition of the term in the labor law was especially prevalent among workers of some particular industries. Among them printers are worth mentioning. From the late nineteenth century on, printers possessed certain unique characteristics that separated them from other workers. Their places of work were generally in the urban center and their daily work brought many of them into close contact with journalists and writers; that is to say, with the printed world of ideas. The nature of their work required them to be highly skilled and literate. They prided themselves on their long organizational history which had started with the foundation of the Ottoman Association of Typesetters (*Mürettibin-i Osmani Cemiyeti*) in 1908. To emphasize this continuity, for example, the İstanbul Print Operators' Trade Union celebrated the 1954 Congress as the 42. congress of the union.⁸⁰¹ On the other hand, they saw themselves as part of the greater working class family as they worked in production with their hands and with skills acquired through long years of apprenticeship and on-the-job practice.⁸⁰² They strictly rejected a narrow craft unionism which separated typesetters from press operators. As a matter of fact, they were the primary group that emphasized the unity of workers as a class.⁸⁰³

nüfusu ayırımı yapmasa ve fikir işçilerinin hepsini gözetse tarım işkoluda çalışanları da kanun karuyuculuğu altına alsa işçi sayısı en az 17 milyonu bulur. Bir deyimde göre hepimiz işçiyiz ve çalışmaktayız.”

⁸⁰¹ “Sendikamızın 42’nci Kongresi Yapıldı,” *İşçi Sesi*, 24 April 1954; “Sendikamızın Bir Senelik Faaliyeti,” *İşçi Sesi*, 8 May 1954. For *Mürettibini Osmaniye Cemiyeti*, see also M. Şeyhmus Güzel, *Türkiye’de İşçi Hareketi*, p. 85.

⁸⁰² Their position in the labor process enabled printers both in Germany and Russia to view themselves through the prism of class. In both countries they were among the first working class communities to form strong associations. For Germany, see Jürgen Kocka, “Problems of Working-Class Formation in Germany: The Early Years, 1800-1875” in Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (eds.), *Working-Class Formation*, p. 326. For Russia, see Mark D. Steinberg, “Vanguard Workers and the Morality of Class,” in Lewis. H. Siegelbaum and Ronald G. Sunny (eds.), *Making Workers’ Soviet*.

⁸⁰³ Hakkı Kezer, “Fikir İşçileri ve Biz,” *İşçi Sesi*, 26 Mart 1955.

Concepts of the social and political language reflect perceptions of the underlying experiences of those who use them in class specific ways. From the 1920s to the 1950s were the crucial decades in which the redefinition of the concept of class took place. It seems that the late 1940s and early 1950s witnessed the development of a growing awareness of working people reflected in the self assertion of the concept of class in the political vocabulary adopted by the workers themselves, though the different values attached to what they called *işçi*.

Working Class Collective Action: Strikes

There has been a tendency in the Ottoman and republican Turkish labor historiography to focus primarily on working class activism in the form of strikes as a demonstration of class consciousness. As Atabaki and Brockett argue this characteristic of labor historiography follows the agenda of what scholars refer to as “the old labor history,” which puts too much emphasis on the institutional aspects of labor and labor militancy in its relation with the state.⁸⁰⁴ The classical examples of labor history in Turkey touch briefly on the class formation in the 1950s, for, it is argued, workers and their unions were reluctant to engage in collective actions, especially in the form of strikes, in a period which was characterized by the authoritarian political regime of the DP.⁸⁰⁵

A number of recent studies, which claim to be revisionist in that sense, aim to show that workers exhibited dispositions to engage in strikes during the period.⁸⁰⁶ These studies are

⁸⁰⁴ Touraj Atabaki and Gavin D. Brockett, “Ottoman and Republican Turkish Labour History: An Introduction,” *International Review of Social History*, no. 54, Supplement 17 (2009), pp. 7-8.

⁸⁰⁵ See for example Y. N. Rozaliyev, *Türkiye Sanayi Proleteryası* (İstanbul: Yar Yayınları, 1978); M. Şehmus Güzel, *Türkiye’de İşçi Hareketi, 1908-1984*; Yıldırım Koç, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi*.

⁸⁰⁶ Yüksel Akkaya, “Demokrat Parti Döneminde Grevler,” in *Cumhuriyet’in Hamalları: İşçiler* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2010); Ahmet Makal, “Türkiye’de 1946-1960 Dönemindeki Grev Tartışmaları ve Grevler üzerine Bir Çözümleme Denemesi,” in *Ameleden İşçiyeye*; Şerafettin Pektaş, “DP Döneminde Tarımdışı Alanlarda

important for they provide a partial inventory of strike incidents during the period. However, since they focus interest on the quantity of strike actions, they fail to go beyond the assumptions of the traditional paradigm and analyze the meaning and influence of strikes on the formation of working class identity.

Since the present study aims to move beyond this paradigm and adopt aspects of the new labor history, a little place has been reserved for strike actions during the period. Moreover, the study of strikes during the period bears some difficulties which are not possible to overcome in the present state of research.⁸⁰⁷ For this very reason, the analysis below will focus on one strike incident which made a visible impression on the language and self-identification of workers and had wide repercussions in the broader public.

Before moving further it is worth noting that workers responded in a wide variety of ways to the changes they experienced in their daily lives during the period. They exhibited dispositions to engage in many different forms of collective action. Campaigns for shorter working day and for the right to strike, meetings, beard growing protests (*sakal grevleri*)⁸⁰⁸ testifies a broad spectrum of collective actions against the employers, the state and the members of the working class itself. Yet the most characteristic form of collective action by

Çalışma Yaşamının Düzenlenmesi” (Ph.D. diss., Marmara Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2006), pp. 247-255.

⁸⁰⁷ Every attempt to provide an inventory of strikes during the period is bound to be partial and incomplete. Because the strikes were illegal actions there exists no statistical data about them recorded by state authorities or trade unions. The only supply of materials for such an endeavor is newspaper reports which can not provide information of all strike incidents. Moreover, in many cases it is hard to determine whether the case in question is strike or lock-out. Because both of the acts were illegal when employers initiated a lock-out they often claimed that the incident was a strike. Conversely, in many cases workers denied to have initiated a strike and argued that the employer closed the establishment in order to gain concessions from employees.

⁸⁰⁸ According to one source first *sakal grevi* was initiated by the Hotel, Restaurant, and Entertainment Venue Workers’ Trade Union in 1952 to protest the rejection of the draft bill in the parliament which extended the scope of Labor Law to cover all the workplaces. See Evren Balta et al., *1947’den 1997’ye 50 Yıllık Emek, 50 Yıllık Mücadele Deneyimi: Otel, Lokanta, Eğlence Yerleri İşçilerinin Sendikal Mücadele Tarihi* (Ankara: OLEYİS, 1997), p. 39. The beard growing protest pervaded among thousand of workers throughout the country in 1961. See “Sakal Bırakma Eylemi,” in *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi III*, p. 562.

workers was the strike. Strikes were certainly not unknown prior to the period. In 1908 and during the armistice period workers initiated, conducted and concluded many strikes. In the authoritarian atmosphere of the early republican period, however, workers abstained from engaging in strikes and strike-like actions. In prohibiting strikes, the Labor Code of 1936 was to a large extent merely sanctioning the then existing position. Şehmus Güzel could discover only seven strikes between 1937 and 1950.⁸⁰⁹

The Law on Trade Unions in 1947 brought a new deterrent in that respect: the incitement to strike. If a member of the administrative committee of a union or a staff responsible for the administration of the union was involved in such unlawful acts, then the union also was penalized. Furthermore, due to their weak monetary sources, trade unions had limited financial funds to offer the workers on strike. Unions could barely collect 30 percent of the membership fees during the period since there was not a check-off system to cut automatically the union membership fee from the salary of workers. It was not until the 1960s that unions began to accumulate permanent strike funds. Therefore, strikes required a strong sense of solidarity among workers participating in them. The workers who participated in strike had to be prepared to make substantial sacrifices and take great risks. They also faced the possibility of not being hired after a strike was terminated. Additionally, benefits like higher wages, which strikers sought more primarily, were collective goods that would accrue to workers who did not make such sacrifices as much as those did and unions did not have the authority to levy sanctions against strikebreakers. These limitations help to explain the general characteristics of the strikes during the period: they were short-term actions (often no more than two or three days); they were spontaneous; they were not supported by trade unions; and

⁸⁰⁹ Güzel, *Türkiye İşçi Hareketi*, pp. 174-175.

their reach to the public was limited. In this sense, the İzmir dock workers' strike in 1954 was exceptional.

The dock workers in İzmir had a long history of resistance to the general level of wages in the area and their specific condition of employment.⁸¹⁰ During the republican period the first strike at the docks took place in 1940 brought about by increased organization, rising prices and the worsening employment conditions. The second strike of dock workers, to our knowledge, came after the end of World War II, in October 1946. During September 1946 workers submitted demands for 5-7 liras a day to the dock administration. A counter offer was made, but not accepted by the workers.⁸¹¹ The demands were backed up by a short-term strike action on 8 October. There then followed a lengthy correspondence between the stevedoring contractor (who argued that no significant wage increase was possible) and the dock administration (who insisted that an increase should be made to end workers' resistance). In the end, their demands were satisfied and workers got back to work.⁸¹²

In 1950 another "one day strike" broke out at the İzmir dock which was also settled by the recognition of workers' demands. Dock workers occupied a relatively important position in the labor process in the docks. Their labor was central to all work operations in landing and shipping cargo. Despite the centrality of their labor in the structure of transport, dock workers were low paid and worked and lived in poor conditions.

Although they achieved a wage increase in 1950, the unrest of the İzmir dock workers magnified in the same year when stevedoring was subcontracted to a private concern of

⁸¹⁰ For a brief account of struggles of İzmir dock workers during the Ottoman period see Engin Berber, "İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Domino Etkisi Yapan Bir Eylem: İzmir Liman İşçileri," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [Online], no. 11 (2010). Available at <http://ejts.revues.org/index4303.html>

⁸¹¹ "İzmir Liman Amelesi Zam Talebinde Bulundular," *Sendika*, no. 6 (5 October 1946).

⁸¹² Kemal Sülker, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde İşçi Hareketleri," in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), p. 1845.

Osman Gürkan. These workers were employed on average 2-3 days a week because of fluctuations in shipping, but also because the employer wished to maintain a supply of labor at a level equal to that of the maximum demand which could be made under peak conditions. As in all ports it was in the company's interest to maintain a reserve army of labor over average daily requirements.⁸¹³ The pressure on wage rates was maintained by this reserve which encouraged competition among workers for vacancies every day. In the early 1950s, the average earnings of workers fluctuated around 20-25 liras a week.⁸¹⁴

The dispute arose over the workers' objections to renewal of a contract between the Turkish Maritime Bank, the government-owned port authority, and the stevedoring concern of Osman Gürkan in 1954. Led by the İzmir Dockworkers Trade Union, more than 600 workers went on strike on 15 July 1954. Hundreds of cabbies and truck workers in the wharves were unable to work and the docks came to a standstill. The dock workers gathered around the Maritime Bank quietly discussing their grievances and listening to speeches by their leaders.⁸¹⁵ The workers asserted that their earnings had fallen by 60 percent after the renewal of the contract with Gürkan's company and demanded that the dock workers again be employed directly by the Maritime Bank and receive higher wages and assurance of steadier work.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹³ The casual labor system was universally prevalent in seaports. See Klaus Weinbauer, "Labour Market, Work Mentality and Syndicalism: Dock Labour in the United States and Hamburg, 1900-1950s," *International Review of Social History*, vol. 42, no. 2 (August 1992); David Hemson, "Dock Workers, Labour Circulation and Class Struggles in Durban, 1940-59," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (October 1977).

⁸¹⁴ Doğan Duman, "1954 İzmir Liman İşçileri Grevi," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 16 (April 1995), p. 48; "Türkiye'de İlk Grev," *Forum*, vol. 1, no. 9 (1 August 1954).

⁸¹⁵ "İzmir Limanındaki Grev Hadisesi", *Akşam*, 16 July 1954; "İzmir Liman Ameleleri İşe Başlamadılar", *Akşam*, 17 July 1954.

⁸¹⁶ "İzmir'de 600 Deniz İşçisi Dün Greve Teşebbüs Etti," *Milliyet*, 16 July 1954.

The strike came under the control of the İzmir Dockworkers' Trade Union and worker representatives, most of whom were immigrants from Balkan countries. On the day that the strike began, 24 leaders were arrested, and let out of the prison on the following day probably on the condition that they urge the workers return the work. Since a strike in the harbor effected the strategic shipping situation the government responded promptly and ordered troops to the docks and indicated it would take forcible steps if the stoppage continued. But the strike continued on the next day when the workers who came to the dock saw that Osman Gürkan was still on duty.⁸¹⁷

On the sixth day, Ekmel Önbülak, the Ministry of Labor General Director in Charge of Trade Unions, and the mayor of İzmir, chaired a meeting of employer and worker representatives and made it clear that if the strike continued the authorities were prepared to make use of a reserve supply of dock labor to be obtained by breaking organized action and by recruiting those not then employed from the area. The workers agreed to get back to work since all of their leaders had been arrested.⁸¹⁸ Although they had been able to achieve only a small wage increase, dock workers had successfully continued a strike for six days under the heavy pressure of employers and state authorities.⁸¹⁹

The police arrested Abdullah Zobu, president of the İzmir Dockworkers Trade Union and two other unionist leaders. The three leaders were released by İzmir's first Court of the Peace shortly after they were taken into custody for the first time.⁸²⁰ They were arrested again almost immediately and held until mid-August. 558 dock union members stood trial on charges of having staged Turkey's largest labor strike. The leaders faced up to 32 months in

⁸¹⁷ "İzmir'de Taşıt İşçilerinin Grevi Dün de Devam Etti," *Milliyet*, 17 July 1954.

⁸¹⁸ "İzmir'de Grev Yapan İşçilerin Bir Kısmı Dün İşbaşı Yaptı," *Milliyet*, 20 July 1954.

⁸¹⁹ "İzmir Liman İşçilerinin Grevi Sona Erdi," *İşçi Sesi*, 24 July 1954.

⁸²⁰ "İzmir Liman İşçilerinin Grevi," *Akşam*, 18 July 1954.

prison if they were convicted of having attempted to exert pressure on port authorities for higher wages and steadier work for dock workers. The rank-and-file members were liable to six months imprisonment and a fine of 100 liras (equivalent to about a month's work for workers).⁸²¹ İzmir dock workers' strike coincided with other strike incidents in Santral Mensucat mill and the Hilton hotel. The police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were suspicious about whether these events were related and part of a communist provocation. That many of the leaders of dock workers were immigrants from Romania, Bulgaria and Crimea added to their fears of an organized conspiracy.⁸²² In the meantime the government closed the İzmir Dock Workers Trade Union and the smaller Alsancak Coal and Dockworkers Trade Union.⁸²³

The trial proceeded slowly as the defendants were hauled into court for interrogation in groups of fifty.⁸²⁴ Despite the ongoing trial of dock workers in İzmir, a further strike broke out exactly one year after the 1954 strike. Workers asserted that their wages were still low and demanded to be paid a wage which would enable workers and their families to live under urban conditions. Some workers told that they did not even sleep with their wives for they were afraid of having children under the poor conditions in which they were made to live.⁸²⁵ On the second day of the strike, the Maritime Bank announced that it had abrogated the contract with the private concern of Osman Gürkan and promised that the workers would

⁸²¹ "Turkey Tries 556 for Strike Action," *New York Times*, 29 December 1954.

⁸²² Duman, p. 50; "İzmir'deki Grev Dün Sona Erdi," *Milliyet*, 21 July 1954.

⁸²³ "İzmir Grevi Tahkikatı," *Akşam*, 23 July, 1954; "İzmir'de Dün İki Sendika Kapatıldı," *Milliyet*, 23 July 1954.

⁸²⁴ "İzmirde Grev Yapan 600 Liman İşçisinin duruşması," *İşçi Sesi*, 2 October, 1954.

⁸²⁵ İbrahim Güzelce, "İzmir Grevçileri," *Forum*, vol. 3, no. 33 (1 August 1955), p. 17.

receive a wage increase. Upon the parole of Maritime Bank authorities the workers returned to the docks.⁸²⁶

The prominence of the İzmir dock workers' strike lay in its broader repercussions in public. The newspapers followed the developments with deep concern and reported on the latest developments on the front pages. No strike before had attracted the interest of public opinion to that degree. The influential *Forum* magazine welcomed this act as “the first strike in Turkey” and prepared many reports about it. According to *Forum* editors the ban on strikes and organized work stoppages had received a severe blow by this single act of the İzmir dockers in the face of sympathy expressed in the media:

In the studies which will be made in the future on the movements and the lives of Turkish workers, there is no doubt that the year 1954 will be marked as the beginning of a new era. This act can be conceived as an inception of the idea of a prospective Labor Party in Turkey ... For the first time in his history the Turkish worker has witnessed the success of a strike attempt performed in solidarity for the sake of a common cause.

The factual side of the İzmir strike is not very important. As far as we are informed by the newspapers, the dock workers walked out in protest after having seen that their demands for a wage increase were not met. The newly recruited workers who had been brought to the docks to replace the strikers also participated in the strike since they found the wages too low. Although the strike as an incident was a concern for only a small portion of the organized working masses, the events occupied the headlines of the top daily newspapers and the public opinion followed the strike with the greatest interest from cover to cover. In the end, the authorities recognized workers' claims, and workers got back to work.

The İzmir workers have inflicted a heavy blow on the ban on strikes which inhibits the improvement of organized labor relations as one important fundamental of a democratic regime, and reminded the statesmen that there is an important question about labor to think about.⁸²⁷

⁸²⁶ Makal, “Türkiye’de 1946-1960 Dönemindeki Grev Tartışmaları ve Grevler üzerine Bir Çözümleme Denemesi”, p. 296.

⁸²⁷ “İlerde Türk işçi hayatı ve hareketleri hakkında yazılacak eserlerde, 1954 senesi hiç şüphe yok bir devir başlangıcı olarak kabul edilecektir. Bu hareket Türkiye’de müstakbel İşçi Partisi fikrinin br başlangıcı olarak kabul edilecektir.

İzmir’deki grevin hadise cephesi o kadar mühim değildir. Gazetelerden öğrendiğimize göre liman işçisi ücretlerinin artırılması için yaptıkları talebin yerine getirilmediğini görünce toplu olarak çalışmayı bırakmıştır.

In a later issue, *Forum* editors wrote that the İzmir strike once more revealed that the burden of economic development always had been placed on the shoulders of “the weak classes” while the rewards of growth has gone exclusively to bosses.⁸²⁸

The *New York Times* published two extensive reports on the strike incident and noticed that although both major parties had promised the right to strike, the present regime had failed to carry out the pledge since 1950.⁸²⁹ The strike forged class solidarity on both the national and international levels. The American Federation of Labor urged Turkey to call off the trial of the İzmir dock workers on charges of having engaged in a strike on 29 December 1954.⁸³⁰ In support of the dock workers, the İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance raised a solidarity fund while the legal advisor of İstanbul Press Technicians Trade Union acted as lawyer for the dockworkers in İzmir.

Institutions and Ideological Influences

The institutionalization of trade unions and multi-party political system after World War II had significant influence on class dispositions and politics. A number of trade unions were established under the influence of two socialist parties (The Socialist Labor and Peasant

Yerlerine alınmak istenen yeni işçiler bile mevcut ücret seviyesini kifayetsiz bulmuşlar ve onlar da grevcilere katılmışlardır. Hadise olarak bu grev, çalışan ve teşkilatlı işçi külesinin gayet cüz’i bir nisbetini ilgilendirdiği halde, bu hadise günlük başlıca gazetelerimizin baş sahifelerinde en önemli yerleri işgal etmiş ve halk efkarı bu grevi başından sonuna kadar ilgi ile takip etmiştir. Neticede işçilerin talebi kabul edilmiş ve işçiler çalışmaya başlamıştır.

İzmir işçisi demokratik nizamın en mühim temellerinden birini veren teşkilatlı iş müessesinin inkişafını önleyen grev yasağına, bu son hareketiyle önemli bir darbe indirmiş ve devlet adamlarına iş ve işçi meseleleri ile ilgili üzerinde ciddi bir surette düşünülecek bir mesele bulunduğunu hatırlatmıştır.” “Türkiye’de İlk Grev,” *Forum*, vol. 1, no. 9 (1 August 1954).

⁸²⁸ “Gene Grev Hakkına Dair,” *Forum*, vol. 3, no. 33 (1 August 1955), p. 6.

⁸²⁹ “Turkey Tries 556 for Strike Action,” *New York Times*, 29 December 1954.

⁸³⁰ “A.F.L. Urge Turkey to Release Dockers,” *New York Times*, 30 December 1954; “İzmir Grevi Hakkında,” *Forum*, vol. 2, no. 20 (15 January 1955).

Party of Turkey and The Socialist Party of Turkey) as soon as the ban on the foundation of class based associations was lifted from the Associations Law in 1946. The wave of unionization observed by contemporaries was beyond the estimations of the then ruling party, RPP. Having seen that the increasing number of workers were joining unions controlled by socialists, the government determined to limit the relative liberty provided by the 1946 changes in the Associations Law within new borders. The “1946 unions” survived only a few months and were closed together with the socialist political organizations with which they were associated on 16 December 1946.⁸³¹

By the time the RPP had already started drafting a new law to regulate the unionization movement. The Workers’ and Employers’ Trade Unions and Confederations Law (No. 5018) was ratified in the parliament in 20 February 1947. This law is an important piece of legislation since it provided the social philosophy and conceptual baggage of the ruling party and the general public opinion with respect to workers and labor issues. The governing party did not seem to be unreserved or unequivocal about this legislation, but the regulation it composed was well designed to serve their purposes. The law cited nationalism as a legal quality of Turkish trade unions. As reflected in parliamentary debates, it was considered to be the most important principle that determined the character of the Trade Unions Law.

According to the fifth article of the law, trade unions were “national institutions” and “could not act against nationalism and national interests.” Thus the deep-rooted Kemalist hatred of internationalism was reflected clearly in the law. The reason of the law clarified what was meant by nationalism and national interests as follows: “Parallel to the nationalist character of our regime, the draft stated that the trade unions were national institutions, they

⁸³¹ For a comprehensive discussion of the trade union model proposed by Socialist Labor and Peasant Party of Turkey in 1946, see Zafer Toprak, “1946 Sendikacılığı: Sendika Gazetesi, İşçi Sendikaları Birlikleri ve İşçi Kulüpleri,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, vol. 6, no. 31 (July 1996).

would perform their duties with a nationalist mentality, and they cannot bear international traits.”⁸³² Indeed the law did not ban the possibility of membership in international organizations altogether, but conditioned it to governmental permission. Based on this clear statement in the law, neither the RPP nor the DP governments would permit the membership of trade unions in international organizations and both always would get involved in the selection of worker delegates to the ILO conferences.⁸³³

However, the limits and content of the principle of nationalism were much narrower than might seem at first sight.⁸³⁴ The term “national interest” meant the opposite to the term “class interest” when mentioned with respect to workers. As argued by Yüksel Akkaya, nationalism took over the content of populism in the post war period and was manipulated frequently for ideologically subordinating workers. The notions of nationalism and national interests became buzzwords in debates concerning the right to strike.⁸³⁵ During the parliamentary debates on the issue in the late 1940s and 1950s, engaging in strike action frequently was condemned as proof of non-national behavior.⁸³⁶ As early as 1947 the minister of labor Sadi Irmak said in a public statement that “no genuine Turkish worker has ever demanded the right to strike to this date.”⁸³⁷

⁸³² Doğan, p. 96.

⁸³³ The first frictions between Türk-İş and the DP was concerning the Türk-İş’s application for membership in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The DP rejected the recurrent attempts of Türk-İş for becoming a member of this international organization. See Kemal Sülker, *İki Konfederasyon: Türk-İş ve DİSK* (İstanbul Koza Matbaası, 1976), p. 50-56.

⁸³⁴ Doğan, p. 97.

⁸³⁵ Yüksel Akkaya, “Korporatizmden Sendikal İdeolojiye, Milliyetçilik ve İşçi Sınıfı,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 833-834.

⁸³⁶ See Mesut Gülmez, *Meclislerde İşçi Sorunu ve Sendikal Haklar* (Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi, 1995).

⁸³⁷ “Türk Sendikaları”, *Ulus*, 22 February 1947.

In early 1950, the ministry of labor undersecretary Fuat Erciyaş reiterated this approach by saying that “those who demand the acknowledgement of the right to strike are not Turks.”⁸³⁸ The DP promised to grant that right to workers during its oppositional years before 1950. However, even then the Democrat leaders stipulated that if the right to strike were granted to workers, they should use it “within the limits of the concept of national interest.”⁸³⁹ As is well known, the DP would abandon its pro-strike policy once it came to power in 1950. In the course of the 1950s the DP would develop a strong enmity to demands of strike and frequently associated such demands with communist propaganda.⁸⁴⁰

The first minister of labor, Sadi Irmak, wrote in a later article published in *Hürbilet* that the Turkish social legislation was based on the close partnership of state, employers and workers to avoid the evils of class struggle and in the service of national interests.⁸⁴¹ Irmak repeated and clarified this theme in a speech delivered right after the promulgation of the trade unions law:

This law is introduced in order to protect Turkish workers, who have a nationalist consciousness and ideals of independence, from the harmful tendencies and to keep those associations away from any kind of political currents since their mission is to serve the profitability of industry. The final goal is to provide these associations with better equipment to increase cooperation between the state and these associations which are beneficial to the national and professional interests.⁸⁴²

⁸³⁸ Kemal Sülker, *Türkiye’de Grev Hakkı ve Grevler* (İstanbul: Tüstav Yayınları, 2004), p. 65. These words of Erciyaş were harshly responded to by the trade unions.

⁸³⁹ Akkaya, “Korporatizmden Sendikal İdeolojiye”, p. 834.

⁸⁴⁰ See the discussions between DP and RPP deputies over the issue provided in *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 11, vol. 7, 26 February 1959.

⁸⁴¹ Sadi Irmak, “İşçi Sendikaları,” no. 16, *Hürbilet*, (31 July 1948).

⁸⁴² Koç, *Türk-İş Tarihinden Portreler*, p. 42. See also Suat Seren, *Çalışma Bakanlığı: Kuruluşundan Bugüne Kadar* (Ankara: TC Ziraat Bankası Matbaası, 1947), p.

In another speech, Irmak maintained that the national type of trade unions which gave the spirit to the Trade Unions Law “are free unions which defend the interests of parties within the limits of common good together with the state.”⁸⁴³ The theme of partnership or cooperation among national institutions as against any possibility of class struggle which was repeated over and over by Irmak and other deputies revealed that for the majority of the concerned public, there was no contradiction between the emergence of trade unions and the solidarist social philosophy.⁸⁴⁴

According to the law, another important trait of the new trade unions would be non-partisanship. The law stated that while the members and directors of trade unions could get involved in politics individually, organizations could not perform political acts as a body. In case of violation of this rule, Article 5 wrote, the competent court could rule to suspend the activity of the convicted trade union from three months to a year or rule its permanent closure. Another article stipulated that the administrative control over the unions would be performed through the Ministry of Labor.⁸⁴⁵ Indeed this provision of the law was quite abstract and enabled the governments to restrict trade union activities at will. In practice both the Republicans in the late 1940s, and their heir in the 1950s took advantage of this abstract provision and punished the trade unions which seemed to be dissident while supporting the political involvement of pro-government unions during the elections. The fines gathered from punished workers when they damaged a machine or for any other reason were gathered in a fund at the Ministry of Labor and then they were distributed to the pro-government trade

⁸⁴³ Quoted in Akkaya, “Korporatizmden Sendikal İdeolojiye”, p. 834.

⁸⁴⁴ Cemil Koçak, “1940’ların İkinci Yarısında Sosyal Politika: Devlet, Sınıflar, Partiler ve Dayanışmacı/Vesayetçi İdeoloji,” in *Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyete* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1993).

⁸⁴⁵ Doğan, p. 118.

unions and Türk-İş.⁸⁴⁶ This procedure was vital for the survival of Türk-İş, but also instrumental in guaranteeing the loyalty of unionists to the party.

Especially in the 1950s, the DP used the clause which provided the government with the authority of administrative control over trade unions more than once to close unions and regional associations of unions which were not controlled by the party.⁸⁴⁷ In 1957 nine regional associations of unions and federations were closed by the government on the grounds that they were involved in political activities and that they had established links with the political opposition.⁸⁴⁸ In a similar vein, the government tried to prevent a series of conferences held by a group reformist scholars from the İstanbul University Institute of Economics and Sociology with the participation of trade unionists.⁸⁴⁹ These conferences were highly effective among the unionist milieu and the papers presented there were published annually as a book. On many occasions the Democrat minister of labor, Mümtaz Tarhan, threatened the unionists not to allow them to attend Social Policy Conferences since the hidden agenda of these conferences, he argued, was to inject politics to the trade unions. He even implied that socialist ideas were agitated in these conferences. However, what essentially worried the Minister of Labor was not the socialist propaganda of the scholars, which was not the real intention of conferences in any sense, but more importantly that the conferences provided an independent forum between union leaders and intellectuals which took place out of the reach of the government.⁸⁵⁰ When the issue was brought onto the agenda

⁸⁴⁶ Yirmibeşoğlu, p. 80.

⁸⁴⁷ See Sülker, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Tarihi*.

⁸⁴⁸ *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 11, session 1, 18 February 1957, p. 169; “Sendika Birliklerinin Kapatılışı ve Muhalefet”, *Cumhuriyet*, 10 May 1957.

⁸⁴⁹ “Türk -İş’in Hükümetle Olan Münasebetleri ve İsmail İnan,” *Gece Postası*, 7 April 1956.

⁸⁵⁰ “İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesine bağlı İktisat ve İktisadiyat Enstitüsünün işçiler için bazı vilayetlerimizde konferanslar tertip ettiğini, konferans yeri olarak işçi veya sendika lokallerinin tercih edildiğini

of the National Assembly, Mümtaz Tarhan repeated his opinion about the conferences and even asserted that Orhan Tuna promoted revolutionary methods of Karl Marx in these conferences.⁸⁵¹

It is a well known fact that another influence on trade unionism in Turkey came from US trade unionism. Indeed, American unionists' interest in Turkey that started in the early 1950s continued increasingly in the 1960s. In the 1950s, the DP rule did not allow Türk-İş to become a member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in 1952 and restricted the Turkish trade unions' international relations severely. Against all difficulties, the Turkish and US trade unionists corresponded even in the early 1950s.⁸⁵² By the middle of that decade, intensive relations were established between Türk-İş and AFL-CIO. The US trade unionists including George Meany, Jay Lovestone and Irvin Brown, who were AFL-CIO's major figures and played crucial role in terms of US foreign policy during the

*gazetelerde okudum. Üniversitelerin kendi salonlarında serbest konferanslar vermeleri yadırganacak bir keyfiyet telakki edilemese de bu seri konferansların işçi muhitlerinde kapalı olarak yapılması ve işçiden başka hiçbir dinleyici, hatta alakalı Vekalet mütehasıslarından hiç kimsenin davet edilmemiş olmaması ve hele ilim enstitüsü altında ilmi bir hüviyeti, hatta ilk mektep tahsili dahi olmayan bazı zevatın da konferansçı seçilmiş bulunması dikkatimizden uzak kalmamıştır. İşçi ve sendikacı eğitimi mevzuu Çalışma Vekaletinin vazifeleri cümlesinden olduğuna göre bir ilim enstitüsünün bu vekaletle ait bir vazifeyi üzerine alması gayretinin ne gibi maksatlara matuf olduğunu kestirmeye imkan yoktur... Ellerinde sosyal adaletin bayrağını taşıyanların şimdiye kadar günlük ve işçi gazetelerindeki başmakaleleri, gazetelerde yazdıkları, seminer ve kürsülerde söyledikleri birer birer dökülür saçılırsa bu insanların gizli maksatlarının, maskeli yaygaralarının kökünün nerede olduğunu, bu zakkum ağacının nereden sulandığını anlamayacak tek Türk kalmayacaktır.” “Sendikalara Siyaset Sokulmak İsteniyor”, *Gece Postası*, 20 March 1957.*

⁸⁵¹ For the parliamentary discussions between Mümtaz Tarhan and RPP deputy Turhan Güneş, see *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 10, session 64, vol. 19, 6 May 1957, pp. 17-26.

⁸⁵² See Aziz Çelik, “Vesayet Mektupları: 1950 ve 60'lı Yıllarda Türk ve ABD Sendikacıları Arasındaki Yazışmalar,” *Çalışma ve Toplum*, no. 25 (2010/2). The correspondences provide significant clues concerning the influence of American trade unionism on union leaders in Turkey. These letters show that the relations between Turkish and US trade unionists were not established on equal terms and Turkish trade unionists were subordinated to their US counterparts.

cold war, made frequent visits to the country to talk to Turkish union leaders as well as to government authorities and to attend trade union conferences.⁸⁵³

The widely circulated claims that Türk-İş had been founded under the suggestions and auspices of American authorities do not seem to be based on any good reason.⁸⁵⁴ The sharp increase in the number of trade unions and federations after 1947 reveals that a tendency towards a wider institutional association already had started before 1952. According to Sülker the need to form a central structure had increased in the early years of the decade due to the rise in the unionist organization. It was Sülker himself who had given the confederation its name.⁸⁵⁵ Sülker also claimed that the financial aid offered by Irwing Brown during the preparations of the establishment of the confederation was refused right away and Türk-İş was founded by its own means. Koç also writes that Türk-İş was the natural result of the unification process of the trade unions that were born and grew between 1947 and 1952. It was regarded as a necessary step to enhance the organizational power of workers by the union activists.⁸⁵⁶

However, once Türk-İş was founded on 6 April 1952, the relations between the American and Turkish unionists became more intensive. Many Türk-İş leaders and unionists were invited to the United States for training purposes. Moreover, USAİD made generous financial contributions to Türk-İş, which were critical of the confederation because of the financial frailty of the unions during the 1950s.

⁸⁵³ Ibid. See also Kenan Öztürk, *Amerikan Sendikacılığı ve Türkiye İle İlk İlişkiler: AFL-CIO'nun Avrupa Temsilcisi Irwing Brown ile Söyleşi* (İstanbul: Tüstav Yayınları, 2004).

⁸⁵⁴ For such an argument, see İlhan Akalın, *İşçi, Sendika, Tarih* (Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi, 1995), especially Chapter 7.

⁸⁵⁵ Sülker, *İki Konfederasyon*, p. 50.

⁸⁵⁶ Koç, *Türk-İş Tarihinden Portreler*, p. 54. See also Şaban Yıldız, "Türk-İş'in Kuruluşu ve Bazı Gerçekler," in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi 6. cilt* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985).

The United States Foreign Operations Administration (FOA) sponsored special seminar courses for union leaders in various parts of the country in cooperation with the government. These courses started in İstanbul on 14 June 1954. According to the report of Cam-İş, about 90 unionists attended in the courses, which continued two months.⁸⁵⁷ Sina Pamukçu, who was then a young lawyer eager to find a job in the trade unions, remembers that all the prominent trade unionists of the time, such as Kemal Türkler, Rıza Kuas, Seyfi Demirsoy, Bahir Ersoy, Şaban Yıldız, İbrahim Güzelce were present at the Worker Training Courses.⁸⁵⁸ A 1954 survey which provides a profile of the union leaders in Turkey reveals that these courses were very important for the political and cultural formation of many unionists. The survey covered 251 trade union leaders, 139 of whom were under the age of 35. 150 trade unionist had completed primary education, but only 15 of them had graduated from secondary or high school. The survey revealed that the unionists had high expectations from the FOA-sponsored seminar courses which was the only channel that provided information about the theory and practice of trade unionism.⁸⁵⁹

Commissioned officers from the US labor ministry participated in the courses as instructors on the history and present situation of American unions, American type of unionism, and trade unions' relations with the political parties and society. The courses continued throughout 1954 and 1956 in 15 cities. Hundreds of young trade unionists received training on unionism in these courses.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁷ "Sendikacı Yetiştirme Kursu Açıldı," *Cam-İş*, 1 July 1954.

⁸⁵⁸ Aziz Çelik, *Sina Pamukçu ile Sendikalı Yıllar*, p. 35.

⁸⁵⁹ Engin Ünsal, *İşçiler Uyanyor* (İstanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1963), pp. 108-109. For similar observations about trade union leaders see, Kemal Sülker, "21 Sendikacı ile Yapılan Röportaj Serisinin Sansörü: Dost Acı Söyler," *Gece Postası*, 11 October 1951.

⁸⁶⁰ "İşçi Seminerleri," *İşçi Sesi*, 2 October 1954; "Hedefsiz Gayretler," *İşçi Sesi*, 2 October 1954; "Eskişehir İşçi Yetiştirme Semineri Faaliyete Geçti", *İşçi Sesi*, 22 October 1955.

The nonpolitical – so-called American type – unionism of Türk-İş may be traced to the influence of these organizations and their close association with Türk-İş. This type of unionism was based on the harmony of class interests, which opposed class-based politics and fitted neatly with the nationalistic ideology.⁸⁶¹

Institutionalization of Trade Unions and Working Class Politics

The legislative restrictions on the activities of trade unions had a determining effect on the development of trade unionism in Turkey. These legislations and institutions were certainly a straightjacket imposed on workers and unions. However, it would be wrong to assume that the working class discourse and politics was determined unilaterally by these institutional influences.

Labor's connection to state-related values appears particularly powerful and influential when other intellectual sources to which to movement might have turned is practically absent. As discussed above, the unofficial unionization movement in 1946 was initiated by two socialist organizations. The ruling party did not want to legalize unions, yet they became obliged to regulate them when those organizations quickly widened their scope of influence. Before the establishment of “national type” unions, most of the existing unions were damaged or closed permanently and leading organizers were arrested in consequence of the police investigations launched against the Socialist Party of Turkey and Socialist Laborer and Peasant Party of Turkey by the İstanbul Martial Law authorities in December 1946. Consequently the area of worker organizations were cleared from the pro-leftist tendencies and become vulnerable for the ruling party.

⁸⁶¹ Kemal Sülker, *İki Konfederasyon: Türk-İş ve DİSK* (İstanbul: Koza Matbaası, 1976), pp. 51-56.

In 1950 Esat Adil Müstacablıođlu reestablished the Socialist Party of Turkey with a small coterie of organizers who had been active in some of the 1946 unions. However, the Socialist Party would not appeal to new union leaders and members until it was finally closed and its leaders were imprisoned after the failed attempt of textile workers to hold a public demonstration in Taxim square in 1952.⁸⁶² By 1950 a second socialist party was established in great hope of recruiting working people to its ranks and taking hold of the fast-growing trade union movement. The Democrat Labor Party (DLP) was founded by lawyer Orhan Aرسال and a group of renowned unionists including Üzeyir Kuran, Ferruh Apaydın, Nizamettin Yalçınkaya and İbrahim Güzelce. In the beginning, the party had some supporters among print operators and metal workers. However, the party lacked a realistic and long-term strategy to expand its support base. On every occasion, the party and its leader, Orhan Aرسال, criticized the unionists for collaborating with employers and selling out the cause of labor.⁸⁶³ As early as 1952, the DLP, frustrated by the insouciance of the unionists and workers towards the party, decided to withdraw its members from the administrative courts of the trade unions.⁸⁶⁴ With this move, the party lost all its links with the labor movement and finally was dissolved in 1955. A third attempt to form a left party in the 1950s came with the Homeland Party (*Vatan Partisi*) which was established in the last days of 1954 under the leadership of

⁸⁶² “Sosyalist Partisi Sanıkları Tevkif Edildi,” *Akşam*, 19 June 1952. “Dün Gece 3 Saat Sorgudan Sonra,” *Gece Postası*, 19 June 1952. During a parliamentary discussion in early May 1952, the Democrat Deputy of Prime Minister Samet Ađaođlu accused the Socialist Party for having provoked the strikes of municipal workers in İzmir and coach drivers in Ankara. It is highly dubious whether these incidents were instigated by the socialists, but this speech signalled the closure of the party. *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 9, session 2, vol. 15, 7 May 1952, pp. 97-100.

⁸⁶³ See *Demokrat İşçi Partisi Birinci Sarı Çizgili Kitap* (İstanbul: Ođur Matbaası, 1953), p. 5. See also “Demokrat İşçi Partisi Mitingi,” *Akşam*, 26 May 1952.

⁸⁶⁴ Orhan Aرسال’s arrogant and conceited attitude towards unionists might have played a significant role in this process. Avni Erakalın reminds that when he and a group of unionists who were interested with the party visited Aرسال in his office, they were shocked by his contemptuous style against the unionists. This was the last contact they made with Aرسال. For similar observations about Orhan Aرسال, see Nihat Sargın, *TİP’li Yıllar 1 (Anılar-Belgeler)* (İstanbul: Felis Yayınları, 2001), p.58; See also Ünsal, *İşçiler Uyanıyor*, p. 127, 129.

Hikmet Kıvılcımlı. A group of textile workers was also among the founders. The Homeland Party participated to the 1957 elections only in İstanbul and İzmir. Its candidates were predominantly workers and professionals. This party was abolished by the government and twenty-five of its members were arrested in January 1958 for having promoted communism.⁸⁶⁵

The remarkable weakness of an independent political alternative targeting the working class had a decisive effect on the particular formation of working class politics and ideology. The political and social environment of the period was extremely unfavorable to any leftist or socialist activity. In the immediate aftermath of the war the government had begun to seek closer ties with the United States and had succeeded in obtaining military and economic assistance under the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan respectively. Turkey was one of the few countries that immediately offered and sent troops to Korea, an incident which dramatically increased the anticommunist sentiments throughout the country. Joining the NATO alliance in 1952 guaranteed it a safe place in the capitalist world against the political and ideological expansion of communism. The cold war became the guiding principle of political life and anti-communism came to define the political vocabulary after 1945. Beyond any doubt the strong anti-communist atmosphere of the period affected workers and their organizations. The fear of being labeled communist was the greatest political concern of unions. Many unions felt the need to put in their charters a special clause to prove that they were not “red unions” which “instigate class struggle to the detriment of national interests or promote the politics and ideology of a foreign country.”⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶⁵ Emin Karaca, “Demokrat Parti Döneminde Komünist Hareketin Kuğu Çılgılığı: Vatan Partisi,” in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Tarihi Ansiklopedisi Cilt 6* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), pp. 1962-1963.

⁸⁶⁶ See *İstanbul Liman ve Dokları Gemi Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası Ana Nizamnamesi 1947* (İstanbul: Rıza Koşkun Matbaası, 1956).

A former leader of Demiryol-İş, Adnan Binyazar, reminds that unionists were frequently threatened by allegations of communism. “There was severe fanaticism then. You could not even wear a red tie because a person wearing a red tie meant this person could disseminate communism. We could not dare to pronounce the word social between 1955 and 1965.”⁸⁶⁷ As early as 1948 Sabahattin Selek noted that the archaic habit of associating trade unions with communism was the greatest obstacle before the development of trade unions in the country. However, he does not omit to note the actuality of the unions’ mission to fight against communism:

Unfortunately there are many who mingled trade unionism with communism. Today many workers who do not get enrolled in trade unions choose to do so because they are afraid of being stigmatized or because they believe that unions are the seedbeds of communism. However, Turkish trade unions are fortresses against communism. The enemies of communism should support them instead of avoiding them. That being said, it would not be right to belittle the threat of communism. Communism is like the tetanus bacteria. It should not be neglected how so ever little the lesion may be. We should be cautious, but not in the degree of a hypochondriac.⁸⁶⁸

Thus the trade unions and union activists had to put a great effort into displaying their anti-communist fervor. The labor and trade union newspapers, published either by the trade unions themselves or by some profit-seeking private entrepreneurs, emphasized repeatedly both nationalism and anti-communism as the essential features of the association they proposed. These were appeals to a value system that was shared with the rest of the society, not radically opposed to it. It should be noted, however, that the anti-communist fervor was

⁸⁶⁷ Quoted in Yirmibeşoğlu, p. 82.

⁸⁶⁸ Sabahattin Selek, “İşçi Düşmanları,” *Hürbilet*, no. 2 (24 April 1948). “*Maalesef komünizm ile sendikayı birbirine karıştıranlar çoktur. Bugün sendikaya iltihak etmeyen işçilerden birçoğu lekelenmekten korktukları ve sendikanın birer komünist yuvası olduklarına inandıkları için uzakta duruyorlar. Halbuki Türk işçi sendikaları komünizme karşı bir kaledir. Komünizm düşmanı olanlar bu teşekküllerden kaçacak yere, onlara yardım etmelidirler... Bununla beraber komünizm tehlikesini küçümsemek doğru değildir. Komünizm tetanos mikrobuna benzer. Yaranın küçüklüğüne bakıp ihmale gelmez. Tedbirli bulunmalı, fakat tedbiri evham derecesine vardırmamalıyız.*”

most visible in the newspapers and journals published by private publishers rather than the labor unions. Such newspapers and journals were full of news about the suffering of workers under communism and the never-ending conspiracy plans of the communists to prepossess the workers. An editorial article appeared in *İşçi Dünyası* reveals clearly these opinions:

The Turkish worker acknowledges that the communism is the most implacable enemy to us. Every drop of the sacred blood that flows in his veins is for the sake of this saintly land which has been irrigated with the blood of our fathers. Like all Turks, he hates every ideology that has its root from outside. Turkish worker! There is a saying, “fish is caught in trouble waters”. Take care of ones who will try to benefit from the situation you are in. The welfare of nations lies in the unity of the masses. The spirit of national unity and solidarity is present in the noble blood flowing in your vessels.⁸⁶⁹

The nationalist sentiments served as a powerful tool in the hands of governments not only to suppress opponent trade unions and left-wing political parties, but also for other political reasons. Evidence reveals that during the 6-7 September 1955 events, trade unions, especially the ones which were supported and controlled by the government were mobilized. By 1955 there were established links between pro-DP union leaders and the leadership of the ultra-nationalist Cyprus Belongs to Turks Society (*Kıbrıs Türktür Cemiyeti*), which would take the leading role in the riots. In many provinces and towns, the society was established through the agency of unions and DP local organizations together. The then-chairman of Türk-İş, İsmail İnan, also assumed the presidency of this society.⁸⁷⁰ The events were triggered by the government to demonstrate to the London Conference how strongly the Turkish people opposed the unification of Cyprus with Greece. However, the course of events

⁸⁶⁹ “Türk İşçisinin Hüviyeti,” *İşçi Dünyası*, 20 February 1953. *İşçi Dünyası* was published in Ankara by a private publisher. According to the Encyclopaedia of Trade Unionism in Turkey, the newspaper adopted a policy in line with the newly founded Türk-İş. *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi II* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1996), p. 102.

⁸⁷⁰ Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları Bağlamında 6-7 Eylül Olayları* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2005), pp. 63-64.

quickly turned into a riot. Worker unions were manipulated as much as youth organizations during these events. 607 out of the 977 people who were arrested after the attacks and lootings were workers. After the events, the initial reflex of the government was to put the blame on secret communist organizations, but most unionists knew that the riots had been organized by pro-government unions that were organized in public sector workplaces, and many workers had participated in the events. In the months following 6-7 September, a total of 66 trade unions were closed in İstanbul.⁸⁷¹

It should be underlined, however, that the anti-communist movements among workers and their organizations equally derived from a sense of self-defense. The unions often subscribed to anti-communist rhetoric and action for the sake of avoiding legal sanctions or, more importantly, proving their legitimacy. As observed by contemporaries, on every occasion during the period employers and politicians accused the unions of having destroyed the old social arrangement based on class harmony and that functioned smoothly under its own direction.⁸⁷² For unions every opportunity to make public demonstrations or such large meetings to advance their rights was robbed by the authorities under the pretext of avoiding class hatred or class struggle. The recurrent attempts of the workers to organize outdoor meetings always were halted by the governments during the late 1940s and 1950s.

Consider, for example, the attempts of the İstanbul Textile and Weaving Industry Workers' Trade Union to organize public demonstrations in Taksim Square twice in 1951 and 1952. The first of these attempts came in January 1951 when massive dismissals occurred in the textile sector. The textile trade union appealed to the governor's office to hold a public demonstration against the dismissals and to air their demands for banning the importation of

⁸⁷¹ Aziz Çelik, "6-7 Eylül'den Bugüne GONGO'lar," *Radikal İki*, 12 September 2010.

⁸⁷² Kemal Sülker,

raw thread. However the governor rejected the union on the pretext of the related clauses of the law on meetings and rallies. The failure of the attempt gave rise to serious discussions within the İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance concerning the role of labor unions and the meaning of class struggle.⁸⁷³

One year later, the textile trade union attempted to organize a second demonstration with more or less the same demands. This time a number of independent and left-wing unions also supported this initiative. The Employers' Trade Union responded promptly by making a statement that labor unions were unjustified in their demands and that they were acting in order to exert an illegal pressure on the government.⁸⁷⁴ The governor, Fahrettin Kerim Gökay repeated his attitude against such public demonstrations and recommended the unions to seek solution to their problems in the arbitration committees. By the time the governor had declared his decision, all preparations had been made by the union. Announcements were posted on the walls all around the city and arrangements were made about the organization of the arena and workers' transportation to the meeting.⁸⁷⁵

The unrealized meeting of 1952 triggered broad debates in the concerned public about democracy, workers' rights and class struggle. The textile trade union issued a declaration which severely criticized the governor and the government. Around thirty-five workers submitted their resignations from the Print Operators' Trade Union to protest the governor. Furthermore, four members of the administrative board of the İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance, Üzeyir Kuran from Maden-İş, and İbrahim Bilge, Şeref Hivel and İbrahim Güzelce from the

⁸⁷³ Sülker, *Türkiye'de Sendikacılık Tarihi*, p. 163; "İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliğinde Tartışmalar," *Gece Postası*, 7 February 1952.

⁸⁷⁴ "İşçilerin Mitingi," *Akşam*, 17 April 1952.

⁸⁷⁵ "İşçilere Miting için Müsaade Edilmedi," *Akşam*, 19 April 1952; "İzin Verilmeyen Miting," *Gece Postası*, 24 April 1952.

Print Operators' Trade Union resigned from their posts on account of the fact that the Alliance could not stay firm against the pressures of the government.⁸⁷⁶

Workers' initiative and the response of the governor also were brought onto the agenda of the National Assembly. In May 1952, the Kırşehir deputy of RPP Halil Sezai Erkut delivered a motion in the Assembly asking the government that if it had been involved in the governor's illegal act of cancelling the meeting of Textile Union. The question was answered by Deputy Prime Minister Samet Ağaoğlu. Ağaoğlu' answer reflects a vulgar anti-communist rhetoric of the time. According to him, when the demands of textile workers were regarded together with recent strike actions of İzmir municipality workers on 6 May and Ankara taxi drivers on 21 March,⁸⁷⁷ it became apparent that all these actions had been controlled and directed from one political center. He also warned the audience that trade unions were trying to incite class struggle by engaging in such illegal acts:

Colleagues, I will read aloud the following from the declaration which was posted on walls before the meeting (Worker compatriot, we cannot close our eyes any more to the employer who exploit the labor power of his worker and dismiss him without a just cause; to those who want to make the super profits that they get used to make by taking advantage of our labor.) Here colleagues, after reading these words, we are asking: Where are we going? Are we going towards class struggle? Are we going to rally in the arenas and engage in class struggle between capital and labor?⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁶ See "Vilayetin Mitingleri Menetme Salahiyeti Olmadığı Anlaşıldı," *Akşam*, 16 May 1952. Related newspaper reports are available in Demokrat İşçi Partisi *Birinci Sarı Çizgili Kitap*, pp. 21-29.

⁸⁷⁷ For these incidents, see "İşçiler İzmir'de Grev Yaptılar," *İstanbul Ekspres*, 7 May 1952; "Grevci Şöförler," *Akşam*, 8 April 1952; See also "İleri Jön Türkler Birliği Avrupa Komitesi'nin Ankara Şöförlerinin grevini engellediği iddiasıyla Başbakan Adnan Menderes'i suçlayan mektubu", BCA Catalog no. [30.01/18.103..3].

⁸⁷⁸ *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, term 9, session 2, vol. 15, 7 May 1952, pp. 97-100. "Arkadaşlar miting dolayısıyla duvarlara yapıştırılmış ve indirilmiş olan beyannameden satırlar okuyacağım. (İşçi vatandaş, emeğini istismar ederek sebepsiz yere işine nihayet veren işverenle kanunun bize bahşettiği hakları vermemekte ısrar eden, türlü kaçamak yollarla alıştığı fahiş kazancı yine sırtımızdan çıkarmak isteyenlere daha fazla göz yumamayız.) İşte arkadaşlar, bu satırları okuduktan sonar haklı olarak soruyoruz: Nereye gidiyoruz? Sınıf mücadelesine mi gideceğiz? Meydanlarda toplanarak sermaye ve say mücadelesi mi yapacağız?"

Ağaoğlu completed his speech by establishing an analogy between workers' initiative and the 31 March incident (31 Mart Vakası) of 1909 and by asserting that if they had not taken strict measures in time, major provocations might have occurred during and after the demonstration.⁸⁷⁹

The words of Ağaoğlu, which implied an organic link with the Socialist Party of Turkey (allegedly the extension of the illegal Communist Party) and trade unionists must have placed too much stress on the latter, considering that his assertions had broad repercussion in the press. As far as the available material indicates, the first anti-communist meeting of workers in the 1950s took place just in this conjuncture. The İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance held an indoor meeting in Eminönü Halkevi "to curse communism and to declare the loyalty of workers to Turkish nationalism" on 13 May 1952.⁸⁸⁰

The first legal public demonstration of trade unions took place in a similar political context. When in early 1953 allegations were raised by a group of employers that some unionists and workers were acting in a "communistic manner," that is to say, trying to raise class conflict in the workplaces, Türk-İş decided to respond to such allegations by holding a large meeting.⁸⁸¹ Upon that, the Sakarya Trade Unions Federation adopted a resolution to hold a public demonstration in Eskişehir. The stated purposes of this demonstration were as follows: first to proclaim once again that trade unions of Turkey are national institutions; second to declare that workers were loyal to Atatürk's reforms and principles and to protest

⁸⁷⁹ "Gözü pek, kolu kuvvetli 100 işçi seçilecek, Taksim meydanında toplanmaya mani olan polisler göğüslenecek ve açılacak gediklerden işçilerin geçmesi sağlanacak. Şayet tevkif edilenler olursa 100'er kişilik gruplar karakollar önünde toplanarak arkadaşlarının haksız yere tevkif edildiğini ve dövüldüklerini ileri sürerek gürültü çıkaracak... Memleketimizde muhtelif vasıtalarla bir 31 Mart havasını yaratmak teşebbüsleri seziliyor. Fakat hangi yoldan gelirse gelsin bu tahriklere karşı hükümet, Cumhuriyeti, vatandaşları ve demokratik rejimi muhakkak surette koruma kararındadır."

⁸⁸⁰ "Türk İşçisi Komünizmi Daima Boğacaktır," *İstanbul Ekspres*, 18 May 1952

⁸⁸¹ "Eskişehir Mitingi," *Gece Postası*, 22 February 1953.

those who claimed the opposite; third to demand the abolition of restrictions and pressure over the trade unions and protest the dismissal of union members without a just cause; and fourth to declare the public opinion that the unions are custodians of the republic and the backbone of democracy.⁸⁸² The meeting took place in a movie theater because of the rainy weather. However, the organizers seemed to be satisfied with the positive atmosphere of the meeting. According to the press, “vehement speakers expressed the nationalist and anti-communist sentiments of the workers in the presence of an enthusiastic crowd.”⁸⁸³

Another public demonstration organized by workers took place in September 1953 when eleven workers who were members of the İstanbul General Construction Workers’ Trade Union were arrested by the police in an alleged plot to disseminate communist ideas among workers. The sporadic arrests and revelations of alleged communist abuses and conspiracies were common tactics of the governments to heighten the anti-communist sentiment within the country and stimulate the US to sustain foreign aid to Turkey. The arrests of eleven workers were probably such a movement of the government. However, it was enough to terrorize some of the unions, which once again felt obliged to express publicly their commitment to nationalism and other principles of the regime.⁸⁸⁴ The Ankara Trade Unions Alliance’s meeting in Ankara witnessed one more time the expression of same banal nationalist rhetoric from the mouths of Türk-İş leaders and other established union leaders about the evils of communism, the nationalist character of workers, etc.⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁸² “Türk İşçisi Komünizmi Tel’in Ediyor,” *İşçi Dünyası*, 20 February 1953. “Büyük Bir İşçi Mitingi Yapılacak,” *İstanbul Ekspres*, 7 February 1953;

⁸⁸³ “Eskişehir Mitingi,” *İşçi Dünyası*, 27 February 1953.

⁸⁸⁴ See M. İsmet Ünal, “On Bir Meczup,” *Gayret*, 26 September 1953.

⁸⁸⁵ “Komünizmi Tel’in Mitingi,” *İşçi Dünyası*, 25 September 1953; “Komünizmi Tel’in,” *Gayret*, 26 September 1953.

One may wonder, however, whether the meetings organized by union federations and alliances reflected the real concerns of the workers. As argued above, at least a certain number of workers heartily shared an aversion to communism and any kind of leftist politics. But the available sources reveal that none of these meetings managed to gather more than a couple of thousand workers. The audiences of these meetings were most probably brought by public sector factory unions which often had intimate relationships with the state and government.

To make a comparison, it is worth considering that while Türk-İş and some Türk-İş supported regional union alliances were organizing anti-communist events in early 1953, the İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance attempted to organize one more time a public demonstration in Taksim square on 15 March 1953. The purported reason of this action was the continuous pressure of the employer of the Zeytinburnu Cement Factory on union members. But it seems that the actual motive of the Alliance was to respond to wider calls of affiliated unions to take action.⁸⁸⁶ The administrative board's resolution concerning the meeting was adopted as early as on 10 February to reserve adequate time for preparations.⁸⁸⁷ The organization committee expected at least 50,000 workers to attend the meeting.⁸⁸⁸ The negotiations between the governor and the alliance continued to the last minute when finally, on 14 February, the governor cancelled the meeting. Yet in the early morning of 15 February 1953 tens of thousands of workers set off into the streets to arrive at Taksim square. The boats which crossed the Bosphorus were full to overflowing with workers. Even though thousands of them were diverted by the police and gendarme, at least 10,000 workers arrived early at Taksim.

⁸⁸⁶ Avni Erakalın, interview by author, tape recording, Aksaray, İstanbul, 20 May 2010.

⁸⁸⁷ "15 Mart Mitingi Hazırlığı," *Gece Postası*, 7 March 1953.

⁸⁸⁸ "İstanbul İşçilerinin Muazzam Mitingi," *İşçi Dünyası*, 20 February 1953; "Miting İçin 50 Bin Davetiye Dağıtıldı," *Gece Postası*, 13 March 1953.

After some negotiation, 21 workers were allowed to leave a wreath on the monument in the Taksim Square.⁸⁸⁹

It is difficult, if not impossible, to know what large groups of workers really felt and thought. It is still difficult to what extent nationalist, populist and other political discourses affected the self-perception of the workers. More is known, however, about the relation between labor organizations and political parties. As stated above, Law No. 5018 sanctioned any kind of political activity for trade unions. This had a serious impact on the future policies of unions in terms of their political activities.

Although they often pressed policy demands on the state in addition to the demands they made to employers, trade unions, on the whole, were disconnected from political activity. Their domain came to be restricted largely to the workplace and to political demands that directly affected work or their right to organize. In reciprocal fashion, public officials tolerated these demands only when they were limited to workplace concerns, and the unions increasingly diminished the scope of their activity to bread-and-butter unionism. The political system, in turn, was a trans-class institution, which mobilized supporters where they lived on the basis of territorial identities. Led by the solidarist ideology, the political parties for the most part downplayed class and class conflict in the interests of political patronage and distribution.⁸⁹⁰ This ideological inclination was reflected in Türk-İş's "above-political parties" position, which was adopted on the grounds that the Turkish working class was not mature enough to form its own political party and even if it was it would be to the workers'

⁸⁸⁹ Müsaade Edilmeyen İşçi Mitingi," *Gece Postası*, 16 March 1953; İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliği, *1952-1953 Devresi 9 Aylık Faaliyet Raporu* (İstanbul: 1953), p. 30. This report claimed that at least 50 thousand workers were present at Taksim in the early morning of 15 March 1953.

⁸⁹⁰ See İlkay Sunar, "Populism and Patronage: Democrat Party and its Legacy in Turkey," in *State, Society and Democracy in Turkey* (İstanbul: Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004)

disadvantage to force class struggle between workers and employers.⁸⁹¹ Even where union leaders sought to organize third parties to fight for social change, such unionists frequently became excluded from the union circles.

However, in the 1950s workers wanted to be in the political sphere in addition to their activities in trade unions because they wanted to see more workers in the parliament. This is the reason why they created the “Support Committee of Turkish Worker Parliamentarians” in 1954. The aim of the Committee was to encourage and support the worker candidates for the 1954 elections. The Committee was founded by eleven prominent unionists to support all the workers who were willing to become deputies regardless of their political party affiliations. However, the Committee was liquidated by a court verdict soon after its foundation.⁸⁹² After that date the DP actively tried to control the leadership of the labor unions. Unions whose leadership supported the RPP were either threatened with temporary shutdowns for engaging in political activity or were harassed by fines that kept them in constant financial trouble. Union leaders who supported the DP, however, were protected and often rewarded by being elected as representatives in the parliament in the DP ranks.

Executives of trade unions tried to get involved individually in the slates of both the DP and RPP after 1954.⁸⁹³ They had a greater tendency towards the DP since this party promised to be more generous to include workers in its slate. In the 1950 elections both parties nominated only three workers as candidates.⁸⁹⁴ In 1954 elections more workers were

⁸⁹¹ Şaban Yıldız and Şükran Kurdakul, *Sosyalist Açından Türk-İş Yargılanıyor* (İstanbul: Ataç Kitabevi, 1966), pp. 34-35.

⁸⁹² Sülker, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Tarihi*, pp. 306-307.

⁸⁹³ Kemal Sülker, “Parti Listelerinde Yer Alan Milletvekili Adayı İşçiler ve Bazı Fikirler,” *Gece Postası*, 9 April 1954.

⁸⁹⁴ The RPP list included 41 merchants, 39 farmers, 27 soldiers, 6 industrialists, and 3 workers. The rest of the candidates were middle class professionals. The DP list included 55 merchants, 56 farmers, 23 soldiers and 4 industrialist and 3 workers. Fatma Alev Atayakul, “Türkiye’de Demokrat Parti Döneminde Genel Seçimler

included in the candidate lists, but only four candidates among the ranks of unionists were elected as DP deputies. Two of them, Naci Kurt and Ahmet Topçu, were elected in İstanbul, while Abidin Tekön was elected in İzmir and Necati Dikmen was elected from Zonguldak.⁸⁹⁵

In 1957 elections the major parties displayed an extraordinary effort to attract the vote of workers in large cities.⁸⁹⁶ The opposition and the government parties clashed on the question of workers' living standards and their freedom to organize and the right to strike. The Republicans, departing from their former conservatism, claimed that the Democrats were mindful of workers' welfare only to the extent it suited their partisan purposes, but failed to acknowledge their political maturity by giving them freedom of organization, and the right to strike. The democratic speakers claimed that the workers' living standards were approaching those in the West and since their educational level was still low they could not properly use the right to strike; such a right would eventually be granted.⁸⁹⁷

In this election RPP included 9 workers in its electoral list. The former İstanbul Provincial Labor director, Bedii Süngültay, and the former director of Labor Exchange, Faruk Kardam, were also candidates of the Republicans. The Democrats had fewer worker candidates in comparison to the 1954 elections. However, the DP list included two renowned unionists. Both the chairman of Türk-İş, Nuri Beşer, and the chairman of İstanbul Trade

(1950-54-57)" (Master Thesis, İÜ Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Uluslararası İlişkiler Ana Bilim Dalı, 2007), pp. 179-181.

⁸⁹⁵ "Parti Listelerinde Yer Alan İşçi Adaylar ve Aldıkları Oylar," *Gece Postası*, 6 May 1954.

⁸⁹⁶ According to contemporaries working class votes amounted to 400 thousand in İstanbul and stimulated the appetite of the major parties. Kemal Sülker, "İş ve İşçi Dostu Seçmenlerin Önemi," *Gece Postası*, 25 September 1957.

⁸⁹⁷ Kemal Karpat, "The Turkish Elections of 1957," *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 2, (June,1961), p. 447.

Unions Alliance, Mahmut Yüksel, became candidates of the Democrats.⁸⁹⁸ The candidates of working-class origin were active during the campaigns of their parties and often took the floor in the meetings of their parties.⁸⁹⁹

The Freedom Party (*Hürriyet Partisi*) entered the election campaign with an exaggerated belief in its own strength and importance. It claimed that it provided a new slate of candidates who had never been associated with the one-party regime, proposed a new eclectic economic policy, and described itself as the only party capable of solving Turkey's problems. The presence of the Freedom Party in 1957 elections was important for it provided a platform for workers to air their demands and working class issues. The party was established by middle-class reformers who were sympathetic to workers' demands. The Freedom Party electoral list included 15 workers. Among them there were left-wing union leaders like Avni Erakalın and Rıza Güven from the Textile Workers' Trade Union.⁹⁰⁰ The election results, however, were disappointing for the Freedom Party which would soon dissolve itself and merge with the RPP in 1958.⁹⁰¹

The experience of electoral politics clearly indicated that to advance workers' rights by sending worker representatives to the parliament proved to be a delusion. Despite their flirtation with alternative responses to great difficulties that workers confronted, a majority of trade unionists followed a more accommodating strategy and their unions came to overshadow the organizations that pursued less conciliatory policies. Mainly the unions affiliated with Türk-İş chose this course of action because their leaders concluded that "the

⁸⁹⁸ "İşçi Adaylar Arası Mücadele Başlıyor", *Gece Postası*, 4 October 1957; "Mebus Adayı İşçiler", *Gece Postası*, 5 October 1957.

⁸⁹⁹ "İşçi Hatiplerin Pazar Günkü Konuşmaları", *Gece Postası*, 15 October 1957.

⁹⁰⁰ Kemal Sülker, "Hürriyet Partisine Katılan Sendikacılar", *Gece Postası*, 9 October 1957; "Hürriyet Partisinin Sendikacı Adayları ve Tekstil", *Gece Postası*, 12 October 1957.

⁹⁰¹ The Freedom Party only won 4 seats in the Parliament with receiving 3,86 % of the votes (356.419).

above politics” unionism adopted by the confederation was the only viable form of working class organization in Turkey. By 1957, after changing hands several times between the DP and the RPP, the Democrats exerted their power decisively on the Türk-İş leadership. The various efforts by union leaders to secure changes in government policy through electoral activity ultimately were defeated. The former unionists who had been elected in the parliament were co-opted to the party system and became alienated from the rank-and-file members of their unions. The strategy of working through a third party (the Freedom Party), which also had been supported by left-wing unionists, was also defeated.

Conclusion

Until the end of the 1950s it was possible for the trade unionists to work together because to a considerable degree they shared a common vocabulary and set of objections to the dominant institution of values of the mid-twentieth century Turkish economic order. There were differences among them, but the similarities were sufficient to speak of a single, albeit amorphous, labor movement. The mutual vocabulary shaped by the concepts of rights, equality, social justice⁹⁰² and based on a heightened sense of worker identity and sense of conflicting interests with employers⁹⁰³ provided the workers and unionists with the channels necessary to articulate their common demands. However, by the end of the decade the conflict between bread-and-butter unionists mostly associated with Türk-İş and co-opted by the party system, on the one hand, and the more radical unionists who grasped a strong hold in İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance on the other, became more visible.

⁹⁰² A discussion on the basic concepts and characteristic features of this discourse is provided in Akın, “The Dynamics of Working Class Politics in Early Republican Turkey”.

⁹⁰³ The existence of strong sense of conflicting interests and even enmity towards employers in the trade union circles in particular and among working class in general was well observed by the socialist intellectuals in Democrat Labor Party as early as 1952. See Demokrat İşçi Partisi, *Birinci Sarı Çizgili Kitap*.

In the harsh and authoritarian environment of the late 1950s, the separation of the two understandings of unionism was not aired openly. This conflict and further radicalization of left-wing unionists came in the more libertarian atmosphere of the early 1960s. The workers were one of the major groups using the advantages of the democratic constitution and its proposed reforms related to their rights to strike. The prominent Saraçhane demonstration of at least 100,000 workers at the end of 1961 symbolized the formation of a working class with distinct dispositions, identity and interests. The Sarçhane meeting, which was organized by the İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance, was probably the greatest mass demonstration in Turkish working class history until that time and arguably could be compared to 15-16 June 1970 demonstrations with respect to the size of the events. The reason for the meeting, demands aired by workers, banners carried during the long marches which proceeded along all the main roads of the city, all indicated the opening of a new era in working class politics. The meeting bore a number of slogans which expressed the actual demands of workers such as “not condescension, but rights”, “unconditional strike rights”, “wage: 350, house rent: 150, enough is enough”. Another group of slogans such as “Bosses drive Cadillac, workers walk barefoot”, “we don’t have rounded belly to tighten the belts”, “wage rise to deputies, grief to workers” targeted the bosses and other privileged groups as the groups to blame for the poverty of workers.⁹⁰⁴ Mehmet Ali Aybar remembers a giant banner that hung just in front of the platform. It depicted a group of round-bellied employers gathered around a desk. Behind them a worker raised up in his coverall, lands his punch on the table saying: “we have words to say.”⁹⁰⁵ The single banner illustrated the whole meaning of this mass demonstration for Aybar. The Saraçhane demonstration, the increasing news of strikes in the newspapers, the

⁹⁰⁴ “Saraçhane Mitingi” in *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi* II, p. 567; “Dev İşçi Mitingi,” *Gece Postası*, 31 December 1961.

⁹⁰⁵ Mehmet Ali Aybar, *TİP Tarihi 1* (İstanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1998), p. 190.

boost of demands from trade unions to have their right to strike made clear in the eyes of the contemporaries that organized workers had already become a political force.

This meeting also symbolized that, at least for the organizers of the event, the economic and social welfare of workers could not be isolated from the question of the political representation of class interests.⁹⁰⁶ Avni Erakalın, then the chairman of the İstanbul Trade Unions Alliance, recalled that when they talked with other left-wing unionists (such as Üzeyir Kuran, Kemal Türkler and Ziya Hepbir) of the plans of a large demonstration, they had three aims in mind: first, to enhance the self-confidence of workers; second, to show the members of National Unity Committee that workers were determined to grasp their rights; and third, to accustom workers to the idea of a labor party.⁹⁰⁷

There were other signs that workers had become more inclined to question the separation of the domains of economic and political. Consider the passage that appeared in a union journal just before the Saraçhane demonstration:

It becomes more clear in the minds (of the workers) that it is not possible on any account to consider that workers and economy, economy and politics are separate entities. A trade union engages in politics firstly because of its foundational cause. The public order which aims to separate worker from politics is put to prevent the implantation of the ideology that we deeply hated in this community. But it seems that it is firmly understood by the worker leaders that the interest of the worker stands on the opposite side of this ideology, a doctrine (democratic socialism) which is even antagonist to it.

For this reason, we urgently feel the need for a political party which adopts the principle of democratic socialism and which articulates the laborers as a unity that bears a particular idea and opinion.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁶ In the late 1950s the criticism of Türk-İş's "above politics" stance was more openly expressed in the reformist press. For instance Adil Aşçıoğlu wrote in the *KİM* magazine that workers could no longer grasp their problems unless they saw them as political issues. Adil Aşçıoğlu, "İşçiler Yalnız Kendilerine Güvenmelidir," *KİM*, 20 February 1959.

⁹⁰⁷ Avni Erakalın, interview by author, tape recording, Aksaray, İstanbul, 20 May 2010.

⁹⁰⁸ "Ne olursa olsun işçiyi iktisattan, iktisadı siyasetten ayrı mütalaâ etmeye imkan olmadığı gerçeği beyinlere iyice yerleşme yolundadır. Bir sendika herşeyden önce kuruluş sebebiyle siyasetin içindedir. İşçiyi siyasetten ayrı tutmaya çalışan kamu hükmü, nefret ettiğimiz bir ideolojinin bu kitle içinde yerleşmesini önlemek için

The specific experience and language of class that is explored in this chapter contributed positively to the development of a more radical working-class politics in the 1960s and 1970s. This new political culture and language were built on critical assessment of the corporatist construction of labor relations and the rejection of the idea that employers and workers were members of the same family. The evolution of the state-related values and the establishment of political and legal institutions restricted in a certain degree this formation of class identity. Nevertheless, the economic and social developments in the course of the late 1940s and 1950s opened channels which enabled workers to advance the struggle and challenge the legitimacy of the established order in which workers suffered from all kinds of deprivations. Subsequent labor movements critically would adopt this language and elaborate it further in the following years.

vazedilmiştir. Ama artık işçinin menfaatinin bu ideolojinin tam karşısında, hatta ona düşman bir doktrinin yanında olduğu bütün işçi önderlerince anlaşılmiş görülmektedir.

Bu sebeple artık emek-sermaye münasebetlerini düzenleyecek, demokratik bir sosyalizm prensibini güderek emek sahiplerini ne istediklerini bilen, belirli bir fikir ve kanaate sahip bir bütün haline getirecek siyasi partiye şiddetle ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır.” “Özlem,” Petrol-İş, 15 December 1961.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study explored the everyday experiences and changing meanings workers attached to their living and working conditions in Turkey between the end of the Second World War and the early 1960s. This was a crucial period of transition from one-party rule to a relatively liberal regime, the development of social reform and protective labor legislation, a growing urban economy and expansion of wage labor, the emergence and rise of the trade union activity, attempts at modernization and rationalization of production, and heightening of concerns on the part of the political and economic elites to define and redefine the social question of labor which composed a large arena of discourses and policies from the housing conditions of working class families to their quotidian cultures and the problem of low labor productivity. Throughout the study it was argued that this historical context created the cultural, intellectual, linguistic and organizational space on which the subsequent labor movement was built. These transformations were crucial for the emergence of the class identity and the establishment of institutional practice that were further elaborated by workers over the following years. The study also aims to show that the seemingly routine and ordinary existence of everyday life contained the possibilities of the creation of distinct class enclaves.

The main concern of this study was a critical engagement with some intrinsic dichotomies of histories of class formation in Turkey, such as those between work and off-work, between structural and political class formation, and between quotidian cultures and formal organizations of workers.⁹⁰⁹ It first explored the spatial dimension of working class formation, arguing that forms of organization and identity are built first on territorial basis and that the working class territoriality became a primary issue of contention between different actors during the period. The housing conditions of the working class became a central part in debates about social problems and social policy in those years. Images of affluence and deprivation, health and morality, industrial discipline and productivity; and issues of segregation and community integration were strongly associated with the housing of the laboring families. The links established between external sanitary and moral condition to the homes of the poor, along with the competitive environment between the rival parties to attract the votes of the growing laboring masses provided the appropriate juncture for the birth of housing policy. However, the policy of the public provision of housing remained incapable of meeting the growing demand for affordable housing for the laboring poor. Especially the laboring families in the big cities suffered most from poor sheltering conditions. On the other hand, the advantages offered by “flexible” type of squatter housing and commuting conditions helped to develop strong attachment to the neighborhood. This also was manifested in the rapid growth of neighborhood organizations which provided the primary mechanism to strengthen group solidarity and articulate the common interests of the squatters.

⁹⁰⁹ For an example of pervasiveness of such dualities in thinking class formation in Turkey, see Metin Çulhaoğlu, “Türkiye’de İşçi Sınıfının Oluşumu ve Sınıf Kültürü,” in *Birinci Sınıf Çalışmaları Sempozyumu: İşçi Sınıfının Değişen Yapısı ve Sınıf Hareketinde Arayışlar, Deneyimler*, eds. Başak Ergüder et al. (İstanbul: TÜSAM ve SAV Ortak Yayını, 2005).

The different meanings attached to home was another theme discussed in this study. According to middle class reformers, physical and moral health defined the essential qualities of the ideal home. In their vision, home ownership was not crucial and many well-off families who could have afforded to buy their residences stayed in rent. Yet, having titles to their homes, in spite of costs in sanitation and comfort, bore much more importance for workers. Workers were more determined in seeking ownership of homes, for in a period where managerial bodies sought more control over the production process in workplaces, building or purchasing a home meant securing some autonomy, control and financial security for workers in a significant part of their lives. Further research on working class housing, I believe, could expand our knowledge on a vital area of social life and its relation to structures of working class solidarity and identity running beneath the levels of trade union and associational activity that normally form our understanding of working class consciousness.

Given the degradation of work and the emergence of privatized, inward-looking consciousness under developing capitalist relations, many workers sought escape from the monotony of everyday life in such leisure pursuits as film, sport or coffeehouses. However, leisure was not taken in this study as a commodified and irrational sphere of modern society. This thesis adopted a culturalist approach with the purpose of moving closer to workers' lives, locating the potential of solidarity in everyday practices where working people sought to demarcate a kind of autonomous space both in and outside the work, and generally affirmed themselves in a hostile and limiting environment. In the light of this perspective, the study scrutinized the ways working class men and women imposed their own meaning and uses upon the new leisure forms. Working class public life was characterized by informality, intimacy, vivacity and active socialization.

Beneath the formalization of a labor movement culture was a popular culture that remained impermeable to the attractions and rationalizing effects of middle-class reformers

and state bureaucrats. Such leisure activities were effectual in the formation of a distinct class culture and identity. In this respect, it is vital to explore these aspects of working class experience and culture that do not fit easily to conventional understandings of labor history. However, we should avoid constructing a stark dichotomy between the organized labor movement and a larger universe of working class culture beyond its reach. On the contrary, as was discussed, the boundaries were very fluid in this sense.

The study focused on the local and quotidian contexts in which the possibilities were created for class politics and resistance, on the one hand, and conformity and acquiescence, on the other. One of the inspirations of this study was specified as the conception everydayness as an effort to question large structural generalizations and recover specificity. This outlook guided the discussion on the changing regimes of industrial discipline and its impact on working class identity and protest. Shop-floor history provides a suggestive agenda in this respect.⁹¹⁰ Only by looking at specific industries and at individual workplaces with distinctive production lines could the diversity of workers' experiences be recovered and elements of what Alf Ludtke called self-assertion (*Eigensinn*)⁹¹¹ and resistance be detected.

Exploring the transformation of the labor process in textile mills provided an invaluable opportunity in this respect. It was seen that weavers, for example, enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy at work. Experienced weavers trained newcomers and generally handled the functions normally discharged by employers and managers. In consequence, the sea change in the wage system became all the more important as the medium of managerial control through which employers asserted their right to set the rate and

⁹¹⁰ For the promises of shop-floor history for labor studies, see David Brody, "The Old Labor History and the New: In Search of an American Working Class," *Labor History* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1979).

⁹¹¹ See Alf Ludtke, "What is the History of Everyday Life and Who are its Practitioners?" in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*.

judge the amount and quality of the output. Along with the formal organizations of workers, I focused on the informal and quotidian structures of solidarity to point the analysis in a different direction and recover the weavers' self-perception of their labor and their reaction to the changes in the production process.

Acts of self-affirmation by the weavers may not have expressed a conscious outlook against the prevailing structures of exploitation and dominance and may have been far from formal political concerns. Yet workers' indifference to class politics did not mean that they had no idea about the everyday functioning of capitalist production relations and could not articulate their common interest to pursue. It is true that only a minority of workers became enrolled in socialist parties and still fewer developed affinity to socialist ideas. However, workers' everyday life, where the abstract structures of exploitation became tangible and directly experienced, generated a culture of solidarity and resistance, which provided considerable political potential. Under circumstances of social and political crisis (such as the late 1950s) or during smaller local mobilizations (such as the campaign against overtime work in Mahmutpaşa and the anti-Bedaux movement in Mensucat Santral) this potential could take on a fuller meaning. I also argued that combined with the organized power of the employers, who disciplined their workers via forms of company paternalism, the division of workers along the lines of gender, skill and commitment to industrial work placed weavers and trade union militants at a serious disadvantage in the resistance against the growing demands of employers.

Labor law is probably the most developed sub-field of labor studies in Turkey. However, the novelty of the discussion presented in this study lies in its recognition of law as a constitutive system of everyday practices. I also analyzed the functioning of labor law as a power relationship between employers and workers that provided the former with the potential for considerable control.

During the period, the working population experienced a massive migration and new urban societies were being manufactured. When migrants were flooding to the cities from far and near with such a startling diversity of customary cultures and such enormous local mobility, the effect of existing traditions were bound to be small. The new working class in the cities was composed overwhelmingly of people who had moved to a new environment from long distances. Under such conditions, the question of the subordination of labor required extra-economic instruments to facilitate and secure productive discipline at the shop-floor level.

I argued that through the labor law, inspectors, state officers and factory managers interceded in the apparatuses and processes of production. Concurrently, discipline became more severe. Factory inner regulations became detailed and involved working times, security and hygiene conditions. Labor inspectors who were endowed with great authority were often indifferent to worker complaints about discipline issues while their decisions on other issues were rarely binding on employer. Furthermore, the social embeddedness of manufacturers within the local elite provided them with access to and power to manipulate the legal system as a means of labor control. However, it appears that legal norms and institutions gave way to unpredictable consequences in terms of the working class consciousness. The legislation system itself magnified the worker's sense of himself as a worker rather than as a citizen or the nation as a whole.

While engaging the concept and history of class, this study also provided an understanding of the genealogy of class identity, forming a foundation for further study of the contested domains of class in the history of trade unions, of the changing meanings of labor, of the changing perception of the relationship between the economic and the political instances, and the rich terrain of conflict between the state and trade unions as well as among the latter on the boundaries of class and the role of associational activity. I showed that

although the legislative restrictions on the activities of trade unions had a significant effect on the development of trade unionism in Turkey, the working class discourse and politics was not determined unilaterally by these institutional influences. The specific experience of economic and social conditions and the more inclusive language of class that developed in the course of the 1950s contributed positively to the rise of a radical working-class politics in the coming decades. This new political culture and language, which was constructed on the critical assessment of the corporatist construction of labor relations and the rejection of the solidarist notion of society, was manufactured by a circle of radical trade union militants who rejected the tutelage of the state and defended the independence of class politics during the unfavorable climate of the 1940s and 1950s.

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