WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS IN TÜRKİYE

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Introduction

This text is the expanded version of an article ("The Development of the Working Class in Turkey in the 20th Century") by the same author, to be published in volume 5 of the **Philogiae Turcicae Fundamenta** in the Netherlands, edited by Erik Jan Zürcher (Department of Studies of the Islamic Middle East, Leiden University, the Netherlands).

The objective of the book is to give briefly a very general view of the development of the working class and the trade union movement in Turkey. It is hoped that it will stimulate new research and lead to new publications on a subject, which already plays and will continue to play an important role in the social and political developments in this country.

According to the household labour-force surveys of the State Institute of Statistics, in October 1998, the population of Turkey was 63,897,000. Those in the labour-force numbered 23.4 million, with a labour-force participation rate of 48.5 percent. The official unemployment figure of 1.5 million highly underestimated the reality.

The total number of gainfully employed was 22 million. Of these, 9.6 million were wage- and salary-earners. 5.3 million were self-employed. 5.8 million were unpaid family workers. 1.3 million were employers. There is a rapid process of the transformation of the self-employed and unpaid family workers into the unemployed and the wage- and salary-earners. Black employment and homeworking are on the increase, as well.

The total number of trade union dues-paying membership (including the public employees' trade unions) is about 2 million. In spite of all difficulties, the trade union movement in Turkey has achieved much and will further reinforce its position in the future.

Emergence of the Working Class

There was wage-labour in the Ottoman Empire (free to sell its labour-power and free from the ownership of the means of production) even during the 15th-16th centuries.

In the construction of the Süleymaniye Mosque complex in the 1550-1557 period, 1.5 million work-days were worked by free wage-earners, in addition to 1.1 million work-days worked by "acemi oğlanları" (newly recruited janissaries) and 140 thousand work-days by slaves [1]. In 1631, the number of wage-earners employed in the construction of the Mosul Fortress was 3035 [2]. A strike of the construction workers in 1587 for wage increases is known [3]. The masons and carpenters working in the construction of a mosque asked for an increase of their wages and went on strike, although a wage increase of about 33 percent was granted.

One can even consider the uprisings of the janissaries for wage increases from 1444 onwards as a form of economic struggle of wage earners [4]. The janissaries constituted a standing army and when their real wages were decreased through decreasing the gold content of the "akçe" (the Ottoman coin), they first showed their discontent by demonstrating with their holy cauldrons and then rebelled, thus increasing their wages. Sometimes they dethroned the Sultan and received a bonus from the new Sultan, that would equal almost their annual wages.

However, all these were sporadic phenomena, and we cannot speak of a modern working class movement and struggle until the late 19th and the 20th centuries.

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[1] Barkan, Ö.L., **Süleymaniye Camii ve İmareti İnşaatı (1550-1557),** Vol. I, Türk Tarih Kurumu Pub., Ankara, 1972, pp. 104, 105, 161.

[2] Murphey, A., "The Construction of a Fortress at Mosul in 1631: A Case Study of an Important Facet of Ottoman Military Expenditure," in Oktar, O. - İnalcık, H. (ed.), **Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071-1920),** Ankara, 1980, p.166.

[3] Ahmet Refik, **On Altıncı Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1553-1591),** İstanbul, 1935, p.73.

[4] see, Koç, Y., "Kapıkulları Hangi Sınıftandı?" **Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı Tarihinden Sayfalar**, Ataol Pub., İstanbul, 1992, pp. 20-35.

The wage-earners in the Ottoman Empire were mainly concentrated in construction, mining, agriculture and in various sectors of government industrial and administrative activity.

The public servants became ordinary salary-earners from 1839 onwards and constituted a component of the working class, although it took them another 150 years (late 1980s) to acquire this class consciousness.

The guilds in the Ottoman Empire constituted an integral part of the state, performing important tasks and functions concerning the uninterrupted provision of the basic necessities of the state and of the population, at a standardised quality and price. They were closely and directly controlled by the state.

The master was not permitted to accumulate large sums of money to be used to recruit new apprentices and journeymen; to transform himself from simple reproduction to expanded reproduction; to develop a division of labour in the production of a commodity and to free himself from manual labour.

This control on the guild was also carried on within the guild, restricting the number of apprentices and journeymen and regulating their working and living conditions; thus, preventing any abuse or extreme exploitation of these categories of producers. Accordingly, the relations between the master and the journeymen and apprentices never resembled that of a modern industrial relations system, and no serious or long lasting opposition (action and/or organisation) of the journeymen and apprentices emerged, as in many parts of Europe, to be the prototypes of trade unions.

Most of the Ottoman industry and guild system disintegrated under the competition of European products. Some of the workplaces managed to survive European competition and adapted to the new conditions. In the 19th century, the majority of the artisans became either unemployed, or returned to the land, which was plenty.

Thus, the 20th century did not inherit the seeds of trade unions from the guild system in the form of journeymen's fraternities. In the absence of a well-developed indigenous industry, the majority of the apprentices, journeymen and some of the masters of the guilds did not turn into an industrial working class.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was neither large masses of direct producers deprived of land proprietorship and other means of production ("expropriated"), nor a powerful industrial capital ready and willing to exploit this free labour-power.

Industrialisation was mainly concentrated in Salonica and İstanbul [5]. There was scarcity of labour, of wage-labour and of skilled wage-labour; there was plenty of available land almost free; and a skilled worker could quite easily start a business of his own; and capital preferred to reap high rates of profit through trade, usury and investment in government securities.

The first known strikes of modern wage-earners in the 19th century were of Ereğli Coal Mine workers in 1863 [6] and telegraph workers of İstanbul in February 1872 [7]. Although there is reference to strikes in the Police Regulation of 1845, the first explicit prohibition of strikes was in the Regulation for Railways in 1867 [8]. But neither of these references was a result of strikes. They were mainly precautionary measures from laws and other pieces of legislation translated

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[5] See, Quataert, D., "The Workers of Salonica, 1850-1912" in Quataert, D. and Zürcher, E.J. (ed.), **Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic 1839-1950**, Tauris Academic Studies, London, 1995.

[6] Issawi, **The Economic History of Turkey**, U.C.Press, Chicago, 1980, pp.50-51.

[7] Sencer, O., **Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı, Doğuşu ve Yapısı**, Habora Yay., İstanbul, 1969, s. 133.

[8] See, Koç, Y., "Demiryollarında İlk Grev Yasağı (1867)," **Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Tarihi, Olaylar-Değerlendirmeler**, Yol-İş Pub., Ankara, 1996, pp.14-15.

from other countries. In the 1872-1906 period, only a total of 24 industrial actions have been specified [9].

The first known organisation of workers with an economic-political aim was the Ottoman Workers' Association (Amele-i Osmani Cemiyeti or Osmanlı Amele Cemiyeti) of 1894-1895, of which we know very little of. This illegal organisation was soon discovered by the security forces and liquidated.

The "Ameleperver Cemiyeti", which is quite frequently cited as the first workers' organisation was actually a charity organisation established in 1866 and had nothing to do with trade unions (the actual name of the organisation was "Amelperver Cemiyeti").

At the beginning of the 20th century, the working class in the Ottoman Empire was very weak in many respects, quantitatively and qualitatively.

The very limited known cases of organisation and industrial actions of the workers until 1908 are not a reflection of an extensive but unknown movement to be discovered by future research. There was no serious working class movement at all.

Attempts to exaggerate the role of the workers in the promulgation of the Police Regulation of 1845, to create a trade union history around the "Ameleperver Cemiyeti", to claim contribution of workers in the 1876 Constitution are ungrounded.

The number of wage and salary earners was small; there was plenty of available land in relation to a relatively small population and, thus, many of the wage- and salary-earners were not totally expropriated from their means of production; and the wars of national liberation waged against the Ottoman Empire during a period of its disintegration divided it, so that, in general, the workers of each ethnic group preferred to align itself with its own bourgeoisie.

Until 1908, the reactions of the workers were mainly individualistic and unorganized, not leading to a "working class movement". Machine-breaking was also a very exceptional practice [10], since there was no modern industry replacing the artisanal activity and since there was plenty of land easily accessible.

It was not the dictatorship of Abdülhamit II (1876-1909) or the existing legislation that prevented the outburst of discontent of a developed working class.

There were only the beginnings of a class movement. There was discontent, but sufficient only to complain, but not so great as to take serious risks. Thus, only in the almost complete absence of state and government authority, it was transformed into industrial actions and organisation.

Thus, the 1908-1913 period faced a growing movement, to be completely taken under control under the Unity and Progress Party rule from 1913 onwards.

1908 was a turning point in the political and social history of Turkey. It was a bourgeois democratic revolution without the active participation of the large masses of people. The successful uprising of the Unity and Progress Party (İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası) acted as a detonator and unleashed a wave of strikes, when any risk of reprisal from the government was out of the question[11].

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[9] Baydar, Oya, **Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı Tarihi (I),** Infograph, Frankfurt a.Main, 1982.

[10] For a view on the contrary see Güzel, Ş., "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Makina Kırıcılığı, 1907-1908," **Cahit Talas'a Armağan**, Mülkiyeliler Birliği Pub., Ankara, 1990s. 285-292.

[11] For an analysis of the strike wave of 1908, see, Karakışla, Y.S., "The Emergence of the Ottoman Industrial Working Class, 1839-1923," in Quataert, D. - Zürcher, E.J. (ed.), op.cit.

There was no working class for itself at the time to wage a struggle for democracy against the autocracy of Abdülhamit II. Although there were in the leading echelons of this Party many salary-earners, they acted not as the part of the struggle of the working class, but as individuals in a party with a bourgeois democratic program.

However, as in all cases when a crack within the ruling classes arises, the labour movement emerged spontaneously. Quite differently from its counterparts in the industrialized countries, even this movement was not totally spontaneous. The socialists preceded the working class.

The 1905 Russian Revolution had its impact and repercussions also in the Ottoman Empire, and the 1908 Revolution was followed by the socialists trying to organize and mobilize a nascent labour movement.

New trade unions were created. Sometimes strikes preceded organisations, sometimes organisation preceded strikes. There was no clear-cut division of labour between trade unions and socialist parties.

Trade union activity was mainly concentrated in Salonica, İstanbul and Zonguldak. In 1908 alone, there were 110 strikes. There were also some acts of violence committed by army and navy officers and conscripts who had several months of salaries in arrears.

Jews, Armenians and Greeks were especially active in the trade union and socialist activity. The Workers' Federation of Salonica, comprising mainly Jewish workers, was a successful initiative [12].

However, this first spring of the labour movement was short-lived. The new Government, aware of the potential of the labour movement, prohibited in the public utilities the organization of trade unions and stipulated a stage of compulsory mediation before strikes (Tatil-i Eşgal Cemiyetleri Hakkında Kanun-u Muvakkat of 1908 and Tatil-i Eşgal Kanunu of 1909). There was no regulation of industrial relations in the other sectors of the economy.

However, the sanctions of this Act, which was in force until 1936, were relatively mild. The sanction for establishing a trade union in the prohibited workplaces was imprisonment of one week to six months. Going on strike without going through the compulsory mediation stage had a sanction of imprisonment from 24 hours to one week.

Thus, this prohibition of trade union activity and the requirement of compulsory mediation in public services and public utilities cannot account for the lack of these activities in the following decades.

In 1911, there were only 11 enterprises in the Ottoman Empire that employed more than 1000 employees [13].

According to the censuses of industry carried out in the major cities of the Ottoman Empire (excluding railways, mining, public utilities, construction and other services) in 1913 and 1915 in 264 enterprizes employing at least 10 employees, there were 17 thousand employees in 1913 and 14 thousand in 1915. Only 15 percent of the employees were Moslems; 60 percent were Greeks, 15 percent Armenians and 10 percent Jews [14].

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[12] See, Dumont, P. "A Jewish, Socialist and Ottoman Organisation: The Workers' Federation of Salonica," in Tunçay, M. and Zürcher, E.J. (ed.), **Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1923,** British Academic Press, London, 1994.

[13] Koç, Y., **Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi**, Gerçek Yay., İstanbul, 1998, p.17.

[14] State Institute of Statistics, **Türkiye'de Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Gelişmenin 50 Yılı**, Ankara, 1973, pp. 143, 145.

Vedat Eldem estimates that the total numbers of employees not covered by these censuses of industry were 27.6 thousand in 1913 and 24.7 thousand in 1915, adding up to 44.0 thousand and 38.8 thousand in 1913 and 1915, respectively [15].

The workers employed in mining, construction and services were either semi-expropriated peasants or were scattered into very small workplaces. There were about 15 thousand mineworkers. The number of public servants was 138 thousand in 1910 and 97 thousand in 1911.

From 1913 onwards, all trade union activity was suspended. The Unity and Progress Party liquidated all independent trade union activity and tried to take under its own control any organisation of the working people. Since there was no strong spontaneous movement of the working class, there was no important trade union activity and labour movement in the 1913-1919 period.

In the urban areas of the Ottoman Empire in the 1839-1913 period, the nominal wages of wage-earners increased on the average by 1.1 percent annually. In other words, there was a 123 percent increase from 1839 until 1913. The real wages pursued a similar trend. The average wage level in the Ottoman Empire was above 40 percent of the wage level in Great Britain. In the 1880-1889 period, the ratio had increased up to 46 percent.

These relatively high wages can be attributed to the scarcity of wage-labour, rather than to an organised and active struggle of the workers.

During the First World War, the public servants lost about 60-80 percent of their purchasing power. Due to the severe labour shortage, the workers could preserve their gains; their loss of purchasing power during the War was about 20-30 percent[16].

The First World War costed the Ottoman Empire about 1.5 - 2.5 million lives. In addition to these, 764 thousand had been wounded [17].

This loss and the loss of the Greek and Armenian populations during WW I and following the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 had a very adverse impact on the development of the working class movement in three ways.

The expropriation process was reversed; many workers could and did acquire land and other property of those who died or left.

The lack of skilled manpower and the deficiency of wage-labour prevented the fall of real wages, the wage- and salary-earners were in a relatively better position compared with the peasantry.

Much of the legacy of the trade unionism in the 1908-1913 and 1919-1922 periods were not passed on to the working class of the Republic of Turkey.

The 1919-1923 period is outstanding for its lively trade union activity.

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[15] Eldem, V., **Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İktisadi Şartları Hakkında Bir Tetkik**, İş Bankası Pub., Ankara, 1970, pp.124-125. The total population of the Ottoman Empire in 1914 was estimated as 18.5 million (15,044,846 Moslems, 1,792,206 Greeks, 1,294,831 Armenians, 187,073 Jews, 14,908 Bulgarians and 186,152 of other ethnic origins (Akbayar, N., "Tanzimattan Sonra Osmanlı Devleti Nüfusu," in **Tanzimattan Cumhuriyete Türkiye Tarihi**, Cilt 5, İletişim Yay., İstanbul, 1985, p.1241).

[16] Eldem, V., **Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi**, Türk Tarih Kurumu Pub., Ankara, 1994, pp., 54, 148.

[17] Eldem, V., ibid, 1994, p. 132. Yusuf Hikmet Bayur estimates the human cost of WWI for the Ottoman Empire as follows: Killed in combat; 50,000; wounded in combat and died later: 35,000; dead due to diseases: 240,000; seriously wounded: 400,000; sick, deserters and lost: 1,565,000. 800,000 Armenians and 200,000 Greeks lost their lives during forced migration or while serving under forced labour (Bayur, Y.H., **Türk İnkılabı Tarihi**, Vol.3, Section 4, Ankara, 1983, p.787). Ahmet Bedevi Kuran's estimates concerning the human loss in the 1908-1918 period are 550,000 dead, 891,364 disabled, 103,731 lost, 2,167,841 wounded, 129,644 captives (Kuran, A.B., **Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İnkılap Hareketleri ve Milli Mücadele**, İstanbul, 1959, p.772).

There was, in this period, again a division, a split amongst the ranks of the ruling classes and thus a weakening of the established regime due to internal strife.

The Ottoman Empire had collapsed. There was no powerful state apparatus to contain the discontent of the workers. The occupying powers had internal conflicts which the labour movement could benefit from. For instance, it has been claimed that the strike of the tramway workers at a French company in İstanbul had been financially supported by the commander of the British occupying forces, with the intention of weakening the French company, to be replaced by a British one [18].

The War of National Liberation, the last war of national liberation against the Ottoman Empire and the first successful war of liberation against imperialism, had started, further weakening the Ottoman Sultan. The forces of national liberation had support from the workers in İstanbul. The remnants of the Unity and Progress Party and the supporters of the war of national liberation were active in various demonstrations and strikes.

The 1917 Russian Revolution had also its impact in Turkey. Socialists, communists and anarchists competed for the sympathy of an emerging spontaneous working class movement. But this spontaneous movement was very weak indeed and lacked a tradition of organisation and struggle. Thus, it was prone to outside control.

Socialists, communists, anarchists, the forces of national liberation and the remnants of the Unity and Progress Party on one side, governments on another side and employers yet on another side tried to organize and control the workers, who were generally the first generation of wage-earners and were not totally expropriated from their means of production.

Although there were attempts to form organisations comprising workers of different ethnic origins, these were not successful. The International Unity of Workers (Beynelmilel İşçiler İttihadı), which was established in 1920 and became affiliated with the Red International of Trade Unions (Profintern) was such an initiative.

Active cooperation of Anatolian Armenians with the Russians and the French during the First World War (and with the French occupation forces in 1919) and occupation of western Anatolia by Greece in 1919 and the active cooperation of the indigenous Greeks of Anatolia with the occupying forces led to a situation in which national consciousness predominated over nascent class consciousness.

In 1919, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) was established. Its establishment was based on the Versailles Treaty; but the same section existed also in the Sevres Treaty concluded between the victorious powers and the Ottoman Empire on 10 August 1920. Since the occupation powers were the founders of the ILO, there was an air of freedom for the labour movement in İstanbul. Fear of bolshevism also contributed to freedom.

In Anatolia a war of life or death was being waged. There were only a limited number of workplaces in the areas under the control of the Ankara Government. In 1921 in Anatolia not under foreign occupation (areas other than İstanbul, İzmir, Adana, Bursa, etc.), there were 33 thousand workplaces employing a total of 76 thousand workers. These establishments were small shops of artisans rather than large capitalist enterprises.

In Anatolia, all means were channeled for national liberation. National sentiments dominated over class interests. There were socialists and communists in Anatolia, with sympathy for the Russian Revolution. However, they could not find a “working class for itself” to unite and direct towards socialism.

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[18] Tuncay, M., **Türkiye’de Sol Akımlar, 1908-1925**, 3rd ed., Bilgi Pub., Ankara, 1978, pp.79, 80, 82.

In İstanbul, some of the workers participated actively in the War of National Liberation (1919-1922) as individuals. Associations established by the Unity and Progress Party, directly or indirectly, were involved in the support for the war of national liberation; but these associations were not independent, genuine or bona fide organisations of the working class.

During the 1911-1922 period, there was a division within the ranks of the working class, between blue and white-collar workers.

White-collar workers employed in the private sector benefited from the scarcity of educated labour-power and kept away from trade union activity or struggle.

White-collar workers employed in the public sector (public servants or civil servants) suffered low salaries, but held credited posts. However, they did not consider themselves part of the working class and pursued a bourgeois democratic program at the most.

In the 1919-1922 period, the workers in the occupied capital of the Ottoman Empire enjoyed de facto extensive trade union rights and freedoms.

Many trade unions were formed. Some of them were under the direction and control of the socialists and communists; some were under employers' control.

The Socialist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist Fırkası) under the leadership of Hüseyin Hilmi acted both as a trade union and a socialist party. The International Union of Workers (Beynelmilel İşçiler İttihadı) was a multi-ethnic organisation affiliated with the Profintern and in theory tried to pursue a line resembling the Industrial Workers of the World in the United States of America. The İstanbul section of the Communist Party of Turkey, established in Baku on 9 September 1920, worked under the name of Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Sosyalist Fırkası) and organised some trade union activity. May Day was celebrated with enthusiasm.

However, all this activity was not the reflection and result of a spontaneous working class movement, but was under the influence of various organisations external to it. The balance of forces and the division within the ranks of the ruling classes facilitated and even promoted actions of workers [19]. Socialists and communists, in the wake of the international revolutionary tide and with the hope of contributing to the world revolution under the leadership of the Comintern endeavored to achieve the impossible.

The Ankara Government, in 1921, enacted two laws to improve the working conditions of coal-miners in the Ereğli Coal Basin. Poorly implemented, these laws were the messages of the Ankara Government to workers, although their scope was limited to workers employed by foreign mining companies.

Early Republican Period (1923-1945)

The War of National Liberation against the occupation powers and the Ottoman Empire ended with victory and the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923.

A new and a more formidable task of creating a modern nation and state on the principles of contemporary civilization awaited Mustafa Kemal and his friends.

[19] The nationalist forces and its supporters in İstanbul supported workers' organisations and actions, which they believed would be an ally. The cooperation with the Soviet Union led to tolerance for the activities of the socialist and communist groups, so long as they were not powerful enough to pose a threat.

The democratic revolution continued with a new agenda. The new agenda led to a new alignment within the leadership, the “Ottoman reformers” being liquidated in the 1923-1926 period and Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the architect and the engineer of the democratic revolution, proceeded further.

The Republic of Turkey started with a relatively small population, with depleted human and material resources due to wars in the 1911-1922 period. There was plenty of land, but skilled labour and even labour of any kind was scarce.

The migration caused by ethnic rivalries and the exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece under the Lausanne Treaty deprived the Republic of Turkey of both skilled labour-power and much of the accumulated experience in trade union organisation and struggle of the 1908-1922 period.

1923-1925 was a period of transition for the new regime. The Moslem fundamentalist and Kurdish nationalist uprising of Şeyh Sait, with the alleged support of the British, testified for the prospective resistance to the envisaged reforms and provided the necessary pretext to take various political and social measures to proceed with the democratic revolution.

The Republican People's Party strengthened its power and embarked on a policy of cutting ties with the Ottoman past. Having the occupation forces out of Turkey, the Kemalist leadership concentrated its efforts on continuing the last war of national liberation against the Ottoman Empire, the democratic revolution of breaking with the Ottoman past. Kemalist reforms followed one another.

The Kemalist Governments were very dexterous in handling with the working class, indeed. The Government faced a number of dilemmas. The Republic had inherited a religious community ("ümmet"), a mosaic of ethnicities. This religious community had to be transformed into a modern nation. The political independence had been won; but preserving it required industrialization.

Both processes vital for the survival and strengthening of the Republic required a skilled workforce, devoted to new ideals of modernisation. And there was the threat from a number of super powers of the period and from the Moslem fundamentalists and Kurdish nationalists who cooperated with them. Anything that would obstruct this process had to be annihilated.

The leaders of the War of National Liberation had to create their own working class, in addition to creating their own industrial bourgeoisie. They had inherited from the Unity and Progress Party the practice of forming and directing workers' associations under their own control.

In Europe, when the bourgeoisie launched the struggle against the aristocracy in the late 18th century and the 19th century, there was a relatively developed working class. Trained in these struggles, the working class continued its fight for democracy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In Turkey, the Kemalists' struggle for modernisation was against the remnants of the feudal past, and it was only through liberating the large peasant masses from the yoke of reactionary elements that modernization could be achieved. And there was no working class sufficiently developed to assume and carry on the struggle for democracy.

Thus, the Kemalist revolution did not and could not be fully democratic. But an indispensable element of modernization in Turkey was secularism, the basic weapon against the remnants of the Ottoman Empire and the basis of democracy and trade union rights and freedoms of the post-WW II period. The working class in Turkey started to take part actively in the struggle for democracy only in the post-WW II period.

On the other hand, there was the Comintern, a world communist party, with a Turkish section. With the transition from the expectation of a world revolution to the basic objective of preserving the Soviet Union ("Socialism in one country"), all the efforts of the Comintern and its sections were directed towards this goal and indexed to the foreign policy of the Soviet Union.

Thus, any workers' association or trade union under communist leadership was considered by the Kemalists to be detrimental to the existence of the Republic of Turkey.

The leaders of the Republic, while concluding a Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union, did not refrain from arresting the leadership of Advancement of Labour Society (Amele Teali Cemiyeti) in 1925, for the leaflet distributed on the occasion of the May Day and of the Communist Party of Turkey.

However, until 1945, the Turkish state considered Moslem fundamentalism and Kurdish nationalism as the strategic enemies; and the Soviet Union, except for a couple of years before and during WW II, was the strategic friend and ally.

There was an identification of the state with the government and with the People's Republican Party in these two decades, which disappeared in the post-WW II period, leading to the intervention of the Turkish Armed Forces in active politics directly in various ways on behalf of the Turkish state. The National Security Council, first established in the 1930s, was reorganised and enshrined in the constitution of the Republic of Turkey in 1961, was the platform for the peaceful solution of problems that might emerge between the government and the state.

The Government launched on to establishing and modernizing the new state. The Code of Obligations and the Civil Code of 1926 replaced the Moslem Civil Code (Mecelle) of the Ottoman Empire, thus creating a capitalist system of the sale and purchase of labour-power. The Turkish Penal Code was also adopted in the same year.

The dismantling of the feudal fundamentalist superstructure of the Ottoman Empire, through numerous legislative and administrative changes and reforms, created the necessary preconditions for democracy and basic trade union and worker rights and freedoms.

General suffrage was also granted as a component of the modernization process, rather than as a result of the struggles of the working class. However, it could not be an effective weapon of the working people until the end of WW II.

During the first 2.5 decades of the Republic, the Government pursued a very keen policy of dividing the working class by forming a labour aristocracy. Even the skilled blue-collar workers in the public sector were employed in the status of civil servant and were granted basic rights and a good salary.

In 1931, for instance, civil servants constituted only 1.2 percent of the workforce, but received 7.1 percent of the national income [20]. They had job security, social security, paid annual leave, etc. This labour aristocracy severed its ties with the large segments of the semi-expropriated working class and enjoyed a high social status. In turn, they zealously endeavored to fulfill the national tasks: To transform the religious community ("ümmet") into a modern nation and to construct the economic infrastructure and later the public industrial establishments.

[20] Boratav, K., "İktisat Tarihi, 1908-1980," Akşin, S. (Ed.), **Türkiye Tarihi**, Vol. 4, Cem Yay., İstanbul, 1989, p.300; Ömürgönülşen, U., "Türkiye'de Kamu Görevlilerinin Sayısal Evrimi ve 1980 Sonrasında Kamu Görevlilerinin Azaltılmasına Yönelik Politikalar Üzerine Düşünceler," **Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi**, November 1990.

The People's Republican Party, the government and the Turkish state, on the other hand, pursued a very well-defined and conscious policy of perpetuating the land ownership of the working people.

Thus a dilemma emerged: On the one hand, an expropriated population was necessary to be employed as permanent wage-labourers in the newly established industrial establishments. On the other hand, the emergence of an expropriated working class reminded the leaders of the Republic of the social and political upheavals in other countries and caused fears concerning the activities of the Turkish section of the Comintern, which would endanger the integrity, sovereignty and the independence of the newly-established Republic [21].

This situation led to a discussion within the ranks of the Communist Party of Turkey, as well. A group from the leadership left the Party in 1927. They advocated that there was no developed working class movement in Turkey and that the Kemalist government could, through its efforts to industrialize the country, create the material basis of socialism. They propagated these views in the Kadro Magazine they published. This prototype of the post-WW II "non-capitalist way of development" theory proved to be successful to a considerable extent.

The Government combined its attempts of modernising the country with a policy of appeasing the wage- and salary-earners by granting them rights which were the fruits of decades of struggle in some other countries. Scarcity of wage-labour was one of the factors. The other factors were the attempt to win over the sympathy of the workers and to inhibit the development of a tradition of acquiring rights through common struggle.

In the 1925-1938 period, the formation and functioning of trade unions on a class basis were legally possible, but were prevented in practice. The 1938 Act on Associations prohibited "associations based on class," not specifying trade unions.

Thus, under the law, craftsmen's trade unions were not banned. Besides, the sanctions for establishing associations based on class were not so severe as to prevent them. Thus, in the 1925-1938 period, the absence of trade unionism in Turkey cannot be accounted for by the Act on Associations. If there had been a strong spontaneous movement of the working class in Turkey in this period, such limited prohibitions would not have prevented trade union organisation and activity [22].

The Strike Act of 1909 was in force until 1936, when the Labour Act No.3008 was promulgated [23]. Thus, until 1936 strikes in the public utilities were to pass through a stage of compulsory mediation. There were no restrictions on the right to strike in the other establishments. However, due to the nature of the working class in Turkey in this period, there were only very infrequent incidents of strike action.

Strikes were prohibited by the Labour Act of 1936. However, the sanctions for strikes with an economic objective were very mild, indeed. Article 127 of the Act stipulated only a fine of 10-100 Turkish Liras to each of the strikers. If the striking workers were employed by companies undertaking public services, imprisonment from one month to six months was sanctioned. The amendment to the Penal Code in 1933 was not a strike ban, but concerned only intimidation and threats to strike.

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[21] See, Koç, Y., "Türkiye'de Mülksüzleşme ve İşçi Sınıfının Oluşumu (1923-1946)", "Türkiye'de İşgücü Yetersizliği ve Daimi İşçi Sıkıntısı (1923-1946)" and "CHP ve İşçi Sınıfı (1923-1946)" in Koç, Y., **Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Tarihi, Olaylar Değerlendirmeler**, Yol-İş Pub., Ankara, 1996, pp., 27-64, 65-87 and 175-182, respectively.

[22] On 20 July 1994, TÜRK-İŞ staged a general strike to protest the government. Under the current legislation, this was an "illegal strike to protest the executive." The explicit sanction was the liquidation of the Confederation (Act No.2821/58) and dismissal without any compensation of all participants (Act No. 1475/17/II and Act No. 2822/45) and sentencing of all participants to at least six months in prison (Act No.2822/73). None of these could be enforced.

[23] Labour Act No.3008 repealed only those provisions of the Act of 1909 that contravened it.

The section of the working class employed in the status of civil servant enjoyed considerable privileges. Act on Civil Servants (No.788) of 1926 and the acts on their salaries had the objective of preserving the employment of the skilled workforce in the public sector, which was vital for building the social and technical infrastructure of a modern independent nation and state.

Following the repercussions of the Great Depression in Turkey, the state undertook the main responsibility to industrialize. State economic enterprises were established. The distribution of these establishments around the country also reflects the anxiety and the objectives of the Kemalist leadership.

Rather than concentrating these establishments in the İstanbul area, where the industrial infrastructure was more convenient, they were dispersed. These tobacco, sugar, textile, tea, iron-steel and other establishments were not only production-oriented. They also formed the nuclei of a modern life-style in the age-old Anatolia, like oases in a desert. There were also the prototypes of the “social state.”

Besides, the workforce was generally first-generation labourers, not totally expropriated. Their labour aristocracy position in a poverty-stricken environment discouraged any "disruptive propaganda". The Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) ideologues pursued very consciously a policy of perpetuating the land-ownership of the wage-earners, as well.

In the period before WW II, labour was scarce. The Great Depression and the agricultural crisis did not lead to the expropriation of the peasantry. On the contrary, at the face of unstable and falling prices of agricultural products, the landlords preferred the share-cropping system to re-emerge in importance. The semi-feudal relations in the process of being liquidated were reinforced.

The landless peasants or peasants with insufficient land or those who needed cash to pay their taxes and to buy basic consumer products, flocked to the labour market as temporary workers.

However, this temporary flow did not and could not contribute to the development of the working class movement. The semi-expropriated peasants working for wages for a temporary period did not care about social security, protective labour legislation, trade unions or collective agreements. On the contrary, their presence might have weakened such tendencies among genuine workers.

In 1933, the governor of İzmir, General Kazım Dirik, emulated the "single and compulsory membership trade unionism" of Mussolini Italy in his region. However, it was in vain, most probably because the Turkish state was not so powerful as to control and organise all of private industrial activity at a time when temporary work was quite widespread. But the Republican People's Party organised workers' associations under appointed persons.

Until the end of the Second World War, associations on a class basis were forbidden. However, there were many craft associations of blue collar-workers and associations of public servants [24]. Some of these were turned into trade unions following the repeal on the ban [25].

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[24] For a list of these associations, see. Koç, Y., “1947 Yılında Sendika-Dışı İşçi Örgütlenmeleri," **Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı Tarihinden Yapraklar**, Ataol Pub., İstanbul, 1992, pp.100-120.

[25] For instance, İzmir Tobacco Producers Association was established in 1926. It was in fact an association of tobacco workers which provided health service in return for a contribution and which organised about 10 thousand workers. Following the repeal of the ban on associations on a class basis, it was turned into İzmir Tobacco Workers Trade Union, which represented 12 thousand workers in 1951. Koç, Y., "1947 Yılında Sendika-Dışı İşçi Örgütlenmeleri," ibid, 1992, s. 102.

WW II changed the relations between the workers and employers in Turkey. The conscription of hundreds of thousands of productive young men further increased the labour scarcity problem the Turkish economy had faced for decades.

Since the increased military expenditures and the threat of war prevented the use of material incentives to attract labour, forced labour was stipulated under the National Defense Act of 1940 [26]. Much of the gains of the Labour Act were suspended, as well.

Although Turkey was not actively involved in combat, WW II meant deprivation of all kinds for the working population in general.

Among the working people, the civil servants were the luckiest. They enjoyed pay rises and additional bonuses to compensate for the price rise; and they were sold some basic consumer goods produced by the public sector at prices much below the going black-market rate. The workers in the public sector lost much, but were still better off then the private sector workers and especially than the large majority of peasants. The privileged status of the public servants strengthened further the division within the ranks of the working class.

In the 1923-1945 period, the People's Republican Party, the governments and the state, financed the servicing of the Ottoman debt, the construction of railways and other infrastructural investments, nationalisation of many foreign enterprises, the establishment of the state economic enterprizes, investments in health and education and the building, equipping and feeding of a large army, by the surplus produced in the agricultural sector.

Thus, it was the peasantry in general and the poor peasants in particular who suffered the most. The small commodity producers, the peasants with insufficient land and the landless peasants, rather than opposing the landlords, usurers and merchants, showed a silent opposition to the People's Republican Party regime and the progressive steps taken and the reforms implemented from above.

In the absence of the radio and the television, the illiteracy of the rural population led these rural masses to come under the influence of the fundamentalist sects (or permitted the perpetuation of this already-existing influence), which had been prosecuted by the Turkish state.

The attempts of the state to enlighten the rural population through the Village Institutions was a very important, but belated project. In the minds of the majority of the rural population, the People's Republican Party was analogous to poverty, taxation, being beaten by the gendarmarie and religious oppression.

This situation led the peasant masses to be the supporters of conservative parties and religious sects. When, starting in the 1950s, these people were transformed into workers, this political attitude continued, to be further reinforced by the populist activities and policies of the Democrat Party (in power in the 1950-1960 period) and its successor, the Justice Party (in power, with some interruptions in the 1960s and 1970s, either on its own or in coalition with other right-wing parties).

A census of industry was carried out in 1927. There were 257 thousand people working in 65 thousand enterprises. In 36 percent of these enterprises, only one person, the owner himself/herself, was employed. In another 8 percent, only the owner and his/her relatives were working. There were only 155 enterprises with a workforce exceeding 100.

In 1943, there were 3.2 thousand enterprises employing 10 or more workers (a total of 301 thousand workers). However, a considerable portion of these workers were still not totally

[26] For details of this practice, see, Güzel, M.Ş., "Capital and Labour during World War II," in Quataert, D. - Zürcher, E.J., op.cit.

expropriated, would go back to their villages during harvest time and receive agricultural income, as well.

The number of public servants increased from 88 thousand in 1938 to 152 thousand in 1946. Public servants, although they constituted a labour aristocracy in this period, consisted mainly of totally expropriated persons.

Progressive and pro-labour legislation and workplace regulations in the public sector in these two decades were mainly the result of the scarcity of wage-labour and the attempts of the People's Republican Party, the governments and the state to contain labour discontent and to win over the urban working people to the Turkish enlightenment, nation-building and reform process [27].

In this period, the working class was in the process of being formed and, thus, could not play an important role in the democratic revolution.

The 1945 - 1960 Period

At the end of WW II, Turkey allied herself with the Allies and participated in the founding of the United Nations. The one-party rule had to be abandoned. Following the permission to form associations on a class basis, trade unions were established rapidly in various centers, mainly in the public sector.

The Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti), established on 6 January 1946 by politicians who had occupied leading positions in the Republican People's Party had close relations with the workers. Although they were not directly involved in the formation of trade unions, they were the ground of attraction of workers as the only legitimate and powerful anti-government organisation.

Two socialist parties were formed: The Socialist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi) and the Socialist Labourers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi). The latter was the legal extension of the Communist Party of Turkey. Both started establishing trade unions.

There were also spontaneous initiatives from amongst the workers. Former formal and informal provident funds, craft associations, mutual-aid societies, etc. contributed considerably to the formation of trade unions by the workers themselves.

The outbreak of the Cold War interrupted this process. On 16 December 1946, the two socialist parties and all trade unions associated with them were liquidated. However, some of the founders of these liquidated unions were later active in other trade unions.

Act Concerning Workers' and Employers' Trade Unions and Higher Level Organisations No. 5018 was promulgated in February 1947. The People's Republican Party established a Workers' Bureau and started to organize trade unions using government funds. Government officials were directly involved in the establishment of many of the trade unions in the public sector.

The trade unions had been non-existent for more than two decades. For the majority of workers, trade union activity was communistic and was full of risks. The liquidation of some trade unions in December 1946 had further reinforced this fear.

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[27] For a summary of the legislation in this period, see, Koç, Y., **Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi,** Gerçek Yay., İstanbul, 1998, pp.31-35; Koç, Y., "Kamu Kesiminde İşçi Hakları (1923-1946)," in Koç, Y., **Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Tarihi, Olaylar-Değerlendirmeler,** 1996, pp.98-132.

Although the state's direct involvement in this process was a negative factor from the perspective of independent trade unionism, on the other hand, it also contributed to the eradication of these fears. Otherwise, it would have been more difficult to organize trade unions during the Cold War.

One can say that, the intervention of the state to organise the workers (which was reinforced by the territorial demands of the Soviet Union from Turkey in 1945 and by the Cold War) while on the one hand accelerated the process of the formation of trade unions by eradicating legislative and administrative obstacles and supporting actively, on the other hand, retarded the development of a tradition of spontaneity.

Trade unions were first mainly established in the public sector, mostly in the state economic enterprises. First there were workplace (house) unions. Then local councils and federations were established. İstanbul Trade Unions Council (İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliği) was the most important local council, which guided the activities of trade unions in other areas, as well. The state closely scrutinized the activities of the trade unions and higher level organisations.

The Confederation of Trade Unions of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu - TÜRK-İŞ) was established on 31 July 1952. It was the first nation-wide organisation of the working class in Turkey.

At the height of the Cold War, the CIA was active in Turkey in the trade union arena. The first contacts of the alleged CIA agents under the cover of trade unionists took place in 1951. However, contrary to exaggerated allegations, the activities of the covert CIA agents has had only a minor impact on the development of the trade union movement in Turkey in general and on TÜRK-İŞ in specific.

If there is a force that has had its imprint on TÜRK-İŞ, it is the Turkish state, apart from the government. TÜRK-İŞ has from time to time opposed the policies of the governments and has defied government authority. But it has never detracted from the general state policy and has never challenged the state.

The policies in Turkey that resemble to a certain extent the "bread-and-butter unionism" or "business unionism" of the AFL-CIO are not the result of external factors, but are the outcome of the indigenous characteristics of the working class in Turkey, of the attitudes of the employers and the state. Attaching a determinant role to the influence of the AFL-CIO would be incorrect and misleading.

In the 1946-1950 period, the government started the Workers' Insurance Institution. However, the blue-collar workers had negative sentiments about the Republican People's Party, due to their experiences either as workers or as peasants. The Democrat Party, with its pro-democracy rhetoric appealed to the people.

The public servants, recalling their privileged status in the past and identifying themselves with the political party in power, in general supported the Republican People's Party. On the other hand, the majority of the blue-collar workers were for the Democrat Party and participated actively in the party work.

When associations on a class basis were still forbidden, the Democrat Party advocated the establishment of trade unions. Until 1950, the Democrat Party propagated for the right to strike, whereas the Republican People's Party accused those advocating the right to strike as communists.

In the 1950-1960 period, the Democrat Party in power enacted legislation and pursued policies that benefited the workers. Paid weekend, paid annual leave, statutory bonuses,

extension of the scope of the Labour Act and of social security, labour tribunals with a worker serving as judge, subsidised construction loan for workers, minimum wage are examples of positive steps taken by the Democrat Party with respect to legislation.

Just on the eve of the military coup d'etat of 1960, Prime Minister Menderes, in a radio speech, celebrated the May Day as the "Workers' Day."

Besides, the government granted wage increases as a result of collective disputes initiated by trade unions or by groups of workers. Rarely collective agreements were concluded. The trade unions under the leadership of Democrat Party sympathizers could enjoy other privileges in the public sector, as well.

However, the Democrat Party did not keep its promises with respect to the right to strike. Its attitude towards the trade unions changed as the economic crisis mounted. The government suspended the activities of some trade unions in 1955. The activities of some local councils were suspended by court rulings in 1957.

The Democrat Party tried to have a firm grip on the trade unions. During the economic boom of 1950-1954, it endeavored to achieve this objective through concessions to the workers and trade unions at the same time.

When these attempts proved to be a failure in securing the allegiance of trade unions and when the economic problems began to mount, it resorted to suppression of the trade unions and granting of rights to the workers directly.

The confrontation between the trade unions and the government ended when a pro-Democrat Party President (Nuri Beşer) was elected at the 1957 Congress of TÜRK-İŞ (to serve until the military coup of 27 May 1960).

However, the Democrat Party was then aware of the fact that it could not control the trade unions and use them as the workers' branch of the Party. Then, the project of the Motherland Front (Vatan Cephesi) was initiated, which tried to organise the people (including large numbers of workers) in a front against possible threats to the Democrat Party (mainly from the state - Turkish Armed Forces).

In the 1950-1960 period, the rapid mechanization of agriculture, the building of highways and the attraction of the urban settlements led to a major exodus of semi-expropriated peasants from the land. In some regions share-cropping gave way to large farms.

In the urban areas, investments in construction and industry absorbed the new entrants to the labour market. Shanty towns around the cities were constructed. The ties of the new workers with the rural areas and land ownership continued to a considerable extent.

The wages and working and living conditions of these migrants under wage-employment were much better than the situation in their villages. Thus, migration, shanty towns and wage-employment represented a considerable improvement in the living standard of the semi-expropriated workers.

Being first-generation workers, they were totally ignorant about trade union activity. In the absence of experience and knowledge about any other alternative, finding a job and receiving regular wages were considered a fortune to be grateful to god for.

Trade unions in this period had great difficulty in recruiting members. In the absence of the right to strike, collective negotiations were ineffective. Actually, it was the lack of the will and the power to strike, rather than the right itself, which caused problems.

The majority of semi-expropriated workers had neither the will, nor the power to engage in industrial actions. The trade unions engaged in various forms of activities, such as starting a provident fund, organizing joint festivities, organizing craft courses etc. to attract members.

According to the 1955 population, only 14 percent of the labour-force was under the category of wage- and salary-employment; and a considerable portion of this group was still semi-expropriated direct producers.

In 1950, there were only 76 thousand workers employed by public manufacturing industry establishments employing at least 10 employees. The number of workers in similar private sector establishments was 87 thousand. These figures became 128 thousand and 169 thousand in 1960, respectively.

The number of trade union membership in the 1946-1960 period was limited.

Trade Unions and Trade Union Membership (1948-1960)[28]

Year	Trade Unions	Membership
1948	73	52,000
1949	77	72,000
1950(1 May)	88	76,000
1951(1 May)	137	110,000
1952(1 December)	248	130,000
1953(1 July)	275	140,000
1954(1 July)	323	180,000
1955 (1 December)	363	189,000
1956 (1 December)	376	209,000
1957 (31 December)	385	244,000
1958 (1 October)	394	262,000
1959 (10 August)	417	280,000
1960 (1 September)	432	282,000

The military coup d'etat of 1960 was not welcome by the workers in general. When the armed forces, acting on behalf of the state, resorted to the coup d'etat against a legitimate government, TÜRK-İŞ sided with the armed forces. This attitude was not only the result of the fear of arms, but also a natural outcome of its close relations with the state. The anti-democratic actions and attempts of the Democrat Party in power in 1959 and 1960 contributed to this attitude.

The 1950s and the 1960s were the Golden Age of capitalism in the world and in Turkey and meant considerable improvements in the living conditions of the people in general, which were identified with the Democrat Party.

Land transport developed rapidly, rendering it possible and cheaper to market agricultural products and to have access to various new products and services by the majority of Anatolia, not only the rural areas.

Considerable improvements in the consumption patterns were realised. Rubber shoes and boots replaced the “çarık”, a primitive home-made sandal. Pesticides (especially DDT) eradicated the problems of lice and flees. Penicillin cured many serious mortal diseases. Considerable success was achieved in the struggle against tuberculosis and syphilis. Radio became widespread. Margarine was added to the diet of the population. The brazier (“mangal”) was replaced by the stove and the gas-cooker (“gazocağı”). Electricity replaced the gas-lamp.

[28] Tuna, O., “Türk İşçi Sendikalarının Gelişme Seyri ve Fonksiyonları, **“İktisadi Kalkınmanın Sosyal Meseleleri,** Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Konferans Heyeti, İstanbul, 1964, p.252.

With the advent of the tractor and other modern agricultural implements, land tilled and productivity in agricultural increased considerably.

All these and others contributed to the general welfare of the people. The peasants and workers were respected for the first time as “voters”.

The 1961 - 1980 Period

The 1960s were a period of high rates of economic growth and optimism for the future. Crises, when occurred, were expected to be short-lived and mild, and they proved to be so. Economic growth was reflected concretely in the lives of the working masses.

However, the Golden Age of capitalism ended in the early 1970s. The consensus between labour and capital, based on continuous economic growth and the social welfare state, ended by the late 1970s and early 1980s in many countries. These developments were also reflected in Turkey.

The 1961 Constitution extended the right to organize to the civil servants and guaranteed the right to strike for workers. The concept of the “social state” was enshrined in the Constitution for the first time. Act No.274 concerning Trade Unions and Act No.275 concerning Collective Labour Agreements Strikes and Lockouts were promulgated in 1963 and regulated industrial relations in the 1963-1980 period.

From the early 1960s until the end of the 1970s, there was in Turkey continuous economic growth. Although the economic crisis started at the beginning of the 1970s, serious attempts for solution were continuously delayed, until the austerity program of 24 January 1980.

Turkey was endeavoring to develop through import substituting industrialization. The domestic market was continuously expanding. Turkey benefited from the bipolar world political scene. Unemployment, especially of skilled workers, was at a relatively low and tolerable level. Immigration to Europe and repatriation of savings relaxed social tensions especially in the rural areas.

From the mid-1970s onwards, the governments used the public sector for political employment. The sympathizers of the political parties in power were recruited by the public enterprises. The phenomenon which is identified as the "artificial proletariat" became quite widespread.

Collective labour agreements, which in the 1946-1963 period were exceptions, became the rule and the trade union movement concentrated on acquiring rights through collective agreements, ignoring to a large extent the political arena and the amendment of the legislation.

The number of wage- and salary-earners increased rapidly in the 1961-1980 period. According to the population censuses, the number of gainfully employed wage- and salary-earners was 3.0 million in 1965, 4.2 million in 1970, 5.4 million in 1975 and 6.2 million in 1980. The proportions of wage- and salary-earners in the total number of gainfully employed were, respectively, 22.5, 27.6, 31.0 and 33.4 percent.

If the household heads were taken as the basis, whereas in 1970 only 35.0 percent were wage- and salary-earners, the figures had increased to 39.0 percent in 1975 and 42.1 percent in 1980.

The status in which the employee worked started to be a controversial issue in this period. The governments, in order to be able to deprive some employees of the rights to bargain collectively and to strike (and in the 1971-1980 period, of the right to establish trade unions),

changed arbitrarily the status of some workers into public servants, and many newly recruited employees were employed as public servants.

This practice led to a completely irrational system, in which the same tasks would be performed in the same establishment or even in the same room by two people working in two different statuses and enjoying and exercising completely different rights; thus creating serious unrest.

This problem continues even today. Today, Turkey is most probably unique in the world in having train operators, janitors, nurses, drivers, teachers, ordinary clerks and many other similar occupations of blue-collar workers in the status of civil servant or public servant.

This was a period of social and political upheavals in Turkey. The trade union movement became stronger and more influential. Public servants established their unions in 1965.

The Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi - TİP) was influential in the disaffiliation from TÜRK-İŞ of 3 unions and the establishment of DİSK (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey) in 1967. MİSK (Confederation of Nationalist Trade Unions), which was closely linked to the Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi - MHP) was established in 1970, but became active only after 1975. HAK-İŞ (Confederation of Real Trade Unions), which had close ties with the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi - MSP) was established in 1976.

During the 1963-1980 period, trade union membership grew rapidly, especially as a result of negotiated agreements. However, it is difficult to observe this development in statistics.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Labour, the trade union membership proceeded as follows (excluding public servants trade unions):

Trade Unions and Trade Union Membership (1961-1980)[29]

Year	Trade Unions	Membership	Year	Trade Unions	Membership
1961	511	298,000	1971	631	2,362,787
1962	543	307,000	1972	642	2,672,857
1963	565	295,710	1973	637	2,658,393
1964	595	338,769	1974	675	2,878,624
1965	668	360,285	1975	781	3,328,633
1966	704	374,058	1976	800	3,269,356
1967	798	834,680	1977	863	3,807,577
1968	755	1,057,928	1978	912	3,897,290
1969	797	1,193,908	1979	750	5,465,109
1970	737	2,088,219	1980	733	5,721.

[29] Tuna, O., "Türk İşçi Sendikalarının Gelişme Seyri ve Fonksiyonları," **İktisadi Kalkınmanın Sosyal Meseleleri,** Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Konferans Heyeti, İstanbul, 1964, p.252; Ministry of Labour, **Çalışma Dergisi-1972,** Vol.I, No.2, p.121; Ministry of Labour, **Çalışma Dergisi-1977,** Vol.I, No.1, p.104; Ministry of Labour, **Çalışma Dergisi-1978,** p.167; Ministry of Labour, **Sayın Devlet Başkanı ve Milli Güvenlik Konseyi Üyelerine Sunulan Brifing,** Ankara, 1981, p.40.

However, these figures are not reliable for the whole period under consideration. For the 1963-1966 period, the reliability of these figures is high. Following the establishment of DİSK in 1967, a competition to exaggerate membership figures became the rule.

The possibility of being member to more than one trade union simultaneously further aggravated the problem. Competence for collective negotiations required the membership of the simple majority in the establishment concerned. Trade unions competing for certificates of competence for negotiations resorted to various ways of exaggerating their membership figures.

This tendency increased even further after 1970, when an amendment to the Trade Unions Act required that any trade union to function at the national level had to represent at least one third of the workers in that specific branch of industry. Although this provision of the amendment was later repealed by the Constitutional Court, the practice of extremely overstating membership figures continued.

The public servants had established various associations until 1965. With the enactment of Act No.624 in 1965, with the support of some of these associations, public servants trade unions were formed. Some of these were highly politicized.

Two confederations were established: TÜRKPERSEN (Confederation of Public Personnel Trade Unions of Turkey) and Confederation of State Economic Establishments and Enterprises Personnel Trade Unions of Turkey. In the 1965-1971 period, the number of public servants trade unions reached 658. Reliable figures about their total membership are inaccessible [30].

The public servants trade unions were liquidated following the amendment of the Constitution in September 1971, prohibiting expressly the establishment of trade unions by public servants. Public servants were organized in associations in the 1971-1980 period. These associations were divided along political lines.

The right to strike was guaranteed by the 1961 Constitution for workers. The exercise of the right to strike was to be regulated by law. Before the enactment of the law, strikes began. Following the enactment of the Act concerning Collective Labour Agreements Strikes and Lockouts in 1963, strikes became more extensive. Data on strikes in the 1963-1980 period are presented below. There are no reliable lists of other legal forms of industrial actions and illegal strikes [31].

Legal Strikes (1963 - 1980) [32]

Year	Workers on Strike	Work-Days Lost	Year	Workers on Strike	Work-Days Lost
1963	1,514	19,739	1972	14,879	659,362
1964	6,640	238,261	1973	12,286	671,135
1965	6,593	336,836	1974	25,546	1,109,401

[30] Demir, S., "Türkiye'de Kamu Görevlileri Dernekleri (1971-1980)," **Amme İdaresi Dergisi**, Vol.24, No.1, Ankara, March 1991, p.58.

[31] For more information about these actions, see. Koç,Y., **Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi**, İstanbul, 1998, pp.112-121. For a list of an extensive list of all industrial actions in the 1960-1969 period, see, Koç, C. - Koç, Y., "Türkiye'de 1960-1969 Döneminde İşçi Sınıfı Eylemleri," **Yıllık-1999**, TÜRK-İŞ, 1999.

[32] Ministry of Labour and Social Security, **Çalışma Hayatı İstatistikleri**, No.18, Ankara, 1995, p.51.

1966	11,414	430,104	1975	13,708	668,797
1967	9,499	350,037	1976	7,240	325,830
1968	5,289	174,905	1977	15,682	1,397,124
1969	12,601	235,134	1978	9,748	426,127
1970	21,156	220,189	1979	21,011	1,147,721
1971	10,916	476,116	1980	84,832	1,303,253

Apart from strikes, various other forms of industrial actions became widespread.

The coal-miners in the Kozlu region on the Black Sea Coast started an illegal strike in 1965 leading to clashes with the security forces, in which two workers were shot dead.

About 100 thousand workers participated in a rally organised by the Council of Trade Unions of İstanbul, affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ, on 31 December 1961.

Consumer boycotts against intermediaries were organised in some provinces. TÜRK-İŞ protested communism by a mass rally in Ankara on 22 December 1962.

TÜRK-İŞ launched a campaign before the 1965 general elections to prevent the election of some members of Parliament, who had acted against the interests of the workers; and the TÜRK-İŞ leadership faced prosecution.

TÜRK-İŞ's rally in Ankara on 24 August 1969 contributed considerably to the improvement of the social security legislation.

In the 1968-1970 period, work-place occupations and clashes with the security forces were common. The student movement had started university occupations in 1968.

Although there were no important direct links between the student movement and the actions of the workers, it is generally accepted that the university occupations of students with impunity was one of the sources of inspiration of the workers engaged in similar actions in the following days and weeks.

These actions were generally not organized by the trade unions. It was mainly the workers in the workplaces who started them. Sometimes the workers in a factory became members of a trade union. The leaders were dismissed. The workers started a sit-down strike. When the employer retaliated by dismissing all workers, a workplace occupation ensued. Sometimes the issue was resolved peacefully, sometimes there were clashes with the police. Sometimes the incident started when the workers took steps to change trade unions.

The apex of these sets of wildcat strikes and demonstrations was the incident of 15-16 June 1970. Answering DİSK's call to protest a bill to amend the Trade Unions Act, about 100 thousand workers in the İstanbul-Kocaeli region started demonstrations and clashed with the security forces. Martial law was declared.

The bill was enacted, but another bill to amend the Collective Agreements, Strikes and Lock-Outs Act was withdrawn.

The events in the İstanbul region subsided. About 5,090 leading cadres of the trade union movement were dismissed on charges of being involved in illegal industrial actions and were blacklisted.

Following the oppression of the workplace occupations in the rapidly industrializing Adana region in October 1970, silence reigned within the ranks of the working class.

A bomb attack at the TÜRK-İŞ headquarters in Ankara on 29 December 1970 led to a general work stoppage for two hours on 31 December.

Anarchist tendencies within the socialist-communist movement (which had acquired a mass character for the first time in the Republican period) increased following this retreat. Some factions within the left emulated the "foco" theory of R.Debray; some started a "vanguard war", resembling, to a certain extent, the Tupamaros of Uruguay [33].

The military coup d'etat of 12 March 1971 was staged under these circumstances.

TÜRK-İŞ and DİSK supported the coup. It was only after the Israeli Consul-General in İstanbul was abducted and assassinated that martial law was declared. DİSK leaders were taken in custody and trade union activities were curtailed.

However, the "workers" trade unions did not suffer much from the coup. There were no adverse legislative changes. The prohibition of strikes for a short period of time caused a decline of a few percentage points in purchasing power.

Public servants' trade unions, however, were liquidated following an amendment of the Constitution in September 1971.

It is interesting to note that DİSK was not then considered a strategic enemy of the state, and no legal case against DİSK was initiated. This was not the case for the Teachers' Trade Union of Turkey (TÖS), which was more politicized. Although in the end TÖS was acquitted, its leaders were prosecuted following the military coup of 1971.

The establishment of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) on 13 February 1961 by 12 trade unionists was an important attempt to create the political wing of the labour movement. However, the decision to establish the party was not the result of a political necessity for the masses, but was an attempt by a number of trade unionists, without the democratic resolutions and approval of the competent bodies of their respective unions.

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[33] In the 1963-1970 period, the socialist movement in Turkey acquired a mass character. From 1968 onwards, various splits in the socialist movement occurred. On the one hand, the division in the international communist movement following the confrontations of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party in 1963 had their reflections. The Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China, the successes of the Vietnamese People's Liberation Army (the famous Tet Offensive), the activities and death of Che Guevara and the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Red Army all contributed to further splits in Turkey. While the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) propagated for a socialist programme through legal and democratic struggle, some sections of the left (especially the young and militant leaders of the student movement) propagated for an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal programme (a national democratic revolution - MDD). This was actually the traditional line of the illegal Communist Party of Turkey. However, this militant movement criticized the policies of the Soviet Union and the practices of the Communist Party of Turkey. After the defeat of the working class movement in 1970 and as a result of the continuous attacks of the radical right-wing groups, armed struggle became more appealing to these young militant groups. Regis Debray had tried to theorize the experiences of the Cuban revolution in his widely read book, **Revolution in Revolution**. The small armed group ("foco") would repudiate the "pacifist" traditional working methods of the communist parties and would launch rural guerrilla warfare. The Tupamaros in Uruguay, on the other hand, were waging an urban guerrilla war. Some of the leaders of the radical student movement established the People's Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO) and started a tragic rural guerrilla war. Some others established the People's Liberation Party/Front of Turkey (THKP/C) and started urban guerrilla warfare, sharing a similar tragic fate.

It was a failure as a workers' party; it turned into a socialist party [34]. Until 1968, it was under the leadership of M.A.Aybar, who opposed Leninism and advocated a nationalist "socialism with a smiling face."

The advent of the Workers' Party of Turkey on the political arena had its impact on the trade union movement, as well. Supporters of the TİP became active in the trade unions.

However, as the TİP acquired a socialist character and openly propagated socialism, the anti-communist forces in Turkey made it a target. There started to be a division in the labour movement between the supporters of TİP and those against. Whereas previously the division was between Democratic Party and Republican People's Party sympathizers, in the mid-1960s the parties to the confrontation had changed. This confrontation culminated in the establishment on 13 February 1967 of DİSK.

Another aspect of the establishment of DİSK was the trade union activity in the private sector.

The public sector pioneered and led the trade union movement in the early post-WW II period. In the absence of legislated job security, it was only through the de facto job security in the public sector that trade unions could be established.

Following the gains in wages, fringe benefits and other rights in the public sector through collective agreements, private sector workers in the large enterprises started organizing.

Political relations were important in concluding successful collective agreements in the public sector. Thus, the workers and trade unions did not have to resort to industrial actions. This was in line with the traditional industrial relations in the public sector. However, this approach did not fit in with the private sector, especially with the Turkish employers who had been used to exploit the labourers without much care.

The traditional trade union practice of TÜRK-İŞ did not satisfy some of the private sector workers, because this practice did not bear the same results in the private sector. This dissatisfaction created the quest for a new approach, a class approach to trade unionism.

The Workers' Party of Turkey was the only political party preaching class struggle and socialism. Thus, some dissatisfaction with the traditional public sector unionism in the private sector created what was thought to be appropriate for itself: DİSK.

In the 1960-1978 period, real wages and salaries increased, thanks to the economic growth, import-substituting industrialization, the struggle of the workers and trade unions and the parliamentarian system. Except for the interruptions in a few years, there was almost a continuous improvement in the living and working conditions.

Starting with 1975, an undeclared civil war between the radical right and left forces in Turkey gradually developed. This political confrontation in society was reflected in the public sector workplaces. Recruitment of new workers in the public sector based on political criteria further escalated the tension and armed clashes between the parties.

Rival political groups, movements and parties competed to get control of trade unions and to use them as transmission belts in their relations with the masses or to exploit their resources. Religious sect differences (Sunnis and Turkish Shiites) increased in importance after the unfortunate events in 1978 and 1979 in Kahramanmaraş, Çorum, Malatya, etc., in which the Turkish Shiites were mainly the victims. Radical right and left groups were also active in these incidents.

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[34] See, Koç, Y., **Sendikalar, Siyaset, Siyasal Parti**, Yol-İş Pub., 1998, pp.63-69.

In the public sector, the industrial relations changed radically in the 1975-1980 period. Thousands of sympathizers and militants of the political party in power flocked the public sector (government offices, municipalities, state economic enterprises, agricultural sales cooperatives, etc.).

There were frequent armed conflicts between various political groupings in the work-places. Workers were forced to take sides. United action of the workers in a workplace against the employers and the government became more and more difficult. Trade unions lost the initiative. Political relations became more important than all other factors in collective negotiations.

In the private sector, the repercussions of the economic crisis were felt more vigorously. The employers started to respond by resisting to the demands of trade unions. Legal strikes and wildcat strikes became more widespread.

TÜRK-İŞ staged a regional general strike in İzmir on 16 June 1975, to protest the employers.

DİSK came under the control of the illegal Communist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist Partisi - TKP) in 1975. While activating DİSK and some of the affiliated trade unions considerably, it led to internal strife, liquidations and serious political confrontations.

In the second half of 1977, the DİSK leadership was split into two. In the 1977 December Congress, other socialist and communist groups and parties came to power and pursued an anti-TKP policy, leading to further problems within DİSK. All through this period, the radical left influential at DİSK and affiliated unions tried to increase class conflicts and confrontations further.

About 2 million public servants were deprived of the rights to form and join trade unions, to bargain collectively and to strike. The confrontation along political lines was reflected in the public servants associations, as well. Rival associations spent almost all their energy to counter the attacks of each other, rather than trying to organize the masses around common demands.

The relations between the public servants associations and the trade unions were limited. The attempts to establish fronts were mainly limited to joint declarations. DİSK, rather than trying to unite the working class, pursued a policy of trying to unite some of the left-wingers in the trade union movement with the numerous factions within the socialist-communist left.

The attempts of DİSK to establish in November 1979 a socialist party or to unite the socialist factions in a socialist political party was in vain [35]. The theoretical confusion between class consciousness and socialist consciousness had its practical implications.

The economic crisis in Turkey deepened further during the second half of the 1970s. The IMF-imposed austerity programs, which would solve these problems in line with the interests of international capital and which would restructure and adjust the Turkish economy to the new international division of labour, assigned a new role to Turkey as the provider of cheap labour-power. The 24 January 1980 austerity and stabilization program was thus another turning point in the history of class struggles in Turkey.

The minority Demirel Government tried to implement these austerity measures under parliamentarian democracy. It was mainly the working class and trade unions that resisted. The

[35] For details see, Koç, Y., "DİSK'in Siyasal Parti Kurma Girişimi," **Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi**, September-November 1996, pp.36-40

number of striking workers was only 6400 on 25 January 1980. It had increased to 57,000 on 27 June 1980.

The Government suspended the strikes of 131 thousand workers in 47 enterprises. New disputes emerged concerning hundreds of thousands of workers. The number of striking workers in the first 8.5-month period in 1980 reached a record-high figure of 85 thousand. It became evident that the austerity, stabilization and re-structuring program could not be implemented in peace.

The Military Coup D'Etat and After

To prepare the ground for and to legitimize the coup, armed confrontations between radical right and left were escalated. Assassinations of trade union leaders (former DİSK President Kemal Türkler, Sadık Özkan, Aslan Sivri and others), of journalists (Abdi İpekçi) and of others created a climate of insecurity.

When the coup d'etat of 12 September 1980 took place, it was welcome by the large majority of the population, as relief from the fear of death and insecurity and from the destruction of the country.

The collective labour agreements that had been concluded before the coup had granted wage increases for 1981 based on anticipations of high rates of inflation. When the rate of inflation declined following the coup, the workers within the scope of these agreements enjoyed real wage increases.

On the other hand, the negotiations of tens of thousands of workers were still going on when the coup took place. They were granted immediately nominal wage increases of 70 percent.

The National Security Council prohibited the dismissal of workers, and some employers faced litigation and ever imprisonment sentences for having violated this ban [36].

These and similar factors should also be taken into consideration in evaluating the docile attitude of the workers concerning the liquidation of the Parliament and the prevention of trade union activity.

TÜRK-İŞ supported the intervention of the military and stated its desire to return to parliamentarian democracy in the shortest time possible. DİSK was informed about the coup, but did not disclose it to the public and did not try to organize and mobilize mass opposition and resistance, which was not possible.

Each organization compared the new coup with the previous ones, neglecting the structural economic recession of capitalism from the 1970s onwards and the ensuing new international division of labour.

The difference of the 12 September coup was comprehended by the DİSK trade unionists when thousands of them had to go through torture and when the period of detention exceeded months.

The majority of TÜRK-İŞ unionists had hoped that the military intervention would also annihilate the communist influence in the trade union movement, cleaning the ground for them. The reality became evident when the new draft Constitution was prepared in 1982. This draft envisaged the restriction of basic worker and trade union rights.

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[36] See, Koç, Y., "12 Eylül Sonrasında İşçi Çıkarma Yasağı," **Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi**, January - March 1998.

The 5-member National Security Council immediately issued directives suspending the activities of DİSK, HAK-İŞ and MİSK, banned all strikes (54 thousand workers in 178 workplaces resumed work) and other forms of industrial actions, replaced collective negotiations by compulsory arbitration and started a period of serious difficulties and oppression for labour and for the democratic and progressive forces in the country.

Some TÜRK-İŞ unions also faced prosecution. The first trade union for which a military court ruled to be liquidated was Ankara Yol-İş, a union within TÜRK-İŞ.

The leader of the National Security Council, General Kenan Evren, expressly stated one of the main objectives of the coup when he said, "Had the 24 January measures not been succeeded by the 12 September period, I had no doubts that these measures would result in a fiasco; these measures have borne fruit thanks to such a strict military regime." [37]

The years 1980-1988 was a period of defeat for the working class in Turkey.

The Supreme Board of Arbitrators granted low rates of nominal wage increases in the 1981-1983 period and the Motherland Party (in power in the 1983 Nov.-1991 period) was anti-labour; so that, until 1989 high rates of inflation led to a considerable decrease in the purchasing power of all wage- and salary-earners.

Although there are no reliable date including all wage-earners, various observations confirm that by 1988, real wages and salaries were between one-third to one-half of the pre-coup level.

Other rights and benefits were also curtailed, including those concerning social security, either by new legislation or through amendments in the collective agreements by the government-dominated Supreme Board of Arbitrators.

The 1982 Constitution of the military regime and the two acts (Act No. 2821 concerning Trade Unions and Act No.2822 concerning Collective Labour Agreements Strikes and Lock-Outs) promulgated by the National Security Council violated blatantly basic worker and trade union rights.

Martial law ruled in the country. It was impossible even to exercise the very limited rights in the existing legislation.

The activities of HAK-İŞ were also suspended by the National Security Council. However, HAK-İŞ was re-activated on 20 February 1981. HAK-İŞ advocated the necessity of the military coup d'etat in 1980 in the following years.

MİSK was also suspended by the National Security Council. In spite of serious allegations concerning MİSK's co-operation with the Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi), some loopholes in the legislation were used to evade the persecution of MİSK leadership. MİSK was re-activated on 23 May 1984 [38].

All public servants associations that were politically active in the 1971-1980 period were liquidated, and their leaders faced persecution. Many of them served long periods of imprisonment.

Following the transition to civilian rule after the general elections of November 1983, the collective negotiations process began again in 1984, under the strict limitations of the legislation

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[37] **Milliyet**, 7 January 1991.

[38] For the details of MİSK's story, see, Koç, Y. "MİSK," **Kebikeç**, 1997.

of the military period. However, the continuation of the martial law and later the emergency situation further restricted the exercise of the already curtailed rights.

The purchasing power of the workers continued to fall. Confidence in the trade unions eroded rapidly. The trade union leaders and the rank-and-file could not adopt themselves to the new attitude of employers and governments and to the new sets of power relations.

Hopes that the transition to the civilian rule would automatically lead to positive relations with the government and to the re-acquisition of previous rights proved to be an illusion.

The general secretary of TÜRK-İŞ, Sadık Şide (1974-1986) served in the military government as the Minister of Social Security. It was only during the preparation of the new Constitution that the TÜRK-İŞ leadership started to respond to the severity of the problem. TÜRK-İŞ organized a large meeting in Ankara on 8 September 1982.

On 7 November 1982, the Constitution was put to the referendum, all criticisms and anti-propaganda being strictly forbidden. The alternatives put forward by the National Security Council were, either the approval of the undemocratic Constitution as the price for transition to civilian rule, or the continuation of the military regime.

Şevket Yılmaz, president of TÜRK-İŞ, delivered a speech in favour of civilian rule, which was widely interpreted as pro-constitution. His attitude was criticized during the following period. But his criticisms would not have changed much the position of the population, who approved the Constitution with a 92 percent majority.

While the TÜRK-İŞ leadership followed its traditional pro-state policy, some unions affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ were persecuted by the martial law authorities, and the activities of some of them were suspended either by the military commanders or by the martial law military courts.

A total of 1955 trade unionists from DİSK were taken in custody. The majority of them suffered torture of various degrees. The martial law military public prosecutor requested the execution of 78 leaders, imprisonment of 1399 and the liquidation of the trade unions and DİSK. The DİSK trial at the martial law military court violated the rule of law in many respects.

Meetings and demonstrations organized by TÜRK-İŞ from 1984 onwards (meeting in İzmir on 11 March 1984, meeting in İstanbul on 3 June 1984, meeting in Bursa on 12 May 1985, meeting in Samsun on 31 July 1985, meeting in Antalya on 10 December 1985, meeting in Ankara on 21 December 1985, mass rally in Balıkesir on 8 February 1986, mass rally in İzmir on 22 February 1986, mass rally in Eskişehir on 22 June 1986) were not effective in changing the policies of the government.

At the end of 1986, the 2650 workers of the Netaş Telecommunications Company went on strike. During the negotiations process, they had resorted to various industrial actions. The strike aroused solidarity sentiments all around the country. In spite of all difficulties and obstacles, the strike proved to be a success. The tide began to change [39].

On 24 March 1987, TÜRK-İŞ organised a march to the Parliament. It was prevented by the security forces. A mass rally organized by TÜRK-İŞ in Mersin on 19 April 1987 was prohibited by the governor of the city. Mass rallies in Samsun on 26 April 1987 and in İzmit on 10 May 1987 were organized. In 1987, meetings in 33 provinces were organized to repeal the ban on political activity of the politicians before the military coup.

TÜRK-İŞ unions started to exercise the extremely restricted right to strike in 1984 (Dok Gemi-İş). The strikes in the chemical (Petrol-İş), leather (Deri-İş), metal (Türk-Metal) and road

[39] See, Koç, Y., "Grevler, Netaş Grevi ve Dayanışma Geleneği," **Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi**, April 1987, pp.7-9.

transport (Tümtis) branches in 1987 were influential and were complemented by mass rallies. For instance, Türk Metal organised a mass rally in Seydişehir on 29 August 1987. Deri-İş had a rally on 20 September 1987 in İstanbul. Türk Harb-İş (defense workers' trade union) protested the employers of the USA military base in Adana.

TÜRK-İŞ organized a country-wide lunch boycott on 11 March 1988. In many of the public sector workplaces, civil servants also participated. This first country-wide protest action was quite a success. It was followed by mass rallies in Sakarya on 26 March 1988 and in Adana on 3 April 1988, organized by TÜRK-İŞ.

The strikes of the state papermill workers (Selüloz-İş) during the last months of 1988 were the harbingers of the approaching country-wide confrontation between TÜRK-İŞ and the government.

Strikes in the private sector in 1987 and 1988 further contributed to the metamorphosis. But the main blow of the working class came in after the defeat of the Motherland Party in power in the local elections in March 1989.

What is generally named as the "Spring Actions" of workers organized in TÜRK-İŞ unions shook the country. Hundreds of thousands of public sector workers organised in TÜRK-İŞ trade unions resorted to all forms of industrial actions, from sit-down strikes, "work-to-rule"s, lunch boycotts, slow-downs, late reporting-in for work to mass sick-outs.

Especially the mass sick-outs were very effective. Tens of thousands of workers marched to the health institutions and went back to work, demonstrating against the Motherland Party in power.

Although these demonstrations violated the current legislation, the Government, weakened by the defeat in the local elections, was taken by surprise and the mass character of these industrial actions and the public support for them prevented reprisals.

The majority of the public sector workers became involved in legitimate mass actions for the first time in their lives [40]. The majority of the urban settlements in Anatolia confronted with industrial actions for the first time. The trade unions supported and united these industrial actions. TÜRK-İŞ, although hesitated at the beginning, later issued declarations of support, but did not become directly involved.

The "Spring Actions" constituted a milestone in the history of the working class in Turkey, especially in the history of the public sector workers. Self-confidence and confidence in the trade union movement developed within the ranks of the workers. A new tradition of united legitimate mass struggle against the government, in which trade union and class consciousness dominated over various differences, was built.

Starting with 1989 especially, although the great majority of the restrictions and prohibitions of the military period continued to exist in the legislation, the mass character of the actions and the public support prevented the implementation of the serious sanctions when the laws were violated quite frequently.

The 1989 round of negotiations changed the direction of real wages. The decline stopped; real wages started to rise.

These actions were reflected in trade union elections, as well. For instance, 48 percent of the branch presidents of affiliated unions of TÜRK-İŞ were changed during the 1987-1990

[40] It was common in those years to differentiate between "legality" and "legitimacy" of these actions. They were not legal under the 1982 Constitution and other legislation promulgated by the military regime. They were legitimate under the general principles of democracy.

period. During the same period, 15 of the 32 presidents and 49 percent of all executive committee members of affiliated unions of TÜRK-İŞ were also changed [41].

Mass actions mainly for economic demands during collective negotiations continued during the following years. Trade unions and TÜRK-İŞ became more directly involved in these actions. From 1991 and especially from 1993 onwards, the struggle developed under the centralized leadership of TÜRK-İŞ.

In 1994 and 1995, almost all important industrial actions and demonstrations were directly determined by the Presidential Board of TÜRK-İŞ, an advisory body comprising mainly the presidents of affiliated unions and the Executive Board of TÜRK-İŞ.

On 12 February 1990, a short general strike was made to protest the death of 69 mineworkers in a mine on 7 February 1990.

Dismissals of workers were protested by mass rallies organized by a number of TÜRK-İŞ unions.

On 3 January 1991, TÜRK-İŞ called upon the workers in all parts of the country not to report for work. It was quite a success.

On 30 November 1990, the mineworkers of Zonguldak on the Black Sea coast, organized in a TÜRK-İŞ union (Genel Maden-İş), started a strike. They organized mass rallies in Zonguldak on every single day of the strike. On 4 January 1991, the striking coal miners started their march, together with their families to Ankara, with extensive public support. This struggle contributed to the history of the working class in Turkey the tradition of uniting strikes and active demonstrations during the strikes. 50-60 thousand workers, their families and supporters marched for 5 days, to be stopped by the military.

TÜRK-İŞ's mass rally in Bursa on 2 June 1991 was also a success.

Members of Kristal-İş, affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ, occupied the Paşabahçe Glass Factory for 21 days in 1991 in protest of the dismissal of some workers; and they succeeded in reinstating them.

TÜRK-İŞ's resistance to the government's policy to get Turkey directly and actively involved in the Gulf War should also be noted.

In the public sector, the 1991 round of negotiations was a great success. The purchasing power of workers in the public sector more than doubled in one year. On the other hand, Turkey experienced the largest legal strikes in her history until 1994 in 1990 and 1991. The majority of the strikers were in the private sector [42].

Legal Strikes (1984-1994)

ear	Workers on Strike	Work-Days Lost	Year	Workers on Strike	Work-Days Lost

[41] For details, see, Koç, Y., "TÜRK-İŞ Çok Değişti," **İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketinin Güncel Sorunları**, Ataol Pub., İstanbul, 1991, pp.124-130.

[42] For the history of TÜRK-İŞ in this period, see, Koç, Y., **Teslimiyetten Mücadeleye TÜRK-İŞ (1980-1992),** Öteki Pub., Ankara, 1995, 262 p.

1984	561	4,947	1990	166,306	3,4 66,550
1985	2,410	194,296	1991	164,968	3,8 09,354
1986	7,926	234,940	1992	62,189	1,1 53,578
1987	29,734	1,961,940	1993	6,908	574 ,741
1988	30,057	1,892,655	1994	4,782	242 ,589
1989	39,435	2,911,407			

These increases in the labour-costs and the impunity with which the thousands of workers violated the anti-democratic and illegitimate legislation of the military period seriously disturbed the ruling classes.

Turkey was on the eve of customs union with the European Union. The number of foreign companies operating in Turkey had increased from 78 in 1980 to 2330 in 1992 (3161 in 1995). Free trade zones with a strike ban of 10 years had been established. Export-oriented companies, especially in the textile sector were mushrooming in various parts of Anatolia. On the other hand, the fall of the Soviet system further increased the unscrupulousness of the employers world-wide and in Turkey.

The distribution of value-added in the largest 500 industrial establishments in Turkey shows expressly the seriousness of the situation for the employers [43].

Distribution of Value-Added in Largest 500 Industrial Establishments

All 500 Establishments

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	
Wages and Salaries		40.4	37.9	34.4	33.5	46.6	59.9	82.3	75.0	68.8
Interest		24.6	37.9	38.2	43.9	35.0	30.5	44.0	39.7	36.8
Rent	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.6	
Profit	34.5	23.7	27.0	22.3	18.0	9.2	(-) 27.1	(-)	15.3	(-) 6.2

Private Establishments

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	
Wages and Salaries		39.4	32.6	29.5	31.8	39.1	48.5	55.8	50.3	48.0
Interest		36.2	45.1	35.1	38.4	30.4	24.8	30.7	25.4	24.8
Rent	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.8	0.8	
Profit	23.7	21.6	34.9	29.3	30.0	26.2	12.5	23.5	26.4	

Public Establishments

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	
Wages and Salaries		41.3	44.3	40.5	35.4	55.5	76.0	130.4	117.5	105.2
Interest		14.6	29.4	41.9	50.1	40.4	38.4	68.4	64.2	57.7
Rent	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	
Profit	43.9	26.1	17.4	14.3	3.9	(-)	14.7	(-)	99.2	(-) 82.0
(-) 63.2										

[43] İstanbul Chamber of Industry, **İstanbul Sanayi Odası Dergisi 500 Büyük Sanayi Kuruluşu Özel Sayı**, Eylül 1994, p.57.

The successes of the public sector workers in the 1991 round of collective agreements stimulated trade union activity amongst the public servants, as well.

The 1982 Constitution did not expressly prohibit the establishing of public servants trade unions. Turkey had ratified Convention No.98 of the ILO. Although this Convention mainly guaranteed the right to bargain collectively of all wage and salary-earners except for those public servants engaged in the administration of the state, mainly it was used as the legitimate basis of establishing public servants trade unions in May 1990 and afterwards, after about 5 years of discussions and preparatory mass meetings in various regions.

It was mainly the sympathizers and cadres of the previous or still existing communist or socialist factions, movements or political parties that showed the necessary patience, sacrifice and courage to force through these organizations.

However, the dubious legal situation of these trade unions, the persecution of their leaders and the poverty of the public sector workers already organized in trade unions and concluded collective agreements, created a climate in which becoming member of a trade union meant high risks and doubtful benefits for the public servants.

The public sector workers secured indeed high wage rises in 1991, which changed the relative position of wages of the workers and salaries of the civil servants in the public sector.

Thousands of public servants who had stayed apathetic to trade union activity suddenly became involved. Public servants trade unions were established in new branches of industry. The existing ones increased their membership and power. Public servants trade unions organized two unofficial coordinating bodies. Some workers trade unions had supported this process from the very beginning. From 1992-1993 onwards, these contacts became more institutionalized.

The public servants started to wage mass struggle for salary increases and democratic rights. Although their attempts to persuade the government to negotiate collectively with them failed, they could get relatively good salary increases in 1992 and 1993. Due to these developments, the share of personnel expenditure in the consolidated government budget increased from 37.8 percent in 1991 to 42.4 percent in 1992.

During the 1980s and the 1990s, the stabilization and austerity programs imposed by the IMF had their impacts on agriculture, as well. The expropriation of the petty commodity producers from their means of production accelerated. The PKK's terrorist activities in Southeastern Anatolia and the Government's counter strategy also led to the exodus of the population from the rural settlements.

This mass scale migration created a large population generally unemployed or casually employed in the black economy. These new members of the working class were devoid of class consciousness; and they could not and did not unite forces with the organized sections of the working people.

The ratification of seven ILO Conventions in 1993 and 1995 was an important gain for the working class. Especially Conventions No.s 87 and 158 were of significant importance. However, the national legislation was not brought in full harmony with these ratified international instruments, in spite of important improvements in 1989, 1995 and 1997.

The employers responded to the material and de facto legal gains of the workers by a new set of measures.

The 5 April 1994 austerity and stabilization program was another turning point in Turkey. Those workers directly and immediately affected by these policies responded by mass actions.

In the 1990s and under this program, privatisation was accelerated. Privatized companies dismissed workers, in part or in totality. Sub-contracting was systematically extended and became widespread. Black or clandestine employment increased to about half of the working class, rendering protective labour legislation totally ineffective. Precarious forms of employment were promoted. Bogus self-employment, especially homeworking, became common.

The government promoted temporary contracts and labour contracts with a specific duration. Dismissals both in the private and the public sectors increased. The government attempted not to honour concluded collective agreements in the public sector. The government drafted bills to curtail social security rights. TÜRK-İŞ had to organize rallies in various cities to counter the new offensive of the employers and pro-employer governments.

As a result of this new offensive and rates of inflation at an annual rate of around 100 percent, the purchasing power of all wage- and salary-earners diminished in the 1994-1996 period. Public sector workers lost about 60 percent of their purchasing power in these three years. The share of wages and salaries in the value-added in the largest 500 industrial establishments decreased from 75.0 percent in 1992 and 68.8 percent in 1993 to 49,7 percent in 1995.

TÜRK-İŞ and DİSK celebrated the May Day by two separate demonstrations in İstanbul in 1993. It was the first time TÜRK-İŞ celebrated the May Day by a demonstration.

It was the first time since 1952 that TÜRK-İŞ, as the Confederation, ever organized a demonstration in İstanbul.

On 20 July 1994, TÜRK-İŞ staged a nation-wide general strike. On 26 November 1994, TÜRK-İŞ organized a march of 100 thousand workers to the Parliament to protest the budget bill, which was amended in line with the demands of TÜRK-İŞ [44].

When the government resisted the demands of trade unions during the 1995 round of negotiations, the largest strikes in the history of Turkey took place. 200,000 workers in the public sector went on strike, increasing the work-days lost due to strikes to a record-high figure of 4,838,241 in 1995.

During the strikes, strikers and other workers under the strike ban held many demonstrations. At a rally of TÜRK-İŞ in Ankara on 5 August 1995, about 230 thousand workers protested the government and the IMF. A rally by TÜRK-İŞ in Ankara on 15 October 1995 led to the loss of the vote of confidence of Tansu Çiller's minority government in the Parliament. Workers took an anti-IMF stance in all these demonstrations, accusing the IMF and transnational capital as the main factors behind the employer offensive.

The strikes, mainly due to the absence of energy, telecommunications and banking workers in these industrial actions, could not be successful in preserving the purchasing power of wages. The lack of the political wing of the trade union movement had its effects be felt, as the problems whose solutions were in the political arena mounted.

Increased trade union and class consciousness, the new systematic and sustained attack of the employers and the inability to solve these new problems through a trade union strategy based on collective negotiations, promoted a tendency to create the political unity and party of the working people on a reformist program within capitalism, restricting the power of the employers by the social welfare state.

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[44] For the details of the struggle of trade unionism in these years, see, Koç, Y., **Sendikacılığın Güncel Sorunları**, Öteki Pub., Ankara, 1995, 223 p.

All the arrested trade unionists from DİSK were released by the end of 1984. The İstanbul Martial Law Military Court convicted 261 trade unionists and employees of DİSK and affiliated unions to terms of imprisonment ranging from 5 years 6 months 20 days to 15 years 8 months. The sum total of the prison sentences was 2053 years 5 months and 20 days. DİSK and 28 of the affiliated trade unions were liquidated. The convicted applied to the Military Court of Appeals.

In April 1991, the pertinent article of the Turkish Penal Code was repealed by the Parliament. The military Court of Appeals, basing its judgment on this amendment, acquitted the accused. DİSK started to function again after an interruption of 11 years.

However, the current legislation in force favoured the "most representative organization" in collective negotiations in many respects. DİSK also had great difficulty in re-formulating a trade union strategy. It abandoned the socialist rhetoric and this created some internal problems. Recruiting new members or re-affiliating old ones proved to be very difficult. By the end of 1998, the financial problems had also mounted.

HAK-İŞ followed a non-confrontationist policy in its relations with the government. However, the fundamentalist imprint observable during the years following its establishment was replaced by a more subtle attitude, trying to create a modern trade union image.

MİSK was re-opened in 1985; but it was a failure. It changed its name to YURT-İŞ in December 1987 to present a new image. It was not successful and MİSK disintegrated in 1988. A new MİSK was established in 1994.

The public servants trade unions mobilized their members and non-members in mass actions in 1993 and 1994. But the expectations of the union members to increase their salaries through collective agreements did not realize. Frustration and disappointment increased within the ranks of the public servants.

The socialist and communist sympathizers who had led the public servants trade union movement in its initial stages pursued a policy of "transmission belt" in their relations between their political organizations and the trade unions. This policy caused problems within the unions and in their relations with the rank-and-file.

KESK (Confederation of Public Employees Trade Unions), which brought together the two informal coordination bodies, was established in 1996. Some other public servants unions followed in these foot steps of KESK. Türkiye Kamu-Sen, Memur-Sen and Demokratik Kamu-İş were established and became active. Especially Türkiye Kamu-Sen could mobilize its membership in 1998 and 1999 to ask for higher salaries and to protest the IMF-imposed policies.

Another important development in the 1993-1995 period was the establishment of the "Democracy Platform, the Common Voice of the Working People." It was an informal co-ordination body, bringing together for the first time TÜRK-İŞ, DİSK, HAK-İŞ, public servants trade unions, Chambers of Engineers and Architects, Chambers of Physicians and other democratic organizations[45].

The Democracy Platform supported some of the industrial actions and demonstrations of TÜRK-İŞ. HAK-İŞ parted from this co-operation in early 1995. The Democracy Platform faded away in 1996. The May Days were celebrated by the Democracy Platform in 1994 and 1995. In 1996, TÜRK-İŞ, DİSK, HAK-İŞ and KESK issued a joint manifesto and organized a joint demonstration in İstanbul.

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[45] For details of the establishment of the Democracy Platform, see, Koç, Y., "Demokrasi Platformu'nun Kuruluşu, " **Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi**, August-September 1997.

In 1996, the Refahyol Government (a coalition of the Welfare Party and the Right Path Party) came to power and began to pursue policies in various areas that were in conflict with the basic characteristics of the Republic of Turkey. There arose a confrontation between the government on the one side and the state on the other.

In 1996 and 1997, Turkey faced the dangers of being turned into another Columbia (with drug traffickers in power), another Iran or Saudi Arabia (where democracy and basic trade union rights and freedoms are absent), another Yugoslavia (where people of different ethnic origins perpetrated massacres against each other).

The majority of the workers and trade unions took a firm stand against gangs, reactionary movements trying to destroy the secular republic and its gains, terrorists and separatism. The National Security Committee, a constitutional body comprising equal number of military commanders and members of the Council of Ministers, adopted on 28 February 1997 a set of decisions in line with the traditional state policies.

TÜRK-İŞ, DİSK and the Confederation of Petty Tradesmen and Artisans (TESK) started to cooperate to safeguard the secular and democratic social state of law characteristics of the Republic and challenged the government. These three were later joined by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry (TOBB) and the Confederation of Employers' Associations of Turkey (TİSK).

This cooperation (generally named as the Civil Initiative or the Initiative of the Five) contributed considerably to a democratic process which culminated in the resignation of the Refahyol Government in June 1997. The cooperation between the 5 organisations continued in 1998, as well [46].

As the problems of the workers increased in 1998, the necessity for a more formal cooperation between TÜRK-İŞ, DİSK and HAK-İŞ was felt more seriously. Thus, on 29 December 1998 the presidents of these three Confederations decided to cooperate more closely on joint issues and a standing secretariat comprising one representative from each organisation was established. It was possible to extend this cooperation to include KESK, Türkiye Kamu-Sen and Memur-Sen, as well, at a joint meeting and press conference on 27 January 1999.

This cooperation culminated in the Labour Platform. In 1999, the government began to proceed with a "social security reform," which in fact served the intention of dismantling the remnants of the social state. On the invitation of TÜRK-İŞ, presidents of 15 organisations convened at TÜRK-İŞ headquarters on 14 July 1999 and joined forces to fight mainly against (i) the social security reform bill, (ii) privatisation and subcontracting, (iii) agricultural policies, (iv) low rates of increase of salaries of public servants and of pensions, (v) international arbitration (as proposed in the Multilateral Agreement on Investment), all imposed by the IMF and against black employment and for democratisation and job-security.

The Labour Platform comprised, for the first time in the history of Turkey, all working people of all political affiliations, statuses, sectors and regions. The systematic cooperation between TÜRK-İŞ, DİSK, HAK-İŞ, KESK, Türkiye KAMU-SEN, MEMUR-SEN was joined by the 3 pensioners associations and 6 professional organisations of engineers, architects, pharmacists, physicians, etc.

[46] For details of the initiative, see, Koç, Y., "Türkiye'de Değişen Toplumsal-Siyasal Saflaşma ve Beşli Girişim," **Mülkiye**, November-December 1998.

The Labour Platform organised, alongside other regional activities, a mass rally in Ankara on 24 July 1999 to protest the IMF-imposed policies. On 13 August 1999 a general strike with limited success was organised with the same objective.

Conclusion

The working class in Turkey is entering the new millennium with new problems and new challenges.

The proportion of the labour force employed in agriculture comprised in 1998 still 42.6 percent (9.0 million of a total of 21.2 million), most of whom are self-employed or unpaid family workers (3.5 million self employed and employers, 5.1 million unpaid family workers).

Due to the economic problems, the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the international financial institutions and the policies pursued by governments, these figures will decline rapidly, leading to mass-scale exodus from the rural areas. This will further increase unemployment and clandestine employment tremendously, weakening the trade union movement.

The new neo-liberal policies implemented on the global level further increase the problems the workers and trade unions are facing.

On the other hand, the domestic political developments increased the influence of the labour movement in general.

Thus, contrary to anticipations, labour's role was reinforced and seems to be further strengthened at a time the Turkish state is trying to unite all forces against fundamentalist and Kurdish nationalist movements.

The labour and trade union movement in Turkey enjoys many of the contemporary rights and freedoms which their counterparts in many developing countries are deprived of. Although the current legislation violates the basic rights and freedoms enshrined in the ratified ILO Conventions in many respects, many of these bans and restrictions have been ignored by the labour movement with impunity.

The level of wages and the labour cost in general are above those in many developing countries, as a result of the active struggle of the workers.

Especially during the last 10-year period, a tradition of legitimate mass struggles has been developed. The mobilisation of the workers for economic, social and political objectives is much easier than in most of the countries of the world.

The fledging public servants trade union movement promises new successes.

The fundamentalist and Kurdish nationalist movements, on the other hand, could not form a firm base in the labour and trade union movement and thus could not divide the labour movement along religious and ethnic lines.

The labour and trade union movement in Turkey seems to have the potential to overcome the new problems and meet the new challenges and further reinforce its role in social and political life of Turkey in the new millennium.

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