

POLITICAL CHANGE AND WORKING CLASS FORMATION
BETWEEN 1945 – 1960 IN TURKEY

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POLITICAL CHANGE AND WORKING CLASS FORMATION
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by

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ABSTRACT

Title: Political Change and Working Class Formation between 1945 – 1960

In Turkey

The conditions and properties of the working class formation between the end of the Second World War and the military intervention of 1960 have not received the attention they deserve from scholars working in the field of labor history. This partly has been due to the obvious weakness of the labor action and union organization in the 1950s when compared to the periods of the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, the dominant view of labor history has prevented the period from being regarded as an attractive subject of study.

The thesis tries to alter this limited approach in labor history in two ways. First of all, the selection of the period is against the general tendency of focusing on the periods where the working class is visible to the public by its collective action as an obvious social actor. The 1950s are considered as an important period of transition in which the formation of working class accelerated, and the “*amele*” of the late Ottoman era became the “*işçi*” of modern Turkey.

In addition to the choice of period, the method selected aims to go beyond the approach regarding the working class formation just as a passive result of legal regulations and economic development. An analysis of the factors affecting the class formation within their multi-level causal hierarchy and without strong deterministic relations would help us to end up with a rich checklist of working class formation in the period in question and understand the nature of the labor movement in modern Turkey.

KISA ÖZET

Başlık: 1945 – 1960 Türkiye’inde Siyasal Değişim ve İşçi Sınıfı Oluşumu

İkinci Dünya Savaşı’nın sonuçlanması ile 1960 darbesi arasındaki dönemde işçi sınıfı oluşumunun koşulları ve özellikleri emek tarihi alanında çalışan akademisyenler tarafından hak ettiği ilgiyi görmemiştir. Bu kısmen 1950’lerdeki işçi örgütleri ve eylemlerinin 1960 ve 1970’li yıllar ile karşılaştırdığında oldukça zayıf olmasına bağlanabilir. Aynı zamanda, emek tarihi alanındaki egemen yaklaşım, dönemin ilgi çekici bir araştırma alanı olarak görülmesini engellemiştir.

Bu çalışma, emek tarihi alanındaki sınırlı yaklaşımı iki yönden aşmaya çalışmaktadır. En başta, dönem seçimi, sadece işçi sınıfının kolektif eylemi ile toplumun gözünde belirgin bir sosyal aktör olarak ortaya çıktığı dönemlere odaklanılması eğilimine karşı durmaktadır. 1950’ler, işçi sınıfı oluşumunun ivmelendiği ve Osmanlı döneminin “amele”sinin modern Türkiye’nin “işçi”sine dönüştüğü bir geçiş dönemi olarak ele alınmıştır.

Dönem seçimindeki yaklaşım kadar, tercih edilen yöntem de, işçi sınıfı oluşumunu sadece yasal düzenlemelerin ve kapitalist gelişme düzeyinin edilgen bir sonucu olarak gören yaklaşımları aşmayı hedeflemektedir. Sınıf oluşumunu etkileyen faktörlerin çok katmanlı bir neden-sonuç yapısı içinde ve güçlü bağlayıcılık ilişkilerini öngörmeden incelenmesi, sözkonusu dönemde işçi sınıfı oluşumunu ve modern Türkiye’deki işçi hareketlerinin doğasını anlamamıza yardımcı olacaktır.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
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CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STATE OF THE WORKING CLASS BEFORE 1945.....	8
Working Class in the Transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic.....	13
The Overview of the Working Class in the Late Ottoman Era.....	13
The Situation after the Second Constitution.....	17
Labor Movement from the Armistice to the Republic.....	22
Labor Organizations between 1919-1923.....	25
The First National Assembly, the Economics Congress and the Workers.....	27
The Working Class in the Early Republican Era.....	30
The Profile of the Working Class and the First Labor Movements.	32
The Maintenance of Order Law and the Working Class.....	35
Attempts for a Labor Law between 1924-1934	39
The Labor Law of 1936.....	41
Industrialization, Statism and the Working Class in the 1930s.....	44
The Working Class and the Second World War.....	49
Workers, Employers, and Working Conditions in during WWII.....	49
The National Law of Protection and Working Class Rights.....	51
3. POLITICAL CHANGES AND THE WORKING CLASS FROM 1945 TO 1960	56
The International Conjuncture and the Change in Turkish Politics.....	56
Transition to the Multi-party Regime and the Working Class.....	62
The Economic Factors Affecting the Social and Political Structure of the Working Class between 1945 and 1960.....	64
Labor Relations and the Period of Institutionalization in Social Policy.....	66
The Emerge of Labor Unions and a Short Period of Freedom.....	69
The New Labor Law and the Unions of 1947.....	71
The Conditions Laying the Ground for TÜRK-İŞ.....	78
The Main Characteristics of TÜRK-İŞ Unionism (1952-1960).....	80
TÜRK-İŞ, the Government and the Workers (1952-1960).....	82
The Political Labor Movement (1945-1960).....	85
The Labor Policies of the DP and the RPP.....	87
The Labor Movement from 1945 to 1960.....	89

4. THE SOCIAL EXISTENCE OF THE WORKING CLASS BETWEEN 1945–1960.....	92
The Socio-Economic Change in the 1950s and Its Reflections.....	92
Peasants, Migration, and the Urbanization Process.....	98
Adaptation to Industrial Life.....	102
The Profile of the Working Class between 1945-1960.....	108
The Sources of “Proletarization”.....	108
The Qualitative Situation of the Working Class.....	110
Wages and Social Security.....	114
The Political Profile of the Working Class.....	120
Class Struggle in the Democratic Party Era.....	122
5. CONCLUSION.....	126
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	132

TABLES

Table	Page
1 - The Distribution of the Workforce Status	111
2 - Nominal and Real Wages, 1940-1950	115
3- Nominal and Real Wages, 1951-1960	117

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A study on the working class of Turkey between 1945 and 1960 is first of all an analysis of a social class formation in this particular period. This phase has different characteristics when compared to the state interventionist policies of the new Republic until the end of the Second World War. It brings more liberalized approaches to the economy and political life, and extends the freedom of expression and organization to labor. In addition, a rapid urbanization together with an increase of the ratio of working masses within the overall population shaped this era. Therefore, the period between 1945 and 1960 can be regarded as a bridge between the early Republic and contemporary Turkey.

The nature of the selected topic requires a social history approach to be able to deal with its economic, social, political, legal, and cognitive dimensions. The agenda of social history makes it necessary to have a “total” and “holistic” view of history. Factors such as the mentality, ideas, daily life of society, material conditions

of production, problematics of the ordinary people are all mandatory elements for the success of social history.¹

Therefore, this study tries to assess the period from its economic, social and even cultural aspects regarding the multi-dimensional structure of the period with its external conjuncture and domestic dynamics and discusses the social existence of the working class within this framework. Therefore, these dynamics appear similarly when we comparatively study the formation process of the working class in Turkey and the West. As Işıklı mentions, the formation process of the working class in Turkey has followed a different path compared to that of many Western countries and a delay in industrialization and inefficiency of the working class in democratization have all been major factors of this difference.²

To see the formation of a social class as a process gives us a chance to evaluate its different forms and milestones in particular periods on its way. The study presents an analytical approach to the factors determining the formation process of a social class. Therefore, it is a must to define the theoretical background of the study first. This also will help to define the question of methodology for this study.

The class formation process should be considered as a process determined by a series of correlated factors. The general approach to labor history in Turkey emphasizes legal/judicial arrangements, state intervention and its effects, and the history of the worker organizations and their organized movements. As an important result of such an approach, only the existence of organized labor action seems to be considered as the determining factor of class formation. The 1950s, due to the ban on the right to strike, and the lack of active labor movements and strikes, have not

¹ *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 54/55 (1991); “Sosyal Tarih Alanı ve Türkiye Gerçeği”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 54/55 (1991) p.77-88.

² Alpaslan Işıklı, “Türkiye’de İşçi Hareketinin Batı İşçi Hareketi Karşısında Özgünlüğü,” in *11.Tez Kitap Dizisi*, no.5, (İstanbul: Uluslararası Yayıncılık, 1987), pp.10-31.

drawn enough interest in our traditional labor literature. The period after 1963, with the right to strike, often is considered almost as the starting point of the history of the working class in Turkey. In this study, the 1950s are considered as a time when the formation of the working class accelerated under the influence of various social factors, and the decade had an important effect on the following period.

In order to avoid an analysis based solely on the relation between the state and organized labor, a theoretical framework which would emphasize economic and social factors (demographic change, urbanization, proletarianization, the transition to the multi-party system, the institutionalization of industrial relations, etc.) was selected. It is a methodology formulated by Ira Katznelson, with four layers of class formation to describe the different aspects of the existence of a social class.³

Katznelson emphasizes the significance of proletarianization and of class for understanding the ties between economies, social and political structures. Katznelson acknowledges his debt to the classical Marxist “*Klasse an sich, Klasse für sich*” (class in itself and class for itself) model, but sets forward to improve on this in an essence base-superstructure metaphor: “With the specification of different levels it becomes possible to construct the various cases of class formation in their own terms and to explore the competing capacities of various macrohypotheses about linkages between the levels.”⁴

Katznelson distinguishes between four levels that together constitute class in capitalist societies: The first level is the formation of capitalist economic structures and the level of development, including the the proletarianization process throughout the world despite its differences between countries. The second level is “determined

³ Ira Katznelson, “Working-Class Formation: Constructing Cases and Comparisons,” in *Working Class Formation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.14-22.

⁴ Ira Katznelson, Aristide R. Zolberg, eds., *Working-Class Formation. Nineteenth Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986.)

in part by the structure of capitalist development” and refers to “the social organization of society lived by actual people in real social formations.” This includes the labor market, working conditions and relations. At the third level, we can see an assessment of social classes from a cognitive perspective: “Classes are formed groups, sharing dispositions” that are formed by the manner in which people interact with each other; in other words, dispositions constitute social meaning and cultural configurations within which people act. However, there is no direct connection between individuals’ disposition to behave and the collective action that constitutes the fourth level. Collective action refers to “classes that are organized and that act through movements and organizations to affect society and the position of the class within it.”⁵ This framework represents a step forward compared to many versions of the basis-superstructure model.

These four aspects of class formation reflect a multi-level causal hierarchy without strong deterministic relations. On the other hand, it does not end up with a tight analytical model of development from one level to the next. The result is a rich and sophisticated checklist that loosely specifies the necessary analytical conditions for moving from economic structure, way of life, to tendencies and characteristics, and collective action. In other words, Katznelson’s model softens the traditional “*Klasse an sich – Klasse für sich*” relationship by introducing social and cultural variables between necessary economic conditions and political strategies such as movements, interest organizations, political parties, and state structures. This approach seems valuable at analyzing the working class formation in Turkey after the Second World War.

⁵ Ibid.

Since the formation of working class is related strongly to the process of capitalist development, after an evaluation of the historical background, I have tried to assess the economic processes which determine the social and political picture of the period. Then the legal and institutional changes which were of a particular value for the period of 1945 – 1960 are taken into account.

The social and political existence of the working class in Turkey became visible to everyone after the 1960s. The period between 1945 and 1960 was the time for a transition of the social and political structure which prepared the conditions of the 1960s and 1970s. This period of change had the effects of the late-Ottoman and early republic, therefore, in the first chapter of this study, the focus is on the social and political developments from the late Ottoman period until the end of the Second World War, in order to define the formation of the modern social structure and conditions for the working class formation.

Labor organizations were considered suspicious in the first era of the new Republic. Especially after 1925, the control over these activities was tightened. This approach reached its peak in the 1930s, and all organizations based on class distinction were banned in 1936. Together with this anti-labor approach, some corporatist practices were tested, such as the model organized by General Kazım Dirik in İzmir in 1934. Allowing some workers in a sector or a workplace join their forces in the form of an corporatist association was the proposed formal practice for labor organizations.

As a result of the war conditions, the migration of skilled workers from non-Muslim minorities, and the industrialization policies of the state interventionist era of the 1930s, the demand for workers showed a sharp rise in this period. Moreover, the

state policies and difficulties in international trade during the Second World War helped the development of a domestic industrial bourgeoisie.

The National Law of Protection that was applied just before and during the War cancelled almost all rights of the working class, and accelerated the capital accumulation. Some directives protecting women and child labor were eliminated, weekend holidays were cancelled, legal working hours were increased from 8 to 11 temporarily, and leaving a workshop without the consent of the employer was banned. Forced labor was put into action, especially in the mining sector. Industrial accidents increased sharply in this period. Workers were not granted any legal rights to organize or fight for their demands. As a result, the Second World War was a period of capital accumulation and rapid proletarianization.

The international political system also changed radically after World War II. These changes were soon reflected in the domestic political and social structure of all the countries. The third part of this study consists of an analysis of the important dynamics which determined the social, economic and political life of Turkey just after 1945.

The shift to the multi-party political system and the effects of the international conjuncture, and the effects of the economic policies of the Democrat Party are taken into account. Then, the formation of Türk-İş and other trade unions are also assessed. Türk-İş is given particular importance to assess the relations of the governments with the workers' organizations. In addition, social and political allies, struggles and tensions between labor organizations and political parties such as the Democrat Party and the Republican Peoples' Party are also considered.

The fourth chapter is more concentrated on a social analysis of the formation of the working class. The peasantry, migration, the urbanization process and

problems of adaptation to industrial life are all discussed as major dimensions of the subject within the framework of the social change of the 1950s. The working class of the period can be considered as a conservative social group with high expectations for social and economic welfare, quite open to manipulations, determined by the relations of patronage, and trying to find its way by intuition.

The qualitative and quantitative profiles of the working class are considered within the dynamics of the proletarianization in the period. The social existence of the working class and the factors determining their daily lives such as their situation in terms of social security and salaries are also studied. Finally, the political situation of the working class is analyzed both as a factor shaping and expressing the social existence. It seems that both the heritage of the previous periods and the conditions and practice in which the transition to the multi-party regime occurred shaped a working class which counted more on the distinctions between the existing bourgeoisie parties rather than on its own class action, unions and organizations. This aspect of the class formation during the 1950s can be regarded as one of the main reasons why it was more difficult to see an independent labor movement in Turkey in the second half of the century.

CHAPTER 2

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STATE OF THE WORKING CLASS BEFORE 1945

The social and political existence of the working class in Turkey acquired visibility mainly in the 1960s. The period of 1945-60 was a time of fermentation of many social and political movements that then acquired visibility in the 1960s, a decade in which Turkey realized radical social and political changes. This important period of change and construction naturally was built on the previous period and involved the important aspects of the heritage it took over from the past. It will be sensible to examine the social and political developments of the late Ottoman period, then the first years of the Republic, and the accumulation of World War II in order to understand this section of the modern social structure, capitalist production relations, and within this scope, the modern working class and the formation of the class movement.

The historical background that determined the social and political existence of the working class between 1945-60 make up the basic matter of this chapter. Focus will be given to analyzing social development processes and worker

organizations and movements in this period, due to the restricted studies on the existence of working class in late Ottoman society.

Worker-related organizations in Turkey go back to some relief funds formed under the titles *Orta Sandığı* (common fund) or *Teavün⁶ Sandığı* (aid fund). But these were definitely far from being worker organizations in the modern sense. Although the *Ameleperver Cemiyeti* (Pro-labor Association) founded in 1871 is considered to have been the first worker organization according to some researchers, this organization was unable to go beyond being a relief fund formed by intellectuals under the influence of the West with the aim of helping workers.

The only worker organization in the modern sense in the late nineteenth century was the *Osmanlı Amele Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Laborer Association) founded in 1894. However, this organization, which the *Tophane* (Cannon Foundry) workers started in the repressive atmosphere of the Abdulhamit period, did not last long. The association was dissolved upon the arrest of its directors in 1895. The right to establish associations in the Ottoman Empire was granted after the declaration of the Second Constitution (1908). The workers started going on strike successively one after the other, in this relatively free atmosphere. In August and September, the strikes were primarily in the Balkan provinces and in Istanbul. Various pressures to prevent the strikes and passing the act of *Tatil-i Eşgal* (Strike Law) (1909) that significantly restricted the labor rights could not prevent the formation of worker organizations totally.

During that period, while part of the founders of *Osmanlı Amele Cemiyeti* (the Ottoman Laborer Association), which was dissolved in 1895, founded *Osmanlı Terakki-i Sanayi Cemiyeti* (the Ottoman Progressive Industry Association) in 1908,

⁶ Teavün means charity, aid in Arabic.

many more worker organizations, such as *Mürettibin-i Osmaniye Cemiyeti* (the Ottoman Editors' Association), *Dersaadet Tramvay İşçileri Cemiyeti* (the Dersaadet Tram Workers' Association), and *Şark Şimendiferleri Müstahdemin Teaviin Cemiyeti* (the Eastern Railroad Workers' Aid Fund), were founded by various worker groups. In 1910, the railways, tobacco, gold mine and loading workers, carpenters, bakers, tailors, press workers, shoemakers, cotton thread twisters, etc. had become organized in various institutions primarily in Istanbul and Selanik, and in other large cities such as İzmir, Zonguldak, Kavala and Drama and they formed the *Sosyalist Amele Heyet-i Muttehidesi* (Socialist Workers' Federation) in Selanik.

However, the outbreak of the Balkan Wars and the First World War, then the War of Independence led to a recession in the activities and to the dissolution of the organizations. There were only two worker organizations during the War of Independence, *Türk Amele Birliği* (the Turkish Workers' Association) (1919-1922), and *Beynelmilel İşçiler İttihadı* (the International Workers' Union) (1920-1923). In the first years of the Republic, *Türkiye Dernek Birlikleri İttihadı* (Turkey Association Unions' Confederation) was established under the pioneering of *Türk Amele Birliği* (Turkish Workers Association) yet could not succeed. This was followed by the establishment of *Istanbul Umum Amele Birliği* (the General Workers' Union of Istanbul) (1923) just before the *İzmir İktisat Kongresi* (İzmir Economic Congress), with the support of the *Milli Türk Ticaret Birliği* (Turkish National Union of Commerce.)

The union participated in the Congress as the representative of the workers. With this congress, the right to found associations (trade unions) was promised to the workers, and it was decided to revise the act of *Tatıl-i Eşgal* (Strike Law) in favor of the workers and to use the term *işçi* (worker) for worker rather than *amele* (laborer).

The fundamentals of the *Amele Birliđi* (Laborers' Union) were nearly fully accepted at the Congress. Yet it would not be easy to apply these fundamentals.

With the Republic, the *Istanbul Umum Amele Birliđi* became the *Türkiye Umum Amele Birliđi* (General Workers' Union of Turkey) but was dissolved in 1924. After that, the *Amele Teali Cemiyeti* (Laborer Progress Association) was established by the gathering of various associations in Istanbul. The association, active especially in determining the opinions of the workers on draft bills on labor, was able to survive a while, in spite of the act of *Takrir-i Sükun* (Martial Law) passed after the Şeyh Sait rebellion of 1925. However, this formation also was dissolved by the government in 1928. In that period, organizations such as the *İşçi Tesanüt ve Teaviün Cemiyeti* (Worker Solidarity and Charity Association), the *Silahtarađa Elektrik Fabrikası İşçileri Cemiyeti* (the Silahtarađa Electrical Factory Workers Association), and the *Istanbul Umum Deniz ve Madenkömrü Tahmil ve Tahliye İşçileri Cemiyeti* (Istanbul Public Maritime and Coalmine Loading and Unloading Workers Association) failed as well.

All strikes were forbidden by the act of *Takrir-i Sükun*; in 1933 the Criminal Code was amended in order to make the punishment for striking more severe. The Labor Law passed in 1936 introduced significant restrictions on the freedom of trade unions. Then, establishing associations based on classes was prohibited through amendments on the Law on Associations Code 3512. Thus, it became legally impossible for workers to organize until the end of World War II.

The law of 1936 was undoubtedly the most comprehensive development that brought some improvement to the institutional life of the workers during the single-party era. Throughout the single-party era, especially after the first ten years of the Republic, rapid industrialization was realized, and the increase in the number of

workers as a result of this brought up the long awaited Labor Law. The previous attempts to pass in a law and draft bills were dated 1924-1925, 1927, 1929, 1932 and 1934. Each of these draft bills reflected the political and socio-economic conditions of its own period and showed diverse characteristics. Yet none was passed. Code 3008 (1936) passed into law, forming a systematic integration and stayed in effect for the next 35 years. In this sense, Code 3008 is significant for retaining its effect also on the multi-party era, although was a product of the single-party era.

A brief look will now be taken at the developments realized on the international scale, the exercises put into practice by statism (*devletçilik*) and populism (*halkçılık*), and the changes made to the qualitative and quantitative presence of the working class by industrialization. Among the principles of the Republic, there were two that are used in the same functional context and which are more directly related to our subject besides the concepts of national sovereignty and nationalism: Populism and Statism. Both Populism and Statism served as principles for the Kemalist forces of the new regime, which was trying to solidify its impact. They formed the backbone of the struggle against communism, especially in the fight against its influence among industrial and agriculture laborers by using the slogans of the USSR, which had supported the Turkish War of Independence.

The young Turkish Republic preferred to follow a liberal policy for the first few years, but then after a short while, with the influence of the Great Depression of 1929, it adopted the populism principle, which the multi-dimensional control movement born as a response to the communists turned into one of its ideological supports. Thus an ideological factor was acquired which could empty out the meaning of the propaganda that the socialists executed. Boratav clearly expresses

this characteristic of populism that had political and economic aspects, in his discussion on the principle of populism:

Furthermore, it should be noted that populism is also a part of a capitalist development model in Turkey. If we were to compare the dynamism of a populist development to the stagnancy which would be the inevitable companion of liberalism under crisis conditions, on the basis of short and long term benefits of the bourgeoisie, the former would prove to create a much more efficient environment for the development of capitalism in Turkey.⁷

Working Class during the Transition from Ottoman Empire to the Republic

The Overview of the Working Class in the Late Ottoman Era

In the Ottoman Era, one must wait for the period of the *Tanzimat* (Reorganizations) in order to talk about a mass of workers rather than individual workers. Until the nineteenth century, in Ottoman society which lacked a large scale manufacturing industry and factories, and had a manufacturing industry effective in relatively small workshops or flour mills and bakeries, or in areas such as tanning and textiles, the primary fields of activity of the *amele* (worker) were for the most

⁷ Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi (1908-1985)*, (İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi, 1990), p. 50. ...“Buna karşılık, devletçiliğin Türkiye’de kapitalist bir gelişme modelinin bir parçası olduğu da belirtilmelidir. Devletçi bir gelişmenin dinamizmi ile buhran koşullarında liberalizmin zorunlu refakatçısı olacak olan durağanlık, burjuvazinin kısa ve uzun dönem çıkarları açısından karşılaştırılırsa, birinci seçeneğin Türkiye’de kapitalizmin gelişmesi bakımından çok daha elverişli bir ortam yarattığı ortaya çıkar.”

part construction, portorage, gardening and vinicultural work, ship work such as ship's crew, fireman, wood and coal cutter, bakery and glass oven worker.⁸

Starting with the Tanzimat, we can talk about a formation of a wageworker sector, especially within the local production and trade enterprises of the foreign capital. The growing wageworker recruitment in tobacco processing, weaving, and road construction goes back to the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Industrialization and mechanization had come onto the scene to such a degree that there could be movements against mechanization in Rumeli as early as 1834.⁹

In the meantime, we can talk about two worker organizations for the period before 1908. The first was the *Ameleperver Cemiyeti* (Pro-Labor Association), a charity foundation established in 1866. It is concluded from the advertisements published in the various journals of the period that towards the 1870s many worker protection associations were founded as charity organizations.¹⁰

The second important worker organization was the *Osmanlı Amele Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Laborers Association). This association, formed with the consolidation of workers against bad working conditions, was able to stay effective only for one year and dissolved after its founders were arrested and sent into exile.¹¹ The association tried to provoke the public, opposing the autocracy with class-related demands. Opposed to this property of the association, Şehmus Güzel claims that the *Osmanlı Amele Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Laborers Association) was more like a craftsman's organization rather than a worker's organization, on the grounds of the purposes it

⁸ Oya Baydar, "Osmanlı'dan 2000'e İstanbul İşçileri" in *75 Yılda Çarkları Döndürenler*, eds. Oya Baydar, Gülay Dinçer, *Bilanço '98 Yayın Dizisi* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), p. 208.

⁹ Oya Sencer, *Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı, Doğuşu ve Gelişimi*; (İstanbul: Habora Yayınları, 1969) p.89.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp.103-106.

¹¹ Baydar, *75 Yılda Çarkları Döndürenler*, p.215.

possessed such as device and work material support.¹² Erkan Serçe agrees with Güzel about the relief-oriented operations of the associaton.¹³

Before the Second Constitution, when getting organized was virtually impossible, other worker organizations were formed in the 1880s in mines, shipyards, railways and maritime lines, weaving mills and factories mostly by the guilds, following the *orta sandığı* (aid fund) tradition and as social security institutions. They can be seen as the restricted front runners of today's social security organizations. Still some worker-employer tension and worker actions are observed in various forms before the Second Constitution.

In order to understand the general characteristics of the labor actions before 1908, it will be useful to look at the characteristics of the worker action and activities at that time, and to examine the actions that can be considered strikes in particular. Twenty-one out of 23 strikes held before 1908 had economic characteristics targeting increases in wages and especially the payment of acquired wages.¹⁴ Another characteristic of the strikes in those years was the application made to authorities by a common petition for dispute settlement before they went on strike. It is known that part of the strikes were the result of the fear of unemployment due to machines taking the place of the human labor.¹⁵

According to Kemal Sülker, the first strike in Turkish history was the one held by the workers of the Kasımpaşa Shipyard for wages not paid for the previous 11 months (1872).¹⁶ On the other hand, according to Sencer, the Kasımpaşa Shipyard

¹² M.Şehmus Güzel, *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi* (İstanbul: Sosyalist Yayınları, 1993) p. 57.

¹³ *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "Ameleperver Cemiyeti" by Erkan Serçe, ed. Oya Baydar; (İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı and Tarih Vakfı, 1998), vol. 1, p.41

¹⁴ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Ertuğrul Kürkçü, vol. 6 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988) pp.1813-1816.

¹⁵ Sencer, *Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı*, pp.104-105.

¹⁶ Kemal Sülker, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Tarihi-1* (İstanbul: Bilim Kitabevi, 1987), p.15.

strike was not the first strike. Sencer claims that this is a mistake resulting passing from the Muslim calendar to the Gregorian calendar, and that this strike took place in January 1873, whereas the first strike took place in “February 1872 by the workers of the Beyoğlu telegraph office.”¹⁷

In an overview, it is seen that the demands, organizational levels and struggles of the Ottoman workers showed a highly different characteristic and level from the demands, organizational levels and struggles of their contemporaneous European workers that shaped history. The main reason for this was lagging behind the industrialization level and backwardness. The industrialization and the development levels of the related processes were not developed enough to bring the Ottoman *kul*¹⁸ to a worker category with class awareness. In the following pages, it can be seen that the worker organizations established until 1908 often functioned as a professional union in the strict sense.

To sum up, several protest movements, demonstrations and strikes took place in the period before 1908 when no significant state intervention is observed, is basically in economic character, although some initial symptoms of a social-political character¹⁹ is observed under the influence of political currents coming from the West.²⁰

¹⁷ Sencer, *Türkiye’de İşçi Sınıfı*, p.130.

¹⁸ Person who has a master such as God or an Emperor.

¹⁹ Nusret Ekin, *Endüstri İlişkileri*, 4th Edition; (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Enstitüsü Yayını, 1987), p.226.

²⁰ George Haupt and Paul Dumont, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyalist Hareketler*, trans. T. Artunkal (İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977), pp.35-60.

The Situation after the Second Constitution

After the 1908 Constitution, following an atocracy period of 30 years, a general progress in the social organizations and struggle is observed. The relative freedom atmosphere acquired with the declaration of the Constitution proved effective in all fields. The most important worker organizations founded upon the declaration of constitution were the *Anadolu Osmanlı Demiryolu Memurin and Müstahdemini Cemiyet-i Uhuvetkaranesi* (Anatolian Ottoman Railway Civil Servants and Employees Brotherhood Association), and the *Çalışkan Kardeşler Cemiyeti* (Hardworking Brotherhood Association) founded in 1911 by the former workers of *Şark Şimendiferleri Kumpanyası* (Eastern Railroads Company).

In addition to these organizations, Sülker also considers the associations founded by the maritime workers working in Şirketi Hayriye and the weavers working in the Feshane and Hereke factories. The worker organizations ceased after the act of *Tatil-i Eşgal* became effective in August 15, 1909, and starting from that date non-unionist organizations began to form. The number of organized workers within these unions then is estimated to be around 125-150,000.²¹

Actions rather than organizations represent the period after 1908. A series of worker actions, far from being at an organizational level, originated from the Balkans and spread throughout the large trade and industrial centers of the Empire.

The strike and labor protests known as the “1908 Strikes” took place mainly in Istanbul and Selanik in the first days of freedom following the declaration of the

²¹ Sülker, 1987, pp.18-28.

Second Constitution. Within a short time it spread to other regions of the empire. The strikes were in railway transportation, weaving, leather, warehouse, trade and entertainment workplaces in İzmir, Aydın, Beirut, Samsun, Skopje besides Istanbul and Selanik.²² Among the strikes that the worker masses started, as if they had been agreed upon in advance, to seek their rights with the belief that freedom would be acquired after the autocracy, the first were the *İdare-i Mahsusa* (Intelligence Agency) ships captain and crew strike that lasted a few hours and the strike of the *Cibali Tütün Rejisi* (Cibali Tobacco State Trading) workers that lasted 15 days. According to Şanda, the first strike started upon the unanswered demand of a fifty percent increase in the wages by the workers of the *Alatini Tuğla Fabrikası* (Alatini Tile Factory).²³ In Selanik, the workers of two tobacco factories went on strike for a thirty percent wage increase. In early August, the strike news spread throughout the country.²⁴

The strikes after mid-August, that at first started with demands of salary increase and better work conditions and then included many workers from large businesses, was a sign that the strike impact of 1908 continued to grow. Journals dated 15 August announced the news of large railway strikes to continue for months at intervals.²⁵ In early September, this was followed by the strikes of officers of the *Selanik Telgraf İdaresi* (Selanik Telegraph Administration), the workers of trade centers and stores, the workers of the *Kazlıçeşme Debbaghane* (Kazlıçeşme Tannery), the workers and officers of the *Havagazı Şirketi* (Coalgas Company), and the strike of more than 12,000 *tütün rejisi* (tobacco state trading) workers in Kavala.

²² *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 1; (İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı and Tarih Vakfı, 1998), pp.175-176.

²³ Hüseyin Avni Şanda, “Türkiye’de 54 Yıl Önceki İşçi Heraketleri” (İstanbul: Evren Yayınları, 1962), pp.16-17.

²⁴ *Ibid*; p. 17.

²⁵ For the full list of the strikes, see *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1, p.176-177.

The workers of the Anadolu-Baghdad Railway, who had been waiting anxiously for the approval of their request since mid-August, went on strike once more on 14 September upon the rejection of their demands by the company.²⁶ Again the actions and discomfort of the workers of the *Deniz İşletmeleri* (Maritime Lines) were transformed into strikes at the end of September and early October. The strike news of the tram workers in Istanbul, İzmir and Selanik followed one another in September and October.

Although it is not easy to give an exact number for the workers that joined the strikes of July-October 1908, the evaluation of information and data compiled from several sources indicate that the number of workers that participated in the strikes reached 100,000²⁷. It was inevitable that these strikes would lead to serious results and responses, when the circumstances of 1908 are taken into account.

During the strikes of 1908, the Ottoman workers counted on the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) (*İttihat ve Terakki*) that had dismantled the autocracy and declared freedom. For the most of the actions, the workers tried to notify the CUP of their requests and complaints, and their hopes were focused on the association's intervention and support. Indeed there are some documents recorded by the reports of the French embassy that at first the CUP selectively supported some strikes.²⁸

But right after the first shock caused by the strikes spreading since August disappeared, when the government chose to suppress these strikes harshly, especially the strikes taking place in large companies with foreign capital under the effect of imperialist pressure, by sending armed forces against the workers, it started to become obvious that the CUP, which the workers had counted on and were hopeful

²⁶ Şanda, *ibid.*, p.18.

²⁷ For the number of workers on strike, see *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1, p.176

²⁸ Güzel, 1993. pp.64-67.

about was not on the side of the workers, but on that of the government and foreign capital.

The quickly passed *Tatil-i Eşgal Kanun-u Muvakkati* (Strike Law) of early October (October 8, 1908), also had the approval of the CUP, along with the foreign monopolies that were trying to prevent the painstaking strikes and worker actions, and of the Government. It was the CUP that made this law more severe after a while. In the journal *İkdam* (effort) , which was considered to be the press channel of the CUP, a claim stating that it was not religiously favorable for the Ottoman workers to behave like foreign workers was a clear indication of the stance of the CUP.²⁹

The reason for the act of *Tatil-i Eşgal*, which clearly prohibited establishing unions in public services,³⁰ was the *İlan-ı Hürriyet* (Declaration of Freedom) strikes of 1908.³¹ The law arranged to prevent the strikes that suddenly blew up did not really introduce a strike prohibition, but a union prohibition that targeted the dissolution of organizations that might pose a danger to the power of the Committee of Union and Progress.³²

In 1909 and 1910, with the effect of the act of *Tatil-i Eşgal*, while an obvious backwards progress was observed in the worker actions and strike movements, the organizational steps gained momentum. As in the Rumeli region where Bulgarian socialists declared their activities, the unionism efforts gained momentum also in Istanbul and İzmir, in the regions where coal and other mine businesses existed and in all cities where there were high numbers of workers.³³

²⁹ Şanda, p.22.

³⁰ For the details of discussions of Güzel with Toprak and others, who claim that the act of *Tatil-i Eşgal* did not mean a strike prohibition, see Güzel, (1993). p.68.

³¹ Mesut Gülmez, “1936 Öncesinde İşçi Hakları,” in *Türkiye’de İşçi Hakları*; (İstanbul: Yol-İş Sendikası Yayını, 1986), p.32.

³² Yüksel Işık, *Osmanlı’dan Günümüze İşçi Hareketinin Evrimi (1876-1994)*; (Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi, 1995), p.29.

³³ Baydar, *75 Yılda Çarkları Döndürenler*, p. 208

When the period of 1908-1918 is compared to the previous period, it is seen that the organizational initiatives of the workers were not restricted to organizations struggling for economic rights. Also socialist clubs, associations, political organizations and socialist circles were established aiming at introducing class awareness and ideology to the workers.³⁴

Among these, an attempt was made to found the *Osmanlı İşçi ve Çiftçi Fırkası* (Ottoman Workers and Peasants Party) in 1912 by Dr. Hasan Rıza Bey, who broke with the CUP in early 1911. Yet it was not allowed.³⁵ Within the same period of time, a small left-wing group formed by Vlahov, a Bulgarian socialist elected from the Balkan provinces of the Empire, by gathering around the socialism-oriented members of parliament in the *Meclis-i Mebusan* (Parliament) of the Second Constitution between 1910-1911. The left-wing opposition the group tried to maintain in the parliament is worth mentioning, although it does not represent any sort of attempt to become a party.³⁶

The *Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası* (Ottoman Socialist Party), again formed in the first days of September 1910 by the supporters of Hüseyin Hilmi, bears an important place with its perception of socialism, its publications and with its influence on the Istanbul labor movement for a short time.³⁷

The cosmopolitan characteristic of the Ottoman working class led to weak connections between the Muslim workers and the others, and made the union formation of the working class difficult. Similarly, the facts that a major part of the large workplaces were owned by foreign capital and that every struggle against or any request from the employer to become a struggle against the *gavur* (non-Muslim)

³⁴ Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar-I (1908-1925)*; (İstanbul: BDS Yayınları,1991), pp.17, 29.

³⁵ Dimitir Şişmanov, *Türkiye İşçi ve Sosyalist Hareketi, Kısa Tarih (1908-1965)*, eds. Ragıp Zarakolu and Ayşe Zarakolu (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1990), p.58.

³⁶ Tunçay, p.19.

³⁷ Sencer, p.239.

in most cases, driven by an underlying unconscious anti-imperialist principle made it difficult for the Muslim-Turkish workers to acquire a class awareness.

Labor Movement from the Armistice to the Republic

The Armistice signed in October 30, 1918 in Mondros marked the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. This period can be considered a special one in terms of the development of the labor movement, during which a new form of relation was shaped under the conditions of the War of Independence. In addition, the five years between the Mondros Armistice and the declaration of the Republic bore properties worth examining, representing one of the most active and intense periods in the history of the social struggle in Turkey.

When viewed on the international scale, it would not be wrong to define the years following World War I as years of huge social shock and change. The Bolşevik power that appeared on the world stage with the October 1917 Revolution deeply affected all the social struggles and movements of the time, as a source of inspiration and hope for the oppressed people (*mazlum halklar*, in the expression used then), and was a foreshadow of a new era. In Asia, the foreshadowed end of colonial oppression that had lasted for centuries was reflected in the progress of national independence movements and national independence currents in countries such as Mongolia, China, Turkey, and Iran. Within this period, seen on the world scale, the developments in Turkey were following a special path.

The *Beynelmilel İşçiler İttihadı* (International Workers' Union) should be mentioned as an important worker organization that had a presence in this period. Formed at the end of 1920 and dissolved in June 1923, it was a workers' organization with the majority of its members from non-Muslim minorities. It was formed by a joint initiative of three unions, the *Beynelmilel Bina İşçileri İttihadı* (Building Workers' Union), the *Beynelmilel Deniz İşçileri İttihadı* (Maritime Workers' Union) and the *Beynelmilel Sanayi-i Hasabiye İşçileri İttihadı* (Carpenters Union). The new union became a member of the Red International of Labor Unions in 1921. Ten members of the *Beynelmilel İşçiler İttihadı* were arrested after May 1, 1923. Its press channel was prohibited, and then the organization was dissolved in June 29.

One of the barriers for the Marxist-oriented left-wing to reach the workers was the *Istanbul Umum Amele Birliđi* (İUAB). The Union was an organization formed on December 20, 1922, with the effort of fifty workers and the help of the *Milli Türk Ticaret Birliđi* (Turkish National Union of Commerce) before the İzmir Economics Congress. After the union addressed itself to the field of *mücadele-i meşrua-i iktisadiye* (struggle for economic rights), it opened its first association on January 1, 1923 among the Aksaray Tram Workers. Within the first ten months following its foundation, the İUAB established 26 associations.³⁸

Starting from its foundation, the İUAB tried to organize only Turkish and Muslim workers. Its aim was only to defend and protect its own rights and benefits against companies and groups with a national perspective (*milli bir daire dahilinde şirketlere ve kumpanyalara karşı kendi hukuk ve menfaatini müdafaa ve muhafaza*). Declaring that it had no political purpose (*maksad-ı siyasa*), the İUAB also wanted

³⁸ *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2. pp. 69-71.

the employers to have personal contacts with workers “as a father, a brother” (*bir peder, bir ağabey sıfatıyla*) and to help them as far as possible. After a consultancy meeting with several worker organizations on February 10, 1923, the İUAB formulated the demands of the Istanbul working class to be presented to the Izmir Economics Congress.³⁹

With a congress in 1923, the İUAB changed its name to the *Türkiye Umum Amele Birliği*. In the extraordinary congress, which at first won the approval of Mustafa Kemal, a general labor code was requested. Then the union was dissolved on the grounds that it had been founded against the Law of Associations (*Cemiyetler Yasası*).⁴⁰

Many political organizations and associations came into existence at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 in the atmosphere of freedom created by the lack of power and authority. Yet the labor movement in this new period of time had to struggle in a completely different and complex environment that had the traces of the Independence War which was still effective in Anatolia.

During the period from the Armistice to the Republic, the poor peasant masses had made up the majority of the population together with a weak worker segment that had started to accumulate in cities like Istanbul, İzmir, Adana, Bursa, Eskişehir and mining regions. The middle classes included small craftsmen and artisans, officers working for the middle and small-scaled companies, soldiers, and civil intellectuals. On the other side, we can see the Ottoman central bureaucracy, large landowners, notables of Anatolia, representatives of foreign trade bourgeoisie, and a weak local bourgeoisie. Such a social structure led the armed and civil intellectual sections that behaved in the name of and as the striking force of the local

³⁹ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 6. p.1825.

⁴⁰ Ahmet Rasim Kalaycı, “Amele Birliği ya da Bize Özgü Bir Demokrasi ve Sendikacılık Deneyimi,” *Düşünen Siyaset Dergisi*, no.15 (Ankara: 2000), p.184.

(national) bourgeoisie, to undertake the leadership during the National War of Independence and the democratic bourgeoisie revolution, and caused these staff to act in the name of the bourgeoisie to acquire a relative independence and almost a position of over-classes, also as an extension of the state tradition in society.

Highly active labor movements and leftist organizations were observed between 1919-1923, which can be considered as a relatively free period of time in regards to the social-class struggles, in spite of – and partly due to – all the civil commotion present in the country. The worker organizations during the Armistice and occupation periods were in a form where the union and political party formations most of the time existed together.⁴¹

Labor Organizations between 1919-1923

Due to a certain interruption of organizational activities and the conditions of war, the period between 1908-1918 can not be considered as an important organizational heritage to the period of 1919-1923. Most of the political labor organizations and unions were based in the Balkan cities of the Ottoman Empire. Selanik was the center of socialist and worker organizations. Maybe more important than this regional difference, Istanbul and the other parts of the Balkans and Anatolia that had remained in the new republic had lost their labor leaders, since the majority of leaders in the labor organizations were from then non-Muslim minorities who had left the country.

⁴¹ Baydar, 1999, p.216.

As discussed above, the socialist clubs in cities such as Istanbul, İzmir were all dissolved before 1913 and the majority of the cadres were dispersed. For this reason it should be noted that there were almost no organic relations between the working class organizations established between 1919-1923 and the organizations in 1908.

The struggle between the working class and the new regime which was trying to take it under its control was very intense between 1919-1923.

It is possible to classify the working class organizations of 1919-1923 under three main groups: First, the organizations that focused on economic struggle, with a parallel policy to that of the the Second International: *Sosyal Demokrat Fırkası* (the Social Democratic Party), *Türkiye Sosyalist Fırkası* (the Turkish Socialist Party), *Müstakil Sosyalist Fırkası* (Independent Socialist Party) which separated from *Türkiye Sosyalist Fırkası*, *Türkiye İşçi Sosyalist Fırkası* (the Turkish Workers Socialist Party), and their related organizations.⁴²

Second, the organizations that were established by nationalist forces in order to have control over the labor movement: *Osmanlı Mesai Fırkası* (the Ottoman Work Party), *Türkiye Komünist Fırkası* (the Turkish Communist Party, the “official” one that was supported by the new regime), *Amele Siyanet Cemiyeti* (the Society for the Protection of Workers), *İstanbul Umum Amele Birliği* (the General Association of Istanbul Workers), and several local associations and unions.⁴³

And third, the organizations in line with the Communist International and Profintern:⁴⁴ *Türkiye Komünist Partisi* (the Turkish Communist Party), *Halk İştirakiyun Fırkası* (the People's Communist Party), *Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Sosyalist*

⁴² Şişmanov, 1990, p.58, Tunçay, 1991, p.41-42; and Baydar, *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 6, p. 1823. s.v. “İştirakçi Hilmi”

⁴³ Tunçay, p.92.

⁴⁴ The Red International of Labour Unions, widely known by its Russian abbreviation *Profintern*

Fırkası (the Turkish Workers and Farmers Socialist Party), and the organizations under the control of these parties.⁴⁵

Several consolidations and separations occurred among these organizations and some of them were able to survive only a few years. After 1923, the leading cadre of the working class largely was taken under control. The perception of social classes for the new republican elite was based on the motto of *sınıfsız, imtiyazsız, kaynaşmış bir kitle* (a classless, merged mass with no privileges), which was in fact a denial of the existence of classes. Socialist intellectuals could represent themselves more around the line of the *Türkiye Komünist Partisi* as a marginal force with almost no influence over the working masses and society.

The First National Assembly, the Economics Congress and the Workers

Years of war are generally periods when not much attention is given to the life and organizations of workers. This was also the case in Turkey. Yet two laws were passed during the National War of Independence regarding the workers in the Zonguldak region. The first of these ensured the sale of coal dust under the administration of the *amele heyeti idaresi* (worker delegation) and the second one prohibited forced labor and the employment of people under the age of 18.⁴⁶

Other than these two laws, one of the most important developments that marked the economic life in Turkey was the İzmir Economic Congress and the

⁴⁵ Şişmanov, 1990, p.73; and Tunçay, 1991, p.93.

⁴⁶ Yıldırım Koç, *Türkiye’de İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi*, 100 Soruda Serisi (İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi, 1998), p.25.

decisions made there.⁴⁷ The revolutionary ideas that formed the basis of the new republic would be reflected on labor relations in the İzmir Economic Congress.

Yerasimos claims that the administrative staff of the Ankara Government was waiting for the right time to discuss and determine its own approach toward the Istanbul-centered opposition.⁴⁸ The Congress started in İzmir a few days after the interruption of the Lausanne Conference. It also can be considered to have been a way to find a compromise between the bourgeoisie of Istanbul and the new regime in Ankara to build up the economic policies of the new era, including the approach to labor relations.

This approach reflected itself also in the way congress was to gather. The workers, farmers, merchants, and industrialists were invited to the congress each as a social group. The various social groups participating in the congress demanded some improvement for themselves from the government. The priority for each group was certainly its own benefits. This was the case also for the working class.

A delegation from the *Istanbul Umum Amele Birliđi* attended the Congress in which 1,135 representatives participated from all over the country. Many members of the labor delegation were not workers, like its president, Aka Gündüz. The groups were based on professions, in order not to use the term “social classes.” Indeed, the people invited to the Congress were only the leading members of the related professional groups who were at least not against the new regime.

Although the representatives of different social groups participated in the Congress, each group was represented by individuals close to the Government. The labor delegation was lead by the *Aydınlık* (Enlightenment) group, who had an important role in the labor movement in Istanbul. The articles of the proposed resolution were

⁴⁷ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Az gelişmişlik Sürecinde Türkiye*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları 1980), p. 652.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 659.

declared in the periodical *Aydınlık* (no. 14), in April 1923,⁴⁹ with some extensions, under the heading of “The Fundamental Principles Offered by the Working Class for the Economics Congress.” This was related closely to the force of the *Aydınlık* circles within the labor movement and to the support it provided to the new government. The principles included ideas that requested the workers be called “*işçi*” rather than “*amele*”, that workers be represented in the Grand National Assembly and Municipal Councils, that union rights be granted, and that eight hours be the working day.⁵⁰

In contrast to the resolutions of the congress supporting labor rights, the introduction of a new constitution in 1924 to replace the constitution of 1921 did not provide rights such as to organize labor unions or to strike.

The Congress had an important role in the labor movement. The workers of Istanbul who had supported the War of Independence with various ways of resistance had for the first time formulated their demands in a well-organized manner within this Congress. Several decades passed in order to realize the ideas that were put forth here, in the atmosphere of liberation created by the War of Independence. The laws and the practical applications during the 1920s, 1930s and even 1940s can not even compare to some of the clauses of the Economics Congress.

⁴⁹ Yüksel Işık, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze İşçi Hareketinin Evrimi*, p.56.

⁵⁰ For the full details of mentioned articles, see *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2, p.173.

The Working Class in the Early Republican Era

As in all foundational processes, the first years of the formation of the new republic also included a search for policies in an experimental manner. This was the case in economic policy as well as the social issues involving workers and employers. The actions in which the workers were involved, and the organizations they founded within the new era, also should be considered in relation to the political preferences of the new governance. Especially in the first years, the worker activities were highly unrestricted. There were strikes demanding wage increase, working security, and a legal framework for labor rights and working conditions. However, after 1925, the demands and actions of the working class were considered just as a problem of security, and instead of building a legal framework for labor issue, the police department was assigned to “solve” the problem by suppression.

Labor organizations were regarded as suspicious formations and after 1925 more intensive controls applied, which reached their peak in the mid-1930s. The corporatist approach put into practice by the gathering of workers from all professions and/or industries within a single union in İzmir in 1934, under the supervision of General Kazım Dirik, is especially worth examining in this sense. Seven separate organizations in the maritime transport industry were integrated under the *Deniz Amelesi Cemiyeti* (Society of Maritime Workers). The workers in public service were brought together under the *İmtiyazlı Şirketler Memur ve Müstahdemin Birliği* (Privileged Companies’ Officers and Employees Union). For the factory workers, the *Sanayi İşçileri Birliği* (Industrial Workers Union) was

established. Tobacco, press and bakery workers, and drivers were organized in separate associations. All of these associations founded in İzmir were put under the administration of *İzmir İşçi ve Esnaf Birliği* (the Union of Workers and Tradesman of İzmir) in 1935.⁵¹ With this model, the organizations under the supervision of the RPP obtained their financial resources from the workers to control the workers. These organizations were more involved in activities such as providing clothes for poor children or their circumcisions than in defending labor rights.⁵² For a more general view and historical background of corporatist tendency inherent in the Republican elite, and its view of the society, Parla's work can be regarded as an important resource.⁵³

More severe conditions than that of the act of *Takrir-i Sükun* of 1925 came up towards World War II. In June 28, 1938, a new Code of Associations was passed, which prohibited the foundation of any organization, union and social body based on classes, and even to mention the existence of social classes. According to the new law, the organizations could be founded only with the consent of the government, and the approved organizations could operate only under the close supervision of the government and the local administrators. Also the government was given the right to close the organizations at any time.⁵⁴

The martial law that was declared in Istanbul, Edirne, Kırklareli, Tekirdağ, Çanakkale and Kocaeli during World War II and stayed in effect until December 22, 1947 deeply affected the labor organizations and their struggle. With the National Law of Protection put into practice in 1940, the hours of the work day were increased

⁵¹ M. Bülent Varlık, s.v. "İzmir İşçi ve Esnaf Birliği," in *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 2, p. 175.

⁵² For a sample of worker ration as a document, see Sülker, 1987, appendices on p.227 and further.

⁵³ Taha Parla, *Ziya Gökalp, Kemalizm ve Türkiye'de Korporatizm* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989).

⁵⁴ Baydar, *75 Yılda Çarkları Döndürenler*, p.216.

to eleven, the obligatory working method was adopted, leaving the workplaces in mines and some public enterprises was prohibited, and the weekly holiday was abolished. The work of women and children in industry and even some mines during the years of war was decided. Within the same period, a 50 percent decrease in actual wages was realized. Those years represent a period when especially importers and exporters obtained highly profits and the private sector realized its first serious capital accumulation.

The Profile of the Working Class and the First Labor Movements

The economic statism and national industry mixed policy that followed the War of Independence lead to great changes in the working class both quantitatively and qualitatively. The regions where increasing numbers of industrial organizations were located, such as İstanbul, Ankara, Bursa, Adana, Eskişehir, Kayseri, and Nazilli took the forms of worker centers where workers intensively lived.

It might be useful to examine the results of the industrial census of 1927, in order to examine the overview of the worker profile. According to these statistics, approximately 257,000 workers were working in a total of 65,245 enterprises. Nearly 50,000 of those were small businesses that had a maximum of four workers in charge and that were still operating based on manual labour. The large factories made up two percent of the total number of enterprises and around 85,000 workers were working there.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Koç, *Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi*, p.30.

After the republic, the end of the conditions of war and the increase in the number of industrial proletariat, and their increasing density in certain large industry centers lead the workers to organize struggles in order to guard their own benefits. Between 1924-1927, a large scaled stream of strikes influenced nearly all industrial centers. The strikes broke out both in foreign and local owned enterprises. The local and foreign capitalists came together against the Turkish workers due to class benefits. Although the central government and the local administratives attempted conciliation between the workers on strike and the foreign enterprises, the workers rejected these attempts figuring that they would end up suffering harm from this compromise; then the security forces were sent to attack them in response. For example, due to the strike of the workers of the Adana-Nusaybin railway lines, which was under French control, started in 1927, the army and police were moved to the region and the strike was suppressed although with difficulty. When the trains stopped operating due to the strike, the army started to fire on the striking workers, and the women and the children lay down on the rails to block the passage of the train.⁵⁶

Workers set about founding unions especially in large industrial centers, enjoying the organizational rights that had been guaranteed in the Constitution of 1924. Nearly 20 unions were founded in Istanbul and İzmir within the same year. The workers started to get organized in unions in the coal district of Adana, and in the Eskişehir, Bursa, Konya, Edirne, Zonguldak and Balya mines. The governing party, *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası* (Republican People's Party), developed two separate precautions to take the union movement under control, with the fear from the effort of union the administrators in relation to the Communist movement to combine the

⁵⁶ Yüksel Akkaya and Metin Altıok, s.v. "Adana-Nusaybin Demiryolu Grevi – 1927", *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1, pp.9-10.

separately established unions within the trade unions. While planting secret agents in the existing unions, it played the role of an initiator in the foundation of an organization called the *Türk İşçi Birliği* (Turkish Workers' Union) combining the *İstanbul İşçi Birliği* (Istanbul Workers' Union) and the *Zonguldak ve Balya İşçi Birliği* (Zonguldak and Balya Workers' Union). The purpose of this organization was to gather all the unions within the country under the same umbrella and to take the entire labor movement under the control of the government.⁵⁷

After a while, discovering the intention of the government, the workers that were committed to an uncomprisable independent labor movement separated from the Union to establish the above-mentioned *Amele Teali Cemiyeti* (Laborer Progress Association). This new association, which was composed of twenty unions, had nearly 30,000 members. The new association attracted a great number of workers, successfully governing the strikes of tramway, mail, railways and bakery workers. As a result of the organized struggle of the *Amele Teali Cemiyeti*, the government had to grant the right of a weekend holiday to the workers and officers working in industry and trade enterprises.

May 1, 1924 was celebrated in Istanbul and Ankara. In Istanbul, the *İstanbul Umum Amele Birliği* celebrated the Worker's Festival with a meeting in its head office because the government did not permit a demonstration. Within the same year, the workers of the *İstanbul Dokuma Fabrikası* (İstanbul Weaving Factory) and the railway company, the *İzmir-Aydın Demiryolu Şirketi* (İzmir-Aydın Railway Company) also went on strike with the demand to increase wages.⁵⁸

In conclusion, the first years of the Republic represent a period in which it was not sufficient to take the required steps to get the rights considered in the İzmir

⁵⁷ Şişmanov, p.130

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.128.

Economics Congress and to pass the related working laws, yet still quite dynamic as compared to the next period with regards to the worker organizations and their activities. Before this dynamism was suppressed by the prohibitions, the organizational right that the constitution of 1924 provided laid the grounds for the defense of worker rights.

The Maintenance of Order Law and the Working Class

The importance of the principles making up the ideological character of the Maintenance of Order Law of 1924 with regard to the Turkish Republic clearly proved itself during the process of the self-strengthening of the Republic. The Turkish Republic, emerging from a period of wars of more than ten years with short interruptions, passed from a time of high life and property loss rates, especially during the War of Independence. It is known that significant riots occurred in the days following the establishment of the Republic. Nearly all the riots and riot attempts known to have occurred within the establishment period of the Turkish Republic belonged to this period, except the riot of Dersim. Within this period, among the riots of tribal chiefs in the east that took place with British support, some entirely religious riots were observed. The riots and outbreaks increased military expenses, caused many deaths, and then these weaknesses in turn led to the rise of many social pains.

After examining these power balances in the first years of the Republic and the approaches developed to take these under control in brief, it is necessary to look

at an important event that would deeply affect the labor movement. Although this law, known as the act of *Takrir-i Sükun*, was issued with the necessity of taking under control all those powers mentioned above, it had long-term effects on the labor movement in regard to its results.

The act of *Takrir-i Sükun* did not include laws directly specifying the working class. Yet in practice it significantly obstructed the process of working class development that took place, especially in the large cities with a certain dynamism. Although the target of the law was not related to the spread of the labor movement and achievement of concrete gains, its results laid the ground for it. With this period, the publication of essays of socialist tendency in the press was prohibited and severe restrictions were applied to the organizational rights of union workers.

Despite all these, the *Amele Teali Cemiyeti* decided in the congress of 1926 to apply to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) for a labor law. Yet the worker delegation sent to the TBMM to announce this decision was arrested and the *Amele Teali Cemiyeti* was dissolved.

Upon the rejection obtained in response to the request of permission to celebrate the Worker Festival on May 1, 1925 from the governorship of Istanbul, the *Amele Teali Cemiyeti* held a meeting in its head office. The association published a booklet under the title *1 Mayıs Nedir?* (What is May 1?) with the title “*Bütün Dünya İşçileri Birleşiniz !*” (All the Workers of the World, Unite!) on its cover. Within that year the workers of the *İstanbul Havagazı Şirketi* (İstanbul Coalgas Company), the *İstanbul Tramvay Şirketi* (İstanbul Tram Company), the *Zonguldak Ereğli Kömür Madeni* (Zonguldak Ereğli Coal Mine), the *İzmir Kuru Üzüm İmalathanesi* (İzmir Raisin Plant) and the officers and workers of Adana, Samsun and Erzurum Telegram went on strike. And in 1926, the workers of Soma and Bandırma Railways and

İstanbul Port left work with a series of demands including wages and health conditions. In 1927, the strike that was initiated by 3,000 people upon the attempt of the Port Company to bring a new system, changing the working order that the workers had been used to for years, and its intention to transform them to staff dependent on the Company, turned into a armed conflict with the intervention of the security forces. As a result of the shootouts, fifteen strikers and five policemen were killed and 320 of the striking workers were arrested, and 32 of them were removed to the Extraordinary Court.⁵⁹

In 1928 an increase in strikes is observed. The workers of *Adapazari Karoser İmalathanesi* (Adapazari Coachwork Plant), *İstanbul and Edirne Demiryolu Şirketi* (İstanbul and Edirne Railway Company), *İstanbul Dokuma Fabrikası* (İstanbul Weaving Company), the *Tütün İmalathanesi* (Tobacco Factory), *Demir Çelik İmalathanesi* (Iron and Steel Mill), and *Tramvay Şirketi* (Tram Company) went on strike.

A total of 33 strikes took place between 1923-1936. The most important characteristic of these strikes is their continuity until 1932. The demands put forth within these strikes include wage increases, the regular and on-time payment of wages, the recognition of the union by the employer, the removal of the accomodation and health issues, limiting the workday to eight hours, equal wages for men and women or local and foreign workers, and sometimes the recruitment of local workers instead of foreign workers.

Most of the strikes after the War of Independence were in companies owned by foreign capital. These strikes, which were supported by the government as well as the local employers, were suppressed by the security forces only to the extent that they

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 130, and further.

posed a threat to the integrity of the government and its benefits. The strikes began to be prohibited as the government started purchasing the foreign businesses and “nationalized” them. As the Kemalist government claimed that exploitation can only exist in the foreign businesses, they concluded that strikes were not necessary for the governmental enterprises and evaluated the workers that went on strike, especially after 1930, as “troublemakers that violate the order.” Moreover, although May 1 was “accepted as Turkish Worker Festival” as per Article 14 of the “*Amele Grubunun İktisat Esasları*” (Economic Principles of the Worker Group) in the İzmir Economics Congress in 1923, with the law passed in on National Festival and General Holidays in 1935 the “1st of May is changed to the Spring Festival.”⁶⁰

Another important aspect of the period is the change of the ethnic structure of the working class. Until the Republic, workers from the non-Muslim minorities were the most active part of the labor movement. The composition of population changed a lot in the 1910s and 1920s, national and religious tensions caused migration and population exchange policies throughout the Balkans and the Middle East. In the period after the Republic, the workers bearing an organizational dynamism were in general from Muslim Turkish origin, employed in companies owned by foreign capital.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1923-1946* (Ankara: İmge Yayınevi, 1999), p.352

⁶¹ Alpaslan Işıklı, *Türkiye’de Sendikacılık Hareketleri İçinde Demokrasi Kavramının Gelişimi* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayını, 1994), p. 12.

Attempts for a Labor Law between 1924-1934

The rapid industrialization realized and the increase in the number of workers brought about the long awaited Labor Law after the first decade of the Republic. The previous drafts were dated 1924-1925, 1927, 1929, 1932 and 1934. Each of these draft bills reflect the political and socio-economic conditions of its period and shows diverse characteristics.

In the draft bill of 1924, even the right to strike was included. Yet that draft bill did not become a law due to the reluctance of the political power that was trying to overcome the massive social problems realized in the country. As the riot of Şeyh Sait and the act of *Takrir-i Sükun*, passed in response to this riot aimed at surpassing the social opposition and to restrict the granted rights and liberties, the draft bill of 1924, prepared extensively to include the right to strike, could not become a law until 1926 and was brought about by the government itself then. The same year, the *Amele Teali Cemiyeti*, which insisted on the passing of the referred draft bill pending in the TBMM, was dissolved and the delegation that had been sent to present this demand to the parliament was arrested.⁶² The government was standing against the granting of strike and union rights, and did not pass in a labor law as promised.

A new draft bill was prepared in 1928. This was different from the one in 1924. Above all, it was more restrictive. For example, there were no rights to strike or union rights in it. Despite this, the parliament of the new Turkish Republic, which

⁶² Yüksel Işık, *Sendikal Bürokrasi ve Çözüm Önerileri*, 2nd edition (Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi, 1995), p.63

was affected extensively by the world depression of 1929, could not accept even this restricted bill.

Still under the influence of world depression there was a step backwards in the economic policies after 1931. Instead of the liberal economic policy followed before, a protective one was seen as appropriate in the new period. According to Boratav, “there are two characteristics of economic policies between 1930-1939: Protectionism and statism.”⁶³

Of the draft bills prepared in the initial years of the Republic, but that did not pass into law for different reasons, the draft bill of 1932 is of special importance. This draft bill included more liberal precautions compared to Code 3008 of 1936.⁶⁴ The clauses of the draft bill on the right to found professional associations, the right to strike and on the resolving of collective work disputes are important regulations within this field. The term of “professional association” was used in the meaning of union as quoted from French laws dated 1884 and 1920.⁶⁵

As is well known, however, just like the draft bills that appeared in nearly all governmental programs, the version of 1932 did not pass into law. That was a time when the single-party regime was achieving a more authoritarian character.⁶⁶ The draft bill of 1934 that was prepared later included more regressed regulations than the bill dated 1932. The draft bill of 1934 was like a transition between the draft bill of 1932 and 1936, which represented a more authoritarian character.⁶⁷

⁶³ Boratav, p. 45.

⁶⁴ Selim İkin, “Devletçilik Döneminin İlk Yıllarında İşçi Sorununa Yaklaşım ve 1932 İş Kanunu Tasarısı,” *ODTÜ Gelişme Dergisi, İktisat Tarihi Üzerine Araştırmalar Özel Sayısı* (1978), pp. 302-348.

⁶⁵ Mesut Gülmez, *Türkiye’de Çalışma İlişkileri (1936 Öncesi)*, 2nd edition (Ankara: TODAİE Yayınları, 1991), pp.254-255.

⁶⁶ Cahit Talas, *Türkiye’nin Açıklamalı Sosyal Politika Tarihi* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi 1992), p.101.

⁶⁷ Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, p.354.

The draft bills were brought up almost every legislative year starting from 1924. They were discussed in various aspects until 1936 yet not passed. The long discussions eventually ended at the end of the sixth İnönü Government.

In this governmental period, the restrictions that had been introduced on workers in 1908 were brought up again with the law of 1936. Moreover, a legal arrangement that was more regressed than the act of *Tatil-i Eşgal* was prepared. The first law of the new republic on industrial relations was Labor Code 3008 of 1936. The general secretary of the RPP, which was in power as the single-party, evaluated the new law as a step against class consciousness: “The new Labor Law will not allow the birth and survival of a class consciousness, and will even sweep its potential forerunners off.”⁶⁸

Having mentioned the affects of the *Takrir-i Sükun* on the labor movement and then shortly examined the reluctance the government showed to arrange labor relations, we can now take a closer look at the law dated 1936, the effects of which would continue until the 1960s.

The Labour Law of 1936

Until 1936, labor relations were arranged by indirect laws. None of these laws was intended to arrange the field of industrial relations integrally, but only to bring some legal decisions on particular issues. The law was accepted on June 8, 1936, passed in as Code 3008 in June 12, 1936, and was put into effect one year

⁶⁸ Metin Özüğurlu, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’ndan Cumhuriyet’e: Örgütlü İşçi Hareketi ve Demokratikleşme Süreci,” in *Türkiye’de Sendikacılık Hareketleri İçinde Demokrasi Kavramının Gelişimi*, ed. Alpaslan Işıklı, p. 125.

later. It was among the most important laws that has shaped labor issues not only on the single-party era but also until Labor Law 931 of 1967. In the periods of World War II, the transition to the multi-party regime, and military intervention, in the context of a rapid social, political and economic change, this law was in effect for 30 years.

In order to understand the content and approach of the law, it is necessary to examine the conditions that the workers faced then in the country. An American research group of ten people under the presidency of Walker D. Hines conducted a study in 1933-1934 and published a report containing extremely important clues reflecting the working conditions in Turkey. According to the report:

...in general, the levels of wages are only sufficient to scrape a living, and as a result of that the participation level of the wageworker class is extremely low. Usually, ...the working hours of the workers are long. In Turkey, even the most improved precaution taken to ensure the security of the workers represents a highly primitive case. There are various applications in the field of worker health, and they are “poor” especially in small businesses ... The work insurance rarely and individually exist.⁶⁹

This study mentioned above called attention to the status of workers devoid of assurance in health, insurance and wage conditions and suggesting to bring arrangements on this issue. This approach was indeed in line with the approach of the government of the time. Thus, the fact that the Labor Law of 1936 was the first law with the intention to arrange labor relations as a whole under these circumstances, and that it did so with a systematical structure makes it especially important. As

⁶⁹ Walker D. Hines and others. *Türkiye'nin İktisadi Bakımdan Umumi Bir Tetkiki, 1933-1934*, Vol. V-VI (Ankara: Mehmet İhsan Matbaası, 1936), p.241. (“...ekseriyetle ücret seviyesi, ancak, idamei hayat için kifayet edecek derecededir ve bundan dolayı ücretli sınıfın iştirak kuvveti son derece düşüktür. Umumiyetle ...işçilerin çalışma saatleri uzundur. Türkiye’de, amelenin emniyetini temin için alınan tedbirlerin en iyisi bile çok iptidai bir vaziyet arzeder. İşçi sağlığı konusundaki uygulamalar çeşitli olup, özellikle küçük kuruluşlarda “fena”dır ...İş sigortası pek nadir ve münferit ahvalde mevcuttur...”)

Tolga puts it, Code 3008 differs from its predecessor, as being a complete law on labor issues.⁷⁰

Besides basically introducing arrangements on the individual relations between workers and employers, the Labor Law also contains important clauses on collective labor relations, and within this frame it is evaluated as “the first fundamental source of the Turkish labor law.”⁷¹ Explicitly prohibiting the right to strike, and suggesting a worker representative instead of labor unions, the law includes all the individual and collective relations, notions and institutions of a contemporary labor law except labor unions.⁷² The main idea was to introduce some legal measures to handle social problems arising from a growing wage-worker population, but at the same time to keep the working class under the control of the new regime and not to provide any opportunity to organize within unions.

Definitely, the Labor Law has a restricted scope in terms of the number of workers per company and the sectors and operational fields it has covered.⁷³ Since the largest portion of waged workers were in small enterprises, initially the law was only valid for state enterprises and the private factories in the main industrial centers. But this scope was extended, though gradually, in the following years.

One of the important features of the law was that it also included measures to enforce the new rules in its field. Yet the insufficient level of control led to a negative effect on the enforcement of some clauses, mainly those protecting workers. The law introduced the problems of the working masses as a new element in the

⁷⁰ Muammer Vassaf Tolga, *İş Hukuku* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ticaret Postası Matbaası, 1958), p.45.

⁷¹ Nuri Çelik, *İş Hukuku Dersleri*, 14th edition (İstanbul: Beta Yay., 1998), p.89.

⁷² Ali Güzel, “3008 Sayılı İş Yasasının Önemi ve Başlıca Hükümleri,” *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları*, vol. 35-36 (İstanbul: 1987), p.177

⁷³ Makal, 1999, p.356

press of the time. We see several articles focusing on the compliance of the employers with the regulations introduced by the law.⁷⁴

The law stayed in effect for a long period of time and it determined many aspects of labor relations in the second half of the century, until a new Labor Law in 1967. Furthermore, according to Talas, the Labor Law of 1967 “is the continuation of the law accepted in 1936, based on its general systematic and its clauses on individual labor relations.”⁷⁵

Industrialization, Statism and the Working Class in the 1930s

After World War I, a great recession was realized with regard to the human resources and capital accumulation during the Armistice and the War of Independence years. However, the attempts to speed up the industrialization process started with the Republic, and the industrial investments in the 1920s within this framework quickly increased the demand for workers.⁷⁶ In the period after 1930, when statist industrialization policies were followed, it is observed that the demand for workers, especially qualified workers, increased along with the acceleration in industrialization. In that period of time, thousands of new workers were required in order to implement the development program in selected sectors.⁷⁷ The report prepared on the First Industrialization Plan that was put into force in 1934 included this comment for the *İş ve İşçiler Bürosu* (Work and Workers Office): “our national

⁷⁴ For an example, see “Patronlar Kanuna Karşı Vaziyet mi Alıyorlar?” *Cumhuriyet*, September 2, 1936.

⁷⁵ Cahit Talas, *Sosyal Politika* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1967), p.200.

⁷⁶ Bilsay Kuruç, *Belgelerle Türkiye İktisat Politikası* (Ankara: AÜSBF yay. 1993), p.CI.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

industry will realize a new leap forward by adding 15,000 workers to the working masses where we reserved a place for iron industry.”⁷⁸ The public investments that are included in the Second Industrialization Plan were calculated to create a new employment volume of 35,000 workers.⁷⁹

In fact, as will be seen when we examine an extended period of time (1927-1965), the employment rate in the agriculture sector realized a growth of 111 percent and more importantly, this growth was more than tripled, reaching 380 percent in the industrial sector.⁸⁰

Indeed the industrialization made up the most important link of the economic development strategy that was dominant throughout the world, and Turkey was no exception. As stated before, serious growth was realized in business sectors within the industrialization process. By all means, this tendency increased more in the statist period. The fact that the industrial business scales established by the government were much larger led to the condensation of workers in larger businesses. As stated before, the studies conducted in workplaces under the scope of the Labor Law showed that while there were 42 workers per workplace in 1937, this number reached 86 in 1943.

This worker concentration lead to a shift in the labor relations from the individual to the collective field, and the current and possible problems increased the requirement to arrange this field. However, this can not be considered independent of the statism because the statism notion affected the spirit of the law as much as the increase in the number of workers underlined the *de facto* necessity for the law. To

⁷⁸ İş ve İşçiler Bürosu Raporu, Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin Birinci Sanayi Planı, 1933, p.33.

⁷⁹ Ali Nejat Ölçen, “1923-1938 Döneminde Birinci ve İkinci Sanayi Planları,” in *Atatürk Dönemi Ekonomi Politikası ve Türkiye'nin Ekonomik Gelişmesi* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Yay., 1982), p.147.

⁸⁰ Ali Gevgilli, *Türkiye’de Kapitalizmin Gelişmesi ve Sosyal Sınıflar* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1989), p.97.

state it in a different manner, the significant turning point in Turkey's coming out of the manufacturing process was the statistism action.⁸¹

The State in the 1930s became the largest employer as a result of nationalization efforts and the newly established enterprises. During the same years, the adoption of the plan idea followed the statist policy, and the authoritarian attitude of the RPP within the political plan affected the labor movement. As is well known, while the exercise of the right to strike was made more difficult and eventually was prohibited by the Labor Law in 1936, the RPP tried to take the worker organization under its control.⁸²

The fear of the RPP of an extensive labor movement during those years also played a role in these developments. Allowing the establishment of the *Serbest Firka* (Free Party) in 1930, and the strikes organized by the workers in Istanbul and especially in İzmir caused the government to hold back. Within the same year and in the following years, TKP partisans organized illegal meetings and demonstrations, and posted bills around some factories, which lead to a greater disturbance among the single-party government of the RPP.⁸³

In response to these developments, the RPP set forth a bidirectional attitude. On one hand, the TKP militant and sympathizer workers were arrested and imprisoned; on the other hand, worker organizations were created to prevent the secret worker organizations, to take the workers under the RPP's control, and to equip them with an official nationalist ideology.

As well known, the ruling elite never desired the workers to develop an independent initiative during the single-party era. On the contrary, as Sülker has expressed, the RPP tended to found worker organizations to govern the workers in

⁸¹ Ibid. p.49.

⁸² Güzel, p.161.

⁸³ Şişmanov, p. 133.

the way it desired.⁸⁴ The labor movement policy of the RPP was put into practice first in 1934, in İzmir. Workers in each profession and/or line of business under the administration of General Kazım Dirik, the Governor of İzmir, started to gather under a single association or union. For example, seven separate social body in the maritime transport business line were integrated under the social body of the *Deniz Amelesi Cemiyeti* (Maritime Laborers Union). The *Sanayi İşçileri Birliği* (Industrial Workers Union) was established for the factory workers. Tobacco, press and bakery workers and the drivers were organized under separate associations. All these unions and associations in İzmir were put under the administration of the *İzmir İşçi ve Esnaf Birliği* (Union of Workers and Tradesman of Izmir), founded in 1935. The purpose of this last organization was defined as “to make the workers and tradesman committed and useful to the regime in all aspects.”⁸⁵

To force the workers to join these organizations, an application was introduced called the *işçi karnesi* (worker ration). According to this application, a worker was to apply to the founded association in the profession or business line until March 1, 1935 and acquire a worker ration in order to keep his position or to apply for a new job. It was also obligatory to pay a fixed subscription fee for these organizations to which they were, in a way, subscribed by force. This subscription fee was to be automatically cut from their wages by the employer and paid to the organization. In this way, even a financial resource was created with the wages of the workers for the organizations under control of the RPP.

It was no coincidence that İzmir was selected as the first city. After all, İzmir was the most active city in the labor movement. In addition, in 1932 the police had arrested nearly twenty TKP sympathizer workers who had been preparing to

⁸⁴ Stülker, p.32.

⁸⁵ Güzel, p.162.

establish a union in this city. Eventually, İzmir was the city where many protest demonstrations were held by workers against the draft bill prepared in the 1930s. These protesting and demonstrations continued until the acceptance of the Labor Law in 1936.⁸⁶

This organizational form is indeed the result of the reflection of the economic policy of the time, and the political authoritarianism of the RPP, on the social life. This reflection showed itself as taking all kinds of social organizations, including sports clubs, under the RPP's control.

In fact, the attempts of the RPP to control them started in 1923. The president and vice president of the *Türkiye Umum Amele Birliği* were party members themselves.⁸⁷ In many countries at different times, official worker organizations have been founded in order to take the working class under the management and control of certain official ideologies and governing parties, to prevent the free organizational formations of the working class, and to cut their connections with the socialist movement. However, the complicated social relations and the inner dynamics of the labor movement prevented this application from always surviving everywhere to full extent and to become established. And in many cases, the working class has created the opportunities to build up its own free organizations.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.162.

⁸⁷ Gülmez, *Türkiye'de Çalışma İlişkileri*, p.423.

The Working Class and the Second World War

In 1938, the RPP adopted a more direct and definite way with regard to worker organizations. The prohibition method was changed in 1938 by amending the Code of Associations dated 1909 and founding associations based on classes was forbidden. Item H of the 9th Article of the law states that “Associations based on family, religious community, race, sex and class can not be founded.”⁸⁸

No right to exist was granted to the associations, except some worker associations of the RPP, which were resembling mutual aid societies rather than worker organizations. As a result, the RPP tried to take the working class under supervision and control, through easygoing and compliant worker associations on the one hand, and enterprise and factory directors, sometimes of a tough and sometimes of a fatherly nature, on the other.

Workers, Employers, and Working Conditions during WWII

In general, war means a state of emergency for a country and its people. Disasters occur in the form of destruction, starvation and fear. War affects the political, social and economic life of a country and brings great changes. When World War II reached the borders of Turkey, precautions were taken as if Turkey

⁸⁸ Quoted from the law by Sülker, 1955, p.33.

would enter the war, and legal arrangements and prohibitions were made. The political pressure on intellectuals and workers were increased and the barriers for the political and labor organizations were enhanced.

Working hours were extended and forced labor was put into effect in some sectors. Efforts were made to close the gap created by adult male workers leaving their jobs for military service with woman and child workers. While the real income of the wageworkers decreased, an extreme increase in the prices due to the black market, profiteering and stockism was observed. Many people became rich from the war. While the employers got richer, it was the workers who suffered the consequences of the war, as Kurthan Fişek writes.⁸⁹

The Martial Law (*Örfi İdare Kanunu*) was accepted in May 22, 1940. The law included all the clauses necessary to limit the rights of thinking, meeting and demonstration, getting organized, press and publication. In addition, private courts were to be established under the name Martial Law Courts. Based on this legal arrangement, the martial law that was declared in November 23, 1940 in Kocaeli, Istanbul and all the cities of Trakya stayed in effect until December 23, 1947, i.e., more than one year after the end of the war. The martial law played a determining role in making the political and police pressure on the working class and intellectuals more intense. The pressures' continuity was ensured by the extensions with the end of the war coming closer. In this sense, Turkey passed to the multi-party democracy under martial law.

Maintaining the martial law after the war was used in prohibiting the unions and parties of the workers and socialists trying to get organized by benefiting from the right to found associations re-granted in May 1946. In December 1946, two

⁸⁹ Kurthan Fişek, *Türkiye'de Kapitalizmin Gelişmesi ve İşçi Sınıfı* (Ankara: Doğan Yayınevi, 1969) p.76.

socialist parties and their related unions were dissolved by the martial law. In brief, the Martial Law of those years represented a nightmare for workers and intellectuals. Within the cities where the martial law was declared, a strict control and censorship was realized in nearly every segment of society.

The National Law of Protection and Working Class Rights

The first effects of the war conditions were observed on the work law. While some legal decisions of the Labor Law dated 1936 were put into effect in 1937 and many of them were waiting to become effective, the law nearly was abolished in the early 1940s. The National Law of Protection (*Milli Koruma Kanunu*) Code 3780, dated January 18, 1940, introduced legal decisions on strictly arranging industry, trade and agriculture, and made the working conditions extremely harsh.

It will be appropriate to examine some related articles of the National Law of Protection and to try to understand how the economic and social life was arranged during the years of war, based on this law.

As Taner Timur states, “There is a law that should be persistently emphasized while examining the social-political life of the years of war in Turkey: The National Law of Protection. Actually, even the developments following the war are related to the implementation of this law, either directly or indirectly.”⁹⁰

The National Law of Protection was laid down in order to arrange the economy strictly, as stated above. This was to be executed by the government

⁹⁰ Taner Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası*, 3rd edition (Ankara, Imge Kitabevi Yayınları, 1994), p.176.

whenever the cases specified in the first article of the Law take place, by using the duties and authorities again specified in the Law. The purpose was to ensure the compliance of the country's economy with the World War conditions, which was possible to be entered any time. In fact, the situations of emergency set forth are listed as follows in the first article:

- a) General and (or) partial mobilization,
- b) The possibility of the government to enter a war,
- c) The case of a war between foreign countries that are of concern to the Turkish Republic.⁹¹

The National Law of Protection gave an extensive arrangement opportunity to the government for the economic life; on the one hand by imposing what and how much to produce in the industry and mine enterprises (institutions), which programs to be followed in these enterprises in order to achieve the production targets, and on the other hand, regulating the foreign trade and controlling prices, eventually interfering strictly in the worker and employer relations. In the discussion held on the Grand National Assembly on the articles of concern for industrialists, tradesmen and farmers, the articles became the target of severe criticism, it was striking that the restrictions regarding worker rights were passed over without any debate. For instance, during the discussion for the article related to the extension of working day by three hours, none of the deputies defended the workers' rights. On the contrary, a deputy shouted, "Only three hours?" from his seat.⁹²

The National Law of Protection significantly influenced the course of the labor movement. This legal arrangement that grants extended authority to the government in order to solidify the economic and national defense in situations of

⁹¹ Güzel, 1993, p.167.

⁹² Ibid, p.167.

emergency, naturally influenced the workers more deeply than other social powers. A rumor was widespread that the Nazi's would invade Turkey to attack the Soviet Union from its south. This led the Turkish government to take precautions although Turkey did not enter the war.

The National Law of Protection dramatically carried back worker rights. Working conditions were made harder. It became legal to use women and child labor even in the sectors that it was previously forbidden. Real wages decreased by more than fifty percent while prices increased as a result of black market and profiteering. Yerasimos summarizes the situation as follows:

The National Law of Protection, dated January 18, 1940, settled down to work by removing some fundamental rights that had been granted to the workers in 1936. Some of the legal decisions related to the work of women and children were suspended and the weekly work holiday was removed; now workers did not have the right to leave their jobs and the mandatory working principle was put into effect for all people in general, especially the peasants located in mine regions.⁹³

The negative features that the National Law of Protection brought to the workers continued especially during the war. The 9th article of the law gave the government the authority to create a worker staff in industry and mining sectors, to fulfill the liabilities made mandatory by the law. According to this authority, the government could assign the wagework obligation to citizens. And the 10th legally declares that no one can leave his/her workplace without an acceptable reason. Especially the amendments dated April 3, 1944 go further, granting the employers the right to use force where needed to keep the worker at the workplace.⁹⁴

⁹³ Yerasimos, p. 702. (“...18 Ocak 1940 günlü ‘Milli Koruma Kanunu’, 1936 yılında işçilere verilen bazı temel hakları ortadan kaldırmakla işe ko-yulur. Kadın ve çocukların çalışmasıyla ilgili bazı hükümler askıya alınır ve haftalık iş tatili kaldırılır, işçilerin artık işlerinden ayrılma hakları, yoktur; genel olarak bütün halk için, özellikle maden bölgelerinde yer alan köyler ahalisi için zorunlu çalışma ilkesi konur...”)

⁹⁴ Işık, 1995, p.104.

Work accidents showed an outstanding increase in this period of time. Between 45-50,000 accidents occurred during the years of war; and 4,000 workers passed away as a result of these accidents. The peasants around Zonguldak and Ereğli coal districts were taken away from their land and forced to work in coal mines. Longer working hours, forced labor, lack of work experience, hunger and exhaustion caused more accidents which caused serious injuries and deaths.⁹⁵

Both the anti-democratic clauses of the Labor Law, the restrictions that were set forth by the martial law put into force, and the National Law of Protection imposed extremely bad conditions on workers historically. Having studied the economic history of the Turkish Republic, Boratav said the following about the National Law of Protection:

The Government of Refik Saydam tried to solve the problem by methods such as strict price controls and sequestering the agricultural products through low prices. The National Law of Protection that was passed in January 1940 would be the main tool of this approach. In addition to the clauses that control the workforce such as wagework liability, extending the working hours and wage restriction, it is this law that grants large powers to the governments against the capital, to temporarily sequester private enterprises; to determine the maximum prices in the import and domestic trade and minimum prices in export; and distribution of fundamental goods with ration card.⁹⁶

The workers reached a point where they could not in any way fulfill their minimum rights and demands, and maintain their living conditions. Combined with the profiteering and black market that became widespread due to the conditions of war, the fall in the wages transformed the world of the workers into a prison. While

⁹⁵ Güzel, 1993, p.170.

⁹⁶ Boratav, 1990, p. 65. (“...Refik Saydam Hükümeti; sorunu, katı fiyat denetimleri ve tarım ürünlerine düşük fiyatla el koyma yöntemleri ile çözmeyi denedi. Ocak 1940’ta çıkarılan Milli Koruma Kanunu bu yaklaşımin ana aracı olacaktı. Ücretli iş yükümlülüğü, çalışma süresinin uzatılması ve ücret sınırlaması gibi işgücünü denetleyen hükümlerin yanı sıra; sermayeye karşı da, hükümetlere, özel, işletmelere geçici el koyma, ithalatta ve iç ticarete azami, ihracatta asgari fiyatları saptama, temel malların vesikayla dağıtılması gibi geniş yetkiler veren, bu kanundur...”)

this was the case, the government that acquired the authority to extend the working hours made use of the law to the full extent. Although the work of the women and children at night and of hard work was prohibited by the Labor Law, as a result of the authority granted to the government by the National Law of Protection, many tragic cases were observed in the work life. This is the period with the highest rate of child deaths. The law granted the government the power to force workers to work to the bitter end, and the government never hesitated to use this authority.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL CHANGES AND THE WORKING CLASS

FROM 1945 TO 1960

The International Conjecture and the Change in Turkish Politics

The international political system underwent a serious structural change after the end of World War II. The new international system was determined by the emergence of two opposite blocs by the two superpowers and the relations between them developed into what became known as the Cold War. Conferences held in Yalta and Potsdam with the leaders of the three powerful governments in 1945 symbolized the beginning of this system.

By 1947, the hidden polarization had begun between the United States of America and the Soviet Union on concerns such as the future of Germany, Iran, Turkey, and about the Greek Civil War; and the constitution of governments in the Eastern and Western European countries; and this became visible with the declaration of the Truman Doctrine on March 12, 1947. The Truman Doctrine manifested that the USA wanted to close the gap of power against the inapproachability of the Soviet Union in the power balance of the Old World after

the war. With the following circumstances, this polarization and the emergence of blocs around the poles accelerated.

This change in the international system found its echo in both the internal and foreign policies of the countries in the system, and also played the essential role in the reorganization of Turkish foreign policy. Another essential and determining effect on Turkish foreign policy was the Soviet Union's policy towards Turkey during, and especially, after the war. This negative policy resulted in the end of the good relationship between the countries which had begun with the Turkish Independence War; and Turkey, although it resisted the Soviet demands on the Straits and North-eastern Anatolia, began to feel under a serious threat.

The understanding of security which was crystallized in the last years of the Ottoman Empire attributed importance to the power balance in Europe. The Ottoman government had provided its own security by using the elements of this balance against each other. The new republic followed a similar policy between the two world wars, however, in contrast with the Ottoman period, Turkey did not enter into direct alliances with any of those powers. However, it was difficult to continue with such a strategy after the war. Hence, Turkey had to play a new role in the process of power balance by the strategy of direct alliances, just as it had in the late Ottoman period.

The United States of America was the only power which could constitute an alternative system of alliance against the Soviet Union, which was the dominant military power in Europe after the war. Turkey acted with the feeling of being besieged by the Soviet Union and its proponents in both Caucasia and the Balkans. Moreover, the Democrat Party brought up a new threat of being besieged from the south. Thus, the USA became more important for Turkey in terms of security after

World War II. Turkey intended to establish a power balance by having an alliance with a distant superpower against the one which was near. Turkey had to join one of the blocs emerging due to the international bipolarity, as not joining seemed impossible.

Moreover, in this period, the organizational and armament structure of the Turkish Army gradually were becoming aligned with the standards of the USA and NATO. It can be said that Turkey, especially the DP government, was eager to house nuclear weapons, and thus the security program was shaped around weapons of this kind, which came from the USA. In the perception of security in this period, national security was equated with security of NATO and the USA.⁹⁷

Until the end of World War II, the Turkish Republic had a foreign policy tradition which was very sensitive to the issues of independence and sovereignty. These concepts were indispensable for all countries; however, they were reminders of sorrowful experiences for Turkey. In the last period of the Ottoman Empire, powerful western governments frequently had interfered in the internal affairs, and tended to implement their demands on the fate of the country. This experience had stamped its traces on the collective mind. Thus, at the Lausanne Conference, Turkey had to compromise on many subjects, just to have the political, economic and legal agreements of privileges abrogated. The oversensitivity of Turkish statesmen on the protection of independence and sovereignty led them to be prudent in their relationships with other countries.

Nonetheless, the founders of the republic were concerned about reaching and keeping up with the level of development of the Western civilization in social values; thus they attributed a greater importance to the relationships with the countries

⁹⁷ Serhat Güvenç, "Bir Dış Politika Aracı Olarak Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri: Yetenek ve Uygulamalar," in *Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, Reviewed 3rd edition, ed. Faruk Sönmezoğlu (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2004). pp.895-933, pp.904-905

belonging to this civilization; and in the periods when they had problems with them, they even came up with statements such as “Westernization in spite of the West.” Turkey, which was trying to enter into an alliance with the USA and NATO, had such a foreign policy tradition.

Why Turkey entered NATO is explained by the international conditions of those years. Thus, some have the impression that Turkey was pushed into NATO by external influences. This is partly true. In the new world polarized around two distinct social systems, Turkey’s place was determined by its own search for a political and social system. In other words, some internal factors played definite roles in Turkey’s entrance in the Western bloc.⁹⁸

Towards the end of the period between the wars, a statist policy of industrialization was dominant. Substructural services were supplied for entrepreneurs’ production, some intermediate goods were produced, and businessmen who had been in the bureaucracy or had good relationships with the state began to accumulate wealth. This became evident during the war years. The Democrat Party, which was founded on January 7, 1946, and supported by the above-mentioned groups, became a candidate for power. The Republican People’s Party wanted to enter NATO essentially for matters of security, while the Democrat Party leaders considered this rather as a guarantee of the multi-party system, and of their own government after 1950.⁹⁹ Moreover, the Democrat Party socio-economically situated itself by the capitalist system, and found it necessary to be a member of NATO to realize its foreign relations and collaborations accordingly. As a

⁹⁸ Baskın Oran, “Türkiye’nin 'Kuzey'deki Büyük Komşu' Sorunu Nedir? (Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri 1939-1970)”, *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*. vol. 25, no. 1 (March 1970), pp.41-94, p.73.

⁹⁹ Oral Sander, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, 1947-64*. (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Yayınları, 1979), pp.66-67.

matter of fact, there was no dissential note in the voting about NATO in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on February 19, 1952.

On the other hand, the Turkish Republic, led by Atatürk, had begun its challenge of socio-cultural westernization with the foundation of the state. This was a principal of internal politics rather than that of foreign policy. Nonetheless, the socio-cultural closeness to the West guided Turkey, which had to take sides in the bipolarized world. In other words, Turkey's close relations with the West were the result of an ideological choice, and it was not only because the national advantage was there. The spiritual and political values which were shared by the majority of people in the country necessitated the improvement of relationships with the West, especially with the USA.¹⁰⁰ As a result, the Turkish advantage in foreign politics was taken as becoming close to the West, and to enter into political, military, and economic alliances with the Western countries.

There was another aspect: Foreign aid.¹⁰¹ Turkey did not engage in the war, but it accumulated 245 million dollars by selling raw materials to the combatant countries until 1945. However, the war had a negative effect on the economy. Moreover, the prices of some export commodities, which had increased during the war, decreased to the regular levels leading to a decrease in the foreign income. The country needed new sources for income. Public opinion expressed its will for development and US aid was deemed necessary for this. The USA wanted Turkey to be its supporter in politics and security. Thus, the more support Turkey provided the USA, the greater the amount of aid it would receive. The Turkish leaders of the

¹⁰⁰ Nasuh Uslu, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri* (Ankara: 21. Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2000), pp.25-27; pp.52-53.

¹⁰¹ Haluk Ülman, *İkinci Cihan Savaşının Başından Truman Doktrinine Kadar Türk-Amerikan Diplomatik Münasebetleri, 1939-1947* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1961), p. 89.

period were worried about a decrease in the importance attributed to Turkey in the USA.

In this period, the USA began to aid Turkey within the framework of the Truman Doctrine, and the aid continued with the Marshall Plan.¹⁰² These aids did not solve the entire problem, and on the contrary increased the need for foreign aid. In fact, Turkey had to spend 400 million liras annually for the maintenance of the military equipment donated by the USA. Moreover, the replacements for this equipment were only available in the USA, thus the relations had to be improved in order to get more aid from this country. The inevitable step to achieve this was to enter NATO.

NATO was established on April 4, 1949. The first application to enter NATO was made on May 11, 1950, while the Republican People's Party was in power.¹⁰³ After this application's denial, the second general election was held and the Democrat Party acceded to power. The second application, while Turkish soldiers were being sent to Korea, was denied again. On September 21, 1951, the NATO Council of Ministers gathered in Ottawa invited Turkey and Greece to join NATO, and Turkey officially joined to NATO on February 19, 1952.¹⁰⁴

It can be derived from the above-mentioned facts that after World War II, Turkey acted based on an ascertainment that the security of the country could not be fulfilled with its own resources. The decision makers of Turkey then could be said to have been influenced mostly by foreign factors. They especially were concerned about being alone against the Soviet Union.

¹⁰² Ülman, 1961, pp. 89,121.

¹⁰³ Sander, 1979, pp.67-82.

¹⁰⁴ Fahir Armaoğlu, 20. *Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi 1914 – 1980*, 3rd edition (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1986), p.520.

Transition to the Multi-party System and the Working Class

There has been a tradition of limiting labor rights after a democratization period in Turkey. The first restrictions introduced after the Second Constitution in 1908 were on the labor movement. The right of organization, which was promised on the decisions made at the İzmir Economic Congress, and included in the 1924 Constitution, was rendered invalid by the *Takrir-i Sükun* in 1925, and by the Law of Associations and the Law of National Protection in the 1930s and 1940s. The same tradition continued during the attempts for democratization after 1945.

After World War II, Turkey wanted to keep up with the democratization of the world, and attempted a transition to a multi-party system. One of the first legal arrangements was the democratization of the law of associations in 1946, which prevented organization based on classes. During the second half of 1946, it was free to found class-based organizations, and this resulted in an increase in the number of labor unions and their members. In 1947, the Law of Unions was made to control this process. The law, which seemed progressive at first glance, aimed at restricting workers' rights and controlling the potential labor movement. Thus, in the multi-party system, which was so important for Turkish political life, the first prohibitions were exercised on the working class. The prohibitions were not enough to prevent the developing labor movement. The government and industrial bourgeoisie tried to influence working class with unions under their control.

Capitalist development was gradually speeding up with the liberal policies after 1945. The Marshall Plan as a part of the Truman Doctrine helped economic and social change. Feudal structures started to go into a process of dissolution to leave their place to capitalist relations, and capitalism gained a more dominant role.

The process, which began with the War of Independence, led to a transformation after 1945. The collaboration with the USA made the capitalist life style dominant in all fields. On January 18, 1954 the Law of Supporting Foreign Capital, and on March 7, 1954, the Law of Petrol were passed in the Great National Assembly. Despite the Law of Supporting Foreign Capital, foreign capital hesitated until the Law of Petrol, but flowed into the country in search of petrol, conducting research in various regions of Turkey. Despite this flow, the government was not satisfied with the amount of these foreign investments. However, this led to the spread of capitalist relations, which accelerated after 1950.

Especially during the periods when Menderes was governing with the promise to “create a millionaire in every district,” capitalism put the burden of the process on the working class. Workers not only had to carry the burden of the economic system, but also could not express their demands by organized action. Their organizations were also under the effect of the Truman Doctrine, which represented itself with the foundation of the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) against the independent and socialist unions. The ICFTU and the AFL (American Federation of Labor) tried to influence labor unions all over the world, by means such as training labor leaders in the USA, and supporting anti-communist tendencies within those organizations. An interview of Kenan Öztürk with Irving Brown, who was the representative of the AFL in Europe from 1946 until the 1960s, provides a detailed view of the Cold War strategy of the USA in the field

of labor unions, and includes some important clues about initial relations between the US and Turkish unions.¹⁰⁵ Instead of organizing within the unions which were under the effect of Cold War, or going beyond the limits imposed by the existing unions, labor movement tried to get closer with other structures of social opposition in order to confront the oppression in the 1950s.

The point not to be overlooked here is the encounter with the developing social opposition. That is because the DP government did not hesitate to suppress all the oppositional structures which were against its benefit. The effects of capitalist development upset society and the discontent with the government became visible. The opposition developed at all levels, one of which was the workers. The RPP, which has been subject to severe oppression until then, joined the opposing mass, and then came the coup d'état in 1960.

The DP had come into office with the promise of democracy, but during its governance it exercised severe oppression against all democratic demands. The party was overthrown in an anti-democratic way, and their overthrowers became the voice of the silent masses who wanted democracy.

The Economic Factors Affecting the Social and Political Structure of the Working Class between 1945 and 1960

The changes which determined the basic tendencies in the economic structure of the period began in the years 1946-1947. The Republican People's Party,

¹⁰⁵ Kenan Öztürk, *Amerikan Sendikacılığı ve Türkiye: İlk İlişkiler, AFL-COI'nun Avrupa Temsilcisi Irving Brown ile Söyləsi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, 2004), p.7

which was governing in 1947, left the strict statist economic policies implemented in the previous period. In 1947, liberal economists prepared the Economic Development Plan, which was not implemented legally, but influenced the next period. The main tendency in the plan was the freedom given to private enterprise. This was also in accordance with the DP's attitude toward the economy. Policies supporting private enterprise had become clear in the RPP period, and they developed while the DP was in charge. Nonetheless, the role of the state in the economy was dominant throughout the period. In contrast with the previous periods, state enterprises were used to support private enterprise. Boratav states that the basic economic policies did not come with the DP government. On the contrary, the process which began in 1947 was pursued by the DP; and that the period between 1946 and 1953 should be considered as a continuous unit.¹⁰⁶

The main economic indicators of the 1946 period reflect a development process. There was an increase of eleven percent in the national income. This increase could compensate the decrease that had occurred in the years of war. In this period, agriculture developed and the amount of exported goods was doubled.

This period of rapid development between 1946 and 1953 included the material conditions resulting in a common increase in the levels of income across all social groups and levels. Indicators show that this opportunity was realized. Boratav thinks that the period between 1954 and 1961 can be considered one of obstruction and re-adaptation.¹⁰⁷ Economic expansion and liberal foreign policies ceased, imports were limited, and an atmosphere of stagnation was dominant. The DP had acceded with the promise to transfer the state enterprises to the private sector, however, because of the stagnation, the DP had to expand public investments. The

¹⁰⁶ Boratav, 1998, pp.80-83.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.85.

ratio of public investments in the gross national product increased. However, the public enterprises of the period had the aim of supporting the accumulation of private capital. Private capital accumulation was fed by new sources and gradually became more important. Especially, the use of tractors in agriculture accelerated the transformation in the mode of production.

Industrialization policies were implemented in urban areas and there emerged an increasing need for skilled workers. Then the immigration began from the rural areas to the cities. The demand for wage-workers increased. At the end of the 1950s, the unemployment problem started to be an issue. The period between 1945 and 1950 can be considered as a turning point in terms of unemployment in Turkey. Population increased too much between 1945 and 1960. While it was 19 million in 1945, it became 27.5 million in 1960. The most important demographic fact of the period was urbanization. The urban population was 18 percent of the total population in 1945, and 25 percent in 1960.

All these economic factors had effects on the labor relations, and increased the importance of social policy in Turkey. These were among the determining factors of the qualitative and quantitative transformation of the working class.

Labor Relations and the Period of Institutionalization in Social Policy

The institutions constructed by a series of legal regulations at the beginning of the considered period were of great importance in the constitution of the working

class and the institutionalization of class struggles. The period between 1945 and 1960 can be considered as a period when the institutional structure was constituted. There occurred three basic attempts in terms of institutionalization in January 1946. On January 1, the Institution of Labor Insurance (*İşçi Sigortaları Kurumu*), and on January 25, the Employment Agency (*İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu*) were founded. On January 28, the Law on the Ministry of Labor (*Çalışma Bakanlığı*) was passed. On June 8, 1949, the Law on the Retirement Fund (*Emekli Sandığı*) was passed. With the passing of the Law on Social Insurance (*Sosyal Sigortalar Kanunu*), the Institution of Labor Insurance became the Social Insurance Institution (*Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu*).

Many laws and regulations were introduced in the realm of social policy and within the scope of the social security system: The law on accidents and diseases related to working conditions (*İş Kazaları ile Meslek Hastalıkları ve Analık Sigortaları Hakkında Kanun*, June 27, 1945), insurance for the elderly (*İhtiyarlık Sigortası Kanunu*, June 7, 1949), insurance for disease and maternity (*Hastalık ve Analık Sigortası Kanunu*, January 4, 1950), insurance for disability, old age, and death (*Maluliyet, İhtiyarlık ve Ölüm Sigortaları Kanunu*, February 4, 1957), and the law on the midday break (*Öğle Dinlenmesi Hakkında Kanun*, March 2, 1954) .

Regulations and auditing about labor relations, which were done by the Labor Office of the Ministry of Economics, began to be pursued by the Ministry of Labor. The ministry had some financial problems and could not find appropriate buildings, but then completed the necessary structure and continued working. In the first years, with the aim to share the experience of the developed countries which had advanced their labor systems, two experts from the British Ministry of Labor were called. The duties of the ministry were to prepare the laws, rules and regulations to constitute the labor policy, to take the regulatory precautions, to organize the

relations with international labor associations, and to solve any dispute between workers and the employers. Although the Employment Agency was working more and more, it could not keep up with the transformation of the labor market and economic development. The performance and organization of the agency was insufficient to find jobs for unemployed, and to provide qualified workers for employers with its professional courses.

During the 1950s, many workers benefited from the advantage suggested by the social security system. From 1950 to 1960, the number of the workers who received insurance increased by 112 percent. However, this number was much less than the number of workers the Labor Law covered.¹⁰⁸ This is undoubtedly due to many workers being illegally employed without insurance; and auditing processes that were not satisfactory.

Another attempt at institutionalization was in international relations. By joining to the League of Nations in 1932, Turkey had automatically been a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The relations with the ILO were very limited at the beginning. The period between 1932 and 1946 should be considered as symbolic membership,¹⁰⁹ as there were no worker or employer organizations in Turkey until 1946, and the country was not fully represented there. Through the end of the 1940s, the initial relations started. In 1952, an agreement between the ILO and Turkey was made, and the Near and Middle East Labor Activity Center (*Yakın ve Orta-Doğu İşgücü Faaliyet Merkezi*) was established in İstanbul. This organization would supply the opportunity to improve the relations with ILO; however, the interest was not satisfactory and the activities were delayed, thus the center was moved to Lebanon. In this period, Turkey was chosen for the board of management

¹⁰⁸ Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1946-1963* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2002), pp.394-95.

¹⁰⁹ Cahit Talas, *Toplumsal Politika* (Ankara: İmge kitabevi, 1995), p.193.

twice. Turkish delegates declared that Turkey attributed great importance to collaboration with the organization, but a corresponding effort was not present. Turkey accepted ten regulations of the ILO, which were called the labor constitution, and were important in the organization of labor relations and the enhancement of the working conditions; however, these made up only nine percent of the total regulations of the organization in 1960. Turkey did not sign any agreements between 1952 and 1959.

Institutional regulations of the period are important as they determined the structures of social policy and labor relations in the following periods. Comprehensive efforts in institutionalization went parallel to the basic authoritarian attitude. After the state organized itself, the organization of workers and employers were restricted to a state-controlled unions.

The Emergence of Labor Unions and a Short Period of Freedom

The 1924 constitution and the Law on Associations sketched out a frame in which labor unions could be organized. After the Labor Law in 1936, the Law on Associations was changed, and it was prohibited to found associations based on class. The change applied in the law in 1938 resulted in a more strict prohibition of unions. Then, the following years witnessed a total termination of organization opportunities of workers due to war, martial law and the National Law of Protection.

The years after the war, starting with 1947, were times when democratization was strongly advocated, and the conditions, rules and regulations were adapted with the democratic discourse. The war was over; Turkey had joined the winning side in the last days of the war. Though without any action, Turkey had declared war on Germany and its proponents. Turkey was attempting to organize a show which hopefully would transform it into a member of the democratic world.

One of the first changes for to such an attempt was to change the Law on Associations of 1938, which had prohibited founding an organization based on class. By the change on June 5, 1946, the ban on class-based organizations was eliminated to pave the way for labor unions and parties.

After June, the sudden democratization turned into the advantage of labor movement, and the process of unionization was accelerated. In the multi-party process, the Turkish Socialist Party (*Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi*) and the Turkish Socialist Worker and Peasant Party (*Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi*) led the foundation of many unions, most of which were included by the Confederation of İstanbul Labor Unions. The confederation published magazines and newspapers, and worked for a more democratic atmosphere of labor relations. The new unions, centered in İstanbul, opened departments in several industrial cities, and became the focus of the labor movement with their seminars, conferences publications within a short time.

An accelerated organizational development under the effect of socialist groups disturbed the government. A socialist labor movement in Turkey was a dangerous kind of opposition for both Turkish ruling classes and for the USA hegemony in the region. The government had used the martial law to dissolve political parties, workers' unions, and the newspapers and magazines which

supported them in December 1946. Not only had these “dangerous” organizations been dissolved, but also their managers had been arrested. But the international and domestic expectations of democratic measures did not allow a complete ban the labor unions. The government decided to continue the exhibition while stopping the 1946 unions which were not under its control, and started a new wave of unions in 1947.

Just a month after the elimination of socialist parties and unions, the Labor Law Unions accepted on January 20, 1947. It was preventing unions from political activities, and suggested to dissolve the unions which were “not-nationalist”, i.e., class-based, and to arrest the founders. The distinctive feature of the new Law of Unions was that it aimed to prevent the relations between the labor movement and the socialist organizations, and attempted to keep the unions under the control of the Republican People’s Party. With this law, a framework for the unions, which would be the communication medium between the party and the workers, and transferring the orders from the former to the latter, was constructed.

The New Labor Law and the Unions of 1947

1947 is an important date for the Turkish labor movement as it was the first time that a law for unions was accepted. Taking into account the experience of the unions in 1946, the government planned to prohibit strikes, strike attempts, collaboration with political parties, and political activities for unions. Before the law was passed, it was discussed both in the Assembly and by the public. *Cumhuriyet*, the newspaper which was one of the most important supporters of the government,

announced the new law with the headline “Unions Abolished.” In *Sendika*, a periodical published by the İstanbul Confederation of Labor Unions, which was controlled by the socialists, the comment was “legal acknowledgement.”

In an article published in *Sendika*, with the title “Towards the Legal Acknowledgement of the Unions,” the new law to be passed was evaluated. *Sendika* declared that the working class happily had reached the end of its struggle and had obtained what was desired. However, *Sendika* had been too quick for a positive comment; and in the next issue, after a closer examination of the draft, the headline had become “This Law is Not Democratic.” The new law intended to stop the labor movement the article said. In the last issue the confederation had published before it had been dissolved, universities had called to object to the law, with the headline “Professors, Where Are You?” After this call, the Turkish Socialist Party, Turkish Socialist Worker and Peasant Party, and İstanbul Confederation of Workers Unions were all abolished with the help of the martial law. Thus, all the agents which could have organized and opposed the new Law of Unions had ceased to exist. Many socialists and unionists had been arrested. One week after the decision of dissolving the unions, martial law started in 1940 had been cancelled in December 23, 1946.¹¹⁰

The parties who agreed on barring the unions from politics were not only the prime minister and the minister of labor. Although they were opponents, the Democrat Party and Republican People’s Party were of similar opinion. They agreed on the prohibition of politics while the law was being discussed in the Assembly. In spite of this, both tried to get the support of the workers. For example, the *İşçi Bürosu* (Workers’ Office) of the RPP had become the İstanbul Association of Labor Unions after the law was passed.

¹¹⁰ Işık, 1995, p.111.

The groups of both parties were of the same opinion on the national character of unions, thus they wanted to bar unions from politics and membership in international organizations. Nonetheless, the DP argued for the right to strike though with restrictions. DP deputy Fuat Köprülü stated that this right existed in the laws of Western societies and Turkey should act the same if the aim was to join them. Without this right, it could not be claimed that there was the freedom to organize unions and to strike in a democratic sense. He said that he was not for the right to strike in the broad sense and suggested that the regulation the 1908 *Tatil-i Eşgal* had introduced would be appropriate. “If we do not accept the right to strike, the law of unions will be useless. It is regarded to be only for show” Köprülü said.¹¹¹

Moreover, both the RPP and the DP stressed “statism” in their programs, thus it was a conflict to defend the strike. Irmak stated that the ILO suggested organizing unions while it did not argue for strike. The right to strike should not be passed, and the function of unions should be limited to being delegates, representatives of the workers as there was no working class in Turkey such as those in the west; Turkish workers constituted a group only.

Orhan Tuna comments that although the political power could not tolerate the rights given by the Law on Associations, it attempted to make regulations about the unions: “The law is undoubtedly one of the steps taken involuntarily, obligated by the international political and military conditions, and with the aim of joining the nations representing democracy, just as the transition to the multi-party system.”¹¹²

After the socialist political opposition was forced underground, there remained the discussions between the parties which were struggling to pursue the

¹¹¹ Orhan Tuna, “Türkiye’de Sendikacılık ve Sendikalarımız”, *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları*, vol. 20 (İstanbul: 1969), p. 256.

¹¹² Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi (1908-1985)*, 1990, p. 74

present system. The aim of the two main parties was to keep left wing policies out of discussion in the period between 1946 and 1953:

In some analyses, this atmosphere was considered a populist regime. The condition of sustaining this regime, keeping the ruling classes under control, and preserving their long-term interests is to prevent a leftist political opposition which claims to organize and represent people from being an alternative to power. As a matter of fact, this is what happened in Turkey. After a short period of democracy, at the end of 1946 all the leftist parties and the unions which supported them were dissolved, and the socialist movement was driven out of legal politics.¹¹³

It is interesting that Sadi Irmak, the minister of labor of the period, argued for the acknowledgement of the strike as a legal right, whereas prime minister Recep Peker stood for banning it. According to Irmak, the subject did not include the discussion on strike; he asserted that he could not understand why the government suggested that strike attempts should be considered illegal. While having different views on strike, Irmak and Peker agreed on the article that “the labor unions should be isolated from political organizations.”¹¹⁴

The government, which could not let the labor movement continue on such a track, taking the 1946 unionizations into account, prepared the Law on Unions in 1947 and brought about the condition of “nationalist unionism.” The cold war applied world-wide against the USSR found its echo in Turkey. Nationalism was the most favorite post-war trend as an anti-communist ideology. In order to avoid socialist effects within the unions as in the second half of 1946, nationalism was the ground on which the 1947 unionism was based. This was a new understanding of

¹¹³ Fatih Güngör, in *1946-1960 Döneminde Türkiye’de Sendikacılık Hareketi ve Demokrasi*, ed. Alpaslan Işıklı, 1994, p.155. (“...Bazı çözümlerinde ‘popülist’ bir rejim olarak da nitelendirilen bu ortamın, egemen sınıfların denetiminden çıkmamasının, bunların uzun dönemli çıkarlarını zedelememesinin ön koşulu, doğrudan halk sınıflarını temsil etme ve/veya bunları örgütleme iddiasında solcu bir siyasi muhalefetin iktidar alternatifi olarak gelişmesine imkan verilmemesidir. Nitekim, Türkiye’de de böyle oldu. Kısa süren bir yaygın demokrasi denemesinden sonra 1946 yılı sonunda solcu partiler ve bunların paralelindeki sendikalar kapatılarak, sosyalist hareket yasal siyasetin dışına itildi...”)

¹¹⁴ Işıklı, *Osmanlı’dan Günümüze İşçi Hareketinin Evrimi (1876-1994)*, 1995, p.114.

labor organization based on nationalism. Irmak explains the rationale of the law on unions as below:

Nationalism is a vital necessity, just like air and water. Thus we think that it is natural to direct the labor unions by national motives.¹¹⁵

There is another point to mention before analyzing the articles of the Law on Unions. As is well known, the Law on Unions was considered as a right which should be recognized immediately in the İzmir Economic Congress in 1924. Despite this fact, recognition was postponed until 1947. The law was the fruit of long and challenging efforts, but not those of the organized workers. There were two reasons why this law was prepared. The first one was to keep up with the democratic atmosphere dominant world wide, in order to be eligible for financial aid from other countries. The other reason was to prevent the unions from collaborating with political parties on the basis of class. Faruk Pekin's comment is similar. Pekin thinks that the Law on Unions was not the result of the efforts of the labor movement, but that of the government trying to seem to be democratic, and to control the growing labor movement.¹¹⁶

This nationalist law, which was agreed on by the DP and the RPP in the Assembly, and which, however, was criticized by the same DP outside the Assembly, legitimized membership in unions and allowed the foundation of more than one union per branch of industry.

It should be noted that the 1947 unionism did not give the unions the role appropriate to what the historical and social conditions then necessitated. The unions could not enter into dialogue with employers or sign contracts, but were limited to joining commissions to declare opinions only.

¹¹⁵ Işıklı, 1994, p. 155. (“*Millilik memleketin hava gibi, su gibi, muhtaç olduğu havaici zaruriyededir. Binaenaleyh, işçi birliklerinde milli motiflerle hareket etmeyi tabii gördük*”)

¹¹⁶ Faruk Pekin, *Türkiye Sorunları Dizisi*. vol. 1 (June 1987), p. 109.

Article 5 focuses on a subject that was not discussed much: the prohibition of political activity. This was the only issue upon which prime minister Recep Peker, Minister of Labor Sadi Irmak, and the DP and the RPP groups agreed. The law prohibited unions from making politics, and from being the means of any political party. This law aimed at the prevention of the relations naturally constructed between the socialist parties and the unions, based on the regulations of the 1946 Law of Associations.

The political parties seemed to be directed towards isolating themselves from the unions; however, it did not proceed as expected. The RPP tried to gather workers in the Istanbul Federation of Labor Unions (*İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliği*), and the DP founded İstanbul Federation of Free Labor Unions (*İstanbul Hür İşçi Sendikalar Birliği*) to attract the workers who wanted to gain the right to strike.¹¹⁷ These parties created a process of controlled labor organization by using these unions while they were in government. Union organization controlled by these parties reached its peak between 1947 and 1960.

Article 7 of the 1947 Law of Unions, which is a perfect example of controlled and nationalist unionization, prohibited strike and lockout. The law, even when it was a draft, triggered many debates in the Assembly. The DP argued that the right to strike should be acknowledged, while prime minister Peker wanted to define attempts to strike as illegal. The RPP regarded strike as a tactic aimed to do economic harm, and stated that acknowledgement of strike would necessitate that of lockout, which would get the workers into trouble. According to the RPP, strike was a dangerous means which could be used by communists. The DP wanted to attract the

¹¹⁷ Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi, vol. 2, p.58.

workers who were opposed to the RPP, and argued for the right to strike for the unions which remained out of political actions and relations. ¹¹⁸

While the law was being discussed in the Assembly, the DP argued against the RPP's opinion that Turkish unionism should not be similar to the European one. Outside the Assembly, the DP seemed to want an unlimited right to strike, while in the Assembly, the DP wanted a restriction for the right to strike, and wanted the prohibition of political activities for unions just as much as the RPP did.

The RPP's attitude is well-known and more clear. They wanted a limited unionism, and were against strike. The DP's contradictory attitude is interesting. This continued into the DP government in the 1950s. In 1950-1951, the program of the first Menderes government states:

We consider the right to strike as a natural right according to the principles of democracy. Thus, we will legalize it as in all democratic countries, in the way that it does not disturb the order and economic harmony. ¹¹⁹

Menderes led the government four more times within the next ten years, but the right to strike disappeared from the programs. On the other hand, he took all the precautions to engage the unions with the DP. In the 1950s, the DP continued the tradition of the RPP in limiting and prohibiting the unions. The close-to-worker-attitude was transferred to the RPP instead.

After the discussions on Article 7, it was decided that the unions which supported strike and lockout would be dissolved for three months to one year, or permanently. The government argued that they prohibited lockout by prohibiting strike; however, they could not stop lockouts in practice. The employers took the advantage of the Law on Labor, and fired many workers whenever they need.

¹¹⁸ Işık, 1995, p.117.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., (“Demokrasi prensiplerine göre tabii bir hak olarak algıladığımız grev hakkını sair demokrat memleketlerde olduğu gibi içtimai nizamı ve iktisadi ahengi bozmayacak surette kanunlaştıracağız”)

The Conditions Laying the Ground for TÜRK-İŞ

The heritage of the years 1946 and 1947 for shaping the future of the Turkish trade unions was the crystallization of two completely opposite union practices.¹²⁰ The unionism of 1946 tried to organize an independent working class movement. On the contrary, the unionism of 1947, which had developed under the effect of the new trade union law, created a tradition of labor unions guided and controlled by the state and the bourgeoisie.¹²¹ The unionism of 1947 was the starting point for the process of the foundation of Türk-İş in 1952, which provided the “reliable” basis of trade unions for the regime, isolated as much as possible from any left-wing effect.

The unions founded after 1947 soon joined federations. They constituted either regional federations, or combined with others in larger unions. For example, the unions founded by the railway workers from Haydarpaşa, Sivas, İzmir and Adapazarı came together in 1952 and founded the Federation of Railway Workers (*Demiryolu İşçileri Federasyonu*).¹²² Besides these industrial unions, some unions at the city level were founded, which were politically more critical. The most important one was the İstanbul Federation of Labor Unions (*İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliği*). It was founded on March 21, 1948, and controlled by the RPP. This confederation acted as a national center until 1952 when TÜRK-İŞ was founded. The RPP, which had attempted to direct the labor movement through the Workers’ Office, founded the Federation and supported it financially. The manager of the Office, Dr. Rebi

¹²⁰ Zafer Toprak, “1946 Sendikacılığı”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, 31 (July 1996), pp.19-29.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.19.

¹²² Koç, *Türkiye’de İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi*, p.50.

Barkın, had been publishing a newspaper named *Hürbilek*, which was transferred to the Federation later. This newspaper had an important role in supporting and directing the process for building a national level confederation.

All these attempts to direct the Federation could not stop some opposing unions and unionists; and after the DP's success in the elections in 1950, this opposing wing gained power. During the single-party government, the Federation had not accepted some free unions; and it opposed the ones which were against the government. Then, the opposing unions constituted the İstanbul Federation of Free Labor Unions (*İstanbul Hür İşçi Sendikalar Birliği*) with the support of the DP. A struggle between the confederations rose. The new federation called all the unions for membership, addressing the "conscious and patriotic Turkish worker" (*şuurlu ve vatanperver Türk işçisi*).¹²³

The two powerful parties of the period were struggling to be dominant with their hegemony on the labor movement and organizations. Before the 1950 elections, the RPP had pressed workers into supporting the party and declare this. This was to the extent that some DP supporter unionists had had to give interviews declaring that they would vote for the RPP.¹²⁴ The DP had encouraged its supporters to announce the RPP's oppression of workers and unions. After the DP won the elections, the Federation of Free Labor Unions began to work more, while the managers of the İstanbul Federation of Labor Unions became surprised and worried. The DP intensified the propaganda for unification, and eventually, the İstanbul Federation of Labor Unions proposed that they unite. The two opposing confederations united under the name the İstanbul Federation of National Labor Unions (*İstanbul Milli İşçi*

¹²³ Kemal Sülker, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Tarihi* (İstanbul: Tüstav Yayınları, 2004), pp.146-156.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.151.

Sendikaları Birliđi). They elected new managers; however, the political atmosphere was dense and the unionists from the different parties set into quarrelling.

As an overview, it can be said that there was a clear distinction between words and action. All the parties claimed that unions should be independent and free from politics; however, all the crews in all of the unions were highly politicized. Despite all of the quarrels, after a challenge of six years, Türk-İş (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, the Confederation of Turkish Labor Unions) was founded as a result of the will to intervene into the labor relations with a centralized structure. Regional and industrial attempts to unite resulted in a country-wide confederation. After many meetings of different local and industrial unions in 1951 and 1952, Türk-İş was founded legally on July 31, 1952.

The Main Characteristics of Türk-İş Unionism (1952-1960)

After the Law on Unions was passed, the government sent the unionists close to the party to the USA for education. This was to prove the law functional and to direct the labor movement according to its own tendencies. It should be noted that while the law was being discussed, the government wanted Turkish unions not to be similar to western unions; however, after the law, it did not hesitate to collaborate with American unions. When the question was freedoms and rights, the government was nationalist; when it came to the matter of directing the labor movement, the government chose to consult with the USA.

The union leaders under the effect of the DP, the RPP and the cold war policies of the USA made Türk-İş a pioneer of a new era of trade unions. The basic aim was to follow a trans-party policy (partiler üstü politika) which tries to keep the working class out of political action.¹²⁵

Within the context of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, the USA supported the formation of a national level confederation and tried to manipulate Türk-İş after its foundation. The local expectations were similiar to those of the foreign ones. The minister of labor, Nuri Özsen, formulated the expectation of the government from Türk-İş:

First of all in the struggle against communism and in all national and vital causes of the Turkish nation, for defending the principles of freedom and democracy, we do not doubt that the confederation will have a hundred percent patriotic and nationalist character.¹²⁶

The foundation of Türk-İş also symbolizes the beginning of a new period for the labor movement. The government tried to found a Türk-İş type of unionism until 1952. As the only ruling power in the Western World, the USA influenced the attitudes and responses against labor relations had an important effect on the route of Turkish unions.

Pekin refers to the USA's manipulations in the foundation of Türk-İş. Türk-İş developed under the consultancy of the AFL-CIO, and was involved in politics even less than the AFL-CIO desired.¹²⁷ It cannot be claimed that its distance from politics drove it to be a professional union. Pekin states:¹²⁸

¹²⁵ *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3. p.326.

¹²⁶ Işık, 1995, p.118. ("Başta komünizm olmak üzere, Türk milletinin milli ve hayati davalarında, demokrasi ve hürriyet prensiplerinin savunulmasında, Türk işçi sendikal konfederasyonunun zerre kadar müsamaha kabul etmeyen, yüzde yüz vatanperver ve milliyetçi bir karakter taşıyacağından asla şüphemiz yoktur")

¹²⁷ Until 1955, it was the AFL (American Federation of Labor) which was acting as a representative on American trade unions. In 1955 the AFL and COI (Congress of Industrial Organization) united their forces and formed AFL-CIO.

¹²⁸ Pekin, p. 114. ("1952'de Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu TÜRK -İŞ kuruldu. TÜRK -

The Turkish Confederation of Workers Unions, TÜRK-İŞ, was founded in 1952. The American influence in this should not be overestimated in a conspiracy theory sense. In fact, the foundation of TÜRK-İŞ was due to many factors. The workers of the public sectors, who considered themselves as officers, who did not risk themselves in partisan appointments, and whose working conditions were better than the workers of the private sector, were dominant in the confederation. Thus Türk-İş had to get on well with the state. It had to be the “organization of all times,” and had to defend the ideology of the state.

TÜRK-İŞ, the Government and the Workers (1952-1960)

Code 5018 on unions included prohibitions on the political activities of the unions. The statement from Article 5 below shows this clearly: “Worker and employer unions cannot be engaged in politics, and cannot be the medium for political activities of any organization.” There were strict precautions to implement the law. A notice published by the Ministry of Labor in 1947 is a good example of this situation, which proceeds as below, after summing up the decisions of the law:

These decisions should absolutely be implemented by District Labor Principals by auditing the unions at least once every month, checking if they are engaged in political activities, controlling their expenditures and ascertaining any illegal aspects to inform the Ministry immediately.¹²⁹

İŞ'in kuruluşundaki Amerikan etkilerini bir 'komplo teorisi'nin ışığında fazla abartmamak gerek. Gerçekte TÜRK - İŞ'in kuruluşu çok değişik etkenlere bağlı. Kendilerini daha çok memur gibi gören, partizanlığa dayalı atamalar ortamında kendilerini tehlikeye atmak istemeyen ve özel sektördeki işçilere oranla çalışma koşulları daha iyi olan kamu kesimi işçilerinin çoğunlukta olduğu, yalnızca partizan atamalar nedeniyle devletle iyi geçinmek zorunda olan sendikacıların bulunduğu bir Türk - İŞ, 'her devrin örgütü' olmak ve resmi ideolojiyi savunmak durumundaydı.”)

¹²⁹ Circular 2079-20 dated 13.6.1947. Çalışma Mevzuatı, Çalışma Bakanlığı Yayınları, No.17, (Ankara, 1949), p.788 (“Kanunun bu hükümlerinin mutlak surette tatbikini sağlamak maksadıyla; Bölge Çalışma Müdürleri veya tecrübeli iş müfettişlerinin muntaka dahilinde bulunan sendikaları en az ayda birr defa ve kanun hükümlerine aykırı ahvalin vukuu haber alındığı takdirde derhal murakabe ve teftişe tabi tutarak siyasi faaliyette bulunup bulunmadıklarını ve bilhassa varidat menbaları ile nerelere ve ne gibi sarfiyat yapmakta olduklarını easalı bir surette tetkik eylemelerini ve kanun hükümlerine aykırı hareketleri tesbit olunan sendikalar hakkında derhal bakanlığa bilgi verilmesini rica ederim.”)

Founded in such a context, the directors of Türk-İş were afraid of political division; and thus added an article preventing the chair members from active politics in parties to the constitution. However, the unionists were not completely isolated from politics. In the multi-party period, many unionists became deputy candidates and deputies.

The DP government attempted to control the unions by politicizing them and prohibiting the opposing activities by unions. The unionists supporting the DP were pursuing partisan activities in offices and unions while the unions which were not supporting the party were dissolved according to the law. In the meantime, the ex-unionist deputies did not perform well in terms of worker rights and expectations.

Before the elections on May 2, 1954, ten union leaders established a committee to support workers and deputies who worked for workers; however, this attempt was not successful. Most of the directors of Türk-İş and other unions were supporting the DP, and a few were getting in touch with people from the RPP to develop individual relations and manipulate their policies. Most of the workers supported the DP. By the elections in 1957, the DP had lost most of this support. Especially, after Mümtaz Tarhan had been the minister of labor, there were two cases which reinforced the opposition of the workers against the government. The first was that the ban on federations of unions. The second was the prohibition of social policy conferences.¹³⁰ The RPP had a list of deputy candidates which included many unionists; however, the party was not successful. All through the period, political discussions on candidates to be supported, relations with parties, etc. went on in the unions, but these did not add up to a powerful will to intervene with the

¹³⁰ Kemal Sülker, *Sendikacılar ve Politika* (İstanbul: May Yayınları, 1975), p.162.

government's actions. As a result, the DP did not feel responsible to keep the promises; and there were no developments about workers.

Türk-İş felt a severe oppression of the government in its third General Conference in 1957. This was expressed in the report presented in the fourth General Conference as below:

There were more policemen than delegates at the third General Conference. The supporters of the old management threatened the delegates by stating that Türk-İş would be banned in the case they were not elected.¹³¹

The DP government also prevented Türk-İş from being a member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The restrictions in union organizations resulted in the ILO receiving complaints about Turkey. One of the means the government used to prevent Türk-İş from being a center of opposition was its financial resources. Several penalty fees that were controlled by the government had been the main financial source for the unions. Compared to the relatively good relations in the initial years of the DP period, the relation between Türk-İş and the DP worsened gradually and the confederation was never a fully independent or powerful labor organization in the 1950s.

¹³¹ *Belgelerle Türk-İş Tarihi (1) 1952-1963*, (Ankara: Türk-İş Yay., 1995) Originally published in *Türk-İş 4.Genel Kurul İcra ve İdare Heyetleri İdari ve Mali Raporları*, (Ankara: Türk-İş Yayınları, 1960), (“*Delege miktarından fazla polisin baskısı altında aktedilen 3üncü Genel kurul, düşük iktidarın taraftarlarının ‘biz seçilmezsek Türk-İş’in kapısına karakilit takılacaktır’ şeklindeki tehditi altında ... cereyan etmekte idi.*”)

The Political Labor Movement (1945 – 1960)

With the transition to the multi-party period, many unions, federations, parties and groups were rapidly organized. In 1946, the socialist ones among them were dissolved and a potential leftist labor movement was stopped. Although the process was short-lived, the activities and organizations of the socialist parties and unions were remarkably massive and intensive. The unions of the sectors where socialists had been active since the period before the Republic were organized rapidly around the mentioned parties.

One month after the parties were founded, the number of members in Turkish Textile Workers Union, which was supported by TSP, was 4,500. The İstanbul Confederation of Worker Unions and some others which were related to the TSWPP had more than 10,000 members.¹³²

The *Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi* (Turkish Socialist Worker and Peasant Party) was founded on 20 June 1946 by a group of socialists led by Şefik Hüsnü Değmer. Şefik Hüsnü and some other leaders of the TSWPP were in relation with the Turkish Communist Party, which was forced to be an underground organization for decades. With the help of the labor activists from the Communist Party organizations, the TSWPP was more successful and organized a larger number of workers within the unions it has supported.

¹³² Güzel, 1996, p. 151

Lawyer and writer Esat Adil Müstecablıođlu founded the TSP on May 14, 1946. The party published the magazines *Gün* (Day) and *Gerçek* (Truth) to disseminate their ideas. The TSP was a political association which intended to supply the unity and the political independence of the country, its development, and justice among all groups of people within the principles of democracy.

According to the TSP, the working class would lead the social struggle, and it should be organized by unions. The leaders of the class should recognize the peasant case in Turkey. This necessitated a relation of ideas and action between the working class and peasants. Moreover, the working class should unite its own concerns with the liberation and development of peasants. The revolutionist and ideological party should prove itself to be the only one for the peasants. The only power which could solve the problems of peasants was the working class. The TSP was not included in the 1946 elections and was closed on December 16, 1946. More details about the programs and the trials of their leaders after the ban on these parties can be found in the collection by Rasih Nuri İleri.¹³³

Another experience in which the unionists were highly active was the Democrat Worker Party (*Demokrat İşçi Partisi*). The founder of the party, lawyer Orhan Arsal, was a candidate to join the elections in 1950; however, the DP did not include him on the list of candidates. The party described itself as a moderate leftist (*mutedil sol hüviyetli*) party. Among the founder members were Üzeyir Kuran, Nizamettin Yalçınkaya, and Ferruh Apaydın, all of whom were workers and unionists. The Democrat Worker Party was a social democratic party, and was active in unions such as the İstanbul Metal Workers Union, and the Press Technicians. The activities of the party disturbed the DP and many of the founders who were working

¹³³ Rasih Nuri İleri (ed), *Kırklı Yıllar – 4, 1947 TKP Davası* (İstanbul: Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, 2003).

for the public sector were exiled. The party, after three congresses, and some disputes within the members from the İstanbul Federation of Labor Unions, changed the name to the Workers' Party. After its last congress in 1955, when it was clear that it was unsuccessful at reaching the masses it aimed at, the party was dissolved.¹³⁴

The daily life and struggle of labor leaders involved in the activities of these parties can be followed by memoirs published in recent years. For the labor movement of the 1930's and trade union practice of the TSWPP in the Kocaeli region in 1946, the life of Şoför İdris is one of the best references for a labor historian.¹³⁵ Another party and union activist, Zihni Anadol describes the atmosphere of the 1940s¹³⁶ and the 1950s¹³⁷ in two different volumes of his memoirs.

The Labor Policies of the DP and the RPP

The transition to the multi-party system drove the DP to construct its identity by focusing on the critique of the single-party period. This construction process necessitated the party to be democratic. The discourse of the party on labor relations was coherent with this. However, the changes made in the program afterwards terminated this coherent unity. The program can be defined as eclectic. Social solidarism, which characterized the single-party period, was included in the program with some others which were more liberal. Another conflict was that social

¹³⁴ Kemal Sülker, *Sendikacılar ve Politika* (İstanbul: May Yayınları, 1975), p.76

¹³⁵ Hikmet Akgül, *Şoför İdris – Anılar* (İstanbul: Yar Yayınları, 2004).

¹³⁶ Zihni Anadol, *Truva Atında İlk Akşam* (İstanbul: Yön Yayıncılık, 1990).

¹³⁷ Zihni Anadol, *Kırmızı Gül ve Kasket* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1989).

solidarism excluding the idea of class was side by side with the right to strike, which meant to accept the differences in classes' benefits.¹³⁸

The DP made definite developments in individual labor relations; however, when it came to the collective relations of labor, there were no legal developments. The developments in individual labor relations can be summarized as follows. By governmental decrees, the number of workers included in the Labor Law was increased, the workers who worked for the sectors of press and maritime were included in a special labor law, and the representatives of workers and employers would be on the committees of referees in case of disagreements. Workers received the right for vacation and leave with pay and the scope and quality of social security elements were developed. However, on the collective relations of labor, the DP became increasingly authoritarian and did not keep its promise on the right to strike, or on the extension of freedom to organize labor unions.

The RPP underwent serious transformations in parallel with the DP's development. The applications the RPP exercised while it was governing were mentioned above. After 1950, when the party fell from power, there were lengthy discussions in the party, and social policies and attitudes towards labor changed. At the tenth general assembly of the party, the RPP declared the new attitudes in the new program. The borders of union freedom were broadened, and the right to strike was acknowledged.

The DP, besides the benefit it provided to citizens by milder financial conditions and foreign aid, delivered a relative welfare to the working class. The party got on well with both the workers and the unions, employing the opportunities of the economic refreshment in the period 1950-1954. However, as the unions could

¹³⁸ Makal, *Türkiye'de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, pp.73-75

not be controlled as the party wished, the directors and unions were taken out of service, and the party tended to have direct relations with the workers. The workers were organized directly in local DP branches, and directed to join the Motherland Front (*Vatan Cephesi*), an organizational attempt of the DP which was built up to mobilize masses to support DP policies. One of the reasons for the organization of *Vatan Cephesi* in early 1959 was the failure of the DP to control and mobilize the labor unions.¹³⁹

In the period we are dealing with, the two big governing and opposing parties changed their attitudes and positions in their policies about the working class. The two parties were not different in their ideological attitude towards labor; however, they tried to get votes from the members of the developing working class and were away from exercising holistic, coherent implementations towards the development of the class.

The Labor Movement from 1945 to 1960

In this period, the initial response to an action to defend rights was to be fired without any pay. Increase in pay, social security aid, and to stop firing was possible only by applications to the Committee of Referees. However, this mechanism was not implemented until the multi-party period. The number of applications between 1947 and 1950 was fourteen only. With the right of unions to apply, the number increased to 50 in 1951, 60 in 1952, and 89 in 1953. Between

¹³⁹ Yıldırım Koç, *Türkiye’de İşçiler ve Sendikalar (Tarihten Sayfalar)* (Ankara: Türkiye Yol-İş Sendikası Yayını, 2000), pp.43-44

1951 and 1960, there were 1,104 conflicts, and these were reported to the committees. These conflicts were due to the unions' responses, thus it can be derived that there was a development in union organizations.¹⁴⁰

Despite all the oppressions and obstructions, there was a revival in the labor movement starting with 1946. The working class began to gather new experiences and acquisitions. There were eleven strikes between 1946 and 1950. In 1947 and 1950, sudden strikes occurred in İzmir. In 1948, İstanbul tram workers were in action. In 1950, textile workers marched in Gaziantep.¹⁴¹ The coal strike during the elections in 1950 can be considered as an important political strike. *Cumhuriyet* reported on the news as follows:

The orders and advice of the chiefs were not successful in stopping the workers from leaving the coal mines. The ones who would rotate the shift stayed in their village to vote. The mines of Demir and Kozlu were half empty, and the production almost stopped.¹⁴²

In this action, the pain of the forced labor and the disappointment the RPP had caused were expressed by the workers. The coal mines' administration was together with the RPP organization in the Zonguldak district, and the unions were directed by the RPP; but this action showed how the influence of the RPP on workers was getting weak. It also showed that working masses could develop brave responses spontaneously when necessary.¹⁴³

Between 1951 and 1959 workers realized 35 actions in forms of resistance, stopping production and strike. In 1951, harbor workers in İskenderun went on strike.

¹⁴⁰ Makal, *Türkiye'de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, p.507

¹⁴¹ Yüksel Akkaya, "Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık-1(Kısa Özet)," *Praksis*, no.5 (Ankara: 2002), p.170.

¹⁴² *Cumhuriyet*, 14 May 1950. (...Şeflerinin nasihat ve emirlerine rağmen binlerce işçinin ocakları terketmesini önlemek kabil olmamıştır. Kendilerinin yerini almaya gelecek olanlar da reylerini kullanmak üzere köylerinde kalmışlardır. Demir ve Kozlu ocaklarının yarıyarıya boşaldığı ve istihsalin mühim nisbette durduğu söyleniyor...)

¹⁴³ Güzel, "Cumhuriyet Türkiye'sinde İşçi Hareketleri," in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol.7, p.1855.

In 1952 there were nine strikes. The most active workers were the harbor workers in İskenderun and İzmir. They were uncomfortable with working conditions and the money they were paid. These strikes were stopped by the police and the gendarmerie. Another important point is that strikes started in Anatolia as well as İstanbul. In the period there were eleven strikes in transport sector, six in textile sector, four in the building sector, and four in the food sector.¹⁴⁴ In terms of form and duration, these strikes were short, protesting actions. Most of them were not organized by unions. The reason for these strikes was mostly the demand for a wage increase. Some of them were cancelled due to agreement with the employers, and in some other cases public officers were mediators. These labor movements were responses to the working conditions, anti-communist atmosphere, and strict legal regulations.

¹⁴⁴ Akkaya, *ibid*, p.171.

CHAPTER 4

THE SOCIAL EXISTENCE OF THE WORKING CLASS

BETWEEN 1945-1960

The Socio-Economic Change in the 1950s and Its Reflections

The 1950s is one of the periods with the most rapid and radical changes in the history of the Republic. As mentioned in the previous chapter, radical changes in the judicial, political and economic aspects of the Republic came onto the stage with the effect of the international conjuncture following World War II, which was a problematic and oppressive period of poverty for wide segments of Turkish society but provided a friendly environment for a process of capital accumulation throughout the country. All these changes rose to the peak after the victorious elections of 1950 for Democrat Party and their power that lasted until 1960.

Therefore, the year 1950 when the Democrat Party came to power is a very important turning point for Turkey. The voters showed their political opinion for the first time and voted against the state interventionist tradition. The mentality that perceived the State as a central interventionist actor shifted to a demand to dismantle the barriers against the functioning of a free market. Undoubtedly, the majority of the

population was not aware of the risks that could have been brought onto their agenda by an uncontrolled free market. However, vast segments of the population were thinking that the shift to a free market economy would bring broad benefits to their lives and therefore, a future full of uncertainties was chosen against the practices of the past.¹⁴⁵

A sharp increase in the national income appeared between 1950 and 1960 despite the various problems of the period. Given the index of 100 for the year 1948, national income increased to 91 percent until 1960 and the GNP per head increased to 39 percent at the same period. The sharp increase in the population also should be taken into account for that particular period. If we follow the approach to revise that period in two sub-segments, the GNP increase in the period between 1946 and 1953 was relatively low; however, real income for almost all segments of the society increased regarding the populist welfare policies of the period. In the second period, between 1953 and 1960, the growth rate decreased and inflation became a serious problem. The government put the National Law of Protection onto its agenda once again for the first time after the War. The changes of the period also affected the allocation of national income between various sectors of the economy. The proportion of the industry and service sectors in the economy increased in that period and industry showed an annual growth of nine percent between 1948 and 1960. The growth of these sectors was accompanied by a decrease in the share of agriculture.

Regarding the position of the industry at that period, the post-War growth tendencies also triggered a tendency for centralization and intensification in Turkish industry. These changes in banking and trading sectors led to suitable conditions for companies such as İş Bankası to increase their effectiveness in all segments of the

¹⁴⁵ Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995), p.172.

economy and publicly traded companies found opportunities to increase their profits. Many companies which are now major actors in the economy took their first steps into the arena in that period. In other words, the formation of the modern Turkish bourgeoisie took a large step forward in that period.

The business relations of major politicians were also very intense. The president of the Republic, Celal Bayar, was also the founder and former manager of *İş Bankası*, the biggest private bank in the country which owned several enterprises in other sectors. Prime minister Adnan Menderes was the son of a landlord from the Aydın region. Therefore, Menderes took a very strong stance against the demand for land reform and showed his class opinion during the formation period of the Democrat Party as a separate rival political party against the Republican People's Party. Menderes had been a major employer in the agriculture sector before World War II. Samet Ağaoğlu, who was the Minister of Development and later of Industry, was a shareholder in eight companies and three banks.¹⁴⁶ It can be stated that the political elites of the period had organic class ties with the bourgeoisie in its formation period.

Contemporary capitalist property arose following World War II. The number of companies in Istanbul alone tripled between 1951 and 1957. The number of industrial companies, which was 22,715 in 1949 was multiplied by five by 1959, reaching 107,257.¹⁴⁷ The intensification of private capital in sectors such as textiles took place where state intervention and public investments were common. For instance, 48 percent of all spindles and 36 percent of all looms in the cotton textile sector in 1949 were owned by private capital and this increased to 71 percent of all

¹⁴⁶ Y.N.Rozaliyev, *Türkiye'de Kapitalizmin Gelişme Özellikleri* (Ankara: Onur Yayınları,1978), p.246.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.220.

spindles and 70 percent of all looms in 1957.¹⁴⁸ Textile plants were built in cities such as İzmir, Adana, Aydın, and Antalya. New factories were built in cement, chemical, pharmaceuticals sectors and monopolization began to appear in the Turkish economy.

The developments in agriculture sector during this period are of a particular importance. Various efforts to provide technological improvements in the agriculture sector since the foundation of the Republic had not been successful until the beginning of the 1950s for many reasons. However, the 1950s was the first period in which technological improvements occurred, followed by a similar trend in the 1970s. In the 1950s, mechanical and biological developments took steps in agriculture and the number of tractors increased sharply. The number of tractors increased to from 1,756 in 1948 to 40,282 in 1955. One of the important outcomes of industrialization in agriculture was the sharp increase in the amount of land in use. Therefore, the agricultural production increased.

Another important development in Turkey's agriculture in the 1950s was increased opportunities in the transportation and marketing of agricultural products due to the improvement of the infrastructure for transportation. Industrialization was also effective on the labor force on two sides. On one side, industrialization decreased the demand for unskilled labor especially in agriculture; on the other, it increased the demand for skilled labor. Industrialization in agriculture decreased the use of land by rent or collective use methods and released an important quantity of labor from agriculture to industrializing regions.

In this period, a very significant part of the peasants lost their jobs in the industrializing agriculture sector. On the other hand, industrialization in agriculture

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.221.

increased the demand for skilled labor in agriculture where drivers, operators, repairmen of agriculture machinery were needed. In addition, the increase in the quantity of land in use in agriculture also raised the demand for agriculture workers. To sum up, we can say that the industrialization in agriculture had more negative affects on the labor force and particularly increased the massive migration from rural areas to urban and industrializing areas. Following these developments, major shifts in the labor force from rural regions to urban regions appeared and the vast population that remained in the rural areas shifted to permanent labor relations.

One of the most important aspects of the social transformation between 1946 and 1960 involved employment. In that period, the allocation of employment in various sectors of the national economy changed in accordance to the change in national income and while the proportion of agriculture in the economy decreased, the proportion of the industry and service sectors increased. The proportion of employment was 86.5 percent in agriculture, 8.3 percent in industry and 5.2 percent in service in 1944; however these figures changed to 74.8 percent in agriculture, 11.5 percent in industry and 13.7 percent in the service sectors in 1960.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, it can be said that an important dissolution was observed in the agricultural population of Turkey in that period and the labor force significantly shifted to industry and service sectors. Two important factors determining these developments in employment allocation in the economy of the period were population increase and domestic migration.

The period under examination underwent a very important shift in the rate of population increase. This rate was 1.059 percent in 1945, increased to 2.173 percent in 1950 and 2.853 percent in 1960. The population of the country, which had been

¹⁴⁹ Makal, pp.90-91.

18,790,174 in the 1945 census increased to 27,754,820 in 1960.¹⁵⁰ The population increase recorded during the 1960 census is still the highest in the history of contemporary Turkey. Undoubtedly, this sharp population increase affected the entire social structure of the country. Developments in agriculture and the population increase pushed vast rural populations to migrate to the urban regions.

The migration from rural areas to industrializing cities started, reached to its peak, and slowed down during the period between 1950 and 1985. The net migration from rural to urban regions was 214,000 between 1945 and 1950; however, this increased to 904,000 between 1950 and 1955 and remained the same in the next five years.¹⁵¹ The expansion of rural villages with scarce land and the attraction of the urban areas especially of the rural young population had major impacts on this migration process. These domestic migrations also caused the formation of a modern working class in Turkey. The housing conditions in the target regions of this domestic migration changed, slums became an important element of Turkey's urban areas in time.

The incompatibility at the skills of this migrating labor force decreased as this population adapted itself to the industrializing urban economy. However, the wages in the urban regions also decreased sharply in that period. In addition, integration in social relations between the traditional system of kinship and religion and the complex multi-dimensioned urban social relations took place. Therefore, a complex social relations system where formal and informal structures were integrated became apparent side by side.

¹⁵⁰ The population figures are from the Turkish Statistical Institute (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*) web site (accesses on 20 May 2006) {http://www.die.gov.tr/nufus_sayimi/2000Nufus_Kesin1.htm} and {http://www.die.gov.tr/yillik/03_Nufus.pdf}.

¹⁵¹ Bahattin Akşit, "İçgöçlerin Nesnel ve Öznel Toplumsal Tarihi Üzerine Gözlemler: Köy Tarafından Bir Bakış", in *Türkiye'de İçgöç* (İstanbul: 1998, Tarih Vakfı Yayınları), p.25.

Peasants, Migration, and the Urbanization Process

The period between the second half of the 1940s and the 1960s was characterized by an increasing demand for labor and a relative decrease in rural population. There was a lack of skilled labor in the industrial sectors. Another characteristic of the period was the seasonal, temporary employment opportunities for the migrating population. The main sectors where these migrant workers were employed were the construction and seasonal agriculture sectors. There was a newly emerging employment market in parallel with the existing market in the cities.¹⁵²

In the literature on labor relations of the period, the problematic of these workers' relations with their villages were widely discussed. In her studies on this issue in 1942, Behice Boran discusses the profile of the worker who liked to return to his village and his agricultural activities as soon as possible after his temporary employment in industry ends, and called them "peasant-workers" while questioning the reasons behind their motivations.¹⁵³ According to her findings, Boran's "peasant-workers" might have become permanent workers only if their living conditions had improved.

According to Boran, the solution of this problem is possible by two ways: First, living conditions in the rural areas must be improved; second, the "peasant-

¹⁵² Ahmet İcduygu and others, "Türkiye'de İcğöç ve İcğöçün İşçi Hareketine Etkisi," in *Türkiye'de İcğöç* (İstanbul: 1998, Tarih Vakfı Yayınları), p.234.

¹⁵³ Behice Boran, "Sanayide Köylü-İşçi," *Yurt ve Dünya*, vol. 3, no. 15-16 (March-April 1942), pp.81-84.

worker” in the city must be assisted in his adaptation process to urban life. Building labor districts near the industrial regions to provide housing for the workers is necessary but not sufficient.

In addition, the adaptation and integration of these workers to the social life of the city was important. Supporting this mainly male population to build up their families or if they were married, to bring their families from their villages to the city would also help their social adaptation.¹⁵⁴ When evaluating these solutions of Boran, which may be regarded as naive from today’s perspective, one should take the conditions of that period into account. Social change created initially by the requirements of an extensive industrialization attempt, and then intensified by the difficulties of a war era had added these problems to the agenda of social policy.

However, this problematic is not limited to the 1940s. These problems remained until the end of the 1950s. In his study, Ekin discusses that the density of these “peasant-workers” who remained an important problematic decreased after 1955 and especially after the 1960s when planned development policies were put onto the agenda. The author claimed that these “peasant-workers” would return to their villages once their economic situation improved and the problems many of them faced in these newly industrializing areas helped to improve an awareness that they should never abandoned their ties with their villages. In addition, he discussed that the cultural, psychological and religious aspects of these “peasant-workers” pushed them to keep their will to return to their villages sooner or later. Various studies on that period have shown that the peasants did not wish to leave their villages; even highly-paid jobs in factories could not move them to permanent employment conditions. It has also been discussed that temporary employment

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

relations were built with the big cities in the era of economic problems and it was very common to return to the village for the harvest season despite permanent jobs in the big cities.

Workers in the coal mines in the Zonguldak-Ereğli region were the most studied segments of the working class among the studies on permanent workers. People living in the villages around Zonguldak who were put into forced labor in the frame of The National Law of Protectionas mentioned above were this time put in an exchange system of employment in these mines. These profile of workers were considered to show common characteristics of the peasant-workers. The exchange system of employment in the region was used as the method to operate the coal mines in the region for a longer period of time.

Ekin said, “one of the most visible clues that the peasants don’t like industrial activities is the situation of workers in Zonguldak mines.”¹⁵⁵ According to Ekin, that is why the workers generally did not stay in the mines more than 300 days a year. In these years, this problem of workers living and working in the industrial areas and their villages was discussed widely. It commonly was argued that permanent housing projects should be implemented. In addition, calls for improving the living and working conditions of these workers were made by either the scientists or the people responsible at various stages of this process.

For instance, one of the important economists of the period, Gerhard Kessler, whose studies on the Zonguldak-Karabük region was published within the proceedings of the Social Policy Conferences in 1949, found that the workers of the region were generally low-skilled, uneducated and suffered poor opportunities for personal development and argued that the management of mining company should be

¹⁵⁵ Ekin, p.263.

responsible for these problems. However, Kessler also defined the housing problems of these workers as one of the most urgent issue to be resolved. According to him, adequate housing projects should have been implemented to increase the number of skilled workers in the region to at least 15,000.¹⁵⁶

Gradually, the problems of these “peasant-workers” were replaced by the newly rising problems of “urban workers,” who built up their slums around the cities. Just like other countries in the region, the problems rising with the slums of the vast population migrating to urban areas from rural areas became an important issue. The slums surrounding big cities changed the appearance of these cities sharply and modified also their cultural, economic and social structure which were in close connection with the European metropolis. The slums and their expansion are still a valid problem today and the debates about them have not changed radically.

The slum areas of the period can be regarded as the typical housing type of these new urban workers. Especially in Istanbul, almost all of the first slums around the city were built next to the industrializing areas of the city. In his early studies on this issue, Ekmel Zamil defined the map of Istanbul slums:¹⁵⁷ The region between Kazlıçeşme and Bakırköy was the biggest slum area of Istanbul with more than 3,000 houses, around 200 houses at Mecidiyeköy, 500 houses around Şişli and Yıldız, and the slums around Kasımpaşa, Eyüp, Çarşamba and Paşabahçe, and Beykoz. In his study, dated 1949, when slums began to appear around Istanbul, Zamil defined the organized structure of Kazlıçeşme slums with his positive impressions. According to Zamil, the community in this region of Istanbul was very organized about their problems, trying to solve the infrastructure problems of their slums with a

¹⁵⁶ Gerhard Kessler, “Zonguldak ve Karabük’teki Çalışma Şartları,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisadi Siyaset Konferansları*, vol.2 (İstanbul, 1949), pp.15-23.

¹⁵⁷ Ekmel Zamil, “İstanbul’da Mesken Meseleleri ve Gecekonular,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisadi Siyaset Konferansları*, vol.2 (İstanbul: 1949), pp.81-82.

foundation. It must be kept in mind that this region of Istanbul was heavily involved in the leather industry. In addition, the slums in Paşabahçe region in Istanbul were typical workers' neighborhoods next to glass, beverage, leather and footwear factories.

When we observe the development of slums around big cities at that period, we can see that the social relations derived from the village had a major role in their formation. The shanty houses of the first period of these slums improved themselves gradually as the economic situation of their owners improved. Politicians also promised to bring some comforts of the cities to these neighborhoods and accomplished some of these promises. The votes of slums in the earlier period mostly went to the Democrat Party. Keyder writes that the bureaucrat elites somehow contributed to the improvement of these slums areas.¹⁵⁸ The second generation of these slums who did not have the opportunity to witness relative improvement in their living conditions gradually began to get political motivations in terms of class politics. After the 1960s and especially during the 1970s, slum areas around the big cities became major areas for left-wing politics.

Adaptation to Industrial Life

Since the 1930s when industrialization started in Turkey, one of the most important problems was the adaptation of the working class to industrial life and the productivity and skills of these workers. Important characteristics of the working

¹⁵⁸ Keyder, p.190.

class in that period were the destabilization, mobility and inadequacy of that working class for a developing industry. Those problems were detailed in the literature of that period on Turkish employment relations. Having such skills and their effect on the organizational capacity of the working class were discussed in detail by several authors from various political backgrounds.

Among the reasons behind the working class mobility were low wages; the demographic profile of the working class, which predominantly consisted of young workers; inadequacy of projects to improve housing and other living conditions; the migration of workers back to their villages during the harvest season; indecent working conditions; compulsory military service; and large number of workers dismissed by their employers.¹⁵⁹ Worker mobility was a very common problem for the industrial relations of the period. Especially the problem of high levels of turnover with its causes and effects was frequently discussed in the literature.

Labor turnover can be described as the ratio of the number of workers started or left the work in a given period to the average number of employees in the enterprise within the same period.¹⁶⁰ Nusret Ekin, who studied this topic in detail tries to emphasize the problem:

I can say with confidence that, in our country we have the problem of a high level of labor turnover, which requires serious attention. Reports from the Prime Ministry delegation of supervision on the issue on one hand, poll results of Istanbul textile industry and polls on work force point this problem very clearly. In addition to high rates in specific enterprises, high figures of general averages increases the difficulty of the situation.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Güzel, *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi 1908-1984* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996), p.138.

¹⁶⁰ Sabahaddin Zaim, *Çalışma Ekonomisi* (İstanbul, Filiz Kitabevi, 1997).

¹⁶¹ Nusret Ekin. "Memleketimizde İşçi Devir Araştırmaları ve Neticeleri," in *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları*, vol.9-10-11 (İstanbul: İktisat Fakültesi Neşriyatı, 1960), p.180. ("Memleketimizde üzerinde ehemmiyetle durulmaya muhtaç bir işçi devri probleminin olduğunu cesaretle söyleyebilirim. Bir yandan Başvekalet Umumi Murakabe Heyeti raporlarının neticeleri, diğer yandan İstanbul mensucat Sanayiine ait anket sonuçları ve nihayet işgücü anket neticeleri bu ehemmiyeti gayet vazih şekilde ortaya koymuştur. Münferit işletmelerin yüksek nisbetleri yanında unumi vasatilerinde oldukça yüksek bulunması vaziyetin vahametini artırmaktadır.")

It is relevant to point out some figures from this high level of labor turnover. The ratio for the workers who had left their job in one of the important enterprises of the period, Istanbul Mensucat Santral was 67 percent in 1947, 64 percent in 1948 and 73 percent in 1949. The ratio of workers who started to work in the same enterprise in the same period was 57 percent in 1947, 76,5 percent in 1948 and 45 percent in 1949.¹⁶² The figures given by the ILO Committee who visited to Turkey and studied the issue are also interesting. Out of 1,450 workers who worked at Paşabahçe Bottle and Glass Factory in 1948, 570 had left their jobs in the same year and 555 had started employment. These figures were accepted as quite normal at that time. The same year, out of 3,000 workers of a textile factory in Izmir, 2,132 had left their jobs and 2,424 started work.¹⁶³

These figures continued in the following years. Therefore, the figures given by the *İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu* (Employment Agency) poll are important. The figures of worker mobility between May 1957 and April 1958 are quite high, especially in the construction (4.7), and metal processing (2.2) industries. For the average of the economy, this figure is 1.2. The report assessed these figures as follows:

The figure of 1.2 for the general labor turnover shows that the number of workers started and left their jobs within a year is higher than the average number of employees worked in these enterprises. Employers face difficulties because of this situation. Female workers leave their jobs when they get married, workers who get a little bit higher-paid jobs leave their position, the ones from Anatolia returns back since they long for their home, other save some money that lead them to return to their villages. The high levels of turnover and the need for experienced workers pushes the employers to compete for skilled

¹⁶² Ekin, "Memleketimizde İşçi Devir Araştırmaları ve Neticeleri," in *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları*, vol.9-10-11, 1960. p.153

¹⁶³ *Labour Problems in Turkey, Report of a Mission of the International Labour Office, March-May 1950* (Geneva: International Labor Organization, 1950), p.215.

work force already working in other enterprises which cannot be approved for the sake of national economy.¹⁶⁴

Ekin discussed that high levels of turnover was an important factor against the development of Turkey. He also argued that high levels of turnover was a barrier to the development of a skilled work force, the stabilization of a wage system, and workplace security. On the other hand, the author discussed the difficulties raised by this mobility from the point of view of the workers as follows:

losing seniority due to change in employment, losses resulting from the wage differences between the two jobs, lower level of income during the initial period of a new employment, higher vulnerability to accidents, missing the oportunities for insurance of unemployment, and advantages such as paid holidays and bonus payments¹⁶⁵

Proposals to solve the issue of higher worker mobility included the improvement of coverage of the legal frame in order to protect the workers more efficiently, to build up the capacity of the trade unions, to improve the social security system, the training programs and solve various employment problems faced by the workers. Ekin, who underlined the necessity of housing projects for the workers defined two points: To block urbanization problems that might arise with the expansion of slum areas around the cities and to minimize the problems faced by the workers due to their indecent housing conditions and to create a permanent working class with more developed skills. On the other hand, he said that the companies may

¹⁶⁴ 1958 İstanbul İşgücü Anketi Raporu (Ankara: İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu Umum Müdürlüğü İş Piyasası Etüd Şubesi Yayını, 1958), p.33. (“1.2’lik umumi devir nisbeti, bir yıl içinde işyerlerine buralarda çalışanların ortalamasından fazla sayıda işçinin girip çıktığını göstermektedir. ;şverenler bu durum karşısında cidden müşkül vaziyettedirler. Kadın işçi evlenince işten ayrılmakta, başka yerde biraz yüksek ücret bulan işçi işyerini terketmekte, Anadolu’dan gelenler daiüssülaya tutulup dönmekte veya bir miktar tasarrufla bulununca köyelerine gitmektedirler. İşçi devir nisbetinin yüksekliği ve tecrübeli işçilere duyulan şiddetli ihtiyaç işverenleri sanayi kolundaki başka işyerlerinde çalışan işçileri kandırma gibi millet ekonomisi bakımından hiç de tasvip olunmayacak yollara sevkmiştir.”)

¹⁶⁵ Nusret Ekin, “Sanayimizdeki Yüksek İşçi Devrinin Tesirleri ve Bu Hususta Alınabilecek Tedbirler”, İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası, vol.20, no.1-4, (October 1958 - July 1959), p.287. (“Çalıştığı yeri değiştirmesi sebebiyle kadem derecesini de kaybetmesi, iki iş arasındaki ücret farkından doğan kayıp, yeni bir işe alırken ücret gelirinin azalması, yeni bir iş alırken kaza yapma veya kazaya duçar olma ihtimalinin daha fazla olması ve işsizlik sigortası, tatil ve ikramiye planları gibi avantajları elinden kaçırmaması.”)

also have benefited by these housing projects in a way that gave them a chance to employ more skilled and permanent workers.¹⁶⁶

Despite all these proposals underlined by various social scientists and authors at different levels and efforts in that direction, the slum problems arosen sharply around almost all of the big cities. However, gradually it was observed that the problem of labor turnover and mobility decreased and the workers began to solve their housing problems within the expansion of the slums. A poll of the Unemployment Agency (*İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu*) in 1950 observed that the mobility of workers decreased after the slums were built around the industrial enterprises.¹⁶⁷

On the other hand, the housing cooperatives of workers were not sufficient despite various calls for such attempts by various academics. However, after the Institution of Labor Insurance (*İşçi Sigortaları Kurumu*) started to offer housing credits to the workers' cooperatives after the 1950s, such attempts which were present since the 1940s also started to become more visible. The first step in this direction was the Kayseri Sümer Housing Cooperative. Founded by 34 workers in 1951, the cooperative started the construction of 53 houses in 1952 and 173 houses in 1953. Around 10,000 workers found the opportunity to own a house after the financial credits offered by the Institution of Labor Insurance.¹⁶⁸ The newspapers of the period reported on the insufficiency of such initiatives. For instance, Kemal Sülker, a famous reporter on workers and employment news noted the failure of the housing cooperative initiated by the Istanbul Federation of Labor Unions on his

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.299-307.

¹⁶⁷ Ekmel Zadi, "İş ve İşçi Bulma Hizmeti, Mahiyet ve Vazifeleri," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisadi Siyaset Konferansları*, vol.4 (İstanbul: 1951), p.27 ("Taş toprak müesseseleriyle diğer sanaiî mesleksiz işçiliklerinde çalışanlar arasında evvelki senelerde büyük mikyasta işçi hareketi mevcut olduğu halde bu müesseseler civarında gecekondular kurulduktan sonra işçi hareketi asgariye inmiştir.")

¹⁶⁸ Koç, p.60.

columns in *Gece Postası* and questioned the reasons behind it.¹⁶⁹ According to his reports, only 19 house had been delivered to owners in different regions of İstanbul, while this number should have been 427.

Many writers regarded the higher rate of labor turnover as one of the main reasons that prevented the development of an organized labor movement and the formation of a class awareness among Turkish workers of the period. For instance, Güzel thinks that the unstability of the workforce and higher levels of turnover both decreased the efficiency in the economy and made it more difficult to organize working class within the labor unions.¹⁷⁰

In recent years, some counter arguments also have been voiced against this view, which is shared by many authors. Akın criticized the approach that regards the labor turnover as a factor preventing the formation of class awareness, saying that it reduced the factors for the development of class consciousness to a single and universally valid process.¹⁷¹ The author rejects the definition of the problem of labor turnover from the point of view of the state and to define this problem as an excuse to other negative conditions. His formulation of the question has a different approach: “Can the high level of labor turnover be regarded as a defensive reaction that the workers develop against their bad working conditions and low wages?”¹⁷² With no doubt, these alternative points and questions should be considered as an opportunity to discuss the problem from other perspectives. Viewed from one perspective or another, the issue of higher labor turnover rates was one of the most important factors determining the economic and social character of the working class in this period.

¹⁶⁹ Kemal Sülker, *Gece Postası*, 25 Eylül 1954.

¹⁷⁰ Güzel, p.138.

¹⁷¹ Yiğit Akın, “Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Tarihçiliğine Katkı: Yeni Yaklaşımlar, Yeni Kaynaklar“, *Tarih ve Toplum*, no.2 (Fall 2005), p.99.

¹⁷² Ibid., p.100.

The Profile of the Working Class between 1945 – 1960

Sources of “Proletarianization”

It is necessary to define the sources of proletarianization of that period which was characterized by a sharp population increase and migration. The working class have been growing on three main sources. The first and the basic source of the new members for the working class is the peasant whose living resources have been scarce or devastated. Many of the peasants who had to leave their villages worked in mines and construction projects. The second source of the growing workforce was owners of small sized enterprises. This segment of the workers consisted of small entrepreneurs who could not compete with the cheaper import goods and shut down their businesses. In 1950, almost 40 percent of small enterprises based on simple technologies were shut down in Istanbul due to the competition which came with the liberalization of imports. At the same year, it is reported that more than 16,000 weavers were closed in the regions of Maraş, Burdur and Gaziantep.¹⁷³

The third source of the growing workforce was the families which had belonged to the working class for several generations. These did not constitute a great number among the total workforce. The majority of the workers employed in

¹⁷³ Y.N.Rozaliyev, *Türkiye Sanayi Proleteryası* (İstanbul: Yar Yayınları, 1978), p.63.

that period were the first generation workers. Constant wars and migrations for a number for decades block the continuity for the formation of proletarianization.

Information given in a factory monograph in 1954 is helpful to define the sources of the working class of the period. Samples taken from the answers of the workers to a questionnaire including questions such as “How and from where did you find the chance to get a job in this factory?” at the *Defterdar* textile plant in Eyüp are quite helpful:¹⁷⁴

When there was a famine in Tekirdağ region 10 years ago, I found the chance to find a job in this factory from the information given by a friend of mine

We lost our living resources after the Niksar earthquake. An acquaintance has called me to work for this factory.

I was doing my military service in Istanbul. After finishing my military service, I did not return to Çankırı because living conditions there were quite hard. I found a job in this factory and brought my mother and brothers also with me.

I was an officer at Fatih Municipality. I was laid off and I applied to this factory.

I came here because of the unemployment in Biga.

I was a worker at the Electricity Plant; however, the wages there were very low, I left my job there and started to work here.

My father placed me in this factory when I was a child, since he and his father were also workers here. I have been a loyal worker of this enterprise for 30 years.

During World War I, I migrated from Tranzon to this city, and I found a job here.

In addition, workers migrated from the territories once belonging to the Ottoman Empire can also be counted as a “foreign” source of the working class.

According to the results of the İstanbul Workforce Poll by the Employment Agency

¹⁷⁴ Fahri Ziya Fındıkoğlu, “İş Hukukumuzun ve Çalışma Mevzuatımızın Tatbik Edildiği Büyük Sanayi Müesseseleri-Defterdar”, *İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Mecmuası*, vol.19, no.3-4, (1953), p.878. “(Tekirdağında on sene evvel kıtlık olunca İstanbul’da bir arkadaş vasıtasıyla Defterdar’a yerleştim. - Niksar zelzelesinde yerimizi yurdumuzu kaybettik. Bir hemşeri beni buraya çağırdı, defterdar’a girdim. - İstanbul’da askerliğimi yapıyordum. Askerlikten sonra Çankırı’ya dönmedim, yaşama şartları güçtü. Defterdar’a yerleştim, annemi kardeşlerimi de getirttim. - Fatih Belediye memuru idim. Kadro harici edildim, Defterdar’a başvurduğum. - Biga’daki işsizlikten dolayı geldim. - Elektrik fabrikasında işçi iken ücret azlığından dolayı çıktım ve buraya girdim. - Dedem ve babam hep bu fabrikada çalıştıkları için babam beni çocuk iken buraya yerleştirdi. Müessesenin 30 yıllık sadık işçisiyim. Birinci Dünya harbinde 1914’te Trabzon’dan hicret ederek buraya geldim ve dokumacı oldum.”)

in 1958, 18 percent of the men and 38 percent of the women in the workforce in Istanbul were of foreign origin. Most of these workers were migrants from the Balkan peninsula. Those workers were generally skilled, and especially on the levels of women's employment, this group was the first among other sections of workers. According to the results of this poll, 31 percent of women workers at enterprises with more than 100 employees were migrant workers from the Balkans. According to the poll, 24.5 percent of the manufacturing industry was also of that origin. Compared to their total population, this ratio was relatively very high. The concentration of migrant workers from the Balkan region shows their higher skills compared to those of workers of other origins. The workers from the Balkans also were the locomotive of the trade union movement. The biography of Zehra Kosova, who migrated from Greece and participated in union activity in the tobacco industry, is a very good example of the daily life and struggle of a labor leader in this period.¹⁷⁵

The Qualitative Situation of the Working Class

The domestic population flows which accelerated between 1946 and 1960 created a worker profile who was still linked to his/her village and landowning. Higher wages on average for those workers compared to the average income of peasants in that period caused more and more workers to buy more land in their villages. This profile was visible especially among workers in the mining and construction sectors.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Zehra Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996).

¹⁷⁶ Koç, pp.40-41.

Census data provide us with significant figures on the qualitative presence of the working class in the period. Despite the important inadequacies in the methodology of these population counts, it is still possible to assess them within their important content. However, it should not be forgotten that the censuses after 1955 provide us with such important figures. According to the assumptions of 1946, there were almost 700,000 workers employed in various sectors of industry.¹⁷⁷ According to the results of 1955, the rate of paid workers in the total workforce was 13.31 percent and their total number was 1,624,303. In 1960, these figures increased to 18.76 percent and 2,437,135. We also should consider the rate of waged workers according to the different sectors of industry. The detailed figures related to the workforce of the time can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Distribution of the Workforce Status

	1955		1960		1965	
	Number	Ratio (percent)	Number	Ratio (percent)	Number	Ratio (percent)
Employer	39,250	0.30	156,108	1.20	132,819	0.98
Self-employed	3,289,047	26.95	3,683,362	28.35	3,885,915	28.66
Family worker	6,668,782	54.64	6,220,725	47.88	6,418,834	47.34
Waged worker	1,624,303	13.31	2,437,135	18.76	3,037,968	22.41
Unknown	583,620	4.78	495,915	3.82	80,282	0.06
Total	12,205,272	100.00	12,993,245	100.00	13,557,860	100.00

Source: Census Results, active population including age of 15 and above. Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri:1946-1963*, p.120 (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2002).

¹⁷⁷ Makal, p.119.

Agriculture was the biggest sector of the period in terms of the number of people involved. But the ratio of wageworkers in agriculture was very low. As mentioned before, small land owners and peasants were very common in the agriculture sector of the period. According to the figures of the Ministry of Labor, the number of wageworkers in agriculture in 1953 was around 1 million.¹⁷⁸ From the figures on agricultural census and polls, Makal concludes that first of all, contrary to the general assumptions, the rural population consisted not only of people employed in agricultural activities. Workers employed in different industrial activities related to agriculture like weaving were very common. According to the 1950 Agricultural Census (*Ziraat Sayımı*), the rate of these wageworkers in agriculture sector was 15 percent. The same source figure that almost 70 percent in the agriculture sector were temporary workers. Only 30 percent of the workers had a chance for permanent employment. Most of the permanent and temporary workers were moving to other villages for work. Makal also concluded that these people were not only landless peasants, but also small land owners.¹⁷⁹ The rate of rural workers who were employed in non-agricultural sectors increased sharply between 1950 and 1963. This can be related to the increase in employment opportunities around the big cities.

Industry and Business Counts (*sanayi ve işyeri sayımı*) of 1950 and 1953, and annual industry polls (*yıllık sanayi anketi*) are important resources to study the qualitative situation of wageworkers in non-agricultural sectors. When we look at the figures of the 1950-1963 period, the number of workers in manufacturing sectors increased from 335,576 to 679,462, almost doubling. The rate of increase in the number of enterprises was 95 percent, on the other hand. Another important category to study the qualitative developments in the period was the rate and number of

¹⁷⁸ *Çalışma Vekaleti Dergisi*, vol.1, no.2 (June-July-August 1953), p.42.

¹⁷⁹ Makal, pp.125-127.

workers who were covered by the Labor Law of the period. All of the workers in that period were not covered by this law. However, the law covered only workers in workplaces with more than ten employees. Businesses that did not meet these qualifications and the agricultural sector were not included in the frame of this law. It is still important to assess trends related to the businesses under the coverage of this law, which was an important step towards protecting workers legally. Makal, who studied the figures of the Ministry of Labor, concludes: ¹⁸⁰

In this period, the number and ratio of the businesses covered by this law increased in all years except 1958. The number was 6,156 in 1947 increased to 22,870 in 1960. The number of workers covered by the law also increased from 289,147 of 1947 to 824,881 of 1960. If the figures of 1947 are taken as an index, the figures of 1960 increased 285 percent. However, it should be noted that despite the increase in the number of workers covered by this law, the ratio of the same group within the total number of wageworkers did not rise at a similar rate. Actually, this rate fell between 1955 and 1960. The number of employers who tried all the ways not to be covered by the law and insisted on operating in the informal sector was quite high. Therefore, these figures also show us some of the characteristics of the informal sector around the 1950s.

The public sector also should be considered to assess the characteristics of the employment relations in that period. Despite all political motivations in favor of the private sector and a liberalization of the economy, the number of State Owned Enterprises (*İktisadi Devlet Teşekkülleri*) did not decrease but increased sharply. The workers employed in the public sector always had their specific conditions apart from the other segments of the working class; therefore they should always be taken

¹⁸⁰ Makal, pp.150-55.

into account separately. The number of workers in State Owned Enterprises in 1949 was 62,645, but this number did rise to 154,642 in 1959. The number of employees in all of the public sector was 254,496 in 1955 and 292,026 in 1960. According to the figures of 1950, the rate of public sector workers in manufacturing sector was 33 percent. Another important segment of public sector employment was the officers in public services and their number increased to 401,179 in 1960 from 222,166 in 1946.

All these figures show that employees in the public sector were also a very important segment of the working class in that period. In 1950, the sum of public officers and workers in State Owned Enterprises constituted 21.21 percent of the total employment in non-agricultural sectors. The rate of public sector employees in the total workforce was 34.65 percent in 1955. This means that almost 1/3 of wageworkers was employed in the public sector.¹⁸¹ It never should be forgotten that the highest increase in public sector employees was observed in the State Owned Enterprises. This shows us that these enterprises were used by the governments as sources of patronage relations in that period.

Wages and Social Security

Wages, as a parameter reflecting the quality of life of the working masses, represent the conditions of working and living. Wages are not only the value paid for the labor time, they are also economic social factors because they are very much related to the workers' personality and human rights. Therefore, societies attempt to

¹⁸¹ Makal, pp.163-173.

build up a system of wages within the general frame of their economic system in order to provide a fair level of wage as an element of a stable social policy.¹⁸²

Before 1939, the wages had shown a tendency to rise in general; however some random fluctuations and decreases also were present. The wages decreased sharply during World War II between 1940 and 1945.¹⁸³ We can evaluate the wages policy of the period in two sections; before 1950 and after 1950. This mainly is due to the differences in the methodology of the statistics used in these periods. For the statistics on wages after 1951, it is helpful to assess data given by the Institution of Labor Insurance. For the earlier periods some other variables and data also should be considered.

Table 2. Nominal and Real Wages, 1940-1950

Years	Nominal Wages		Index of wholesale prices (1948=100)	Real Wages	
	Agriculture	Manufacturing Industry		Agriculture	Manufacturing Industry
1940	20.85	47.30	27.1	76.90	174.5
1941	24.67	61.25	37.6	65.60	162.9
1942	69.69	95.91	72.8	95.70	131.7
1943	113.38	102.07	126.5	89.60	80.7
1944	63.45	96.82	98.4	64.50	98.4
1945	44.88	74.32	95.3	47.10	78.0
1946	64.45	81.59	91.6	70.40	89.1
1947	58.54	88.40	92.8	63.10	95.3

¹⁸² Cahit Talas, *Toplumsal Ekonomi* (Ankara: İmge kitabevi, 1997), p.37.

¹⁸³ Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Tek Parti Döneminde Çalışma İlişkileri:1920-1946* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999), pp.429-448.

1948	84.92	136.21	100.0	84.90	136.2
1949	70.77	119.60	108.0	65.50	110.7
1950	77.00	121.00	97.0	79.40	124.7

Source: Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1946-1963*, p.423 (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2002)

The situation in real wages index between 1946 and 1950 with the prices of 1948 were as follows: in agriculture 70.4, 63.1, 84.9, 65.5 and 79.4 in 1950. In the manufacturing sector, 89.1, 95.3, 136.2, 110.7 and 124.7 in 1950.¹⁸⁴ It can be seen that, after the War, the wages reflected a tendency to rise. However, the real wages in 1950 were not even at the level of 1938. Another interesting figure is that the wages in the manufacturing sector were around 50 percent higher than the wages in agriculture and had a more stable tendency to rise. The problems of migration and proletarianization in the cities should be considered together with these developments in wages.

The evaluation of wages between 1950 and 1960 can be made using the data provided by Institution of Labor Insurance. These data are very reliable due to their dependency on the insurance premiums paid to the agency. We can see from these data that the real wages of workers did rise very slow and with some exceptions within this period. The rise of wages for the workers with social security was 27 percent between 1951 and 1960. The index decreased only in 1959. The average daily salary was 4.62 TL in 1951, rose to 14.46 TL in 1960.

We can see differences once again when we assess the wages in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Real wages in the manufacturing sector rose constantly in that period except the year 1955. This rise was almost around 60 percent for the period between 1951 and 1961. However, the rise in wages in the

¹⁸⁴ Makal, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, p.422.

agriculture sector of that period was around 52 percent. The gap in wages between the manufacturing and agriculture sectors which was around 50 percent also persisted during the whole period. The wages of another very important segment, public servants, also decreased during the period. The loss of public servants was around 25 percent. However, public workers realized a rise in their wages. In addition, the average wages of public sector was 30 percent higher than the workers in the private sector in 1947, and the difference was 33 percent in 1954.¹⁸⁵

Table 3. Nominal and Real Wages, 1951-1960

Years	Average number of workers with insurance	Average daily wage (TL)	Average daily wage index (1951=100)	Price index (İstanbul cost of living index, 1951=100)	Average daily actual wage (TL)	Average daily actual wage index (1951=100)
1951	348,440	4.62	100	100.00	4.62	100.00
1952	384,365	5.17	112	105.92	4.88	105.62
1953	432,255	5.50	119	109.58	5.02	108.66
1954	449,284	6.24	135	120.00	5.20	112.55
1955	466,852	7.21	156	130.42	5.53	119.70
1956	506,204	8.24	178	149.01	5.53	119.70
1957	530,029	9.22	200	167.04	5.52	119.48
1958	549,947	10.90	236	185.07	5.89	127.49
1959	555,797	13.28	287	233.24	5.69	123.16
1960	577,991	14.46	313	246.20	5.87	127.06

Source: Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1946-1963*, p.426 (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2002)

Some institutional arrangements initiated after 1950 were also important for the wages system and living conditions. The task of determining the minimum wages

¹⁸⁵ Makal, pp. 425-474.

that was identified by the Labor Law of 1936 started in practice with a directive on 8 January 1951. According to the directive, minimum wages were defined by different commissions according to local conditions and different sectors. Hence, the number of sectors which were defined by minimum wage level by these commissions was nine between 1951 and 1955. This number increased to 31 different sectors in 1956-1960. However, in the earlier periods of these commissions, the minimum wages were not defined relevantly and in practice, lower wages were still very common. Another important arrangement is commissions that deal with collective disputes in the workplace.

The Labor Law rejected the strike lockout as the alternative ways to solve labor disputes. In cases when disputes could not be solved between the labor and employer representatives, *İl Hakem Kurulu* (the City Board of Mediators) and *Yüksek Hakem Kurulu* (the Higher Board of Mediators) were the institutions responsible for mediation. Serious problems within the system were left behind after the foundations of trade unions in 1946 and 1947. After 1950 when the trade unions were given the responsibility of participating in the resolution of collective disputes, the situation of the workers improved. Saymen concludes that, “Workers making use of the opportunity provided by law have found the ways to struggle for their rights in a more collective and strong manner.”¹⁸⁶ This mechanism allowed the workers to be more active in disputes over wages and working conditions. In addition, it gave more legitimacy to the trade unions from the point of view of their members. The total number of disputes that were sent to the Higher Board increased sharply between

¹⁸⁶ Ferit Hakkı Saymen, “İş Uyuşmazlıkları Yüksek Hakem Kurulu Kararları”, *İstanbul Barosu Dergisi*, vol.26, no.7, (1952), p. 4 (“*Kanunun son zamanlarda bahsettiği bu imkandan faydalanan işçiler daha toplu, daha teşkilatlı, daha kuvvetli ve daha metin bir tarzda haklarını aramak, müdafaa ve elde etmek yolunu bulmuşlardır.*”)

1951 and 1958 and reached 855. These disputes contributed to the improvement of the working conditions.

It should be added that despite some of the gains of the trade unions in the period, they were not effective enough to determine the wages of the workers and the relations of redistribution of income mainly were left to the operation of the market, but not to institutional arrangements.

As mentioned before, an important period of institutionalization started in working relations and social policy in Turkey after 1945. The Institution of Labor Insurance, which was founded in 1945, was one of the most important institutions. Other institutions and laws to handle different social risks followed it.¹⁸⁷ However, all these laws covered workers with social security who were defined in terms of the Labor Law of 1936. Hence, agricultural workers and workers employed in workplaces with fewer than ten employees remained excluded.

More workers were included in the scope of the legal protection with the development in industry. The increase in the number of workers with social security was 112 percent between 1950 and 1960. However, the rise in the number of workers with social security was always lower than the rise in the number of workers included in the Labor Law. The most important reason behind this was the employment of workers with no social security in the informal sector. In the beginning of the period, the number of workers with social security was 348,440, but this number rose to 620,900 in 1960. In the period between 1950 and 1960, the social security system took its first steps and that it was lagged behind the requirements of covering the problems raised by such extraordinary events as domestic population flows, migrations, and rapid industrialization.

¹⁸⁷ See the section “Labor Relations and the Period of Institutionalization in Social Policy” above.

The Political Profile of the Working Class

The Democrat Party took power in the country with strong public support that lasted for many years. The workers were also within this supporting masses, and in some periods, the majority of workers supported the DP. Studies on this period indicate that the support of workers for the Democrat Party was evident from the 1946 elections.¹⁸⁸ Undoubtedly, the problems faced during the war era, the oppressive practices of the single-party regime were all important factors behind this support. The reasons for the support of workers for the Democrat Party should not be limited to the improvements related to labor relations. The support was based more on a belief that the Democrat Party regime would solve the complex problems of the masses recently joined to the working class. In fact, the Democrat Party benefited from the changes that had been initiated since 1946. Positive changes in areas such as wages, social rights, and trade unions were considered by the workers as policies of the Democrat Party but not of the Republican Peoples' Party, which had started the process of change after the war. The example given below is significant to define the collective perception and popular awareness of the working class in that period. The memories of Halit Mısırlıođlu, who was the president of Yol-İş Trade Union in Mersin, are given below:¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Kemal Karpat, *Türk Demokrasi Tarihi* (Ankara, İstanbul Matbaası, 1967), p.144.

¹⁸⁹ Yıldırım Koç, *Türk-İş Tarihinden Portreler, Eski Sendikacılardan Anılar-Gözlemler* (Ankara: Türk-İş Yayını, 1998), p.81-82 ("İşçiler 1950 yılında kişiliklerine kavuştular. İşçiler DP'ye güvenerek işyerlerindeki baskılara karşı kafa tutmaya başladılar. RPP döneminde Bakanın kapıcısı bile bakan gibiydi. DP döneminde ise işçinin ve sendikacının Bakanla görüşmesi mümkün oldu. İletilen sorunlar takip edilir ve bu konuda başvurana bilgi verilirdi. DP'liler gönül almasını bilirlerdi, insanca

Workers began to get their personalities in 1950. They began to resist the pressures in the workplace by trusting the Democrat Party. In the RPP period, even the tea maker of the minister was considered like a minister. However, in the DP period, the trade union members and workers found chances to meet with the minister. The problems raised by the workers were all monitored carefully and workers or their representatives were informed later on. The executives of the Democrat Party knew how to behave towards the workers and their representatives.

It should not be forgotten that the Democrat Party was supported mostly by the peasants and that the workers of the 1950s were also of villager origin. It is understandable that the peasants considered the Democrat Party in positive ways regarding the innovations made in their villages and the relative improvements in their welfare after migrating to the big cities. Therefore, the Democrat Party in that period was almost like a class party within the perception of the workers. The words of Hamit Kızılkaya, who was a railway worker and trade union activist at that period might be illustrative:¹⁹⁰

Eighty percent of the railway workers were supporting the Democrat Party. We were 'amele' during the RPP period. We were considered humans in the Democrat Party era. Parliamentarians in that period were paying visits to our trade unions and asking our demands. There were 24 offices of the Democrat Party in Eskişehir. All of the people in these offices were railway workers.

It should be added that the support of working class for the Democrat Party regime was continuous during the Party's power. Some oppressive policies against trade unions began to concentrate near the end of the era, but these policies did not change the popular support of Party widely among the workers. In addition, the majority of the working class supported the parties of central right in the following period of the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*), which was the continuation of the

muamele yaparlardı”)

¹⁹⁰ Koç, p.91. ("*Demiryolu işçisinin yüzde sekseni DP'liydi. RPP döneminde ismimiz 'ameleydi'. DP döneminde adam yerine konduk...Bu yıllarda milletvekilleri sendikaya gelir, 'ne istersiniz?' diye sorarlardı. Eskişehirde DP'nin 24 ocağı vardı. Hepsi demiryolcuydu.*")

Democrat Party after the military coup of 1960. It can be observed that the Justice Party received great support from labor districts in the elections after 1960.

An important aspect in the social history of Turkey is that the workers were used as mobilized mass in some demonstrations supported by governments in power since the Democrat Party era. For instance, 607 of 977 people were workers who were arrested after the attacks and lootings of 6-7 September 1955 against the non-Muslims in Istanbul. Much evidence show that not only the youth organizations of the Democrat Party but also many trade unions also were manipulated during these events.¹⁹¹

To sum up, the political profile of the working class in the period can be characterized as a working class in its formation process, as a working class which was lacking concrete class awareness: conservative, easy to manipulate, determined by relations of patronage.

Class Struggle during the Democratic Party Era

The Democrat Party followed a policy depending on the development of a trader's bourgeoisie and big and medium-sized land owners during its first four year period in power. Capital accumulation achieved by the modernization in agriculture and increasing agricultural exports did not flow into the direction of industrialization. On the contrary, this led to luxury consumption and mostly to the development of trading capital. In addition, almost all of the big industrial groups of Turkey were

¹⁹¹ Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları Bağlamında 6-7 Eylül Olayları* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2005), p.63-64.

founded in this period. Only a very small part of the big industrial groups go back to the period before the Democrat Party era. Actually, the opportunities of the 1950s gave a chance for the growth of a domestic industrialist class. This industrial bourgeoisie had seized the surplus from the agriculture sector and also benefited from the credits offered by the Bank of Industrial Development (*Türkiye Sınai Kalkınma Bankası*), which was founded with the assistance of World Bank and the USA.¹⁹²

The main figures of that period undoubtedly were the small peasants who formed a vast part of the population. As the peasants integrated with the market as small producers, the conditions of a shift to capitalism in the agricultural sector was reduced. Policies in order to gain the votes of this vast segment of the population and political parties which directed these policies led to political competition and populist policies. Therefore, the support of the peasants was almost constantly and dominantly on the agenda of the Democrat Party during their power.

Another rising social figure of that period is the urban workers class. When we look at the period from the prism of redistribution relations, we see that the rate of wages in the added-value constantly decreased through 1950 and 1953. The rate of wages in non-agricultural sectors decreased to 18.8 percent in 1953 from 22.2 percent in 1950. This figures a worsening in the situation of urban workers. However, the segment of the population that witnessed an improvement in its situation is the domestic and international traders of agricultural products. Additionally, there was a relative improvement in the situation of the rural populations.

¹⁹² *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol.6, p.1949.

The rise of national income between 1954 and 1961 slowed down and redistribution became more unbalanced. In this period, wageworkers in the non-agricultural sector found opportunities to improve their living conditions. The share of wages and salaries in the national income of the period increased to 41.1 percent from 33.2 percent. For the side of the ruling classes, the period gave much broader benefits to the industrial bourgeoisie and traders of industrial products, against the land owners and trading capital dealing with in foreign trade.¹⁹³

During the Ottoman period and all through the reform movements of the nineteenth century, a bureaucratic class managed the country with its projects and policies.

The bureaucracy formed allies with segments of the bourgeoisie when it attempted to control the social transformation in Turkey. In this relation, the bourgeoisie was given a chance to control the economy only when it was in accordance with the policies of the bureaucracy. When we look at the results of the 1950 elections, we can see that the bureaucracy has lost its autonomous position which allowed it to defend its own policies, and turned into a group of managers and governors whose relative autonomy depends on the power balance within the bourgeoisie.¹⁹⁴ During the Democrat Party era, one of the most important political motivations was to minimize the power of this bureaucratic elite in political, economic, and social life. Together with the class struggle between the emerging bourgeoisie and working class, and maybe more visible than that, the redistribution of power within the ruling classes was an important political dynamic of the period.

In the second part of the Democrat Party's time in the office, by the second half of 1950s, which was mentioned as an economic recession period previously,

¹⁹³ Boratav, pp.91-93.

¹⁹⁴ Keyder, p.176.

political allies and power relations started to change. Struggles within the Democrat Party arose and the RPP appeared as the rising party with a more progressive policy that promises additional rights to the working class. Collective bargaining, the right to strike and freedom to organize for public workers were all included in the program of the RPP and for the first time, the party had formulated and promised concrete measures targeting the working class.

The RPP considered targeting the urban working class as it had given up any hope to attract rural population that the Democrat Party has taken under its effect. This was partly due to the urban character of the RPP. On the other hand, the industrial bourgeoisie who were aware that capital accumulation should be designed in accordance with the requirements of modern capitalism, were also against the populist policies followed by the DP which wasted economic and financial resources by its populist and inflationist policies aiming attract the support of the rural population and trader's bourgeoisie.¹⁹⁵ The development of an industrial bourgeoisie with its international connections brought back the necessity of state control and intervention in the capital accumulation process.¹⁹⁶ The DP, which was deeply involved in political quarrels, was not a suitable candidate for this mission. Therefore, an ally between the bureaucracy, industrial bourgeoisie and rising working class emerged on the way to the 1960 military coup.

¹⁹⁵ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 6, p.1956.

¹⁹⁶ Keyder, p.197.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The modern class formation and struggles that determined the social and political history of the nineteenth century to a large extent are relatively new for Turkey. But even in the countries of early capitalist development of the western world, one should not forget that the working class formation has followed different paths at different time phases.

Significant analyses have been made on the development of the labor movement in Turkey, and its differences from the Western world. For instance, Işıklı emphasizes the following basic factors to understand the differences between the Turkish and Western labor movement in twentieth century: late industrialization, the ineffectiveness of the working class in the development process of democracy, the lack of a class struggle tradition, and the power of the effects from the international conjuncture.¹⁹⁷

The four fundamental levels that Katznelson emphasizes for a class formation were considered as an appropriate framework for the subject of this thesis.¹⁹⁸ The structure of the capitalist development, which includes the

¹⁹⁷ Alpaslan Işıklı, "Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketinin Batı İşçi Hareketi Karşısında Özgünlüğü", *11.Tez Kitap Dizisi* no.5, (February 1987) (İstanbul, Uluslararası Yayıncılık, 1987), p.10-31.

¹⁹⁸ Ira Katznelson, "Working-Class Formation: Constructing Cases and Comparisons", in *Working Class Formation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.14-22.

proletarianization process that every society on its way to capitalist development goes through, despite all their differences. Social organizations that arrange the working conditions, labour market and the labor relations make up the second level. The classes are considered at a cognitive level like experience and consciousness at the third level; and labor movements make up the fourth level.

In previous chapters, the period of 1945-1960, which represents an important phase in the formation of the Turkish working class and labor movement, was discussed. However, in order to understand the dynamics of the period and the factors of continuity and change, some aspects of the late Ottoman and early Republican periods also were considered.

Since the working class is primarily an objective existence created by the process of capitalist development that has gradually become a universal phenomenon, the study deals with the economic processes that shaped the social and political picture of the discussed period, following a historical background. Then the legal and organizational aspects of the period were discussed.

As a period of the search for a modern social policy and related institutions to implement it, the decade after the war determined many aspects of the following periods. Although institutionalization appeared as a legal process most of the time, it could not be reduced to a legal process in the absolute sense. “It is the crystallization of the social mould under the social circumstances.”¹⁹⁹

Although the institutionalization was not fully achieved right after the world war, the 1950s can be considered as a transition to the 1960s in the field of social policy and institutions. Although these two decades were classified as two different periods, there were many common points. For instance, the same Labor Law stayed

¹⁹⁹ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türk Siyasal Yaşamında Batılılaşma Hareketleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), p. 18.

in effect for a long time with all its restrictions; in another example, the workers in the public enterprises emerged as a result of the statist industrialization of the 1930s continued to make up the main body of the working class, and shaped the labor relations. Among all, maybe the most important issue was the continuity of the anti-democratic attitude in the *İttihat ve Terakki*, the RPP and DP periods towards the working class organizations and kind of labor action. The main policy was a mixture of a formal populism, corporatism, nationalism and anti-communism.

One should also note the changes along with the continuities mentioned above. The government made an effort to organize the field of labor relations. The establishment of the Ministry of Labour, Employment Agency, the amendments made to the Code of Associations in 1946, the first labor union law of Turkey in 1947, and a set of arrangements in various related fields indicates that the government switched to a more regulatory, controlling role than the repressive, prohibitive intervention of the previous period. In the years following 1945, it can be seen that the old static social structure was in a process of disintegration and that the society acquired a new dynamism and social mobility. In contrast to the previous period, the myth of a classless, merged society lost its prestige even at the popular perception level. In other words, the “class” reality now started to show its unquestionable existence in every field. The change in the position and role of the government in the class struggle was no doubt an effort of rearrangement related to this growing visibility of the classes. The existence and struggle of the classes started to be accepted, but efforts were made to create the conditions to ensure this under the control and arrangement of the government.

On the other hand, the period at issue included an extraordinary social dynamism. The peasant masses that made up the majority of the population started to

flow towards the cities, and determined the structure of the workforce and housing style there. The basic dynamic of the working class formation during the period was certainly this large population shift and its results. In this study, migration, urbanization, the formation of a class culture were discussed in relation to each other and as objective dynamics of the class formation.

During this study, the working class formation was not described in the form of a chronological history of the labor movements determined only under the framework of government interventions and designations surrounded by some legal arrangements and political changes. All these processes are evaluated under causality relations, a dialectic determining-determined relation.

One of the most important events of the time was certainly the transition to the multi-party regime and a government of the Democratic Party. Institutionalization attempts and the establishment of legal unions moved into a different phase after the elections held in 1950, which resulted in the victory of the DP. However, the point with regard to our analysis is the effect of transition to the multi-party political life on the formation of the working class. First of all, the process greatly increased the political participation of the working class. The workers positioned themselves as subjects in the political arena as citizens, and started to stand up for their own benefits. This was, in a sense, the point where the “*amele*” of Ottoman turned into the “*işçi*” of the modern republic.

The political participation process was discussed in various aspects and with the help of the views from the workers and unionist that witnessed the period. This gave the opportunity to see the general point of view and the form of awareness within the working class at the time. The analysis of political preferences were not restricted to a comparison of main policies and actions of the two parties, they were

regarded as a result of the meaning of these parties and their policies for the workers. The workers were not passive objects of the legal arrangements and political conflicts, but active subjects trying to change their daily lives.

Although the labor unions started to organize after the war, the restrictions on organization and union activities were far from the international norms of the time. Both the RPP and DP tried to manipulate the working class via their control over the unions. At the same time, they shared the common aim of not providing the right to strike, and of preventing any interaction between the labor movement and socialist groups.

Within such conditions, legal improvements and unions served more the purpose of preventing the formation of an independent labor movement.²⁰⁰ Yet the Turkish working class acquired its first comprehensive experiences of union organization and activity in this period. The discussions on the right to strike, freedom of organization, and the relations between the unions and political parties were observed extensively. The industrial relations in private and public enterprises reached a stage where the unions and union membership were not regarded as illegal actions. The first generation of union leaders grew up during this period. Certainly the seeds of the weaknesses were also moving into the next decade with them. Despite all the restrictions and problems, the working class gained a momentum to step into the social and political arena as a more visible actor in the 1960s. This point of view differs from the approaches which consider the 1960 intervention as a landmark that initiated many social and political developments, including the labor movement from the scratch. The 1950s gave workers the time to gain the initial experience of organization and struggle under a relatively democratic regime, rather

²⁰⁰ Makal, *Türkiye'de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri*, pp.527-528.

than years to be put between brackets for a working class which was waiting for the rights to be provided in the 1960s.

At each stage of the thesis, different layers which determine the formation of the working class were analyzed. The period covered was a stage where the transformations in all these layers accelerated, combined together and paved the way for a more visible working class formation. I think, after the 1950s, as E.P.Thompson states, there was now a, “working class in this land and it can be defined with a certain accuracy as an element of the social structure.”²⁰¹ After a period of half a century, we can see how a set of conditions and developments that might be regarded as irrelevant and ineffective can determine the formation of a working class.

²⁰¹ E.P.Thompson, *İngiliz İşçi Sınıfının Oluşumu* (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 2004), p.41.

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