THREE CASES OF WORKER MOBILIZATION IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

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2007

THREE CASES OF WORKER MOBILIZATION
IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

Thesis submitted to the
Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

by
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Boğaziçi University
2007

An abstract of the Thesis of Alpkan Birelma for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History to be taken September 2007

Title: Three Cases of Worker Mobilization in Contemporary Turkey

This thesis examines three cases of contemporary worker mobilizations with the aim of unionization in Turkey. Special emphasis is devoted to the investigation of the participant workers' experiences and agency. It is argued that there is an ever-present temptation to objectify and distance the working class due to the unequal power relations in our global society. Thanks to the rise of neo-liberalism at the ideological level and the concomitant rise of post-fordism, this temptation has become even stronger, in line with the fact that the extent of the rule of the capital has strengthened itself. Hence workers' experiences have become degraded, and their agency neglected.

The investigation of three mobilizations reveals the particular difficulties the workers faced on the way to unionization due to the legal restrictions and the economic conditions as can be seen in high rates of unemployment and low job security. Emphasis is given to the ways in which workers attempted to overcome the mentioned difficulties by way of workers' agency. The data consists of observations made during the mobilizations and afterwards, and the detailed interviews with the participants. How those workers perceived and expressed their experiences, as necessarily it is, in cultural terms is especially scrutinized, following E. P. Thompson's inspiring contributions.

This thesis illuminates the workers' agency, and focuses on the more indigenous worker strategies, cultural practices and active work-group social relations such as the formation of solidarity, cohesion and networks among workers, instead of focusing on the external factors, such as union involvement, or pure economic factors on which conventional works mainly concentrate.

Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü'nde Yüksek Lisans derecesi için Alpkan Birelma tarafından Eylül 2007'te teslim edilen tezin kısa özeti

Başlık: Günümüz Türkiye'sinde Üç İşçi Hareketi Örneği

Bu tez Türkiye'de sendikalaşmayı hedef alan üç güncel işçi hareketini incelemektedir. Hareketlerde yer alan işçilerin deneyimlerine ve özneliklerine özel bir önem atfedilmiştir. Günümüz küresel toplumunda işçi sınıfını nesneleştirme ve uzaklaştırmaya yönelik –daima var ola gelmiş olan– bir eğilim olduğu iddiası ile yola çıkılmıştır. İdeolojik alanda neo-liberalizmin ve ona eşlik eden post-fordizmin yükselişi ile bu eğilim, sermayenin egemenliğinin güçlenmesi ile denk düşecek şekilde daha da güçlenmiştir. Bu yüzdendir ki işçilerin deneyimleri değersizleştirilmekte ve öznelikleri yok sayılmaktadır.

Üç hareketin incelenmesi işçilerin sendikalaşırken karşılaştıkları yasal sınırlamalar ve yüksek işsizlik, düşük iş güvencesi gibi ekonomik koşullardan kaynaklanan zorlukları ayrıntısıyla ortaya koymaktadır. Tezde işçilerin bu zorlukları hangi yollarla aşmaya çalıştıklarına ağırlık verilmiştir. Kullanılan veriler, hareketler sürerken ve sonrasında yapılan gözlemlere ve katılımcılarla yapılan ayrıntılı görüşmelere dayanmaktadır. E. P. Thompson'ın ilham verici katkılarının izinden gidilerek, işçilerin yaşadıkları deneyimleri, zorunlu olarak kültürel terimlerle, nasıl algıladıkları ve ifade ettikleri özellikle irdelenmiştir.

Bu tez işçilerin özneliğine eğilmektedir. Geleneksel çalışmaların odaklandığı sendika etkisi ya da ekonomik etkenler gibi dışsal etkenlerden ziyade işçilerin kendi stratejilerine, kültürel pratiklerine ve dayanışmanın, bağlılığın, ağların oluşturulması gibi işyerindeki etkin toplumsal ilişkilerine odaklanmaktadır.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my special thanks to Assoc. Prof. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, my thesis adviser, who provided me with his support and guidance, since I took two courses of him in the last year of my undergraduate education. Without his friendly support, the last three years at university would have been a lot harder and alienating for me. I want to thank Prof. Ayse Bugra and Assist. Prof. Cengiz Kırlı for their presence on my jury and for sharing their knowledge and suggestions. I am also grateful to Assoc. Prof. Nadir Özbek for his inspiring courses and for reminding me of the significance of the theory for social change.

I also would like to thank Kathryn Kranzler, who edited this thesis; and Tracy Lord, who was always held me improve my thesis. I also want to mention Kadriye Tamtekin, Leyla Kılıç and Necla Turunç for being helpful during my two years of graduate education, especially during my assistantship year. My friends know themselves, so I do not need to mention them here.

Last but not least, I thank my mother and father for their help, patience and support during my whole studentship and my whole life. Without their extreme support I could not have thought about entering a graduate program, which is more or less a luxury in our country.

Finally, I am grateful to those men and women, who intimately shared with me their feelings and thoughts about their struggles. This is their story, their experience and their labor.

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PREFACE

Today there is an ever-present temptation to objectify and distance the working class as a natural result of the unequal power relations in our society. After the rise of neo-liberal ideology together with the so-called post-fordist practices, this temptation has become even stronger, following the ideological strengthening of the rule of the capital at the expense of its alternatives. Both in daily life and in academic life, workers as historical agents have become to be perceived as irrelevant, or at best, as an issue of the past. In fact, in an atmosphere in which high rites of unemployment and low job security interact freely and disastrously for the millions who have to work for a survival, worker's collective actions and mobilizations lose their basis to flourish to a certain extent. Since workers find themselves in a position of necessity to compromise with their employers, generally with capital, to be able to keep their jobs, which become an increasingly scarce source of survival. But do they really just become paralyzed, facing these tremendous forces, surrounded by thousands of excuses for not acting collectively against their employers for their own benefits? Is there not anything but a "lack" of significant worker mobilization?

This thesis is a modest attempt to show that there is. I argue that the workers' agency and one of its particular results, worker mobilization, are not irrelevant despite the disastrous structural transformations which have undermined the workers' base to struggle against their employers for their own benefits. Moreover, I claim that to illuminate workers as agents, we should focus on more indigenous worker strategies and practices, active work-group social relations, the active formation of

solidarity and networks, and cultural practices instead of focusing on the external factors as conventional works mainly do.

The labor history of Turkey remains more or less a forlorn as a result of the general embryonic nature of the social history approach, and thus labor history is left to the scholars of other disciplines such as social policy, work law, labor economics, and trade unionism. As a result, studies on labor conventionally center on the unions and institutions. Though there are important contributions on this literature, both in form of historical and contemporary studies, this immense research area is mostly untouched.

Inspired by E. P. Thompson and faced with the relatively virgin soil of Turkey in terms of the literature focusing on workers' agency, this study examines contemporary class struggle experiences. The reason I chose the cases of collective struggle is primarily due to their more accessible nature and potential richness in terms of including a variety of stories than the more subtle and hidden forms of worker struggles or resistances. As a personal preference I chose to study contemporary experiences is that their contemporary nature provides me with a great opportunity to observe them directly and interview their participants immediately, while the process is ongoing. And the lack of work dedicated to particular worker mobilizations in Turkey could be counted as the last reason.

Nowadays, there are very few opportunities for workers to engage in collective actions other than unionization. For practical research purposes, collective actions other than unionization are not easy to be heard about and accessed. They also do not last for a long time, compared to mostly long-lasting unionization struggles. These do not make things easy to discern. The collective actions aiming at unionization present many difficulties for the researcher. Besides their scarcity, they

basically imply hard times for their participants. Hence the participant workers are not much in the mood to share their experiences and feelings with a stranger. Moreover I should underline the difficulty in overcoming the just concern that the stranger who hangs on around and keeps asking weird and detailed questions should be nothing but a spy of the employer. Moreover, to be able to talk with those workers about their personal perceptions, their accounts on the experiences they were living through necessitated the formation of a certain level of trust. Additionally, to be able to even perceive their extremely secret attempts to intervene in the complex situations in the process of their struggles, which actually provide brilliant cases of conscious agency, requires an even stronger confidence relationship, which I believe I was able to build with at least several workers among the participants.

Practical constraints led me to study the unionization struggles which occurred during the time I conducted my research project. Mainly two methods were used in the research: I conducted comprehensive interviews with the participants of the mobilizations one by one, or in groups. In addition to that, I made observations while mobilizations were in process, witnessed their actions, their conversations, got the chance to participate in some of their private union or workers' meetings and also participated in the free time activities of several groups among the insurgent workers. I faced particular difficulty in interviewing women workers, which resulted in an important weakness stemming from the lack of detailed accounts on gender relations among workers except for a few accounts.

In the introduction I highlight the framework of the thesis: my theoretical assumptions, a short overview of the existing literature and particular analytical tools I raised to investigate worker mobilizations in line with my theoretical framework. In the second chapter, I discuss the general conditions of the working class after 1980,

which basically determines the structural ground on which all three worker mobilizations flourished. Growing exclusion from the working life, the rise of the temporal employment, the fall of earnings and the decline of the trade unions are the major headings under which those conditions are discussed. All of the three cases of worker mobilizations are discussed in separate chapters, since I am convinced that each of them implies a peculiar and complex set of relations, networks, internal dynamics and external factors. I hope to contribute to the emerging literature which focuses on the agency of the ordinary people in general, and of the workers in particular.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Theoretical Background

The starting point of this endeavor was inspired by the hypothesis that history writing as an activity involves "ethicopolitical" implications.[1] Harootunian's statement in this regard could be legitimately generalized for all social sciences. This is not to argue that one *should* have ethico-political concerns, but that one writes history or does social science in accordance with this or that political project. The dominant social system of the day, capitalism, according to Harootunian, is a process "knowing only the limits of capital itself, can never really imply development because it will always generate unevenness and forms of unequal exchange."[2] Harootunian reminds us of Benjamin's warning; on this stage, whose rules are set by capitalism, a threat hangs over us, "that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes."[3] To grasp Benjamin's point, we should apply the words of his forbearer, Marx:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant

[1] Harry Harootunian, "The Benjamin Effect: Modernism, Repetition, and the Path to Different Cultural Imaginaries," In *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History,* ed. Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.66.

[2] Harry Harootunian, *The Empire's New Clothes* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004), p. 122.

[3] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," In *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections,* ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 255.

> material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.[4]

The emphasis of this thesis is on Thompson's deliberate awareness about the nature of these ruling ideas and his following contribution about the clues to overcome the process which "generate unevenness and forms of unequal exchange." The particular component of the ruling ideas, on which Thompson presents a deliberate accuracy, is the ruling ideas about the nature of the disadvantaged side of the unequal relation that is the working class in its most general sense. The ruling (or hegemonic) ideas are the necessary and logical production of the capitalist expansion. To hide and to reinforce this uneven nature of the existing social structure, the disadvantaged side should be presented as unable, as subjected to external agents. So while on the one hand it becomes legitimate to argue that they deserve their disadvantaged position, on the other hand, it becomes unimaginable that they can achieve to change their position. In this way the ruling material relationship replicates itself as the ruling idea, by both presenting itself as fair, and as having no alternative.

The subjectification of the working class should be understood as a consequence of the ruling social relations, not only as a trick propagated by the overwhelming ruling class. We should take into consideration the alienation which is originated from the deep separation between the hand and mental labor in capitalism. The ground is set so by the classified nature of the social relations that the ruling class does not need intervene much additionally. Dirlik recalls the concept of alienation experienced by intellectuals, who are the producers of thought:

[4] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), p. 61.

> alienation that intellectual activity has undergone, for intellectuals, whatever their formal ideological professions, have been absorbed into structures of domination that represent alienated social power. [5]

The source of this alienation is the material relations of the society, and the intellectuals' position in it. Dirlik conceptualized the objectification of the working class in a brilliant way, as "culturalist hegemony" inspired from Thompson. Dirlik reminds the reader of another example of "culturalist hegemony" which is much more fashionable to work on, and to be aware of that which is much more popular, to make clear the culturalist hegemony over the working class.

> The parallel within the West to the hegemonic use of culture in studies of the Third World is to be found in the use of culture in establishing the ideological hegemony of one class over another. Here, too, culture has been utilized to distance the Other, if not in space (…) then at least in time, through the assertion of the ideological and cultural backwardness of the working classes, with similar hegemonic consequences, particularly in denying contemporary relevance to the culture of the Other. Culturalist hegemony is secured here by presenting the consequence of oppression, cultural impoverishment, as its cause, but above all by distancing the culture of the Other. [6]

A deeply critical theoretical baggage is needed to escape from the dominance of this set of ruling ideas. It even seeps into the schools of thoughts or ideologies which manifestly call themselves the defenders of the working class' emancipation. This is what makes Thompson so important. He sheds light on the ruling/hegemonic tendency to objectify the working class, and criticizes it precisely:

> There is today an ever-present temptation to suppose that class is a thing (…) 'It', the working class, is assumed to have a real existence, which can be defined almost mathematically – so many men who stand in a certain relation to the means of production. Once this is assumed it becomes possible to deduce the class-consciousness which 'it' ought to have (but seldom does have) if 'it' was properly aware of its own position and real interests.[7]

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[5] Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 25.

[6] Ibid., p.30.

[7] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p.10.

Thompson criticizes in all of his works basically the objectification of the class' experience, the total denial of working people's capacity to be creative, and furthermore to emancipate themselves, and also their claimed dependency on self-appointed (preferably Marxist) intellectuals for their "emancipation." Kaye Harvey points in an accurate way to how Thompson criticizes the elitism and its subsequent substitutionism both the "Old" and the "New" Left deeply involved in:

> Regarding the Old Left, he is opposed to the assumption that the working class has a real existence – objectively defined – from which one can 'deduce the class-consciousness which "it" ought to have (but seldom does) if "it" was properly aware of its own position and interests', and the proposition which follows, that a 'party, sect, or theorist', is needed who can furnish the consciousness 'not as it is, but as it ought to be'. Concerning the New Left, Thompson is opposed to the view of the working class as 'irretrievably co-opted, economicly and/or ideologically, by capital' (as present in both the embourgeoisment thesis of sociologists, and the one-dimensional man thesis of Herbert Marcuse and the Frankfurt School theorists), which produces its own variation of substitutionism, i.e. intellectuals and/or students standing in for class-consciousness workers. In both cases, Thompson argues, what is lacking is a sense of history and a proper understanding of class struggle.[8]

Thompson does not only point out how to be aware on the objectification or distancing of the working class. The strength of his critique lies in his genius contribution at the very point of how to overcome that material and cultural hegemony. Özbek, following Thompson's line of argument, summarizes this point about the question of overcoming in a straight forward way:

> The emphasis on the politics based on the overcoming of social inequalities requires us to base our historical research on the search for the social inequalities, the remembering of the daily experiences of the masses related with those inequalities and the clues related to the opportunities to overcome those inequalities.[9]

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[8] Harvey Kaye, *The British Marxist Historians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 176.

[9] Nadir Özbek, "Alternatif Tarih Tahayyülleri: Siyaset, İdeoloji ve Osmanlı – Türkiye Tarihi," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 98 (Fall 2003), p. 236.

To give an example Thomson states that "friend societies did not 'proceed from' an idea; both the ideas and the institutions arose in response to certain common experiences."[10] The importance of experience is not only philosophical or ethical but highly political in that it is the real source of the alternative ideas and practices. And this stand implies the denial of the elitist and substitutionist hegemony and a search for a political and research agenda, which centers on the experiences and reactions of the working class. To investigate the agency of the "other" of a class-based society, that is the working class, is besides a preference also a necessity for Thompson. Since his goal is to show, as Dirlik puts forward, "that the struggles of the working class in England, rather than being expressive of cultural backwardness or political irrelevance, helped preserve and promote the democratic values which the ruling class claimed for itself but was ever ready to compromise."[11] In his immense work, which is based on "listening" to the workers, of the common, with an industrious attempt to avoid any substitutionist conceptualization about those people's experiences, he believes that he has succeeded at decoding their contribution to society, their power to act and to create, and to struggle against injustice. He expresses his method as following:

> But the fact is, again, the material took command of me, far more than I had ever expected. If you want a generalization I would have to say that the historian has got to be listening all the time. He should not set up a book or research project with a totally clear sense of exactly what he is

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"toplumsal eşitsizliklerin aşılması çabasını temel alan bir siyasete yaptığımız vurgu, tarih çalışmalarımızı, sosyal eşitsizliklerin, geniş kitlelerin bu eşitsizliklere ilişkin gündelik deneyimlerinin hatırlanması ve eşitsizliklerin aşılması imkanlarına ilişkin ipuçlarının aranması ekseninde şekillendirmemizi gerektirmektedir."

[10] Thompson, *The Making*, p. 423.

[11] Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura*, p. 32.

> going to be able to do. The material itself has got to speak through him. And I think this happens. [12]

Thomson does not deny the material forces, objective determinants on society in general and on the working class in particular.[13] But he claims that the focus should be on the class struggle rather than the classes themselves. What we should investigate is not the class consciousness it ought to have, but the class struggle. Class-consciousness can not be determined and defined by certain theoretical principles, but it is one possible conclusion of the experiences of exploitation and struggle. Class consciousness is "the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas, and institutional forms."[14]

Dirlik, in his article "Culturalism as Hegemonic Ideology and Liberating Practice" freshens up Thompson's method. He emphasizes and advocates the importance of the cultural sphere on the battle field of class struggle following Thompson, remarks on the alienation problem of the intellectuals from the working class, and its consequent creed on the degradation of the working class' culture and abilities. Dirlik's remarkable addresses the importance of Thompson and his question of culturalism for the Third World critics should also be mentioned since both the

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[12] Michael Merill, "Interview with E. P. Thompson," *Radical History Review*, 3, no 4 (Fall, 1976): p. 19.

[13] It should be noted however that this issue is one of the most contradictory about Thompson's contributions. Trimberger summarizes the counter arguments, especially by pointing at the weaknesses of the second chapter of *The Making of English Working Class*, which, supposed to underline the material forces determining those workers' conditions beyond the impacts of the cultural sphere. See Ellen Kay Trimberger, "E. P. Thompson: Understanding the Process of History," in ed. Theda Skocpol, *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1984). Also Richard Johnson provides one of the most detailed and interesting debates about Thompson's supposed contradictory claims with the main Marxist arguments. See Richard Johnson, "Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese, and Socialist-Humanist History," *History Workshop* 6 (1978, Autumn). In this thesis, to have more space and energy for the empirical research, those theoretical debates are not deliberated, hence Thompson's contradictory claims are not discussed, and his more widely accepted contributions about emphasizing on the human agency are underlined.

[14] Thompson, *The Making*, p. 10.

author of this thesis and the workers, whose experiences would be investigated, are from Turkey. Dirlik points out that the Thompson's approach gives a clue to the Third World intellectual to break with the Western hegemonic culturalism, with which they conform and which interpret non-western societies "as prisoners between the past and the west."[15] Dirlik continues: "To the extent that these intellectuals distance themselves from the present of their societies by taking refuge in the past or the West, they not only produce a hegemonic relationship between themselves and their societies, but facilitate the distancing of their societies in the hegemonic culturalism of the West."[16] He puts forward the need to focus on the experience and culture of the working people to be able to approach the present of the society. The question of culturalism becomes extra important for Third World critics in the obvious existence of the hegemonic culturalism of the West. The way leads to overcoming first the hegemonic culturalism of the West and second, the class-based hegemonic culturalism, which also includes the intellectual as a part of the hegemonic side, is to listen to the working class daily experience.

The clues to overcome the immense structural inequalities are hidden in the daily experiences of the working masses. The cultural sphere plays an important role in this struggle for mainly two reasons: First the ruling class at the first place closes any opportunity of overcoming its rule symbolically with its hegemonic culturalism. Second, the class-consciousness is not a designed formula, but a living entity deeply rooted in the cultural sphere of the working people. The consciousness we seek, which would lead the way in the long lasting and difficult struggle to overcome those inequalities is inherently a cultural phenomenon, namely the cultural expression of the daily experiences and struggles of working people. A new society, which would

[15] Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura*, p. 38.

[16] Ibid.

overcome the structural inequalities of today, would be possible only with the emergence a new culture. And "such a culture must be forged out of the ingredients of present society, for any other alternative must of necessity reintroduce alienation to the cultural process." [17]

A Short Overview of the Literature

In the previous section was stressed the importance of Thompson's approach to understand the working class and its struggle was stressed. Mainly three points were raised: First, analytical focus should be on class struggle rather then class itself. Second, classes and class struggle are cultural phenomena as much as they are economic. And last to both understand and to change, the scientist or the activist must "listen" those experiences by the "experienced." In line with Toprak's statement about the embryonic nature of the social history approach in Turkey,[18] Güzel notes that due to this lack, labor history remains forlorn and thus left to the scholars of other disciplines such as social policy, work law, labor economics, and trade unionism.[19] As a result, studies on labor conventionally have centered on unions and institutions.[20] Akkaya raises similar criticism of the majority of the existing studies on labor history, with the very bitter accusation of their being

[17] Ibid., p. 49.

[18] Zafer Toprak, "Sosyal Tarihin Alanı ve Türkiye Gerçeği," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 54/55 (1991), pp. 77-88.

[19] M. Şehmus Güzel, "Türkiye İşçi Hareketine Nasıl Bakılmalı?" In *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Problemler, Araştırmalar, Tartışmalar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), p. 396.

[20] Ibid., 407.

"miserable."[21] This criticism is developed more systemically by Akın,[22] and faced with a counter-criticism by Makal.[23] I think besides underlying the deficiencies or the supposed "miserable" nature of those works, we should also admit that "all have added to our knowledge."[24] Even though social history studies on labor in Turkey are very few, there are important contributions.[25] In a similar vein, a few works on contemporary workers have appeared which take into consideration the different levels of the cultural aspects, the daily experiences of workers, and how they are perceived and expressed by themselves.[26] Most of these works underline a similar point that is to take at least some cultural aspects into consideration while studying workers besides focusing on statistics or on the external economic forces.

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[21] Yüksel Akkaya, "Türkiye'de Emek Tarihinin Sefaleti Üzerine Bazı Notlar," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no 91 (Winter 2001/2002), pp. 285-294.

[22] Yiğit Akın, "Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Emek Tarihçiliğine Katkı: Yeni Yaklaşımlar, Yeni Kaynaklar," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no 2 (Autumn 2005), pp. 73-111.

[23] Ahmet Makal, "Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Emek Tarihi ve Tarihçiliği Üzerine bir Değerlendirme," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 3 (Spring 2006), pp. 215-264.

[24] Thompson, *The Making*, p. 12.

[25] Donald Quataert and Eric Zürcher, *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic 1839-1950* (London: I.B. Tauris 1995); Donald Quataert, "Labor History and the Ottoman Empire c. 1700-1922, "*International Labor and Working-Class History,* no. 60 (Fall 2001), pp. 93-109; John Chalcraft, "The Coal Heavers of Port Sa'id: State-Making and Worker Protest, 1869-1914," *International Labor and Working-Class History,* no. 60 (Fall 2001), pp. 110-124; Cengiz Kırlı, "A Profile of the Labor Force in Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul," *International Labor and Working-Class History,* no. 60 (Fall 2001), pp. 125-140.; Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "The Role of Women in the Urban Economy of Istanbul, 1700-1850," *International Labor and Working-Class History* no. 60 (Fall 2001), pp. 141-152; Can Nacar, "Working Class in Turkey During the World War II Period" (MA Thesis, Bogazici University, 2004).; Murat Metinsoy, "Wars Outside the War" (MA Thesis, Bogazici University, 2004); Yiğit Akın, "Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Emek Tarihçiliğine Katkı: Yeni Yaklaşımlar, Yeni Kaynaklar," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 2 (Fall 2005), pp. 73-111; Oya Baydar and Gülay Dinçel, ed., *75 Yılda Çarkları Döndürenler* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1999).

[26] Metin Özuğurlu, *Anadolu'da Küresel Fabrikanın Doğuşu* (İstanbul: İstanbul Halkevleri İktisadi İşletmesi, 2005); Arif Geniş, *İşçi Sınıfının Kıyısında* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2006); Theo Nichols and Nadir Suğur, *Global Management, Local Labor* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).; E. Kahveci, N. Suğur and T. Nichols, ed., *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey* (New York: Mansell, 1996); Gamze Yücesan-Özdemir, "Başkaldırı, onay ya da boyun eğme?" *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 86 (Fall 2000), pp. 241-259; Özge Berber, "Sınıf Bilinci ve Sınıf Kültürü: Seydişehir Eti Alüminyum Fabrikası Örneği," in *İşçi Sınıfının Değişen Yapısı ve Sınıf Hareketinde Arayışlar Deneyimler*, TÜSAM (İstanbul: Sosyal Araştırmalar Vakfı İktisadi İşletmesi, 2005), pp. 91-10.; Erkan Saka, "Blaming Others: Agency among Unionised Unskilled Workers" (MA Thesis, Bogazici University, 2001).

Inspired by Thompson and faced with the relatively virgin soil of Turkey in terms of the literature focusing on workers' agency, this study focuses on contemporary class struggle experiences. To remember, one of the most important implications of social history and labor history is the "discovery" of the more subtle, day to day struggles of workers. Beyond the discovery, their importance and impact on the general class relations are underlined, they are realized as an important means of workers' agency. They are presented in a very appropriate way as clues of workers' agency, even in those eras or places, in which workers were conventionally pictured as being silent and docile. The focus of this thesis on the collective and more apparent ways of workers' agency should not be perceived as if the importance of subtle struggles is being underestimated. The particular forms of worker struggle investigated in this thesis are also equally important as the other forms and its examples in Turkey have not been studied yet with Thompson's approach. The goal of this study is to make a small contribution to the newly emerging literature on this side of the general picture. Also since the previous episodes of collective action and its phase of development are included in the following chapters, an important number of cases of more subtle, day-to-day and less collective (involving a small number of workers) worker struggle and agency are also presented in the following pages. After all, the apparent collective workers insurgencies did not emerge from nothing. They occurred if those ongoing subtle struggles were able to and also had to evolve -as perceived by their actors- into collective action due to the various conditions.

My search for workers' collective action led me to the worker mobilizations due to unionization. As will be illustrated in a detailed way in the following chapters, contemporary worker collective actions could be categorized mainly in three forms: actions due to non-settled collective bargaining negotiations including strikes, anti-

privatization protests of public sector workers, and mobilizations for unionization, which is a very difficult process due to the legal and structural barriers. Another sub-category may be unionized workers' protests against their own unions and their struggles to alter their unions. This type of protest usually occurs when workers are dissatisfied with the union's performance about the collective bargaining negotiations.[27] Collective actions without any involvement of a trade union exist, but they mostly have not been heard or seem to last for a short while. In a labor market with low job security and extremely high unemployment, to expect a large number of workers to engage in collective actions against their employers even without the obscure and insecure protection provided by unions would be an illusion. This is not only due to the "cowardice" of workers about losing their jobs, but about the objectively low possibility of getting what they want from the employer as a result of their collective action. The employer would prefer to dismiss them instead of accepting the deal, since he/she can do it easily, due to low job security and due to the existence of thousands of unemployed people eager to work in those unpleasant conditions against whom the employed workers act. But as was observed in the cases extended in this thesis, the involvement of the union in the struggle does not necessarily imply a reduction of the role played by workers, of their agency. After all, in all of the cases the workers themselves applied to the union after some experience of collective struggle given by themselves.

As Luebke and Luff state, the organizing of workers both in general and in particular aiming unionization is "a secret history":

> Yet labor history offers surprisingly few studies of union organizing tactics, methods, and theories, and labor historians often slip into passive voice when discussing the origins of workers' organizations –

[27] Theo Nichols and Nadir Suğur, *Global Management, Local Labor* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 165-182.

> unions were formed, workers came together, but just how that happened remains somewhat of a mystery.[28]

This thesis aims to illuminate at a certain level at least some parts of this "mysterious area." At least one of the reasons that those issues have remained somewhat of a mystery is obviously the employers' counter-actions, which oblige the workers and the union organizers "to operate in secrecy and with stealth."[29] The issue of secrecy is also highly valid for the three cases discussed in the following pages. This is one of the greatest difficulties I faced in the process of information gathering. Another point to note is due to the respect of this secrecy.[30] Also, due to respect of the privacy of the particular workers I interviewed, I changed all names of the workers and the firms with nicknames.

The Worker Mobilization Ethnography

To use Thompson's approach, which focuses mainly on the historical and macro processes, in investigating contemporary and micro cases a further theoretical framework is both useful and productive. The most appropriate approach in line with my theoretical concerns and the subject of the study seems to be developed by Dixon, Hodson, Roscigno, Fantasia and Kimeldorf in various articles and books in which they discuss worker mobilizations with ethnographical methods. This does not imply that these scholars are totally unanimous in opinion or collectively raise a fully coherent framework, but they hold a more or less similar approach either by quoting

[28] Sam Luebke and Jennifer Luff, "Organizing: A Secret History," *Labor History*, 44, no. 4 (2003): p. 421.

[29] Ibid. p. 422.

[30] I should remind that the two of the three groups of workers, whose experiences will be told in the following chapters, were still working at the same workplaces when this thesis was written.

each other or even making research together. I will discuss the points these scholars raise, which are used in my study.

To begin with, Fantasia is meaningful, as he builds his analysis on Thompson and therefore can be considered athe link between him and the other scholars mentioned above. Fantasia defines Thompson's contribution as "conceptualizing and demonstrating class as an active and relational historical process and class consciousness as the cultural expression of the class experience."[31] On the other hand, as Fantasia notes, the sociological research on class consciousness in the United States is mostly limited to survey methods, a corollary of which implies and results in a view of class consciousness as a static and individuated phenomenon, abstracted from social action and the context of class practices. Instead of these conventional approaches based on "the ideationally bound concept of class," the author holds to and points to the emergence of a new approach focusing on class formation which draws upon historical, ethnographic, and participant observation techniques.[32]

Fantasia points out that strategic encounters between classes, industrial conflicts or collective actions are important to understanding the problem of class formation. He also includes the importance of studying local or regional conflicts, which illustrate the dynamics of class formation at a more micro level.[33] The author mentions his early work on three cases of contemporary worker mobilization "that focused on the ways in which emergent cultural formations were constructed inter-subjectively and in relation to opposition during acute industrial conflicts." He calls

[31] Rick Fantasia, "From Class Consciousness to Culture, Action, and Social Organization," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21 (1995), p. 276.

[32] Ibid., 269.

[33] Ibid., 279.

these emergent cultural formations "cultures of solidarity," which are expressed in emergent values, behaviors, and organizational forms. "Cultures of solidarity" implies that collective consciousness may be "bound fairly tightly to the strategic encounter that has given rise to it, and thus such cultural processes can be seen as relatively independent of the previously existing ideas and beliefs of the individual participants." This argument was built on the assumption that "group beliefs are more fluid in situations of conflict, than during settled periods." The focus of this analysis is not individuals, but the collective action and mobilization of both within the strategic encounter.[34] In line with Fantasia's study and his particular focus on cultural formations, this thesis investigates three cases of industrial conflict and collective action, and claims that "cultures of solidarity" is a productive conceptualization with which to understand the dynamics of those unusual events.

Similar to Fantasia, the other above-mentioned researchers also give the importance to the worker agency it really deserves. The literature on the contemporary workers collective action seems to interact with a broader and obviously more popular literature about social movements. In the social movement literature, there is a line of debate about the relative importance of two different factors:"organizational resources versus collective identity processes and related

[34] Ibid. 280. A review of Fantasia's *Cultures of Solidarity* by Ansell says that Fantasia's case studies ignore exogenous factors for more dynamic local factors. The review concludes that at the local level, "Fantasia's studies are well worth reading. They are an insightful look at how collective action is culturally constructed at the microsociological level. Yet Fantasia's study illustrates that to understand the American worker, we must focus more on the relationship between the micro and macro levels." This emphasis on the relationship between the micro and macro levels, reminds me of the above-mentioned polemic between Akın and Makal, which (at least for now) ended with Makal's warning that "micro and micro levels are not rivals for each other, but complementary" in a similar vein as Ansell. I do not mean that the debate between Akın and Makal (or Fantasia and Ansell) is reducible to the tension between macro and micro levels (which actually also imply material and cultural levels), but the awareness of the complementary nature of those levels would help the literature a lot. Christopher Ansell, "Review," *The American Journal of Sociology* 94, no. 6. (May, 1989), pp. 1526-1528.

cultural, emotional, and cognitive dynamics."[35] This debate is easily adaptable to the workers collective action in terms of the unions' effect on the one hand, and "interactional solidarity processes and oppositional cultural formation more proximate to the workplace itself" on the other hand.[36] Most of the works in the literature suggest that union organization is the key to understanding worker mobilization. The studies, which also underline the importance of the internal solidarity networks already realized by workers on the shop floor, are mostly case-oriented and historically-grounded accounts. As mention above, a similar approach is prevalent in the historical literature on the worker movement in Turkey, which reduces the worker movement to the trade unions and focuses mainly on the unions as potential actors of the worker movement.[37]

Similar to the Turkish case, the authors argued that much of the "research on worker insurgency has been union-centered with the assumption that the resources, leadership, and leverage that unions bring to bear will bolster workers' power and capacity to demand change through formal and informal, collective channels."[38] The micro-level solidarity and identity processes workers engaged in tend to be either neglected or treated as non-problematic. In my opinion, this negation tendency is very much related to the degradation of the working class. Donald Quataert criticizes this tendency, stating that "labor historians have overly stressed outside agencies in examining labor's past and actually, despite their declared focus, have given

[35] Marc Dixon, Vincent J. Roscigno and Randy Hodson, "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," *Social Forces* 83 (Sep. 2004), p. 3.

[36] Ibid., 4.

[37] M. Şehmus Güzel, "Türkiye İşçi Hareketine Nasıl Bakılmalı?" in *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Problemler, Araştırmalar, Tartışmalar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), p. 407.

[38] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 5.

insufficient attention to labor itself."[39] The struggles and agency of workers in building up solidarity, collective identity and an oppositional culture are usually neglected, and in this way degraded. Thus, workers are again objectified to an extent, since this argument implies that even their insurgencies and mobilizations against the exploitative relations they experience should be generated by an outside agency, in this case unions, than themselves. Like Thompson states in more general terms in the preface of *The Making*, we should always remember that workers are present at the making of their struggles.[40]

Few works though underline workers' internal processes, or claim that workers' solidarity and militancy are not necessarily generated by unions, but rather by conflict in the workplace, more indigenous worker strategies and practices, active work-group social relations, and cultural practices. After all there are many studies which suggest that unions may also stifle worker insurgency. [41] Moreover, the way the unions bind the workers to the company by channeling and defusing class conflict is discussed by Burawoy, who calls this phenomenon the "internal state."[42] The reality should be somewhere in the middle of the two arguments, obviously. Worker insurgency is generated from the co-existence of the union and the necessary internal dynamics of workers. The issue, however, is to understand how and to what extent the internal dynamics of workers lead to collective action. The cases, which will be discussed in the following chapters, reveal some clues about the complex,

[39] Donald Quataert and Eric Zürcher, *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic 1839-1950* (London: I.B. Tauris 1995), p. 15.

[40] Thompson, *The Making*, p. 9.

[41] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 9.

[42] Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Pres, 1979), p. 112.

dynamic and floating relationship between the impacts of the unions on and the workers' internal dynamics in the mobilization process.

Worker solidarity is an important concept in understanding the generation of collective action, according to the authors. In another article which is dedicated mainly to worker solidarity, it is defined as the workers' chief protection against abusive management practices and also a mediating factor against the ravages of meaningless work.[43] It is noted that worker solidarity is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to study because it resists being studied by conventional survey techniques, due to its nature of being a group phenomenon, which emerges from specific situations and histories.[44] The authors engage in this tough job to analyze worker solidarity. They first argue that its foundation is "shared experiences at work" and "the sense of involvement and attachment" generated by the shared experiences. Group activities of solidarity build the foundations on which workers "gain the experience and create the conditions which make possible a transformation of the labor process."[45] Worker solidarity does not have to oppose management, since it also involves enforcing norms of productivity due to workers' pride in their work. But it should be noted that even these types of solidarity practices provide a basis for workers to shape a collective identity separate from management.

The authors define five facets of solidarity. The first one is cohesion, which reveals the extent workers seek each other out for social contact. Cohesion is the fundamental precondition of solidarity since if it is lacking, workers behave indifferently to each other. Friendship networks are essential mechanisms for the

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[43] Randy Hodson, Sandy Welsh, Sabine Rieble, Cherly Sorenson Jamison and Sean Creighton, "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined by Autonomy and Participation? Patterns from Ethnographic Literature," *American Sociological Review* 58, no. 3 (Jun., 1993), p. 398.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p. 399.

development and implementation of collective strategies. The second facet is mutual defense, which implies struggle against management over the sanctioning of workers and is a relatively more visible aspect of worker solidarity. There are findings pointing towards mutual defense becoming most prevalent in those workplaces where management implements strict systems of control. The third facet is leadership, without which, it is argued, solidarity remains isolated and non-cumulative.[46] The emergence of group leadership implies a more durable basis for collective action. Strong leadership usually does not appear until the point when the group has to take some collective action, such as defending a member against management's abuse of sanctioning a member due to violating group norms.

The fourth facet is enforcement of group norms. Researches have founded across diverse settings cases of workers informally pressuring other workers to restrict production. The pressured norms can also vary, such as involving generosity, production, quality or safety standards. It is important to note that "sloppy work and poor standards irritate and demoralize workers; pride in doing even relatively simple work well often motivates workers to demand a minimum of cooperation and output from coworkers."[47] The last facet of worker solidarity is group boundaries, such as group members' clear sense about who is in or out of the group. Solidarity, especially its facades of cohesion and leadership, was evidently present to varying extents in all the three cases of this thesis, and their dynamics and impacts on the mobilization are discussed in detail.

Solidarity has determinants besides the internal dynamics of workers. The existence of unions, or stability of labor force have the potential to foster solidarity, also past collective actions may function as an unseen cultural basis for

[46] Ibid. p. 400.

[47] Ibid.

contemporary acts of solidarity. Job insecurity and internal labor markets, implying a career ladder for workers in the firm, potentially undermine solidarity. In contrast, management's oppressive presence on the shop floor can promote it.[48] After the researchers investigated and analyzed statistically 79 ethnographic studies of workplaces chosen as appropriate to be used in the analyses from 365 work places, they concluded that the major facets of solidarity appear to be mutual defense and the enforcement of group discipline. The most important determinants of stronger solidarity are hazardous working conditions and peer training. Close supervision increases overall worker solidarity while bureaucratic rules decrease it.[49]

In a similar line with these statements about worker solidarity, Dixon and his colleagues also claim that solidarity may emerge through activities such as cooperative, group-building practices, grievance sharing within work units, and also contentious encounters with management, which may alter employee perceptions about the workplace, fairness and justice.[50] They note especially that the mutual defense and leadership aspects of solidarity are important to indigenous resistance practices to form and foster mobilization. A legacy of collective action also has an important impact on worker activism since this legacy may encourage future action through "the establishment of interpersonal and organizational networks, along with the forging of oppositional frameworks, identity, and abeyance structures that can be explicitly activated at a later point."[51] Workers bring different backgrounds and histories of activism to the workplace, but above all the history of conflict in the particular work place is "often shared informally across different cohorts of workers

[48] Ibid. 401.

[49] Ibid. 412.

[50] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 9.

[51] Ibid.

and may provide a basis for collective action."[52] The legacy of the factories in two of the cases are presented in the following chapters, since one of the factories was newly opened and therefore had no legacy. Also the impacts of the personal legacies of the particular workers are underlined and their impacts are discussed.

After the statistical examination of 133 content-coded workplace ethnographies, the authors conclude in line with their expectation that the joint influence of union organization and internal worker solidarity is most likely to generate collective action. Unions, they claim, more successful at forging activism in workplaces if the workers are already connected interpersonally and stand up for one another in the face of an abuse. Workers without organizational leverage or any historical precedent for militancy are unlikely to give collective responses to the employer.[53]

A similar argument is raised in *The Organizational and Social Foundations of Worker Resistance*.[54] The researchers, by using findings, derived from analyses of unique data on 82 workplace ethnographies, conclude that "it would be erroneous to assume that union presence has causal priority in the emergence of worker resistance."[55] Shop floor conflict and the resulting critical consciousness on the part of workers may be a precursors to effective union involvement. The organizational structure, such as how bureaucratized or coherent a firm is, and social relations in the workplace are important for worker resistance, but almost always in an interwoven manner. Furthermore, the interplay of these workplace attributes are conditioned by a union presence and collective mobilization history. Differences in organizational

[52] Ibid., p. 14.

[53] Ibid. p. 23.

[54] Vincent J. Roscigno and Randy Hodson, "The Organizational and Social Foundations of Worker Resistance," *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 1 (Feb. 2004).

[55]Ibid., p. 34.

structure and organizational structural constraint may encourage collective or individual forms of resistance. But workers response is also conditioned by more proximate and systemic interpersonal conflicts with managers and by resulting worker interpretations of these problems. In this process, "union presence and a history of collective action may afford workers a behavioral repertoire that is more, although not exclusively, collective form."[56]

Parallel to the claim that internal dynamics of workers such as solidarity building are as important as unions to understand worker insurgency, another productive debate is presented by Roscigno and Dixon in their article "Status, Networks and Social Movement Participation," which investigates the impact of micro structural dynamics, especially networks, at the point of production on the movement participation.[57] They claim that more aggregate network processes may condition potential participants' perceptions about the cost and benefit of participating in the collective action, since individual decision making does not proceed in a social or cultural vacuum, but ultimately is bound and conditioned by social attachments and associations.[58] This argument could be easily held as an adaptation of Thompson's more general statement that class-consciousness is the way in which workers' experiences "are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms."[59]

Movement participation is held to be patterned mainly by individual status, like seniority level, being skilled or not, ethnicity, or gender. But our authors point that it is also a function of the networks in which the individual worker is embedded,

[56] Ibid., p. 35.

[57] Marc Dixon and Vincent J Roscigno, "Status, Networks, and Social Movement Participation: The Case of Striking workers," *The American Journal of Sociology*108, no.6 (May 2003), pp. 1292-1327.

[58] Ibid., p. 1293.

[59] Thompson, *The Making*, p. 10.

and which have an impact on "normative, cultural, and cognitive processes that translate movement issues into day-to-day experiences of individuals."[60] Therefore networks are crucial for the recruitment and coordination of individual participants, and they function as "the conduit for identity building, framing, and dissemination of social movement culture."[61] In this way, networks may change calculations and either facilitate or hinder individual involvement. Among the few works that have investigated specifically network effects and potentially related cultural and identity processes, a particular analysis of contemporary strike campaigns suggests that transportation and communication networks provide the necessary conduits for strikers and that "cultures of solidarity" emerge among workers during campaigns which are disseminated with apparent implications for individual involvement and commitment.[62]

Keeping in mind the questions above, the authors hesitate very appropriately to argue that those cultural network processes are more important than more material-based conditions such as individual statuses related to workplace, like wage levels and positions, or gender and ethnicity. What they point to is that it is not only useful but necessary to make "the social milieu within which decision making unfolds or is even constrained" explicit. Since they claim that it is usual that movements themselves introduce "grievance frames, collective identity processes, and even repertoires in a manner that alters potential participants' calculations and that can bridge status divides."[63] Such networks, they continue, may condition the terms, rewards, and costs of involvement. The process in which the framework of the

[60] Dixon and Roscigno, "Status, Networks, and Social Movement," p 1296.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid. p. 1297.

[63] Ibid. p. 1299.

movement and the personal calculations of potential individual participants become overlapped, is generated partially through solidarity networks, or networks of individuals who share common social relations, a common lifestyle, a common fate, and who therefore are likely to have a common identity.[64]

In this line the authors conducted an ethnographic study on a strike by the Communications Workers of America that occurred at Ohio State University in 2000. Almost 80% of 1681 full-time workers participated in the strike. Their results indicate that "above and beyond individual causes, class identity within networks and especially strike action among those in one's unit has implications for individual involvement."[65] These networks become crucial through "grievance sharing and identity formation prior to the strike, as well as through individual decision making and calculations at a pivotal point."[66] Some initial core of strikers in the work unit appeared to have an important impact on engaging others in strike mobilization. Their results also suggest that there is a long-term cost of not striking when others in one's unit do so. A summary of their findings reveals that the status composition of such networks, the potential information and identity shared among members, and the degree of protest involvement within may all have impacts on individual calculations and strike propensity beyond the impact of individual attributes. In a respectable way, the researchers though admit that their conclusions are tempered by "the inability to measure network dynamics outside the work environment, as well as limited detail pertaining to coworker interactional processes and potential friendship

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid. p. 1321.

[66] Ibid.

networks within the workplace."[67] The cases studied in this thesis reveal many interesting examples of how the individual decision making on whether to get involved in the mobilization or in a particular action in the mobilization or not was deeply influenced by the friendship networks.

Before concluding my discussion about the theoretical bridge between Thompson and the topic of this thesis, a last point to raise involve the nature of the listening practice in which I engaged. Since I literally listened to those workers as a part of a field study, I was helped greatly by the experience of Portelli, an experienced oral historian who also has studied worker mobilization: "the field situation is a dialogue, in which we are talking to people, not studying 'sources'; and that it is largely a learning situation in which the narrator has information which we lack."[68] In line with the substitutionism criticism, Portelli states that "there is a lot more to be learned by leaving ourselves open to the unexpected than by repetition of our own conceptualizations."[69] Furthermore the scholar underlines the necessity and the importance of building an equal relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, which is the apparent condition of a dialogue: "the narrators' sense that I was not studying them but learning from them projected a degree of confidence, which ultimately also helped further my own agenda."[70] Hence I tried to operate my listening practice following Portelli as a meeting of two persons "on a ground of

[67] Ibid.

[68] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany: State Universtiy of New York Press, 1991), p. x.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid. p. xi.

equality to bring together their different types of knowledge and achieve a new synthesis from which both will be changed."[71]

Concluding Remarks

In this introduction, first the importance of Thompson's approach to understand the working class and its struggle was discussed raising mainly three points. First of all, analytical focus should be on class struggle rather then class itself. Second, classes and class struggle, as much as being economic, are also cultural phenomena. Lastly, in order to understand and to change the scientist or the activist must "listen" to those experiences from the "experienced". As discussed above, even though they may be few, there is still an important body of work on contemporary worker mobilizations in line with Thompson's approach. They suggest some analytical tools to investigate worker collective actions at the micro level focusing on the workers' self-activities rather then the conventional approach of focusing on external factors.

Fantasia points to the importance of strategic encounters between the classes to understand class formation and introduces the concept of "cultures of solidarity," which implies collectively constructed cultural formations during acute industrial conflicts and might be considered as a specific form of collective class consciousness.[72] Dixon and his colleagues argue that worker militancy are not necessarily generated by unions, but also facilitated by conflict in the workplace, more indigenous worker strategies and practices, active work-group social relations,

[71] Ibid. p. xii.

[72] Fantasia, "From Class Consciousness," p. 280.

and cultural practices.[73] Worker solidarity was hold as one of the most important aspects of workers' internal social relations, whose facets are defined as cohesion, mutual defense, leadership, enforcement of group norms and group boundaries.[74] The organizational structure of and social relations in the workplace are important for worker resistance in an interwoven manner and the interplay of these workplace attributes is conditioned by union presence and collective mobilization history.[75] Another concept introduced about the social relations of workers in the workplace besides solidarity is network, since it is held that "above and beyond individual causes class identity within networks and especially strike action among those in one's unit have implications for individual involvement."[76]

[73] Dixon et al., "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p.9.

[74] Hodson, et. al. "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined," p. 399.

[75] Roscigno and Hodson, "The Organizational and Social Foundations," p. 35.

[76] Dixon and Roscigno, "Status, networks, and social movement," p 1321.

CHAPTER II

THE CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS IN TURKEY AFTER 1980

Since 1980 the winds of neo-liberalism have blown hard as the ideology and the economic policy of the global rule of capital, which succeeded in expanding and strengthening itself victoriously over all alternatives at the end of the short twentieth century. This meant that a tougher era started in the same period for the working class of the world. In the geography of Turkish Republic the tragic turn was symbolized in a coup d'etat on September 12, 1980. The economic policy of the import-substitution industrialization that had been pursued by the state during previous two decades was ended with the coup, and instead of it export-led growth was adopted in line with the global trend of neo-liberalism. Post-fordism, with its direct consequence of flexibility, which was developed in the mid-1970s instead of the preceding fordism to solve capital's problem of falling profit rates, arrived in the geography after the mid-1980s.

While post-fordism accompanied and even preceded neo-liberalism, globalization at the end of the 1990s appeared on the scene. This could be perceived as the natural consequence and a further step of the global rule of neo-liberalism. The era starting from 1980 and lasting until today, which it seems will be sustained in the near future, has had mainly four results for the working class of Turkey, as Çam conceptualizes: the rise of temporary employment, the decline of trade unions, growing exclusion from the working life and the downfall of the employees'

earnings.[77] Following Çam's categorization, the conditions of the era for the working class are investigated below.

Growing Exclusion from the Working Life

During the 1980s in line with demands of the IMF, policies, which support the agricultural sector, was altered incrementally and this sector became more and more open and sensitive to the market forces.[78] While the subsidies granted to the agricultural small producers by the state decreased relatively, the price control mechanisms by the state were loosened. The peasant farmers, who found themselves defenseless against the organized trade and financial capital, experienced the heaviest price decrease in the Republic's history between 1978 and 1988.[79] In addition, to increase the agricultural output and thus export in line with the export-led growth economic policy a mechanization program was put in process, which meant more peasant unemployment. Mechanization was received special attention even in the 1990s related to the issue of intentionally reducing the rural population. A 45% share of agriculture in the total employment rate in 1997 was depicted by the State Planning Organization as another reason to speed up mechanization to decrease this proportion to the level of developed countries, which was 7% among WOECD[80] countries in the same year.[81] The privatization of the meat and animal industries also

[77] Surhan Çam, "Neo-liberalism and Labour within the Context of an 'Emerging Market' Economy – Turkey," *Capital & Class* 77 (Summer 2002), pp. 89-114.

[78] Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye'de Sosyal Sınıflar ve Bölüşüm* (İstanbul: Gerçek, 1991), p. 50.

[79] Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908-2005* (Ankara: İmge, 2006), p. 166.

[80] WOECD: Western OECD countries.

[81] Çam, "Neo-liberalism and Labour," p. 100.

had a negative impact on the population working in the agricultural sector.[82] As a result of his empirical research on 19 different villages in Turkey, Korkut Boratav states that "migration is found to be a type of defense and 'safety valve' especially for the poor and oppressed groups, which also affects all segments of rural structure."[83] The initiation of neo-liberalism accelerated internal migration, rendering millions of peasants unemployed, thus they became "free labor" and "moved from areas of supply to areas of demand."[84] Movement is, according to Wolf, one of the main conditions which the working class has always experienced and the post-1980 period was no exception.[85]

Labor on the Move

In the 1980s the balance between the rural and urban populations shifted so that the majority of people came to live in urban areas. The population in 1980 was 45 million and became 68 million in 2000 meanwhile the urban population shifted from 20 million to 44 million. The percentage of urban population to the total population was 44 in 1980 and became 61 as a result of the greatest increase in one decade in the Republic's history. If compared, the urban population's percentage increase between 1960 and 1980 was from 32% to 44%. The percentage was 65 in 2000 and reached 69 in 2005. To give the sector numbers for the agriculture would

[82] Ibid., p. 99.

[83] Korkut Boratav, *İstanbul ve Anadolu'dan Sınıf Profilleri* (Ankara: İmge, 2004) p. 116.

[84] Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 355.

[85] Ibid., p. 361, p. 383.

also make sense. The ratio of the people working in the agricultural sector to the total employment in percentage was 54 in 1980, 44 in 1992 and 34 in 2004.[86]

Table 1. Employment Ratios of Different Sectors in Percentage

	1980	*2004*
Agriculture	50	34
Industry	12	18
Services	33	43
Construction	5	5

Source: World Bank, 14 April 2006, *Turkey Labor Market Study*, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTURKEY/Resources/361616-1144320150009/Labor_Study.pdf [30 March 2007], p.7.

An account of the internal migration after 1980 must also include the great impact of the Kurdish question in addition to the structural economic transformations. It is obvious that the Kurdish question can not be understood only within the framework of neo-liberalism, considering the large number of insurrections during the twentieth century of the Kurdish people. Çam points out the growing economic deprivation in the southeast part of the country as result of the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies. Both of the two main economic activities of the region's people, smuggling and animal husbandry, were affected by the new economic policies. While trade liberalization reduced smuggling, the privatization of the meat and animal food industries and the release of meat importation damaged animal husbandry substantially. The growing economic

[86] Mete Çetik and Yüksel Akkaya, *Türkiye'de Endüstri İlişkileri* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1999) p. 67; Ayşe Buğra, Fikret Adaman and Ahmet İnsel, 10 May 2006, *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler ve Türkiye'de Sendikaların Değişen Rolü*, http://www.spf.boun.edu.tr/docs/ BU_SPF_Arastirma_Projesi-_Sendikalar.pdf [10 May 2006], p. 17.

stagnation "buttressed sympathy for the insurrections of the Kurdish Workers' Party."[87] In the 1990s during the periods in which the war between the Turkish Republic and the Kurdish Workers' Party accelerated, the state forced thousands of Kurdish people to leave the region and migrate to the cities. Besides the enforcement, many Kurds also migrated in order to distance from the fighting. There is obviously no official or exact numbers of Kurds who migrated or were forced to migrate to the cities. Keyder and Adaman argue that there is a general recognition that this number is more than one million.[88] To note the different nature of this wave of migration from that of the others, we should underline that these migrants "are likely to arrive at their destinations with almost zero resources" because it is difficult for them to sell their belongings back home due to the economic and political instability.[89] Peker notes that "on the whole these people are likely to live in conditions worse than any group of internal migrants has faced before".

Unemployment

While the agricultural sector was diminishing, employment in the non-agricultural sectors (industry and service) was not growing enough to absorb those forced to stop to work in agriculture. Between 1986 and 1996 nearly 300,000 workers were dismissed from the state economic enterprises as a result of the privatization program, which was and still is one of the former priorities of the neo-

[87] Çam, "Neo-liberalism and Labour," p. 99.

[88] Çağlar Keyder and Fikret Adaman, 30 March 2007, *Türkiye'de Büyük Kentlerin Gecekondu Ve Çöküntü Mahallelerinde Yaşanan Yoksulluk ve Sosyal Dışlanma*, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/2006/study_turkey_tr.pdf [30 March 2007], p. 23.

[89] Mümtaz Peker, "Internal Migration and the Marginal Sector," in *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey*, ed. E. Kahveci, N. Suğur and T. Nichols (Londra: Mansell, 1996), p.18.

liberal economic policy. Besides privatization, the increase in the automation of production and the introduction of new management techniques, accompanying post-fordism, designed to cut labor costs and to increase labor productivity also hampered employment growth in non-agricultural sectors.[90] As stated by the World Bank Report, employment growth in services from 1980 to 2003 was the slowest in Turkey compared to countries Ireland, Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina.[91]

Total employment growth average between 1980 and 1997 slowed down to 2%; compared to 2.6% between 1970 and 1979. To illustrate how little the economic growth in Turkey affected employment, it should be pointed out that while the workable population increased by 23 million from 1980 to 2004, the rise of the number of employed people was only 6 million. As a result, the employment rate (the percentage of the employed adult population) was one of the lowest in the world. In 2004, it was only 43.7 percent, while most countries have employment rates above 50 percent and the EU-15 average is 65 percent.[92] It should be also noted that the two severe economic crises of 2000 and 2001 led to the decrease in economic growth and therefore to the rise of unemployment. Also some field research on workers reveal that unemployment is seen by workers themselves as the greatest problem in the working life.[93] The following economic growth from 2002 to 2007 with the percentage of 7% did not lead to a decrease in unemployment either.[94] When the

[90] Çam, "Neo-liberalism and Labour," p. 100.

[91] World Bank, *Turkey Labor Market Study*, p. v.

[92] Ibid. p. ii.

[93] Z. Altan, D. Kağnıcıoğlu, Y. Şişman and Z. Sungur, *İşçi Profili Araştırması: Eskişehir Örneği* (Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005), p. 50; Buğra, et. al., *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler*.

[94] *Milliyet*, 23 July 2007.

hopeless unemployed people who do not search for jobs actively and those who work seasonally also added, the number of unemployed reached 19% in April 2007.

The rising unemployment in the 1990s "forced migrants to seek any work, regardless of its kind, insecurity or poor earnings" and in this regard the high rates of migration coming together with the rising unemployment is one of the most important reasons behind the dramatically widening of the marginal/informal sector, according to Peker.[95] While the early migrants were relatively successful in getting a regular urban job until the mid-1980s, the migrants of this era have little chance to find this kind of a job and most of them have to work in the marginal/informal sector, in irregular and low-paid jobs. The culture of optimism in the *gecekondu*s[96] of the early periods has waned.[97] Peker quotes a common saying of the *gecekondu* people, which he often heard during his small field research to illustrate their conditions: "*Türkiye'nin çivisi çıkmış*" ("Turkey has a nail loose"). In his article investigating the impact of the internal migration on the workers' movement, İçduygu concludes that the only thing he can be sure about by looking at the scare available data is that these new-comers of the post-1980 period do not or cannot participate in the trade unions or other similar class organizations. They coexist with the settled workers of their places of origin and this situation deepens the fact that the fragmentation of the working class.[98]

The conditions in which the new migrants of the 1990s and 2000s found themselves were also investigated by Buğra and Keyder under the conceptualization

[95] Peker, "Internal Migration and the Marginal Sector," p. 10.

[96] The illegally built houses of the new immigrants, and the neighborhoods, which consist of those kinds of houses.

[97] Ibid. p. 21.

[98] Ahmet İçduygu, "Türkiye'de içgöç ve içgöçün işçi hareketine etkisi," in *Türkiye'de iç göçler: Türkiye'de iç göç, sorunsal alanları ve araştırma yöntemleri konferansı*, ed. A. İçduygu, İ. Sirkeci and İ. Aydıngün (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1998), p. 237.

of a new poverty in line with Peker's statements. Thousands of people, who were excluded from working in their rural hometowns and migrated to the cities, faced different conditions than the prior generations of migrants. After their study particularly focused on Istanbul, based on more than 150 interviews with (a) administrators of social assistance primarily with those of Solidarity Fund, (b) people who receive or are in a position to receive welfare, and (c) persons in a position of providing meaningful information about manifestations of "new poverty," the following new aspects were raised by the researchers. Joblessness, informal employments and recurring unemployment, which were seen as temporary situations before, have become permanent.[99] The use of family labor, self-employment, occupations such as retailer, tradesman and craftsmen which have always occupied important places in the employment structure of cities,[100] have relatively disappeared facing with the destructive effects of capitalism and globalization.[101]

The third difference of this era is the ending of *gecekondu*-ization. The *gecekondu* served during the prior decades as a lifesaver, providing the urban poor-would-be newcomers with informal access to urban landownership, a future opportunity to earn rental income by adding floors, and more than this a neighborhood with co-locals and thus networks. As a result of the demand for land related to the reinforcement of capitalist property rights due to globalization, local governors no longer encourage new settlers in their regions, and thus there is not much land available for building a *gecekondu* anymore.[102] A further aspect is the fact

[99] Ayşe Buğra and Çağlar Keyder, *New Powerty and the Changing Welfare Regime of Turkey* (Ankara: United Nations Development Programme, 2007), p. 21.

[100] This fact is also underlined by Boratav. Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye'de Sosyal Sınıflar ve Bölüşüm*, p. 107.

[101] Buğra and Keyder, *New Powerty*, p. 22.

[102] Ibid. p. 23.

that the new migrants' ties with their hometowns are much weaker than before, since most of them originated from the southeastern and eastern parts of the country, leaving behind villages with devastated economies if not totally destroyed ones. The crowded bachelor apartments of Kurdish men, who came in city to work without their families, are in near total cultural isolation as a particular phenomenon of the new era. Keyder and Buğra conclude that the income those new migrants can earn from precarious jobs may not even be sufficient for the reproduction of the family by paying for the children's nutrition and education in many cases.[103]

The Rise of Temporary Employment

The boundaries between unemployment and being employed have become blurred in the neo-liberal era. In line with the global trends of post-fordism temporal employment has risen in Turkey. Post-fordism as the "new capitalism" rests on flexibility with respect to production, firms, labor processes, labor markets, products and consumption.[104] Flexibility for workers basically means a lack of job security, especially in a country of "South" like Turkey, where specific post-fordist production techniques are applied in a limited sense. Harvey states that flexibility engenders "relatively high levels of 'structural' (as opposed to frictional) unemployment, rapid destruction and reconstruction of skills, modest (if any) gains in the real wage, and roll back of trade union power – one of the political pillars of the Fordist regime."[105] Another important aspect of this new regime is the introduction of new production

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[103] Ibid. p. 24.

[104] Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), p. 23.

[105] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 147.

techniques, such as Total Quality Management, which encourage worker participation in a certain sense to lower the proportion of unqualified products, which results in loss of productivity.[106] So in line with neo-liberal and post-fordist transformation temporary employment has risen in Turkey. Temporary employment is also investigated under the term "precarious employment" which implies instability, insecurity and poor economic and social conditions.[107] To estimate the rate increase in temporary employment is hard due to its informal nature such as informal subcontracting and home-based work. Çam calculates by using the statistics of the State Institute of Statistics that temporary employment rose from 5% in 1985 to 14% in 1997 by noting that the proportion should be much higher if home-based jobs and other informal ones were included in the picture.[108] To compare and to underline the global nature of this trend due to post-fordism, it could be mentioned that in the same years the percentage rose in England from 5% to 8%, in Italy from 4% to 12%, and in France from 6% to 13%.

During the years between 1980 and 1987 while real wages dropped significantly, job security was more or less maintained in big industry. Meanwhile in 1986 the implementation of quality circles was introduced for the first time in some public industries and spread later to the major private factories, thus the transformation to post-fordist production began at that time. After the rise of the workers' movement at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, wages began to rise. Faced with the lesser increase of productivity compared to wages employers sought ways to get rid of the pressure of the unions by dismissing

[106] Çetik and Akkaya, *Türkiye'de Endüstri İlişkileri,* p. 41.

[107] Aziz Çelik, "Eğreti Emek – parçalanan sınıf," *Birikim* 217 (May 2007), pp. 122-133.; Hasan Ejder Temiz, "Eğreti İstihdam: İşgücü Piyasasında Güvencesizliğin ve İstikrarsızlığın Yeni Yapılanması," *Çalışma ve Toplum* 2 (2, 2004), pp. 55-80.

[108] Çam, "Neo-liberalism and Labour," p. 94.

unionized workers and encouraging part-time and temporary employment together with subcontracting.[109] In this way employers put flexible employment into the process as counter attack,[110] and began to raise oppositions to the Labor Act due to its lack of response to the urgent need for flexibility.[111]

Temporary employment has two basic forms, contract work and the subcontracting system. After the mid-1980s the contract work system was presented in public sector companies, especially in those which were scheduled to be privatized as the first steps of the general program of privatization. Being a contract state employee means being employed for a limited time, usually one year without any guarantee of the renewal of the contract. The number of the contract workers in the public sector climbed from 20,000 to 500,000 in years between 1985 and 1996. KESK, one of the biggest trade union confederations for civil servants, who are legally categorized separately from blue collar workers employed by the public sector, declared that there were more than 100,000 contract personnel working near civil servants.[112] It was emphasized that especially the numbers of precarious working teachers had reached a tremendous level.[113]

Privatization has been one of the most important aspects of the post-1980 era for workers, since it means also the erosion of the most secured segment of workers in line with the general trend. The percentage of public employees in the total

[109] Çetik and Akkaya, *Türkiye'de Endüstri İlişkileri,* p. 58.

[110] Altan, et. al., *İşçi Profili Araştırması*, p. 50.

[111] Çetik and Akkaya, *Türkiye'de Endüstri İlişkileri,* p. 59.

[112] KESK, 20 July 2007, http://www.kesk.org.tr/ [20 July 2007].

[113] Çelik, "Eğreti Emek – parçalanan sınıf," p. 130.

employee number decreased immensely, dropping from 36% to 22% between 1980 and 1997.[114]

Another form of temporary employment is the subcontracting system, under which workers are hired by mediating firms, which have a subcontract relationship with the main firm. The subcontracting system spread from the construction industry, in which workers conventionally are employed with this model. Subcontracting firms appeared in the state-owned or private industries first by undertaking the catering, cleaning and transportation services. Later subcontracting firms were introduced by the main firms to employ workers in the main jobs of the main firm for much less gain compared to that of the main workers, thus so-called "orange-collar workers" appeared on the work floor, symbolizing the most non-privileged segment of the workforce.

The subcontracting system has forms other than only the work done in the same workplace with the main firm, such as the complicated subcontracting system proceeding in the complex global apparel commodity chains, which end up in the small, mostly informal workshops.[115] To emphasize the prevalence of such subcontractor apparel workshops it should be remembered that the ratio the textile and apparel industry has in the employment of all industries was 33% in 2001.[116] It is claimed that almost half of the informal workers, who constitute nearly one-third of all workers, are employed in apparel workshops.[117] The portion of subcontracting workers climbed from 4% to 15% between 1986 and 1996, as stated by Boratav and

[114] Çetik and Akkaya, *Türkiye'de Endüstri İlişkiler* ,p. 64.

[115] Erdem Yörük, "Social Relations of Production within the Workshop System in Istanbul's Apparel Industry" (MA Thesis, Bogazici University, 2006).

[116] Buğra, et. al., *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler.*

[117] Yörük, "Social Relations of Production."

his colleagues.[118] The widening gap between subcontracting workers and permanent workers especially in the public sector has become the focus of some studies.[119]

Sub-contracting was found a place in the legal system after many years of de-facto existence in Labor Act No. 4857, which was enacted in 2003. In the preamble of this law it is stated that "after the 1980s subcontracting practice increased numerically and as a result it was confirmed also through the disputes raised to the jurisdiction that there are many examples of the cases in which the individual and collective rights of workers have been restricted and abandoned." So the negative consequences of subcontracting were also acknowledged by the state, but despite this promising recognition the new law did not solve but, on the contrary, consolidated the problem, turning it into a permanent one.[120] Flexibility also was legalized by this law with the introduction of "temporary work relation," "temporary work contract," "short-term contract," "work by call," and thus flexibility was encouraged with the law in line with the demands of TİSK as raised by a booklet published in 1994.[121]

Informal Economy

The phenomenon of temporal employment can not be investigated without taking the informal sector into account. Workers, employed at an informal job,

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[118] E. Taymaz, K. Boratav, A. Candan, İ. Ertuğrul, T. Bali and Y. Kepenek, "Kamu işletmeleri ve özelleştirme deneyimi: Sorunlar ve politika seçenekleri," *Toplum ve Bilim* 77 (Summer 1998), p. 104.

[119] Buğra, et. al., *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler*; Özge Berber, "Sınıf Bilinci ve Sınıf Kültürü: Seydişehir Eti Alüminyum Fabrikası Örneği," in *İşçi Sınıfının Değişen Yapısı ve Sınıf Hareketinde Arayışlar Deneyimler*, TÜSAM (İstanbul: Sosyal Araştırmalar Vakfı İktisadi İşletmesi, 2005), pp. 91-105; Surhan Çam, "Job Security, unionization, wages and privatisation," *The Sociological Review* (1999), pp. 695-714.

[120] Sebahattin Şen, "Alt İşverenlik ve Asıl İşin Bir Bölümünün Alt İşverene Verilmesi," *Çalışma ve Toplum* 10 (3/2006), p. 71.

[121] Çelik, "Eğreti Emek – parçalanan sınıf," p. 124.

meaning practically without being a part of the social security system, could be considered as being temporary workers. Since they do not have any job security, their employment can not be seen as permanent. But while being a formal and temporary worker is possible and widespread as will be explained below, the informal sector includes more than temporal workers, for example self-employed people. The extent of the informal sector in the Turkish economy was underlined by World Bank by pointing that approximately one of three workers in urban areas and three of four in rural areas are working informally; that is without being registered in any of the social security institutions.[122] To give parallel data to this, it is claimed that nearly 30% of the production is generated by the informal sector.[123] The workers who work informally cannot enjoy health and unemployment insurance, cannot get any severance pay, and cannot fulfill the necessary conditions to enjoy the right to get pensions. Beyond the lack of any benefits originated from social security, the wages may be even lower than minimum wage and wage payments may be arbitrarily delayed or not even paid at all. Nevertheless it should be also noted that the absence of social security may also be preferred by the workers themselves to get higher wages in return due to complicated facts including the hopelessness of getting the right for pension, or as a young women worker planning to stop after marriage.[124] But obviously this proportion of workers should not be over estimated.

The informal economy should be conceived as "a permanent, albeit subordinate and dependent, feature of capitalist accumulation in the global age of

[122] World Bank, *Turkey Labor Market Study*.

[123] Keyder and Adaman, *Türkiye'de Büyük Kentlerin Gecekondu.*

[124] Yörük, "Social Relations of Production."

capitalism"[125] rather than an abnormality. In the era of neo-liberal globalization and flexible accumulation "in most so-called developing countries, it is the formal sector -regular direct employment with a formal sector company- that is 'atypical' in the literal sense."[126] Even though the informal labor market is a heterogeneous entity some important features could be counted as: "flexibility in labor supply and demand; low levels of skill, productivity, wages and social security; and a high level of exploitation by the formal sector."[127] Some of the informal sector activities are "automotive repair; bus and taxi driving; domestic painting and repairs; maintenance of grounds and buildings; personal services in private residences; operation of small retail shops; street cleaning and maintenance; street vending of products and services; textile piecework at the home; and various transport and haulage jobs."[128]

A new sector has appeared in the last decade and has begun to be researched recently, consisting of "street pickers," who collect waste products such as paper, plastic and metal from the trash on the streets and sell them to the main collectors.[129] Turkey "enjoys" many indicators of the informal sector including high rates of migration, the precedence of small-sized enterprises, low wages in the formal sector, high numbers of privatization-led dismissals, high numbers of self-employed people, and high unemployment. Turkish economy features a strong predominance of small-sized enterprises (enterprises with five or fewer employers and employees represent

[125] M. Özdemir, D. Erel and G. Yücesan-Özdemir, "Rethinking the informal labour marker in Turkey,"*South-East Europe Review* (3/2004), p. 80.

[126] Dan Gallin, "Prepositions on Trade Unions and Informal Employment in Times of Globalisation," *Antipode* (2001) p. 532.

[127] Özdemir, et. al., "Rethinking the informal labour market in Turkey," p. 82.

[128] Ibid.

[129] S. Yardımcı and A. Saltan, "Sokak Toplayıcılarının İş ve Yaşam Koşulları Üzerine," *Toplum ve Bilim* 108 (2007), p. 108.

almost 65% of the volume of employment[130]). Low wages in the formal sector also contribute to the informal sector as a source of additional income.[131] The main component of an informal sector is self-employed individuals, who compose together with the unpaid (therefore informal) family workers, most of whom are women working in agriculture, 50% of the total employment in Turkey. Boratav in his early work makes a similar claim.

While discussing why the working class in Turkey has not been able become a proletariat in the traditional sense, he claims this is not because of the fact that it has lasting rural bonds, but probably because of the fact that the social structure in Turkish cities has great heterogeneousness and complex petty-bourgeoisie influences.[132] Boratav concludes that the individual histories of the workers would probably reveal that different individuals in the family (and even the same individuals) have experienced quite frequent transitions between small-production and trade, marginal jobs and workmanship. But it is important to recognize the complex nature of informality and self-employment. Despite the fact that being self-employed seems to be preferable, and implies a higher status than being a worker conventionally, data raised by Buğra and Keyder reveal that while 19% of paid workers are categorized as being poor, the percentage for the self-employed is 27%. Hence, self-employment by itself can not be conceived as an improvement compared to wage-labor generally, in contrast it may be a necessity, a last resort for many of its practitioners. Informality together with the unemployment reach to such an extent that nearly one-third of the whole population does not have any social security in

[130] Özdemir, et. al., "Rethinking the informal labour marker in Turkey," p. 83.

[131] Ibid., 84.

[132] Boratav, Türkiye'de Sosyal Sınıflar ve Bölüşüm, p. 107.

2001, not even a green card, which is provided for the poor by the state without any conditions of being employed.[133]

It is very important to note that all of these developments, increasing unemployment, the growth of precarious jobs, temporary work and subcontracting, the increasingly flexible labor market and the enlarging informal economy with all of its variations were and are furthering the segmentation of the work force.[134] It has been demonstrated that the working class has always been segmented in contrast with the image of thousands of factory workers in the "good old days."[135] But the difference of the post-1980 era in Turkey, in line with the post-mid 1970s of the global economic turn, seems to be that the flexible accumulation, together with deregulation as the first rule of neo-liberalism and after globalization, created those newly emerging segments of the flexible labor market and integrated them in one global economy. Thus, much of the segmentation is now structural, like the structural high rates of unemployment, or structural high proportion of informality operating in line with the global flexible accumulation process. For example, rural women, most of whom were informal unpaid family workers working in family-owned small agricultural enterprises, have become urban informal workers in great numbers after the migration to the cities and engaged in home-based work or have been working in the small, mostly informal subcontractor workshops. Informality continues, but its nature has changed fundamentally.

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[133] Buğra and Keyder, *New Powerty and the Changing Welfare*.

[134] Çelik, "Eğreti Emek – parçalanan sınıf," pp. 122-133.; Buğra, et. al., *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler*.

[135] See especially chapters 6-9 in Thompson, *The Making*.; Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, p. 380.

The Fall of the Employees' Earnings

It has been underlined by many macro economic researchers that the distribution of income changed dramatically between 1978 and 1988.[136] While the real incomes of civil servants decreased by two-thirds between 1978 and 1988, the wages of those workers insured by social security institution were halved in the same period.[137] The wage rise after 1989, which was a result of the workers' movement, did not last much longer so that in 1997 the real incomes of civil servants were 79% less than they had been in 1978, while in the same year the wages of formal workers were 33% lower than 1979 levels.

To make an international comparison, the following data provided by World Bank is meaningful. The manufacturing labor cost per unit value added, a proxy measure of labor costs relative to productivity, in 2004 was 0.27 in Turkey, while it was 0.44 in Greece, 0.68 in Spain, 0.54 in Hungary, 0.31 in Mexico and 0.49 in the Republic of Korea.[138] This impoverishment of earnings compared to former decades or other countries also should be regarded as a means to attract foreign capital for investment, and to face the immense competitive nature of international free trade as an export-led growth seeking country. It is important to note that 19% of the wage-earning workers are categorized as poor due to the low wages.[139] The leveling of employees' earnings, together with the diminishing employment prospects have resulted in income disparity throughout the country. Thus the share of the bottom

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[136] Boratav, *İstanbul ve Anadolu'dan Sınıf Profilleri*, p. 9.

[137] Çam, "Neo-liberalism and Labour," pp. 103.

[138] World Bank, *Turkey Labor Market Study*, p. vi.

[139] Ayşe Buğra, "AKP döneminde sosyal politika ve vatandaşlık," *Toplum ve Bilim* 108 (2007), p. 164.

fifth in national income shrank from 5.6% to 4.2% between 1983 and 1997.[140] In 1997 Turkey was the second most unequal society after Mexico in the OECD countries.

The Decline of the Trade Unions

The neo-liberal turn of the Turkish economic policy was declared on 24 January 1980 by one of the Prime Minister Demirel's undersecretaries Turgut Özal. This new program declared that Turkey could not increase exports with the wages of that time.[141] In the same year the number of strikes reached its peak, almost 200, almost all of which were organized by the unions attached to *Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* (DİSK).[142] After nine months, on 12 September, the military coup appeared on the scene. The military regime immediately banned all strikes and DİSK, and many DİSK unionists were put on trial and jailed. Together with DİSK, two smaller confederations *Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* (MISK)[143], which had a nationalist tendency and *Hak İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* (HAK-İŞ)[144]; which had an Islamist tendency, were also banned. Thus only *Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* (TÜRK-İŞ)[145] was left to work, the biggest and oldest mainstream confederation, which conventionally has close ties with the government.

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[140] Çam, "Neo-liberalism and labour," pp. 104.

[141] Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, p. 147.

[142] Nichols and Suğur, *Global Management,* p. 191.
Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfedarasyonu – Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions

[143] *Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* – Confederation Nationalist Workers' Unions

[144] *Hak İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* – Confederation of Right Workers' Unions

[145] *Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* – Confederation of Workers' Unions of Turkey

As a result of the military coup the unions became generally weakened, TÜRK-İŞ and its American-type unionism were encouraged to the disadvantage of DİSK, and third the introduced legal framework created a structure in which the state limited unionism in a great sense with the Unionization Act of 1982.[146] The new act restricted the usage of strike, declared that a large proportion of workers were unqualified to unionize at all, and erected many bureaucratic barriers for the process of becoming a union member, such as the necessity of notarial attestation. As Boratav underlines the coup could be understood as the disciplining the working class through non-economic means.[147] While HAK-İŞ and MİSK were allowed to function again in 1983 and 1984, respectively, DİSK was treated much differently so that it was not allowed to operate until 1991. The picture would be complete if we include the new employment structure explained above, which was developed as a result of the neo-liberal economic policy and post-fordist accumulation. The decline in public employment due to privatization, rising unemployment, higher rates of temporal employment, widening informality, and deepening poverty all imply the narrowing of the potential member pool of trade unions, a process the effects of which became evident during the 1990s and later.

After the 1980 coup, trade unions were more or less silent until 1989, while real wages shrank dramatically in the same period. As mentioned above, between 1978 and 1988 the real salaries of civil servants decreased by two-thirds, and the wages of those workers insured by social security institutions were halved. The silence was disrupted in 1989 when the collective bargaining process between the state enterprises and public workers, which involved 600,000 workers, became stuck and the parties could not reach an agreement. The disagreement triggered one of the

[146] Ibid. p. 196.

[147] Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, p. 148.

most widespread and massive collective action of workers in Turkish history, and definitely the most widespread one for public workers specifically. This wave of collective action, which became to known as the "Spring Protests," is interpreted as a reaction of the accumulated post-1980 developments by many researchers.[148] The massiveness of the protests could only be compared with the protests in 15-16 June 1970 against the government's attempt with a change in the law to prevent DİSK's right to make collective agreement. For three months (March, April and May 1989) 600,000 workers engaged in hundreds of collective protests that varied in a many ways, such as slowdowns, marches, stopping traffic and not doing overtime work. The grassroots nature of the protests, which were in many cases without the control of the unions, the creativity they involved in terms of introducing many new types of protests in the face of the legal restrictions about the strike and the politicized nature of those protests in terms of their apparent attack to the government instead of particular public enterprises has been noted by many observers.[149] The government, which offered a wage rise of 40% at the beginning, had to accept an increase of 140%. This successful collective agreement also had an important positive impact on the salary rise of civil servants in the following July and on the collective agreements signed in the private sector.

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[148] Yıldırım Koç, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi Tarihi* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2003), pp. 284-286.; *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "Bahar Eylemleri."; Feroz Ahmad, "The Development of Working-Class Consciousness in Turkey," in *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East*, ed. Zachary Lockman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 158; Günseli Berik and Cihan Bilginsoy, "The Labor Movement in Turkey: Labor Pains, Maturity, Metamorphosis," in *The Social History of Labor in the Middle East*, ed. Ellis Jay Goldberg (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), p. 55; Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, "Labour: The Battered Community," in *Strong State and Economic Interest Groups: The post 1980 Turkish Experience*, ed. Metin Heper (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), p. 65.

[149] *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "Bahar Eylemleri."; Ahmad, "The Development of Working-Class," p. 158; Berik and Bilginsoy, "The Labor Movement," p. 55; Sakallıoğlu, "Labour: The Battered Community," p. 68.; Hasan Oğuz, *1980 Sonrası İşçi Hareketinde Durum* (İstanbul: Scala Yayıncılık, 1995), p. 29.

This wave of workers' collective action had an energizing impact on the next few years, so that two years later another spectacular massive collective action of mining workers in Zonguldak took place as a result of an unsolved collective bargaining process. The miners' collective action in the form of a strike, which began on 30 November 1990, turned into a massive march in 4 January 1991 with the participation of nearly 70,000 workers and their families. In 3 January 1991 TÜRK-İŞ organized a general strike, for the first time in its history, to support this march, which shook the country. After four days the march was ended in front of a massive army blockade in the road with the initiative of the union leaders despite many workers' decisiveness to continue as recorded. This ending of the march brought the government into an advantaged position; moreover, the government declared on January 25 that all strikes were banned due to the Gulf War for sixty days. In the end the union had to accept the wage increase it had rejected before the march.[150] The same period between 1989 and 1992, however witnessed the highest wage increase in Turkish history,[151] so that the real wages in 1990 reached the level back in 1979 after years of decrease and in 1991 they exceeded the wages in 1979 for 18%.[152] Equally important as the struggle for wage rises was, as pointed by Ahmad, the emergent struggle for democracy within the unions related to the grassroots nature of the movement.[153] But some later observers claim that this wave of struggle, which

[150] *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "Zonguldak Grevi ve Yürüyüşü, 1990-1991".

[151] Koç, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı,* p. 298.

[152] Çetik and Akkaya, *Türkiye'de Endüstri İlişkileri*, p. 201.

[153] Ahmad, "The Development of Working-Class," p. 159.

seem to have lasted at least until 1995, was blocked by the confederation bureaucracy.[154]

After this wave of workers' movement, with the influence of a lowering the rates of productivity increase compared to wages, employers sought to get rid of the unions' pressure by dismissing the unionized workers and encouraging temporary and part-time work through subcontracting.[155] In this way flexible employment techniques were introduced due to raising global competition but also as a counter attack to the previous upheaval of the workers' movement.[156] Those years were ones in which employers began to demand that the laws be changed to fit to the flexibility necessitated by the new production techniques and international competitiveness. Berik and Bilginsoy offer a more structural account and state that the grassroots activism came into being in an unfortunate time period, in which the existence of the traditional working class was threatened by the ongoing economic adjustments.[157]

This wave of workers' movement resulted in a general wage increase beginning with 1989 and lasted until 1991. In the following three years both the wages and the strikes, as major indicators of the workers movement, decreased steadily. The economic crisis and the "Stability Packet" declared by the government on 5 April 1994 to deal with it meant for workers nothing but privatization, mass dismissals, decreasing real wages and high inflation. In the following year the organized workers, who witnessed year by year the melting of the rights they had gained through the struggle between 1989 - 1991, and the economic crises afterwards engaged in widespread strikes mainly in the public sector as a respond to the

[154] Oğuz, *1980 Sonrası İşçi*, p. 51.; Ercan Atmaca, "İşçi Sınıfının Durumu Üzerine Birkaç Söz," *Bilinç ve Eylem* 3 (Spring 2005), pp. 184-190.

[155] Çetik and Akkaya, *Türkiye'de Endüstri İlişkileri*, p. 58.

[156] Altan, et. al., p. 50.

[157] Berik and Bilginsoy, "The Labor Movement in Turkey," p. 59.

"Stability Packet."[158] This was the biggest strike wave in Turkish history in terms of the numbers of strike participants and days lasted in strikes.[159]

Koç states that at the end of these mass strikes "workers were not able to win a victory, but were not defeated either" in an optimistic way.[160] What was more concrete is that the wages overall continued to decrease like the previous three years.[161] It should be noted that the spectacular collective actions and strikes of this era were mostly organized in the public sector, while in the private sector no such massive collective actions took place. The public sector worker's protests against privatization were a relatively important feature of the post-1980 workers' movement. On the other hand, the protests of the private sector workers were usually about the dismissals due to the unionization process. They were organized by particular unions or independently by the workers themselves. Nevertheless, in both cases they did not tend to become widespread.[162] All of the three cases studied in this thesis should be identified as examples of this particular kind of worker collective action. At least one of the main reasons for that difference between the public and private workers in terms of their involvement in collective struggle should be the much more reliable legal job security of the public employees.[163]

The failed strike wave of 1995 generated demoralization and exhaustion; hence, in the public sector the frequency and extent of the strikes lessened. Workers and unions came to prefer other types of collective action in which they have more

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[158] Nichols and Suğur, *Global Management,* p. 199.

[159] Koç, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı,* p. 298.

[160] Ibid., p. 289.

[161] Çetik and Akkaya, *Türkiye'de Endüstri İlişkileri*, p. 201.

[162] Koç, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı*, p. 294.

[163] Ibid.

initiative and took on less risk, instead of strikes in an economic situation of permanent crises. The increase of dismissals and unemployment in the following years discouraged them even more from going on strike or engaging in any other collective action. The following series of economic crises in 1999, 2000 and 2001 made things even worse. In the conditions of little if any job security due to the increase in temporary employment, subcontracting and millions of unemployed men and women searching for jobs, both the number of the employees who would bear the cost of unionization, and the number of the employers who would take the risk of unionization were unsurprisingly few.[164] Moreover, unions were conditioned by these facts and became more and more eager to compromise and to focus on job security rather than wage bargaining.[165]

To illustrate the process of the attrition of the trade unions after the 1980 clearly, it will be useful to give the numbers of unionized workers. The numbers of unionized workers declared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security are unreliable for several reasons.[166] There is a wide concurrence of opinion on this point. Çelik provides the following numbers based on his calculations on the number of workers who enjoyed a collective employment agreement. He calculated the numbers of the total employees which include all wage-labor including civil servants and informal employment by using the data provided by the State Institute of Statistics

[164] Ibid. 231.

[165] Altan, et. al., p. 3.

[166] *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "Sendikalaşma Oranları."

Table 2. Numbers of unionized workers according to years calculated by Çelik

	Total Employees	Workers, Benefiting from a Collective Employment Agreement	The percentage of unionized workers
1988	7.170.000	1.589.718	22,2%
1992	7.595.000	1.426.824	18,8%
1996	8.953.000	1.288.969	14,4%
2001	10.057.000	1.015.983	10,1%

Source: Aziz Çelik, "Türkiye'de Sendika Üyeliği ve Sendikalaşma İstatistikleri," *İş Güç Endüstri İlişkileri ve İnsan Kaynakları Dergisi* (2/2004).

The numbers display in a self-evident way how the trade union membership diminished through the years of neo-liberalism and post-fordism. This trend is coherent with the argument that the union-busting techniques of post-fordist flexibility were put into use especially in the 1990s, after the rise of the workers movement between 1989 and 1991. To talk about the period after 2001, it is mentioned that the number of unionized workers has been reduced to nearly 700,000.[167] To give another striking number TÜRK-İŞ declared that its members in the public sector had been reduced by half between 1995 and 2007.[168]

Besides pure numbers a detailed analysis of the trade unions generated from a study that was conducted in 2004 and 2005 gives an idea of the conditions of the unions in the 2000s. Buğra and her colleagues raised some important points after the survey, which consisted of close-ended questions conducted with 1242 workers from six different sectors and ten cities. The researchers also organized small group

[167] Yüksel Akkaya, "Küreselleşme Kıskacında Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı ve Temel Özellikleri," in *Petrol İş Yıllık 2002-2003* (İstanbul: Petrol İş Yayınları, 2004).

[168] *Evrensel*, 8 May 2007.

meetings with those workers, and conducted interviews with unionists. Unemployment was declared by nearly the half of the workers as the most important problem of Turkey.[169] The frequent answer to the question of why they did not unionize while having social insurance was the fear of losing their jobs.[170] This seems to be not an irrelevant fear, since the chairmen of DİSK declared in July 2006 that 4,159 workers had been dismissed due to their engagement in unionization in the unions tied to DİSK since last three years.[171] Similarly the chairman of TÜRK-İŞ claimed that 25,000 workers had been dismissed between 2003 and 2007 due to unionization in the unions tied to TÜRK-İŞ.[172] In line with these points, the unionists stressed that it was almost impossible to unionize considering the high unemployment rates of Turkey.

The barriers in front of unionization generated by the laws and regulations were emphasized as the necessity of notarial attestation to become a member and the lack of job security in practice. First of all, the notarial attestation has a financial cost and worse than that, the time needed to finish the notarial process is enough in many cases for the employer to be informed about the unionization and to dismiss the unionized workers. It was declared by many unionists that job security is completely missing when it comes to unionization. Since the trials about dismissal due to the unionization last for a very long time, the dismissed workers usually dispense with the trial if the employer gives them severance pay. In other cases, even though the workers may win the case, the employers do not take them back to work, but dismiss again by giving them severance pay. The unionists mention that it is very hard to find

[169] Buğra, et. al., *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler*, p. 14.

[170] Ibid. p. 13.

[171] *Evrensel*, 20 July 2006.

[172] *Cumhuriyet*, 5 July 2007.

someone who had been dismissed because of the unionization but managed to go back to work.[173]

Another issue is that the right to unionize is completely non-existent for workplaces consisting of less than 30 workers according to Law. Thus the high proportion of small workplaces in Turkish economy implies that a large number of formal workers do not have the right to unionize at all. To give examples, we are talking about 42% of the food industry, 20% of the chemical industry and 13 % of the apparel industry. The co-existence of many firms engaged in the same job under the same roof of one workplace is a widespread phenomenon. If those firms employ less then 30 workers, those workers lack job security despite the fact that they work in crowded workplaces.

This phenomenon is also related to another legal entanglement, namely thresholds. According to the law, for a union to gain the authorization to get involved in a collective employment agreement, it must organize a minimum %10 of the workers employed in that unions' sector and 51% of the workers employed in the particular workplace.[174]

Today unions face the danger of being totally eradicated due to structural factors such as subcontracting, temporal employment, high rates of unemployment and legal restrictions such as lack of job security and the threshold. The interesting point is that most of the unions lack enough real membership to exceed this threshold and this fact is well-known by both the state officials and employers, so that the unionists do not seek to hide this reality. Hence we are talking about an illegal situation, which is well-known by everyone and which could be used against the unions if it is needed. But employers and officials are well aware that a work life

[173] Ayşe Buğra, et. al. *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler*, p. 31.

[174] Ibid. p. 24.

without unions would generate serious reactions from abroad. Unions, which were allowed to exist, give up in return some of their opportunities. In this different type of "negotiation" among the unions and employers, unions are claimed to accept to be content with a certain group of unionized workers in workplaces in which they become authorized, and not to engage in organizing the others.[175]

Concluding Remarks

The worker mobilizations discussed in the following pages did not occur in a vacuum, but in a tough context filled with many structural forces generating great difficulties for their participants both to survive and to act against the hazardous conditions they experience. The very reason why those kinds of worker mobilizations have become rare events is hidden in the above-told story. The scene started with a coup, which could be interpreted as the disciplining of the working class through non-economic measures, as Boratav claims.[176] The new economic policy, introduced after the repression of the working class movement, resulted in massive migration movements and the rise of unemployment and temporary employment, which changed the conditions of the labor market to a great extent. Besides unemployment becoming a very serious threat for each segment of the laboring people, the available jobs became increasingly temporary ones either in the informal sector or in the formal in forms of temporal contracts or in the subcontractor firms. Job security became an issue of the past for the majority of the working class

[175] Ibid. 36.

[176] Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi*, p. 148.

except for a minority. Wages decreased and, like finding a job, to earn a decent living became harder.

In an atmosphere in which high unemployment and low job security interacted freely and disastrously for millions who had to work for survival, to a certain extent worker's collective actions and mobilizations lost their basis to flourish. Since workers found themselves in a position of necessity to compromise with their employers to be able to keep their jobs, which became an increasingly scarce source of survival, as Burawoy states.[177] It should be kept in mind that collective mobilization is not a "natural" or "obvious" response to the increasing exploitation or oppression, "but a sophisticated pattern of collective behavior, a collective alternative to individualistic and familial strategies of survival," as Thompson states in his study on food riots in England in the eighteenth century. The existence of deepening exploitation does not "dictate" that workers must collectively mobilize against that situation, "nor does it determine" mobilization's "forms." [178] The period after 1980 witnessed two nation-wide worker mobilizations, namely the one in between 1989 and 1991 and the other in 1995. But already in the 1990s the structural transformation of the economy and the labor market had proceeded to such an extent that there was no longer a need for non-economic disciplining. We should also add in the picture the complicated impact of ideology, but still "the invisible hand" seems to have become strong enough to handle by itself with the disciplining of the working class. Hence the unions, which were the conventional foundations of

[177] Michael Burawoy, "Reaching for the Global", in *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*, ed. Michael Burawoy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 39.

[178] E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy Reviewed," in *Customs in Common*, (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 266.

worker mobilization, eroded tremendously so that only 700,000 of the 15.5 million of workers[179] were claimed to be unionized.

One of the important contributions of Thompson was his warning that the "notion of class entails the notion of historical relationship."[180] The story told above can be considered as what one side of this relationship has done for its own part. Whether it was deliberate or not does not make much difference, since the result is apparent. Turkey has became a much more profitable place for capital, and a much more miserable place for the working class people in the last 27 years as the account above clearly reveals. This story is actually well known, and much investigated. But what about the other side of this relationship? Except for a couple of nation-wide mobilizations and some distant numbers and statistics, which are conventionally perceived as pointing the "lack" of a significant mobilization, what do they really do? Have they just become paralyzed in the face of these tremendous forces, surrounded by thousands of excuses for not acting collectively against the capital for their own benefits? In the following pages I will attempt to enlighten three small scenes in the grand ocean of working class and its various forms of struggles. The workers whose stories will be told in the subsequent chapters are from somewhere around the middle segments of the working class. With reference to the segmentation defined by Buğra and her colleagues,[181] this means that they enjoy a formal work, which became a privilege in a certain level, but lacking the union, which became sort of a privilege of the privileged. I do not imply that they are members of the labor aristocracy at all. Even the workers of the pharmaceuticals factory of the fourth

[179] As calculated by the statistics provided by TÜİK. Numbers of regular employees, plus casual employees, plus unpaid family workers give this number. See TÜİK, 1 March 2007, *Employment Status by Years and Sex*, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do [1 March 2007].

[180] Thompson, *The Making*, p. 9.

[181] Buğra, et. al., p. 28.

chapter, who could be considered as the closest ones among the three cases to such aristocracy, if it ever really exists, could not be considered as labor aristocrats with monthly wages of 700 YTL ($ 560) without any premiums. They are regular workers, from the middle segments of their class, who have ventured to engage in apparent collective actions against their employers. I believe that their agency is worth to be considered, and their experiences are worth to listen.

CHAPTER III

THE MOBILIZATION OF WORKERS IN A FOOD FACTORY

This chapter is about the unionization struggle in a big food factory in Istanbul founded in 1979 that employed a total of more than 1000 people. Fifty workers were dismissed due to unionization on 15 December 2006, which had been started back in May 2006. The distinctive feature of this mobilization was its achievement to get ten of the dismissed workers, who continued to struggle, back to work in March 2007. Despite this important step, the legal authorization process of the union was prolonged due to the managements' acts to prevent it, and due to the passivity of the unions as perceived by many workers. As a result, among some workers, at least among two different groups, attempts were observed to organize this time independently from the union to force it to adapt a stronger stance against the management. I had the chance to observe the period after the dismissals by visiting the dismissed workers, while waiting outside of the factory. In the later period the coffeehouse, rented by the union to have an appropriate place to hold meetings, provided me a better place to interview and to observe the workers. I also participated in a particular group of workers' free time activities like picnicking and card playing. In addition to seven deep interviews, daily conversations with eleven workers and observations constitute the sources of my data.

The firm is leading one in its sector, with 60% of the national market, owning well-known trade marks and exporting an important portion of its production. The size of its workforce is remarkable both generally and compared to the other cases

investigated in this thesis. The wages are low, so that most of the workers earn the minimum wage (419 YTL, roughly equals to $335) and there are examples of workers who have been working for ten years in the factory and earning nearly 150% of the minimum wage. There are no premiums. Workers work over-time to be able to earn a living. Most of the workers are women, who especially have grievances about the lack of a nursery. Another feature of this work-place is that it includes legally three different firms inside the same building. Through this way, the management is able to employ workers for longer than six months, which is the most common period for temporal contracts. Since a worker should legally gain a layoff benefit after six months of work in the same workplace, the management dismisses the worker before six months from each of the three firms, but then employs the very same worker through the other firm. This system of "get in-get out" (*girdi-çıktı*) had been used for three years, as reported by the workers. The fact that this system also provides an important additional barrier for unionization, besides the existing ones, and its prevalence is well-known.[182] An important proportion of workers in the factory were employed in this way. This situation facilitates also relatively high turnover rates in the factory. A worker depicts this situation in a joking way by saying that almost every worker in the neighborhood had worked in this factory once.

The Legacy of Workers' Mobilization in the Factory

As a fairly old and populous factory with hard working conditions, this workplace has quite a rich collective mobilization legacy in terms of unionization.

[182] Buğra, et. al., *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler.*

The importance of this kind of a legacy for the future possible mobilizations was discussed above.[183] Obviously for this legacy to mean anything practically, it must be known at least by an important amount of workers in the factory. Almost all of the workers, probably thanks to the current mobilization, knew at least some parts of this legacy. Unsurprisingly less knowledge is present about the older mobilizations. Before the military regime in 1980 Gıda-İş,[184] tied to DİSK, was organized in the factory. After DİSK was closed and banned by the coup, the factory remained non-unionized until 1992, except for several unsuccessful attempts of workers to get unionized in Tek-Gıda-İş[185], tied to TÜRK-İŞ. In 1992, this time workers went to Öz-Gıda-İş,[186] tied to HAK-İŞ, as a worker explains. They were able to organize, after their campaign concluded with the return to work of those workers, who had been fired because of the unionization. The first collective work agreement signed by Öz-Gıda-İş occupies almost a semi-mythical position, very well-known by the contemporary workers. Kadir said:

> They got a wage raise of 300%, can you imagine that? The guy (who was working also at that time) says, 'We used to go to the ATM and fill up our pockets. I swear you our pockets were not enough.' The guy tells that, as a couple friends, they got their wages and with only some part of it, they made a pub serve only them, for one night (*bar kapatmak*).

Ceyhun, another worker, who was deeply engaged into the unionization, had the chance to talk with the shop steward of Öz-Gıda-İş of that period, who still lives in the same neighborhood near the factory. Ceyhun relates the former shop steward's

[183] Roscigno and Hodson, "The Organizational and Social Foundations," p. 35.

[184] Gıda-İş: Türkiye Gıda İşçileri Sendikası – Food Workers' Trade Union of Turkey

[185] Tek-Gıda-İş: Türkiye Tütün, Müskirat Gıda ve Yardımcı İşçileri Sendikası – Tobacco, Alcohol, Food and Supportive Industries' Workers' Trade Union of Turkey.

[186] Öz-Gıda-İş: Öz Tütün, Müskirat Gıda ve Yardımcı İşçileri Sendikası – Essential Trade Union of Tobacco, Alcohol, Food and Supportive Industries' Workers.

statement that the reason behind this wage rise was "workers dependence on each other":

> She told that, they had managed to get this wage raise thanks to the strong togetherness of workers, to the effective organization among themselves. When any negative development occurred or an attack of the management emerged, she told that she used to call the workers even on the phone from the union's room and tell that they must stop working due to such reasons. Their unity was so strong that they used to immediately stop working after this kind of a call.

Most of the workers explained the erosion of Öz-Gıda-İş by pointing out that it did not strive as it had in the beginning during the following collective work negotiations and consequently achieved only low wage raises. That great raise was diminished year by year, when the union was unable to get wage raises of more than 10%. Ceyhun, as he learned from the former shop steward, raises another issue, which is an internal process of workers. The emergence of disputes about shop stewardship among the workers disrupted the previous unity and solidarity of the workers. But an important number of the workers of that time seem to have been reactive towards the union, holding it responsible for the low wage increases, and even accusing it of bribery. The level of this reaction was so intense that a group of workers went to the union's office and damaged the office by force. Ceyhun also had a conversation with a former worker, who had participated in this attack. This worker stressed that the issue which made them angriest, was the fact that the chief unionist had started to meet with the management by himself without making any consultations with the workers.

Another story related to this issue claims that the veteran general manager of the factory, whose cunning merits were noted and damned by the workers all the time, had made an attempt to get rid of the union, by suggesting that the workers get a wage raise of 18% instead of the raise of 10% the union had negotiated. Most of

the workers accepted the deal in this version of the story, and Öz-Gıda-İş lost its unionization in this way in 1998.

Between 1998 and 2004 there were no apparent attempts to unionize. This does not mean, however, that the workers were totally docile during this period. Several protests were undertaken against the low wages, some lunch boycotts and marches inside the factory garden were organized without any involvement of a union.

> At that time we were marching constantly at the end of the shifts. We were marching ourselves. There was no union or anything. Then we went to DİSK. We did what ever we could. So that the boss came once at that time and made a speech in the eating hall.

Such collective actions led to a point in 2004 that the workers themselves, having decided to unionize in Gıda-İş tied to DİSK a while earlier, organized each other to a certain level. The workers organized an evening program in a hall and called Gıda-İş at that point to join the evening and to recruit them all. The workers, who were employed in the factory at that time, emphasized the crowdedness they reached during that campaign, a level which they could not attain even in the current campaign. Despite the high participation rate they reached, this mobilization was unable to achieve its goal. Several reasons were mentioned including the emergence of disquiet during the evening program when the unionists declared that the notary fee, a necessary condition for legally unionizing, should be paid by the workers themselves. Another related reason was the fact that Gıda-İş did not have the right to sign a collective work agreement because of the national threshold of 10% of the sector's workers.

> DİSK did not fight for us. It did not have the power to do that. The man (the chief of the union) does not have the authorization to sit at the table and sign the contract. Therefore, he did not lead us.

This "detail" was learned by many workers after the first mobilization and generated the belief that Gıda-İş could not help them practically, but they as workers found themselves in a position, where they were helping the union to overcome the national threshold. To execute the negotiations with the management about their demands the workers organized a committee:

> Five or six workers from those of the older ones formed the committee. They went upstairs (meaning the management floor which is upstairs), talked, but came back with nothing. There was DİSK at that time. If it had been another one, it would have been better, because DİSK did not have authorization. Without legal authorization, how far can we go? Ayhan (the general manager) has the gift of gab ("*ağzı çok laf yapar*"). Therefore he assured and persuaded our friends in each time. I told them once in the changing room: "you have gone upstairs and came back many times, can't you snatch anything from the man?" They said, "the man talks more than us." "If the man talks more than you, you should talk more than him, you should suppress him," But he suppresses more than we do", this and that. I said "My friend, if he suppresses you more, then this has no meaning. Why do you go there?" We were not making protests at that time, after the protests there had been a meeting with the management and we had built that committee. After they kept coming back empty-handed, as far as I know, some friends got some wage raises or some gains like that. Therefore, people began to distrust to the committee.

Without the support and the leadership of the union, as they perceived it, the workers could not become motivated of feel secure. In addition, the committee, after not being able to achieve anything became corrupted as many workers claim. Also more specific criticism of Gıda-İş besides its lack of resources is highly popular among the workers, who claim that the unionists did not even come to the factory and that they were "passive."

> When the committee did not see any attempt of the union, they had to agree with the manager. He said: "Get your papers back and come; I will improve your conditions." He meant the papers we gave to the union about the membership. We did so, resigned from the union, but he did not do anything. No raise or anything else.

Between the diminishing of this mobilization and the emergence of the current one there are accounts of several collective actions. The workers, who came to a point of hesitating about unionization due to the direct experience or the mediated information of the last failed attempts, became involved in collective action without aiming at unionization. In one of those mobilizations the workers prepared a list of demands, which was signed by more than 300 workers. The list included varied demands such as wage raise, the regulation of overtime work, a nursery, improvement of the cafeteria and changing rooms. The management counteracted this attempt by dismissing some of the workers who had been in a leading position in the process of preparing that list in 2003.

These accounts illustrates that the workers who came in and left this factory were not very silent about the poor conditions with which they were faced. Several victories and the following defeats imply important experiences about the details of the struggle. There were mobilizations which included all of the three major trade-union confederations. They were faced even with an apparent corruption of the union, against which they were organized and showed their reaction. Hence, many of them think that they can not fully trust the unions. At the same time, however, they know that workers' collective struggle can make a difference, which is remarkably observable in their stories about how great the wage raise was when Öz-Gıda-İş signed its first contract. The last mobilizations, especially the one for Gıda-İş, was experienced personally by many of the current workers, including the ones I spoke with, and left important marks on them. For example the manager breaking his promise is very important for them.

A Special Feature of the Factory: Relative Freedom to Move

Some major remarks about the nature of social relations should be discussed before getting into the details. First of all, we are dealing with a very big factory and therefore with a large population of workers. Workplaces, which employ few workers, are quite prevalent in Turkey, so that the employment in the workplaces in the production sector employing less than 30 people are 37% of the total number of employment.[187] Informal workplaces are not included in this picture. Allthough it is constantly changing with new employees being hired, there are around 650 blue-collar workers employed in the factory in the main building only. There is a large group of sales people, around 250, who work mobile outside of the factory and nearly 100 white-collar workers. Neither of the latter two groups is socially related to the main group of the blue-collar workers in a strong way, nor are they interested much in unionization. Another fact is that there is a three shift system in the factory, which usually determines the networks and relationships among workers. The further I got into the relations, networks and groupings in the factory, the more I felt that the factory is a world by itself, as a worker called it. I could see only a small piece of this world, especially due to the fact that I could not convince any women workers to talk to me except two of them. But still the part I was able to observe was quite complicated.

The first thing to note about the social relations due to both its unusual nature and importance is the freedom (*serbestlik*) of workers to move in the factory. This feature of the factory was mentioned by many of the workers. Except for the sections in which white-collar office personnel work, to move in the factory is completely

[187] Buğra, et. al. *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler*, p. 18.

free: “if the person gets his job done at the end of the day, nobody cares about his moving around.” But why is there such kind of freedom, which sounds quite contrary to the usual factory discipline? Mustafa answers this question:

> Do you know the reason for the freedom here? Since 90% of the workers work here for the minimum wage, the upper people do not press or railroad the worker much. If the worker gets his job done, it is okay that he walks around and rests for a while.

As mentioned above, the factory has a high turnover rate as reported by many workers. Mustafa means above that while offering the minimum wage or a little higher than that, the factory cannot pressure its workers much more, for those workers can quit the job. Quitting the job may not seem very reasonable, when one thinks about the high unemployment rate of the country. For example, one of the workers who used to work in the factory as a temporary worker and was dismissed due to unionization, said that during the period of struggle: “the work hours are appropriate, the work is easy, and your social security payments are guaranteed. That is why I am struggling to get back, waiting here for three months.” But still the fact is that the management does not push workers much for higher productivity rates. Obviously, we should add to the picture, as another factor leading to this relative freedom, the constant drive of the workers employed in the factory during last decades, to engage in collective actions for higher wages and other benefits. The management was faced with collective resistance many times, managed each time to break the mobilization and stuck with its minimum wage employment policy. No doubt management was highly aware of the possibility and actuality of another mobilization and therefore it seemingly preferred, deliberately or not, not to put much pressure on the workers, which would help to make them more eager to act.

The freedom to move is also enabled by a system in which workers help nearby co-workers if he/she leaves the work place for some reason. This practice is not very organized or deliberate enough to be called a team-work system, but it is seemingly encouraged by the chiefs on the shop floor. Kadir compares the conditions of the workplace and its impact on the unionization with one of his former factories, a textile and garment factory, in which he also had been engaged in a failed unionization attempt. He gives a detailed account of the two sectors' differences, and on particular difficulties in the textile sector.

> To unionize in textiles is harder. Why is it so? In there, you cannot go and talk with each other easily like we can do here. In textiles they even calculate your minutes. You come in time and go in time. But here, things are not like that. In textile, for example, your chief sends you somewhere else to work, when you are done with your job. Also in textiles, for example a machine operator earns 600, 700 million, the legworker ("*ortacı*") earns the minimum wage, the presser a little more than that. These differences make it harder to unite. Another thing in those places, the manager, the boss, chiefs always employ their relatives. If you do anything, it comes up that one of the workers is the chief's nephew or his uncle's son or something else. Therefore, when you do anything for unionization, the ağas hear about it immediately.

The number of breaks is also higher than usual in the factory. For example a machine operator has five short breaks and one lunch break during a twelve-hours work day, which includes overtime work, and almost all workers have four total breaks. Break times are not the same for all workers, hence they take their breaks in groups. During the breaks, while men usually gather in the smoking room, women gather in front of the toilet. Lack of a decent room for the breaks is another grievance. The issues discussed during the breaks are partially determined by their agenda. During the election period politics become the hottest issue; when the national soccer league starts, it becomes one of the top for men; in the periods of mobilization it became the

issue, but economic problems and gossip about male and female relations are those topics which never lose their primacy.

There is a general belief among the workers that the relations on the shop floor are quite good mostly thanks to the freedom to move. The fact, I observed in the next two factories, that the friendship groups usually consist of the workers in one's unit is not that prevalent in this factory, even though it still has a certain impact. Freedom to move seems to be followed by a freedom to choose your friends. They mention, for example, that they take their breaks at the same time as their friends even if they are working in different sections. The chiefs, who determine the times of one's breaks, are described as being "empathetic" about this:

> The chiefs are empathetic on this issue. Actually, are they really empathetic, I am not sure? The production may become more effective in this way, I do not know. But if there are, for example, two friends, they go on breaks together. The chiefs organize them in that way.

Hence the relations among workers are described as being quite good:

> The atmosphere is very good in terms of friendship. Sincerity and friendship are very good inside, because you are side by side all the time. The guy's machine is next to mine. He walks nearby, salutes you ("*kolay gelsin diyor*"), a dialog begins in that way. In the changing room or in the smoking room dialog begins in some way.

The individual worker's section and place still matter in terms of relations. Obviously, one cannot move around for very long time and freedom to move should be understood as freedom to take short breaks and to chat with nearby people. Another worker mentioned how in the packing section the relations among workers are kind of superficial, because the section is crowded and the place where one works us changing all the time:

> For example, you chat with the workers working on the same machine in that day, but the next day you just salute them and go to another

> machine, as if you do not know them. But in the production sections it is different, since you are together with the same people all the time. They say we are like a family there.

Before concluding I want to quote Mustafa, who summarized this issue quite well. He explained the reason for the close relations among workers, when he first time let me realize this feature of "freedom":

> That freedom is very important. Where you have freedom, you can meet with each other more often, so binary relations and dialogs develop more and more. If I have a chief nearby me who puts pressure on me, tells me to do this and that, gives me orders all the time, then the binary relation, dialogs, conversations will be limited; disconnectedness will emerge among the workers.

Social Boundaries among Workers

Another important issue about the social relations among workers involves the main boundaries of networks and groups, which operate as a negative and preventive feature for any collective action. After many conversations and interviews I realized that there were some negative opinions among a group of workers about another group. The criticism was about that group's eagerness and insistence to unionize in DİSK, meaning in Gıda-İş, which is tied to DİSK, contrary to the current mobilization I investigated, which was in Tek-Gıda-İş tied to TÜRK-İŞ. According to the criticism, the workers had tried to organize in DİSK three years earlier, but DİSK supposedly did not engage in the struggle as much as described above. Moreover, they commented that to insist on unionizing in a trade union like Gıda-İş, which lacked the authorization to bargain, was useless and destructive.

In further conversations with that group of workers it was told that those workers who insisted on DİSK were looking at the issue politically, which was not

only unpleasant, but destructive for their interests. I was told that there was a cleavage among workers along left and right in terms of political preferences. Later I learned that many of the "leftists" were from the same city, from Tokat, and that they were known as *Tokatlı*s (people from Tokat). And finally in our more sincere conversation it emerged that *Tokatlı*s was a euphemism for *Alevi*, members of a heterodox Muslim sect which constitutes a minority in Turkey. Tokat is a city which has a minority population of Alevis, and the workers from Tokat in the factory seem to be nearly all Alevis.

Why those workers hesitate to say "Alevi?" Several reasons were at play. Since to have a totalizing judgment about a sect, about Alevis is politically incorrect, especially while talking with a stranger like me, those workers did not tell me about this very easily. I do not imply necessarily that those workers deeply internalized political liberalism and therefore felt shameful about their own opinions. But to have that kind of a totalizing opinion about *Alevi*s, means doing more or less the same thing, which they were mainly criticizing the Tokatlıs for doing: to "hold each other" and to "behave towards others in a colder way." And they are obviously clever enough to see that. Another thing was that the cleavage between Alevis and Sünnis, the other sect of majority, is a delicate issue. Tention between the two sects came to a point of even mass murder during the 1970s in convergence with the cleavages between the radical left and the radical right.[188] Another reason may be that as Sünnis those workers might see being Alevi as something essentially bad and to call someone an Alevi might seem intrinsically offensive to them.

[188] The last instance about this tension which became a national issue, was about a popular T.V. showman in 1995, who used a word for *Alevi*s, which is used conventionally as a heavy curse. Heavy protests were followed in front of the T.V. building including physical attacks. The showman's carrier, who was extremely popular at that time, almost ended after his blunder.

Yıldırım also points out the same cleavage among workers of Gebze, a town of Kocaeli, the neighboring province of Istanbul.[189] In his wonderful and inspiring article, Yıldırım describes the residential segregation and says that there was little contact between the members of the two sects. I should immediately underline that the cleavage in our factory was not that strict at all. There were many friends crossing between two different groups; I did not hear or observe any practice or even implication of any misbehavior related to the issue. The above mentioned opinions did not give any serious damage to the mobilization yet, which was an important sign since to act together in a collective way is very hard, but they more or less achieved it despite the "cleavage" mentioned above. The main criticism of those Sünni workers I interviewed towards Alevis was about their discrimination against others. They hold as being untrustworthy due to the claim that they gave importance to other Alevis were more than anyone or anything else. Mustafa explained that the cleavage was not that deep and that the issue was a specific mistrust:

> There is no strict separation. We are merged with each other. But people have, how do you say, this feeling ("*ukde*") internally even if it has small impact. I mean, if we talk a secret issue, like unionization, with one of them for example, he can go and tell it to his best friend, his friend may go and tell to another, and it may spread around in that way. You cannot trust them much.

There is a high level white-collar worker from Tokat, they said, who had a role in the massive employment of people from Tokat in the factory. This implied that Alevis had a supporter supposedly in the management. We should note that there were nearly 250 Alevis in the factory, which was a much higher proportion than the general proportion of Alevis compared to the total population of Turkey. But was not necessarily because of the white-collar worker but might be simply a result of the

[189] Engin Yıldırım, "The Metal Workers of Gebze," in *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey*, ed. E. Kahveci, N. Sugur and T. Nichols (New York: Mansell, 1996), p. 138.

neighborhood. The fact that the branch chief of the union they were struggling with in the current mobilization was also from Tokat and Alevi led those Sunni workers to question the Alevi workers' real allegiance to the union. The stories about how many Alevi workers became unionized after they heard that the union chief was "from Tokat" were used to back up their claim about the Alevis' unity against others. For example, I witnessed that while the Sünni workers were trying to make a short list of workers to engage in a highly secret attempt to build up a kind of a workers committee to mobilize workers to put pressure not only on the employer but also on the union, about which they had begun to have doubts, they had a hard time finding even one reliable Alevi worker. Obviously the high level of secrecy about this organization had an impact on this difficulty of finding even one Alevi worker, since even the unionists should not hear about this attempt. But still it was an important sign.

Another Sünni worker mentioned an interesting detail about the emergence of the cleavage, which he claimed was directly related with the unionization mobilizations. He talked about the unionization mobilization with Gıda-İş back in 2004:

> We were all together before this unionization in 2004. When it started and grew, most of the workers became divided in two groups. One was for Tek-Gıda (TÜRK-İŞ) and the other for DİSK. Tokatlıs pressured for DİSK. There were also friends who were working for Tek-Gıda. We did not make any discrimination; we said that we would prefer what the majority would. We went to DİSK, but DİSK sold us out. A committee was built; most of it consisted of *Tokatlı*s. The committee sold both DİSK and us.

Hence the conventional prejudices seemed to be encouraged by this experience or by the interpretation of it by these Sünni workers. First of all, the fact that the committee "sold" the others, consisting mostly Tokatlıs, seem to encourage the old prejudices. Also the reason why the separation between the Alevi and Sünni workers was coded

to me at first as the separation of political left and right became understandable after learning about this experience. The claimed DİSK preference of the *Alevi*s, which was partially consistent with my observations about at least some of them, was coded by the other group as a political preference related to being leftist, as Alevis usually claimed and observed to be. And it was condemned because it was interpreted as making a preference for political views which were separating workers instead of an interest-based view which would bring them together. From the point of view of these workers to claim that organizing in DİSK would not be in the interest of the workers, but could be only a political choice was a fact related to their opinion that a union without authorization could not help them. Also a few Alevi workers, but literally a few of them not more than four, as far as I observed, seemed to be very much engaged in and eager for DİSK probably really related to their political preferences of socialist left. Not that DİSK is socialist or anything like that, but probably through networks related to the socialist group in which they were involved, they preferred DİSK in a more essential way. In addition, they really believed that DİSK would benefit them more and struggled for it. Related to this DİSK argument and the Alevi workers' insistence and struggle about it, a last common saying about the Alevis was that "they seem to be in front of the struggle, but they leave it later on the way." This argument was mainly generated from the behavior of that committee, which was made up of mostly Alevi workers and which was perceived as "selling out" the workers.

Among the Alevi workers I did not observe or hear such negative opinions about Sünnis. This may be partially due to the weaker confidence relationship I was able to build with the Alevi workers compared to that particular group of Sünni workers. As I mentioned above, sharing their real opinions on that delicate issue with

a stranger was not easy and necessitated a relative diminishing of that strangeness. All of the four Alevis I interviewed said that there was not much a cleavage among the two groups. They underlined that friendship groupings did not develop according to that separation. They admitted that people talked like that, as if this separation had a serious impact, but they claimed the reality was different. Especially about the unionization those claims were often mentioned among workers, according to them. People tended claim that the other group was not struggling enough, but the reality was that a collective habit about unionization could not be totalized for any group. The important point they raised was that even people who were talking like that did not really believing in these arguments, or behaving in line with them, since there were no observable problems due to those lines.

Another line of -at least- discursive separation among the workers was provided by a third group of so-called "migrants," who complicated the social relations in the factory even more. "Immigrants" meant actually those 350,000 people who had emigrated from Bulgaria in 1989 because of the escalating oppression of the "communist" government.[190] To picture this issue within a framework Nichols and Suğur's account on it would be helpful. In their brilliant and productive research, which included face-to-face interviews with 356 workers employed at seven large-scale factories in the Marmara region during 1999 and 2000, they made important observations on these "immigrant" workers and on their relation with other workers. They pointed out that despite ten years having past, after the migration mistrust was still prevalent among local workers. In some factories they examined, local workers saw the newcomers as unreliable finks, who were "not one of them." Moreover they concluded that migrated workers were stereotyped as

[190] Nichols and Suğur, *Global Management,* p. 90.

people who were interested only in money and unified within themselves against the outer world.[191]

In line with the two scholars' findings, among the workers of this food factory but especially among the Sünni ones, negative judgments about immigrants were observable. Those judgments were related to the immigrants' supposed discrimination against non-immigrants, their willingness to work for low wages, their hesitation to engage in the unionization and their unreliability about informing the management about worker mobilizations. Fırat provided a radical example of this perception: "We cannot trust them; they do not give us the opportunity to trust on them. The guy (a immigrant worker) says that he would work even if the boss paid him one million (less than $1)." Adnan said in a private conversation about there were some workers in the factory, who would even resign from the union if the management gave them 80 YTL ($64) and raised their wages for 20 YTL ($16). Adnan pointed mainly the migrant workers in telling this.

A similar claim about immigrant workers was that they acted in a collective and coordinated way in terms of engagement in unionization, which led the Sünni workers to hesitate from them. During the preparation of the list for the formation of a highly secret committee, as mentioned above, those Sünni workers could not even find one immigrant worker to add to the list. A more reasonable argument was that the immigrants were not much engaged in the struggle, they just signed up, but were not doing anything else to further the struggle. I even witnessed once that a Sünni worker implied to another one that the immigrant male workers did not care much about their wives' relations with other men. This gives a clue that some other prejudices might follow the ones about the work life. The Alevi workers I

[191] Nichols and Suğur, *Global Management,* p. 94.

interviewed, in line with their claims about the cleavage between Alevi and Sünni workers, said that some members of the three groups (Alevis, Sünnis and migrants) might talk in a negative way about each other, but this neither influenced their practices much, nor was totally consistent with the reality. But they admitted that there is still truth in these words:

> Immigrants hold that the source of our problems about unionization is *Tokatlı*s, a *Tokatlı* holds that these migrants are unreliable and flatterer. But in reality it is not like that. The process is not ongoing because nobody is doing anything. But the groups are accusing each other. For example a immigrant man is not signing up with the union; people say immediately that these migrants are always like that. But there are already many migrants signed with the union. One *Tokatlı* does not sign, others tell that the *Tokatlı*s are always like that, they pretend to be leading the unionization but leave the struggle on the way. But there are not any problems in terms of friendship relations and all that. People just talk like that to find someone to blame.

The Emergence of the Current Mobilization

As I tried to show above, the factory is a big one and in this large group of workers there were certain divisions, which seemed to be effective in a certain sense at least in terms of unionization preferences. So this unionization mobilization was not led by a specific unified group of workers. Right from the beginning of the process tension emerged between two groups, one of which preferred to unionize in Tek-Gıda-İş (TÜRK-İŞ) and the other in Gıda-İş (DİSK). Thus, determined by this tension, there were different stories about the emergence of the movement. Unsurprisingly members of the both groups claimed that they had begun to organize first. Canip's story is following:

> Fewer than ten workers, who had experienced the previous struggle (in which they prepared a list of demands with many workers' signatures on it), started this unionization. It was around last May. We

> saw that we could not do much without a union behind us. Our friends had been fired. We needed a legal base. That was what we told ourselves. In the beginning we put all of the four unions on the table and decided on Tek-Gıda-İş due to the large number of its membership. DİSK does not have the authorization anyway. There was an ember already, but with ashes on it. When we pulled the ashes away, the fire began. But we strived a lot.

Canip likes to talk in a poetic way; he was one of the workers who had been fired in the process and his pride at being one of the leaders of this mobilization was easily observable.

Ceyhun provided another story about the unionization, which centered on the other union, Gıda-İş, tied to DİSK: "In the first meeting for unionization there were nearly 20 people. In it we did not determine in which union we would organize." Upon further questioning, he revealed that most of them were from Tokat, with three or four immigrants and a couple workers from the eastern provinces of Turkey.

> We decided to investigate the unions. One week later, we gathered again. Some wanted to organize in this union, some in the other. We were nearly 30 people in the second gathering. The process was going well; there was no snitching or anything. We talked about each union. It came out that Tek-Gıda had been engaged in several corruptions, that it sold out the workers several times. There were some who wanted to organize in Öz-Gıda, but we convinced them more easily by asking them what it have done in this factory in the past. So we concluded to go to DİSK. In that second meeting some said that there were other friends, who wanted to organize in Tek-Gıda. We called them also and made a third meeting one week later. We talked there and agreed to organize in DİSK. (…)[192] So we began to unionize. After a couple weeks, in a morning we were getting out of the night shift, Tek-Gıda-İş was in front of the door, making speeches, holding a banner, throwing us carnations. We called to them immediately "Why are you here?" The man said that they had members in the factory. We asked him, who had called them. He did not say. (…) By that time our friends had been called by the management and chewed out. The manager told Mahmut, "I will fire you, but I pity your children." We learned someway, who had called them. Halil, Canip, Osman and Serdar. But Halil was supposed to be with us. He was on the committee we had built. He was one of those, who had agreed on organizing in DİSK. We had known that he had met with the unionists

[192] I used (…) to show that there are sentences I skip, which were told by the interviewee during our conversation.

> of Tek-Gıda a couple times, but he had told us that he did not anymore. (…) So a rift among us appeared in that way.

One thing for sure is that after a point, the two groups began to organize separately in a competitive way. But it seems that the general tendency of the workers in the factory was towards Tek-Gıda-İş, especially because of Gıda-İş's lack of authorization and Tek-Gıda-İş's size in terms of membership and material resources. This fact was also admitted by Ceyhun and other pro-DİSK workers. The first dismissals of two workers in December 2006, who had been organizing for Tek-Gıda-İş, was the turning point. Gıda-İş accepted to unite the struggle under Tek-Gıda-İş's banner and the two separate attempts became unified.

The Importance of Social Networks in the Involvement in Mobilization

Dixon and his colleagues argue that active work-group social relations are one of the important factors for the emergence of worker militancy[193]; moreover Dixon and Roscigno underline the importance of the networks, since above and beyond individual causes, level of engagement of fellow workers in the mobilization within one's networks has important implications for individual involvement."[194] In line with these arguments, in this particular experience many cases were recorded and observed about the importance of networks and work-group social relations for individual involvement. Canip underlined that to convince those workers to sign in, who avoid joining in the mobilization, and they contacted with the friends of the avoiders; and convinced them to join through them. For some workers, who insisted avoiding, he told that they even went to their neighborhoods, found the influential

[193] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 9.

[194] Dixon and Roscigno, "Status, networks, and social movement participation,", pp. 1292-1327.

people of the neighborhood and tried to convince them to encourage those unwilling workers to engage in the unionization. Both tactics worked well in many cases as Canip claimed. Canip (30 years old), whose father was a miner in Zonguldak, experienced many strikes and collective actions nearby his father as a child, including the great march of miners from Zonguldak to Ankara, which was mentioned in the second chapter. He was also engaged in unionization in Çorlu, Tekirdağ, while he was working in the leather sector there. So he can hold to be fairly experienced, thus he made an important comparison about a specific condition in the current mobilization:

> "Istanbul is a big city. Here a person can dare more easily to sell his friend out. In a small place people would choke him with splits ("*adamı tükürükle boğarlar*"). But here he changes his neighborhood, his job, get out from under."

During a conversation with his friends Adnan, Mustafa, Necip and others, Fırat (29), married with one child, told why he had become engaged in the unionization struggle: "Why did we sign up with the union? For this man. We trusted him. We did not know the chief (of the union). We signed up with the union due to Adnan's words." Mehmet continued, where Fırat stopped: "Adnan does not lie. We never heard any lie from his mouth. He does not care about money." Mustafa and Adnan used to work in the same section four years earlier, when Mustafa first had come to the factory. He was also on the same shift as Necip and Fırat, both of whom live in same area as Mustafa. So they took the same service bus everyday, met each other and became friends. Mustafa emphasized their closeness: "That is how we met. Our friendship developed, we are gathering now as entire families. They got married after we met, we went to their weddings." This is how those four men become close

friends. And seemingly Adnan was the one who got them into the unionization. Mustafa remembered how Adnan became involved in the first place:

> In that period when the two unions were organizing separately, he told me that we should be patient and not get involved much. After one week I saw Adnan with papers in his hands gathering signatures, running around making people members.

Kadir (32) is an interesting figure. People made jokes about him. He was known as the "murderer" almost by everyone and in every case. I witnessed that some workers even did not know his real name. I was told that he had been called in that way due to his physical appearance. He was a big man with a tough-looking face. But this nickname sounded like it involved mockery. Another story was more revealing in terms of popular mocking stories about him. After he had bought a plasma T.V. and bragged about it a lot, he started to be called the "plasma murderer," but the length of this name was difficult to say and people began to call him simply the "murderer" again. Kadir was deeply involved in the unionization struggle and had a lot of stories related to his efforts to organize people, some of which revealed the importance of social relations in involvement in mobilization:

> For example, women listen to what their elders tell them to do. In our section there is an old sister, all of the women were listening what she said. After striving to make those women sign up, but failed, we applied to her finally, and said her "my sister, for God's sake please sign up for this, these women would also follow you." She said, "My child, I keep signing these papers each time, but unionization is never achieved, each time we get nothing." We talked with her, did this and that for her ("*allem ettik, kallem ettik*") and we somehow convinced her. After her, all of the women signed up. But, of course, the important thing is to make your words heard by others. She should have a distinctive personality to make herself listen. It is not only age.

This claim that women listen to their elders was also acknowledged by Şermin, a young (24) female worker, one of the few with whom I was able to have a conversation. Kadir also gave examples of those workers who did not sign up the

factory, but had to sign up after Kadir and others had gone their home several times to convince them: “After you go to his house two or three times, he feels embarrassed and says ‘bring that thing, I will sign up.’” Serdar, one of those who had started to organize for Tek-Gıda-İş, mentions similar examples:

> We excluded the ones who did not signed up in the union. For example, we sit and eat our lunch. When the man comes, everybody leaves the table. He goes to the smoking room, but he can not talk with anyone. We do not talk to him.

Another example he gave is a more specific one:

> We had a friend who was selling coffee and tea, stuff like that, to us. He bought them wholesale, and sold them to us at a cheaper price. Cheaper than the retail shops. That guy did not sign up at first. We told our friends “Nobody is to buy anything from him anymore.” He came one day later asking where to sign up.

To sum up, the social networks in which the workers were embedded seemed to have had an important impact on their involvement in the mobilization besides their individual calculations.

Dismissals, Protests, Marches and a Success

To the Management[195]

Look! Those workers you fired, united they resisted.
They didn't go home, nor did they retreat.
How didn't you see these workers' stance?
Decisive they are, the union became their pride.

So you thought, "Through firing I got rid of them."
"Wanted a little time, so I silenced them."
You, foolish management!
You only fooled yourself.

You built walls, strengthened security.
We offered a hand, you sent us to custody
Why did you give up, when you saw workers' stance?

[195] For the original Turkish poem see Appendix A.

Did you think those sound proof glasses, those high walls would protect you?

İ. Özer

On December 15 two workers were dismissed by the management, two leaders for Tek-Gıda and nearly 45 workers followed them in the next week. Some of them continued to struggle. They met every day in front of the factory with the unionists, who had a minibus provided by the union. The minibus had large speakers on top and it kept playing songs all day long about unionization and worker struggles. The number of the dismissed workers who kept on struggling decreased in time and in the end, only ten workers remained. At the beginning of each shift the dismissed workers greeted the workers arriving in the buses and usually the chief of the union office made speeches once a day at the beginning of a shift, while workers inside the factory garden were getting off their buses and leading their way to the changing rooms. The dismissed workers held up a banner writing "The Dismissed Workers Should Be Rehired!" on it, shout slogans, while they were standing in front of the factory's gate. After a while the unionization in the factory reached a certain level and they began to march around the factory after one of the shifts several times a week. The workers of the ended shift would walk out from the factory instead of getting on the buses, they would join together the dismissed workers outside and march around the factory shouting and protesting. Nearly two hundred workers took part in these marches in the days when the unionization developed. After these protest workers were taken homes on the buses provided by the union.

The factory legally was made up of three different firms, which made it harder to reach the legal threshold of 50 % plus one to become unionized, since in each firm this process had to be undertaken separately. The union applied to the

Ministry of Labor and Social Security about this unlawfulness, but the process was slow. Another difficulty was the salespeople who were working for the company but outside the factory in a mobile way. The workers had little contact with them, and thus had a hard time reaching them. A further difficulty was the existence of a large number of people who were employed in the factory officially, but who actually were working for the employer in his house, like his servants and security personnel. There were nearly 50 people like that, the unionists and workers claimed. I also mentioned that there was a large number of workers, which fluctuating all the time but claimed to be around 250, who were employed on a temporary basis. These workers were usually dismissed before six months, which was the time period necessary to obtain the layoff benefit. So they were being laid off without any benefits and then were offered jobs in one of the other two firms in the same factory after a couple of weeks. In this way management kept the circulation of a group of workers who had almost no rights. To unionize them was obviously even harder since they had no job security in any sense. Most of the 45 dismissed workers were from that group of temporary employees. These were the structural measures taken by the employer, who had a great deal of experience with the unionization mobilizations, as seen in the collective action history of the factory.

Kadir, who was not dismissed but striving hard in the factory to unionize others, evaluated the impact of the dismissals on the process:

> It was after our friends were dismissed, when we were able to unionize an important number of workers in the factory. So actually the dismissals of our friends benefited the union. Really. Of course we took some risks in the factory, we did whatever we could. But they, the dismissed ones became totally free. They were free for two and a half months. They did not have anything to do but unionization. They also had nothing to lose. They went to the houses, visited people many times, making them members in this way with insistence.

Fırat, similar to Kadir, was not dismissed, engaged in the unionization and he even became in the process one of the two leading figures in his shift together with his close friend, Necip. I mentioned above how he was made to join in the mobilization by his friend Adnan, thanks to the respectable position Adnan had from his point of view. When Adnan was dismissed, Fırat, Necip and another member of their friendship group, Mustafa, became even more agitated and motivated about the mobilization after their close friend's dismissal. Fırat explained the process inside the factory:

> See, these people were dismissed; afterwards, we made more workers members than they had. Why? People became members due in reaction to the management about these dismissals. We told people that if those people were dismissed, we could be also dismissed like them tomorrow. We should unionize both for the dismissed ones and for ourselves. This is our chance, our opportunity. If it were a union other than Tek-Gıda, it would not wait in front of the factory for such a long time. This is our chance. The union is powerful, we should also push forward.

Obviously the struggle inside during this period was not easy. To make such visible protests while working in the factory, meant taking a serious risk of being dismissed. Let aside join in them, to organize and lead them were further risks. The workers who played leading roles in those protests and marches were summoned by the management and threatened many times. Fırat told that he was summoned two times, which was conceived to be a lot, and which meant that he was guaranteed dismissal if the management found that chance. Mustafa had the record. He had been summoned three times. His account about one of those conversations with the general manager Ayhan and his asistant was quite revealing to relate:

> Ayhan asked me "Why do you do this?" I told him: "The wage I earn is 400 million ($320). One *simit* ("a kind of bagel") is 500 liras (40 cent), one glass of tea is 500. If I eat this menu at all of the three meals, it will make 3 million ($ 2.40). We are four people in my family, which makes 12 million ($ 9.60) a day. Multiply this by 30, it

> makes 360 million ($ 288). The rest is 40 million. I can spend this in whatever way I like! As if you do not know why we are doing this!" He told me that they were in debt; they were close to going bankrupt and all that other stuff. I told him "I have friends who used to work here thirty years ago. I heard from them. This factory kept going bankrupt for thirty years. You are the one who bankrupts it. Don't do it." He told me that I was wrong. He began to explain me how his former factory had gone bankrupt. That factory also had gone bankrupt probably because of him. I didn't tell this out loud, of course. Then he began to tell me other things. I propped my chin to my arm on the table looking out from his office's windows to the workers working downstairs. The guy next to him said: "You are speaking in vain. This man is not listening to you." (…) Ayhan told me: "If I fire you now, you will go and join those outside. You will be a plague for me". This is why he did not fire me.

Necip underlined the difficulties they faced in a similar way:

> The task of the ones outside was easier. The tough job was ours. We were blocking the way at the end of the shifts, when we were about to march. We did not let anyone leave. Ayhan (the general manager) was coming and yelling at us. We came through these difficulties. Others were leaving, we were blocking the way to not to let them go. The chief (of the union) believed that he had called for it and the workers had marched as a result of his call. He actually knew who had made the people march inside. We were blocking the way, the chiefs and managers were shouting us not to do that. Since when we were blocking the way, everybody saw us through the windows upstairs.

Hence with the collective struggle of the workers inside and outside, most of the blue-collar workers working inside the factory became unionized. But they still had to unionize more to reach the legal threshold. On the other hand, those blue-collar workers were well aware that they had achieved unionizing the majority of those around, which motivated them a lot and made them to feel powerful and confident. The union decided to organize a massive protest in front of the factory, not only with the factory's workers, but with other members of the union in the first week of February. Nobody was expecting a protest of thousands, but it still seemed to disrupt the management probably because of the popularity of their brands. The company was apparently spending an important amount of money for its advertising

campaigns involving celebrities. Hence the employer himself agreed to hold a meeting with the unionists for the first time, to pursue them not to organize that protest. The employer proposed that if the union would stop the protests, ten days later he would sit at the table with the union. The union accepted the deal and during these ten days the union rented a coffee house in the neighborhood to use as a center for the meetings about the unionization. The management gave the signal about its attitude by raising walls, as Özer describe above in his poem, around the factory and changing the windows of the management section for sound proof ones.

At the end of ten days the management did respond to the union's calls. The protests began again with a greater intensity. The workers of each shift got off their buses at a point five minutes walk from the factory and together marched from there to the factory. In this way they began their work 15 minutes late, which meant 45 minutes of striking in a day, including all shifts. Ceyhun told me proudly that this had been his idea. The most radical collective action of this mobilization occurred on Friday of that week. The dismissed workers and unionists chained themselves along the two gates of the factory in the morning at the changing time of the shifts. Before that, the workers inside had sent the buses empty to bring those workers of the next shift. When the buses came back filled with workers, they were faced with the chained workers and could not enter the premises. So all of the workers of the two shifts came together and witnessed the "determination of those workers for unionization" as underlined by many workers at different times.

The management called the police and had those who chained themselves to taken into the custody. The workers who came to the coffee house after this protest, some workers of the nightshift and others who had avoided being taken into custody, were very excited, happy and proud about the impact of their action. Canip described

this impact: “Our determination helped us unionize an important number of workers had been avoiding becoming members.” A group of chiefs of the factory, who had not been unionized until that time as was usually the case, had been convinced and signed up after that action. This was perceived by workers as an important signal that they were very close to the victory, since “the chiefs are always the ones who became members at the end,” as Mahmut said. While describing the protest and other big ones in the following days in an excited way, Canip concluded that, “these are one of those things you cannot explain, one has to live them.” The following week the employer called the unionists for a meeting and in that meeting he agreed to rehire those ten dismissed workers, who continued to struggle. In the first weeks of March the dismissed workers got their jobs back.

The Atmosphere of Success, Confidence and Unity

(No name)

if he knocks off at seven in the morning,
if he goes out after pressing his card
then gathers with his friends at the gate,
chief! is there a penalty for this?

MARCHING IN THIS SQUARE,
MARCHING AND PROTESTING,
THAN SHOUTING SLOGANS,
CHIEF! IS THERE A PENALTY FOR THIS?

if he’s after his bread,
if he’s chaining himself to the gate,
if the police come
and take them away,
chief! is there a penalty for this?

if Ayhan does not raise our wages
if he says “you don’t deserve a raise”
if he says “do not subscribe to the union”
chief! is there a penalty for this?

if he raises the walls around the factory to four meters,
if he puts barricades in the road with containers
if Mr. Boss is afraid of the worker
chief! is there a penalty for this?

"do not become a member!" they said
ten percent wage raise they offered
"that is more than enough for you anyway," they claimed.
only this premium what they gave

the foremen left us alone
they flattered to the boss
but could not get what they wanted
now they also became members of the union

IF 700 WORKERS BECAME UNION MEMBERS
IF THEY ALL STAND FOR THE UNION
IF THE OTHERS ARE SELLING US OUT
GETTING INTO THE BUSES AND RUN AWAY
CHIEF, WHAT IS LEFT TO DO THEN?

Barış[196]

Especially after that protest with chains on Friday and the rise in the membership in the following weekend the worker community became even more cohesive. Both Barış's poem right above and Özer's poem were written in this period. Besides revealing the story of their struggle in a very beautiful way from their own eyes, both poems disclose the level of confidence, enthusiasm and unity they experienced collectively at that time. Confidence was the word used most often to describe the current feeling among the factory's workers. The collective confidence of workers was obviously something built by their efforts and struggle. Ufuk, one the dismissed workers working in the factory with his wife for five years, described the situation:

> This confidence was built with time. At the beginning everybody was hesitating from each other. Everyone was suspicious that the other might be a man of the boss. Even two days ago it was not like today.

[196] For the original Turkish poem see Appendix B. This poem has a form of traditional folk poems, very popular among *Alevi*s. The "chief" in the poem is the chief of the union's branch.

Ufuk gave the example of how the general manager had felt compelled to intervene in one of the last gatherings of workers at the end of the shift to begin marching: "Even that Ayhan, from whom most of the workers used to be afraid of a lot, could not stop them." Şermin said that even those workers who had used to compete with each other not to be noticed in the front lines, did not hesitate to march in front anymore. She held that especially women workers had done so, but at that time this had changed.

A young, married worker (25) Umut, who had worked in the factory for one year as a temporary worker, said how "beautiful this confidence" was, and how "pleasant" the period they were experiencing at that time: "Before, people were distrustful of themselves. They used to run away from the cameras. Now nobody cares about them, everybody is calm, because they trust each other." Umut concluded by saying: "As much as we struggle, we internalize it even more, we learn more." Including Umut and his young friends, everybody in the coffee house was talking during that period about a few group of workers who had not sign up yet, and about how to unionize them. One of Umut's friends, Ömer (26), who was also a temporary worker, pointed another issue: "Our job will not end, even after the union gets in the factory," and talked about the Öz-Gıda-İş experience: "As we heard, that union did not defend the worker. Also, the workers did not call it to account." The legacy of the factory was to be transferred to the newer workers quite well.

Ceyhun, in saying that he had changed a lot after experiencing a unionization struggle in previous last workplace, pointed out that many workers had changed a lot during the struggle. He described the situation and his feelings about it in a later period:

> In the factory the friendship relations were always good. But there was also mistrust. Especially on issues related to unionization, people used to mistrust each other. But to see that later the confidence developed, to see that people began to trust each other was wonderful. To see the change in people's relations with each other is really wonderful. This was really the case in those days, in which we were mobilized, in which people met and talked with each other often due to unionization. In the workplace nobody used to talk with each other about unionization at first. Then I saw that everyone was talking about this, about how to organize this or that worker. That means that they had begun to trust each other. To see this is a different thing, very enjoyable. (…) I lived wonderful things, gained wonderful memories, really. I am sure everybody would say the same thing. People missed those days later. After the marches had been stopped, people asked why they were stopped, "Why we do not march despite the boss does this and that?" There was such a spontaneous thing. But it later eroded because of the union's attitudes.

To note here the workers' thoughts about their present union and its chief would be appropriate. In that period, as can also observed in some of the quotations above, most of workers had great confidence in Tek-Gıda-İş. Many of them emphasized that the success of the current mobilization compared to the previous attempts that had failed was related to Tek-Gıda-İş's insistence on this mobilization and its financial power. How the chief of the union branch was active was also another issue mentioned by many workers. Many of the workers compared Tek-Gıda-İş with Gıda-İş, the union of the last failed campaign and noting that Tek-Gıda-İş was overly successful compared to Gıda-İş. Many cases were reported of which him coming even late at night to several places on call of activist workers to persuade hesitant workers. Umut mentioned another reason for their confidence in him, a point which was considered to be extremely important by many workers:

> When the chief was about to go to the boss' office to hold a meeting with him for the first time, he told us "Give me one female and one male worker, I will talk with the boss in front of them. This is my principle." He did not say "give me this and that worker." He left the choice to us. This made us trust him a lot.

A story about a worker who strived to damage the unionization on the directions of the management, as was claimed by the unionized workers, is meaningful about the nature and the formation of the confidence. This worker cursed the unionizing workers in many cases. They interpreted this as an attempt to agitate them to attack him physically and to create scene, which would give way to the management's involvement. The workers did not react to him physically and showed patience. When this worker cursed nearby female workers to the unionizing workers, which was hold to be even worse, a group of workers, including Mustafa, Fırat and Necip, went up to the manager and told him how that man was cursing even near women, how he was out of control, and how they could not stop themselves much longer. The management probably saw the seriousness of the situation and told that worker to stop. This man took a couple weeks off. Ömer gave an important clue about the nature of their community, while concluding this story:

> When he took off, he told the manager that he had no life safety in the factory. People say that he ran away from his home town. The workers, whom he was afraid of, would also secure his life safety, if he had begun to be a decent man"

The Union's Changing Attitudes and the Following Criticism of the Workers

During the first week of March 2007, when the dismissed workers went back to work one by one, the union declared to the workers that due to the agreement it had reached with the management, they would not organize any protest. Another issue on that agreement was that, according to union, the management would no longer try to prevent the unionization. The fact that the dismissed workers began to work not in their old sections but in the storage areas, which were outside of the main

factory, generated discontent. Two weeks passed, but there was no development in terms of unionization but there were many rumors about the management's actions.

The first rumor was that the management was preparing to employ new salespeople, which was perceived as a move to increase the number of workers of the firm to prevent the workers from reaching the required number of members in the factory. The other one was even more confusing, that the factory was about to being sold. Mustafa, who was defending Tek-Gıda-İş against Gıda-İş all the time, declared his concerns about the union's attitudes and the campaign only one week after the return of the dismissed workers: "The union is not telling us about what is going on, we do not know anything." Even Canip, who had a close relationship with the union's chief since he had spent as a dismissed worker two and a half month side by side with the chief outside the factory, was worried: "We heard that the chief is waiting to sell the factory to apply to the ministry for the authorization. But he is telling us anything."

Another issue of criticism was that the union chief had stopped to signing up members. Mustafa said that he had found somehow the phone number of one of the salespeople who was interested in unionization and gave it to the chief, but the chief was not interested and responded that he had made an agreement with the employer. He claimed that according to this agreement on April 15 the issue would be settled; until that time it would be unethical for him to sign up more members. But at that time Mustafa was still not very reactive due to a reasonable point: "The union does not give us any information. However, each word mentioned here goes to the management through the finks. That may be the reason."

Another affair which shook workers confidence in the union's branch chief was a meeting he held with the employer in the middle of March. The branch chief

had a meeting with the employer which the union's regional chief also attended. In this meeting the branch chief did not call any worker to join in the meeting with them, contrary his former behavior and promise. This attitude was taken very seriously by many workers. Adnan said: "We asked them 'Won't you take any workers with you?" They responded that they could not take any due to the procedures. We do not know what they talked on that day." The branch chief tried to defend himself, as I witnessed many times, by arguing that this meeting was not his, but the regional chief's meeting. But this did not satisfy many workers.

Twenty days after those days of enthusiasm, which included high confidence in the union, in a meeting in the coffee house on April 20 the atmosphere was not that positive due to these grievances and criticism. At least twenty workers were present at the meeting; they told their friends in the factory that they were worried about the lack of knowledge. Many workers related that their friends no longer wanted to come to the coffeehouse anymore, saying that the chief did not give any information, but kept talking about the same issues all the time. They underlined that the workers inside were much more worried and troubled, and blamed the chief as for this situation. The image of the perfect chief had disappeared. When the meeting of the chief with the employer without participation of any workers had began to be talked about, the tension rose. The workers' critical stance was interesting. They felt that the immense struggle they gave was faced the a risk of erosion because of the union's authority in the process. Whether their criticism would lead them to act to change the union's attitude was another question. In the following days, I witnessed important and interesting attempts of this kind of an act.

Second Stage: After the Struggle against the Management, the Struggle against the Union

As described above there was a group of workers who had favored Gıda-İş (DİSK) instead of Tek-Gıda-İş (TÜRK-İŞ) from the very beginning of the mobilization. As I observed, there were mainly three workers, Ceyhun, Şermin and Mahmut, who were dedicated supporters of Gıda-İş. They were all Alevis and supporters of a legal socialist party.[197] Their preference for Gıda-İş seemed to be related to their political stance and moreover, to partisan networks in Gıda-İş. Throughout the campaign they had had a critical attitude towards Tek-Gıda-İş and its branch chief but due to their militancy in and knowledge about unionization they were still among leading figures of the campaign. Şermin and Mahmut were among those who were dismissed, and therefore they had close relations with the branch chief. It is not hard to guess that the level of criticism was increased after the concerns for the union emerged among a wide group of workers due to the union's changing attitudes as they perceived it. They obviously gained a chance to raise their criticism loudly, which had not been taken seriously before, since most of the workers in the factory seemed to evaluate the failure of the campaign for Gıda-İş (DİSK) as a result of the union's own incapacity. I later learned that they had tried to hold a meeting in the coffeehouse to organize the wide-spread but disorganized criticism without the knowledge of the branch chief. But this attempt was disrupted by the union's branch chief.

The criticism and actions related to it of another group of workers was more interesting. During my visits to the dismissed workers waiting outside the factory and later to the coffeehouse, rented by the union and used as a base, and during my

[197] EMEP: Emek Partisi – Labor Party

conversations and interviews I became close with several workers. Especially Mustafa liked me a lot due to personal attributes like a similar sense of humor. Knowing that I was doing a research on workers' struggles to unionize, he respected me a lot and perceived me as a knowledgeable person about unionizations even though I kept telling them that I was not. He was one of those workers who came to the coffeehouse almost everyday, which was a sign of his level of involvement in the struggle. Mustafa had heard about the unionization attempts in the factory from Tokatlıs for the first time three years ago and followed them in the campaign for Gıda-İş, but he criticized them for behaving according to their political preferences and thus leading them to Gıda-İş, even though that union lacked authorization. I mentioned above his and his friends negative perceptions about Alevi people in the factory, which were inevitably related to their being of Sünni. These perceptions interacted with this specific group of Alevi workers' political and union preferences and thus deepened. Mustafa was a conservative man; his wife wore headscarf and they had voted in the last national election, on 22 July 2007, for AKP.[198] Mustafa also became highly critical of Tek-Gıda-İş and more specifically its branch chief in the process. In one of our interviews he said:

> One month ago the chief gave a break in the unionization for ten days. He gave this break because he had got some promises from the boss. But they were not realized. Then he gave another break, but it did not turn to be realized neither. … What was going on, what they talked about inside, we have no idea. We have no idea about the conversations between the boss of the factory and the boss of the union.
>
> *(A.B.) Why do you call the union's chief "boss?"*
>
> The unionists are also earning their living with workers' wages. … They should give information at least to some of our friends if they could not inform everybody because of the finks. They did not do this. We began to walk on this road for them, for our bread. If they gave up

[198] Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – Justice and Development Party

> now, that many worker would come to handgrips ("*gırtlak gırtlağa* gelir") with the employer. What we gained in this process, if it could be call as a gain, our friends return to work.

Mustafa also drew my attention when I witnessed him gathering money from other workers to give Mehmet, a dismissed worker, who had been a temporary worker in the factory. Mehmet was having very hard times economically those days due to his long-lasting unemployment and I heard that Mustafa managed to gather nearly 1,000 YTL ($800). The branch chief reacted to him about doing this without his knowledge. Mustafa decided to organize a small committee with reliable workers and without informing the union to push the union to act in line with their demands. He was inspired by the attempt of the other group of workers, who favored DİSK. When he told me about his idea, I asked him if I also could attend one of their gatherings. He did not reject me, since he thought me "reliable." The meeting was in Mustafa's house and his close friends, Fırat, Necip, Adnan, who were also engaged in the mobilization actively, as mentioned above several times. Also Ali, who was not involved in the campaign very actively, was invited since he was an old respectable worker of the factory with important networks.

This meeting was very interesting to me. I was not expecting that much criticism about the union, which in my opinion reveals their level of awareness, collective self-confidence, and will make a difference in their lives. It seems that the success they had achieved in terms of bringing the mobilization to an important point with their efforts and struggles, made them self-confident about their power to act collectively. Their current concerns were not about the workers' collective capacity to act but about the union's uncertain attitudes. Until that time they let the branch chief to take the main decisions since they were inexperienced about unionization and since the chief seemed to lead well enough. But this situation had changed and

now they were not willing to let their struggle to erode because of the union's failures. They were ready to fight for this. Fırat was excited about Mustafa's suggestion. He told it to the others in the meeting:

> Mustafa told me that we should build a committee and annoy the chief everyday. We should imply to the chief that the workers may leave Tek-Gıda with the influence of that committee. If we make the chief see worker's unity, he will do what we tell him to do. We cannot get any information from that man in another way.

Mustafa spoke about the details of his idea:

> We all know that there are at least two closemouthed, reliable people in each shift. We should find and gather them. If these people take two more people with them, this would make 12 people. These should gather, talk and decide what to do. We should make them learn how to unionize somehow. These 12 people can organize the whole factory.

Necip also liked this idea, but he was uncertain about the need for leadership: "Actually there is no need for a leader, everybody is a leader. But people are hesitating to act." Ali (47) an older worker, working for 15 years in the factory had witnessed many failed mobilizations and became pessimistic. But the current one seemed to affect him radically. The management had given a wage raise of 10% back in February, which was perceived as having been given to silence the workers after the first waves of protests. But this additional payment had been given unofficially, without being recorded, which meant that it would not have any impact on other benefits like, social security premiums and layoff benefits. The workers suggested the brand chief stop the over-time work to force the management to record this raise, but he did not accept due to his agreement with the management. Ahmet talked about this:

> Ali: The union may let our right to be abandoned by the management openly.
> Necip: We keep telling him that we will do whatever it is necessary, but he does not trust the workers' power.

> Ali: If the workers unite and resist even only for one day, the management will record it immediately. If we stop to stay for the overtime work even for one day, the next day it will be recorded.

At the meeting Adnan informed them that the branch chief had once said that the first shop stewards would be determined by him. The other workers heard this there for the first time. This drove them crazy. Ali compared this situation to that of the former experiences of the factory:

> I am hearing this right now. If I had heard this before, I would not have followed this chief. Look, in Öz-Gıda (HAK-İŞ) at the beginning always the workers chose the shop stewards. The last time, the union's chief assigned them. His idea was to make them follow his demands. The idea is to guarantee his words being passed on to the other workers in a positive way. He thinks "My men should be the shop stewards." But the workers also push all the time to make their man shop steward. If this chief of *Tek-Gıda* plans to sell us out even before getting in the factory, we would have a hard time with this man. This was exactly the reason why we sent Öz-Gıda out of the factory. There were also other reasons, but people lost their confidence in the union because of its shop steward preferences anyway.

After narrating how the union branch's chief prevented the attempt of the other group favoring *Gıda-İş* to hold an independent meeting, Adnan noted that "right now neither the management nor the union wants the workers to come together." Necip said that the branch chief would even dismiss them, if he faced much criticism. Ali concluded how the committee would act:

> If the chief says he cannot do much to push the management, we should organize the workers and force the union to do so. We should tell him if he will not do what he should do, these workers will disgrace you. Just like the union came here and protested the employer here, these workers would do the same thing to you, if you do not act appropriately.

They made a list of the most reliable workers after long debates about the candidates. The list included 10 workers except those five workers who had participated in that

first meeting at Mustafa's house. They decided to contact them shared them and to organize another meeting one week later with the participation of all fifteen workers.

In this gathering I learned that, beside the group favoring DİSK and the group of Mustafa and his friends, there was another effective group in the unionization, which consisted of workers totally loyal to the branch chief. They were considered the "chief's men" by Adnan, Mustafa and the others. Halil, Canip, Osman and Serdar, who were mentioned by Ceyhun as the first four starters of the campaign for Tek-Gıda-İş, were in that group with some others. Adnan said that they had become *maraba*s ("servants") of the chief, doing what he said without questioning: "If the chief tells that this is black, it is black for them without any question." Adnan knew them better than the other workers at the meeting at Mustafa's house, since those four workers; Halil, Canip, Osman and Serdar were also among the dismissed ones, like Adnan himself. So they spent a lot of time together.

Adnan gave several examples of the chief deciding to take actions in spite of his and a few others' opposition, but later it came out that his decision was wrong. He did what the opposing ones offered. He thought that those workers who were following the branch chief strictly without questioning might have been promised things like becoming a shop steward. The point at which Mustafa's and his friends' criticism towards the union grew immensely, as mentioned above, those workers still loyal to the chief despite his apparent failures were perceived by them as totally unreliable: "We should stay away from both the employers' and branch chief's adulators." So there were mainly three different groups of workers on the scene, which were favored different paths about the unionization campaign and willing to strive actively for it. Mustafa's group, newly engaging in organizing a secret

committee, was very critical at that time towards the other group of Gıda-İş (DİSK) due to what they perceived on partisan attitudes.

Somehow the union's chief was informed about Mustafa and his friends' attempt in the following week. It seems that his information networks were as strong as the ones built by the employer. As mentioned above, the chief had already organized a group of workers as loyal cadre. Mustafa and his friends were completely shocked, since they had filled the list carefully with their most reliable co-workers. They heard that the chief described his astonishment by admitting that those names in the list were the workers he trusted most. The chief called Mustafa and met with him. Even though Mustafa tried hard to convince the chief that this attempt was not against Tek-Gıda-İş and its campaign, and that they aimed to improve the campaign, which was true, the chief declared his disappointment in a harsh way. He was irritated with Mustafa, a sharp contrast with his former closeness, and threatened him in a covert way. He told Mustafa to hold a meeting with more workers than the ones on their list, in the middle of which the chief himself would also join in. The chief met with the other three participants of the first meeting too, and also threatened them in covert as they understood it. Ali related that the chief told him: "as a result of such an attempt, the side which would lose would not be the union but those workers." Ali was shocked most and declared that he would not participate anymore in the effort to build the committee:

> If what we sit and talk with five workers was delivered to the chief somehow, this means that we could not do anything secretly with these workers in this factory. The one who tells this to the chief today, can also deliver tomorrow something else to the employer.

The chief promised that after one week on the 15 April they would achieve to become unionized officially due to an agreement he had reached with the employer. He had said that they would either celebrate their victory, or turn the factory into a

hell for the employer. Mustafa's and his friends' level of reaction towards the branch chief was accelerated even more after this action to prevent their attempt and his following threats. They felt that their negative thoughts and further suspicions about chief's attitudes were confirmed: "The chief thinks that he is a Sultan. But those struggling 450, 500 workers are the real Sultans. Thanks to our struggle the chief can get in the factory and meet with the manager." They agreed that the chief would not be able to find anyone to protest for unionization in his union if he kept threatening and estranging them, since they were the leading figures of the unionization in two of the three shifts. They underlined that the workers in their shifts kept asking them about the unionization, about what to do, and about what were the last developments, which were revealed their position in other workers' eyes. Even though Mustafa, Necip and Fırat were still willing to organize to put pressure on the chief, they admitted his organized power and influence among workers, so they decided to keep and to strengthen their unity and criticism with a smaller number of workers around them. They kept organizing picnics on weekends with participation of their friends, at which they usually talked about what to do in a more informal way, as I witnessed several times. Mustafa, a conservative man with negative feelings towards political left, who had never organize in a union before, came to a point in this process to defend that despite the risk of being fired, and despite the branch chief's attitudes, the unions were important to fight for:

> After all of this the chief may tell the manager to dismiss us in the future. The manager would do this willingly. Three or five people would lose their jobs, but the union would survive. The unions are civil society organizations, they should survive.

On 15 April everybody in the factory was expecting a serious development due to the chief's word about it. On that date the management did not hold its

promise one more time, and the workers began marching and protesting again. They also refused to work for overtime. On the third day of the protests, the workers learned that the chief had stopped the protests and told the workers to begin to work overtime. The chief came to the factory on that morning and gathered the workers in the canteen to explain his decision. This generated a great reaction against the chief. Ceyhun describes the situation in the canteen on that morning:

> The gathering lasted all morning. People were very reactive against the chief. Some protested him and left the meeting. There is a friend in the factory who is very naïve. He is so naïve that he wears the vest we should wear at the work inside out. Do you know what I mean? I do not like this kind of things but people make jokes about him all time. This friend stood up and told the chief: 'You told us that you will not go in the factory unless the management accepts the unionization. But you are here today! How can you do this?' People were so impressed by his stance.

The protest of workers did not lead the chief to change his attitude; he gave further dates for the final step and held the sale process of the factory as an excuse for that. Ceyhun and the chief came to the point of fists during that meeting. Ceyhun claimed that the chief had wanted to agitate him to end that meeting, in which he had had very hard time in front of the workers. But the chief had lost his credibility even more, since he kept giving dates, which were delayed each time. In that process Mustafa and his friends became closer with Ceyhun and his friends, who were harshly criticized by them due to their attitudes about the unionization related to their political preferences. There was also an vague gap between the two groups due to religious sects, as described above. The chief, who lost his credibility, went to Fırat in last week of April and told him that they could organize the committee they had suggested once. Fırat and Mustafa interpreted the chief having difficulty to build a cadre loyal and helpful to him after all the things he had done. They did not accept this offer, since they were sure that the committee they had built would be rejected

by the chief himself, because they had decided that Ceyhun and his friends should be in that committee, with whom the chief had come to the point of serious conflict:

> He fought with Ceyhun. He was angry with those people I like most, the most energetic and talkative people, having similar thoughts like me. The chief told that he would get in the factory despite them. I do not understand what they are fighting for. We engaged in a struggle here, it turned into a national issue, ("*memleket meselesine döndü*") leftists, rightists. If the union did become accepted by the management officially, I would understand all those fights. But we started to stumble before we got in. (…) Ceyhun and his friends' failure is this; they are opposing everything. You should not oppose everything! Once we get across this river, we would begin to raise our oppositions. As you know we tried to build a committee, but the man built his networks of spying quite well. Ceyhun and his friends are waiting for a chance to organize in DİSK, this is not very meaningful either, after we furthered that much with Tek-Gıda. Once the union gets in, we would build our cadre, our committee together with Ceyhun and his friends, and call the chief and tell him the workers' demands. But right now we do not have much to do than keeping close with our close friends and waiting for the authorization. (…) We are at odds with the management anyway. If we would become at odds also with the union right now, we would lose. We should lean on one side.

When I met with several workers in the first week of July I learned that the chief kept giving further dates. He last claimed that on July 15 the union moved would get in the factory. Obviously none of the workers with whom I talked took this seriously. Both Ceyhun and Mustafa were quite desperate about the future of the campaign. They both noted that the workers were generally in that mood. But Mustafa was still holding that the union could not sell the workers out very easily: "If it does so, these workers would harm[199] it in a serious way. They did so once as you now, to Öz-Gıda. They went to the union's building and crashed what ever there was." Ceyhun, in a similar way noted the potential of the workers in the factory:

> This is an experienced factory. As I observe, everybody is saying that this campaign had failed. But I am sure after two years, three years, five years, whatever it is, I cannot give a date, a mobilization will

[199] He cursed originally.

emerge again. I also expect when the new firm buys the factory, some movement may emerge again.

Concluding Remarks

The mobilization of the food factory's workers reveals several features. The importance of the collective mobilization legacy on the worker resistance is easily observable, as pointed by Roscigno and Hodson.[200] The wide spread legacy of the factory was constantly referred to by the workers, which was used as a resource of collective pride and power, but also as a pool of practical knowledge about the details of the struggle. The organizational structure of the factory, which provides relative freedom for the workers during the work hours, served as an opportunity for the workers to build closer social relations with each other. Despite the existence of social barriers among workers due to religious sects and the existence of large group of Bulgaria migrants, the social relations among workers in the factory were described by the workers systematically as relatively positive compared to other workplaces, with a special reference to the textile and garment factories. Thus "cohesion" and a "sense of involvement and attachment," which are generated from the "shared experiences at work" and defined as the foundations of worker solidarity seem to have been built by many groups of workers in the factory.[201] It is very clear that the workers' militancy is not generated by the union, but by "more indigenous worker strategies and practices, active work-group social relations, and cultural practices," as it becomes very apparent in the period of the mobilization attempts

[200] Roscigno and Hodson, "The Organizational and Social Foundations," p. 35.

[201] Hodson, et. al. "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined," p. 399.

against the union's passivity.[202] The importance of the leadership factor is also observable as its importance for the worker solidarity was underlined by Hodson and his colleagues.[203] We could observe two separate groups of leaders at the beginning, which were divided by their union preferences. But later after the criticism against the union rose another group among the leaders emerged which tried to organize itself both separate from the group favoring DİSK and the group, which was unquestioningly loyal to the union despite its incapacities. Also the impact of social networks of workers on the individual engagement in the mobilization, as Roscigno and Dixon claimed, was observable in many cases, since many workers gave many accounts of how they or others had become engaged in the unionization due to their friends' or mentors' social influence.[204]

In his inspiring work, in which he refreshes and adopts Thompson's approach for current and micro level worker's collective actions, Fantasia points to the significance of strategic encounters between classes to understand class formation. He uses the concept of "cultures of solidarity," to imply collectively constructed cultural formations by workers during acute industrial conflicts, which might be considered as a specific form of collective class consciousness.[205] The collective confidence of the above described workers in each other to act together for their collective interests with a certain level of awareness about their and their employer's class position, which was observable during that period of their collective success to force the employer to accept their demands, could be interpreted as a lively example of "cultures of solidarity." The enthusiasm they enjoyed about their collective

[202] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking,," p. 9.

[203] Hodson, et. al. "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined," p. 399.

[204] Dixon and Roscigno, "Status, networks, and social movement," pp. 1292-1327.

[205] Fantasia, "From Class Consciousness," p. 280.

confidence was also very important, as I observed and interpreted the individual accounts of the experience, since it is a very human feeling, which is not experienced very often, and affects the person a lot. Also the fact that the prejudices among workers for each other due to religious sects or ethnicity had been temporally overcome during the days of struggle is important to note. Other interesting empirical data this experience reveals is the union's inability to act in the interests of workers, as was perceived by the vast majority of workers in the factory. This feature is especially observable in its actions to prevent emerging worker mobilization led by Mustafa and his friends. To sum up, overall the most important point to underline is the above described workers' "agency," "the degree to which they contributed, by conscious efforts, to the making of history."[206] These were not passive or ignorant people, determined by their external environment. Especially some of them were striving hard with whatever resources they had despite all of the difficulties with which they were surrounded including the union's unexpected attitudes to keep them passive against the management. We witness the transformation of many regular, conservative men into self-confident worker activists striving for their perceived rights against the employer and the union chief, trying to organize and mobilize their friends. I think in their seemingly "lost cause" we can definitely discover some "insights into social evils which we have yet to cure."[207] Actually even *we* cannot, it is sure that the workers in that factory, or maybe also other workers in different workplaces, will discover those insights. Just like these people, whose story I tried to tell, discovered in and inspired by the former mobilization experiences of those workers in that workplace.

[206] Thompson, *The Making,* p. 12.

[207] Ibid., p. 13.

CHAPTER IV

THE MOBILIZATION OF WORKERS IN A PHARMACEUTICAL FACTORY

The unionization struggle of the workers in the pharmaceutical factory was publicized when they engaged in a wildcat strike on March 2007 in which they stopped working and occupied their factory in the middle of Istanbul. The occupation, which is held to be one of the most radical actions taken by workers in an industrial dispute, lasted for seven days. Let aside the occupation itself, its relative long duration was highly unusual. A seven day long occupation was not experienced after the 1980 coup, except the ones performed in the public sector against the privatizations. In reality the occupation was a result of a two year long unionization struggle. Although the necessary number of workers had been unionized two years earlier, the legal barriers to unionization wasted the ensuing time. This provides an explanation for their radical non-legal action.

The pharmaceutical factory was founded back in the 1950s. Most of the workers had been employed there for more than ten years, a fact which promises the potential of cohesive relations among workers. The factory was sold to a foreign multi-national company in 2000. The wages were around 700 YTL ($560), which was quite higher than the minimum wage (419 YTL). But the important point was that the wages were very low compared to several other factories in the same sector, which served as a consistent source of motivation for unionization. I visited the occupation on its fifth day and observed until its end. I had the chance to talk with some of the 17 workers who had been dismissed due to unionization before and

during the occupation. I also attended the gatherings of the 17 dismissed workers after the end of the occupation, which took place in a tea house next to the factory in the following weeks. They gathered there to see their former coworkers, who continued to work in the factory, to press the management to get them back to work, and to press their coworkers to act for their return. I also participated in some of the highly private meetings in their trade union's office after the occupation to discuss what to do to aid their struggle to return to work and to unionize. In addition, I participated in some of their free time activities, including going to swimming, playing cards in coffee houses, and having dinner out. So I had many chances to observe the dismissed workers in action, planning, discussing, and chatting; to have conversations with many of them and several of those who had not been dismissed, and I managed to conduct in-depth interviews with six of the dismissed workers.

The Work Conditions and Emergence of the Will to Strike

"This organization is not something which was developed suddenly or spontaneously"

Cemal, the owner of the above-quoted statement and one of the five workers, who were dismissed at first, said that he was one of the "vanguards," as he called his role. He was 38 years old, had been working there for 13 years, and was married with two children. He had a complete story of their unionization struggle, which was not contradicted by the ones told by others. At the time the unionization began, his task in the factory was delivering documents, which meant that he was free to move in the factory. Hence, he was able to know many workers from different sections. Cemal claimed that he had discussed the unionization with almost all of the 220 members

face-to-face in the process of organizing; therefore he had had a very active role in the campaign with the help of his unique position. Cemal was born to a working class family, which had had unionization experiences: “My father and mother are from the working class; they both are retired workers.” He explained that before 1980 both his father and his mother had been unionized in trade unions tied to DİSK, which was the symbol of workers’ militancy before 1980, and how they had experienced several worker mobilizations. Cemal remembered those days, in which as a child he stayed with his mother and father in the tents built during long strikes.

Until 1996 they had had their social rights, meaning extra pay for clothing, heating, for *bayram* (religious festivals), and premiums even though they had not been unionized. In January 1996 these rights were abolished by the management declaring that the wages would be increased for 37% instead of them. Cemal expressed that around 10-15 workers including him tried to convince the other workers that this would be a negative development for them. But the majority liked the idea of receiving extra payments each month instead of quarterly premiums. No resistance could be organized and the rights became abolished. In one year, according to Cemal and by many others, the extra payments melted, since the rate of the wage increases became 5%, 4% afterwards. They were left with “bare wage” and the rate of the wage increases were reduced constantly. He noted that workers could only subsist with overtime and credit cards: “Many of our friends are in serious debt. If there is overtime work, we all do it. But when there is none, we have to use the credit cards, since we have no other choice.” The widespread and frequent usage of the credit cards was underlined by almost all of the workers. Veysel, a younger worker described the situation about the credit cards in a more dramatic way: “Slaves used to have chains, now they have credit cards in their pockets”.

Cemal presented two workers, Hilmi and Asım as the vanguards of the unionization. They were both senior workers in the factory, who experienced the failed unionization struggle back in 1992. Having "the experience of Petrol-İş,"[208] a struggle named after the trade union, was something respectable among the workers. The important impact of a legacy of collective action on the worker activism was underlined by Dixon, since this legacy may have encouraged the later action through "the establishment of interpersonal and organizational networks, along with the forging of oppositional frameworks, identity, and abeyance structures that can be explicitly activated at a later point." [209] The history of conflict in a particular workplace is "often shared informally across different cohorts of workers and may provide a basis for collective action" [210] In line with this argument the first leaders of this campaign, as acknowledged by all of the workers with whom I talked, had experienced the prior mobilization, which occurred long ago. But in fact they could not form a very strong or consistent leadership. This issue will be discussed below. Thus they could be perceived as the carriers of the old experience to the current generation. Besides the obvious impact of this legacy through two workers, who started the current unionization, there was also a more hidden impact on the current mobilization. It provided a basis and a reference point for collective action, since that experience had been shared among most of the workers.

Cemal declared that he had participated in them later after their call to him and that there was a will among a few workers to unionize since 1996. He presented the national economic crisis in 1999 as another turning point, since the wages began

[208] Petrol İş: Türkiye Petrol, Kimya ve Lastik İşçileri Sendikası: Petroleum, Chemical and Rubber Workers' Trade Union of Turkey, which was tied to the confederation called TÜRK-İŞ.

[209] Dixon, et. al., "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 14.

[210] Ibid.

to melt increasingly after the crisis: “As you know, unfortunately the employers used the crisis as an excuse for the reduction of the rates of the wage increases.” They got increases of 1% or 2% afterwards, which were seen by them as “zero increase.” The grievances grew: “at some point this accumulation led our friends to explode.”

They organized several hunger strikes during 2003 and 2004. Once they did not eat lunch for 10 days and managed to get a wage increase of 5%, instead of the management’s first offer of 1%. At those boycotts the workers favoring unionization thought that they saw the necessary “unity and solidarity among workers” for organization and decided to proceed with a unionization campaign. Cemal responded to the question of how the forerunners of the unionization had motivated other workers at the beginning of and later during the long lasting campaign, by saying that they had pointed out the differences between their working conditions and those of several other pharmaceutical factories, which had much better conditions. In two of the mentioned factories the wages were said to be almost four times more than they were earning. These close references from their own sector led to the perception of injustice to be much more visible by the large majority of workers. It seemed that this tactic to motivate workers for unionization worked well, since I heard the same argument from almost every worker with whom I spoke. To emphasize how unjust the position they were experiencing was, they systematically pointed out these differences. Cemal underlined that this difference of wages and also social rights originated from the fact that the workers of those factories had been unionized a long time ago. This is important to understanding why the unionization had come to be conceived by them as a real and immediate need. Cemal emphasized an interesting point about why he was for unionization:

> To work in a unionized factory means that the workers’ voice will be heard by the management. If the union could get in this workplace, the

> workers would have a voice in the management of this factory. This is also the reason why the employer is so reactive against the unionization. He does not see the unionization only in economic terms. One man from outside, whom the manager does not know, comes and gets a voice. The workers would have a voice. The employer considers this. For example, in Pfizer (a unionized pharmaceutical factory), when the manager wants to dismiss a worker, he goes and asks the shop steward. Is there anything better than this? For example, I would become the chief shop steward or Hasan, or Asım brother, or Hilmi brother, if we succeed. The management would not be able to dismiss a worker without our permission. We would be acknowledged when they would employ new workers. We would sit at the table and negotiate with them.

His account is interesting in that it shows their will to have a voice in the workplace, and their non-economic demands, let aside how useful the distinction between the economic and political spheres. Another issue these words reveal is the quite important return of being a leader of a successful unionization mobilization, which is also a highly risky attempt as we can see. Becoming a shop steward is a very admirable position, as Cemal's description shows.

Six leaders decided to begin to act, and chose to organize in the trade union called Lastik-İş,[211] since they mistrusted the other possible union, Petrol-İş, due to the failed unionization experience back in 1993. Six workers had intense meetings during 15 days in January 2005 with the unionists, and began to organize. They raised the number of the meeting participators to 35 in the end and thought that this number was enough to organize a mass campaign of enrollment. They told other workers that they would go to the union's office on 4 February 2005 to enroll collectively:

> Three buses came here. 184 of us went to the office. On the first evening. Things developed very quickly, but we had been working for it for a long time. On the first evening 184 people. This is not an easy thing. These things are performed usually secretly; we went to the union in an apparent way, bravely ("*biz göğsümüzü gere gere açıktan gittik*"). We ventured everything we had.

[211] Türkiye Petrol, Kimya ve Lastik Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası: Petroleum, Chemical and Rubber Industry Workers' Trade Union of Turkey, which was tied to the confederation called DİSK.

184 of the 403 total employees enrolled on that Friday. On the following weekend they continued to work hard to convince the workers who had not enrolled yet. They visited the workers' houses on the weekend and they overcame the barrier of 51% by achieving to enroll the majority of the workers on the following Monday. Cemal emphasizes in a proud way that they had achieved to enroll the majority totally in only two months after they started to organize in the union. He said that their friends, whom they trusted most, had known about the unionization process already and had been waiting for the mass enrollment campaign, but the vast majority had not known anything about the process. Hasan, another leader said that they had even gone to the hospital on that weekend to make a friend sign up who had given birth to her child. Hasan (36) a bachelor, came from a "social democrat" family, which means RPP[212] sympathizers, with a civil servant father. He was from a town of Trabzon province, Araklı, which back in 1970s had been called "little Moscow" due to its high proportion of RPP sympathizers. Hasan had several relatives who worked unionized, so both due to his background and later those relatives he was familiar with unions, but had never worked unionized. He was a deliberate political leftist, called himself a social democrat, so that he did not vote for the RPP anymore, but hesitated to vote for socialist parties. He described how the human resources manager called him once, and asked him if he would resign from the union, when their conditions became improved:

> I told her openly "No. I will not engage in unionization only for financial reasons. I want to work in an organized, unionized way." Many friends were at that time trying not to make the management learn that they had become unionized. I told the manager myself that I had behaved according to the decisions of the union until that time, and I would do so afterwards.

[212] RPP: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – Republican People's Party

Worker Solidarity in Several Sections

Worker solidarity as a complex phenomenon was defined as the workers' chief protection against abusive management practices.[213] The sense of involvement and attachment that generates from the shared experiences was held to be its foundation. Group activities of solidarity built the foundations, on which workers "gain the experience and create the conditions which make possible a transformation of the labor process."[214] One of the five facades of this complex phenomenon was argued to be cohesion, that is to which extent workers seek each other for social contact. Cohesion is the fundamental precondition of solidarity since if it is not present, workers behave indifferently to each other. Friendship networks are essential mechanisms for the development and implementation of collective strategies.[215] In the case of this factory's workers the cohesion among especially the workers of two sections is observable. More important then the existence of the cohesion among those sections' workers is the fact that those two cohesive groups of workers were the most involved groups in the mobilization.

One of the seventeen dismissed workers, Veysel, a young man (28) working in the factory for three years, emphasized the sectionalized nature of the factory. The factory was separated in two buildings which produced different medicines, and each building in itself was separated into production and packing sections. There was a further separation in the production sections such as the sterile and non-sterile sections. The sections which produced serum and other medicine used through

[213] Hodson, et. al. "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined," p. 398.

[214] Ibid. p. 399.

[215] Ibid.

injection were sterile. This means that the workers' opportunity to leave their area during the work hours was even less than usual, since they had to change their clothing and take special showers. The only chance to get to know people from other sections was being sent to another one in case of a need for help, which was a rare occurrence. Bahadır, working in the same section as Veysel, also said that the workers of each section talked among themselves forming a group, and these groups served as the channels through which the unionization furthered.

Akif, one from the first group of workers, who went to the union, told the story of unionization also in a way centralizing himself, as much as each of the leaders. After the first group of workers decided to unionize in Lastik-İş, Akif claimed, the leaders began to talk about unionization but no one could venture to go to the union. He was the first one who called the union, and organized the first visit. It seems that the first visit was made by four workers, all of whom were from the same section. Hilmi, who was the one of the two veterans who had experienced the campaign back in 1993 and had become the leader of the leaders for this campaign, stated in line with Aydın's words about the participants of the first meetings. To the second meeting they also invited another trustworthy worker, Cemal, due to the fact that he was working in the other building than the first four workers.

Akif held that the motivation to start the unionization was rooted in the close relations between the workers in their section. After the beginning of the organization campaign Aydın talked with a friend in another section about it, and told him that he should organize his section. But his friend responded that it is very hard to organize the workers in their section due to the lack of any friendly relations. Akif went there in his free time to see the atmosphere with his own eyes and to help his friend:

> I looked around in the section. I was surprised! My friend was right. People turned their asses to each other and were working in that way. Whereas in our section people were goosing ("*parmak atmak*") each other.

Akif implied by saying that "the people turned their backs to each other," how there was less dialog among the workers. And goosing is a strange practice, although not very unusual in Turkey among close male friends. It is a sign of high sincerity among men, a kind of joke, which one obviously can only do to a close friend.

Veysel, in a similar vein as Aydın, emphasized the close relations with his co-workers in his section, which produced oral penicillin. When he was dismissed, he described in a yearning way, they were very happy, having a good time and making fun with their peer group which consisted of the section's workers. On weekends they went to soccer games, in summer to the sea, also to each others the weddings; they were playing soccer, setting each other dates (*çapkınlık* yapmak) and doing other free time activities. The group included a colorful profile, "from a wine bibber, to a card player, from a "Casanova", to a gambler, from a gay, to a mother's boy ("*iyi aile çocuğu*") like me." Most of them were young contrary to the general population of the factory. But obviously the social atmosphere could not have been that perfect. In a later conversation, Veysel admitted that

> There is also another side of the story. People in my section were competing once about their houses with each other. 'My house is so big, so wonderful', and all that. Then some began to compete about their cars. And then they competed about their girlfriends.

Even though Veysel was sincere enough to point out this side of their relations, he still concluded that he had not seen "this kind of a friendship atmosphere," this kind of a "dialogue" in his prior workplaces. Later he also said that the reason which had led most of his friends in the section to engage in the mobilization and to not to leave it even after the break of the occupation, was *delikanlılık*.

By *delikanlılık* Veysel meant some thing like honor, which implied that his friends had engaged in and had not left the mobilization so as not to be conceived as traitors or as cowards by their friends. A lively example of what Veysel meant was Recep's perception about the situation, which he revealed in a meeting in the union's office after the breaking up of the occupation. While the dismissed workers were talking about why their mobilization had failed, Önder, another dismissed worker had claimed that they could not make the majority of the workers in the factory understand "the essence and the base of unionization" during two years of work. He meant that they, as the more or less leading workers, could not make others perceive the need for unionization, what the unionization really meant, or why it was so important. Recep, in an angry way, intervened by saying:

> The issue is not the essence or the base or whatever of the unionization! If you begin to do something, if you once engage in a job, if you head down a road, you should go on that road. The essence or whatever is not important!

Bahadır, who had worked also in the oral penicillin section, was also one of the 17 dismissed workers. He was 33 years old, married with a daughter. He had started to work at the same time as Veysel, three years earlier. He also described the atmosphere they had had in the section as "a one of family and friendship." "When someone puts forward something, he either gets the full support, or no one agrees with him. The unity was present." To picture the relations among all of the workers besides their own section, he mentioned that as a general attitude in the factory, when a worker had a sick relative and got permission to take care of him for several days, at the time he would come back to work, a lot of workers went and told him that they had become sad about it. He himself experienced that, even workers who did not know him came to him with support. Bahadır answered the question about what could have been the reason for the special atmosphere in his section, by

pointing to the closeness of the ages of the workers in the section. There were not more then two or three older workers and they also conformed to the young majority. He added that the fact that they had "similar thoughts" was important, meaning that they got along with and respected to each other.

> We could discuss many issues. Political, religious, every kind of issue. The number of uncultured people was very little among us. For example, a friend heard something on the evening news the night before, he shares it with us, we comment on it. Even though people were supporters of different political parties, there was no quarrel. Our atmosphere was good, really good. If this warm dialog among people was not present, the action we took (the occupation) would have been a total disaster. Let alone eight days, it would not have lasted even one day.

Bahadır emphasized the harsh treatment, discipline and oppression of the chiefs as an important issue of grievance. There were ten of his friends, all of whom had started to work at the same time in the same section. At the time the unionization began, they had been working in the factory only for one year. His friends hesitated to join the campaign, since they thought that they were very new in the factory, therefore they would be the first ones to be dismissed if the management found out about the campaign. The fact that he was the leading person in terms of unionization in his section was approved by several his coworkers. Bahadır tried to encourage his friends in the area:

> We had been oppressed all of our lives; we faced injustices all the time. At some workplaces our insurance payments were not deposited, at other workplaces our overtime money was not paid. As people who experience injustice constantly an opportunity ("*nimet*") emerged in front of us; unionization activity. I told them this is a chance. I lead them to the unionization. I told them that I would join the unionization activity, and expect them also to do so. Four or five people started the unionization, and we finished the task.

Those two sections mentioned above, first the one in which four leaders used to work, and the other, in which Veysel and Bahadır used to work, became the leading sections during the unionization struggle. The close relations of the workers in both

of them seemed to play an important role. Veysel gave a detailed account for his section:

> From 26 workers of the section four workers sold us out. And the last 15 workers, who stood for us in the factory's courtyard that night after the end of the occupation, were mostly from our section.

Another worker who emphasized the close relations among workers was Nevin. Nevin (40) was a female worker, one of the dismissed ones, divorced with one son, who had worked in the laboratory performing a semi-skilled job for thirteen years. She also mentioned the importance of the "friendship atmosphere." She said that losing her friends, most of whom were women, was as bad as losing her settled job for her.

The shop floor was not very encouraging for workers to build these kinds of relations and those cases could not be easily generalized for the whole sections. The factory did not lack competitive conditions among workers introduced by the management, which might hinder the workers building close relations. Cemal noted that the wage distribution was unfair in the factory; he thought that this was a policy of the management and exercised through the initiative of the managers and chiefs, whose goal was to disrupt any kind of organized action. The management increased some of the workers' wages more than others without any visible reason, such as producing more than the others. This policy was a great source of discontent in the factory from the workers' point of view. Cemal gave an example: While he had worked for thirteen years and earned 750 YTL ($600), another worker in his section who had started to work five years earlier, earned more than he did. Veysel himself did get without any reason a 35 YTL ($28) wage increase than other workers, with whom he had started to work at same time. He also believed that this practice was meant to divide the workers.

Another issue to note about the factors against the building of worker solidarity was an uncertain social boundary between workers. I mentioned in the previous chapter Nichols and Suğur's findings about the local workers' negative perceptions in several factories about the immigrant workers from Bulgaria, who came to Turkey in 1989.[216] The local workers of the food factory, whose experience I narrated in the previous chapter, revealed similar attitudes. Among the workers of the pharmaceutical factory there were also some negative perceptions to a certain degree about the Bulgaria immigrates. But the situation was not as severe and easily observable, as in the case of the food factory workers I investigated. I heard only several generalized criticisms about the immigrants, which were said during conversations among workers and I found only a couple direct accounts on the existence of such boundary. For example, I never heard an implication about that the ones who gave up the struggle, were mostly immigrants. But Bahadır narrated the following, which reveals that there was a certain level of generalizing criticism and a social distance about the immigrants, although his personal attitude was different:

> There are nearly 70 immigrants from Bulgaria in the factory. There are also some from Yugoslavia. And these people may overlook some negative conditions in the workplace to not experience here again the difficulties they lived back in Bulgaria. They may suppress their feelings. Maybe they are also against the unjust conditions. But since we are local people here, we may see their attitudes as cowardice. We say: 'Forget about them! Immigrants are cowards." But we should also put ourselves in their place. We do not know what kind of difficulties they lived through in Bulgaria, for example. Because we do not know, we easily put forward such claims. But they left their homeland and came here, lived many difficulties. They did not want to find themselves unemployed here, and faced similar difficulties. They have such a fear in them.

Bahadır both said that there was a general prejudice about the immigrants, and he also revealed a very inspiring consciousness to overcome that prejudice.

[216] Nichols and Suğur, *Global Management,* p. 94.

The Process after the Mass Enrollment to the Union

To enroll the majority of the workers did not guarantee anything in practice despite the law. After the enrollment, the "juridical process" began as they called it. The juridical process started with the union's application to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security for confirmation that it had organized the majority of the workers in the factory. Trade unions have to apply to get confirmation to be able to have the right to sign a collective work contract, which is basically the only legal way for a trade union to gain benefits for its workers.[217] In the beginning, the application was rejected because it came out that 15 newly unionized workers were still officially members of the other trade union which the workers had tried to organize back in 1993. After losing some time with this bureaucratic detail, the union gained the authorization but the employer contested this and a trial began. The employer contested mainly that the distributors, who were working in different places than the factory, was working also for the company. The employer concluded that the majority the workers should organize was much more than the amount they did. The referee in the following trials confirmed that the employer's claim was not right; but the employer also contested the referee, and argued that the union's trade board was not appropriate for the factory. In the middle of 2006 the local court rejected all the employer's contests and approved the authorization finally. The employer appealed this time to the Supreme Court, so another long series of trials began. Two years

[217] 2822 Sayılı Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Grev ve Lokavt Kanunu, madde 13. - 2822 Numbered Act of Collective Labor Agreement, Strike and Lockout, article 13. On 1 September 2007, retrieved from http://www.calisma.gov.tr/mevzuat/2822_toplu_is_grev_lokavt.htm

passed in this way. This long duration of the juridical process of confirmation (it was still not concluded after the two years) is not an exception, but the rule in Turkey.[218]

In this long period of time neither side of the struggle remained passive. The workers mainly organized protests with slogans on Monday mornings at the beginning of the work day and on Friday evenings at the end of the day. When the tension rose due to the trials, unionists and workers from other factories in which the same union was organized came to the factory. The management did not let them enter in the factory at any time, so they stood outside the entrance, while the factory workers stood inside, and they protested the management together. In intense periods workers also protested during the lunch breaks. Workers boycotted the lunch for one month in 2006. The employer in turn made changes in the organization of work; an irregular shift system was presented to reduce the number of workers who participated in the protests at the beginning and at the end of the week, according to Hasan. Also overtime work became an important issue of contention. Workers stopped participating in overtime work, which was very harmful for the employer, since the production was decreased. It must be kept in mind that this act was also very harmful for workers themselves since their wages were already low and the addition of the money they earn from overtime work was crucial. The management called and talked with the workers one by one, to convince them to work overtime. In general, the workers claimed that the "oppression" was intensified in this time period. Cemal's role seemed to be realized by the management, since the task to distribute the documents was given someone else, and he was returned to his old position in production.

[218] Buğra, et. al. *Çalışma Hayatında Yeni Gelişmeler*, p. 24.

The slow juridical process weakened the motivation of the workers. Cemal admitted that there were times when they could not organize even "passive actions" such as protests and not staying for the overtime work. During this period they organized meetings in the union's office. Nevin said that the process, which led them to the occupation of the factory, was "spontaneous." On February 21, during a routine protest at the end of a work day with slogans and applauding, the buses left five minutes early, according to her and many others who participated in that particular protest.

> This made everybody very angry. The management thought that we would stop protesting and run after the buses. But we sat in the courtyard of the factory, and said that we would go only, if the buses would come back. That moment was the turning point ("*orada ip koptu*"). The buses did not come. For the first time, we revealed a great resistance that night. In the whole firm, nobody went home. We did not leave. And next morning. In the morning some gave up, they started to say that we should begin to work on time. But that was not right. We stayed there until the morning, but how would the management hear our voice? The security personnel would tell the management, that was okay, but we should make the management hear our voice better than that. I stood up and told them: "Friends, if we begin to work, what will this prove? If we begin to work right now, how will we let the management know that we stayed here the whole night? Let's walk down to the door, to the unionists!" So we all went to the entrance. That is why I was dismissed by the way. The unionists were there the whole night long, right outside the entrance. The union agitated us there: "Will you stay or not!" It is not agitating though; we were definitely in need of it. "Friends! Are we here? Yes! Are we leaving? No!" Shouting and screaming *(she is laughing)*. We were all agitated. We stayed there and did not work on that day.

To make a correction in Nevin's words is important. By saying that nobody went home, she meant that none of the blue-collar workers went home. The white-collar workers were not very involved in the on-going unionization struggle except for fifteen of them, who became members. Nevin gave the details in the following seconds of our interview.

That morning, when the time came to decide what to do, the workers were divided in three groups. The first group declared that they should go back to work in the normal way. The second group said that they should go their work stations but do not work there. And the last group argued that they should go to the entrance and protest with the unionists. While debating about what to do, some workers from the first group decided that to continue to debate was meaningless and began to walk towards the factory to start to work. One of the young workers and Veysel's best friend in the factory working in the same section, Recep yelled at them not to go. Nevin approved that the honor of being the first one to try to stop them from leaving was Recep's. Recep, (27) married with one child, was also dismissed in the third group. He thought that his intervention on that day was the main reason. Recep was a nationalist, a consistent sympathizer of the MHP.[219] Veysel, his best friend, who identified himself as a leftist explained that they had given talking about politics a long time ago. Veysel described the scene, in which Nevin led workers to the gate, even in a more spectacular way than Nevin had told the story:

> Some workers were actually thinking of going back to work, in a way they wanted to apologize from the management. When someone said this idea loudly, people divided immediately. When they began to move, Nevin sister (*abla*) ran up to a high place and shouted: "Who is going? How they can go? Is there not any man who would stay here with me?"

The success of Nevin's intervention became more understandable after Veysel's account. In a highly patriarchal society as in Turkey as a male, to resist Nevin's demand was not easy. Nevin evaluated her action's success and its future unpleasant consequence as follows: "I gathered everybody together, except one worker. But then later they (management) gathered me together." She laughed while saying the last sentence, which meant that the management had fired her later, mainly because of

[219] Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi: Nationalist Action Party

this action. Veysel told me in a later conversation, that even some of the five leaders had tended to follow the person who urged everyone to go back to work. Nevin's critical behavior and its impact on the mobilization's route is an important example of how social networks became influential on the participation in the collective action, since as Dixon and Roscigno write "individual decision making does not proceed in a social or cultural vacuum, but ultimately is bounded and conditioned by social attachments and associations."[220]

On that day they did not work. This collective action of workers enabled the unionists to enter the factory for the first time in two years, a symbolic victory. The chairman of the union himself, with the relevant branch chief, other chiefs and unionized workers, went into the factory and gave a speech in the courtyard. The chairman of the employers' trade union for the same trade board intervened in the case and the management had to accept to consult with the union's chairman. After the meeting with the factory's managers, the workers' union's chairman declared that the officials of the company would go to the corporate headquarters and would try to convince the employer to approve the unionization. The employer's deputies and also the employers' trade union's chairman guaranteed that no one would be dismissed because of this non-legal one-day strike. This great impact and success of their own action motivated the workers a lot and increased their level of self-confidence. They made the management, which did everything it could not to accept the trade union, to finally sit down at the table with the union. But while waiting for good news from the employers, the management fired five of the worker leaders, namely Cemal, Hasan, Asım, Hilmi and Akif the following week without paying any lay-off benefits due to their participation in the non-legal strike.

[220] Dixon and Roscigno, "Status, networks, and social movement," p. 1293.

The Occupation

The workers were shocked by this unexpected act of the part of the management. While waiting for a positive development finally after the promise of the employer's deputies, they were faced with the dismissal of five of their friends, who were the most active people in the unionization. After struggling for two years to unionize and waiting more or less in a calm way for the juridical process, they had not gained anything concrete. Let aside the lack of any gains, they had lost five of their friends as a consequence of the management's act in contrast with its own promises. They were humiliated once more and this time in an even harsher way by the management after the early leaving and not coming back of the buses one week earlier. Having experienced the impact of a strike one week before against the management, they did not hesitate. They did not have much of an alternative anyway. Veysel admitted that he and his friends were expecting to make the management come to terms in a couple days. The occupation started the day after the dismissals were announced. The next morning, the five workers came to the factory as if nothing had happened, but they were taken out of the factory by the security personnel. The occupation began as an answer to this.

When I first went to the factory on the fifth day of the occupation, on a Sunday, there were approximately ten workers waiting outside of the factory entrance. The number was more then five, since the management had dismissed five other workers one day before, including Bahadır. Added to the first group of five workers, totally ten workers had been fired and most of them were there that day. But the dismissed workers on the outside were not alone; the unionists, including the

branch chief, were there. There were also some other people around who had came to offer their support. So there were around 20 people on the outside. Inside the factory there were at least 50 workers walking, sitting in the courtyard. I learned that there were around 50 more workers inside the building, since it was the place they spent their free time on normal work days was not locked. The occupation was held for 24 hours a day, so actually no worker was really excused to leave the work place in the eyes of the strikers. While the dismissed workers spent the night on the outside, the workers in the factory slept inside some rooms.

As I learned afterwards since it was Sunday, the discipline was more relaxed compared the former four days. So, more workers left the factory to go home and rest on that day. Only women workers were excused to leave in the evenings. Cemal explained: "As you know, they are women. They have to do housework, meals, young children and all that. We let them leave in the evenings, and they came back next morning." On that Sunday there were not many women workers inside the factory, because of the day, which was the free day of the week, meaning that all family members were at home, and so should the mother. In the two following days of the occupation I witnessed other visits of women with children to their striking husbands. These scenes resembled the prisoners' meetings with their visitors. The worker and the visitor stood on opposite sides of the fence at the entrance and talked. Since the management did not allow anyone to enter the factory, and the workers also did not want to leave the workplace. Women held up their small children to show them to their fathers.

Workers at the outside of the factory looked tired and sleepy. I was able to talk with four workers that day. The first worker I talked with was Recai. He was tired and angry. He told me the story in his own way: How they were not as valuable

as the dog of the factory, since it was provided with a special meal and even with a mate by the management. How he paid 300 YTL ($240) for rent from his wage of 700 YTL ($560), and he and his wife ate pasta, soup and yoghurt all the time. What they wanted was to eat rice and meat, nothing more. His anger and curses were aimed at some managers and the foreign employer personally, so that he implied that the workers might put in use violence if necessary. He claimed that before the foreign employer had bought the factory, the conditions had not been that bad. His over-emphasis on the foreignness of the employer became understandable to me, when I learned that he was a sympathizer of the radical nationalist MHP.

I met Akif through Recai. Akif and I hit it off, since our hometowns turned out to be the same, which is conceived as an important determinant in Turkish society. Akif as I mentioned above, was one of the leaders and this fact was corroborated there also by Recai and another older worker, Galip (48). Galip teased Akif saying that: "This is the man who threw us into fire. How nice we had been working! (*Ne güzel çalışıyorduk!*)" Akif was a funny and friendly person and it seems that his popularity, which is necessarily needed for being a leader, stemmed from this fact. He seemed to be a man who did not take many things seriously. During our conversation he called around to many workers, who had gone in and out of the factory, they also called back and talked with him. He and other men teased each other about the soccer game that evening. This gives a clue of his popularity in the work place. He talked to me about his son. He said that around one year ago a worker had been threatened with dismissal by the managers because of his involvement in unionization. The threatened worker replied that they could not dismiss a worker very easily, since they could not even dismiss Akif. This meant that the management could not dismiss a person who was a leading figure in unionization

such as Akif. The manager answered that they did not dismiss Akif because his work performance was very good. Akif said by laughing, that his performance let alone being very good, was not more then half that of the other workers in his section. He said proudly that the management had hesitated to dismiss him earlier probably because they had thought that he would cause an uprising in that case.

He also talked about how he had been very active in their first strike one and a half weeks earlier, and how he had struggled hard to get the unionists inside the factory's courtyard in spite of the security personnel's effort to prevent them from getting in. He heard from some workers that a policeman, who had been in the factory with many others on that day, said to another "he is like a terrorist." Akif reported this, proudly smiling. He was not reactive about the security personnel; he told me that they were just doing their jobs, and if I were one of them, I would do the same thing. He also used a common saying, which I would hear later from many of them: "We are the law from now on (*artık kanun biziz*); we can do whatever is needed." They were tired of waiting for the court decision for so long, despite the fact that they had organized the majority of the employees working in that factory. If the valid laws did not provide them what they deserved as they saw, they wanted to be the law themselves. And by striking for one day and this time by occupying the factory they really acted independently from the valid laws.

As I learned later, Akif was also a sympathizer of the MHP. He was 41 years old, married with two children. He did not ever work unionized. Several weeks after the break up the occupation in a sincere conversation with Nevin, which I witnessed, he responded that he did regret being dismissed due to the unionization and that he really wanted very much to work in a unionized way.

The management sent a message the second day to the five workers who had been fired first; they could return to work if the occupation ended. The management did not accept to acknowledge the trade union though, and repeated its former stance that that the management would not sit at the table unless the legal process concluded so. The five workers rejected this offer after consulting with the union officers because "their goal was not to get back to work but to authorize the trade union in the factory." So, practically, the occupation turned into aiming at the acceptance of the trade union by the management, while at first it had aimed at the return of the five fired workers.

During the occupation many unionized workers, mainly from in the same union, visited them every day in large groups. Also workers from the very close pharmaceutical factory came every morning, noon and evening, three times a day in groups of 30 to 100, even though they were organized in the other trade union. Their slogan was "forever support, full support. (*Hep destek, Tam destek!*)" The unions in Turkey do not usually motivate their workers to support the struggles of other trade union with which they compete. On the next day at noon many workers came in front of the factory with a special organization by the union and a protest was held with the participation of almost 300 workers. On the same day, seven more workers were dismissed due to the same Article 25 of the Labor Act without being paid of lay-off benefits. This was an act that they had been expecting, so it did not create much disturbance. What created a disturbance was another development. A few of the workers, who had left the factory on Sunday, did not come back on Monday. Akif told me what they planned to do: "We will visit them tonight and talk to them in a kind way, but if it does not work, in another way. To sell out more than 200 men here can not be that easy."

About 200 workers, mostly middle-aged and married with children, found themselves in the middle of an unusual radical experience. They occupied the factory for seven days. They did an unexpected thing, a seven day long occupation of a workplace by its workers had not been observed in a private firm since before the 12 September 1980 coup. Cemal, as a leader in the first group of five dismissed workers, underlined the difficulties when asked about the occupation. He went home, had a shower, changed his clothes and came back again only two times in that period of seven days. They could not get enough sleep in front of the factory on the side walk or in the limited space of a minibus provided by the union. Cemal stated the reason for their dismissal:

> The management held us (the first fired five workers) responsible for the actions. They fired us, but the actions continued. Our places were filled by our friends. The production stopped completely for seven days. This means than that there were many Cemal, Hasan, Asım, Hilmi (the names of the first fired leaders) inside.

Bahadır was one of those. He became very active after the dismissal of the five and faced the consequences of his efforts in a short time. He was fired with the second group of five workers, at the end of the third day:

> For three days I was taking care of people. For example, at the place where the women stay, they were making tea. I took care of their water, tea and all other needs. I was running from one place to another, so that people, our unity would not disintegrate, so that people would not start gossiping about each other.

Bahadır became the slogan shouter inside the factory. He was shouting first and others repeated after him:

> 150 people were waiting for the word which would come from your mouth. This is a nice thing. It means that I have gained the hearts of those people, if they were acting with my guidance. This was an honorable feeling.

Veysel and Galip emphasized how they met many workers from other sections whom they had not known before, thanks to the occupation. Veysel said that at night

they slept under the same blanket with people, he did not know but experienced the same difficulties. He also mentioned that in the close atmosphere of the occupation he had begun talking with one of his sectional coworkers with whom they he had not talked because of a dispute for a long time. Bahadır illustrates his mood during the occupation further by narrating the story of the evening he was fired:

> In the evening of the day I was fired and left the factory, friends came from the other factory. While they were shouting slogans together with my friends inside the factory facing each other, I was at the front side next to the iron fence at the entrance outside of the factory. When I saw the expression on people's faces in between joy and sadness, it became impossible for me not to become affected. And we had a slogan, it said, "the world will shake, if the workers become united" (*dünya yerinden oynar, işçiler birlik olsa*). They shouted it, by linking their arms together and jumping simultaneously in lines. When I saw it, I became affected, could not stop myself and began to sob. I had no regrets about being fired; I just wanted to live those emotions for some more time. Because inside and outside of the factory was very different.

During seven days they basically stopped the production of the factory and gained some kind of control and initiative. One of the most often mentioned grievances was the distance managers had had with the workers, their repressive behavior, that they had not talked with their workers, looking down at them. The relationship they had with the managers turned upside down to some extent as they perceived the situation. In my conversation with Veysel, Nevin and Önder together, all three were fired on Monday in the last group of seven workers, Nevin mentioned how it was nice the way they had booed two of the managers. On the second day, two managers had come into the cafeteria to convince them to get back to work. The workers sent them back by booing, hissing, using their pipes, which they carried at all time during the occupation to use on these kinds of occasions. Veysel continued and explained how afterwards the chiefs had come down, prostrated themselves before the workers and begged. "This fired people," Veysel said, meaning that

workers became very satisfied with this act of the chiefs and became motivated about their own action. He quoted one of his friends: “I do not mind even if I would be fired after getting my layoff benefit. He (his chief) begged me; there is not a greater joy than that”.

Nevin said that the most joyful thing for her had been to shout slogans on her last day in the factory, on which she knew that she was fired. Since she knew that she was fired, she shouted as much as she could freely, stood on the front side of the shouting workers and became relaxed. Önder also stated that he liked shout slogans in the courtyard and to listen to the agitating speeches of unionist outside very much: “I wanted to enjoy it more.” All three agreed about how they had been affected emotionally on their last night in the factory, and how their last sleep had been the most relaxed one. Önder was close to one of the managers, Mr. Ali, in the factory. He told Nevin about his conversation with him on that day, when he learned that he had been dismissed. Özer’s words revealed his perception about unionization and why he had become unionized in a remarkable manner:

> I told this Mr. Ali. I asked him: “What have we done? Did we steal anything from the factory? Did we damage the factory? We tried to unionize the factory for our honor (“*namus*”) and our dignity (“*şeref*”). What have we done?” I asked “Did I do anything harmful you? What mistake have I made? Why did you dismiss me?”

Everything was not as positive during the occupation as pictured above. First, there were workers who did not participate in the occupation, mainly workers from a particular “rotten section,” as Cemal called it. I later learned about that section, which revealed how the mobilization legacy of a workplace might also have negative impact on the future mobilizations. Two workers reported that in the previous unionization mobilization in 1992 many of workers from that particular section had been dismissed due to the unionization. One of the reasons for the complete absence

of those sections' workers was the impact of that harsh experience. Besides the non-involvement of this particular section's workers, there were people who did not come back after going to their houses on Sunday. The managers did not intervene only like the occasion mentioned above by Nevin and Veysel. Even though they did not fire large number of workers, the dismissal of 17 workers in three groups had a certain negative impact on the workers generally. After some managers tried to talk with all of the workers at once and faced protest, they tended to talk with them one by one or in small groups. They called the workers' cell phones and tried to convince them by threatening that if they did not get back to work, they also would be fired. Cemal emphasized that they told their friends to turn off their cell phones, but while some did so, some other did not. There were even some workers, who called the human resources manager themselves and told her that they were willing to work, but hesitated because of their coworkers.

Veysel, who trusted his friends in his section as mentioned, admitted how they were shocked and demoralized when one of their friends from the section did not come back on Monday. The absent workers' cell phone was turned off and his home number was answered by some woman who said that there was no such person. Some other workers stood in the rain on the first days consciously, and one day after they did not come back saying that they had become very sick. Another story about the tactics of running away from the occupation which was told, was the following: One worker asked once the telephone number of the factory, requested a telephone token, than went to the phone and came back. After some time he was called that he had a phone call. After he came back from the phone, he told the other workers that his brother-in-law had passed away, and that he had to go. Some workers said that they had to undergo surgical operation, which they had supposedly

planned before. As mentioned by many interviewees, some particular workers, who had talked about using guns to damage the factory in an over-radical way in the meetings before, left the occupation during its first days. So the number of the workers who continued to participate in the occupation declined day by day although not in a drastic way. But even though the number of total absentees was less than 50, 20 of them were the workers who had not participated from the beginning. While the workers were waiting eagerly for good news from the depot section that the stocks had diminished, the motivation decreased day by day. As Veysel and Önder hold, the protests and slogans became routine after some time and the excitement decreased.

Another interesting feature of the occupation, which reveals another aspect of its internal erosion, is "resistance coffeehouse" (*direniş kıraathenesi*). On the third day of the occupation male workers turned the smoking room in the factory into a "coffeehouse" (*kıraathane*) by bringing play cards and equipment for other games (*okey takımı*) and they called it the "resistance coffeehouse." To play games in the coffeehouses is a very popular habit of men, particularly in working class neighborhoods, and it was reproduced even during this occupation. After the end of the occupation, in one of the meetings in the union's office, Galip expressed his regrets about this practice:

> I could not resist and I also played. But we should not have done so. Instead of talking about the occupation, about what to do, we sat there and played games.

But Önder pointed out, after Galip's words another aspect of the situation:

> There was no positive conversation anymore after a while. People began to talk about how to end the occupation. Therefore in a way it was better, that they played games, instead of thinking of and talking about such things.

So overall, in this case we may talk about some clues of Fantasia's "emergent cultural formation, which was constructed intersubjectively and in relation to the

opposition during acute industrial conflicts."[221] But since this "culture of solidarity," this collective consciousness was "bound fairly tightly to the strategic encounter that has given rise to it," the cultural formation in this case did not last very long, just like the industrial conflict which have given rise to it did not.[222]

The Breaking of the Occupation

The seventh day, all of which I could observe, began with a harsh threat from management. Management declared that the workers who did not come back to work by the end of that workday, meaning 17:00, would be dismissed. The officially necessary documents for the dismissal had already been prepared, and in addition to that the management announced that it would sue the workers for its damages due to the seven day long occupation. This threat had a great impact on the workers, who were tired after a week of resistance and worried about the possible repercussions of being involved in this kind of a serious and non-legal action; some women cried faced with the threat that a lien would be put on the belongings in their houses.

All day long the disquiet among the workers in the factory was visible. The union's officials did not intervene in an effective way by making a declaration, which the worried workers needed very much, or by motivating them in some other way. What the unionists did all day was only to make the not-much motivated workers walk from one side of the courtyard to the other with slogans and applause. Moreover, the union official who called them to attend these kinds of actions with a megaphone from the outside of the factory did this in a very distracting authoritative way. The discourse he used was very close to giving orders to them. The unionists

[221] Rick Fantasia, "From Class Consciousness," p. 280.

[222] Ibid.

from time to time walked with some of the five leader workers a little further than the group waiting in front of the entrance, obviously to consult to what to do. But they could not develop any plan. In the afternoon some managers and chiefs came down to the courtyard and talked with some of the workers. At first the unionists and leaders outside did not react, but then they realized the seriousness of the situation and called on the workers to protest against the chiefs and to send them back.

At around 16:00 two buses filled with riot policemen came to the factory. The management called the police to get the workers out after 17:00 in line with its earlier threat. One group of police positioned themselves at the back of the workers, who were standing right behind the entrance, close to the dismissed workers and unionists waiting outside of the entrance. So the police built a line in between the workers in the factory's courtyard and the factory building, which was perceived as preparation to push the workers out of the courtyard when the time would come. The stress and anxiety level of the workers escalated even more. While the time went by, the tension raised and the disquiet grew. The unionist called the workers to gather together and to sit in front of the entrance. The dismissed workers and unionists, and workers inside faced each other, separated by the entrance door of iron fence. The dismissed ones were trying to do their best to motivate the others. Slogans and applause also rose like the tension. The time was approaching 17:00. In a moment of silence four workers at the back of the workers' group stood up, turned back and began to walk back towards the factory building.

After a moment of shock in which everyone remained silent, people began to shout, to call them back, and to curse them. But they did not come back and in a couple of minutes another group of three followed the first group; and then another group of four did the same thing. One of them raised one of his fingers as he looked

back with a sad face. Later I learned that this meant that he had been left alone to defend staying in the courtyard among the workers in his section, all of whom had decided to go upstairs to their workplace. He meant that he could not stay by himself there, while all of his section's workers went upstairs. That was the turning point. The game was over; and no one was in the mood to face this fact in a calm way.

One worker ran and broke the glass of the barracks in which the security personnel stayed. Another one broke a water container next to the barracks. Screams and cries rose. Many of them fell to the floor and fainted. There were people crying, sobbing, lamenting. Not only the ones inside, many of the dismissed ones next to me, who could not do anything but watch their losing struggle, began to cry. Some of them kept saying "one of them was my friend, he sold me out, he left me!" Others cursed the managers. Another worker from inside came to the door and said, hardly speaking and crying: "I have a sick child; I stay in a rented house; look at those who ran away." I understood later what he meant was the fact that some of those who had left at that moment were economically quite well off compared to the most of the others. Many of the white collar workers, and also the managers upstairs in the building came to windows to see the reason for the noise. Many dismissed workers outside of the factory shouted those managers looking through the windows: "This is your fault!" Then they began to shake the iron fence to break it and to get to inside. The unionists stopped them.

Fadime, a female worker inside the courtyard, heavily cursed for minutes those men, who had left them: "The one, who sells us out today, will sell his wife tomorrow!" (*Bugün bizi satan yarın karısını satar!*) This situation lasted more than twenty minutes. Seven ambulances came to get the fainted workers to the hospital. The police did not intervene, just watched. Bahadır shouted a slogan to gather their

friends: “Human honor will defeat the capital!” (*İnsanlık onuru sermayeyi yenecek!*) After twenty minutes of chaos and tragedy the foreign general manager went down probably to stop the crises before some workers were seriously injured. He gathered everybody in the courtyard, talked with them, and called them upstairs to hold a meeting. They went upstairs, only the dismissed workers were left outside. After three hours of meeting, fifteen workers came back to the entrance to give information to their dismissed friends. They had managed to get a promise from the manager to hold a meeting one day after in which also the dismissed workers would participate. The occupation was broken.

Hasan, after the break of the occupation, pointed out the harsh reality beyond the individual calculations of those workers who had left the mobilization or had not even participated in it from the beginning. Hasan, as a dismissed worker due to the failed mobilization, revealed that he could not become very angry with those who had left the struggle:

> We are angry with them. But the system is such a system, which threatens people with starvation. The system is so built that it tells you, if you do this and that, you will be dismissed. People have children. If he is dismissed, he will experience a lack of money. So people have to be silent, even if they see many things they want to protest. Everybody cannot take this risk to act, they have responsibilities. We live in Istanbul, you have rent to pay, and you have your children. To find yourself in a position of lacking money is a disastrous thing. These are important factors. But still one should risk to some extent.

Process after the Rupture of the Occupation

The next morning the dismissed workers and unionists went to the factory to participate in the meeting, but the managers did not let them in because they held that one day before they had promised to meet with them if they would come without the

union. So the meeting was held only with the workers who had not been dismissed. It came up that a committee had been formed to run the consultations with the management. But in the formation of that committee, the management had intervened, so that even some workers who had left the occupation were included on the committee. During the meeting the dismissed workers stayed in a close teahouse, the place which would become their base during the next weeks. The meeting ended in the afternoon and the participants came to the teahouse to tell the waiting dismissed ones about the meeting. The coming together of the dismissed minority with the other minority, which left neither the first group nor the struggle, was quite emotional and sincere. A worker from the inside said that his father had asked him the previous night, when he went home after the break of the occupation: "You did not sell out your friends, did you?"

The conclusion of the meeting with the managers, however, was not that good. Furthermore, it came up that the group which met with the managers had forwarded five demands including wage rise and other rights. Only one of the five demands was the return of the dismissed workers, which made them upset. The managers answered, as expected, that four of the demands could be negotiated about, but to get back the dismissed workers was not easy. The foreign manager told that he had to go abroad; he would discuss the case with the central managers of the company, but would come back 15 days later and hold a meeting that day. He added that the dismissed ones should not come in front of the factory to protest if they wanted to be reinstated. The unionists wanted to make the workers to protest the employer seemingly, but the workers opposed this suggestion due to the management's demand.

There were many accounts on how the workers inside the factory, who had not left the occupation, were reactive against the leavers, "sellers". They showed their reaction seemingly on every possible occasion. A worker, once he got on the service bus the next morning, said "Good morning! But do not misunderstand me! I am telling this only to those who did not sell us out yesterday!" Another worker, one of Veysel's young friends who had worked in the factory three years, rose once during the lunch and said loudly: "I am glad that I learned whom I can trust only in three years! Most of you have been working here for more then ten years. But as I see, you could not learn whom you can trust in so many years!" The workers who had not left the occupations, systematically distanced themselves from the others.

During the fifteen days the dismissed workers went to that tea house in groups of a minimum five, and waited there to talk with the workers, who came and visited them during their lunch breaks. Their goal was to push the limited number of workers inside, who were still caring about them, to struggle to get their jobs back instead of better wages. Four to ten visitors came every day. On the day the meeting was scheduled, the manager did not come by, claiming that his program had changed without his intention, and delayed the meeting for seven days. With this frustration the dismissed workers held a meeting in the unions' office. They talked about how to hold a protest in front of the factory before the meeting, as a reaction to the delay, but they concluded not to do it due to the decision of the majority.

To hold a meeting in the union's office with the participation of the employed workers was the second issue they discussed. But they delayed this also, since they did not expect that many workers would come if they organized a meeting. So they basically decided that they did not have any alternative than to wait for the meeting of the manager with the employed workers. The general manager came in the middle

of the next week, and the awaited meeting was held. The management announced the introduction of premiums immediately and a wage raise of 50%, which would become valid in the next year, if the workers would give a "signal" to the management. The signal was obviously resigning from the union. The one white-collar administrative worker among the ten workers who participated in the workers' committee intervened unexpectedly and said that they had come there to talk about the dismissed workers, not about the new wage rises. As an answer she did not get more than another promise that they would work to convince the main decision makers of the firm to rehire the dismissed workers.

After this frustration the dismissed workers decided that it was necessary to organize a meeting in the trade union's office with the workers inside. One week after the management's meeting they organized this meeting in the union office to see how many workers would come, and to discuss what they could do. Only one worker came to the union that evening. The human resources manager was informed about that meeting and called many workers to ask if they would go to the meeting that night. The dismissed workers were frustrated, but were not ruined though, probably because they had expected such a situation. The union official, who gave a long speech that evening, implied that the 17 dismissed workers could not do much more than to assist the union to organize that workplace from the very beginning. Ten days later, a group of workers resigned from the union. The dismissed workers tried to intervene and stop further resignations. The number did not increase much during the next two weeks; it seemed that most of the workers were worried about both the dismissed ones, and also themselves. Since as the worker who was the only participant of the last union meeting from inside declared, the workers inside were worried that they might also be dismissed in groups after some time.

One and a half months after the occupation, the management unexpectedly called some of the dismissed workers and declared that all of them would be rehired if they "convinced their friends." The demand about "convincing their friends" implied to convince the workers inside and outside to resign from the union. With a special effort of Veysel, the dismissed workers convinced the workers inside, who did not and wanted not to resign, to do so. All of the workers resigned from the union, and all of the seventeen workers were rehired back. There was not a special negative attitude of the management towards the dismissed workers in the workplace during two months after their employment until the writing of this text. The workers with whom I talked after the employment admitted that they did not understand why the management had rehired them. The workers were gained premiums and a promise of a 50% wage raise at the beginning of the following year. But the relations were not that close in the factory anymore, as many workers told me afterwards. They said that the old "atmosphere" was gone. Also most of them were seemingly not very hopeful about their future employment in the factory, since many of them were expecting the management to dismiss an important amount of worker in the near future.

Before concluding, I want to mention the relations between the union and the workers. I underlined in the introduction that worker mobilizations tend to be explained through union involvement, but there are also several researchers who claim that "it would be erroneous to assume that union presence has causal priority in the emergence of worker resistance."[223] In the other two cases investigated in this thesis, the importance of workers' will and agency both in the beginning and in the process of the mobilizations above and beyond the union's impact were discussed. At

[223] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 34.

some point in the mobilization as a result of the severe criticism about their unions, in the case of the metal workers all of the workers and in the case of the food workers some groups among them engaged in deliberate actions independent from and even against their unions. In this case of pharmaceuticals workers the beginning of the mobilization was found to be the pure result of the workers' will and agency. A small group of leading workers themselves decided and began to unionize after several successful collective actions without any union involvement in the factory. But in the process it seems that the workers more or less followed their union's instructions. Hasan and Veysel noted that the five leader workers gave all of the control to the unionists and followed them without questioning, which led others to do the same thing. Hasan, as one of the five leaders, admitted that he felt unpleasant about that situation, but could not change it, since the other four leaders were insistent about it. So criticism of the union did not emerge among many workers. Veysel and Hasan became critical but they could not create the conditions to propagate that. Önder, Cemal and Akif also revealed some evidence of criticism but they did it even in a more silent way then Veysel and Hasan. We should note that the union in this case as in the case of the food workers, provided the dismissed workers with a considerable amount of financial support.

The criticism of those workers centered on the union's passivity both during the former occupation and during the occupation. They claimed that the union should have motivated the workers during the occupation in a better way then it did, and that the unionists should have motivated the workers in a more active way on the last day of the occupation against the management's threat, which included a very speculative claim that the workers would be forced by law to pay for the factory's financial loss due to the occupation. Another issue of criticism was that the union had stopped

them beating the workers who had left the occupation: “If we had beat a couple of them and thrown them into the courtyard like sacks of potatoes afterwards, the result would have been different” was one of the main regrets of many of the dismissed workers, and they criticized the union for preventing this.

Another issue of criticism was union’s act of preventing the dismissed workers from going into the factory’s courtyard at the moment of the break of the occupation. Cemal argued in a radical mood that if they had gone in, the police would have attacked them, which would have facilitated the workers’ reaction towards the situation and even those workers who had left would have come down to the courtyard to protest their beating by the police. To sum up, the union’s impact on the process of mobilization in this case was influential.

Concluding Remarks

I want to begin with the impact of the mobilization legacy of the factory, which practically means the unionization campaign back in 1992, on the current mobilization. As I noted above, the impact was important, since the two workers who started the process -as all of the workers acknowledged- were two veteran workers, who had experienced the previous mobilization. Beyond them, other workers who had not participated in the previous mobilization personally, since they had started to work after it, often mentioned the previous mobilization. It obviously provided a basis for reference and motivation. On the other hand, the legacy also had a negative impact as can be observed in the case of one particular section’s workers, who did not get involved in the current mobilization at all. It was reported that in the mobilization back in 1992, many of the workers of that particular section had been

dismissed, and this information was clearly transferred and severely affected the current generation.

About the impact of the worker solidarity on the worker mobilization, this case also provides important clues. The cohesion among the two sections' workers was particularly and systematically addressed by the workers of those sections. Many lively examples of that cohesion were given above. The important point is these two sections' workers became the leading figures in the struggle. Since they had a sense of involvement and attachment[224] and had experience with cooperative, group-building practices,[225] "aggregate network processes" they built seemed to have conditioned their perceptions about the cost and benefit of participating in the collective action. This reminds us one more time that the "individual decision making does not proceed in a social or cultural vacuum, but ultimately bounded and conditioned by social attachments and associations."[226] Also the lack of accounts on an important level of mutual defense among workers against the management prior to the mass collective action could be considered as one of the main reflections of the fact that the level of worker solidarity was not sufficient for collective mobilization, especially for such a radical collective action of workplace occupation since the mutual defense and leadership aspects of solidarity are hold to be especially important to indigenous resistance practices to occur and foster mobilization.[227]

Still on the base of an important level of cohesion among the workers the unionization struggle arose, and faced the managements' counter attacks. The legal obstacles to unionization were erected by the management in an elaborate way,

[224] Hodson, et. al. "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined," p. 399.

[225] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 9.

[226] Dixon and Roscigno, "Status, networks, and social movement," p. 1293.

[227] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 14.

which led the workers to begin to lose their motivation. A couple contentious encounters with the management, however, such as the early leaving of the service buses while they were protesting and the dismissals of five of their coworkers, triggered the process to a radical point of the occupation. I learned that the union was planning to make workers engage in such a wildcat strike, but neither the unionists nor the leader workers planned the current occupation deliberately. But as the union's branch chief once told me, these kinds of radical collective actions could not be planned due to their inevitable reliance on spontaneity.

A culture of solidarity, which involved enthusiasm, collective confidence, a certain level of pride and power gained through their micro encounters with their supervisors and macro encounters with the management itself, a complex cultural formation implying some elements of class consciousness emerged especially in the period between the first strike and the end of the occupation. It was emphasized that one of the most important impacts of the collective action was that those workers who could not even talk to their supervisors due to fear and timidity gained a stronger stance against them thanks to the collective action. But since such a cultural formation is "bound fairly tightly to the strategic encounter that gave rise to it," it did not last very long, just like the industrial conflict which had given rise to it.[228] With the breaking of the occupation that cultural formation was also broken. Except for several workers, in the perception of many workers, mistrust of the particular worker community and to its collective action ability took the place of the former collective confidence and enthusiasm.

As mentioned above, the leadership aspect of solidarity is hold to be especially important for indigenous resistance practices to occur and foster

[228] Fantasia, "From Class Consciousness," p. 280.

mobilization.[229] The two other cases of worker mobilizations discussed in this thesis affirm this claim in a quite clear sense. The leadership of this mobilization was neither very consistent nor very motivating especially after the occupation. If we begin with the "two leaders of the leaders," Hilmi and Asım, I learned that they were quite distant from each other, so that they were competing to be the ultimate leader of the mobilization and also to acquire the chief shop steward position in the future. Even on those tempered days of the occupation, as Hasan explained me, Hilmi and Asım gathered their groups of supporters separately in different spots, and were "lobbying." I heard from many workers especially from the youth group of Veysel and Bahadır that neither of them promised much confidence due to their former stances in the workplace, as they perceived it. As a matter of fact, Asım came neither to the coffeehouse nor the union meetings after the occupation was broken. Hilmi was thought to be a little too old and too uncritical about the unionists. Hasan, another member of the leading group that consisted of five workers, did not have close connections with many workers due to his position in the workplace, which he performed in a small room together only with a couple of workers. Akif, another leader, tried hard to do his best, but his ignorance about unionization was even admitted by him, and also was remarked on by others. Cemal seemed to be the most consistent and practical, and therefore most respected one among the five leading figures. I also described the moment at which Recep and Nevin became occasional leaders and changed the direction of the process, which in a way reveals that the five leaders were not in the leading position consistently in the whole process. So this lack of consistent leadership could be considered another undermining factor of the duration and stability of this worker mobilization.

[229] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 14.

The tragic break of this worker mobilization cannot change the fact that it was a very radical and exceptional one. Nearly 200 mostly middle aged workers engaged in a very radical collective action by striking and occupying their factory in the middle of Istanbul for seven days. They took a great risk, ventured to resist their management in a radical way. Their agency may have been amateur and unconscious, but it was still brilliant. In the end, the occupation was broken; their mobilization campaign had totally failed. But I want leave the last words to Cemal. Several weeks after the break, during a conversation among the dismissed workers in the union's office, most of the dismissed workers began to criticize their ex-coworkers in an extreme way. They were about to conclude that the workers of their factory could no longer engage in any kind of resistance action against their management. Cemal warned them: "Could even one of you imagine one and a half months ago that the workers of our factory would turn off the switch and strike illegally for seven days?"

CHAPTER V

THE MOBILIZATION OF WORKERS IN A METAL FACTORY

This chapter is about the unionization struggle in a fairly new metal factory in İzmit, which was opened in December 2004 and employed 112 workers at the beginning of the campaign. Most of the workers who participated in the unionization struggle had worked in the factory since its opening. The distinctive features of this experience were its durability despite the mass dismissal of the struggling workers due to the occupation of the factory and its militancy. After the collective dismissal in the beginning of August 2006, 65 workers continued to struggle until October 2006 in front of the factory in spite of the strike breaker workers' and later the gendarme's physical attacks and their union's lack of support. Another distinctive feature of this struggle was the apparent importance of a high level of solidarity among workers prior to the mobilization for the emergence and duration of the struggle. Also the apparent existence of two consistent and respected leaders of the struggle is another point to note. I had the chance to visit their tent in front of the factory many times, which allowed me to observe both their daily routines and the more dramatic parts of the struggle. Also, in the months following the mobilization, I met with five of them several times, with whom I conducted long interviews.

The work conditions were harsh in the factory, overtime work was the rule. Most of the workers earned little higher then the minimum wage. Mostly young workers of the new factory had internalized their work with an enthusiasm of making a factory run from the very beginning. They worked hard also due to the motivation

provided by the management's promises about future improvements in their wages and other benefits. But in spite of their collective efforts to work harder, these promises did not turn to be true; and furthermore the management dismissed a beloved and respected chief of one particular section, in which the workers were cohesive most in a humiliating way. Another alarming development was the rumor that many sections of the factory would be sold to subcontractor firms, which meant for the workers a total loss of all expectations about any future improvements of their benefits as they knew well.

The Formation of Worker Solidarity

Worker solidarity is defined as a worker's chief protection against abusive management practices and also a mediating factor against the ravages of meaningless work.[230] Also it is noted that worker solidarity tends to be generated mostly by conflict in the workplace, more indigenous worker strategies and practices, active work-group social relations, and cultural practices.[231] Worker solidarity does not necessarily imply an oppositional stance against the management, since it also involves enforcing norms of productivity due to the workers' pride in their work. But it should be emphasized that even these kinds of solidarity practices provide a basis for workers to shape a collective identity separate from the management.[232] It is argued that worker solidarity has five facets. The first one is cohesion, which means to which extent workers seek each other for social contact, and which implies the existence of strong friendship networks as essential mechanisms for the development

[230] Hodson, et. al. "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined."

[231] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 9.

[232] Hodson, et. al. "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined," p. 398.

and implementation of collective strategies.[233] The second facet is mutual defense, which entails struggle against management over the sanctioning of workers and is a relatively more visible aspect of worker solidarity. The third facet is leadership, without which solidarity remains isolated and non-cumulative.[234] The emergence of group leadership implies a more durable basis for collective action. Strong leadership usually does not appear until the point the group has to take some collective action such as defending a member against management's abuse of sanctioning a member due to violating group norms. The fourth facet is enforcement of group norms such as generosity, production, quality or safety standards. It is important to note that "sloppy work and poor standards irritate and demoralize workers; pride in doing even relatively simple work well often motivates workers to demand a minimum of cooperation and output from coworkers."[235] The last facet of worker solidarity is group boundaries, such as group members' clear sense about who is in or out of the group. It is claimed that especially the mutual defense and leadership aspects of solidarity are important for indigenous resistance practices to occur and foster mobilization.

The existence of worker solidarity before the mobilization and its determining impact on the future mobilization is very apparent in the experience of the workers in this metal factory. The accounts of workers point to the existence of close and strong friendship networks and cohesion particularly in the section, which would start the campaign. The argument mentioned above, that solidarity is not necessarily oppositional, but also involves enforcing norms of productivity due to workers' pride in their work seems to be quite valid, since before the contestation emerged in the

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid. 400.

[235] Ibid.

workplace the workers clearly emphasized an easily observable pride, how they worked hard, and how they increased the production to an important degree. Even though their solidarity in terms of being a cohesive group with a hardworking ethic was not very oppositional against the management in the beginning, it provided a basis for the workers to shape a collective identity separate from the management. Also many cases of mutual defense were mentioned by the workers before the period of contestation; especially after the class struggle in the workplace became harsher an apparent leadership emerged, which would have a great impact on worker solidarity in action, namely collective mobilization. I used the term "community" basically for workers group enjoying worker solidarity.

The metal factory was located in a complex consisting of three neighboring factories, which were owned by the same employer. I will call the two other factories Arel and Margenta. The metal factory was strictly sectionalized as usual and the social relations were determined by this fact, which means that the friendship groupings were mostly in-section rather then inter-section. There was almost no opportunity of time or place besides the lunch breaks and the service buses in which workers of different sections could even see each other. This fact even led to a "soft coldness and discrimination" among the sections as Ali, a worker in the forwarding section, declared:

> As an example we request workers from other sections when we are over-busy. It is told that "we are workers of such and such section, what do we have to do in the forwarding section". They get in such a mood. But they still have to come and help obviously.

Only a few workers who did simple tasks in changing places had the chance to build a wider net of relations.

The first thing which drew my attention was the nature of the close social relations, namely cohesion, among the workers of a particular section (the packing-

forwarding section) of the factory. The members of this section would be the ones who headed the unionization struggle. Three of the five former workers with whom I was able to conduct deep interviews were working in the packing-forwarding section. The seven participators of the first collective visit to the center of the union were all from this section. Therefore to begin to the story with this section seems to be appropriate.

Packing-Forwarding Section

The packing-forwarding section consisted of twelve people, seven of whom were men, and most of whom were between the ages of 20 and 30. Twelve of them did the packing job, and three of them did the forwarding. Three interviewees stressed in a coherent way that there were relative close relations among the workers of this section. To start with activities outside of the factory, it was said that they visited each other's houses and that –a point which was specially underlined- the families also were involved in this relationship (*ailecek görüşmek*). The question of whether the relations were rooted in the pre-factory neighborhood relations was rejected by the interviewees and it was pointed that everybody had met in the factory. Also activities like "goodbye to bachelorhood" parties, to participate in each other's engagement ceremonies, picnics, car tours; wandering in the town center, playing games in the coffee houses were mentioned. The workers obviously sought each other out for social contact.

Ayşe (29) as someone who had lost that job but also that community, described in a longing way the highly positive atmosphere among workers in the factory and revealed an important and apparent case of mutual defense:

> Our atmosphere (*ortam*) was very different. We liked the factory as if it belonged to us. We never let any administrator find out that we committed misproduction or produce junk (*hurda vermek*). No one ever noticed anything (*Kimsenin ruhu duymuyordu*). Neşe once fastened on a wrong stem; we begged the girl in the quality control section. If we could not convince the girl, she would get a caution by the management, or maybe she would even be fired.

The section also seems to have been not a totally tiresome and oppressive place owing to their close relationships. They held song contests between the four production bands in the section. Ayşe stated that they had had a lot of fun in the workplace.

Erol, who was much older (43) than the large young majority of the section, said that when he first came the first thing that had drawn his attention was the absence of mutual cooperation among the four production bands. He told a story in which he put himself in a central position in the process of the emergence of a cooperation tendency in the section. "Poetry came in the factory with me," he said in a poetic way, by which he meant that he had read and handed out poems in the workplace. And his fellow workers had liked this attitude, they saw his "way of looking at things and life," and a trust developed towards him on the side of the majority, but especially women. Many people began to share their private affairs with him as an intimacy emerged. He talked continuously especially with the young women "whose word counted most" in the section about how the solidarity and friendship were important since most of their time had been passing in the factory. He stated that instead of small peer groupings, which had been sort of distant from each other in the section before he had arrived, a more collective and wider solidarity began to develop.

Ali, also older (35) than the majority but younger than Erol, began to work in the same section one year after the opening. Ali observed that there was,

> an enthusiasm of working in a factory which had newly begun to operate. The section was alarmed to do the job better. People were working like ants, running and rushing form one place to another. Everyone was trying to do his/her best so that things ran better.

A collective pride and enthusiasm about the work seemed to be widespread among the workers. An "enjoyable sincerity" had been present when Ali came to the factory, as he described it. The fun they had, which Ayşe had talked about, was also emphasized by Ali:

> Friends were young. And our chief was also brother Mehmet, whom we liked a lot. The atmosphere was cheerful and sprightly. Dancing and all that… The kids were singing and playing games with each other. Making contests. Making jokes. A pleasing atmosphere was present there when I first came. I also entered naturally. But because I am a reticent person, I always remained a little slow. But I liked it a lot. When I saw that good-intentioned harmony among people, I never wanted to disrupt it. They had maybe fifty games. One started to sing a song starting with a letter, the other started where the first stops.

Erol and Ali became friends literally on the first day when Ali came in, since they were "relatives," which implied that they had both found the job thanks to a former convict cadre.[236] Erol had been a young militant of an illegal armed Marxist-Leninist organization[237] and had been caught by the police after a failed bombing in 1983 against the military regime of 12 September 1981. He had been in prison for seven years and had left his organization in his first years in there. He was no longer a Marxist, as he declared due to his detailed criticism about Marxist organizations in Turkey. Ali did not want to tell me why he had been sentenced to five years exactly, but he implied that it was a case of malicious injury. He explained me that he had been a militant nationalist and engaged in a local mafia due to his family and friends in his hometown, Ordu. He told me the long story of how he had changed radically

[236] Workplaces, which employ more then 50 employers, have to employ a certain number of former convicts, according to the 30th Article of the Labor Act numbered 4857.

[237] His organization was TKP-ML, *Türkiye Komünist Partisi – Marksist Leninist*. Communist Party of Turkey – Marxist Leninist. It was an illegal armed Maoist organization founded during the 1970s.

there thanks to his new friends in the prison, who were sentenced due to their radical leftist political activities.[238] He had questioned himself deeply in those years in the prison and made many personal decisions. The friendship of Erol and Ali developed quickly; they became so close that they began to spend all of their free time together, by talking about philosophy and psychology. Their fellowship came to be admired and their conversations drew the attention of other workers, so that during free time many people started to spend their time with them.

The Factors behind the Cohesion and Solidarity

When we look closer to find out the objective reasons of the friendship and solidarity atmosphere in the section other than Erol's and later Ali's personal influence, which might have had some impact, but which obviously could not have been the only reason, as several elements are perceivable. Ali said that they were working very close to each other in terms of physical space. A more convincing factor is age. Almost everybody was in the same age group, 20-30, in the factory general, and in the section, except a few. And most of the workers were living in the same area, in or near the same neighborhood. The fact that the factory was a new one and the majority of the workers had entered right at the beginning was emphasized by Ayşe: "we had such a good atmosphere maybe because we were all new in the factory. No one was talking down to each other due to his better knowledge or so (*Kimse bilmişlik taslamıyordu*)."

[238] Actually those prisoners who had the most impact on him were two militants of the PKK, Kurdistan Workers' Party. He told me that he was shocked when he realized their knowledge and ethical manners, since he had considered them to be immoral, ruthless terrorists until that time as a militant nationalist. He noted that he did not agree with their ideas, neither at that time in prison nor at the time we spoke, but he admitted that they enlightened him greatly.

Ali approved the impact of this fact and pointed in a similar vain: “everyone wanted to work. As if the factory was their own monument. There was a feeling that the more the factory worked, we did it and this was our labor. There was excitement”

Besides the age and the newness effects, another important factor seemed to be the chief of the section, the person who had the responsibility of the section and enjoyed the highest administrative rank in the section. The chief was considered as a well-intentioned person, having a vertical, rather then hierarchical relationship with the workers for whom he was responsible. He was a friendly chief, who never began the day or left at the end of it without greeting everyone in the section, or without asking if there were any problems. He worked with them, often did the same job as they did, and even joined the out-of-factory activities. He was someone included in the community of the workers, someone with whom the workers met outside the factory with the involvement of other family members.

The rush and the excitement to work was also developed due to the chief’s attitude and success to create a good environment to work. It is emphasized that he managed not to reflect his problems with the manager to the workers, and he was an optimist in terms of his attitudes to the management. Ali pointed that he even often told the chief that he should not let his good-intentions be used by the management against the workers:

> By not reflecting the pressure put forward by the management on him to us, he actually was doing something bad for us. “They are using you,” I told him. “They give you the responsibility and they know that you can manage to make it done with your personality. When we say that we cannot take our over-time payments, do not intervene, we cannot run over you. When you say ‘there should be a reason, they will solve it soon’, we stop.”

The positive atmosphere which had been described until now should not confuse the reader. We are talking about a metal factory, in which most of the

workers earned the minimum wage and overtime work was obligatory in an unofficial way. What was put forward above is only one side of the reality, which must be explained in a detailed way because it is a particularly differentiating feature. The young workers who created a rejoicing and friendly community and a hard-working collective habit with the motivation of building a new factory were working really hard. They mentioned that they did overtime almost every day, which meant 11-12 hours a day and in some cases even more than that. The payments for the over-time work were usually paid late, and less than what should have been paid. But on the other, hand by using different words, the workers stated that while they did not known anything about the job at the beginning, the production rose from "100 to 3000 pieces" and that they "reached first quality." They were proud of their work. This collective pride was an important facilitator of the solidarity.

Raising Complaints and Management's Move to Disrupt the Solidarity

The joy they experienced by being together, or the vertical relation with the person who represented the management in the microcosm of the section were pleasing but basically not enough for a decent living. The feeling that they did not get the value of their labor developed and became widespread. The solidarity they built through their social cohesion and work ethic related to their pride about their work provided a basis for a separate identity from the management. They felt that they should get a material response form the rise in the production, which was reached thanks to their hard work. Ali continued as followins:

> When the complaints increased, a special attitude developed by the chiefs and the managers towards certain people. This invited competition among some. This competition disclosed certain complexes among us. (…) This process made clear whom the boss

> could use later, the boss saw to whom he would apply when he needed them.(…) Small groupings appeared between our friends (*Gruplaşma*). Some became more privileged in the workplace. They conformed to the demands of the boss, and by doing so they attracted the attention of the management. The opportunities this would bring. One minute I looked and (*Bi bakıyorum*) the woman next to me had become headworker, the person in charge of the band. But I had no clue about it.

Ayşe told this story in a more direct way:

> The last wage raise was made in 2005. The management gave increases of five million ($4) for some, 250 ($200) for some. The wages became differentiated. Some began to earn 405 ($324), some 390 ($312). We quarreled with each other (*arkadaşlarla aramız açıldı*). People started to say "I got only a rise of 5 million, I will not do this." When there is some job to do, they say "let Ayşe do it, she gets much money." I kept telling them "do not tell me this, tell the manager".

The management seemed to try to handle with the rising complaints by giving privileges to a few, offering newly created so-called higher positions with higher wages compared to those of the majority. By separating them, by causing disputes among them, by gaining some of them to its side, the management, which realized the rising grievances and expectations for higher wages, attempted to prevent a possible united collective action of the workers against its employment strategy. This is clearly one of the oldest tactics practiced by the employers to handle a possible workers' resistance at minimum cost.

Community Strikes Back

Ali pointed out that the community did not fully fall apart, and stressed that the activities outside of the factory continued: "During those activities we killed the poison of the quarrel in the workplace." Ayşe emphasized that they could not manage to fix their relations for two months. An action of the management played a

crucial role in the process of fixing their relations; the respectable chief of the section was "stabbed in the back." One of the oldest workers in the factory-complex, a man who had trained many chiefs and headworkers and had worked there for many years was fired in a humiliating way.

The news that an examination would be held was announced by the management in March 2006, and the chief protested it in a clear way, saying, "I will not take this examination, you also should not." Ayşe expressed that they were expecting a test about their jobs, but it turned out to be an IQ test. The chief was fired due to his protest against this exam on the surface, but Nuri thought that this exam was an opportunity for the management to clean out the un-wanted workers. Ali stated in a similar vein that the IQ test was a game, put to the process of practicing a program which had the goal of minimizing the rights of the workers in the factory by forcing the old workers either to leave or to renounce the claims they had gained due to their long years at the factory.

This unexpected act of the management awakened among the workers the feeling that "the one who does this to our chief, would not even see us," as Ali put it. He continued as follows:

> After him we said with one voice "a man who should not have gone, was sent. What are we going to do? Would we be treated like a man? No way! Would you think to be a headworker would make you be treated as a man?" That was what we told each other. No matter what they do, you cannot guarantee to be employed in the factory (*Sen ağzınla kuş tutsan fayda etmez dedik*).

Ali marked that event as an important breaking point, and emphasized that their friends "began to come back" after that development, which meant that the friendships were rebuilt. This was not an immediate change obviously, what the respectable chief's departure disclosed was the "real faces" of the management, because the human attitude that the packing-forwarding section faced had left with

the old chief. The positive effect provided by the chief's personality was not present any more, but the intensive working conditions continued in a harsher way: "work, work, work, the money you would get at the beginning of the month was not much more than 450 million ($360) including over-time payments." The non-existence of the chief in the workplace showed how the administrators were so "far" from the workers:

> When that good-intended person went from in front of us, their cold winds began to reflect on us. Their words sounded rough, their reactions were offending, and their impositions were unendurable. When this front appeared in front of us, our huddling to each other accelerated.

After the resisting the first wave of the management's attacks, before getting into the development of the unionization idea where it emerged first, some information about the other parts of the factory should be also presented. Semih, who used to work in the curtain (coloring) section as a headworker, which consisted of six workers and one headworker for each of two shifts, underlined the respectfulness of the workers in his section towards each other. He stated that his coworkers in the section were people who were in real need of work, since the manager especially chose that kind of people due to the over-intense working hours of the section. The section's workers had been chosen from the ones who lived in the same neighborhood of the factory in rental houses. While the location of the neighborhood was thought to be solution to the transportation problem after the work days, which ended at 12 midnight, the renting condition guaranteed that the nominee was in real need of the wage. Semih depicted more a respectful and quite atmosphere compared to the packing-forwarding section.

Nuri worked as a machine operator in the spot welding section; he did a semi-skilled job like Semih, unlike Ayşe, Erol and Ali. The relations among the peers of

his section seemed being closer then in that of Semih and distant then the packing. He said immediately how their chief was "on the side of the management," how he was oppressive, and how he and his coworkers acted into a coordinated way against their chief so that they pulled him in a more cooperative attitude. To put pressure on him they created problems in the production process, so that the chief was chided by his superior administrator. Then he stopped annoying them as much. The points Semih and Nuri expressed, and also the relative silence of both workers about the relations in their sections told us enough to conclude that they were not experiencing a distinctive communality like the packing workers.

Grievances and Resistance

Some of the working conditions and complaints were mentioned above where it was necessary to reveal the details of the nature of the social relations among the workers in the factory in general and in the packing section specifically. The most emphasized problem was the intensive working process and the lack of any returns as mentioned above. Ali summarized:

> We were working a lot, and becoming exhausted. And a feeling of wanting some returns was rising. We did not see anything. We were doing over-time work but still did not see any returns. If I worked, for example, 70 hours over-time, I could get my money in three or four months. And that money was given divided in little pieces, like 20 ($16), 30 ($24) or 50 millions ($40), for each month. (…) As much as our work became intensified, so the deficiencies of the employer became more and more evident. "We took a step, you did not. We wanted tea, there is no tea. We wanted a day-off, there is no day-off. I go to the infirmary, we are working hard, therefore I became sick, and you do not give me forwarding permission. You threaten me: "in the middle of so much work, isn't that a shame? Let me tell you, what you did would be considered later, this may even be a reason for departure." (…) Another thing was that the employer did not make any promises to us. "Work hard today, you will get this and this opportunities tomorrow", there was not such a promise. You have no

> hope to rise in a skilled position. What you do in the packing section is nothing but folding the cardboard once left, once right.

In talking about the packing section, beside the poor returns of the exhausting work, the non-promising nature of the non-skilled work the workers performed appears have been another important factor. Over time work became so intense that working until 2-3 o'clock in the morning became routine. Ali expressed his feelings:

> There were unmarried girls who were going home in 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. What the employer did in return to their sacrifice, let aside being bad, was cruelty.

Ayşe, who was rewarded with a higher raise in terms of wage, became later also a band leader, -a position similar to headworker that was higher than a worker but lower then the chief- emphasized that the lack of a serious wage raise was the most important point of the discontent. Erol became the person who was in charge of the store, an admirable position, towards at the end of 2005; so he was partly separated from the packing section. Ali expressed that he personally had resisted the obligatory over-time work in the first place:

> Your job is not more important than mine (…). The problems in my house allow me that much anyway; I can only work for 8-5, after that I won't come. (…) When I experience even a little discomfort, no one can handle the responsibility of that. You cannot carry the sin of it. If I would be in a position to work overtime, I would do it willingly. (…) I kept saying this, but I sufficed only to myself. I was telling this to other friends, what is done to you is oppression. The manager has not even come and thanked you once. The manager never came and said "friends you did this job very well, you managed to fill up this many cars." He always keeps saying "you made this much error," or "the quality is not enough," things like that. We managed to increase our work performance 300, 400 percent; he still talks to us about errors. When you break two covers, our day-wage was being cut. For example, two days' wages were cut. When you treat a person like this, who works hard sacrificing himself, who exerts his good-intention, I can not see you as a good-intentioned person.

After the old chief left the section, as Ali put it, "the distance between the workers and the employer started to become a chasm," they found out themselves "alone" in

relation to the employer. While they experienced times in which they were working with "1% error," having an "enormous work potential," they "descended":

> The workers and chiefs, who knew the job, had been sent. The performance had fallen. Everybody protested the employer from inside.

The last development was a rumor that some sections of the factory, beginning with the packing-forwarding one, would be sold to subcontractors. At least one of the sources of the rumor seemed to be as the old chief, who had heard this from his friends working in management. This information shocked the section. The workers were thinking that they would lose their job even maybe without getting any layoff benefits, or that they would be forced to work for the subcontractor, which meant total minimization of their rights and the wage. Mehmet, who knew the union thanks to his former work in the neighboring unionized factory, offered to go to the trade union, saying that only they could prevent this.

The first visit to the union was made with the participation of seven workers all from the packing-forwarding section, including the old chief, who seemed to have organized the meeting. To even visit a trade union was a dangerous act, which results the managements to firing the visiting workers. So it implied obviously to take a serious risk, in case of that one of the participants informed the management. Ayşe answered the question of how they had chosen the first seven workers to visit the union together, in a way emphasizing the close relationship they had built on the work floor:

> Trust. These are people with whom we shared the same piece of bread (*Bir lokma ekmeği paylaştığımız insanlar*). The people with whom we were together five of the seven days of the week.

Other Sections, Similar Conditions:

Resistances and the Way to the Unionization

The will to organize a collective action in the factory against the management did not emerge as a result of the particular grievances of only one section. Such an action would not achieve the future developments of the collective action, which will be presented in the following pages. Nuri, a machine operator in the spot welding section, represented a more positive image about his and his sections working conditions thanks to their ability to act in a coordinated way, the skilled nature of their job and their achievement to get the oppressive chief to treat them in a more democratic way. Their tacit collective resistance was mentioned above. Nuri said that they "did not have many problems", since they "manage to overcome them," implying the power of their collective action. He continued that they did not face any over-time impositions. So he basically implied by the word "problem," the oppressions and over-time impositions, since he also complained about the low wages. Nuri's discourse about his first commitment to the unionization struggle was an altruistic one, but Ayşe warned him that what they had heard at that time was that Nuri's section would also be sold to a subcontractor. Nuri remained silent as Ayşe intervened in the conversation.[239]

To extend our vision towards the complaints of other sections, of which our pioneers were in need to have a motivation to start unionization struggle, Semih also had a story to tell. He worked as a headworker in the curtain section, which had, as mentioned above, a respectful and quite atmosphere. But they were experiencing tiresome working hours and also a very harsh treatment by the management.

[239] I conducted the interviews with Nuri and Ayşe together.

> *Semih:* We worked between 8 a.m. and 12 p.m. I worked for six months like that, did not I? (He is asking his wife)
> *His wife:* Sometimes they made him get up at night. They even awaked him at 2 or 3 o'clock several times.
> *Semih:* I came home at 10, and felt asleep, the man called at night, "there are that many products to be painted black, they should be finished before tomorrow morning." At that hour I went to work.

But despite this intense laboring, the treatment they were faced with was very harsh.

> She (his wife) was sick at once, and we would go to doctor, I asked the manager for day off. The man told me right this: "if you leave, do not come again!" "What is that?" I asked him. "Dismiss him, get him out!" he said. I went out of the door as if he had fired me, and got back in through the other door. He said "*ulan* (buddy), did I not fire you!" He was a joking manager, he took his actions as a joke. He used to frighten us, then made jokes about it. He used to threaten and frighten us, I was afraid to ask for a day off. The man used to frighten us on every possible occasion. For example, I asked him for a raise, he said, "I have applications from two thousand people for your position." He used to frighten us like this. I used to say myself, "I am a headworker, of course he would not give me the same wage as the other people. Of course, he would raise my wage." I used to console myself as such. But in the end we see, this manager was also dismissed. The boss dismissed this manager, too. We did not go to the union at that time. We went in April.

Semih described the process which led them to the unionization as follows:

> Everybody had lost their hope. The boss had given many promises. We got unionized at the end of the March. The disquiet had begun at the end of the January, at the beginning of February. The firings of the boss, and his threats. As if he would give the factory to a subcontractor. This was the thing our friends were most scared of. When the factory goes in hands of the subcontractor, you cannot get more than the minimum wage, no possibility. "If you like it!" is what they say. In İzmit we did not see anyone who earned more than the minimum wage by working for a subcontractor. And this scared our friends a lot.

As can be observed Semih said that expressed the fear of the subcontractor was felt by his "friends," not by himself that much. Since he was a skilled worker, who felt more secure and in the case of a possible subcontracting he thought that he would stay in the main firm. But his personal problem with the management began right at that point, where he was a skilled worker:

> To come to my own grievance. I became a head worker. The chief promised a lot, "you are working really well, you deserve 750 ($600)". But the boss was bringing men from Adana. Before we went to the union one or two of them came. The man from Adana hangs out next to you, but earns more than you. But you do what is to be done. He threatened me as such: "you are a middle school graduate; we cannot record you officially as a headworker."

Against such threats he went to the room of the general manager with his two friends, who were the other two headworkers of the section. They told the manager:

> Our manager, on our payola-roll it is written that we are coloring workers. But my friends say that I am their headworker. I have done this work for years, but I earn less than him. And this demoralizes me.

The person who earned more than Semih was a new worker who had been brought by the employer from Adana. The general manager responded them that the person in question was also a headworker candidate. These words of the manager were seen by Semih as a clue of the management's intention to train "their own men." By "their own man" he meant the homeland relationship between the employer and the new-comers. The manager still felt the disquiet of his headworkers and again promised that their wages would be raised. But this promise was not kept:

> The raise month passed by, but we could not get any increase. He did not give us what we wanted. We got zero increase. The passed January was the month of the wage raise. Then these events began. He did not raise anyone's wage. We did not understand, and went to ask why. They told us to wait a little more; they tried to throw us off.

Semih thought that the manager had a special plan to realize in the factory instead of using a subcontracting. By considering certain statements of the manager he figured out that the management had decided to practice the "Margenta system," as he called it. Since it is a complex and differentiating employment strategy, it is worth mention. Margenta was one of the two neighboring factories, which was located in the same factory complex next to the metal factory, and which was owned by the same employer producing plastic materials. The system of Margenta, was according to

Semih worse than that of the subcontracting system. All the chiefs and headworkers who were the management's representatives on the shop floor were brought by the employer from other cities then Kocaeli, mainly from the employer's hometown, Adana. The ordinary workers were constantly changing every six or eleven months due to the law which required the employer to pay a layoff benefits in case of dismissal of any worker, who had worked for a company more then six months, and also to pay significantly more layoff benefits for workers with seniority of more than twelve months. Semih had a friend who worked in this factory, so he knew its system well. The management also offered a plan in which the workers would resign just before 12 months, stay one week or so out, and then to start to work again. When the worker was dismissed in this way, before 12 months, he/she did not get more than 500 million ($400) as the layoff benefit, since they worked for minimum wage. So, in this way, the management achieved two goals: it eliminated the necessity to raise wages due to seniority, and to pay seniority layoff benefit in a case of dismissal.

To put aside his thought about the management's plan, Semih stated that most of the workers believed that some parts of the factory would be given to subcontractors. And this rumor had a base, since the management really had investigated if working with subcontractors would be more profitable. Because it had been found to be more profitable, the meal production and service had been given to a subcontractor firm long ago. The management found subcontracting for the whole factory, however, not more profitable and gave up that idea. This was told to Semih and his two co-headworkers by the manager during a visit to state their grievances, some time after the rumor had been heard and raised disquiet among the workers.

The management had changed the plan and had begun to implement another one, according to Semih. The workers, however, did not know this, and all they knew

about was the subcontracting. Even the chief of their section confirmed in an informal way that there was a serious possibility of the introduction of subcontractors. So, as Semih interpreted it the management had turned away, but it had not informed the workers, and they were afraid. This created kind of latent resistance in Semih's section, similar to that told by Ali for the packing section. Semih experienced this resistance not as a participant but more as a headworker who was in position in the middle of the resister and the resisted. The information about the introduction of subcontractors,

> dissatisfied the friends. For example, I tell the man to do this job, he does not do it. I am the headworker, and the other is an unskilled worker. He forwards, and assembles the discs. So when the man heard about the future introduction of a subcontractor, he began to disconnect from the job. After our chief had told us this, they began to disconnect from the job. When I say, "do this", he says, "if they would fire me, let them do it. If we begin to work for a subcontractor, there are subcontractor jobs everywhere in İzmit."

The meaning of working for a subcontractor firm was well known by the workers. If they had not experience it themselves, they had friends or relatives who had. Since Semih knew only Izmit, he talked as if subcontractor work was only in Izmit in the following way:

> There are jobs in Izmit, but there is also instability. There are those who earns 1.5 billion ($800) and minimum wage in the same factory at which subcontractors are present. The worker who works in the main company *(kadrolu)* eats a special meal, the ones who work for the subcontractor eat another meal. The drudgery is done by the subcontractor worker; the easy work is done by the main firm workers. If I breath the same poisonous air in the same factory, why do I eat a different meal? There is Pirelli, for example, the man earns 3 billion ($2,400), the other minimum wage from the subcontractor. They fire you after one or two years anyway; you cannot stay longer.

While the workers were demoralized because of the subcontractor rumor, Semih and his two co-headworkers were able to get a concrete promise of a wage raise. This seemed to have been made due to their positions as headworkers and because of their

constant deliberations with the management, raising their complaints. The promise was made right after they had received the wage of March 2006. What they were earning at the time was 400, 435 and 450 YTL; for each of them the wage was different. And what they wanted was 750 YTL for each. Their chief played the mediator role between the employees and the employer offered 550 YTL for each, arguing that, quoting the mediator, she did not give that much money (750 YTL) even to the managers, and that she even had fired the chiefs and managers who had been earning that much money. The three headworkers accepted the offer. The chief told them this time that they might get the money for that month "from hand," which meant that the wage rise would not be recorded in the payroll, thus became official. They answered that they did not want to get the raise in that month if it would not be recorded,

> because when it (the management) gives you from hand it becomes a little dangerous, as if you are getting hush money (*sus payı*). Also this rise would not be reflected on our compensation and extra-time payments, if it would not be recorded on the payroll. We earn what we earn from the extra-time work payments anyway, not from the normal wage.

The management laid down also another condition. The three lucky headworkers were not to tell the other workers that they had gotten a raise. If they did this their wages, let aside any increase, would be decreased. But Semih and his friends disobeyed this in a way of acting in line with the mutual defense principle and talked about the raise to several workers whom they trusted.

> We let a couple friends to know. We did it deliberately. But we told them that that they did not hear this information from us. We did it to make them to be poised, to go and talk to the chief or whatever they would do. But we warned them that they should act as if they did not hear anything from us. The curtaining and spray section was all in our hands. (…) I told a friend: "See, I talked with the chief, he increased my wage to 550, but there is no raise for you. Watch your step, and do whatever you need to do, but you did not hear anything from us." And I made him swear.

One of the factors which led them to take this solidarity action was the exhaustion they felt from working in those heavy conditions. They made a decision that they would quit the job if they did not get any wage increase.

> We were not afraid anymore. I am a headworker, and the kid (one of the other of his co-headworkers) is a bonnet painter, he is being called from many shops in the industry (organized industry site) anyway. Instead of working here for this money, I would go and do my own craft. Therefore he also could talk to the friend, without hesitating.

The Struggle of the Community

The chief of the packing section was dismissed officially due to his low results on the IQ test, in a humiliating way. Mehmet, the former chief, was an old worker from the neighboring factory, owned by the same employer, who had experienced working organized in a trade union, since his former factory, one of the three factories in the complex, namely Arel factory, had unionized long ago. By the time the subcontractor rumor emerged and shocked the section and the rest of the factory, also the IQ test appeared to be a tool of a dismissal campaign. After Mehmet's dismissal several of others were also fired. The disquiet escalated. The former chief's involvement and his proposition of unionization to his close former coworkers from the packing section changed the scene and started another story. The first visit to Birleşik-Metal-İş[240] was made by seven workers, only two of whom were from sections other than packing.

The union confirmed the subcontractor rumor. One of the first seven was Ender, who had had an unappealing unionization experience while working in the

[240] *Birleşik-Metal-İş*: *Birleşik Metal İşçileri Sendikası*: United Metal Workers' Trade Union. This union is one of the three main trade unions for the metal sector, which tied to DİSK, *Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* – Progressive Workers Trade Union Confederation of Turkey.

neighboring Arel factory. He had been dismissed at that time due to involvement in unionization. He was seen by Ayşe as the "only conscious person among" them about unionization. The unionist presented unionization as a more or less achievable process without any casualties, before Ender's intervention. Engin persistently asked the unionists if anyone would be fired, at the cost of a dispute with the unionists. In the end they admitted that some might be hurt during the struggle. Ayşe stated that they thought at that time that only three or five people would be dismissed at most, but for the rest the result would be positive. Ali said that they felt anxiety about the possibility of being dismissed. They knew that if the management would be informed before they got the majority, some would be punished with dismissal. Ali claimed that whatever happened, they could not be in a position worse than theirs. The close relationship among them helped them greatly in the process: "Because of the sincerity we enjoy we felt the security among us in a better way."

Nuri heard about the unionization after the first steps were taken by the leaders:

> They called me, and said "we should get unionized." I get involved in order not to let the packing section to be ruined. In a way we would be also harmed (by the subcontractor), but we have friends (in the packing section) whom we like, whom we respect.

Ayşe intervened at that point during our conversation and reminded Nuri that at that time what they knew was that not only the packing section but also others might be sold to subcontractors. Ali seemed to become prominent in the struggle at that time, having the privilege to be the one who was already trying to motivate people to act against the management's negative practices:

> I talked almost to everyone. May Allah be pleased (*Allah razı olsun*), all of them like me, and I also never behave in a reckless way at any point. I was convincing about that I would stand behind my word, pursue it till the end.

During the organization process the new workers, who had been working in the factory for less than six months, were the ones who became most worried, since in case of a dismissal they could not get any layoff benefits by law. In spite of the existing social networks, and a community feeling the center of which was more or less the packing section but, which was also diffused through other sections, they were unable to organize the majority before the management was informed about the campaign. Three days after the first visit of the union and the decision, they had reached almost 50 workers, who became members of the union. In total there were 110 people employed in the factory, of which 80-85 were workers, meaning the others were administrative staff, including chiefs, managers, etc. Semih's curtaining (coloring) section was reached at the end since the relations were not as close with them at that point. Ali noted how the community feeling shifted and started to become even stronger:

> We subscribed to the union. Then, as if all friends were unanimous in that, everybody arranged his close network to become closer and more attached. They also arranged meetings outside for us not to become separated, to insure the permanence of our unity. We built very pleasant relations (*çok hoş muhabbetlere girdik*). As the days went on, and as our number increased, we began to feel more confident the idea that we would keep this alive, we would make it prosper, and we would achieve our goal. We really thought that we would achieve it. Also the unionist friends were reassuring and encouraging at that time.

On the third day someone told the management. The chiefs gathered the workers one day later and declared that the management would raise the wages, and ordered them to resign from the union. By that time Ayşe as a supervisor went to the manager's office and told him that they had heard about the subcontracting plans and that her friends were unionized. The manager responded that they had abandoned the subcontracting plan.

By that time, in the curtaining section the workers and the headworkers including Semih, had not heard anything about the unionization. This section would be reached at last by the workers who were engaged in the organizing because of the social distance that existed between them and the workers of the curtaining section. The first meeting in the union's office was held on 24 March on Friday, and the unionization began on 27 March Monday. On 30 March Semih was called by his chief, and the chief gave him 150 million TL ($ 120). Since payday was the 5th of each month, Semih was puzzled, but took the money. His astonishment increased when he found out that not only the three headmen, who had received the promise of a raise from the management, but almost everybody had been given the same amount of money in the section. Semih was confused, since he did not know anything about the unionization and asked a respectful and informed friend, Canip, about what was going on.

> There was a friend Canip. I went him. He said "give that money back immediately." He was informed on these kinds of issues. He had worked at SEKA,[241] he was experienced on these issues. His father had also worked at SEKA. He said, "look, it is very secret, we gathered and went to the union. We also want you to join us." He warned me not to tell anyone, because the boss is investigating right now. I told him, I do not know anything about the trade union; I worked before only in construction, and came here first afterwards. Let me consult with friends, see what they say.

Semih had an antipathy to the trade union at that time, besides his ignorance, due to a unpleasant experience.

> I do not like trade unions normally; I did not want to become a member. And the reason is this. When I first started the job in factory, there was brother Hüseyin, my headworker. Brother Hüseyin liked the union, since he had some friends, so we went once to the union room in Arel. We were 4 or 5 people. As we heard later, Ahmet (the union's

[241] SEKA - Türkiye Selüloz ve Kağıt Fabrikaları İşletmesi Genel Müdürlüğü – It is an old public paper and cellulose factory in İzmit, founded in 1934, which began to be called SEKA in 1955. The factory has a long unionization and mobilization legacy. See *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. "SEKA."

> branch chief) told the manager: “my manager, we got your men.” The manager called us and said “I heard that you visited the union room.” We responded “my manager, we only had a tea”, “you will not go there anymore”. We therefore became hesitant about the union; the first one who sold us out was the unionist himself.

Another worker, who would be one of the two first fired due to the unionization, talked with Semih and tried to convince him about unionization, but Semih told him the story above. Semih’s hesitation and objection made the other angry, so that they had a dispute in the hall. He and his friends resisted their fellow workers and did not become members at the beginning.

> Some joined the union, and some not. We gave that money back. We gathered with friends (two other headworkers). We determined that it was hush money. “Even that we do not join in the union, we should be at least respectful to our friends. We do not take this money.” We called the chief and gave the money back.

The class struggle became escalated from that moment. The employer ordered the chiefs to give extra money as a reward to those who had resigned from the union. Semih’s chief got also extra money for this special job, and some others were heard of as such. Semih was called by the planning manager, one day after he had been informed about the unionization campaign by his friend, and he was asked if he and his coworkers had become members. Semih responded that they had not become members, but he also told the manager that he had heard of 58 workers who had, and if that many workers had become members, it must be something good. Right at the end of this meeting, Semih saw that two workers had been brought outside by the security personnel, and learned that they had been fired due to the unionization. This triggered a collective action, and many of the workers became members of the union in this period.

> They were talking about 58 people, but actually only 10-15 worker went to the union. They also fooled us by telling us that the majority had become members. We went to the union, because we heard that the majority had gone. But when we went, we saw that nobody had

> gone there yet. But the bosses did not know that. If they knew, they would have prevented this and dismissed them all. The union chief said that everybody had become members except for 10 or 15 workers. We said "Are we dupes?" I even became resented and asked the headman, "Why did you not warn us, if so many people had already subscribed? This was told me only two days ago, and I have just asked for some time to consider."

The bluff of the union's headman seemed to work well. After the dismissal of two workers he declared that the workers would slow down the work, that the majority had become members. Erol stated that this was a very successful act taken by the union. The hesitant people became members in one day after this declaration. He admitted in a realistic way that their effort to convince people did not work well enough to reach the majority.

> To find a job is very hard. Everybody had that job through connections (*torpil*). "If I would be dismissed due to the union, I cannot find a job." Therefore even if people trust you, they still have a fear.

At this point I wanted to narrate an interesting story Semih told me about the importance of *torpil*, or favoritism as it may called, for the limited employment opportunities in Izmit. Semih's sincere story reveals how the unemployed youth strive to find jobs, and how they use electoral democracy as a tool to be employed in an environment with high employment rates. I should note that Semih told the following story after they had been dismissed and their subsequent mobilization had diminished. He was working in a small shop at minimum wage at that time:

> Here in İzmir all of the employment opportunities are political. All of the employees find their jobs in this way. Rather than the *İş Kurumu*,[242] the politicians find jobs here. I am sure that all of the workers in the factory, except the relatives of the chiefs and managers, found their jobs through politicians. For example in one period I found a job thanks to the MHP,[243] in another period thanks to the DYP.[244] It

[242] İş Kurumu – Türkiye İş Kurumu, The Labor Institution of Turkey: A public institution tied to Ministry of Labor and Social Security, which operates to find jobs for the unemployed.

[243] MHP – Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi: National Action Party

> is a kind of tradition here, since many years, the things go like that. People do not vote here according to the services the candidates promise to provide. "Which candidate will find me a job?" That is the question they care about. For example once we, the youth of this district, called all of the mayor ("*belediye başkanı*") candidates. We held meetings here in the coffeehouse with each of them separately. We told each of them the same thing. There were 52 unemployed at that time. Even our employed friends supported us. First, we called the mayor of that period, because we thought that he should be the most powerful. We asked him exactly this: "My mayor, for how many people can you find jobs?" "How many unemployed are there among you?" he asked. "52" we answered. He said "I cannot find jobs for all of them, but I will get 25 of them employed". "If you find jobs for 25 of us, all of our votes will be yours," we said. But, of course, we also met with the other candidates. The candidates also had power. For example, *Saadet*[245] pulled three or five of us and found them jobs. Since they had found jobs, they stopped coming with us. Also other parties did the same thing. And this was also a good thing for us. We do not care about parties. Three or five of us found jobs, which is a good thing. We pretended as if we became sad, since we had promised the mayor, but we actually became glad. The mayors, who do not ever show up, came by before elections. In that way 3 or 5 became employed through that party, 3 or 5 through the other one, we all found jobs in some way. I am now again waiting for the elections. I hope to find a job with a union.

If we return our story, the first collective apparent action taken by the workers was against this first evident attack by the management. For 11 days men not the women, did not leave the factory courtyard even at night, and they all slowed down production. With the guidance of the union they went in the factory, stood next to their machines, but they did not work as much as they had. Probably they exaggerated, but as Ayşe and Nuri stated it, the production went down from 3000 units to 100. The union leaders also warned them to work in the normal way when an attorney or an inspector appeared whom was called by the employer to record the illegal resistance of the workers. Semih's section also slowed down the production but not that dramatically, he said:

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[244] DYP – Doğru Yol Partisi: True Path Party

[245] Saadet Partisi: Felicity Party

> We were still trying to behave fairly. Our section was a different one, if you do not work, it costs enormously. Because the electricity, the gas, the paint becomes wasted. The loss is immense. Therefore for example if we would produce 20,000 normally, we still produced 10,000, while the other sections produced 100.

The workers of Arel also stood with the male workers in the factory at night, an act which impressed them deeply. The management stopped the food service as a counter move during the action. Ali described their mood during the action as following:

> We got into this action with very intense feelings. The action merged us together. Also it made us realize the seriousness of the act in which we were engaged. At first the support of the Arel workers created an enormous assurance. We told each other, this is due to our unification, and unionization. We realized the necessity to become unionized. That was the time when we told ourselves that we were doing something good.

Just like the workers were building their front, the employer was busy with the same mission from her own side, since class and class struggle entails a historical relation of at least two sides. As was heard by the workers the employer's father was recommending that the dismissed workers should be rehired. But Handan, his daughter, who was in charge of the factory, did not allow this.

> Handan said, "I do not care, my father." It became obvious that it would be a rough struggle. She started a contra-standing. She gave the signal that she would not stand still, and that she would struggle against us. (…) This is written on their (employers') constitution somehow. The ones who were fired should not be taken back. If you took them back, what would the others do? Such concerns. They generated a contra-stance. (…) The ones who had been fired, were liked and respected. It was like they took and threw a part away from our circle of friends. We told ourselves that tomorrow I might be also dismissed like him or her.

The result of the action was not that successful. The workers were unable to achieve to get the two back to the work, but there was still a gain. Two fired workers got their maximum compensation. While they were paid about 1,500,000 TL ($1,200) each before the resistance, as a result of the collective action while one gained 7,500,000 ($6,000), the other got 11,000,000 TL ($8,800) as compensation. Nuri stated:

> It was our action that forced the boss to give that much money. There was an order from Canada, that was why she had to agree. And we agreed because we thought that our friends had gained. The union had also accepted. To stay at the factory's garden at night was very rough for us. To tell you the truth, we were done ("*bitmiştik biz*"). If we had not accepted the deal, they would not have even gotten that money.

On the evening of the day the agreement was made they received notifications certified by a notary that the work had been hindered by them. They also got two days off after the action and the agreement. The first clash seemed to be taken as a deuce by the workers, but actually it had been won by the management. A new and harsher battle was waiting for them.

"Cold War" until the Collective Dismissal

A new phase began after they retired to the factory. The management's motivation behind the two days-off came out, when they saw almost 50 security cameras fixed on the building during their days-off. The management could not prove that they had slowed down the work at the last resistance. So the cameras were put both to prepare for the next possible slowing down action, and to put a psychological pressure on the workers. The management "spent for the cameras an amount of money which it did not spent for the workers," said Semih. They became worried at first, but then felt relieved, so they began to wave their hands at them. Management's new strategies against the unionization were not limited to the introduction of the cameras; a new production manager, Nesrin, was brought from another factory owned by the employer with full authorization and the special mission of ending the unionization.

Nesrin, who became the prominent figure, the highest representative of the employer in the factory after her arrival in mid-April, conducted a "cold war," as Ali

called it, until the collective dismissal in August. To quote the numbers expressed by Semih, after the dismissal of two workers, and the following campaign of signing up for the union, 81 workers out of a total of 90 became unionized. That was the scene with which the anti-union expert was faced. She used "stick and carrot" to convince or force workers to resign from the trade union. Many worker who had started to work less than six months before were dismissed due to "low efficiency and employment reduction." While the unionized workers were fired, new workers were employed mostly from the employer's hometown of Adana who had worked in other enterprises owned by the same employer. Most of the unionized workers got scared when they discovered that they could not do anything legally against this unjust act of the employer. Some came to the point of being convinced by the promises, by the carrot of higher wage and higher position. Nuri's account was as followed:

> A person called Nesrin came. (…) She came and determined the weak ones. "Come and resign from the union, you will get such and such wages. I will not write it in the payroll; you will get it in an envelope. I will fire the rest, you save yourself." She held these kinds of conversations for three months. She was behind the operators at first, since they were important in the production line. They did not care about the production anymore. They made the machines turn off necessary. The real goal was to end the union activity. She talked differently with each of us. I did not understand at the beginning whether we were friend or foe. (…) She talked with me a lot. "I will give both of you one billion ($800) as wage. It was very appealing. I have a friend, Ahmet. She liked us a lot. At the beginning we did not misbehave towards her, because we did not understand. We were well in with her. We were buying funny presents for each other. She invited us to lunch and other things. Not to let my friends think that I was an adulterer, I distanced myself from her.

Nuri did not have many personal grievances about the working conditions, as mentioned above. Therefore Nesrin's attitudes were more welcomed by him. On the other hand, Semih was much more reactive towards the management, and its representatives, since he had been given promises which were not kept. He became

much more aware about the tactics of the management, since he had experienced many of them.

> She was saying, "your wage would be one billion. You would be chief officially. You would be the most favored ones." She was trying to make us believe that. We told her this: "Will all of us be chief, will everyone in this factory become chief? You are telling all of us the same thing. Will you give all of us one billion ($800) for wages? If it was possible to give us that much money, we were demanding only 550 ($440). If you gave us 550, we would have not gone to the union. (…) There were a group of girls; she made all of them chief, one by one. (…) I am not a child. I am not such a dupe. We are all people who did their military service. (…) I think she was a psychologist. You cannot impress us psychologically. You do whatever you can, but I will calm down only if I bring home two loaves of bread instead of one. How can you cure psychologically a man who cannot afford his rent?

Erol stated that Nesrin used a lot of tactics, including visiting the homes of the workers; she convinced some and made them chiefs. He concluded, however, that when the new workers came from Adana, those who had become convinced by Nesrin, were put aside and the newcomers got the highest positions. Those who had been persuaded by Nesrin were not few actually. Nuri pointed out that there were many people who came him and said that he/she was considering resigning.

> I told them, "I wish that they would be sincere. Then we would leave the union all together." I told them not to believe them. I had dear friends. I let them do whatever they wanted. We left only three people in our section. We had got into a cause. We were afraid of the sin of this job *(Biz bu işin günahından korktuk)*. There were certain people who would make it to the end. They would be harmed. The management aimed to gain one worker from each four important sections. One person was enough. Then they would give him an assistant. Teach him the job in a short time. If I would be convinced in one section, quit from the union. All the rest, all of the seven workers would be dismissed. Nesrin approached saying "I have chosen you." I explained this to our friends again and again. Some became convinced, there were even those who undertook her mission and became convincers themselves. We met with those in town; they were 15 or so people. They told me, "we are convinced, come with us, consider and make your decision, she has promised a good future, high positions."

Nesrin did not use only carrot; the stick was the dismissal. Semih said that the management fired almost one worker a week. When seven workers were dismissed at once in the first week of June, the workers gathered the next morning, and waited for what the union leaders would propose, since they wanted to put forward a collective action against the dismissals. The union responded that since the ones who had been fired had not completed six months, they could not take them back to work. They could only get their union compensations. Instead of these fired workers, at the beginning about 20 workers were brought mainly from other enterprises owned by the same employer in her hometown of Adana. These new comers were not insured, in a contrary way with the law, and they were jobbers, who were paid daily wage. Semih explains how they applied to the work inspectors, how they came and determined the new comers, who were working in an illegal way, in spite of the fact that the employer had dismissed a couple of days earlier unionized workers, due to employment reduction:

> The inspector came and asked who was working as a jobber (*yevmiyeli*). We showed him immediately, "Mr. Inspector she is a jobber," "Are you jobber", "Yes, I am", "When did you come?" "Today." "Mr. Inspector this kid is jobber," "My son are you jobber?", "Yes", "Are you insured?", "No", "If they approve me, they will." We have the document showing that the employer dismissed seven people because she reduced the employment. In such a factory you hire 20 people, who are uninsured. This is completely a deceit. The inspector determined this, he has the document. When nothing came out of this, our friends got scared naturally. Everybody became scared. The woman says, "I will fire you all, wave hands from behind you." The woman began to do what she had said. She fired two others after that.

The dismissal of the unionized workers and the employment of the new workers from mainly Adana came to a point that from April to August about 80 unionized workers were reduced to 41, and newcomers increased to about 60. Erol described the attitude of the unionized workers towards the newcomers as follows:

> The men from Adana came. Including Ayşe, our friends humiliated, insulted, excluded them. I hastily wrote something like a handout. I made a lot of people, including the workers from Adana read it. "The employer wants to make us fight against each other. In fact, we all are workers, brothers. We should prevent this plan. We should not allow the employer to divide us, make us enemy."

Ayşe also approved Erol's intervention about their behaviors towards the newcomers, and said that they changed their attitudes after that. Nuri explained the process as follows:

> When we came to August, 41 of us were left. She had fired the ones who had worked for 2 and 6 months already. They kept saying to us openly, "we will fire you, also." We were 41, and there were 60-70 workers from Adana and Erzincan. We did not have any problems. But we did not teach them the job. I said openly, "If I teach you the job, they will fire me." There were many from them who said, "you are good people." Many of them worked for three days, and went back. They said that, "we would not even let you in Adana, if we were you. We did not know the situation here."

Semih pointed out another dimension about the newcomers, and underlined this situation as another clue that the management had stopped to caring about the production for the time being, but concentrated only on ending the unionization:

> They brought chiefs from the street to lead us. The man had not ever seen the product we produced. He was asking us. The boss brought a chief from Adana, the man says, "Do this as such." But I know the job. We want to work in a good manner. I tell the chief, "My chief, this will not work in that way." He insists, "Do it the way I tell you." But it comes up that the way he tells is wrong.

Even though they could not prevent the dismissals of their friends, who had begun to work less then six months ago, the unionized workers did not remain inactive. As Ali said, they "stood strong against Nesrin's gang."

> We were united, behaving almost as if were organized. Everybody had a duty. How does it work? I said, "Ayhan, you are very close with them, you establish such a dialog with them, and let them establish same kind of dialog with their own friends, so that the unionization mood stays alive among the people with whom I or you do not have any contacts. (…) We organized such a division of labor. That was very nice actually. Some friends, who seemed to be very passive, whom I did not expect to contribute the process, did a lot. They put up

> a good stand against the management. People who had not participated in our meetings about unionization, that we thought that they might easily back down from, did not detach from us because of this division of labor. (…) Nesrin made people worry and scared by telling them that they would be dismissed if they did not resign from the union. She practiced psychological oppression on us. We held it, she pulled it. She held it, we pulled it. But then came together again.

Nuri gave a concrete example of how they gained a worker back who had became convinced by the manager:

> She talked to one of the girls. The girl said her, "I have just got married; I am in debt a lot." Nesrin said her, "how will you subsist then, if you become dismissed?" She convinced the girl to resign from the union. But then she mistreated the girl. We made her a member again. We excluded her at first. Ali and Erol told that we should gain her back. She was the first one who gave up in the packing section. Everybody was reactive to her. To lose our friendship was unbearable for her. After lunch we used to talk about unionization, about what we would do. We were very close with her.

Semih also emphasized the fact that no one resign from the union in spite of this immense oppression:

> But this is a matter of fact, no one gave up. A couple of people gave up, and resigned. But we convinced them again, and they became unionized again.

As Nuri mentioned above, Nesrin's mistreatment of a girl after she had convinced her, Nesrin as the representative of the employer, seemed to make mistakes. Another tactical mistake was that the management dismissed the few workers who had not been unionized due to their close relationship with the chiefs. The management did this to prevent them from also becoming unionized; but this contributed not unsurprisingly to the unification of the unionized workers.

Nesrin changed her strategy over time slightly, and besides the stick and the carrot, she concentrated on provoking the unionized workers so that they would perform insulting behavior towards the managers. This would result in their dismissals in a legal way due to having insulted the employer. A worker, Nihan, fell

into this trap. She swore at Nesrin in a situation in which Nesrin were urging her to reassign. This led to her dismissal on 7 August 2006 due to the 25th article of the Work Law, which legitimizes the right of the employer to abolish the work contract immediately when a worker swears at her superiors. The dismissal of Nihan shocked the unionized workers, after three months of immense repression they decided to perform the most powerful act they could, facing the reality that only 65 unionized workers were left in the factory. They were losing their struggle, their jobs, and their friends day by day. They decided to occupy one of the most important sections of the factory. The previous not-leaving the work place action after the dismissals of two friends had been semi-successful. Also a close factory to theirs, in which workers were trying to unionize like them, had recently occupied the factory for one night and achieved getting two dismissed workers, because of the unionization, back to work. Thus they occupied the curtain section in the same night.

The Second Stage of the Mobilization:
The Struggle outside of the Factory

Sixty-five unionized workers occupied a section of the factory on 8 August 2006 and the occupation lasted for nearly 30 hours. They demanded that the management to rehire Nihan and to recognize the union, but the management did not accept as expected. A gendarme unit came to the factory right after the occupation and the gendarme commander warned them that the unit would intervene in the building if they did not end the occupation. The workers were faced with the fact that the management would not negotiate, and they ended the occupation. When they went out from the gendarme station, where they had been taken afterwards and went

back to the factory, they learned that all of them had been dismissed without any layoff benefits according to 25th article of the work law.

The workers declared that they would go on with their struggle in front of the factory, thus another stage began for them. Ali noted that when they found themselves out of the factory they realized that they were engaged in something serious. During their first night in front of the factory, the management brought nearly 40 new workers with buses, but the workers tried to prevent them, and the first quarrel was experienced. But in the end they managed to send them back with the precious support of the workers of the neighboring factory, Arel, which was unionized in the same union. Also, on the following night, the dismissed workers visited some of the previously employed new workers' residences and convinced some of them also to leave the job. Also in the first days outside of the factory besides preventing the entry of new workers, they also did not let the managers and the chiefs they disliked to go to the factory. Ali narrated a scene about this, laughing:

> Ayhan stopped one manager's car in the morning. He asked him: "Who the hell are you?" He answered him, frightened "I am the manager of this factory." "What the hell is a manager supposed to do in a factory lacking its workers? Get out off here!"

Also Erol noted that on the first days they did not let many managers or chiefs go in the factory, just like newcoming workers. But then they decided to gain the support of the people of İzmit, to let public know about their struggle. They organized committees and began to visit parties, unions and other associations. Erol underlined, as I also observed, that they found an important level of support in İzmit, which motivated them a great deal. They were on the agenda of many local newspapers, and people heard about their struggle. Erol gave several accounts of this popular support such as that many landlords of those workers, who lived in rental houses, did

not push them much to get their rents, since they knew the situation. The dismissed workers made a good start to their struggle outside, but this was only the beginning.

Until 23 August 2006 the workers kept guard in front of the factory all day and night to prevent any possible entry of new workers by the management, aiming to break their resistance. They also organized one protest in front of the factory with the participation of other unionized workers. On that day, in the afternoon, a gendarme unit came in front of the factory to bring all of them to the station to take their depositions on the instruction of the office of the director of public prosecutions (*Cumhuriyet Başsavcılığı*). The workers became uneasy and suspicious about an attempt of entry by new workers, while they were not there. So six workers somehow managed to run away from the gendarme, including Ali, Nuri and Semih, and they stayed there after the gendarme and their friends left the place. They also immediately called the unionists to gather the workers of Arel and other unionized factories to guard factory against the possibility of an entry. The unionists did not do this, but two of them came personally. The suspicious turned out to be valid; three large buses full of new workers came after half an hour. The two unionists and six workers tried hard not to let the bus inside, but they were too few to fight against the bus' driver insistency and the gendarmes, who intervened also in this situation. This event was an important turning point in their struggle, since the management achieved to get strike breakers into the factory, thus the workplace began to work again. But also this event shook their trust in the union:

> The chief (of the union branch) made us distrust him on that day, in which people from Adana got into the factory. When the gendarme came and said that it would bring all of us to the station, we understood that something would be happen. We called the chief, and told him to send us support. He could have brought workers from near factories. There were at least three factories very close around us, which were unionized in our union. He could call the shifts of those factories, which were not working at that time. (…) At the moment we

> could not stop them from entering in the factory, we were finished. We lost our struggle actually on that day. Ali Brother (*abi*) strained incredibly, he fought against the gendarmes. The gendarmes beat him up harshly; they threw him in the gendarme's car. Then they began to beat Nuri. They beat the girls one by one and pulled everybody into the cars. We could not resist them. It was the union's fault, I said this all the time. I do not know, was it the fearfulness of the union, or what? If we had not warned the union, we may say that it could not think that these things would happen. (…) Ali Brother asked them in a harsh way, there was Cemal, the vice-chief of the branch. Ali Brother asked him why they had abandoned them. He answered that he could not gather people there by calling them. Ali brother told him, "if you could not gather 150 people here, it means that you do not know this job. It means that we made a mistake by organizing with you." (…) At once the branch chief blabbed out that "if anything happens here, I would be ruined." When he said this we understood that he had been threatened by someone, maybe by the employer, maybe by the gendarmerie. We talked with friends and agreed on this.

The six dismissed workers and the two unionists after resisting for half an hour were taken into the custody by the gendarmes and thus the new workers entered the factory. The timing of the gendarme in bringing the large group of workers earlier in the station to take their depositions was interpreted by the dismissed workers as the gendarme's cooperation with the management.

Despite the entry of a large group of new workers and their disappointment about their union, the protesting workers came in front of the factory to persist in their struggle. Once, they physically attacked a group of new workers who were staying in a building in the neighborhood outside of the factory. This made most of them quit their jobs and made the management to keep the other strike breakers inside the factory even at night. The use of force was a debated issue among the protesting workers, but in the end it seems that it was used it several times. Another case was even more interesting. Three of them, including Erol, who was generally against the use of force, followed a bus that was carrying new workers to the factory despite the driver having received several warnings not to do this. The workers caught him in the middle of town, got on the bus, beat him quickly and disappeared.

Later, the driver with friends carrying guns found them in front of the factory to beat them, but later it came out that the driver was Ali's friend, so the issue became settled.

Erol gave an interesting account on how the local mayor and the commander of the local gendarme unit, before he had changed in the middle of the struggle, had protected the local workers to a small degree by overlooking many of their non-legal actions:

> This neighborhood is a small one. The unit commander of the gendarmerie and local people know each other very well. "These are our kids," they thought. They were also uneasy about the situation. "While people of this town were being dismissed, you brought workers from Adana." The commander told me "Who do you thing gave you the food when you occupied the factory? I sent you the food." Another thing, when we were brought to the station to make depositions, the commander told us several times that the one who could give the best deposition for us should do it. "Make him give the best deposition, which would not give harm, and make the others to sing it." We did many illegal things. We broke the windows of the building in which those strike breakers had been staying, and beat a couple of them. The local mayor came, the local headmen intervened in the situation. They found the owner of the building, and convinced him to negotiate. "These are kids of our neighborhood." The mayor paid for the damage. But the general manager of the factor complained that the commander of the gendarmerie unit was defending the workers. The commander himself told us. His upper commander began to deal with the issue afterwards.

The struggling workers enjoyed several visits like ones by the local headmen (*muhtar*), workers unionized in other unions. By the end of August the tension rose due to several rumors in the factory about threats raised by some of the new workers against the unionized workers inside the factory and the ones outside. Another massive protest was organized on 31 August with the participation of nearly 300 people. During the protest the unionists went into the factory to meet with the managers, but the workers outside were tense after the threats and after many days of harsh struggle. The union promised it would engage in serious action on that day if

they got no response from the management. The workers began to shake the door of the factory after waiting for more than two hours for the unionists to come back with good news. The unionists came immediately to stop them, but no serious step was taken by the management.

On Sunday, 3 September 2006, eleven workers in front of the factory were attacked by nearly 100 new workers, who were staying in the factory due to the dismissed workers' pressure on them. During twenty minutes an immense fight occurred. In the end the gendarme intervened. Two of the dismissed workers' legs were broken. Nuri described the fight:

> It was a very honorable struggle. We fought for twenty minutes. I was scared to death. But we pushed them down, so that they could not get out of the factory. Ender hit them with his car, I saw men flying off from the top of the car. We did not step back. If we had, they would have hurt us seriously though. Fight for bread (*ekmek kavgası*). They were also workers. Actually, they were right, too.

Erol described the reason in a more reasonable way, how they managed with so many attackers:

> Okay, the side that was beaten was really theirs. But how could this happen? Note this well. Those men knew that they were wrong. In the end they were workers, also we were workers. They knew that they were standing on the wrong side. Even at that moment not all of them attacked us. They did not want to do so. They were preventing and holding each other. Some were trying to calm others down. On the one hand, the fight was going on; on the other, they were trying to hold each other. Because they were aware that we were right. They were also right. I got upset later, workers fighting each other.

The governor of İzmit became involved in the issue after this big fight, and made the union chief and the factory's attorney meet in his office. They could not agree on anything. On the evening of the same day, the dismissed workers attempted to go back in front of the factory, but the gendarme stopped them and took many of them into custody. After that day the workers were unable to wait in front of the factory because of the gendarme's barrier, which was present thereafter. They began to meet

and wait in a small office provided by the local headman, which was nearly 500 meters from the factory. In the following days they organized several marches in İzmit's town center, sold special pens they had ordered to the parties, associations, unions, and other supporters to generate financial support. They also met with the influential former city major of İzmit to ask his support.

All of the five workers were unanimous about the union's incapacity, passivity and lack of financial support. The union had prevented the protesting workers from beating the strike breakers, which had been perceived by many of them after a while as the only way to stop them. Despite many of the branch chief's promises about the future radical actions in the case of the non-settlement of the issue, these turned to be nonsense. The workers themselves strived to gain the support of local organizations, parties and influential figures. The most objective failure of the union was it lacks of financial support. During more then two months of unemployment, the union provided only 100 million TL ($80) for each, which was mostly given by the neighboring Arel factory workers, despite the branch chief's repeated promises of financial support. In the first week of September the branch chief declared that the ones, who found jobs should leave, which demoralized workers further. Semih concluded that "the union and the gendarme stopped us, not the employer." Nuri both described his opinion about the union and revealed his feelings about the struggle:

> We told ourselves that the factory would not work. We kept beating the newcomers. But the union made our waiting meaningless by preventing us from getting into the trouble with law. Even the branch chief was afraid of us. Normally I am afraid of two people; I do not like to fight. But fighting for one's bread is different. Fight for rightfulness. These make the person powerful. To know what you want.

On 16 September another attack of the new workers was undertaken, this time in the factory. As recorded, nearly 50 workers attacked the union room of Arel factory, injured two shop stewards and two other workers, one of whom was stabbed seriously. After the attack many workers came in front of the factory, including our dismissed workers. The tension could not be lowered even by the involvement of the local mayor during the whole night. The gendarme intervened and dispersed the crowd early in the morning. On 18 September the dismissed workers and others attacked the ones who had filed criminal complaints about the general manager and lower managers of the factory. On 19 September, another mass protest was organized in front of the factory with the participation of the general headman of DİSK, Süleyman Çelebi. A parliamentarian of İzmit who had become involved in the dispute declared on 30 September that the settlement of the dispute would not be easy. Çelebi declared that on 3 October his meetings with the governor and the employer had not gone well. After a six-month long struggle in the factory and nearly two and a half months of struggle outside of it, which had been filled with many attacks by the gendarme and new workers, and many were taken into custody, the insurgent workers of the metal factory decided to call an end to their struggle.

The Experience and the Class Formation

Thompson's contribution to the question of class consciousness and experienced was discussed in the introduction. To summarize, Thompson claims that people find themselves in a society which is structured by determined routes, experience exploitation, define themselves through facing antagonisms and they get into struggles about these antagonistic issues. They realize themselves as members of

certain classes in these struggles. And the class consciousness is nothing but the knowledge of this realization itself. [246]

Inspired by Thompson's emphasis on class struggle rather then class itself, and on class formation rather then a static notion of class consciousness, Fantasia argues that the strategic encounters between classes, industrial conflicts or collective action, are important for understanding the problem of class formation.[247] Consequently he points out the importance of examining "the ways in which emergent cultural formations were constructed inter-subjectively and in relation to opposition during acute industrial conflicts." He names these emergent cultural formations "cultures of solidarity," which are expressed in emergent values, behaviors, and organizational forms. "Cultures of solidarity" entail that collective consciousness may be "bound fairly tightly to the strategic encounter that has given rise to it, and thus such cultural processes can be seen as relatively independent of the previously existing ideas and beliefs of the individual participants." The focus of such an analysis should not the individuals, but the collective action and mobilization.[248] As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter and tried to reveal the empirical facts based on the interviewees' accounts and my observations of a lively worker solidarity, which functioned through the networks of workers in the factory, was present before the mobilization and was strengthened even more in the process. It could be argued that a "culture of solidarity," a cultural formation, or a collective consciousness emerged among the workers at a certain level as a result of their experiences. The solidarity feeling among the workers prior to the acute encounter,

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[246] E. P. Thompson, "Class Struggle without Class" In *Class* edited by Patrick Joyce (New York: Oxford University: 1995), p. 136.

[247] Fantasia, "From Class Consciousness," p. 279.

[248] Ibid. p. 280.

which could be observed in workers' accounts, such as "I was afraid of the sin" of not supporting their friends, or "even if we do not become members we should be respectful in our friends," turned into a more critical consciousness related to their class struggle at least for some of them in the process.

The community, which enjoyed a certain level of worker solidarity, changed itself during the struggle in terms of both quantity and quality, some workers joined in, some departed. But the first leading community, based mainly on one section of the factory, extended and included workers from other sections. Semih expressed his feelings, which do not leave us much else to say, as follows:

> We did not greet each other beforehand. We became very very close afterwards. We slept together in the same place, woke up in the same place. (…) I am still having dreams about it, I dream as if I am going there everyday. I have dreams in which I see myself still continuing to struggle there.

To examine the interviewees' declarations with the notion of class formation, as explained above, seems to be appropriate. Despite the frustrating end of the struggle without any gain and the "betrayal" of the trade union as it was perceived by the participants, there are still some clues of on emerging class consciousness due to their "inter-subjectively constructed cultural formation" throughout the struggle. Semih said that he was on the way to becoming a *sofu*, which means objectively a highly religious person, but which meant for Semih a symbol of a conservative ideological positioning conformed to the existent inequalities. Semih, who is a son of a religious and conservative family from Trabzon, whose wife wears a headscarf, said that he learned a lot during the struggle. It is worth presenting the following part of his words on his perception about his experience prior to their collective dismissal:

> We were forced to do it. I had no intention, I am serious. But I should admit that there were friends who would have done this even if they had been given one billion TL as wage. Because they knew that to become a group and to unionize was something good. But we did not

> have any idea about it. Let me call us the lower section of the workers. We were people who had no idea about this kind of issues, who had worked in the construction sector, or in the small industries. In industry there is no union since there are only two or three workers in each workplace. We were people who had not even heard a word about the trade unions. I had not any intention to unionize. I did not know about to unite. But there were certain friends, who knew the bosses very well. They were defending that a boss would commit treachery definitely at a point. Therefore they were grouping, unionizing between themselves voluntarily. A friend said this: A boss would not provide any benefits to a worker. A boss is always insatiable. The man was explaining these things to us, but we were laughing at him. We thought that he was talking nonsense. But what happened? We lived it and saw it. We saw it, since we found ourselves in the middle of the affair. We could not have seen it otherwise. We did not understand it, when someone else told it to us. We found it funny, when the man told us about unionization. We told him that the boss was well-intentioned. We asked him why the boss would dismiss us if we were productive. But we understand this; the boss showed this to us.

I think that Semih presents a remarkable affirmation of Thompson's thesis at the micro level, with his experience and his description of it. He continued to tell in an excited mood the things he had become "aware of" with the enthusiasm of someone who thinks that he has realized the "truths" about once hidden facts from his point of view. In a long speech he gave about what he had learned during the struggle he said:

> Let me tell you what I have learned, I perceived them very clearly. I understood that a lot of people are exploiting us. (…) I saw how the military defends the interests of the bosses, and of the rich. I regretted that I had done my military service.

The duration and the endurance of Semih's "realizations," his transformation as a consequence of the experience he had is another question. He admitted during our conversation that he was having a hard time with his relatives and old friends when he talked about the new thoughts he shared with me. The enthusiasm he felt in explaining his thoughts to me, as someone who would listen to them without any reaction, was a result of this hardship he had faced and the loneliness he felt.

Another interviewee, Nuri, did not express what he had experienced and learned, as remarkably as Semih. But I learned from his friends that he had been to be a semi-organized idealist[249] ("*ülkücü*") at the beginning of the collective action, but had abandoned that ideology in the end. The most shocking point for him, according to Semih and Erol, was the lack of support of his old idealist friends inside and outside the factory for the collective action. He expressed this point in a hidden way as such: "It was a real experience. You should not move in with everyone. Many people ran away." In line with these words Nuri kept saying how this experience had made him to build new and stronger friendships. His ideological transformation was so deep that he had begun to sympathize with the radical left parties, because he began to think that they "really defend the workers rights."

Nuri, together with Ayşe, emphasized how they had begun to care about similar actions by workers after theirs: "We go now to the actions and strikes, and we share our experiences. We went to several workplaces in Istanbul where workers were engaged in resistance actions. We visited to the recent strike in Izmit, we also visited several associations." They say that they are more experienced now on the issues of unionization: "We proceeded in a very unorganized way without any program."

They said that they had learned how to fight, but this did not prevent Ayşe from express her feelings in a sincere way that she would not engage easily in such a struggle again. She told this in a joking way, but it seemed to have serious relevance. Two of them stressed that they had trusted the union too much and that they should have had control over it: "everybody is angry with the union. People are angry with such things. You will hear tons of grievances about the union if you ask them ("*Bin*

[249] *Ülkücü* means a militant supporter of radical nationalist National Action Party.

dokun bin ah işit"). People became unemployed. Most of them are married." This statement about the workers' perception of the trade union, which has at least some factual truth in it, actually explains a lot. The fact that despite my insistent efforts and the precious support of Erol and Ali, two leading figures, I could not conceive more then five workers to interview had its source in this frustration of the majority.

Concluding Remarks

The distinctive features of the above-revealed experience are its durability despite the mass dismissal of the struggling workers due to the occupation of the factory and its militancy. Even after the collective dismissal at the beginning of August 2006, 65 workers continued to struggle until October 2006 in front of the factory in spite of repeated strike breaker and gendarme attacks, many times of forced takings into the custody and their union's lack of serious support, which implied financial crises for all of them during those months of struggling without incomes. They used force several times against the strike breakers; they tried to gain the public support of the neighborhood and İzmit's town center, in which they were successful to a certain level, thanks to the small neighborhood features of their locality. Another distinctive feature of this struggle is the apparent importance of high level of solidarity with its facades of cohesion, mutual defense, and shared norms among workers prior to the mobilization for the emergence and lasting of the struggle.[250] Also, the impact of networks among workers on individual involvement in the mobilization beyond individual calculations is clearly observable.[251]

[250] Hodson, et. al. "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined," p. 399.

[251] Dixon and Roscigno, "Status, networks, and social movement," p. 1296.

The friendship group in one certain section of the factory served as the starting point of the collective action, and it was also the base of the following process. At least an important number of the participant workers were not only struggling for pure economic interests, but for a community they had, they built, they valued and which they felt was really hard to find in this age in the workplaces. I do not imply that they behave altruistically by sacrificing themselves for the sake of their fellows. By not participating in the collective action they would have lost many things, they had such as the friendship of their peer group and a respectable position in the group. Semih stated clearly that people would have been ashamed to back down from the action. The objective reason behind the reality of the possibility of shame is obviously the solidarity feeling among them. The case confirms the argument that worker solidarity and militancy are not necessarily generated by the unions, but rather by conflict in the workplace, more indigenous worker strategies and practices, active work-group social relations, and cultural practices.[252]

Also the apparent existence of two consistent and respected leaders of the struggle is another point, which was claimed as an important facet of the worker solidarity, and also an important condition for long term mobilization.[253] The leading position of two workers, Erol and Ali, was very apparent and the measure of their impact on the process was tremendous. They were both highly respected and loved among the workers. They became leading figures in the process especially after the unionization started, thanks to their earlier stance against the management, their respected status and their labor in the struggle. Others respected them so much that they became sources of inspiration and motivation. They served as role models. To be brave and to fight for justice, to defend his/her rights as much as them, became

[252] Dixon, et. al. "Unions, Solidarity, and Striking," p. 9.

[253] Hodson, et. al. "Is Worker Solidarity Undermined," p. 400.

something to emulate for some of the participants. So this admiration became an important motivation for the struggle. The long duration of the mobilization with a militant stance seems to have owed much to the two consistent and cooperative leaders of the mobilization. Ali and Erol were close friends and besides getting along well, while Ali was respected for his combative stance and his courage, Erol was respected for his wisdom.

The strong solidarity feeling among the workers prior to the sharp encounter turned into a more critical consciousness related to their class struggle, at least for some of them in the process. It could be argued that a "culture of solidarity," a cultural formation; a collective consciousness were constructed by the workers themselves "inter-subjectively and in relation to opposition during acute industrial conflicts."[254] The inventor of the term "cultures of solidarity" claims that collective consciousness may be "bound fairly tightly to the strategic encounter that has given rise to it, and thus such cultural processes can be seen as relatively independent of the previously existing ideas and beliefs of the individual participants."[255] So a small minority among them seems to criticize and change their former political and social stances. But as the bounded-ness argument implies, this emergent cultural formation is very much tied to the experience they had. The tragic diminishing of the mobilization due to the "betrayal" of the union and the immense counter-attack by the management through strike breakers and the gendarmes, as the workers perceived the situation, resulted in the diminishing of at least one dimension of that cultural formation related to the motivation to struggle for most of the workers. But even though most of them were not very motivated about class struggle afterwards, they were still motivated to continue their networks, the solidarity, the cohesion they had

[254] Fantasia, "From Class Consciousness," p. 279.

[255] Ibid. p. 280.

gained thanks to those years in the factory and the mobilization. Many workers kept in close contact with each other as much as their changing conditions and changing jobs allowed them, and especially Ali and Erol were called on often by the others.

After all, even though it is another lost cause, the story and the experience they left behind reveals workers' agency to collectively act against management's abusive behaviors despite the immense difficulties they faced on the way. Sixty-five people, mostly young, mostly conservative or indifferent about politics, of which only a few had worker mobilization experience before, engaged in a tough and militant struggle which lasted for six months in the factory and two and a half months outside. I believe that their experience provides us certain "clues related to the opportunities to overcome those inequalities"[256] our society "has yet to cure"[257].

[256] Özbek, "Alternatif Tarih Tahayyülleri,", p. 236.

[257] Thompson, *The Making,* p. 13.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have aimed to illustrate the workers' agency to act and to change their conditions by investigating three cases of worker mobilization in unionization in contemporary Turkey. For this reason, I made observations of these mobilizations and listened to the participant workers to grasp, as mush as possible, their experiences and how they perceived and expressed those experiences, as necessarily it is, in cultural terms.

I began the thesis by stating that today there is an ever-present temptation to objectify and distance the working class as a consequence of the unequal power relations in our global society. It was noted that, after the rise of neo-liberalism, with its collaborator post-fordism, this temptation became even stronger, in line with the fact that the extent of the rule of the capital strengthened itself. Hence, both in daily life and in the academy, worker agency became to be perceived as non-relevant, or at best an issue of past. In fact in an atmosphere, as pictured in the second chapter, in which high unemployment and low job security were interacting freely and disastrously for the millions who had to work for a survival, to a certain extent worker's collective actions and mobilizations lost their basis to flourish. Because workers found themselves forced to compromise with their employers to be able to keep their jobs, which became an increasingly scarce source of survival. But do they really just become paralyzed when faced with these tremendous sociopolitical forces, surrounded by thousands of excuses to not act collectively against the capital for

their own benefits? Is there not anything but "lack" of significant worker mobilization today anywhere? These were the questions I asked and investigated.

To utilize Thompson's approach, which focuses mainly on historical and macro processes, in investigating contemporary and micro cases, I was faced with the need for a further theoretical framework. I introduced and discussed several works on contemporary workers mobilizations, which in line with the approach of Thompson or generally of "history from below" placed human agency at the center of their analysis. These works could be considered as providing important analytical concepts to illuminate workers' agency and the particular importance of the cultural dimension in the formation of that agency.

The three industrial conflicts and their participants' experiences I studied disclosed important points in line with those arguments above about the nature of workers' social relations, about their cultural practices related to collective mobilizations. First of all, in all of the three cases the worker militancy is not generated primarily by the unions, but by worker's strategies, practices and active work-group social relations. Moreover, in the following process, mainly in two cases of the metal workers and the food workers, an important portion of the workers by criticizing the union's passiveness tried to build an independent line of collective action from the union and in a way against the union.

The significance of collective mobilization legacy of the particular workplace was observable in two of the cases, since the metal factory was a very new one and therefore was lacking a legacy of worker mobilization. As clearly shown, the immense and also close mobilization legacy of the food factory workers served as a very important and useful pool of experience and practical knowledge for the current mobilization. The quite radical and conscious effort of a particular group of workers,

who consisted of conservative and inexperienced men in terms of involvement in worker mobilizations, to engage in a secret organization independent from the union can be partly explained by this collective legacy of the particular factory. In the case of pharmaceuticals factory investigated, the mobilization, which was 12 years before the beginning of the current mobilization, was transferred to the newer generation through two old workers, who became the starters of the current one.

A more consistent and clear feature of all three mobilizations is the vital importance of the prior social relations among the workers for the emergence of the mobilizations. To analyze those social relations by using the term "worker solidarity," as elaborated by the above-mentioned researchers seemed productive to me. One of the five facets of worker solidarity is held to be cohesion. Cohesion is defined by those researchers as the extent to which workers to seek each other out for social contact and the strength of friendship networks, which provide essential mechanisms for the development and implementation of collective strategies. Hence, cohesion is a fundamental precondition of solidarity since if it is absent; workers behave indifferently to each other. As I investigated and subsequently concluded, the socially cohesive groups of workers, which were usually built in line with the existing sectional boundaries in the factory, were consistently more active in the mobilization so that it even seems reasonable to claim that the most cohesive sections of the two cases (metal and medicine factory) have led the mobilization throughout the way. This statement is tempered though by the lack of a systematic and comparative analysis of each section in each factory, but still the result is revealing to a certain level: the leaders of the two mobilizations systematically and consistently gave detailed accounts on the cohesiveness of their sections. This statement was also supported by several cases of non-cohesive sections' lack of involvement. On the

other hand in the food factory the cohesive friendship groups were not much tied by the sectional boundaries of the workplace, thanks to the relative freedom of movement of that factory's workers, but again many cases of those leading workers embedded in and surrounded by cohesive friendship groups in the factory were apparent.

Moreover, in all three cases, many workers provided many personal or second-hand accounts of how the decision-making processes about the individual involvement are deeply influenced by the networks in which the person was embedded. The individuals' mentors, friends, and coworkers especially in the same section seemed to play crucial roles in the decision making about the involvement of a large majority.

Also other facets of worker solidarity, such as mutual defense and the enforcement of group norms were observed, and their influences on the mobilization were discussed, especially in the case of the metal workers. But the other consistent facet for all cases was leadership, and the overall research suggests the essential importance of the leadership for worker solidarity to have a longer duration and stronger stance. The concert among the leaders and the individual consistency of each leader seem to play essential roles. While in the case of the metal factory's workers the long duration of the mobilization despite the immense difficulties they faced owed a great deal to the two consistent and highly respected leaders, in the case of the pharmaceutical workers, the inconsistent leadership became a factor in the demoralization during the tough days of the occupation and afterwards. On the other hand, the existence of two separate and competing leaderships among the large numbered food workers evoked disquiet and in the process, one new group of leaders was even added to the picture. The need for leadership is a consequence partially of

the lack of experience about mobilization, but mainly the difficulties workers faced while acting due to the low job security and high unemployment. As Necip, a leading worker in the food factory, stated in a remarkable way: "Actually, there is no need for a leader, everybody is a leader. But people are hesitating to act."

The unusual collective mobilization experiences of those workers during their acute encounters against their employers resulted in a temporal widening and strengthening of the solidarity and the cohesiveness they enjoyed. The struggle for "bread," "rightfulness," "honor" or solidarity inspired and motivated them. The collective confidence they acquired thanks to their insurgency altered many of their attitudes in a temporal way. Many of them acquired the initiative to resist their supervisors, which they had lacked formerly. Many of them gained the stance to strive for the mobilization openly, which they once had been afraid of or indifferent about. Many of them felt that they had discovered many clues about the nature of relations between the employer and employee, or even about the nature of larger social power relations. They were producing information about the ways in which their management could be abusive, once the encounter had started with their collective action. Moreover, for instance, almost all of the workers were angry in different degrees with the media due to its indifference about their struggle, and they related this at varying levels to a sort of employer solidarity. There were even more radical and very unusual conclusions held by workers as a result of the experience, especially in the case of the metal workers' mobilization. Some of the conservative looking values, such as *delikanlılık*, or "being a man," they brought in their workplaces and later in their struggle were utilized by them in a helpful and useful way to strengthen their cohesion and solidarity, which was tested in a quite serious way throughout the struggle. Hence, it can be argued that these mobilizations

generated their "cultures of solidarities," as Fantasia defines it. This means that they constructed peculiar insurgent cultural formations in a collective way during their mobilizations. But these cultural formations were temporal; since their content and duration were bound fairly tightly to the encounter which had gave rise to them. The fact that all of the three experiences failed to different degrees strengthened temporality dimension of those cultural formations. Most of the young metal workers became very reactive against the union, and seemed to generalize this to all unions, and to unionization itself. The pharmaceutical factory workers, who were proud of the cohesiveness of their relations, reported that they had lost this cohesion after the break up of the occupation. The friendly and close atmosphere they had once enjoyed became a feature of the past. Only the food workers, whose mobilization had not yet totally failed, had not lost their solidarity and confidence as much as in other cases, partially thanks to the immense mobilization legacy of the factory. They already knew that the mobilization was not something easily achieved, and that one mobilization's failure was not the end of the story.

Their struggles might have been lost, but their experiences might suggest clues for themselves and others: The cultures of solidarities they built, the forms of close and supportive friendships they elaborated, the insurgent and solidarist values they raised during the hot days of their encounter, the experience of being agents of their own conditions, the enthusiasm of this agency feeling and of being part of a strong and combatant solidarity group, the courage to stand up for their perceived rights venturing the little that they owned, and by doing this to be able to trust your coworkers would do the same. Their experiences reveal that these features did not yet totally become issues of past, or a distant utopian future, but they are still achievable by ordinary men and women.

Their eagerness to use force may seem uncivilized, but they thought that they did not have any other choice. In our "modern" day, in which we acknowledge the state's monopoly to use force, the laws in their eyes seem not to be very useful for them to acquire and enjoy their supposedly constitutional right to become unionized. To expect them to rely on the legitimate use of force of the state and its laws might seem unreasonable and unrealistic. At the point where they had no other accessible opportunity, faced with the defeat of their labored struggle, the solidarity they had built with difficulty and their jobs, the use of force was perceived as the most effective act for them.

Their dependence on traditional and conservative values may be irritating, but did they ever have neither the conditions nor the need of engagement with more pleasant values of "modernity"? Besides, are we really sure that those "modern" values are inherently more emancipating anyway? We have known since Thompson that tradition, which is used by the ruling classes in settled times as a hegemonic tool, is not inherently oppressive and that it can be used by the oppressed in a selective way to help them in their struggles. I believe we may understand their references to *delikanlılık*, or "being a man" or others in that way.

Another issue to note is that all of the participants of those mobilizations investigated in this study are only a single drop in the ocean of the working class of Turkey. Besides the ones I was able to interview in detail were workers more or less motivated about mobilization. Hence, my particular arguments about the level of agency among workers might be considered to be only related to those "cream de la cream" workers that they were relatively more involved workers among a larger group of insurgent workers. What I have argued, however, considering the findings, is not a general statement about the working class of Turkey in any sense. I do not

imply any positive prevision about the future working class movement by considering the findings in this thesis. What I had in mind was that we should not "replace one meta-physical imputation (the working class as saviour of humanity) with its opposite (the working class as incapable of shaping its own destiny)," as Burawoy warns us, and hence I tried to illuminate the ever lasting worker agency, which is still present despite all of the much strengthened counter-forces enchaining them.

It should be noted that my study is tempered by several aspects. Let me count two of them. First of all, a gender dimension is lacking due to the difficulties I had in the field research in making close contacts with women. I was not able to have much opportunity to observe women either, since not many women workers participated in the meetings of workers to talk issues related to mobilization. Another issue which I had in my mind but could not bring in was the daily life of those workers. I am uncomfortable to present only the class struggling sides of those workers and to not being able to clearly illuminate the transition and the relation between the daily routine and the unusual mobilization. But I had to make a choice to limit my thesis, and therefore included in the picture only those daily life aspects which were directly related to mobilization.

As discussed in the conclusion of the second chapter, working class struggles in its entirety are like a grand ocean. And both the segment of those workers and the form of struggle (mobilization aiming at unionization) I investigated here are only small drops in that large body water. I do not imply in any sense that the particular segment of these workers, namely formal industry workers, or the particular form of struggle in which they engaged, namely mobilization aiming unionization, precede the others. I do not think, and hope that I did not use any notion in any sentence of

this thesis implying that this form of struggle and this segment of the working class are the key in understanding working class struggle overall or on the working class' tough route to strengthen its struggle. I explained in the introduction that the reason I chose them to study was mostly practical concerns about the nature of research and my time limitations.

Maybe the most tangible finding in this thesis is the extreme difficultness for workers to gain a collective right through a collective action in contemporary Turkey. We know this by looking at the conditions and the results, but exactly how those difficulties interact and become experienced by the workers is unclear. I hope that I have been able to contribute to enlighten what kinds of particular difficulties exist and how they are experienced by the workers. The only legal way for workers to engage in collective action against management or to keep and to extend their rights is through unions. But unionization is now extremely difficult as all of the three cases clearly show. To mobilize, to resist collectively and apparently, to not get dismissed due to this involvement, and furthermore to gain collective rights as a result of this mobilization have become exceedingly intricate because of the economic, political and legal conditions. Under these circumstances maybe we should change the question we have in mind. I do not think to ask why the workers do not mobilize and further unionize against the oppressive conditions in which they live is so meaningful anymore. To ask another question seems to me much more reasonable: Despite those economic and political conditions, despite the many failed mobilizations they have personally undertaken or heard of from others, despite the widespread stories about cases of unions betraying their members, how do some workers still engage in worker mobilization? As Harootunian puts it, capitalism is a process "knowing only the limits of capital itself, can never really imply

development because it will always generate unevenness and forms of unequal exchange." I think workers still have a word to say about this. We should take them into account.

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APPENDIX A

"X Yönetimine"

Bak Attığın İşçiler, Hep Birlikte Direndiler.
Ne Eve Gittiler, Nede Pes Ettiler.
Sen Neden Anlamadın Bu İşçinin Tutumunu.
Bunlar Kararlı, Sendika Oldu Onların Gururu.

Sen Sandınki İşten Attım Kurtuldum.
Biraz Süre Verdim, Bak Onları Susturdum
Be Akılsız Yönetim…
Asıl Sen Bunlarla Kendi, Kendini Kandırdın.

Duvarlar Ördürdün Güvenliği Artırdın
Biz Sana El Uzattık Sen Göz Altına Aldırdın.
İşçinin Duruşunu Görünce, Neden Yıldın.
O Ses Geçirmeyen Camlar, O Yüksek Duvarlar
Seni Korurmu SANDIN!!.....

APPENDIX B

sabah yedide paydos ediyorsa
çıkıp kartını basıyorsa
sonra kapıda toplanıyorsa
cezası varmıdır başkan

BU MEYDANDA YÜRÜMENİN
YÜRÜYÜP ALKIŞ YAPMANIN
SONRA SİLİKOM ATMANIN
CEZASI VARMIDIR BAŞKAN

ekmeyinin peşinde gidiyorsa
kendini kapıya zincirliyorsa
polisler buraya geliyorsa
alıp bunları götürüyorsa
cezası varmıdır başkan

ayhan bize zam vermiyorsa
zam sizin neyinize diyorsa
gidip sendikaya üye olmayın diyorsa
biz ne yapıcaz başkan

fabrikanın etrafını 4 metreye çıkartıyorsa
cumboları kendine barikat yapıyorsa
patron işçiden korkuyorsa
bu fabrikada ne işi var başkan

sendikalı olmayın dediler
yüzde on zam verdiler
buda size çok dediler
prim deyip geçtiler

ustalar bizi sattılar
patrona yalaklık yaptılar
istedikleri zammı alamadılar
sendikaya üye oldular

700 İŞÇİ SENDİKALI OLDUYSA
SENDİKANIN ARKASINDA DURDUYSA
DİĞERLERİ BİZİ SATIYORSA
SERVİSE BİNİP KAÇIYORSA
NE YAPMAK GEREKİYO BAŞKAN