

THE LABOR UNIONISM OF 1946

by

Osman Öztürk

Submitted to  
the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts

Boğaziçi University

2006

An abstract of the Thesis of Osman Öztürk for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History to be taken October 2006.

Title: The Labor Unionism of 1946

During the transition to a multi-party system in Turkey during 1946, the prohibition of founding societies “based on class” was lifted. Thus, the way was open to unionist organizations.

At this turning point of the Republic’s history, socialists had been forced to work underground to establish legal parties and take their place in the political arena.

The Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi (TSP), the Turkish Socialist Party, and the Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi (TSEKP), the Turkish Socialist Workers and Peasants Party, were founded and started to organize unions. Although the two parties adopted different methods in organization, this unionist experience conducted by the supporters of TSP and TSEKP is known as “Labor Unionism of 1946” in the Turkish unionist literature.

Both socialist parties and the unions that were founded by their supporters were closed on December 16, 1946 by the Martial Law Command.

Labor Unionism of 1946, even though it lasted only a short period, was organized in a noticeable and speedy fashion among the working class.

The prohibition of the Labor Unionism of 1946 which was essentially of a socialist worldview based on class unionism opened the way to a different type of unionism that is known as the “Labor Unionism of 1947” in Turkey.

The Labor Unionism of 1946 and the developments that took place around it, is an early example of indicating how a multi-party system would take shape in Turkey and provide clues for the understanding of Turkish politics and the history of the labor class.

Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü'nde Yüksek Lisans Derecesi için  
Osman Öztürk tarafından Ekim 2006'da teslim edilen tezin kısa özeti

### Başlık: 1946 Sendikacılığı

Türkiye'de çok partili yaşama geçildiği 1946 yılında Cemiyetler Kanunu'nda değişiklik yapılarak "sınıf esasına müstenit" cemiyet kurma yasağı kaldırıldı. Böylece sendikal örgütlenmenin önü açıldı.

Cumhuriyet tarihinin bu önemli kırılma noktasında, uzun yıllar boyunca yasa dışı çalışma koşullarına itilmiş olan sosyalistler de yasal partiler kurarak siyasal yaşamda yerlerini almaya çalıştılar.

Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi (TSP) ve Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi (TSEKP) kuruldu ve sendikaları örgütlemeye başladılar. Örgütlenmede farklı modeller izlemiş olsalar da, TSP ve TSEKP yandaşları tarafından yürütülen bu sendikal deneyim Türkiye sendikacılık literatüründe "1946 Sendikacılığı" olarak tanımlanır.

Her iki sosyalist parti ve bu partilerin yandaşları tarafından kurulan sendikalar 16 Aralık 1946 tarihinde Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı tarafından kapatıldı.

1946 Sendikacılığı sınırlı bir zaman diliminde de olsa işçi sınıfı arasında dikkat çekici bir hızla ve yaygınlıkta örgütlendi.

Ana karakteri sosyalist dünya görüşüne dayalı sınıf sendikacılığı anlayışı olan 1946 Sendikacılığı'nın bu şekilde yasaklanması, Türkiye'de "1947 Sendikacılığı" olarak da adlandırılan bir başka sendikal tarzın önünü açtı.

1946 Sendikacılığı ve onun etrafında gelişen bu olaylar Türkiye'deki çok partili yaşamın ilerideki yıllarda nasıl şekilleneceğini ve sınırlarını gösteren erken bir örnektir ve Türkiye siyasetini ve işçi sınıfı tarihini anlamak için önemli ip uçları sağlamaktadır.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to my thesis advisor, Prof. Dr. Şevket Pamuk, for his assistance, guidance and critical advice.

I thank to Ms. Kathryn Kranzler for her kindness in editing process.

I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Yüksel Akkaya for his valuable assistance.

I am also grateful to Dr. Sacit Kutlu for encouraging me to learn history.

Finally, I should express my hearty gratitude to my family; my wife Nurhayat and my sons Deniz Taylan and Umut Barış for their great patience during the all period.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### PREFACE

#### Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. LABOR CLASS BETWEEN THE YEARS 1923-1946.....	9
Economic Policies 1923-1946.....	9
1923-1929: Open Economy and Restoration.....	10
1930-1939: Protectionist-Statist Industrialization.....	11
1940-1945: An Interval-World War II.....	11
The Structure of Industry.....	12
The Structure of the Working Class.....	13
Real Wages.....	16
Working Life.....	19
Labor Organizations.....	25
3. BEGINNING OF THE MULTI PARTY ERA AND THE FOUNDING OF THE SOCIALIST PARTIES.....	30
Turkish Socialist Party.....	32
Turkish Socialist Workers and The Peasants' Party.....	37
Relationships between Socialist Parties.....	41
4. 1946 UNIONS.....	48
Changes in the Working Life.....	48
The Lifting of the Class-based Organizational Ban.....	51
The Union Organization Model of the TSP.....	52
Unions Established by TSP Supporters.....	57
The Union Organization Model of the TSEKP.....	59
Unions and Workers' Club Established by Supporters of TSEKP.....	62
Union Activities.....	69
Organizational and Consciousness-Building Efforts.....	70
Working and Living Conditions.....	75
High Cost of Living and Worker Wages.....	78
Labor Health.....	81
Labor Association of Turkey.....	84
5. THE CLOSING OF THE UNIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENTS THAT FOLLOWED.....	88
The Closing of the Unions.....	92
Reverberations from the Shut Downs.....	94
Explanation of the Government.....	98
1947 TKP Court Case.....	103
Labor Law and Labor Unionism of 1947.....	110
6. CONCLUSION.....	116
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	128

## PREFACE

The year 1946 when Turkey adopted a multi-party system is a turning point in the history of the Republic.

In addition, during 1946 changes were made in the Societies Law and the prohibition of parties based on class was lifted. This opened the way for union organizations that had not been allowed under the single party system.

At this turning point of the Republic's history, socialists who had been pushed into underground work all these years founded two legal parties: Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi (TSP), Turkish Socialist Party, and Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi (TSEKP), Turkish Socialist Workers and Peasants Party, and tried to take their place in the political arena. At the same time, they started organizing workers in unions.

This unionist movement that was undertaken by the supporters of these two socialist parties is known as the "Labor Unionism of 1946" in the Turkish union literature.

This unionist movement, which is based on a socialist world view and class unionism was ended on December 16, 1946 when the Martial Law Command closed down the socialist parties and the unions attached to them.

In works that describe Turkey's labor class and the history of unionism special reference is made to 1946 unions and many articles have been published on this topic. In spite of this, it is not possible to say that this matter has been sufficiently analyzed in the writing of history.

There are no official records that can be obtained on the 1946 unions that were founded in accordance with the Societies Law during a time when there was no

Law on Unions in Turkey. Therefore, information was gathered from daily newspapers, proclamations by government officials, documents of the court case that was opened after the closing down of the socialist parties and unions, memoirs of the period, and in particular the union press.

The main purpose of the thesis is to detail this unionist activity that took place in 1946 when the multi-party system began in Turkey.

For this reason it was first necessary to study the working and living conditions of the labor class between 1923 and 1946 and analyze the economic and political reasons that gave birth to the Labor Unionism of 1946.

Later, the transition to the multi-party system and the founding of socialist parties is discussed.

Then as the main subject of the thesis, unions that were founded by the supporters of socialist parties and the activities are described in detail.

Finally, the stopping of Labor Unionism of 1946 and developments that took place afterwards are discussed and evaluation has been made as a part of our political and labor history.

The subject of the thesis is not the history of the Turkish socialist movement. However, the unions that are discussed came into existence as a component of the two socialist parties that were founded that year. Therefore, it was necessary to include evaluations and determinations related to the Turkish socialist movement during the transition to a multi-party system, without going into detail.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The year 1946 marks a very important point of transition in the history of the Republic of Turkey when the period of multi-party politics began.

Actually, two attempts were made during the early stages of the Republic to move to the multi-party system; however both attempts did not last very long. All of the branches and the headquarters of the *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, the Progressive Republic Party, founded on November 17, 1924, were shut down by the government on June 5, 1925.<sup>1</sup>

The political life span of the *Serbest Fırka*, the Free Party, that was founded on August 12, 1930, was even shorter. In a letter written to the Ministry of the Interior on

---

<sup>1</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Ankara: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 1992), p. 120.



November 17, 1930, the founder of the party, Fethi Bey, announced the disbanding of the party.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, in the changing political climate in the world after World War II, the 23 year rule of single-party in Turkey gave way to a multi-party system permanently. While the political, social and economic developments domestically paved the way for this transition, it was expedited by such foreign influences as the need for Turkey to adapt its own political regime to the democratic ideologies that had become prevalent across the world after the war.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, in 1946, a change was made in the *Cemiyetler Kanunu*, the Societies Law, that lifted the ban on the creation of “class-based” societies. Thus the opportunity for the organization of unions was granted after the *Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu*, the Law for the Maintenance of Order, accepted on March 4, 1925, had officially banned them.

At this important breaking point in the history of the Republic, the socialists, who had been forced to work under illegal conditions for years, were able to create legal parties and try to take their place in the political landscape.

First of all, the *Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi* (TSP), the Turkish Socialist Party, was founded under the leadership of Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu on May 14, 1946. Besides their organizational activities, the TSP also published a daily newspaper called *Gerçek*, Truth, which lasted for only nineteen days, and a weekly magazine entitled *Gün*, Day.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cemil Koçak, “Siyasal Tarih (1923-1950),” *Çağdaş Türkiye 1908-1980*, Vol. 4 (İstanbul: Cem Yayınları, 1989), p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 137.

One month after the establishment of the TSP, the *Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi*, the Turkish Socialist Workers and Peasants Party (TSEKP) began its political life on June 19, 1946. The leadership of the party was shouldered by Dr. Şefik Hüsnü Deymer, one of the leaders of the communist movement in Turkey. The TSEKP also published a newspaper, called *Sendika*, which appeared weekly after August 31, 1946.

Immediately after both socialist parties were founded, they started to organize the working class into unions. As will be seen in detail below, even though they followed different organizational models, this unionization experiment conducted by the supporters of the TSP and the TSEKP is defined in the union literature as the “Labor Unionism of 1946.”<sup>4</sup>

The life span of the Labor Unionism of 1946, which began after the ban on the organization based on class, was lifted on June 5, 1946, was quite short. Both socialist parties, unions created by these parties and their supporters and newspapers and magazines that espoused the views of the parties were shut down by the *Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı*, the Martial Law Command on December 16, 1946.

In circumstances where there was not yet a unions law, there were no publicly accessible records regarding unions created in 1946 that were based on the Societies Law. Information regarding these unions is limited to news that appeared in the union press and daily newspapers, declarations by government authorities, documents related

---

<sup>4</sup> These do not make up all of the unions that were created in Turkey in 1946. However, the term “Labor Unionism of 1946,” which is widely used in union literature, in a strict sense, encompasses those unions with ties to these two socialist parties.

to cases filed after the closure of the socialist parties and unions, and memoirs from that period.

These documents and information make it impossible to make a full documentation of all the unions and to fully explain their activities.

However, the current information shows that the unions organized within a remarkably short time and throughout a wide area. That is why the experience of the Labor Unionism of 1946 has attracted the attention of both political and labor historians in Turkey and garnered a special part in studies about the history of the working class and unionization. At the same time, even though they are few in number, articles that deal directly with the Labor Unionism of 1946 have also been published.

In terms of this thesis subject, it will be useful to take a look at some of these studies in chronological order.

The final chapter of Lütfü Erişçi's book *Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfının Tarihi-Özet Olarak*, History of the Working Class in Turkey – In Summary, published in 1951, deals exclusively with this subject. In the chapter titled “Final Period,” brief but important information regarding the subject can be found. Of the unions created by the supporters of the two socialist parties, Erişçi, however, only deals with the ones related to the TSEKP. The other socialist party, the TSP, is defined as “a complete party of provocation.” The union attempts of the TSP are defined as “the imaginary Turkish Labor Unions Federation attempt.”<sup>5</sup>

In Kemal Sülker's book, *Türkiye'de Sendikacılık*, Unionization in Turkey, dated 1955, both the changes that occurred in the working life in 1946 and the unions are

---

<sup>5</sup> Lütfü Erişçi, *Türkiyede İşçi Sınıfının Tarihi-Özet Olarak* (İstanbul: Kutulmuş Basımevi, 1951), pp. 28-30.

described in detail. At the same time, besides the socialist parties, valuable information regarding the *Türkiye İşçiler Derneği*, the Labor Association of Turkey, founded in relation to the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, the Republican People's Party (RPP) is provided.<sup>6</sup> Considered trailblazing studies in the history of labor, it is noted that the term "Labor Unionism of 1946" was not yet used in these books.

The work in which the definition can be found in is an article titled "Labor Unionism of 1946" written by Rasih Nuri İleri and published in the January 26, 1978 edition of *Vatan* newspaper. This article by İleri, who was a firsthand witness to the aforementioned period, has been a reference for many other studies on the subject.<sup>7</sup>

Şehmus Güzel not only devoted a large amount of his book *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi- 1908-1984*, Labor Movements in Turkey, 1908-1984, to this subject, but he also took a close look at *Sendika*, one of the most important union newspapers, in a separate article.<sup>8</sup>

Zafer Toprak's article, "Labor Unionism of 1946" contains a lot of information regarding the main rules and regulations of the unions of the time that were printed in the *Sendika* newspaper. Toprak also provides a short but concise commentary on both the union movement and the domestic and foreign political conditions that surrounded it.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Kemal Sülker, *Türkiye'de Sendikacılık* (İstanbul: n.p., 1955, Sendika Kültürü Serisi No. 1), pp. 34-57.

<sup>7</sup> Rasih Nuri İleri, "1946 Sendikacılığı," *Vatan*, January 26, 1978.

<sup>8</sup> Şehmus Güzel, "Sendikal Basında 'Sendika' Gazetesi Örneği", *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi (Yazılar-Belgeler)* (İstanbul: Sosyalist Yayınlar, 1993), pp. 288-301.

<sup>9</sup> Zafer Toprak, "1946 Sendikacılığı, *Sendika Gazetesi*, İşçi Sendikaları Birlikleri ve İşçi Kulüpleri", *Toplumsal Tarih* 31 (July 1996), pp. 19-29.

Despite all of these valuable studies, it is not possible to say that the subject has been dealt with sufficiently by historians. One of the reasons for this deficiency is the lack of interest in, in Yüksel Akkaya's words, "the stepchild of historians," the history of labor.<sup>10</sup>

Among other possible reasons, the lack of records and other documents pertaining to the period and the fact that the experience relating to the Labor Unionism of 1946 only lasted for six months can be listed.

Even though there are limitations regarding historical material, this important union movement that occurred during a period when the political regime of Turkey was undergoing great change, deserves closer attention. First of all, the analysis of the economic and political reasons that led to the birth of this union movement in 1946 will allow us to better understand the situation and expectations the working class was experiencing at the beginning of the multi-party period.

Articles that appeared in the union press especially present important documentation concerning the union activities and their areas of interest. These documents provide an opportunity to evaluate areas of interest in labor history such as the working and living conditions of the workers of the period, the cost of living, worker wages and worker health.

The Labor Unionism of 1946 quickly developed and spread within a small amount of time despite a series of negative developments. The discussion of the dynamics of this development and the outstanding characteristics of the Labor Unionism

---

<sup>10</sup> Yüksel Akkaya, "Türkiye'de Emek Tarihinin Sefaleti Üzerine Bazı Notlar", *Toplum ve Bilim* 91 (Winter 2001/2002), pp. 285-294.

of 1946 will make it easier to grasp the historical development of the union movement in Turkey.

These developments will be dealt with in detail in this thesis, thus making it possible to comment about the reaction and attitudes of the working class during the transition from the single-party rule to the multi-party period.

On the other hand, the banning of the Labor Unionism of 1946 in Turkey led to the beginning of another union movement, called the “Labor Unionism of 1947” to begin. In order to correctly interpret this understanding that took hold in the latter period of the union movement, it is necessary to analyze the Labor Unionism of 1946 correctly and the developments that followed it.

In conclusion, as important as the activities of the unions were, it is necessary to evaluate the events that developed around this union movement in terms of our political and labor history. The closure of the two socialist parties and the unions connected with them by the government is an early example of how life under the multi-party rule in Turkey would be shaped in the coming years and how boundaries would be determined. The evaluation of this attitude of the political powers will provide important clues to understanding Turkish politics and the history of the working class.

This study will evaluate this brief but interesting experience in the working class history that occurred during the second half of 1946 within the framework of these problems.

The subject of this thesis, in essence, does not encompass the history of the Turkish socialist movement.<sup>11</sup> However, the aforementioned unions existed in connection to the two socialist parties that were founded that same year. For this reason, even though it will not be covered in detail, observations and evaluations with regards to the Turkish socialist movement during the transition to the multi-party period will be presented within this study.

---

<sup>11</sup> For various reasons it is not possible to differentiate between the socialist and communist political movements in Turkey. As a result both definitions are used separately or together to convey the same meaning.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WORKING CLASS BETWEEN THE YEARS 1923-1946

The main goal of the Kemalist revolution was stated as “to reach the level of contemporary civilization.” With the victory in the Independence War, political independence had already been gained. However, the Kemalist elite believed that political independence was impossible unless the economic policy was successful.

Due to this viewpoint, they began a development movement started. Between 1923-1946, various economic policies were introduced practiced to achieve industrialization.

#### Economic Policies 1923-1946

Following Boratav, this period can be divided into three periods, 1923-1929, 1930-1939, 1940-1945.



## 1923-1929: Open Economy and Restoration

With the Lausanne Peace Treaty, the Turkish Republic guaranteed it would pay 85 million golden *liras*, two-thirds of the Ottoman debt. This debt repayment was to begin in 1929 with 15 million *liras* being repaid the first year and then in yearly installments of 6 million *liras*. The treaty also limited Turkish tariffs at the level of 1916 up to 1929. Under these conditions, the state followed an open economy and supported private enterprises for capital accumulation.

In 1925, *Sanayi ve Maadin Bankası*, the Bank of Industry and Mining, was established. *Teşvik-i Sanayi Kanunu*, the Law for Encouragement of Industry, was introduced in 1927. With this law, the state provided proper incentives for national capitalists. The government also encouraged the national capitalists to set up joint ventures with foreign capital. So, approximately one-third of the companies established between 1920-1930 were in the form of joint ventures.

The Gross National Product (GNP) growth-rate during this sub-period was 8.6%, the agricultural growth-rate 8.9%, and the industrial growth-rate 10.2%.

As can be seen, agriculture was the main developing sector during this sub-period. Agriculture made up 46% of the GNP. While the development speed of the industrial sector during this period reached an average of 10.2%, its percentage within the GNP was only 11%. Nevertheless, it was at an important level. In reality, this level reflects a restoration process rather than an actual industrialization.

### 1930-1939: Protectionist-Statist Industrialization

In 1929, the limitation of the Lausanne Treaty ended and Turkey also began to pay the Ottoman debts. 1929 was also the first year of the global Great Depression.

As a result of these two factors, Turkey first started to apply protectionism and then statism. Statism was also incorporated into the RPP program in 1931. In 1934, the First Five-Year Plan was established. Thus, the planned economic period began.

1930-1939 was the first industrialization period of Turkey. All through the period, the industrial growth-rate reached 10.3%, while the growth-rate of the GNP was 5.8%, and the agricultural growth-rate 5.1%. The industrial growth rate of this period has not since been attained at any period of the modern Republic.

### 1940-1945: An Interval-World War II

Although Turkey did not part take in World War II, it suffered all the negative impacts of the wartime economy. Growth-rate fell dramatically in all sectors.

The greatest decline was in agriculture; the decrease was 7.1%. While a decrease of 6.0% was observed in the GNP growth-rate, the decrease in the growth-rate of industrial production was relatively less, 5.5%.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908-2002* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2004, 8. Baskı), pp. 39-93.

## The Structure of Industry

During the Ottoman Empire the establishment of a main industry did not occur. Mining and the existing industry, which had not been able to merge with agricultural production, had developed enough only to produce consumer goods for the nearby markets. The Ottoman economy was selling raw materials and food to European countries and buying manufactured products.<sup>13</sup>

According to the results of the Industry Census that was conducted in 1915 and encompassed flour mills that produced at least 100 *kentals* (a hundred kilograms) of cereal grain in 24 hours, soap factories that employed more than 10 workers and other industrial work places that employed at least 10 workers with powering forces or for those that did not have this force that employed 20 workers, there were 282 industrial businesses within the current borders of Turkey. 155 of these businesses were in Istanbul and its environs and 62 of them were in Izmir.<sup>14</sup>

Seventy-eight of the industrial businesses were in the food industry (27.7%), 78 in the textile industry (27.7%), and 51 in the stationery industry (19.6%).<sup>15</sup> 70.3% of the industrial production belonged to the food industry and 11.9% to the textile industry.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Gündüz Ökçün, *Osmanlı Sanayii 1913, 1915 Yılları Sanayi İstatistikleri-Tarihi* İstatistikler Dizisi Vol. 4 (Ankara: T. C. Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1997), pp. XIX-XXIII.

<sup>14</sup> The 1915 Census was conducted only in Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, Izmit, Manisa, Uşak, Bandırma and Karamürsel and while it can be considered a small region, because the Ottoman industry mostly was concentrated in Istanbul and Izmir at that time, it can be accepted as giving a general idea. Ibid., pp. XXV-XXVI.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 14, Table 2.

Of the 14,060 workers employed at these businesses, 6,763 (48%) worked in the textile industry while 4,281 (27.8%) worked in the food industry.<sup>17</sup>

The first Industrial Census during the period of the Republic was conducted in 1927. Different from the census in 1915 this one included small industry businesses. 43.59% of these businesses were concentrated in the industries of agriculture, small animals, fishing and hunting equipment. The mining industry, mining work and machine repair and production group was in second place with 22.61%.

35.74% of all companies had one worker each, 35.76% two or three workers. 95.68% of all industrial enterprises were not using mechanical power. 65% of the total production belonged to the agricultural industry, and 18% to the textile industry.<sup>18</sup>

The two main characteristics of the Turkish industry in 1927 were that of being of small size and of producing consumption goods. These features lasted throughout the period.

### The Structure of the Working Class

The Republic of Turkey inherited a small working class force from the Ottoman Empire. Using various reliable sources it has been calculated that when the Republic

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 27, Table 10.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 22, Table 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Türkiye'de Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Gelişmenin 50 Yılı* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Basımevi, 1973), p. 151.

was declared there were between 111,950 and 114,400 workers. During the same time period it is estimated that the total population was between nine or ten million.<sup>19</sup>

According to the first census done in the Republic of Turkey in 1927, the total population of the country was 13,646,270. In this census the workforce termed “career workers” numbered 5,351,215 and the percentage of those participating in the workforce was 39.26%. Of this workforce 81.63% worked in agriculture while 5.59% worked in industry.<sup>20</sup>

According to the results of the 1927 Industry census, there was a total of 256,855 people working in 65,245 places of business. 43.01% of the workers were employed in agriculture while 18.70% were in the textile industry.<sup>21</sup>

According to the 1937 Business Statistics that encompassed businesses that employed a minimum of five workers, there were 265,341 workers employed in a total of 6,252 industrial and non-industrial businesses. The average number of workers per business was 42.

By 1943 the number of businesses had declined to 3,205 while the number of workers had climbed to 275,083, doubling the per capita number of workers for each business to 86.<sup>22</sup>

According to the 1937 Business Statistics, 77.55% of the total workers were concentrated in five industries; the food, alcohol, and tobacco industry (22.57%), the

---

<sup>19</sup> M. Şehmus Güzel, *Türkiye’de İşçi Hareketi 1908-1984* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996), p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999), p. 213.

<sup>21</sup> *Türkiye’de Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Gelişmenin 50 Yılı*, 1973, p. 151.

<sup>22</sup> *İş İstatistikleri* (Ankara: Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü, 1945), p. 4.

building industry (22.57%), the textile industry (13.08%), the mining industry (8.92%), and the transportation industry (5.12%). In 1947 the number of workers employed in these five sectors reached 80.32%.<sup>23</sup>

While there was no marked increase between the years 1937 and 1943 in the number of workers classified by the Employment Laws, important changes had occurred in the structure of the working class. During those years the number of workers between the ages of 12-16 increased from 12,620 to 19,185; those between the ages of 17-18 from 10,727 to 32,686, and the number of adult female workers from 50,131 to 56,937. The number of adult male workers decreased from 191,863 to 166,275.<sup>24</sup>

There was an important rise in the number of female and young workers, and also a fall in male workers. The reason for this shift was World War II. Although Turkey stayed out of the war, the number of soldiers in the army increased from 120,000 to 1.5 million. If the number of workers for 1937 is accepted as 100, the same numbers become the following: In 1943, total workers 104; between the ages of 12-16 152; 17-18 years of age 305; women, 19 years old and over 114; men, 19 years old and over 87.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

## Real Wages

Boratav states that there is no safe data for worker wages between 1923-1929. However, it is possible to determine the share of government officer salaries in the GNP. This share was approximately equal for 1923-1924 and 1928-1929, a little under 6%. This result indicates that the relative condition of officers in the national economy during 1923-1929 was protected. Moreover, taking into consideration that the GNP growth-rate was 8.5% for these years, it can be assumed that an advance for the real wages of officers was provided. A similar advance for the workers can be expected.<sup>26</sup>

Boratav, again, declared that the share of worker wages between 1932-1939 decreased from 28% to 21.8%. The share of profits in GNP, however, rose from 72.1% to 78.2%. If the real wages are assumed to have been 100 in 1932, it fell to 88.1 in 1939. In the same years, the wheat/industry price ratio fell sharply from 100 in 1924 to 68 in 1939. This means that the load of industrialization was shared between peasants and the working class.<sup>27</sup>

But, as Boratav points out, the decrease in real wages by 55% between 1940-1945 is obvious. At the same time, the industrial production shrunk by 23%, and the GNP by 25% in the given years. It means that, in addition to an absolute regression in the living standards of the working class, the share of worker wages in both industrial

---

<sup>26</sup> Boratav, 2004, pp. 56-57.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 76-79.

production and GNP decreased markedly. On the other hand, there was a dramatic decrease in industrial employment during the war.<sup>28</sup>

Another important study reflecting the real wages and living standards of the working class was made by Zaim. It revealed that if the real wages of workers in the Istanbul textile industry are assumed to have been 100 in 1938, they decreased to 59 in 1943. They rose to just over 100 in 1947 (Table I).<sup>29</sup>

Table I

Real Wage Index of the Istanbul Textile Industry

<u>Years</u>	<u>Real Wage</u>
1938	100
1939	119
1940	119
1941	89
1942	80
1943	59
1944	71
1945	77
1946	89

---

Taken from Sabahattin Zaim, p.279.

Zaim also compared the purchasing power of the Istanbul workers for wheat flour, milk, rice, and beef with the workers of the United States, England, Italy, Switzerland, and Chile, in 1938. This comparison showed that Turkish workers had an

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>29</sup> Sabahattin Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Neşriyatından, 1956), p. 279.



advantage only in beef over the English, Italian, and Chilean workers. However, for the other three consumption goods, Turkish workers were at the lowest level (Table II).<sup>30</sup>

Table II

Purchasing Power of the Hourly Wage-1938

	<u>Wheat flour(kg)</u>	<u>Rice(kg)</u>	<u>Milk(lt)</u>	<u>Beef(kg)</u>
İstanbul	0.622	0.419	0.903	0.329
USA	4.780	2.540	3.510	0.720
Avustralya	5.130	2.760	3.070	0.780
England	1.800	1.780	1.580	0.320
Switzerland	2.330	1.380	2.440	0.260
Italy	0.780	0.790	1.290	0.180
Chile	0.810	0.470	1.050	0.200

Taken from Zaim, p. 286.

Finally, the manufacturing industry wages between 1914-1998 in Turkey that encompass the period under review have been calculated by Pamuk.

When the real wages in 1914 are accepted as 1.00, it can be seen that they became 0.74 in 1923. While there were fluctuations during this period, the real wages receded to a level of 0.53 in 1946. The most dramatic fall came during World War II. Real wages were 0.98 in 1939 but by 1945 they had become 0.46 (Table III).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>31</sup> Şevket Pamuk, *500 Years of Prices and Wages in İstanbul and Other Cities* (Ankara: State Institute of Statistics Prime Ministry Republic of Turkey, 2000), p. 84.

Table III

Manufacturing Industry Wages in Turkey  
between 1914-1998

<u>Year</u>	<u>Nominal Wages</u>	<u>Price Index</u>	<u>Real Wages</u>
1914	4.65	1.00	1.00
...	...	...	...
1938	39.6	9.71	0.88
1939	44.8	9.85	0.98
1940	47.3	10.91	0.93
1941	61.3	13.40	0.98
1942	95.9	22.58	0.91
1943	102.1	33.72	0.65
1944	96.8	32.92	0.63
1945	74.3	34.41	0.41
1946	81.6	33.26	0.53

---

Taken from Pamuk, Table 5.1, p. 84.

### Working Life

Immediately after the declaration of the Second Constitution on July 23, 1908, many strikes began to take place in the Ottoman Empire, especially in rail transportation. During the second half of the year, there were 111 strikes organized in many cities of the Empire.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Güzel states that the number of workers during that period was approximately 250,000 and from what the participants could determine 42,728 workers participated in 30 of the strikes held in 1908. He states that it is not an exaggeration to say “In 1908 every worker went on strike at least once.” Şehmus Güzel, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e İşçi Hareketleri ve Grevler”, *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 3, pp.803-828.

After these strikes the first organizations of the working life were started directly. First the *Tatil-i Eşgal Cemiyetleri Hakkında Kanun-ı Muvakkat*, the Provisory Law regarding Work Stoppage Association was accepted on October 8, 1908, then the *Tatil-i Eşgal Kanunu*, the Work Stoppage Law, was passed by the Parliament on July 27, 1909.<sup>33</sup>

By law, strikes were forbidden at workplaces that provided service to the public.<sup>34</sup> Article 11 of the Provisory Law, which called for the dissolution of previously established unions<sup>35</sup>, was removed from the final 1909-dated document.<sup>36</sup>

The Work Stoppage Law continued to exist during the period of the Republic. The provisions of this law that came in conflict with Employment Law No. 3008, dated 1936, were abolished. The remaining provisions stayed in place until the Associations Law came into effect on June 28, 1938.<sup>37</sup>

Laws regarding the organization of dependent workers in the Ottoman Empire left outside the scope of the Work Stoppage Law also were covered by the Associations Law in 1909, and this law stayed in place until 1938.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> For the full transcript of both laws and the Parliament discourses: Gündüz Ökçün, *Tatil'i Eşgal Kanunu, 1909, Belgeler-Yorumlar* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1982).

<sup>34</sup> Zafer Toprak, "1909 Tatil-i Eşgal Kanunu Üzerine", *Toplum ve Bilim* 13, (Spring 1981), pp. 141-156. On the other hand, whether or not the Work Stoppage Law outlawed strikes has been interpreted in different ways by various authors. For the commentary regarding that the law did not outlaw strikes but actually began "a period of strike freedom" please see: Mesut Gülmez, "Bir Belge, Bir Yorum: 1909 Tatil-i Eşgal Yasası ve Grev", *Toplum ve Bilim* 12 (Winter 1980), pp. 50-64.

<sup>35</sup> Ökçün, 1982, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Makal, 1999, pp. 42-43.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

The 1924 Constitution, the first constitution of the new Republic, hardly dealt with the subject of social rights. Such collective working rights such as unions, the right to strike, collective bargaining and contracts were not recognized.<sup>39</sup> But according to Article 79, the right to organize was recognized with the understanding that the boundaries of operation would be determined by law.<sup>40</sup>

However, after the Şeyh Sait uprising in the East the following year, the Law for the Maintenance of Order that was promulgated on March 4, 1925 made it impossible for this right actually to be exercised. The first article of this law made up of only three articles was:

The government, with the approval of the President, has the right to unilaterally forbid the organization, provocation, encouragement and publication of any actions aimed at disturbing the peace, security and law and order of the community through fanaticism and revolution.

Those who violate these actions can be tried at the State Court of Independence.<sup>41</sup>

This two-year law was passed in 1925, extended for another two years on March 3, 1927 and stayed in effect for a total of four years until March 4, 1929.<sup>42</sup>

In reality the Law for the Maintenance of Order, which is generally considered the beginning of the single-party rule period, did not contain any direct regulations

---

<sup>39</sup> Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005, 13. Baskı), p. 311.

<sup>40</sup> Yüksel Işık, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze İşçi Hareketinin Evrimi (1876-1974)* (Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi, 1995), p.78.

<sup>41</sup> İsmail Göldaş, *Takrir-i Sükun Görüşmeleri* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1997), p. 426.

“İrtica ve isyana ve memleketin içtimai nizamını huzur ve sükununu ve emniyet ve asayişini ihlale bais bilumum teşkilât ve tahrikât ve teşvikat ve neşriyatı Hükümet, Reisicumhurun tasdiki ile, resen ve idareten men’e mezundur.

İşbu efal erbabını Hükümet İstiklâl Mahkemesi’ne tevdi edebilir.”

<sup>42</sup> Makal, 1999, p.162.

concerning working life. However, thanks to the wide authority it granted the government, it also was used against worker organizations and movements.<sup>43</sup>

Such applications gained legal backing thanks to changes made in the following years, and with changes made in the Penal Code in 1933 strikes were considered to be punishable.<sup>44</sup>

During the first years of the Republic the thought of a law that would organize the working life in Turkey was gradually formed; however, the working law plans prepared in 1924-25, 1927, 1929, 1932 and 1934 did not become law for various reasons.<sup>45</sup> With the exception of the 1924 plan, they were not discussed in the Parliament except as part of a few oral motions. After the strike started by the Eastern Railway workers on November 19, 1923, preparations were started on the 1924 Working Law plans and discussions finally got under way in the Parliament on November 4, 1925. However, the government withdrew the proposal on May 10, 1926.<sup>46</sup>

Later the Working Law proposal prepared by the Economic Ministry in 1934 began to be discussed in the Grand National Assembly on June 3, 1936. Discussions were completed in three seatings and the enforcement area was limited to businesses that employed a minimum of ten workers and was accepted on June 8, 1936 as the first Working Law No. 3008.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>44</sup> Alpaslan Işıklı, “Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türk Sendikacılığı”, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 7, pp. 1826-1838.

<sup>45</sup> Makal, 1999, p. 353.

<sup>46</sup> Mesut Gülmez, *Meclislerde İşçi Sorunu ve Sendikal Haklar (1909-1961)* (Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi, 1995), pp. 132-145.

<sup>47</sup> Levent Varlık, “Türkiye’de Çıkarılan İlk İş Yasası Üzerine Görüşler”, *Toplum ve Bilim* 13 (Spring 1981), pp. 107-134.

The 1936 Working Law was based on the single-party ideology of mixing the nation and people and reflecting the state economic policy on working relationships; thus the state became a meddling symbol as the one and only organizing actor in the lives of all the people, their problems and areas of the working life.<sup>48</sup> The law made no mention in any shape or form of unions or the right to unions, and the right to strike was forbidden in Article 72.<sup>49</sup> According to the 1936 Working Law, Section 8, which stipulates punishments, a monetary fine was seen fit for private business workers who went on strike. In cases where strikes were organized at public businesses, besides receiving a fine, jail sentences between six months to a year were foreseen. If the strike, forbidden by law, aimed to exert influence on “state, provincial or municipal management or decisions,” the punishment would range from two months to two years in jail.<sup>50</sup>

In a speech made before an open vote held at the Grand National Assembly, Recep Peker, the General Secretary of the RPP at the time, stated that the Working Law about to be passed was “a regime law that was one of the state based laws” and that thanks to this law, a fortress had been built to prevent the people from being torn apart by being put into classes and that the new law would dismantle any chance for the opportunity of class knowledge to be born on survive.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Gülmez, 1995, p. 162.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 188-189.

<sup>50</sup> Işık, pp. 103-104

<sup>51</sup> Gülmez, 1995, pp. 178-179.

Finally, according to Article 9 of Associations Law No. 3512, which was passed on June 28, 1938, the establishment of organizations based upon or in the name of “family, race, class and religious community” was forbidden.<sup>52</sup> Thus any legal formation of a union was made impossible.

During the time period under consideration, the final major changes took place in the National Protection Law dated January 18, 1940. Besides the suspension of many articles of the 1936 Working Law, restrictions regarding the application of the social obligations of the Public Health Law were applied.<sup>53</sup>

The law gave the government the right to partially or completely lift weekends, national holidays and general vacations; increase the working day to eleven hours; apply paid obligatory service or paid overtime to public or private industry and mining businesses.

According to Article 19, paragraph 2 of the National Protection Law; “Regarding the laws (Health Law and Working Law) concerning the working of women and children above the age of 12 in industrial jobs and boys over the age 16 working in mining jobs, the current obligations may not necessarily be followed.”<sup>54</sup>

Enacted during World War II, the law gave the Council of Ministers wide authority and duties to organize all of the economy, and foresaw the implementation of these duties principally through the execution of governmental decrees. The National Protection Law is “the most important economic law of the 1940-1945 period” and

---

<sup>52</sup> Faruk Pekin, *Demokrasi, Sendika Özgürlüğü ve Sosyal Haklar* (İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1985), p. 278.

<sup>53</sup> Makal, 1999, p. 413.

<sup>54</sup> Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, “İkinci Dünya Savaşı Boyunca Emek ve Sermaye”, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si'ne İşçiler (1839-1950)*, ed. Donald Quateart and Eric Jan Zürcher (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998), pp. 197-225.

decrees based upon this law make up the main points of the wartime economic policies.<sup>55</sup>

### Labor Organizations

Union type organizations that formed during the Second Constitutional government period conducted their activities in accordance with the 1909 Associations Law and the 1910 Small Business Community Rules. This continued from the founding of the Republic until after World War II. For this reason the labor organizations of the time carried the name “associations.”<sup>56</sup>

There is no complete list of these labor organizations from the period when the Turkish Republic was founded. Besides the Istanbul Workers Union and Workers Improvement Association, which will be mentioned later, Erişçi provides the following list:

In Istanbul: *Haliç Şirketi Amelesi Cemiyeti* (Golden Horn Company Workers Association), *Şark Şimendiferleri Müstahdemin Teavün Cemiyeti* (Association for the Development of Eastern Railway Workers), *Silahtarağa Elektrik Fabrikası İşçileri Cemiyeti* (Association of the Silahtarağa Electrical Factory Workers), *İstanbul Umum Deniz ve Madenkömürü Tahmil ve Tahliye İşçileri Cemiyeti* (Association of General Marine and Coal Loading and Unloading Workers of İstanbul), *Dersaadet ve bıladiselase İnşaat, Tarik Irgat ve Rençber Amele Cemiyeti* (Association of Former Day-laborers, Farmhands and Workers of İstanbul)

---

<sup>55</sup> Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye’de Devletçilik* (Ankara: Savaş Yayınları, 1982), pp. 244-245

<sup>56</sup> Zafer Toprak, “Şirket-i Hayriye Amele Cemiyeti ve 1925 Grevi”, *Toplumsal Tarih* no. 30 (June 1996), pp. 6-14.



and Uskudar, Galata, Eyup), *Tütün Fabrikası Amele İttihat Cemiyeti* (Association of the Union of Tobacco Factory Workers), *İstanbul Tramvay Amelesi Cemiyeti* (Association of Istanbul Tramcar Workers), *Mürettipler Cemiyeti* (Association of Typesetters), *Anadolu Bağdat Şimendiferciler Cemiyeti* (Association of Anatolia-Baghdad Railwaymen. In Izmir: *Aydın Demiryolları İşçiler ve Memurlar Birliği* (Union of Aydın Railway Workers and Civil Servants), *Mülteci ve Muhacirin Amele Cemiyeti* (Association of Balkan and Other Refugee Workers), *Tütün Amele Cemiyeti* (Tobacco Workers Association), *Şimendifer Fabrikası Amele Birliği* (Railroad Factory Workers Association), *Tramvay İşçiler Cemiyeti* (Tramcar Workers Association), *Liman Vapur ve Kömür Amele Cemiyeti* (the Port, Ship and Coal Workers Association), *Mavuna Amele Cemiyeti* (Barge Workers Association), *Liman Rıhtım İthalât ve İhracat Amele Cemiyeti* (Port, Import, Export Workers Association), *Müstakil Liman Vapur Amele Teavün Cemiyeti* (Independent Association for the Development of Ship Workers), *İnşaat ve Madeni Mevad Amele Teavün Cemiyeti* (Association for the Development of Construction and Metal Workers). In Adana: *Amele Teali Cemiyeti* (Workers Development Association). In Konya: *İşçiler Derneği* (Association of Workers). In Bursa: *Yaprak Tütün Amelesi Cemiyeti* (Association of the Leaf Tobacco Workers). In Eskişehir: *Anadolu Bağdat Şimendiferciler Cemiyeti* (Association of Anatolia Baghdad Railwaymen).<sup>57</sup>

The workers' organization that attracted the most attention during the first years of the Republic was the *İstanbul Umum Amele Birliği* (IUAB), the Istanbul Public Workers Union. It was founded on December 20, 1922. The founder of the IUAB was Şakir Rasim, who was the public secretary of the *Müstakil Sosyalist Fırkası*, the Independent Socialist Party, which had been formed by people who had left the *Türkiye Sosyalist Fırkası*, the Turkish Socialist Party. Within 10 months the number of organizations attached to the IUAB reached 26.

Three days before the founding of the Republic, at the IUAB Congress held on October 26, 1923, the workers of the Zonguldak, Ergani, Kara Balya and Aydın companies joined the union, thus forming the *Türkiye Umum Amele Birliği* (TUAB), the Turkey Public Workers Union. The thirty-two organizations attached to TUAB

---

<sup>57</sup> Lütfü Erişçi, 1951, pp. 18-19.

conducted activities. Shortly thereafter reports in the press talked about the TUAB being banned. Despite this the union continued to conduct its activities for a while longer. However, when the arguments continued, it disbanded in mid-1924.<sup>58</sup>

Shortly after TUAB disbanded, a similar labor organization called the *Amele Teali Cemiyeti* (ATC), the Workers Improvement Association, was founded on August 12, 1924. Its founders included the *Mürettibin-i Osmâniyye Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Typesetters Association), *İstanbul Umum Deniz ve Maden Kömürü Tahmil ve Tahliye İşçileri Cemiyeti* (Association of the General Metals and Coal Loading and Unloading Workers), *Cibali Tütün Fabrikası Amele İttihadı Cemiyeti* (Association for the Union of Cibali Tobacco Factory), *Şark Şömendiferleri Müstahdemîn Teaviün Cemiyeti* (Association for the Development of Eastern Railway Workers), *Anadolu-Bağdat Şömendiferciler Cemiyeti* (Association of Anatolia-Baghdad Railwaymen), *İstanbul Tramvay Amelesi Cemiyeti* (Istanbul Tramcar Workers Association), *Haliç Şirketi Amele Cemiyeti* (Golden Horn Company Workers Association).

Ideologically the ATC was close to the *Aydınlık* group. Besides preparing and presenting their opinion to the Parliament regarding the Work Law Proposal in 1925, they also organized Labor Day on May 1. On this day, with the help of the intelligentsia, they handed out a brochure entitled “What is May 1?” and as a result the ATC directors were arrested and given jails sentenced between seven and 15 years in length.

The ATC disbanded after this incident and even though its replacement, the Istanbul Workers Cooperation Organization, fell under the influence of the RPP for a

---

<sup>58</sup> Mete Tunçay, *1923 Amele Birliği* (İstanbul: BDS, 1989), passim.

while, it passed back to the supervision of the leftist community in 1927. During the communist arrests of October 1927, the community was shut down and its president, Sabri Bey, was arrested. Allowed to reopen in February 1928, the community was shut down once again the same year. Thus the final labor organization akin to a federation during the first years of the Republic was disbanded.<sup>59</sup>

A similar attempt in Izmir in 1932 was ended before it had the chance to start. Some of the people who were trying to form the Izmir Workers Union Association were determined to have ties with *Türkiye Komünist Partisi* (TKP), the Turkey Communist Party, and were sentenced to jail terms ranging from six months to five years.<sup>60</sup>

While on the one hand, the government of the period forbade and violently suppressed any kind of labor organizations outside its supervision, it, on the other hand, tried to organize the workers and small business owners into associations via offices under its control.

A notice from the RPP General Secretary, Recep Peker, No. 2101, dated August 29, 1931, stipulated the creation of a General Public Management Board made up of four groups which contained offices of which the ninth article concerned “Labor, workers, small business organizations and free trade.”<sup>61</sup>

To this end Kazım Dirik, the governor of Izmir, published a directive on December 11, 1934 that stated certain problems had been observed in the shape and management of the Small Business and Worker Community, and in order to keep these communities more vibrant and in a state that would be of more use to the country, all the

---

<sup>59</sup> Fatih Güngör, “Amele Teali Cemiyeti,” *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi* Vol. 1, p. 40.

<sup>60</sup> İbrahim Topçuoğlu, *Türkiye’de İlk Sendika Sarıkışla’da 1932* (İstanbul: Öncü Kitabevi, 1975), p. 40.

<sup>61</sup> Mete Tunçay, *T. C. ’nde Tek-Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması (1923-1931)* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1992), p. 319.

small business owners and workers were asked to comply completely with the rules and regulations in every type of organization. Otherwise, punishment in accordance with Article 326 of the Penal Code would be exercised.

According to the articles to be complied with, all small business owners and workers were required to register with the communities and obtain an IDs. Anyone who employed someone who had not obtained an ID between the period of January 1, 1935 and March 1, 1935 would be fined. The dues the workers and small business owners promised to give the associations were to be deducted from their salaries, fees or allowances. The workers and small business owners were required to comply with the association regulations. The police and municipal task force would follow to ensure these rules were enforced.<sup>62</sup>

The number of workers and small business owners who were members of the Izmir Workers and Small Business Owners Organizations Union, that began functioning on April 1, 1935, reached 25,000 towards the middle of that same year and 34,000 by 1941. The Union continued its activities until 1946; however, with changes made to the Association Law that same year and the subsequent founding of unions, it was probably closed.<sup>63</sup>

In conclusion, the Turkish worker class did not have the opportunity to independently organize until the organizational ban based upon class was lifted in 1946.

---

<sup>62</sup> Sülker, 1955, p. 32.

<sup>63</sup> Bülent Varlık, “İzmir İşçi ve Esnaf Kurumları Birliği”, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 2, p. 175-176.

## CHAPTER III

### BEGINNING OF THE MULTI-PARTY ERA AND THE FOUNDING OF THE SOCIALIST PARTIES

During the first years of the Republic there were two unsuccessful attempts to move towards a multi-party system. First, the headquarters and all the branches of *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, the Progressive Republic Party, which was founded on November 17, 1924, were closed by the government on June 5, 1925.<sup>64</sup> The Independent Party, which was accepted mostly as an artificial and controlled experiment in democracy, lasted for only three and a half months. Fethi Bey, the party's founder, sent a letter to the Ministry of the Interior on November 17, 1930 announcing the dissolution of the party.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Ankara: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 1992), p. 120.

<sup>65</sup> Cemil Koçak, "Siyasal Tarih (1923-1950)", *Çağdaş Türkiye 1908-1980*, Vol. 4 (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1989), p. 108.

Finally, the permanent transition to the multi party system began after World War II. While the grounds for the transition were prepared by the political, social and economic developments in the country, certain foreign influences, like the signing of the United Nations Charter, the democracy front winning World War II and the subsequent democratic ideology gaining influence in the world and thus forcing the political regime in Turkey to adapt to it, sped up the process.<sup>66</sup>

Actually, even before the war was over, in a speech for the beginning of the new legislative year on November 1, 1944, when İnönü strongly stressed the democratic parliamentary quality of the Turkish political system, he gave the first indication of the government considering a change in that direction.<sup>67</sup>

The following words spoken by İnönü on May 19, 1945 at the Youth Day celebrations are accepted as the turning point in the liberation of politics in Turkey: “The political management of our country will continue to improve with the advancement in every direction of the public management created by the Republic”.<sup>68</sup>

The words “Our only deficiency is that there is not an opposing party to the government” by President İnönü on November 1, 1945 during his opening speech to the Parliament was an important step in the formation of the multi-party system.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Karpat, p. 137.

<sup>67</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004, New Edition), p. 209.

<sup>68</sup> Feroz and Bedia Turgay Ahmad, *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Politikanın Açıklamalı Kronolojisi 1945-1971* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1976), p. 13.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

The first opposition party of the period, the National Development Party, was formed by millionaire Nuri Demirağ after his application to the Ministry of the Interior was accepted on July 18, 1945.<sup>70</sup>

On January 7, 1946 Demokrat Parti (DP), the Democratic Party, was formed by Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Fuat Köprülü and Refik Koraltan. Celal Bayar was elected Chairman.<sup>71</sup>

Finally on July 21, 1946 the first multi-party elections were held. In the election for 465 parliamentary seats, RPP won 395, the DP won 66 and independents won four seats.<sup>72</sup>

### The Turkish Socialist Party

With the transition to the multi-party system, the Turkish socialists began to form legal parties. First off, on May 14, 1946, before the organizational ban based upon class had been lifted, the lawyer, Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu, founded the *Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi* (TSP), the Turkish Socialist Party. The other founding members were Macit Güçlü, İhvan Kabalıoğlu and Aziz Uçtay. The members of the Central Executive

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>71</sup> Koçak, p. 141.

<sup>72</sup> Ahmad and Ahmad, p. 23.

Committee were Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu, Macit Güçlü, Hüsamettin Özdoğu, Avedis Aleksanyan, Behçet Atılgan, Mustafa Börklüce, and Alaattin Hakgüder.<sup>73</sup>

The General Secretary of the party, Esat Adil, was a socialist who previously had no relationship with the TKP. After graduating from the Faculty of Law in Ankara, he continued studying criminal punishment and detention centers in Belgium. After he returned to Turkey, he settled in his hometown of Balıkesir and while he was the Chairman of the Community Center, he published the *Savaş* newspaper on the one hand and published books dealing with problems in socialism through *Savaş Publications* on the other.

Afterwards he went to Ankara to start his job as the Assistant Head Public Appeals Prosecutor. First, he became the Head Warden of İmralı Prison in 1942, later he was a prison inspector and then he began to practice as a freelance lawyer after he resigned from public service.<sup>74</sup>

Within the TSP program, the main principles that the party's founding and activities were based upon were defined as follows:

Article 1 – To transform the Turkish Republic into a public state and to establish and apply any form of political, economic and social laws that will allow for the people to govern themselves unconditionally. To this end the TSP is democratic.

Article 2 – To increase the welfare, cultural, health and judicial level of the Turkish people, to remove all barriers that prevent individual development and thus make use of the labors and abilities by removing every kind of economic and social injustices. To this end the TSP is socialist.

Article 3 – Nation: Born and developed during the course of history, it is a joining of country, language, economic life, culture and traditions. To ensure this joining continues to exist in complete political and economic

---

<sup>73</sup> *Yeni Sabah*, June 28, 1946.

<sup>74</sup> *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 6, p. 1924.



liberty and independence and recognize this right for other nations. To this end the TSP is nationalist.

Article 4 - The political and economic independence of nations, the non-abuse of the peoples domestically and internationally, make up the basis for actual democracy and social justice between nations.

All the peoples of the planet cooperate to protect themselves and their nations against imperialistic aggressive exploitation, create social and cultural unions, to make use of any means necessary in order to eliminate the reasons for war and to work towards creating a world order that is made up of free, independent nations that are in solidarity with each other. To this end the TSP is international and peaceful.

Article 5 – Regarding whether to believe or not to believe in a supernatural being, individuals have absolute religious freedom and the fact that the state must maintain its complete neutrality when faced with any kind of manifestation of this freedom is the philosophical result of laicism. To this end the TSP is secular.<sup>75</sup>

The TSP regulations defined the party organizational levels as the National Congress and Central Executive Committee and provincial, district, township, neighborhood and village congresses and executive committees. The Central Executive Committee would be made up of one General Secretary and one Assistant General Secretary and ten members and every member would function as a bureau chief. It was foreseen that of the eleven bureaus that the Central Executive Committee would be split

---

<sup>75</sup> *Yeni Sabah*, June 28, 1946.

*“Madde 1- Türk Cumhuriyeti’ni tam bir halk devleti haline getirmek ve halkın kayıtsız şartsız kendi kendini idare etmesine imkan verici her türlü siyasi, iktisadi ve içtimai mevzuatı tesis ve tatbik etmek: T. S. P. bu prensiple demokrattır.*

*Madde 2- Türk milletinin refah, kültür, sağlık ve adalet seviyesini yükseltmek, vatandaşların, ferdi gelişmelerini destekleyen bütün sebepleri ve bu bakımdan mevcut her türlü iktisadi ve içtimai adaletsizliği ortadan kaldırarak emek ve kabiliyetleri değerlendirmek: T. S. P. bu prensiple sosyalisttir.*

*Madde 3- Millet: Tarihin seyri içinde doğan ve gelişen ülke, dil, iktisadi hayat, kültür ve an’ane beraberliğidir. Bu beraberliğin siyasi ve iktisadi tam bir hürriyet ve bağımsızlıkla devamını sağlamak ve başka milletler için de bu hakkı tanımak: T. S. P. bu prensiple milliyetçidir.*

*Madde 4- Milletlerin siyasi ve iktisadi bağımsızlığı, halk kitlelerinin içerden ve dışardan istismar edilmemesi, milletler arası içtimai adaletin ve hakiki demokrasinin temelini teşkil eder.*

*Bütün yeryüzü halk kitlelerinin emperyalist istismarcı tecavüzlere karşı kendilerini ve milletleri korumak için işbirliği etmeleri, içtimai ve kültürel birlikler kurmaları, harbin sebeplerini ortadan kaldırma yolunda her türlü vasıtanı faydalanmaları, hür, bağımsız fakat mütesanit milletlerden müteşekkil bir dünya nizamı kurulması için çalışmak: T. S. P. bu prensiple beynelmilelci ve barışçıdır.*

*Madde 5- Tabiat üstü bir varlığa inanmak veya inanmamak hususunda fertlerin mutlak bir vicdan hürriyetine sahip olmaları ve bu hürriyetin her türlü tezahürü karşısında devletin tam bir tarafsızlık muhafaza etmesi layisizmin felsefi bir neticesidir: T. S. P. bu prensiple layiktir.”*

into, one of them would be the *Sendikalar ve Cemiyetler Bürosu*, the Unions and Associations Bureau.<sup>76</sup>

On July 7, 1946 the TSP began to publish the daily newspaper *Gerçek*. However, the newspaper only existed for nineteen days.

After the elections on July 21, 1946, the DP contended that there were irregularities. İnönü's conciliatory speech calling for all the harsh words used during the elections to be forgotten did little to calm things down. Celal Bayar's statement that irregularities had occurred in the election was printed in the July 25, 1946 editions of *Yeni Sabah*, *Tanin* and *Gerçek* newspapers. As a result *Yeni Sabah* and *Gerçek* were closed by martial law.<sup>77</sup> The pro government *Tanin* newspaper was left untouched.<sup>78</sup>

Another publication of the TSP was the weekly *Gün*. Besides writing about political and union issues, Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu, the chief editor of *Gün*, penned a wide variety of columns with titles such as *En Korkunç İctimai Trajedi: Suç*, The Worst Social Tragedy: Crime, *Suçlar Üzerine İncelemeler*, Crime Studies, *Muhtariyet*, *Üniversiteyi Hür Kılar mı?*, Can Autonomy Free the Universities?, *Yarının Gençliği*, Youth of Tomorrow, *Kaldırım Çocukları*, Sidewalk Children, *Kültür Pazarında Damping*, Sale at the Cultural Market. In addition to the columns that he wrote under his own name, he also had columns published under the pen name "Adiloğlu" and he also prepared the *Lügatçei Adil*, the Dictionary of Adil.

Some other *Gün* writers were Sait Faik Abasıyanık, Sabahattin Ali, Attila İlhan, Rıfat Ilgaz, Aziz Nesin, Orhan Kemal, Mehmet Ali Aybar, Oktay Akbal, Kemal Sülker

---

<sup>76</sup> *Yeni Sabah*, June 26, 1946.

<sup>77</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, July 26, 1946.

<sup>78</sup> Karpat, p. 165.

(using the pseudonym Asım Sarp), Rasih Nuri İleri, Cahit Saffet Irgat and Orhan Müstecaplıoğlu. Also the columns of Suphi Nuri İleri, Hüsamettin Özdoğu and Mustafa Börklüce, the poems of Enver Gökçe and Arif Barikat, the poem translations of İlhan Berk and Cemil Meriç, and the caricatures of Mim Uykusuz were published in the magazine.

Besides commentary and news about union movements in Turkey and the world, there were also stories, poems and literary critiques in *Gün*. Under the title “Great Democrats” Atatürk, Sun Yat Sen, A. Lincoln, Jaures, Lenin, Roosevelt and Mithat Paşa were introduced to the readers. Pieces about national, primary, secondary, tertiary education and worker-youth schools in the Soviet Union appeared in different issues of *Gün*.

*Gün* began its publishing life as a “weekly culture and current affairs magazine” in the last months of 1945. On November 30, 1946, in its 29<sup>th</sup> edition, the magazine announced to its readers that it had become a political publication. Thus the magazine had freed itself from the limitations and restrictions imposed by its non-political nature.<sup>79</sup>

*Gün*’s 30<sup>th</sup> edition, dated December 14, 1946 and two days before it was closed by the Martial Law Command was published in a different format in comparison to previous issues.

Besides *Gerçek* and *Gün* the TSP published brochures. “Political Struggle and Marxism,” “State and Revolution” and “Democracy and Socialism” were brochures of

---

<sup>79</sup> *Gün*, November 30, 1946.

lectures by Professor Etienne Fajon of the Paris Labor University that were translated into Turkish by Esat Adil and published by TSP Publications.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to its publishing activities, the TSP started a series of conferences at its party headquarters in Siraselviler in September. These conferences were organized for party members every Saturday evening and had titles like “The Main Features of Marxism,” “National Matter and Socialism,” “Marxist Novels and Stories” and “Worker Class and Village Life.”

### Turkish Socialist Workers and Peasants Party

Approximately one month after the founding of the TSP, on June 19, 1946, the *Türkiye Sosyalist Köylü ve Emekçi Partisi* (TSEKP), Turkish Socialist Workers and Peasants Party, was founded under the leadership of Dr. Şefik Hüsnü Deymer. The other founding members were Ragıp Vardar, Fuat Bilege, İstefo Papadopoulos, Emin Aydınlatan, Dr. Habil Amato, Müntekim Ölçmen and Hayrettin Emin Manoğlu.<sup>81</sup> The Council of Founders elected Dr. Şefik Hüsnü Deymer as the Deputy Chairman and

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler 1859-1952* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1995, Second Edition, Same Press. First Edition: İstanbul: 1952)

General Secretary and Ragıp Vardar, Fuat Bilege, Dr. Habil Amato and Muntekim Ölçmen as the other members of the Executive Committee.<sup>82</sup>

Born in Thessaloniki in 1887, Dr. Şefik Hüsnü took charge of the group publishing *Kurtuluş*, Salvation magazine, which had first been published in Berlin in 1919, thus started publishing it in Istanbul. Şefik Hüsnü was the General Secretary of the *Türkiye İşçi Çiftçi Partisi*, the Turkish Labor and Farmer Socialist Party, formed that same year and was also elected to the Central Committee of the TKP at their First Congress held in Baku in 1920. He started publishing *Aydınlık* magazine in 1921, was arrested and subsequently released for distributing a declaration after the celebrations on May 1, 1923. Şefik Hüsnü was elected as the TKP General Secretary at its Second Congress in 1925, fled abroad when *Aydınlık* was shut down and arrests began in accordance with the Law for the Maintenance of Order and was sentenced to fifteen years hard labor in absentia. When he returned to Turkey in 1927, he was arrested and spent eighteen months in jail completing his sentence and then went abroad again. He last returned to Turkey in 1939.<sup>83</sup>

According to Article 2 of the TSEKP's Activity Program, the party's "distant ambition" was stated as follows:

To abolish the exploitation of the labor force which has to a great degree furthered the destitution of large amounts of people, to transfer the means of production into the people's hands and to provide all members of the nation a life of prosperity and happiness within a socialist democracy.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> *Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi: Ana Nizamname ve Faaliyet Programı* (İstanbul: F-K Basımevi, 1946) pp. 16-17.

<sup>83</sup> *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 6, pp. 1874-1875.

<sup>84</sup> *Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi: Ana Nizamname ve Faaliyet Programı*, p. 18.

"Geniş halk yığınlarının gittikçe daha ziyade yoksullaşması sonucunu doğuran iş gücünün sömürülmesini ortadan kaldırmak,

However, according to the TSEKP, the current economic and political conditions had not matured enough for the accomplishment of this main principle. Additionally it was not impossible to attain socialism through the conscious and organized economic and political struggles of the masses in Turkey. Taking this into consideration, the TSEKP, as a near target, focused all of its efforts to this end:

- a– To provide for the urban and peasant workers to be involved in every aspect of the country’s economic, political and social life, to truly benefit from the democratic rights and liberties and have a say in the determination of the country’s domestic and foreign politics;
- b– To lift all legal and administrative barriers that have made difficult or at certain times impossible for the urban and peasant working class to benefit from the rights, freedoms and immunities granted by the Constitution to all citizens;
- c– With the aim of protecting their own vital benefits, to assist the public masses in their organizational attempts around trade unions, economic, social and cultural associations, clubs, night schools, etc. thus giving the nation an organized, democratic shape and then strengthening our national independence upon this immovable foundation;
- d– To protect the Turkish workers and peasants and the social classes that can be considered their natural allies - with no regard to their race, religion and sect or their skin color and whether they are a local or an immigrant – from the political pressures and exploitation of domestic and foreign investors;
- To maintain a systematic and continuous struggle against fascism and religious fundamentalism,
- e– According to advanced democratic principles, to provide for the working class at state industrial-commercial businesses developed for the benefit of the people and at private businesses and factories outside of this scope, to work under sanitary working conditions that we will have the democratic management of the Republic accept, within the framework of collective contracts and social insurances and under the tight control of the unions and with high salaries;
- f– To expedite the development of the requirements in our country for the transition into a socialist community by helping the organized worker and peasant masses, that arise in intermittent waves, to embark on economic

---

*Büyük istihlal vasıtalarını milletin müşterek mülkiyetine geçirmek,  
Bir sosyalist demokrasi içinde, bütün millet fertlerine yüksek bir geçim ve mes’ut bir hayat sağlamak.”*

desire movements and political struggles and to manage all these activities on all levels.<sup>85</sup>

The TSEKP published a newspapers named *Sendika* to voice their opinions. It was published as a weekly for 16 editions between August 31 and December 14, 1946, using the motto of “Promotes the Case of Manual Laborers in Economic, Social and Political Areas.” The newspaper mostly reported about worker and union news and the regulations of newly formed unions.

The editorials of *Sendika* were written by Şefik Hüsnü under the pseudonym of “*Sendikacı*” (Unionist). Among other writers were Muvaffak Şeref, who also used the pseudonym “*Sendikacı*”, Ferit Kalmuk, who used the pseudonym “*Sendikacı F.K.*”, Hadi Malkoç, Dr. Hulusi Dosdoğru, Faruk Atay, Neriman Hikmet and Armağan Kerimol.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> *Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi: Ana Nizamname ve Faaliyet Programı*, pp. 19-20.

“a) Memleketin ekonomik, politik ve sosyal hayatının bütün gelişmelerinde, şehir ve köy emekçi halk yığınlarının demokratik hak ve hürriyetlerden gerçekten faydalanmalarını, iç ve dış siyasetimizin tayininde doğrudan doğruya söz sahibi olmalarını sağlamak,

b) Şehir ve köylerdeki emekçi halkın, Anayasanın tek mil vatandaşlara tanıdığı hak, serbestlik ve dokunulmazlıklardan faydalanmalarını güçleştiren ve bazı hâllerde imkânsız kılan bütün kanunî ve idarî engellerin kaldırılmasını sağlamak,

c) Bu halk yığınlarının, kendi hayatî menfaatlerini korumak maksadı ile bizzat kuracakları meslek birlikleri (Sendikalar) v.s. ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel cemiyetler, kulüpler, gece mektepleri ilâh... etrafında teşkilâtlanma teşebbüslerine her suretle yardımda bulunmak ve böylece milleti teşkilâtlı, demokratik bir bünyeye kavuşturarak, bu sarsılmaz temel üstünde millî istiklalimizi gereği gibi sağlamlaştırmak,

d) Türkiye emekçi ve köylülerini ve onların tabîî müttefikleri olan sosyal zümreleri –ırk, din ve mezhep farklarına, deri rengine, yerli veya muhacir olmalarına bakmaksızın- yerli ve yabancı sermayedarların sömürmelerine ve siyasi baskılarına karşı korumak,

İrticaa ve faşizme karşı aralıksız ve sistemli bir mücadele yürütmek,

e) İleri-demokrat prensiplere göre, halk faydasına geliştirilecek devlet sınaî-ticarî işletmelerinde ve onların dışında kalacak hususî işletme ve fabrikalarda, emekçi gücünün; demokrat cumhuriyet idaresine kabul ettireceğimiz sıhî iş şartları, kolektif mukaveleler ve ictimâî sigortalar çerçevesi içinde ve sendikaların sıkı kontrolleri altında korunmasını ve dolgun gündelikler karşılığında kullanılmasını sağlamak,

f) Teşkilâtlı emekçi ve köylü yığınlarının, aralıksız kaban dalgalı halinde, iktisadî istekler hareketlerine ve siyasî savaşımlara atılmalarına yardım ve bütün bu faaliyetleri at başı beraber yürütmek suretile, memleketimizde sosyalist bir cemiyete geçiş şartlarının gelişmesini hızlandırmak.”

<sup>86</sup> Güzel, p. 289.

Also between the dates of October 5 and November 16, 1946 in editions 6-12 of *Sendika* newspaper the announcement “Worker comrades: Wait for our daily political newspaper soon to be published” appeared on the front page next to the name of the newspaper; however a daily newspaper was never published.<sup>87</sup>

### Relationships between Socialist Parties

The union organizations that began after the ban on organizations based upon class principles was lifted in 1946, as we will see later, were not limited only by unions organized by the socialist parties. However, in Turkish union history the term “1946 Unions” is used for union organizations associated with the TSP and TSEKP.

While up until that period the socialists had essentially organized around the illegal TKP, why and how the socialists decided to found two legal parties in 1946 is a subject that has been discussed widely.<sup>88</sup>

The arguments essentially revolve around two claims. According to the first claim, the founding of a socialist party under the chairmanship of Esat Adil, who had

---

<sup>87</sup> Aclan Sayılğan also states that Dr. Şefik Hüsni Deymer was preparing a daily newspaper called *Emekçinin Sesi* (Worker’s Voice) when the TSEKP was closed. Aclan Sayılğan, *Solun 94 Yılı (1871-1965)* (Ankara: Mars Matbaası, 1968), p. 314.

<sup>88</sup> Actually the “leftist” parties that were founded in 1946 were not limited to the TSP and TSEKP. Mete Tunçay mentions seven attempts besides these two parties that “did not amount to very much”: “*Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Partisi* (Turkish Worker and Farmer Party), *Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi* (Turkish Socialist Worker Party), *Liberal Sosyalist Parti* (Liberal Socialist Party), *Ergenekon Köylü ve İşçi Partisi* (Turanist), (Ergenekon Peasant and Worker Party), *Türk Sosyal Demokrat Partisi* (Turkish Social Democrat Party), *Sosyal Adalet Partisi* (Social Justice Party), *Çiftçi ve Köylü Partisi* (Farmer and Peasant Party), (in Bursa).” Mete Tunçay, “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Sosyalizm (1960’a Kadar)”, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 7, pp. 1950-1954.



had no previous association with the TKP, was decided jointly with Şefik Hüsnü. However, Şefik Hüsnü reacted to the leadership falling into the hands of Esat Adil and one month after the founding of the TSP, TSEKP was founded.

According to the second claim, Şefik Hüsnü gave his blessing for the founding of the TSP. However, because such “opposition” TKP members like Mustafa Borklücke and Hüsamettin Özdoğu “provoked” Esat Adil, he founded the TSEKP because he feared the legal party would “veer off” and “a void would be left.” The facts that Esat Adil did not receive any punishment at the 1946 hearings, the political line the TSP followed after it started again in 1950 and the criticisms Esat Adil directed towards TSEKP followers after 1950 are all shown as justifications of Şefik Hüsnü’s thoughts.<sup>89</sup>

However, it should be noted that most of the arguments on the subject were done in retrospect many years after it had taken place. When arguments from 1946 are reviewed, it can be seen that they were not this sharp and divisive.

As a result, in an editorial titled *İşçi Sınıfı ve Köylü Davası*, Worker Class and the Peasant Matter, written by Esat Adil and published by *Gün* on November 23, 1946, he states that the only force that can solve the problems of villages and villagers in Turkey definitively is the working class and he counts the TSP and the TSEKP as “the two main revolutionary, brother parties that have clearly grasped and systemized this in their programs.”<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> For the main arguments regarding this topic: İbrahim Topçuoğlu, *Neden 2 Sosyalist Partisi* (1946): *T.K.P. Kuruluşu ve Mücadelesinin Tarihi (1914-1960)*, Vol. I-II (İstanbul: Eser Matbaası, 1976), Vol. III (İstanbul: 1977, Üçler Matbaası); Rasih Nuri İleri, *T.K.P. Gerçeği ve Bilimsellik Quo Vadis İbrahim Topçuoğlu?* (İstanbul: Anadolu Yayınları, 1976), Emin Karaca, “Aldatıcı Bir Özgürlük Ortamında İki Sosyalist Parti”, *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. VI, pp. 1930-1931.

<sup>90</sup> *Gün*, November 23, 1946.

In the 23<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Gün*, dated September 21, 1946, it was announced that a labor newspaper called “*Sendika*” had been published in Istanbul, success was wished for and “worker friends were advised to read it.”<sup>91</sup>

When both *Gün* magazine and the TSP General Secretary Esat Adil commented on the self dissolution of the TSP Samsun Provincial Executive Committee and subsequent joining of the TSEKP, the softness of their manner was distinctive:

According to a copy of a decision sent to our magazine, it has been reported that the Samsun Provincial Executive Committee of the Turkish Socialist Party has resigned.

...it was reported to all concerned by the General Secretary of the party that an enterprising board would operate in place of the resigned board.

The party General Secretary also added:

“Every one of the members who made up the Samsun entrepreneurial executive committee was an idealist, revolutionary and extremely valuable friends. The resignations of these friends were not due to any kind of misunderstanding. On the contrary, these valuable revolutionaries, while being at fault from a political perspective, have shown great personal redemption by deciding to concede the field of struggle just as the revolutionary Samsun branch of the worker and peasant party...If we were not sure that we could further better and manage our case than anyone, we would not have considered this virtue of our friends in Samsun as a political mistake and would not have shied away from congratulating them.”<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> *Gün*, September 21, 1946.

<sup>92</sup> *Gün*, August 30, 1946.

“Dergimize gönderilen bir karar suretinde Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi’nin Samsun vilâyet icra komitesinin istifa ettiği bildirilmektedir.

... istifa eden heyet yerine yeni bir müteşebbis heyetin faaliyete geçirileceği Parti Genel sekreterliğince tevzihen bildirilmiştir.

Partinin Genel Sekreteri şunları da ilave etmiştir:

Samsun müteşebbis icra komitesini teşkil edenlerin her biri idealist, inkılâpçı ve gayet değerli arkadaşlarımızdı. Bu arkadaşlarımızın istifaları herhangi bir anlaşmazlıktan ileri gelmiş değildir. Bil’akis bu değerli inkılâpçılar, siyasî bakımdan son derece hatalı olmakla beraber şahsi fazilet göstererek mücadele sahasını aynı derecede inkılâpçı olduklarına şüphe etmediğimiz emekçi ve köylü partisinin Samsun şubesine terk etmeyi, kendi görüşlerine göre uygun bulmuşlardır. ... Davamızı herkesten daha iyi yürütüp, daha iyi başaracağımızdan emin olmasaydık Samsundaki arkadaşlarımızın bu faziletini bir siyasî hata saymazdık ve kendilerini tebrik etmekten çekinmezdik.”

On the same page in a report delivered without commentary, it was reported that in the previous few days a large group from the Izmir branch of TSEKP had resigned and “joined” the TSP.<sup>93</sup>

The approach of the TSEKP followers towards the TSP was much more reserved and it was stressed in writings that “the revolutionary party that represented true socialism” was the TSEKP. For example, according to Ferit Kalmuk, the union organization leader of TSEKP, it was clear that the worker masses could not have more than one party. And if there were, they were either artificial parties or their names were fronts for some secret purposes.<sup>94</sup> In addition to this, members of the TSEKP refrained from getting involved in any kind of open political debate with members of the TSP.

Even in the decision by the Istanbul Second Criminal Court regarding the case opened after the parties were shut down stated that attempts had been made to unify the two parties but they had been unsuccessful.<sup>95</sup> In a column written in the November 19, 1946 edition of *SES* magazine, Aziz Nesin, who for a short period of time was a member of the TSP, wrote about the subject and stated that both of the socialist parties were “genuine and sincere” and that they should unify.<sup>96</sup>

Turhan Yıldız (Cervatoğlu), a member of the Samsun entrepreneurial executive committee of the TSP, explained in his unpublished notes many years later the reasons for his switching to the TSEKP:

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> *Sendika*, October 19, 1946.

<sup>95</sup> *1947 TKP Davası, Kırklı Yıllar-4*, ed. Rasih Nuri İleri, (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2003), p. 203-204.

<sup>96</sup> *SES*, November 19, 1946, no 7.

I cannot clearly and exactly state the declaration statement we wrote to the General Headquarters. What we said was more or less this: The fact that the TSEK party came into being after the Turkish Socialist Party and targeted the Turkish Socialist Party as wrong and a harmful blow to the labor cause. This is how we see it. However, under the present conditions, the existence of these two parties which is preparing ground for the division of the Turkish worker, is just as dangerous. For this reason, despite the wrong approach of the TSEK party, due to the faith we have in the cause of the Turkish worker we are abolishing the Samsun branch of the Turkish Socialist Party in favor of the TSEK party.<sup>97</sup>

In conclusion, an approach in a letter attributed to Hüsamettin Özdoğu provides important information about the subject. Özdoğu undertook important duties for many years at the TKP, and had sided with Esat Adil in 1946. It has been claimed that this situation was influential in Şefik Hüsnü founding a second party.<sup>98</sup>

A letter addressed to Şahap Kıvılcım, one of the former TKP members in Izmir, dated August 11, 1946, was used without reference by Tevetoğlu, who said that he had made use of the state archives when he wrote his book. In the letter, Özdoğu first answers Kıvılcım's "Why are there two socialist parties?" question.

According to Özdoğu, it was necessary to take advantage of the democratic movements that had appeared in the country in order to enlarge and widen the socialist movement. Thus the old "gossiping, interrupting, discriminating" activities should be abandoned and efforts made to organize the labor movement, which showed the potential of growing. However a few people, who had for years forgotten about the

---

<sup>97</sup> (Cervatoğlu), Turhan Yıldız's unpublished notes, Özgür Gökmen, "Çok-partili rejime geçerken sol: Türkiye Sosyalizminin unutulmuş partisi", *Toplum ve Bilim* 78 (Autumn 1998), pp. 161-185.

"Genel Merkeze yazdığımız deklarasyon metnini aynen ve kesin olarak ifade edemeyeceğim. (...) aşağı yukarı ifadesi şu şekilde idi: T.S.E.K. Partisinin Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi'nden sonra ortaya çıkması ve Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi'ni hedef alması gayet yanlış ve işçi davasına zararlı bir harekettir. Biz bunu böylece görüyoruz. Ancak bugünkü şartlarda, Türk işçisinin bölünmesini hazırlayacak bu iki partinin mevcudiyetini de bunun kadar sakıncalı görmekteyiz. Bu nedenle T.S.E.K. Partisinin yanlış tutumuna rağmen Samsun Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi Şubesi'ni, Türk işçisinin davasına olan inancımız yüzünden T.S.E.K. Partisi lehine feshediyoruz."

<sup>98</sup> İbrahim Topçuoğlu, *Neden 2 Sosyalist Partisi* (1946), Vol. I, p. 40-41.

class struggle and instead focused on inside party struggles, never accepted this style and could not adapt to the new situation. They believed revolutionary actions to be their domain and did not believe in anyone else's revolutionary actions. That's why they did not trust the revolutionary movement of the working class. This is the main point of differentiation between the TSP and the TSEKP.

As can be seen, Özdoğu explains the existence of both parties through the very important differentiation in their basic politics. However, he does not completely discount the possibility of the two parties unifying. He states that this unification cannot happen as a result of a proposal, rather the working class would take care of the unification.

Despite all his criticism of the TSEKP, when he makes a recommendation to his friend at the end of the letter, he is far from being competitive: "Analyze the situation carefully. Take the side of whichever side is right. To stand in the middle or watch and wait does not become a revolutionary."<sup>99</sup>

In conclusion, while old arguments within the TKP played a part, the concerns of the communist staff who had for years been forced to remain illegal, played an important role in the founding of two different socialist parties in 1946. As a result, relationships between the TSP and the TSEKP were not argued openly on an ideological and political

---

<sup>99</sup> Fethi Tevetoğlu, *Türkiye'de Sosyalist ve Komünist Faaliyetler (1910-1960)* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1967), pp. 553-554. The same letter can be found once again unreferenced in the book of İbrahim Topçuoğlu which takes the side of the TSP. İbrahim Topçuoğlu, *Neden 2 Sosyalist Partisi* (1946), Vol. I, pp. 42-45. In an interview conducted with Mustafa Özçelik many years after he had been sentenced to three years hard labor at the court case opened after the socialist parties and unions were closed, he stated that Hüsamettin Özdoğu had severed his ties with members of the TSP and stood on the side of the members of the TSEKP while he was in prison. Mustafa Özçelik, *Tütünçülerin Tarihi* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2003), p. 48.

level. As will be seen in detail later, the bulk of the argument between the two parties was in regard to the model needed to be followed for the organization of unions.

Whether in terms of political or union organizations, it was the TSEKP that had most of the TKP staff, that was the most widely organized.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> According to two news items that were in the November 30, 1946 dated 29th edition of *Gün*, it can be understood that the TSP founded “entrepreneurial executive committees” in Izmir and Samsun besides the headquarters in Istanbul. Information regarding which provinces the TSEKP had organized outside of Istanbul is contradictory. Tunaya states that the TSEKP did not form an organization. Tunaya, p. 704. According to Şişmanov the party quickly organized in Istanbul and then in Ankara, Izmir, Samsun, Zonguldak, Adana, Gaziantep and Izmir. Dimitır Şişmanov, *Türkiye İşçi ve Sosyalist Hareketi* (Istanbul: Belge Publications, 1990, Second Edition), p. 157. Rasih Nuri İleri, one of the unionists and TSEKP members of the period, stated that the party was organized in 13 provinces (Sunu, *1947 TKP Davası*, p. 21). The Gaziantep branch of the TSEKP was shut down because of a notice it published and the directors were tried and sentenced with their sentences upheld by the Appeals Court. *1947 TKP Davası*, pp. 109-117. The existence of branches of the party in Izmir and Samsun can be understood both from the items in the union press and from the decision of the court. *1947 TKP Davası*, pp. 199 and 205. İleri gives detailed information about the operations of the TSEKP Adana branch. *1947 TKP Davası*, p. 21. In the memoirs of Şükran Kurdakul, an attempt at opening a branch in Denizli is mentioned. Şükran Kurdakul, *Cezaevi’nden Babıali’ye Babıali’den TİP’e-Anılar* (Istanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2003), pp. 32-35. The report about the founders and the opening of the TSEKP’s Ayvalık branch was published in the September 25, 1946 edition of *Yeni Adana*. *Yeni Adana*, September 25, 1946.

## CHAPTER IV

### 1946 UNIONS

After the transition to the multi-party system in Turkey, a series of changes in the working life occurred. On one hand, the Ministry of Labor, the *İşçi Sigortaları Kurumu (İSK)* (the Workers Compensation Association), and the *İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu* (the Employment Association) were created and on the other, with the ban on organizations based upon class lifted, the chance for unionization was available.

Once the TSP and the TSEKP were founded, they began an intensive campaign to organize the working class within unions. However, they followed different styles in terms of their organizing methods.

#### Changes in the Working Life

All subject material pertaining to the working life up until 1945 were dealt with in the Labor Office that existed as a part of the Economic Ministry. The Ministry of Labor was founded by a presidential decree dated June 7, 1945 that was based upon Law

No. 3271 which deals with state offices being divided into ministries and Sadi Irmak, the Konya parliamentarian, became the first Minister of Labor of the Republic period.<sup>101</sup>

This assignment came as a surprise to Irmak. He first objected to Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu, the man who had told him of the assignment, and then to President İnönü, but to no avail. In his memoirs he relays his thoughts after it had become certain that he would become minister:

After I was alone I made some decisions that day. The social problem of Turkey should not be abandoned to a class struggle; the arbitration of the state must be absolute. After I made this decision I thought about a second criterion. The social problem of Turkey should be managed by a three-pronged body: the state, the worker and the employer. I was going to include representatives from all three groups in any kind of organization I would create.<sup>102</sup>

Later, Law No. 4763 regarding the founding and duties of the Ministry of Labor was accepted in the BMM on June 22, 1945 and after being published on June 27, 1945 in the *Resmi Gazete*, the Official Gazette, it went into effect.<sup>103</sup>

After the founding of the Ministry of Labor, with Law No. 4792 dated July 9, 1945 with a start date of January 1, 1946, the İSK was created. Actually, Article 100 of Working Law No. 3008, which had gone into effect on June 15, 1937, stated that a “Workers Compensation Office” would be created in at most a year. This stipulation in

---

<sup>101</sup> Makal, 1999, p. 469.

<sup>102</sup> Sadi Irmak, “Çalışma Bakanlığının Kuruluşu İle İlgili Olarak İlk Çalışma Bakanının Anıları”, *50 Yılda Çalışma Hayatımız* (Ankara: T. C. Çalışma Bakanlığı, 1973), pp. 11-12.

“Daha o gün yalnız kalınca kendi kendime şu kararlara vardım. Türkiye’nin sosyal problemi sınıf mücadelesine terk edilmemeli, devlet hakemliği esas olmalıydı. Bu kararı verdikten sonra ikinci bir hususu düşündüm. Türkiye’nin sosyal problemi bir üçlü organla idare edilmeliydi. Devlet, işçi, işveren. Kuracağım bütün teşekküllerde bu üçlü grubun temsilcilerini yan yana bulunduracaktım.”

<sup>103</sup> Makal, 1999, p. 469.



the law was twice postponed by decree and the actual application of the law only came eight years later.<sup>104</sup>

The June 27, 1945 the Trade Illnesses, Workplace Accidents and Maternity Insurance law, *İş Kazalariyle Meslek Hastalıkları ve Analık Sigortaları Kanunu*, became the first insurance application under the coverage of İSK.<sup>105</sup>

Another important change within the working life came on January 21, 1946 with the acceptance in the Assembly (Büyük Millet Meclisi) of the law regarding the founding and duties of the employment association.<sup>106</sup>

On the agenda of the Recep Peker government, which was read to the Assembly on August 14, 1946, the following promises regarding working life were listed:

1. In addition to the Social Security program begun this year that covers trade illnesses, accidents and maternity, we also are going to add a retirement program that will provide coverage for our workers' old age.
2. We are going to develop our labor laws. We are going to present proposals for small business workers, marine and agricultural workers who have not yet benefitted from our labor law.
3. We are going to widen the working area of the state office created by law that makes it a state duty to find workers and employment. We are going to give priority to training qualified workers.
4. We are going to bring under control the movement of labor from various areas in the country to places with job possibilities and get busy with the creation of facilities.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> A. Gürhan Fişek, Şerife Türcan Özsuca, Mehmet Ali Şuğle, *Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu Tarihi, 1946-1996* (Ankara: Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1997), p. 19.

<sup>105</sup> Fişek et al., p. 23.

<sup>106</sup> Makal, 1999, p. 473.

<sup>107</sup> "1923-1972 Hükümet Programlarında Çalışma Bakanlığını İlgilendiren Bölümler", *50 Yılda Çalışma Hayatımız*, p. 25.

"1.Bu yıl uygulanmasına başlanmış olan ve şimdilik meslek hastalığı, kaza ve analık hallerini ihtiva eden Sosyal Sigortalara bir de işçilerimizin ihtiyarlığını teminat altına alacak emeklilik sigortası ekleyeceğiz.

2.İş Hukukumuzu geliştireceğiz. Henüz İş Kanunumuzdan faydalanamayan küçük işyerlerindeki işçilerle deniz ve tarım işçileri için tasarılar sunacağız.

3.İş ve İşçi Bulmayı bir devlet vazifesi haline getiren kanunla meydana gelen Devlet kurumunun çalışmasını genişleteceğiz. Kalifiye işçi yetiştirmeye önem vereceğiz.

## The Lifting of the Class-based Organizational Ban

Another important change in the working life after the transition to the multi-party system was the softening of the strict attitude from the single-party rule period regarding the organization of the working class.

Studies on the lifting of the part of the June 28, 1938 dated Societies Law No. 3512 which banned the formation of associations “based upon class” started towards the end of 1945. A memorandum sent by the Ministry of the Interior to the Prime Ministry on November 3, 1945, stated that a proposal “of a law changing certain articles of Law No. 3512” had been prepared and presented and that the ministries would pass on their views regarding the proposal to the Prime Ministry. After the ministries presented their opinions, the matter was discussed at the Council of Ministers on December 14, 1945, and the proposal was presented to the Assembly on December 17, 1945.<sup>108</sup>

The matter was also discussed at the RPP Extraordinary Congress that met on May 10, 1946. Along with the lifting of the class-based founding of organizations ban, the RPP would maintain its old stance on the matter. This is how Ismet İnönü explained the situation:

The program of our party forbids the founding of societies based upon class. You are going to evaluate the lifting of this article. In our program, we are going to maintain an opinion that does not want class struggle and aims to achieve balance between class benefits. We are not going to prevent, by means of law, citizens who want to create a party or

---

*Memleketin muhtelif bölgelerinden iş sahalarına doğru vuku bulan işçi hareketini kontrol altına alarak gerekli tesislerin kurulması ile meşgul olacağız.”*

<sup>108</sup> Gülmez, 1995, pp. 206-207.

society based upon class benefits. The society and parties we will try to prevent by law will be the ones with roots to the outside, in other words, those societies and parties that have foreign influences and are inspired by them. Similarly, we will continue our legal fight against those societies and parties that use religion for political purposes.<sup>109</sup>

The law proposal was immediately discussed and accepted in the Parliament on June 5, 1946.<sup>110</sup> Thus after political parties, the way was paved for the founding of unions.

### The Union Organization Model of the TSP

Even before the party had been founded, Esat Adil, the chairman of the TSP, was publishing editorials about the labor problems in *Gün* magazine. In a March 27, 1946 article titled “Türk Sendikalizmi,” Turkish Labor Unionism, he states that the best school for educating the best workers is their very own trade organization. There were two reasons why Turkish unionism quite frequently experienced turbulence and moved along slowly during the Constitutional government and Republic periods. First, the mass of workers never found the opportunity to organize themselves either in political or

---

<sup>109</sup> Makal, 1999, p. 478.

“Partimizin programı, sınıf esası üzerine cemiyet kurulmasını menetmiştir. Bu maddenin kaldırılmasını, tetkik edeceksiniz. Biz, kendi programımızda, sınıf mücadelesini istemiyen ve sınıf menfaatleri arasında ahenk arayan esasta kalacağız. Vatandaşlardan, sınıf menfaatleri üzerine cemiyet ve parti kurmak isteyenlere kanun yolu ile, mani olmayacağız. Bizim kanun yolu ile de menetmeğe çalışacağımız cemiyet ve partiler, kökü dışarıda, yani yabancı aleti olan cemiyet ve partiler ve onlardan mülhem olanlardır. Bunun gibi, dini siyasete alet eden cemiyet ve partilere de kanun yolu ile karşı koymakta devam edeceğiz.”

<sup>110</sup> Gülmez, 1995, p. 207.

trade terms. Second, the interference and protection of the state was based upon non-scientific viewpoints and unreliable data that came from not knowing the actual life of the worker. For this reason Turkish unionism had never reached the level of unionism in other democratic countries.

From these observations, Esat Adil made the following conclusion:

The working class, until a political party that will support the development of the Turkish unionism is founded, should want the workers to at least be tied to trade enterprises, that these trade enterprises should be given the opportunity to develop freely, that the labor and working laws should be organized to protect and provide salvation and that the state should have the character that increases and looks out for the virtue, culture and health of the worker. I do believe that this is the most beautiful and beneficial wish that they could have.<sup>111</sup>

After the founding of the TSP, Esat Adil tried to provide direction to the newly formed unions through his articles. In an article titled “*Yapıcılar, Yıkıcılar*”, “Builders, Destroyers” published in *Gün* on September 21, 1946, he made the observation that the country was only just on the brink of a revolutionary and constructive phase and that democracy was still in its infancy. The public masses needed to be organized and millions of workers needed to be educated under the light of revolutionary manners and instruction.

Unfortunately, the intelligentsia was not fulfilling their responsibilities under these conditions;

Our intelligentsia is in doubt and in a state of hypochondria. Not enough masters of theory and action are being raised from among them.

---

<sup>111</sup> *Gün*, March 27, 1946.

“İşçi sınıfı, Türk sendikalizminin gelişmesini destekleyecek bir siyasi parti kuruncaya kadar, hiç olmazsa işçinin meslek teşekküllerine bağlanmasını ve bu gibi teşekküllere serbest gelişme imkanları verilmesini, iş ve işçi mevzuatının koruyucu ve kurtarıcı mahiyette düzenlenmesini, devlet himayesinin işçinin refah, kültür ve sağlığını gözetken ve artıran bir karakter taşımasını istemek; öyle sanıyorum ki, isteklerin ve dileklerin en güzeli ve hayırlısıdır.”

What most of them do is gossip. Most of them, even though they do not have the slightest inclination to give up one bit of their comfort and stature, like to appear as if they are doing great things by gossiping about the men of action and nitpicking about many aspects of the social struggle.<sup>112</sup>

Despite the condition of the intelligentsia, the working class was not quite homogenized in terms of consciousness, information and ideology. That's why the working class was only able to get organized in terms of democracy. The most appropriate democratic field for workers of different opinions and thoughts to come together was unions.<sup>113</sup>

Hüsamettin Özdoğu, the leader of the labor organization within the TSP, in an article published in the same issue of *Gün*, stated that as worker organizations were being founded in Turkey, the revolutionary viewpoint should be maintained. Otherwise a wide chasm would be created between the class and organization. Lessons should be learned from the historical mistakes of the labor movement in Europe. Many corrupt movements that took the forms of "opportunism, reformism and economism" had prevented the development of the working class in Europe. It was necessary to protect the newly forming unions in Turkey from these unhealthy influences. According to Özdoğu, the most dangerous movement of that time in Turkey was economism. This movement considered the defense of the working class as secondary and economic defense as the best alternative. However, it should have been well known that when

---

<sup>112</sup> *Gün*, September 21, 1946.

"Aydınlarımız, tereddüt ve vesvese içindedirler. İçlerinde nazariye ve aksiyon üstadları yeter sayıda yetişmemektedir. Birçoğunun yaptığı iş fısıltı kahramanlığıdır. Birçoğu ise rahatından ve mevkiinden bir zerre fedakarlığa razı olmadığı halde aksiyon adamlarını çekıştirmek, sosyal mücadelelerin kirpiğini veya kaşını beğenmemek suretile büyük işler yapar görünmektedir."

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

economic defense was a part of political defense then it would be an advanced step that the working class would have accepted readily.<sup>114</sup>

In an article in *Gün* dated October 6, 1946, Esat Adil complained about “never before having seen types of labor organizations and associations” that had been brought forth to make it harder for unions to be organized and developed.

On the other hand, the union organization of the working class could only occur as follows:

1. To accept the term union as the best definition for labor trade alliances and to forego the enthusiasm to try and group workers under surprising, divisive names;
2. To distinguish all the production and business branches from one another and to establish these branches with certainty;
3. To create unions throughout Turkey that will represent the trade benefits of all the workers attached to the same production or business branch (for example, the Turkish Textile Labor Union, the Turkish Maritime Labor Union, etc.);
4. To attach the workers that work in the same production or business branch, but due to the work they do belong to a different trade group, to their respective production or business union (for instance, an electrician or carpenter from a textile factory should be attached to a textile union);
5. To attach all the province and townships that have worker groups within the same production or business area into branches just like a political party organization to the unions located throughout Turkey;
6. After the number of unions opened are at least half the number of the production and business branches in Turkey, every union by the common attempts of ten members, for example, to be elected from among themselves, will form a federation under the name of “Turkish Unions Federation” and it will be necessary to determine the main regulations and elect the entrepreneurial executive committee of this federation.
7. Therefore in order to make these unions created from bottom to top and the unions’ federation permanent, every union, within a determined time frame, must hold their own congress and elect their representatives for the federation congress. With the participation of the representatives elected by the union congresses, a federation congress should be held every two years and a central executive committee of the federation should be elected.<sup>115</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> *Gün*, October 6, 1946.

A Turkish Union Federation formed in this manner would then apply for membership to the World Federation of Trade Unions.

The union model of the TSP was based upon a vertical organization that would be formed according to the branches of industry. There was no room for a horizontal organization that would allow for the formation of union alliances between unions from different trades but from the same province in this model. According to Esat Adil, both a vertical and a horizontal organization would create confusion and such an attempt “would have been completely in vain”.<sup>116</sup>

---

*“1) Sendika tabirini işçi meslek birlikleri için en uygun bir isim olarak kabul etmek ve bunun dışında işçiyi şaşırtıcı, parçalayıcı isimler altında teşkilatlanma hevesinden vazgeçmek;*

*2) Türkiye’deki bütün istihlal ve işletme şubelerini yekdiğerinden ayırt edip bu şubeleri kat’i olarak tespit etmek;*

*3) Aynı istihlal veya işletme şubesine bağı bütün işçilerin meslek menfaatlerini temsil etmek üzere Türkiye çapında sendikalar kurmak (mesela Türkiye mensucat işçileri sendikası, Türkiye deniz işçileri sendikası gibi);*

*4) Aynı istihlal veya işletme şubesinde çalışan fakat gördüğü iş bakımından ayrı bir meslek zümresine mensup olan işçileri de bulundukları istihlal veya işletme sendikasına bağlamak (mesela, bir dokuma fabrikasının marangozu veya elektrikçisi, mensucat sendikasına bağlanmalıdır);*

*5) Aynı istihlal veya işletme mevzuu üzerinde işçi toplulukları bulunan vilayet ve kazaları tıpkı bir siyasi parti teşkilatı gibi şubeler halinde Türkiye çapındaki bu sendikalara bağlamak;*

*6) Türkiye’nin istihlali ve işletme şubeleri sayısının hiç olmazsa yarısı kadar sendika kurulduktan sonra, bu sendikaların her birinin, kendi azası arasında seçecekleri bilfarz, onar murahhasın müşterek teşebbüsleriyle “Türkiye Sendikalar Federasyonu” adı altında bir federasyon meydana getirmek, bu federasyonun ana nizamnamesini tespit ve federasyon müteşebbis icra komitesini seçmek lazımdır.*

*7) Bu suretle aşağıdan yukarıya meydana gelmiş olan sendikalar ve sendikalar federasyonunu daimileştirmek için de, tayin edilecek asgari bir müddet içinde her sendika kendi kongresini yapmalı, federasyon kongresi için murahhaslarını seçmelidir. Sendika kongrelerince seçilmiş olan murahhasların iştirakiyle her iki yılda bir, federasyon kongresi yapılmalı, federasyonun merkez icra komitesi seçilmelidir.”*

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

### Unions Established by TSP Supporters

The *Türkiye Deniz İşçileri Sendikası* (TDİS), the Turkish Maritime Workers Union, was the first trade union formed in accordance with the model proposed by the TSP on July 15, 1946.

According to the regulations of the TDİS, the purpose of the union was defined as follows:

Our union, from here on out to be called the Turkish Maritime Labor Union, will aim to increase the economic and social standing of all workers whether they use their brains or brawn and strengthen the bonds of cooperation between all maritime workers at all of the maritime businesses and their factories, workshops and subsidiaries around Turkey.<sup>117</sup>

After the founding of the TDİS, similar unions followed. Once the number of these unions reached five, it was announced in the December 14, 1946 edition of *Gün* that, through the attempts of the *Türkiye Tekel İşçileri Sendikası*, the Turkish Monopolies Workers Union, the *Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Federasyonu*, the Turkish Labor Unions Federation, had been founded.

The unions attached to the federation were as follows:

1. *Türkiye Tekel İşçileri Sendikası* (Turkish Monopolies Workers Union)
2. *Türkiye Deniz İşçileri Sendikası* (Turkish Maritime Workers Union)

---

<sup>117</sup> Gerçek, July 17, 1946

“*Türkiye Deniz İşçileri Sendikası* namı altında kurulan sendikamız, Türkiye deniz işletmelerinde ve bunların fabrikalarında atölyelerinde ve müesseselerinde kol veya kafa ile çalışan bütün işçilerin iktisadi ve içtimai hayat seviyelerini yükseltmeye ve bütün deniz işçileri arasında yardım duygularını kuvvetlendirmeye çalışacaktır.”



3. *Türkiye Basın ve Basın Makinistleri Sendikası* (Turkish Press and Press Machine Operators Union)<sup>118</sup>

4. *Türkiye Mensucat İşçileri Sendikası* (Turkish Textile Workers Union)

5. *Türkiye Demir ve Çelik İşçileri Sendikası* (Turkish Steel and Iron Workers Union)<sup>119</sup>

Even though it did not join the *Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Federasyonu*, it can be understood that the *Türkiye İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası*, the Turkish Construction Workers' Union had been founded by supporters of the TSP.<sup>120</sup>

Besides these, according to a news item in *Gerçek* newspaper, a committee of elders from the Istanbul and Üsküdar cable car, subway and electrical workers met for a second time on July 14, 1946 at the TSP headquarters and decided to form a union. However, it is not known whether or not a union was formed.<sup>121</sup>

On the other hand, the main regulations of the *İstanbul Şoförleri ve Otomobil İşçileri Sendikası*, the Istanbul Drivers and Automobile Workers Union, were published in *Gerçek* on July 25, 1946 and supporters of the TSP indicate that this seems to be true. However, it seems more likely that this union was the “*Şoförler Sendikası*” (*İstanbul*

---

<sup>118</sup> In SES December 4, 1946, there is a mention of Aziz Uçtay as the “Secretary General of the *Türkiye Basın ve Basın Makinistleri Sendikası*” and therefore it is entirely likely that this was the real name of the union.

<sup>119</sup> *Gün*, December 14, 1946.

<sup>120</sup> In *Gün* magazine published on September 21, 1946 we come across another piece of information about this union under the heading of “List of Those Founded until the Present.” An article in *Sendika* wrote the news that the İstanbul İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası would hold its first congress “This union has nothing to do with the Construction Labor Union encompassing all of Turkey.” *Sendika* October 26, 1946. Furthermore in an interview in SES, Esat Adil states that there are six large unions in Turkey that are modeled after the suggestions of the TSP. It is possible that the sixth union mentioned is the Construction Labor Union of Turkey. *SES*, October 11, 1946.

<sup>121</sup> *Gerçek*, July 15, 1946. İleri and Güzel mention the *Tramvay İşçileri Sendikası* in their list of unions attached to TSP. İleri, 1978; Güzel, 1996, p. 148.

*Şoförleri ve Otomobil İşçileri Sendikası*), the Drivers Union (Istanbul Drivers and Automobile Workers Union), with ties to the *İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliği*, Istanbul Labor Unions Alliance.<sup>122</sup>

Regarding the *İstanbul Kömür İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul Coal Workers Union), *İstanbul Madeni Eşya İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul White/Brown Goods Workers Union) and *Motorlu Kara Nakil Vasıtaları Sendikası* (Motorized Land Transportation Union) that were mentioned as “already founded” in the September 21, 1946 edition of *Gün*, no further information about them has been found. Therefore it is not clear whether these unions were ever founded.

### The Union Organization Model of the TSEKP

According to the TSEKP, to think of the unions as worker cooperatives that only existed as economic entities out to make a profit was just as wrong as to see them as socialist parties. Unions were “both economic and social” institutions. On the economic level, they were busy making sure working hours, worker salaries and the worker share from the business profit were kept at high levels. While on the social level, they were concerned with the organization of the production so that it was appropriate to worker health, honor and dignity and that the workers lived as cultured and knowledgeable people.

---

<sup>122</sup> In Güzel’s list of “Unions Attached to TSP” the *İstanbul Şoförler ve Otomobil İşçileri Sendikası* is included.

The “Socialist Workers Party, which aimed to free the workers from the slavery of working for wages” was no stranger to the unions. The party, however, protected the general and common interests of the working class, executed and managed the daily political struggles and by supporting the union movements unconditionally, and aimed to unite the whole nation with an unexploited society, to socialism.

However, the actual responsibility of the unions concerned a more restricted and determined field. They mostly tried to improve the conditions of the workers in a capitalist society to the best of their abilities. They aimed to lighten the daily burden of the workers by reducing the work hours, increasing the daily wages, making the work environment healthy, preventing firings done through collective agreements and other similar precautions.<sup>123</sup>

The TSEKP was suggesting a more different and complicated model of union organization than that of the TSP. According to the TSEKP, real labor organizations should be created from bottom to top, not top to bottom.<sup>124</sup>

The union organization model of the TSEKP was explained in the September 7, 1946 edition of the *Sendika* newspaper in a report signed by the “Sendikacı.”

The most appropriate organizational method was to create a union around every business or production unit. In a city, more than one union from the same industrial area could be created separately. For unions that would be created in this fashion, all the workers at that work place had to be included, no matter what their trade was.

---

<sup>123</sup> *Sendika*, September 21, 1946.

<sup>124</sup> *Sendika*, August 31, 1946.

Unions created like this had to join the *İşçi Sendikaları Birliği* (İSB), the Labor Unions Alliance, in their city as soon as possible.

On the other hand, certain branches of production like tobacco, shoes, knitwear, metal pouring and the mining industry were spread out and in a state of disarray. It was also necessary to gather these industrial and production workers around trade unions. Unions created according to a trade would open branches in different parts of the city and should join the İSB as soon as they had a chance.

Under no circumstances should there be a desire to create a union to encompass all of Turkey. A union of this scale, in other words an “industrial branch union federation,” would be formed after unions created in various regions of the country came together at a congress.

Unions that would form a federation in this fashion would continue to join the İSB in their city or region.

After the İSBs and the industrial branch union federations from various regions in Turkey held their congress, the *Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, the Turkish Labor Unions Confederation, would be founded.<sup>125</sup>

“The organizational system that must be implemented in our country is given in a figure in its most suitable state” and was published in the fourth edition of *Sendika* on September 21, 1946.

“Sendikacı” proposed the 16 geographic areas where the İSB would be established: 1. Istanbul, 2. Thrace, 3. Kocaeli, 4. Bursa, 5. Izmir (Aegean region), 6. Zonguldak and surroundings, 7. Eskişehir, 8. Ankara, 9. Kayseri, 10. Sivas, 11. Malatya,

---

<sup>125</sup> *Sendika*, September 7, 1946.

12. Diyarbakır, 13. Samsun, 14. Trabzon, 15. Çukurova (Adana and surroundings), 16. Aydın (and surroundings).

The 16 sectors of the *İşçi Sendikaları Federasyonu* (İSF), the Labor Union Federation, to be established were the following: 1. mining, 2. mineral industry, 3. coal, 4. lumber and forestry industry, 5. transportation, 6. railways, 7. electrical, 8. communications, 9. construction, 10. agriculture 11. textiles, 12. tobacco, 13. footwear, leather and leather products, 14. harbor (loading and unloading docks), 15. press and media, 16. maritime.

It was necessary to establish unions in different ways taking into consideration the cultural and industrial backwardness of the country.

If a factory employed between 200 and 300 workers, a union had to be established.

According to “Sendikacı” it was not necessary to imitate other countries. Turkey’s own special conditions would be observed.

The system of dialectical unionism in this form was very useful.<sup>126</sup>

#### Unions and Workers’ Club Established by Supporters of the TSEKP

Supporters of the TSEKP started founding unions as shown in detail in the charts published by “*Sendika*” newspaper. These unions, as in the case of the *İzmir Mensucat*

---

<sup>126</sup> *Sendika*, September 21, 1946.

*Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası*, the Izmir Textile Industry Labor Union, took their names from their cities and the branch of industry. However, the *Bakırköy Bez Fabrikası İşçileri Sendikası*, the Bakırköy Cloth Factory Labor Union, took its name from the workplace itself. The purposes and areas of interest that the *Samsun Tütün İşçileri Sendikası*, the Samsun Tobacco Labor Union, founded by the supporters of the TSEKP, enunciated under the 2<sup>nd</sup> article of the by-laws of the union were as follows:

a) to represent the group of tobacco workers in front of management, other administrative officers and officials of the government; to take measures and where necessary to struggle against any actions that are detrimental to the workers' rights and benefits.

b) to continuously monitor the implementation of the provisions of the labor law and other legislation that may be enacted to protect the labor force and social securities; to take legal measures to eliminate any infractions, to apply to appropriate places and open court cases.

c) to organize conferences on national and international affairs, fine art lessons, choruses, etc. in order to improve the mental and physical conditions of the workers, and to open a workers' club for various cultural activities.<sup>127</sup>

For the tobacco workers in the tobacco factories to become members of the union, it was sufficient for them to promise that they would abide by the provisions of the by-laws no matter what their religion, nationality or political view. However, they would not be allowed to join the union "if they had ethical insufficiencies, if they were spying on behalf of the employers or making their propaganda, and finally if they were

---

<sup>127</sup> *Sendika*, August 31, 1946.

"a) Tütün işçileri topluluğunu işletmeler ve diğer idareci amirler ve hükümet makamları önünde temsil etmek her sahada onların hak ve menfaatlarına uymıyan durumlara ve muamelelere karşı teşebbüslerde bulunmak ve icabında mücadeleye geçmek.

b) İş kanununun ve çıkacak diğer iş gücünü koruma ve içtimaî sigorta kanunlarının hükümlerine riayet edilip edilmediğini daimî surette araştırmak onlara aykırı halleri ve muameleleri ortadan kaldırmak için kanunî yollardan işçileri harekete geçirmek, gereken yerlere başvurmak veya onlar adına dava açmak.

c) İşçilerin fikrî ve bedenî sergilmelerini sağlamak için ihtisas kursları, spor talimleri ve oyunları, memleket ve dünya meselelerine dair konferanslar, güzel sanat dersleri, korolar vs. organize etmek ve bu çeşit kültür faaliyetlerine elverişli bir işçi kulübü açmak ve idare etmek."

involved in fascist or racist movements.” If they were members, their membership would be terminated.

A general meeting with the participation of all members was to be held every six months and the reports would be discussed and courses of action decided. During the meeting at the end of the year, a control commission consisting of five people and a board of governors consisting of fifteen members would be elected.

Affairs of the union in between these two meetings would be administered by the board of directors in accordance with decisions taken during the meeting. The board of directors would meet once a week and would elect three members: one secretary, one accountant and cashier and one secretary for organizational and cultural affairs who would conduct the daily affairs of the union.<sup>128</sup>

The first İSB organized in accordance with the union organizational model proposed by TSEKP was founded in Istanbul<sup>129</sup> and made its first publication under the heading “Bize Göre Görüşler” (Our Views). Six thousand copies of a brochure were prepared by Hadi Malkoç on behalf of the publication and propaganda branch of the İSB.<sup>130</sup>

Ferit Kalmuk, who assumed the position of secretary general of the İstanbul İSB, was at the same time the real leader of the unionization activities undertaken by the TSEKP on a national level. Similar to the situation at the TSP, Ferit Kalmuk and Hadi Malkoç, who were the union leaders of TSEKP, were old TKP militants. İstanbul İSB explained its goals in *Bize Göre Görüşler*, Our Views, written by Hadi Malkoç, in the

---

<sup>128</sup> *Sendika*, August 31, 1946, No. 1, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> *Ulus*, June 23, 1946.

<sup>130</sup> Kemal Sülker, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Tarihi I* (Istanbul: Bilim Kitabevi Yayınları, 1987), p. 10.

following way: “to save the working class of Turkey from the literature of deceit and discouragement and empty promises, and from being used by those who were not their kind.”<sup>131</sup>

The second İSB was founded in Kocaeli. The alliance which was founded under the name *Kocaeli İşletme ve Müesseseleri İşçi Sendikaları Birliği* (Kocaeli Workplaces and Institutions Labor Unions Alliance) would gather together all labor unions and associations that were within the borders of the province would be established in the future and insure that they would work together and that they would act on behalf of all Kocaeli workers.

The İSB for this purpose would publish magazines and brochures, would organize meetings, conferences and shows, would arrange meetings in which matters would be discussed with the participation of expert lawyers and doctors, would organize trips and arrange conferences to be held in areas where workers congregate.

All labor organizations, professional unions and other labor groups that existed in Kocaeli or were to be established later would be considered as natural members of the İSB. Persons, individually, could not be members of the İSB. However, founders and people who had contributed significantly to unionist activities could be elected to the alliance’s board of directors.

Disagreements on methods and details and tactical differences of opinion were not to be construed as an obstacle to the cooperation between local organizations and the Alliance. However, those organizations that did not conform to the general principles,

---

<sup>131</sup> Sülker, 1955, pp. 39-40.



those who were involved in racist, fundamental and fascist activities would be thrown out of the Alliance.<sup>132</sup>

Another organization that the supporters of TSEKP attached a great deal of importance to was workers' clubs. These clubs, which would come into existence from the independent labor unions, would be the instruments for bringing the Turkish laborer to a mature status, mentally and physically.

Workers' clubs were to be schools that would "make sports attractive to labor groups, to help their physical development, make their bodies like steel so that they would not have fatigue and tendencies to illness and increase their moral capacities."<sup>133</sup>

Those who could not enter private athletic clubs because of financial considerations and could only look at those clubs through their windows would join the workers' clubs without any restrictions. When these workers' clubs developed and spread they would provide great service to the development of the working class in Turkey.<sup>134</sup>

The *İstanbul İşçi Kulübü*, the Istanbul Workers' Club, which was founded under the auspices of Istanbul İSB, would be open to all blue and white collar workers and their family members without any consideration for their political views, religion, nationality or race. Workers under the age of 18, apprentices and workers' children under the age of 18 could not be members under the provisions of the Law on Societies. However, they could participate in club athletic activities and use the club library.

---

<sup>132</sup> *Sendika*, September 7, 1946; September 14, 1946; September 21, 1946.

<sup>133</sup> *Sendika*, October 12, 1946.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

The workers' clubs would have branches for sports and mutual assistance, children's playgrounds and nurseries, medical, displays, lessons on childcare, sewing, etc., and cultural, musical and other branches that would provide for the comfort and welfare of the working class.<sup>135</sup>

According to the by-laws and other news items published in *Sendika* and other newspapers, the list of labor organizations thought to have been founded by the supporters of the TSEKP:

In Istanbul:

- 1 . *İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliği* (Istanbul Labor Unions Alliance)
- 2 . *İstanbul İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul Construction Labor Union)
- 3 . *Bakırköy Bez Fabrikası İşçileri Sendikası* (Bakırköy Cloth Factory Workers Union)
- 4 . *İstanbul Basın ve Yayın Kafa ve Kol İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul Press and Media Workers and White Collar Labor Union)
- 5 . *İstanbul Ayakkabı İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul Footwear Labor Union)
- 6 . *İstanbul Tütün İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul Tobacco Labor Union)
- 7 . *İstanbul Maden Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul Metal Industry Labor Union)
- 8 . *İstanbul Şoförleri ve Otomobil İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul Drivers and Auto Workers Union)
- 9 . *İstanbul İşçi Kulübü* (Istanbul Workers' Club)

In Izmir:

- 10 . *İzmir İşçi Sendikaları Birliği* (Izmir Alliance of Labor Unions)
- 11 . *İzmir Tütün İşçileri Sendikası* (Izmir Tobacco Labor Union)
- 12 . *İzmir Mensucat Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası* (Izmir Textile Industry Labor Union)
- 13 . *İzmir Basın ve Yayın Kafa ve Kol İşçileri Sendikası* (Izmir Press and Media Workers and White Collar Labor Union)
- 14 . *İzmir Müessese, Ticarethane ve Esnafları Müstahdemin Sendikası* (Izmir Establishments, Commercial Enterprises and Trade Workers Union )
- 15 . *İzmir Ayakkabı İşçileri Sendikası* (Izmir Footwear Labor Union)
- 16 . *İzmir Terziler Sendikası* (Izmir Tailors Union)

In Kocaeli:

- 17 . *Kocaeli İşçi Sendikaları Birliği* (Kocaeli Labor Unions Alliance)
- 18 . *Kocaeli Nakliye İşçileri Sendikası* (Kocaeli Transportation Labor Union)

---

<sup>135</sup> *Sendika*, October 12, 1946; October 19, 1946.

19 . *Kocaeli Sellüloz Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası* (Kocaeli Cellulose Industry Labor Union)

In Ankara:

20 . *Ankara Terziler Sendikası* (Ankara Tailors Union)

21 . *Ankara Madeni İşler ve Makine İşçileri Sendikası* (Ankara Metal and Machinery Industry Labor Union)

22 . *Ankara İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası* (Ankara Construction Labor Union)

In Adana:

23 . *Adana İplik ve Dokuma Fabrikaları İşçileri Sendikası* (Adana Thread and Textile Industry Factories Labor Union)<sup>136</sup>

24 . *Adana İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası* (Adana Construction Labor Union)<sup>137</sup>

In Samsun:

25 . *Samsun Tütün İşçileri Sendikası* (Samsun Tobacco Industry Labor Union)

In Eskişehir:

26 . *Eskişehir Serbest Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası* (Eskişehir Independent Industry Labor Union)

In Zonguldak:

27- *Zonguldak Maden Kömür Havzası İşçileri Sendikası* (Zonguldak Coal Basin Labor Union)<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> In an article written in 1953 by Union Chairman Hasan Özgüneş titled “The Seven Year History of Unionism in Çukurova,” he gives the founding date as September 19, 1946. *İşçi Haberleri*, September 18, 1946.

<sup>137</sup> The Main Regulations were published in the *Yeni Adana* newspaper. *Yeni Adana*, November 18, 1946.

<sup>138</sup> The wider list given by Rasih Nuri İleri, who was a unionist of TSEKP in that period, is as follows:

“*SENDİKA BİRLİKLERİ* (FEDERATION OF UNIONS)

(Founder Ferit Kalmuk)

1- *İstanbul Sendikalar Birliği* (Istanbul Federation of Unions )

a) *İstanbul İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul Construction Labor Union), (Kemal Balyoz et al.)

b) *İstanbul Ayakkabı ve Deri İşçileri Sendikası* (Istanbul Footwear and Leather Labor Union)

c) *Güzel Sanatlar Kol ve Kafa İşçileri Sendikası* (Union of Fine Arts, Manual Laborers and White Collar Workers)

d) *Basın ve Yayın Kol ve Kafa İşçileri Sendikası* (Union of Media Laborers and White Collar Workers), (Suat Derviş, Neriman Hikmet)

e) *Bakırköy Bez Fabrikası İşçileri Sendikası* (Union of Bakırköy Textile Factory Workers)

f) *Tekel İşçileri Sendikası* (Union of Tekel Workers)

g) *Tütün İşçileri Sendikası* (Tobacco Labor Union)

h) *Maden Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası* (Metal Labor Union)

i) *Şoförler Sendikası* (Drivers Union)

j) *İstanbul İşçi Kulübü* (Istanbul Workers’ Club), (İbrahim Atılal, Emin Atılal, İsmail Marçak)

2- *Ankara Sendikalar Birliği* (Ankara Federation of Unions)

(Province Secretary Zeki Baştımar)

## Union Activities

The 1946 unions spent a major portion of their energies to organize speedily and spread and to achieve legitimacy. Their areas of interest were not confined to these. They also tried to monitor the development of labor organizations in other countries, the political developments, the cost of living, the difficulties of survival and work

- 
- a) *Ankara Madeni İşler ve Makine İşçileri Sendikası* (Ankara Metal and Machinery Workers Union)
  - b) *Ankara Şoför ve Oto Tamir İşçileri Sendikası* (Ankara Drivers and Auto Repair Labor Union)
  - c) *Ankara İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası* (Ankara Construction Labor Union)
  - d) *Ankara Terziler Sendikası* (Ankara Tailors Union)
  - e) *Fırın ve Un İşçileri Sendikası* (Bakery and Flour Workers Union)
  - 3- *İzmir Sendikalar Birliği* (Izmir Federation of Unions)  
(Emin Bilecan) (12.10.1946)
    - a) *İzmir Terziler Sendikası* (Izmir Tailors Union)
    - b) *İzmir Ayakkabı İşçileri Sendikası* (Izmir Footwear Workers Union)
    - c) *İzmir Müessese, Ticarethane ve Esnafları Müstahdemin Sendikası* (Izmir Union of Workers of Institutions, Commercial Establishments and Trades)
    - d) *İzmir Mensucat Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası* (Izmir Union of Textile Industry Workers)
    - e) *İzmir Basın ve Yayın Kafa ve Kol İşçileri Sendikası* (Izmir Union of Press and Media Laborers and White Collar Workers), (Naci Sadullah Danış)
    - f) *İzmir Tütün İşçileri Sendikası* (Izmir Tobacco Labor Union), (Yusuf Etik)
  - 4- *Adana Sendikalar Birliği* (Adana Federation of Unions)  
(Rasih Nuri İleri) (9.12.1946)
    - a) *Adana İplik ve Dokuma İşçileri Sendikası* (Adana Union of Thread and Weaving Workers), (Hasan Özgüneş)
    - b) *Adana Terziler Sendikası* (Adana Tailors Union)
    - c) *Adana İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası* (Adana Construction Labor Union)
    - d) *Adana Deri İşçileri Sendikası* (Adana Leather Labor Union)
  - 5- *Kocaeli İşçi Sendikaları Birliği* (Kocaeli Federation of Labor Unions)  
(İdris Erdiñç)
    - a) *Kocaeli Selüloz Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası* (Kocaeli Cellulose Industry Workers Union)
    - b) *Kocaeli Nakliye İşçileri Sendikası* (Kocaeli Transportation Workers Union)
    - c) ...

Aside from these, the Samsun Tobacco Labor Union was founded and according to an article published in *Sendika* newspaper, the Samsun Federation of Unions probably also was founded.

The Eskişehir Independent Industry Labor Union also was established.” İleri, 1978.

It is seen that the list published by Güzel under the heading “Unions Attached to TSEKP” is essentially the same as İleri’s list. The only union not mention in İleri’s list is the *Zonguldak Maden Kömür Havzası İşçileri Sendikası* which is mentioned in Güzel’s list. Güzel, 1996, pp. 149-150.

On the other hand, because it could not be determined whether or not the Bursa Tütün İşçileri Sendikası (Bursa Tobacco Labor Union) and the Bursa Fırın İşçileri Sendikası (Bursa Bakery Labor Union), which were founded in 1946 and were active in 1950, had any relations with the TSEKP, they have not been included in the list. Sabahattin Selek, “Bursa’da İşçi Durumu ve Partimiz,” March 10, 1950. Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 490.01.1442.15.1.

conditions. Matters pertaining to workers' health such as industrial accidents, industrial medicine, and nistagmus (involuntary eye movements) of mine workers shows the breadth of their interests.

### Organizational and Consciousness-Building Efforts

The unionists' activities that were instigated by a small group of militant socialists and that were started under the difficult financial conditions that existed after World War II required a great deal of effort. The acquisition and repair of buildings for use as union was are the first challenges they faced. Hadi Malkoç tells the story of the acquisition of the decrepit Hasfirin building in Beşiktaş by the Istanbul Federation of Labor Unions:

... unpainted rooms, wooden stairways, broken windows and roofs are changing shape and color accompanied by the symphony of hatchets, hammers and planes. Electricians, carpenters, plasterers are all in a speed race.

We are wandering through the rooms with friend Hakkı who is the chairman of the association of unions. He is, in addition to being a master worker, a very valuable organizer and says: "repairs will be finished in about 4 days." His eyes are as bright as can be. He bends over and whispers in my ear - "All friends working here are unionists. We only buy the materials. Can money alone do all this? Seeing these boys working with all their heart without even taking a breath to fix up their own homes brings tears to your eyes."

In reality these young workers are working as if singing a popular song or eating a most favorite dish.<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>139</sup> *Sendika*, November 2, 1946.

"Badanasız odalar, tahta merdivenler, kırık camlar, tavanlar keser, çekiç ve rende senfonisiyle renk ve şekil değiştiriyorlar. Elektrikçiler, marangozlar, sıvacılar kendilerini bir sürat yarışına kaptırmışlar.

The union activists expended a great effort in spite of all the difficulties involved.

*Sendika* in its edition of August 31, 1946 described these activities with the headline *Türkiye işçileri uyanıyor*, Turkish Workers are Waking Up. According to the newspaper, close to ten unions had already been established. The success that had been achieved by the working class in such a short time without any facilities of press and propaganda was breath-taking. The Tobacco Labor Union, with more than 1,000 members, was leading the pack.

Future generations would laud this handful of brave workers who “were determined to overcome all obstacles”:

Here you have the footwear labor union where Kara Yusuf sits in his armchair with the brochures and by-laws of unions and goes from warehouse rooms to medrese rooms, from workshops to countertops and even from homes to coffee house corners. He runs and runs. He talks at least eight hours a day, continuously.

... ..  
And here you have the metal working industry labor union with their Mahmut and Sariabdullahs. Membership is 48, but they say in a month it will be 200.

... ..  
And here is the construction labor union in Karaköy. This is the roof under which they wish to bring close to 10,000 construction workers in Istanbul. They keep running everywhere.

The Drivers’ Union with its Mehmeds and Nuris are all over Istanbul’s streets.

... ..  
Workers of Turkey are waking up and are developing.<sup>140</sup>

---

*Sendikalar Birliği Reisi Hakkı arkadaşla odaları geziyoruz. O usta bir işçi olduğu kadar değerli bir teşkilâtçı olan Hakkı arkadaş:*

*Dört güne kadar tamirat bitecek diyor. Gözleri ısıt ısıt, kulağıma eğiliyor. Burada çalışan arkadaşların hepsi sendikalisttir. Biz yalnız malzemeyi alıyoruz. Para ile olacak işler mi bunlar? Şu çocukların canla başla, nefes almadan kendi yuvaları için seve seve döktükleri alın terini görürde insanın gözleri yaşarmaz mı?*

*Hakikaten bu işçi gençler en çok sevilen bir türkiyü söyler gibi, en fazla arzulanan bir yemeği karşılar gibi çalışıyorlar.”*

<sup>140</sup> *Sendika*, Augustus 31, 1946.

*“İşte ayakkabı işçileri sendikası, Kara Yusuf koltuğunda propaganda broşürleri ve sendika nizamnameleriyle han odalarından medrese kovuklarına, atelyelerden tezgâh başlarına hatta evlerden kahve köşelerine kadar durmadan kan ter içinde koşuyor. Günde en az sekiz saat durmadan konuşuyor.*

The magazine *Gün* repeated on the opening of the Turkish Maritime Labor Union in the courtyard of Gürel Cinema in Beşiktaş with great deal of enthusiasm. “The 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1946 is a very auspicious day in Turkey’s history. This historical moment is of great value not only for our country, but for the world.”<sup>141</sup>

The *Türkiye Tekel İşçileri Sendikası*, the Turkish Monopolies Workers Union, on November 17, 1946, organized a get-acquainted meeting in the Süleymaniye Club Şehzadebaşı.<sup>142</sup> According to the report by Aziz Nesin that was published in *Gün*, the ceremony was attended by 2,000 workers. But a workers’ meeting in Beşiktaş a couple of months prior had attracted only 500 workers. When Aziz Nesin mentioned this to an ironmonger sitting next to him, the answer was, “Our future will muster 5,000 people. If you like, I can make a bet with you on this point.”<sup>143</sup>

Union leaders and both male and female workers expressed the joy that they had in the founding of the unions. Şevket Döndüren, who spoke on behalf of the Turkish Maritime Labor Union, expressed this joy as follows:

The present existence and establishment of labor organizations that have been either weak or non-existent in our country until now make our chests swell with pride.

---

...  
*İşte kalafat yerinin madenî sanayi işçileri sendikası. Mahmutlar ve Sarı Abdullahlar. Aza adedi 48 fakat bir ay sonra 200 diyorlar.*

...  
*İşte Karaköyde inşaat işçileri sendikası. İstanbul’un on bine yakın inşaat işçisini toplamağa hazırlanan çatı. Canla başla sağa sola koşuyorlar.*  
*Şoförler sendikası Mehmetleri, Nurileri ile İstanbul sokaklarının dumanını attırıyorlar.*

...  
*Türkiye işçileri uyanıyor ve kalkınıyor.”*

<sup>141</sup> *Gün*, September 21, 1946.

<sup>142</sup> *Sendika*, November 23, 1946.

<sup>143</sup> *Gün*, November 23, 1946.

I greet with respect the forerunners of the Turkish labor army of the future.

The Turkish worker who has not been sure of his future, not even of his present, has had to wait for generations for this day.

...

We, male and female workers, will run to take back the time and distance that we have lost.

Our only capital is the sweat of our brows, the strength in our arms and our unwavering beliefs. Our struggle will last until we prove that we are humans, too.

Let us join hands with our unions, let us help each other, friends...

Long live the union! Long live unity!<sup>144</sup>

During their organization efforts the unionists of the period from time to time met with bureaucratic obstacles and pressure from the police. The founders of the Ankara Tailors Union applied to the governor's office. First they were referred to the directorate of the police, where they were sent to the second section and then to the first section. Taking the petition, the section chief demanded documents that were not even required under the Law of Societies and thereby turned down the petition.<sup>145</sup>

In Adana, two workers who argued about the purposes of the union during a union meeting were arrested by the police for making "bad propaganda."<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>144</sup> Gün, November 30, 1946.

"Memleketimizde şimdiye kadar pek zayıf olan veyahut hiç olmayan işçi teşkilâtının bugünkü mevcudiyet ve kuruluşları hepimizin göğsünü iftiharla kabartıyor.

Yarınki büyük Türk işçi ordusunun öncülerini saygı ile selamlıyorum.

Yarınından değil, bugününden bile emin olmayan Türk işçisi nesiller boyu bugünü beklemişti.

...

Kadın erkek Türk işçileri koşar adımla kaybettiğimiz zamanı ve mesafeyi kazanacağız.

Bütün sermayemiz alın terlerimizdir; kolumuzdaki güç ve sarsılmaz inancımızdır. Mücadelemiz bizim de insan olduğumuzu anlatıncaya kadar sürecektir.

Biz sendikalarımıza dört elle sarılalım. Birbirimize yardım edelim arkadaşlar...

Yaşasın Sendika! Yaşasın Beraberlik!"

<sup>145</sup> Sendika, December 7, 1946.

<sup>146</sup> SES, December 4, 1946.



Zehra Kosova, an activist for the TSEKP, describes the treatment that befell the founders of the *İstanbul Tütün İşçileri Sendikası*, the İstanbul Tobacco Labor Union:

After the revisions of the Law on Societies in 1946, tobacco workers in Ortaköy got together and founded the Istanbul Tobacconists Union. ... But officials and police did everything they could to dissolve this union which had been founded in an illegal manner. I will never forget now they took the founders of the union, tied them with rope and made them walk from Ortaköy to the Sirkeci police headquarters.<sup>147</sup>

The congress that was to have been held on December 8, 1946 by the Metal Industry Labor Union, was canceled by the police on grounds that “it would be dangerous to public order.” In replying to those who asked why the congress had been canceled, a secret order dated December 4, 1946 was cited. However, the source of this secret order could not be revealed.<sup>148</sup>

The unions of the period tried to take advantage of various opportunities to increase their legitimacy. Kocaeli İSB participated in official celebrations of Republic Day on October 29, taking part in the city parade and placing a wreath on the Republican Memorial. The Zonguldak Coal Basin Labor Union was not invited to the celebrations in its city. The sorrow felt by the workers was expressed in the union newspaper.<sup>149</sup> The İSB of Istanbul had applied to the governor’s office with the same request but had been denied as a result of because of bureaucratic manipulations.<sup>150</sup>

---

<sup>147</sup> Zehra Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim*, ed. Zihni T. Anadol (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), p. 137.

“Cemiyetler kanunu’nun değişmesinden sonra 1946’da Ortaköy’de tütüncüler bir araya gelerek, İstanbul Tütüncüler Sendikası’nı kurdular. ... Ama yetkililer, polis yasal bir biçimde kurulmuş olan bu sendikayı dağıtmak için elinden geleni yaptı. Hiç unutmuyorum, sendikayı kuran arkadaşları Ortaköy’den Sirkeci Emniyet Müdürlüğü’ne kadar urganla bağlayıp, yürüterek götürdüler.”

<sup>148</sup> *Sendika*, December 7, 1946.

<sup>149</sup> *Sendika*, November 9, 1946.

<sup>150</sup> *Sendika*, November 2, 1946.

The 1946 unions also struggled to represent the Turkish working class in the international arena. On September 19, 1946 the International Labor Conference was to meet in Canada. Each country was to send two representatives from the government, one from the employers and one from the workers. The government appointed Hüsnü Merey of the İzmir Amele Birliği, the İzmir Labor Alliance, which was under the wings of the RPP. The union newspaper claimed that this decision was wrong and totalitarian in nature and that “the honor of representing Turkish labor should be left to someone representing a legitimate union.”<sup>151</sup>

### Working and Living Conditions

The unsatisfactory working and living conditions in which the working class found themselves was a topic frequently brought up in the union press. Hadi Malkoç mentioned the conditions in which the footwear workers were living in the dilapidated workhouses in his article “Han Bodrumlarında Çürüyen Kundura İşçileri”, “Footwear Laborers Rotting Away in the Cellars of Workhouses.” In those work places, the sun, light, health or cleanliness could not enter, but where tuberculosis, unsanitary conditions were rampant. Rats as big as cats ran freely. Ten thousand men worked from 5 a.m. to midnight and were being discarded in the shortest time. It was heart-rending; these

---

<sup>151</sup> *Sendika*, September 14, 1946.

conditions were present not only in the footwear industry but in all of Istanbul, all of Turkey, and all of humanity. They should cover their faces and cry.<sup>152</sup>

Conditions for 800 to 1,000 workers working in 20 factories producing olive oil in Ayvalık were not much different. Those seasonal workers who could work only four months out of the year were terminated whenever they got sick or injured. None of the olive oil factories implemented the provisions of the labor law. In order to earn enough money to feed themselves the workers had to work 11 hours a day and the 25% overtime paid was considered a fantasy by the factory owners. The workers could enjoy weekends only when it was necessary to stop work at the factories to clean the vats.<sup>153</sup>

The caulking workers of Hasköy, who were mostly from the Black Sea region, did ship repairs in the winter and returned to their villages in the summer to farm. The living accommodations in the city were three or four men to a room and those who could not find such places would sleep in the boats. Their daily wages were paid by motorboat owners and accounts were kept by the foremen. They had no monetary relations with the owners of the caulking places. However, in their free time, they were obliged to do whatever work they were given without pay. Otherwise finding work later was not possible. They complained that they unable to save any money to send home to their villages.<sup>154</sup>

Aziz Nesin, in an article published in *Gün*, described the misery of a newspaper hawker who did this work for 86 years in Istanbul. When he was injured as a result of a fall from a train, he was forced to live on the street. He applied to the press association,

---

<sup>152</sup> *Sendika*, September 7, 1946.

<sup>153</sup> *Sendika*, October 12, 1946.

<sup>154</sup> *Sendika*, September 21, 1946.

but could not receive any help. He was forced get by on the money friends gave him. The misery that befell the newspaper hawker was the direct result of not belonging to an organization. Nesin concluded that it was necessary to unionize in order to be free of hunger, misery and begging.<sup>155</sup>

The unionists of 1946 also touched upon the conditions of female workers. Four and a half million peasants and in excess of 100,000 female workers bore the brunt of deprivation and poverty of World War II for eight years. The unionists saw that to defend the workers' rights of these 100,000 and their female status and maternal rights was not only for the benefit of the working classes, but also of patriotism. In Istanbul alone over 50,000 female workers were employed in textiles, tobacco, beverages, bottling, glassworks, matches, paint, rope, hawser and canning industries.

The maternity insurance, which went into effect as of July 1, 1946, was for all practical purposes insufficient and unjust. This law could have been more useful if it had been expanded to include workers in areas where the labor law was not implemented; if the pre- and post-birth leave were extended from three to six weeks, and if the breast-feeding compensation were accepted for two months.

In working class neighborhoods in Istanbul it was estimated that there was a need for at least 50 baby nurseries and 30 day-care centers. *Sendika* argued that a campaign be started to force all work places and employers to establish nurseries and day-care centers throughout the country;

To achieve this mission, in the shortest time and in the shortest way is a precondition of our becoming a part of the civilized world and acquiring

---

<sup>155</sup> *Gün*, December 14, 1946.

human rights for hundreds of thousands of workers' children, tens of thousands of working women and working fathers.<sup>156</sup>

According to the article "Tütün İşçileri Meselesi", "Tobacco Labor Problems" male workers received 320 and female workers in accordance to what they did, were paid 150 to 200 *kurushes* for an 8.5 hour work day. However, the jobs assigned to women were no different from the ones assigned to men. In investigations made from time to time, the productivity of the female workers was not below that of the male workers. In these jobs, women were being clearly exploited.<sup>157</sup>

### The High Cost of Living and Worker Wages

Another dimension of the union struggle was to draw attention to the high cost of living and the insufficiency of worker wages. While trying to calculate the minimum income necessary for the upkeep of a working family, the drop in value in real wages throughout the war years was being emphasized.

During the war years the price of all basic items had gone up five times whereas the increase in workers' wages was not even two times. The great masses who were finding it difficult to make ends meet before the war could do nothing but tighten their belts in the face of all these price increases.

---

<sup>156</sup> *Sendika*, October 19, 1946.

"Bu dâvayı en kısa zamanda en kestirme yollardan başarmak yüz binlerle emekçi yavrusunun, on binlerle emekçi kadını ve emekçi babasının olduğu kadar medeni dünyaya katılma hamlelerimizin ve insanlık haklarımızın başlıca icablarındandır."

<sup>157</sup> *Sendika*, Augustus 31, 1946.

Assuming that the father worked at a medium-difficult job and the mother at a light one, a family with two children would require at least 8,200 calories per day. Excluding expensive items like butter and jam even then to achieve this calorie level, it was necessary to spend at least 385 *kurush*. Together with expenditures for non-food items this amounted to 598 *kurush*. However, both husband and wife working the income, the income could only be 4 *liras* and in cases where only the man worked it would be 2.5 to 3 or even 1.5 to 2 *liras*. The condition of the worker family was hopeless.

The high cost of living made life did not only difficult but also resulted in the spread of disease among workers. The worst was Tuberculosis. “This terrible disease that ruined homes from their foundations wiped out generations and the scythe that chopped the heads off children was the only inheritance left to the workers’ offspring.”

158

The condition of civil servants was better than that of the workers. For example, Sümerbank used to pay one month’s salary bonus and one month’s salary dividend, but would exclude workers who were wasting their lives at their factories.<sup>159</sup>

In the 1947 budget the government announced that a 100% increase would be made to civil servant salaries. However, they were not the only ones with low and fixed income. The same amount of increase should have been applied to the workers, who numbers were three to five times that of the civil servants.<sup>160</sup>

---

<sup>158</sup> *Sendika*, November 23, 1946.

“Yuvaları kökünden yıkan, nesilleri iliklerine kadar çürütüp yok eden; yavruların saz boyunlarını ölümün insafsız orağına teslim eden bu müthiş hastalık.”

<sup>159</sup> *Sendika*, October 26, 1946.

<sup>160</sup> *Sendika*, October 5, 1946.

According to calculations made by the unionists based on 1943 labor statistics the maximum average monthly income of workers in 1946 was at most 65 *liras*. However, the lowest civil servant's salary in Ankara was 88 *liras*, and in other places was 75 *liras* and with the new increases these would become 121 and 108 *liras*, respectively. Workers wages had to be increased.<sup>161</sup>

The *Sendika* newspaper reported that commuting expenses were a big burden on the workers' budgets and demanded that something be done about it. The most recent increase in the price of ferryboat tickets was disastrous for the workers. For this reason, discounts during morning and evening rush hours for workers on trains, boats, tramways and buses were of great importance.<sup>162</sup>

Another demand concerning workers' wages was the establishment of minimum wage. In Article 32 of the Labor Law, the principle of establishing a minimum wage was mentioned but not implemented. According to Hadi Malkoç, one of the union leaders of the TSEKP, all problems relating to national production, general welfare, population policies, productivity, specialization, and industrialization programs were waiting for the implementation circular that would give life to this paralyzed principle. The sanction that would fix levels of profit and lower the ambitions of higher profit to normal profitability was the establishment of a minimum wage.

---

<sup>161</sup> *Sendika*, November 30, 1946.

<sup>162</sup> *Sendika*, November 2, 1946.

For the minimum wage to be of any use, it was necessary for it to take into account the level that would be required for a decent living for a worker family with three children.<sup>163</sup>

## Labor Health

*Sendika* allotted much space to the subject of labor health and reported many instances of people whose hands had been smashed, fingers torn off, arms lost, and who had suffered terrible deaths. In Samsun when the child of a female Monopolies worker who was staying at a day-care center died under the wheels of a municipality bus, the Samsun Tobacco Labor Union hired a lawyer and sued.<sup>164</sup>

The Kocaeli İSB used injured and unemployed factory workers as propaganda to organize the workers. İdris Erdinç talks about these activities in his memoirs:

I meet a friend named Salih. On the weekends we go and find people who were injured while working in that factory in their villages, missing an arm or a leg, having been fired without compensation. Salih takes their picture. I take these pictures and go straight to Istanbul. I visit Kalmuk and Benneci. We immediately print brochures and put the name of the union underneath the pictures and ‘gather under the banner of the unions otherwise your end will be like this.’ A basket of grapes, brochures underneath, grapes on top.

I take the brochures to the factory right at the time of the change of shifts. I quickly take them out from under the counter and immediately start distributing them.<sup>165</sup>

---

<sup>163</sup> *Sendika*, November 9, 1946.

<sup>164</sup> *Sendika*, September 28, 1946.

<sup>165</sup> Hikmet Akgül, *Şoför İdris Anılar* (İstanbul: Yar Yayınları, 2004), pp. 121-122.



In Istanbul a worker who went to the Gureba Hospital was sent home instead of being hospitalized and fell on the sidewalk and was there for hours. The union paper that reported the incident said;

Incidents like these are so numerous that we could print one every day because our hospitals are not sufficient enough to meet today's needs. In order to maintain the health of our workers we are in desperate need of workers' hospitals.<sup>166</sup>

The application of the coal mining workers in Zonguldak to the Ministry of Health and Social Services to build a Tuberculosis hospital was approved and the Ministry of Economy was told to do it as soon as possible.<sup>167</sup>

Workers' diseases that were a result of unsatisfactory working conditions were described in detail in articles signed by Dr. M. Hulusi Dosdoğru and a writer who signed off as *Sağlıkçı*, Health Worker, in the union newspaper.<sup>168</sup> In those articles the toxic

---

*"Salih isminde bir arkadaşı buluyorum. Hafta sonu, o fabrikada çalışıp da, sakat kalmış insanları gidip köylerinde buluyoruz. Kolu kopmuş, ayağı kopmuş. Karşılıksız dışarı atılmış. Hemen Salih resimlerini çekiyor onların. O resimleri alıp doğru İstanbul'a gidiyorum. Kalmuk'a, Benneci'ye. Hemen beyannameleri basıyoruz. Altına sendikanın adresini yazıyoruz. 'İşçi sendikalarının altında toplanın. Yoksa akibette bunun gibi olursunuz.' Bir üzüm sepeti. Altta beyannameler. Üstte üzümler.*

*Fabrikaya sokuyorum beyannameleri. Tam vardiya sırasında. Tezgâhın altından çıkarıyorum. Ve hızla dağıtmaya başlıyorum."*

<sup>166</sup> *Sendika*, September 28, 1946.

*"Bu gibi vak'alar hergün yayınlanacak kadar boldur, çünkü hastanelerimiz bugünkü durumu karşılayamıyor. İşçilerimizin sağlığını korumak için bir an evvel İşçi hastanelerinin inşasına şiddetle lüzum hasıl olmaktadır."*

<sup>167</sup> *Sendika*, November 9, 1946.

<sup>168</sup> A series of articles by Dr. Hulusî Dosdoğru and his wife, Dr. Sâbire Dosdoğru, was published in Tan newspaper describing the health conditions of workers in the Zonguldak coal workers. Sâbire Dosdoğru, M. Hulusî Dosdoğru, *Sağlık Açısından Maden İşçilerimizin Dünü, Bugünü* (Istanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1990).

anemia in workers who were employed in the tobacco and textile industries that was caused by toxic materials and factory waste was described.<sup>169</sup>

Although the industrial areas in Turkey were developing rapidly, the industrial medicine and worker health problems still were not being dealt with. Industrial establishments viewed the handling of worker health problems only as a way of avoiding legal obligations. However it was necessary for doctors working in different industries to learn more about industrial medicine. According to *Sağlıkçı*, the primary duty of industrial medicine was:

to take measures that would prevent diseases before they happened and not be overly concerned with the interests of the establishment in whose pay the doctor was, but rather the interest of humanity and the country.<sup>170</sup>

The doctor of the Bakırköy Sumerbank Cloth Factory was fired because he prescribed expensive medicines to workers. The Union reported this incident stating, “a 10 piaster worker gets a 10 kurush tonic” and asked if it were necessary to have a doctor in that factory if adequate measures were not to be taken.<sup>171</sup>

The insufficiencies in the İş Kazalariyle Meslek Hastalıkları ve Analık Sigortaları Kanunu, the Law for Industrial Accidents and Occupational Diseases and Maternal Insurance, were followed very carefully by the unions.<sup>172</sup>

---

<sup>169</sup> *Sendika*, October 26, 1946.

<sup>170</sup> *Sendika*, September 7, 1946.

“işçiyi hastalandırmamak için gerekli tedbirleri önceden almak ve maaş aldığı müessesenin menfaatlerine amelenin sağlığını feda etmeyecek kadar memleketin ve insanlığın adamı olmak.”

<sup>171</sup> *Sendika*, September 14, 1946.

<sup>172</sup> *Sendika*, December 14, 1946.

The unions tried to provide polyclinic services to their members. In the İSB building in Beşiktaş in Istanbul, every Tuesday from 6pm on, union members and their families were treated in a treatment room and other times injections and wound dressing education was provided to those who were interested.<sup>173</sup> Some time later at the Istanbul Union of Footwear Labor in Çembelitaş there was a polyclinic at 6pm on Wednesdays.<sup>174</sup>

### Labor Association of Turkey

While the TSP and the TSEKP were busy getting organized among the workers, aside from these two socialist parties, the *Türkiye İşçiler Derneği*(TİD), the Labor Association of Turkey, was established on July 9, 1946. The founding president of the TİD was Selahattin Yorulmazoğlu who was also one of the founders of the *Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Partisi* (TİÇP), the Workers and Farmers Party of Turkey. But the TİÇP did not approve of his founding this association so they severed his ties with the party.

Immediately after its establishment, Haydar Berkman, who was known to have close ties with the RPP, was appointed its honorary chairman. Later he was given the title of secretary general and was included on the board of directors.

The TİD stated its aims as “to serve the material and spiritual needs of workers and to vitalize the honor that workers deserve.” The association insisted that it had no

---

<sup>173</sup> *Sendika*, November 16, 1946.

<sup>174</sup> *Sendika*, December 14, 1946.

political ambitions and warned the workers to “know well those who wish to exploit us for their political and individual ambitions for these imposters will lead us into darkness and endless misadventures.”<sup>175</sup>

According to a news item in the union paper on September 21, 1946, some “enemies of workers” who had come from Istanbul to Ankara, had contacted several labor groups employed by the airplane factory, workshops of the state railway, and hairdresser and flour workers saying that they were being used for political ends and tried to discourage them. They were spreading rumors that unions were cooperating with foreigners in contradiction to national interests, therefore they should not use the word “union” but rather “association”. As a result of this propaganda, the Flour Product Labor Union, whose by-laws were being prepared and was in the process of getting approval, changed its name to Association. The “associationists” then persuaded the founders of the Hairdresser Labor Union and the word “association” was used instead of “union”. The “associationists” were telling the workers that if they changed unions they would lose their jobs whereas if they supported associations they would keep their jobs.<sup>176</sup>

According to another news item in “Union” the newly established TİD was “immediately taken under the wings of the RPP” and also was trying to “acquire the Society of Coal Labor Foremen in Zonguldak and thereby grab the 800 *liras* in the society’s coffers and this was met with scorn.”<sup>177</sup>

---

<sup>175</sup> Sülker, 1955, pp. 42-45.

<sup>176</sup> *Sendika*, September 21, 1946.

<sup>177</sup> *Sendika*, November 9, 1946.

The secretary general of the *Türkiye Basın ve Basım Makinistleri Sendikası*, the Turkish Press and Press Machine Operators Union, Aziz Uçtay, who was a supporter of the TSP was also disturbed by the activities of the TİD, which was “being supported by the RPP.” According to another news item several associations, including the Istanbul Press Technicians Association, had joined the TİD. The same news item also stated that the TİD would not be under the auspices of the new law on unions that was under consideration. According to Uçtay the RPP was spreading this kind of news in order to persuade workers to join this association that was close to the RPP.<sup>178</sup>

Esat Adil stated that the non-political organization of the working class in Turkey was developing in two directions. One was independent organizations under the name of unions, the other was quasi-official organizations. That these quasi-official organizations were so much against unions created the suspicion that behind them was the support of the government or the RPP.<sup>179</sup>

The list of the unions founded in association with the TİD is as follows:

1- Ankara

- a) *Un ve Unlu Maddeler İşçileri Derneği* (Bakery and Flour Workers' Union)
- b) *Berber İşçileri Derneği* (Barbershop Workers' Union)
- c) *Garsonlar Derneği* (Waiters' Union)

2-Istanbul

- a) *Dokuma İşçileri Derneği* (Cloth Factory Workers' Union)
- b) *Berber İşçileri Derneği* (Barbershop Workers' Union)

---

<sup>178</sup> *SES*, December 4, 1946.

<sup>179</sup> *Gün*, November 30, 1946.

- c) *İnşaat İşçileri Derneği* (Construction Workers' Union)
- d) *Ayakkabı İşçileri Derneği* (Footwear Labor Union)
- e) *Tramvay ve Tünel İşçileri Derneği* (Cable Car and Subway Workers' Union)

Besides these, there were attempts to found various unions in Edirne, Izmir, Konya, Zonguldak and Eskişehir. The TID was not successful among the tobacco and maritime workers in Istanbul, but was able to create founder boards among the drivers, white/brown goods manufacturer workers and technicians, rubber and plastic workers.<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> Sülker, 1955, p. 42-45

## CHAPTER V

### THE CLOSING OF THE UNIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENTS THAT FOLLOWED

While the unions founded by the supporters of the socialist parties rapidly organized within the worker class, the government was working towards trying to control this developing union movement. For this purpose the *İşçi ve İşveren Meslek Dernekleri ve Dernek Birlikleri Kanun Tasarısı*, the Labor and Employer Trade Association and the Association Alliances Law Proposal, was prepared.

The developments were reported on the front page of *Cumhuriyet* newspaper on November 25, 1946 with the headline: “A Proposal Has Been Prepared for the Labor Associations. Unions Founded up to This Time Will Be Disbanded.” According to the report, a proposal presented to the Grand National Assembly had called for an end to all activities of labor and employer institutions that had to that point been created under the name of association, union or alliance. The proposal contained articles that stated any institution to be founded from then on out must abide by the proposal. Those that

wanted to continue their activities had to adapt their by-laws within three months to the new articles of the law.<sup>181</sup>

*Sendika* reacted by calling this report inflammatory and provocative. In the November 30, 1946 edition of the newspaper, according to the report “Towards the Official Recognition of Unions,” written by the “Sendikacı,” the purpose of this provocation was to create concern and discomfort within the working class and respective areas, and to cause confusion.

The reality of the situation was the exact opposite. According to the new law the unions were going to be officially recognized. Even though the proposal “was an attempt born from the need to stop the eye-catching union movement and contain it within a framework of law,” as a result the unions would gain official status and certain rights would be granted to them. Although this situation was far from being satisfactory, it was still a victory for the working class. The Istanbul branch of the İSB was preparing to take the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper to court.<sup>182</sup>

After a short while *Sendika* realized the dangers the law proposal presented and changed its stance. In a column titled “Such a Law Cannot Exist in a Place Where There Is Democracy” of the December 7, 1946 edition of the newspaper, harsh criticism was directed towards the proposal. The proposal forbid labor and employer associations from being involved in politics, political propaganda and publication activities and acting as an intermediary for any kind of political entity’s activities. Thus if a person, providing he/she were not a member of the RPP, used his/her right to both become a member of a

---

<sup>181</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, November 25, 1946.

<sup>182</sup> *Sendika*, November 30, 1946.



political party and be a member of a union's executive committee, both he/she and the union would face ruin.

According to the proposal, strikes would continue to be a crime. Thus, even if the unions attempted to negotiate between the workers and the employers regarding wages and working conditions, they would not be able to finalize the negotiations because they would not be able to apply any sanctions. No democratic country had a penalty for strikes. This situation was an embarrassment for Turkey.<sup>183</sup>

Esat Adil touched on the subject in his column titled "Is It a Problem for Unions to Develop?" in the November 30, 1946 edition of *Gün* magazine. Over the past few days, according to news reports in certain newspapers, the main articles of the new law proposal would prevent the development of unionism, the spreading of unions, the forming of alliances or a federation among themselves and the creation of ties between unions and political parties and would keep union members from individually taking part in politics.

According to Adil:

the development of labor trade institutions, their growing, strengthening, creating federations like it is done throughout the world, should be considered nothing less than an honorable and civilized development for the Turkish public. To find fault, see dangers in this would be 'trying to find fault where there is none.'<sup>184</sup>

On the other hand, upon answering Aziz Nesin's questions concerning the subject, he said that he did not think that the proposal would further lessen the liberties

---

<sup>183</sup> *Sendika*, December 7, 1946,

<sup>184</sup> *Gün*, November 30, 1946.

"İşçi meslek teşekküllerinin gelişmesi, yayılması, kuvvetlenmesi, aralarında bütün dünyada olduğu gibi federasyonlar meydana getirmesi, Türk cemiyeti için şerefli bir hareket ve medenî bir ilerlemeden başka bir şey sayılamaz. Bunda mahzur görmek, tehlikeler sezmek, düpedüz 'öküz altında buzağı aramak' olur."

of the labor law and the freedom of organization. The law and freedom were as limited as necessary. In Adil's opinion, any undemocratic or articles in violation of the Societies Law that existed in the proposal would be turned down by the Grand National Assembly.<sup>185</sup>

The *Sendika* newspaper continued its reaction to the proposal in a report titled "The workers don't approve of the law proposal" in its December 14, 1946 edition.

In a column entitled "Doctors, Associate Professors, Professors, Ordinarius Professors, Where Are You?" of the same edition, the following announcement was made:

A new law is about to join the series of undemocratic laws in this country. There is no way that you have not heard about the "law proposal concerning the labor and employer associations and association alliances" prepared by the Ministry of Labor. You have no doubt also noticed that this proposal contains articles in direct violation of civil rights and liberties, does not conform to your own ideas of rights and liberties and in fact has no acceptable part concerning the logic and techniques of law. Why are you so quiet?

...  
If this proposal is accepted as a law, will you not find it difficult to reconcile the articles in accordance with human rights and liberties in your classrooms and books? Finally, even if those in charge continue to do what they want, don't you think that it will have been an honor to not have approved of this law?

Doctors, associate professors, professors, ordinarius professors, where are you?<sup>186</sup>

---

<sup>185</sup> SES, December 11, 1946.

<sup>186</sup> *Sendika*, December 14, 1946.

"Memleketimizdeki antidemokratik kanunlar serisine bir yenisi katılmak üzeredir. Çalışma Bakanlığı tarafından hazırlanan 'İşçi ve işveren dernekleri ve dernek birlikleri hakkındaki kanun tasarısı' nı görmemiş olamazsınız. Bu tasarının insan hak ve hürriyetlerine aykırı hükümler taşıdığını, kendi hak ve hukuk anlayışınıza bile uymadığını, hukuk mantığı, kanun teknikleri bakımından dahi iler tutar yeri olmadığını da elbette fark etmişsinizdir. Neden susuyorsunuz?

...  
Yarın bu tasarı olduğu gibi kanun halini alırsa, hükümlerini, kürsülerinizde ve kitaplarınızda anlattığınız insan hak ve hürriyetleriyle telifte yine güçlük çekmiyecekmisiniz? Nihayet imam yine bildiğini okusa da, böyle bir kanunu tasvip etmemiş olmak sizce bir şeref değil midir?

Dr.lar, Doçentler, Prof.lar, Ord. Prof.lar neredesiniz?"

## The Closing of the Unions

While these reactions continued to come from the unions, the headquarters and branches of the TSEKP and TSP, their associated unions, the Istanbul Labor Unions Alliance and the Istanbul Workers' club were shut down in accordance with the Martial Law Command's decree of December 16, 1946. Newspapers and magazines that spread the same ideas of these parties met a similar end.

The full text of the decree signed by the Martial Law Commander Lieutenant General Asım Tınaztepe is as follows:

The Command headquarters, under the duty and responsibility to ensure the general security within the martial law area, has seen it necessary to take the following precautions within the provinces under its command:

1. The main office and branches of the Turkish Socialist Workers and Peasants Party and the Turkish Socialist Party and existing unions that have been founded by these parties or by people taking instructions from these parties and who are administered for their own purposes which have all been founded by convicted communists and people with radical communist ideologies and have worked undercover for the purpose of establishing the primacy of one social class over others and directed to disrupting the country's social and political norms are closed and activities terminated.

2. The newspapers and magazines that disseminate the ideas of these parties, *Sendika*, *Ses*, *Noror*, *Gün*, *Yığın* and *Dost* and their respective publishers, have been shut down.

3. *Yarın*, Tomorrow, newspaper and its printing press have been shut down for four months for spreading propaganda that aimed to disrupt the political and legal order of the country as it was reported in its December 9, 1946 edition.

4. *Büyük Doğu*, Great East, magazine and its printing press have been shut down for six months due to security concerns with regard to the religiously fundamentalist ideas it was spreading.

5. It is forbidden for all kinds of material containing communist propaganda to enter or be printed and sold in any province within the borders of the martial law region.<sup>187</sup>

After the decision by the Martial Law Command to close these places down, the arrests began. Approximately 40 people were arrested including such names as Esat Adil Müstecaplıoğlu, Şefik Hüsnü Deymer, Suat Derviş, Zekeriya Sertel, Sabiha Sertel, Neriman Hikmet, Aram Pehlivan, Avadis Aleksanyan, Sabahattin Ali, Aziz Nesin and Yusuf Ahıskalı.<sup>188</sup>

It also was reported in the press that in accordance with a decision by the Martial Law Command, in Izmir, certain people had been questioned and three unions had been shut down.<sup>189</sup>

Thus the short bloom of unionism that had begun in the second half of 1946 had come to an end.<sup>190</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> *Vatan*, December 17, 1946.

*"Sıkıyönetim bölgesi içinde genel güveni sağlamak görev ve sorumluluğu altında bulunan Komutanlık, hududu içindeki illerde aşağıdaki tedbirlerin alınmasına lüzum görmüştür:*

1- *Mahkûm komünistler veya müfrit komünist mefkûreli kimseler tarafından örtülü bir şekil altında kurularak memleket içinde içtimai bir zümrenin diğerleri üzerinde tahakkümünü tesise ve mevcut iktisadi ve içtimai nizamları bozmaya çalıştıkları anlaşılan Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi ile Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi merkez ve şubeleri ve mevcut sendikalardan bu partiler veya onlardan aldıkları direktifle hareket eden kimseler tarafından kurulan ve kendi maksatlarına göre sevk ve idare edilenleri ve İstanbul İşçi Sendikaları Birliği ve İstanbul İşçi Kulübü kapatılarak faaliyetlerine son verilmiştir.*

2- *Bu partilerin fikirlerini yayan Sendika, Ses, Noror, Gün, Yığın ve Dost gazete ve dergileri ve bunların matbaaları kapatılmıştır.*

3- *9 Aralık 1946 tarihli nüshasında belirmiş olduğu veçhile memleketin siyasi ve hukuki nizamını bozma yolunda propaganda yapan Yarın gazetesi ve matbaası dört ay için kapatılmıştır.*

4- *İrticai mahiyette yaydığı fikirlerle emniyet bakımından zararlı görülen Büyük Doğu dergisi ve matbaası 6 ay için kapatılmıştır.*

5- *Komünist propagandasını taşıyan her türlü yazının sıkıyönetim hududu dahilindeki illere girmesi ve bu illerde basılıp satılması yasaktır."*

<sup>188</sup> *Ulus*, December 18, 1946; *Cumhuriyet* December 19, 1946.

<sup>189</sup> *Ulus*, December 18, 1946; *Cumhuriyet* December 21, 1946. Among those arrested, in addition to the province leader of Izmir TSEKP, Kerim Soyka, and secretary veterinarian Murat, was author and poet Şükran Kurdakul who was then a high school student. Accused of attempting to organize in Denizli, Kurdakul was released 4.5 months later upon the "telegraphic order" of the Supreme Court of Appeals. Kurdakul, pp. 32-35.

## Reverberations from the Shut Downs

The decisions of the Martial Law Command found great support in the press. The newspapers put the news of the shutting down of the parties and unions on their front pages and columnists wrote about the subject in their editorials.

In his editorial titled “*Yabancı İdeolojilere Karşı*”, “Against Foreign Ideologies” in *Cumhuriyet*, Nadir Nadi wrote about the shutting down of two parties that “had been controlled from abroad” and the closure of certain newspapers and magazines that had been harmful to the security of the nation.

The wartime conditions that had existed for six years had taken their toll in certain regions of the country. Even though one and a half years had passed since the end of the war, this delicate situation had not abated; to the contrary, the danger had come right to the doorstep of the country. As long as these conditions remained, it would be necessary to consider the actions born from these extraordinary conditions as normal.

According to Nadi, it was imperative to believe in something. Communism, just like previous movements, was akin to a religion and was trying to spread domestically through propaganda and in the form of an invasion from abroad. Socialism, the roots of

---

<sup>190</sup> In reality, a complete list of the unions shut down after the declaration by the Martial Law Command is not available. For example, an investigation regarding the Adana İplik ve Dokuma İşçileri Sendikası (Adana Union of Thread and Weaving Workers) and Adana İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası (Adana Construction Labor Union) was never conducted and these unions continued their activities. *Türk Sözü*, December 20, 1946. It appears that telegraphs sent by both unions to Prime Minister Recep Peker right before the closure decision played an important role. In their telegraphs both unions condemned the atrocities committed against the Turks in the Balkans and declared that they were ready to execute any orders given by the Prime Minister. *Yeni Adana*, December 15, 1946; December 17, 1946.

which could be traced all the way back to Plato, had in time become a modern religion and then “a tool of invasion and conquering in the hands of the state.”

Nadi defined what needed to be done to combat the communist propaganda:

To never forget these truths is a duty we all have to fulfill. It is true that as a nation, the social conditions we all live under will not provide much of an opportunity for the virus of communism to take hold and bloom among us. But let us not forget that we live in a not too polite corner of the world. We are a nation that is constantly changing and has experienced great revolutions within a short period of time. We still have a lot of social and economic things to do. As we move forward, we must not neglect to strengthen both our living conditions and our spiritual centers.<sup>191</sup>

In his editorial in *Akşam*, Necmettin Sadak asked “What did they want to do?”

This idea that we expected to develop within a wide perspective that would be based upon various believers from political life, to close two socialist parties and a few newspapers in this time of freedom for the written, spoken word and opinion ... Even in regions under martial law ... How can it fit into the advanced democratic movement the country is attempting? Is it forbidden to be a leftist in social, political and economic developments?

In a place where leftist opinions cannot freely be expressed ... can one truly talk about democracy or liberty?<sup>192</sup>

---

<sup>191</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, December 18, 1946.

“Bu hakikatleri bir an olsun unutmamak hepimize düşen bir vazifedir. Milletçe bugün içinde yaşadığımız içtimâî şartlar, komünizm virüs’ünün aramızda tutunup yerleşmesine vâkıa pek imkân veremez. Fakat unutmayalım ki dünyanın pek nazik bir noktasında yaşıyoruz. Ayrıca kısa zamanda büyük inkılâplar geçirmiş, mütemadiyen değişikliklere uğrıyan bir milletiz. Sosyal ve ekonomik alanda yapacak pek çok işlerimiz var. Bunları dikkatle yürürken hayat şartlarını olduğu kadar manevî dayanak noktalarımızı da kuvvetlendirmeyi ihmal etmemeliyiz.”

<sup>192</sup> *Akşam*, December 19, 1946.

“Siyasî hayatın en çeşitli inanlara dayanarak en geniş çerçevede gelişmesini beklediğimiz bu fikir, yazı söz ve kanaat hürriyeti devrinde iki Sosyalist Partiyi ve bir kaç gazeteyi birden kapamak ... Sıkıyönetime bağlı bölgelerde bile ... memleketin giriştiği ileri demokrasi hareketiyle nasıl uygulanabilir? Sosyal, politik, ekonomik işlerde solcu olmak yasak mıdır?

Solcu kanaatlerin serbestçe ortaya atılamadığı bir yerde ... demokrasiden, hürriyetten dem vurulabilir mi?”

Sadak gave his personal answer of “No” to all of these questions which “could have been asked by a portion of citizens.” While the precautions taken had nothing to do with the principles of liberty and democracy, they could not also be considered a movement against leftist thinking and opinions. This was the case not just in Turkey but in all the democratic countries.<sup>193</sup>

The parties that had been shut down appeared to be socialist and had been founded legally. However in reality they were suspected to be institutions working for a foreign state with the aim of changing the political structure of the country.

In the rest of his column, Sadak evaluated the closing of the socialist parties in terms of democracy and liberty:

Why is it obvious that the closed parties and the associations and institutions associated with them were involved in secret and illegal activities to this end? The government can stop the activities of political parties at any time it wants by using these excuses, thus quieting the opposition. Then where will democracy and liberty be?

The guarantee for this is justice, courts and indisputable evidence and documents. From every shred of evidence obtained from investigations in Istanbul, especially the Russian documents, it will, of course, be visible to the public opinion for what purpose and for whom the people who formed these parties aim to serve and that they are trying to turn Turkey into another Bulgaria. We believe that the large amount of documents discovered carry great importance and heavy responsibility. Otherwise the Martial Law Command would neither see it as necessary nor attempt such an undertaking.<sup>194</sup>

---

<sup>193</sup> During the period Necmettin Sadak expressed these views in writing, communist parties in Europe were enjoying their brightest period. They shared power in France and Italy.

<sup>194</sup> *Akşam*, December 19, 1946.

*“Kapatılan partilerin ve onlara bağlı diğer dernek ve kurulların bu yolda gizli ve yasak hareketlere giriştikleri nereden malûmdur? Hükümet, bu gibi bahaneleri her zaman ileri sürerek istemediği siyasî partilerin faaliyetlerine bu şekilde son verebilir, muhaliflerini böylece susturabilir. Demokrasi ve hürriyet nerede kalır?”*

*Bunun garantisi adalet, mahkeme ve hiç kimsenin şüphe edemeyeceği deliller, vesikalardır. İstanbul’daki araştırmalarda elde edilen her delilden, bilhassa Rusca vesikalardan, bu partileri kuranların hangi maksatlara ve kimlere hizmet ettikleri, Türkiye’yi tıpkı Bulgaristan’a çevirmeğe çalıştıkları elbette bütün millet efkârı karşısında tezahür edecektir. Çünkü bulunan çok sayıda vesikaların ehemmiyeti ve ağır mesuliyeti olduğunu tahmin ediyoruz. Aksi takdirde Sıkıyönetim idaresi böyle bir harekete ne lüzum görür, ne girişebilirdi.”*

Sadak summarized his thoughts at the end of his piece:

The Turkish nation and the freedom of Turkey are greater than any other concern. In Turkey every opinion is free, there is permission for every kind of liberty: The exception to this is the liberty to sell out the Turkish nation to foreigners.<sup>195</sup>

Nihat Erim, also, defended the correctness of the decisions of the Martial Law Command in his editorial titled: “*Türk Milletinin Varlığı ile Oynanamaz*”, “You Cannot Play with the Existence of the Turkish nation” in *Ulus*.<sup>196</sup>

People other than parliamentarians and journalists supported the decision of the closings. The chairman of the Bursa Labor Unions Alliance sent this telegraph to Prime Minister Recep Peker:

We the workers of Bursa convened yesterday to condemn with fury and great sadness the actions of the degenerates who aim to infiltrate defeatist and untrue ideas among the worker citizens of Istanbul and Zonguldak. Our loyalty to the Republic government is forever. We kiss your hands.<sup>197</sup>

In a telegraph the Turkish Workers Association sent to the government, they made reference to news items that had appeared in Romanian newspapers that said “Religious fundamentalism in Turkey is driving the country towards fascism” and stated:

---

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

“*Türk vatanı ve Türkiye'nin istiklâli her kayıdan üstündür. Türkiye'de her kanaat hürdür, her türlü hürriyete izin vardır: Türk vatanını yabancılara satmak hürriyetinden başka.*”

<sup>196</sup> *Ulus*, December 18, 1946.

<sup>197</sup> *Ulus*, December 25, 1946.

“*Biz Bursalı işçiler İstanbul ve Zonguldak'ta işçi vatandaşlar arasına bozguncu ve yalancı fikirler sokan soysuzların hareketlerini dün toplanarak nefret ve teesürle lanetledik. Cumhuriyet Hükümetine bağlılığımız ebedidir. Ellerinizden öperiz.*”



We read about the clamoring of the Romanian Communist Party official mouthpiece *Scanteia* newspaper in the news today.

We feel great pain from the accusations that say we workers are not allowed to organize and that anyone who tries to do so is arrested. Our alliance and the trade associations tied to our alliance are the greatest and most obvious evidence that our laws allow us workers to fully organize in a completely democratic manner.

We condemn those that make and are behind those that make this clamoring and would like to take this opportunity to once again convey and verify our utmost respect and love to our Republican government.<sup>198</sup>

### Explanation of the Government

The Prime Minister at that time, Recep Peker, gave information regarding the Martial Law Command's decision regarding the closings and arrests at the RPP Parliamentary Group Meeting on December 17, 1946. The RPP Group General Assembly excitedly approved of the decision.<sup>199</sup>

The actual detailed explanation of the government was made by the Minister of the Interior, Şükrü Sökmenoğlu, on January 29, 1947 to the Grand National Assembly.

According to Sökmensüer, the communists, through uninterrupted work since 1919, had reverted to two different forms of organization in order to realize the

---

<sup>198</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, December 27, 1946.

*"Romanya Komünist Partisi yayın organı (Scanteia) gazetesinin savurduğu hezeyanları bugün gazetelerde okuduk.*

*Biz işçilere teşkilatlanma müsaadesi verilmediği, bu işlerle uğraşanların tevkif edildiği hakkındaki isnatlardan çok acı duyduk. Kanunlarımızda biz işçilere tam demokratik bir şekilde teşkilatlandırma hakkının verilmiş olduğuna faaliyette bulunan birliğimiz, birliğimize bağlı meslek derneklerimiz en büyük ve fiili delildir.*

*Bu hezeyanları yapan ve yaptırımları telin eder, Cumhuriyet hükümetimize karşı beslediğimiz sevgi ve saygıyı bu vesile ile tekrar arz ve teyid eyeriz."*

<sup>199</sup> *Ulus*, December 18, 1946.

revolution. The secret political organizations, in other words, the cells, acted as centers for instruction and training. Unions were used as tools to tie the working class en masse firmly to the political party.

Efforts to take advantage of the democratic developments were noted in communist activities between 1945 and 1946. Şefik Hüsnü had “covertly” created the TSEKP and Esat Adil the TSP. Many labor unions had been created as a result of the “communist party directive made from under these two covert parties” and “extreme publications” had begun in the press.

The Minister of the Interior showed documents seized in the home of Şefik Hüsnü as a reference in his explanations. Among these was “a document that was undoubtedly a report written by Şefik Hüsnü in April 1945 that was sent to a general communist center.”

According to information contained in this “document”, despite the operation and arrests conducted by the police in 1944, activities did not miss a beat; on the contrary, lessons were learned and a wide democratic front was created. It was decided to try to create an organization under the name of the *Faşizme ve Vurgunculara Karşı Demokrat Mücadele Cephesi*, the Democratic Struggle Front against Fascism and Profiteers, that would encompass every form of leftist leaning groups and honorable patriots, even the People’s Party would be welcomed as long as those who had loyalty to fascism or had anything to do with the agents of foreign fascist governments were removed from its body.

According to Sökmensüer, this front was taken into consideration as a tool to reach the main goal and it aimed to genuinely exploit democratic developments.

To this end, “Chief Leader” Şefik Hüsnü had used such magazines as *Yurt ve Dünya*, Home and World, and *Adımlar*, Steps, which were published in Ankara, and *Tan*, Dawn, newspaper, published in Istanbul, to create an atmosphere of opposition in the country.

While the communist leaders continued these attempts, they had also embarked on the path of making Tevfik Rüştü Aras<sup>200</sup> an intermediary with the hope of making contact with people they hoped would be future representatives of the opposition in order to use them for their own purposes.

During this part of his speech, Sökmensüer started to read some documents that had been seized during the search of Zekeriya Sertel’s home. According to an undated letter sent by Tevfik Rüştü Aras to Zekeriya Sertel, he had talked to Adnan Menderes about writing a piece for the magazine *Görüşler*,<sup>201</sup> Opinions, and Menderes had accepted.

After Field Marshal Fevzi Çakmak had entered politics, he too became a target of similar attempts.

Another draft of a letter seized in the home of Zekeriya Sertel had the date September 2, 1946 and was written with Cami Baykurt<sup>202</sup> and addressed to Field Marshal Çakmak. In the letter it was stated a fait accompli had been engineered concerning the legitimacy of the RPP, the Parliament, the government and the President. The DP had succumbed to the games of the RPP and had betrayed the country.

---

<sup>200</sup> Old Minister of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>201</sup> A magazine owned by Zekeriya Sertel.

<sup>202</sup> The first Minister of the Interior in first Grand National Assembly.

Zekeriya Sertel and Cami Baykurt called on Field Marshal Çakmak to resign his parliamentary status under such circumstances. If he were to make such a move, the entire nation would follow in the Field Marshal's footsteps.

Tevfik Rüştü Aras's letter of reply also was seized. According to this, he had personally taken the letter to Fevzi Çakmak and had also explained his views on the matter. The Field Marshal was quite pleased with this proposal. He would convey the result and his decision through a commonly known intermediary.<sup>203</sup>

Sökmensüer's comment regarding these letters is as follows:

In order to show the nation that the National Assembly is not legitimate, the leftists who have not been successful in their attempts to get the Democratic Party's Group to leave the Parliament...the fact that they are trying to sway Field Marshal Çakmak is a clear indication of how they are continuing their subversive attempts. This means that, by abusing the respect that Field Marshal Çakmak earned during his years of service and to use this as an inciting ploy, the plot to destroy the state has found its maximum strength. We greet with great satisfaction the vigilance of the leaders of the Democratic Party for not falling prey to the deceiving tactics of the communists.<sup>204</sup>

According to Sökmensüer, the TSEKP was nothing more than the TKP<sup>205</sup>, founded by Şefik Hüsnü in 1919 and "which had never ceased its activities since that

---

<sup>203</sup> That Özdemir Evliyaoğlu, mentioned the letter by Tevfik Aras, was a police agent became apparent during the Yassıada Trial. Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım* (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition), p. 263.

<sup>204</sup> *Ayın Tarihi*, Basın ve Yayın Genel Müdürlüğü, No. 158, January 1-31, 1947, pp. 10-25.

"*Millet Meclisinin meşru olmadığını millete göstermek için Demokrat Parti Meclis Grubunun Meclisi terketmek hareketine teşvikte muvaffak olamayan solcuların ... Mareşal Çakmak'ı âlet olarak kullanmak yolunda ayartıcı teşebbüslere nasıl devam ettiklerini pek açık suretle göstermektedir. Bu suretle Mareşal Çakmak'ın hizmet yıllarında kazandığı hürmet sermayesini Devleti yıkmak için bir tahrik sermayesi olarak kullanmak teşebbüsü âzami kuvvetini bulmuş demektir. Demokrat Partiyi idare edenlerin komünistlerin bu aldatıcı taktiklerine âlet olmamak için gösterdikleri uyanıklığı memnurlukla karşılıyoruz.*"

<sup>205</sup> It is to be understood when Sökmensüer was talking about TKP, he actually meant the *Türkiye İşçi ve Çiftçi Sosyalist Partisi*, the Workers and Farmers Socialist Party of Turkey, of which one of the founders was Şefik Hüsnü.

time,” gaining official and open recognition. The party, despite the veiled definitions in its official rules and regulations, was in reality a communist party and before the TSEKP was founded the cells of the organization “Forward Democrats Front” had been formed.

The purpose of the TSP founded by Esat Adil was also communism. Esat Adil himself was a convicted communist, and he had convicted communists in his party who were convicted because they had previously worked with Şefik Hüsnü.

Once again worker groups had been organized in accordance with the tactic of taking advantage of democratic liberties. In a short period of time, in various cities around the country, unions had literally appeared “out of nowhere.” Almost all of the founders and executive bodies of the 38 unions founded as legal and semi-political societies were made up of former communists.

The decision of the Martial Law Command was based upon both the first article of the Societies Law of these parties and unions that stated “their purposes are against the law” and paragraph “d” of the ninth article that stated “associations that hide their true purpose.”<sup>206</sup>

The speech of the Minister of the Interior, Şükrü Sökmensüer, made it on the front pages of the newspapers the next day, and the entire text of his long speech was also printed. In his reply to the accusations made by the Minister, Field Marshal Çakmak said: “The people of this country are mature. These propagandas will have

---

<sup>206</sup> *Aydın Tarihi*, No. 158, January 1-31, 1947, pp. 10-25.

unfortunate consequences. The country knows that I am not a communist and will not fall prey to the actions of the communists.”<sup>207</sup>

### 1947 TKP Court Case

After the closing down of socialist parties and unions, investigations were conducted by Kazim Alöç, the military judge of the martial law command. Alöç serialized in 1967 his findings and accusations concerning these investigations in *Yeni Gazete* under the heading “Türkiye’de Komünizm ve Irkçılık/İfşa Ediyorum”, “Communism and Racism in Turkey/I Expose.”

From these serialized articles it is apparent that this military judge was of the same persuasion as that of the Minister of the Interior, Sökmensüer.

---

<sup>207</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, January 31, 1947.

“Millet olgundur. Bu propagandalar makûs netice verir. Millet benim komünist olmadığımı ve komünistlere alet olmadığımı iyi bilir.”

It is apparent that the real purpose of this long and detailed speech that Sökmensüer gave a month and a half after the closing down of the two socialist parties and labor unions was in fact not about communist activities in Turkey but rather about Field Marshal Fevzi Çakmak and the DP. As a matter of fact, when the Minister of the Interior was reading these letters and documents in the Grand Assembly, Celâl Bayar intervened, stating “They are reading the letters of a bunch of idiots.” *Ayın Tarihi*, 1-31 January 1947, p. 19. The next day *Ulus* newspaper reporting this, drew attention to the fact that the Field Marshal, Celal Bayar and Fuad Köprülü were quiet and motionless. *Ulus*, January 31, 1947. As a matter of fact in those days there was a crisis brewing between RPP and DP on the subject of boycotting the Assembly. On December 18, 1946, Menderes had criticized the government. Answering him in the name of the government, Recep Peker had described Menderes’ view as that of “the expression of a sickly psychopath spirit.” As a result, the members of DP left the Assembly, and the crisis thus born was resolved nine days later through the mediating efforts of İnönü. This attitude of İnönü was considered a defeat for the Peker group within RPP and a victory for DP. Ahmad and Ahmad, 1976, p. 28.

According to Alöç, communist activities inspired by Moscow and Communist International had been continuing in Turkey without interruption since 1919. Starting in 1942 these activities were “terrible, planned and very intensive, underground.”

Within the framework of these activities, the *İleri Gençler Birliği Faşizm ve Vurguncularla Savaş*, Union of Progressive Youth for Struggle against Fascism and Exploitation, first had been founded under the leadership of Reşat Fuat Baraner in 1943-1944, and later had been under the leadership of Mihri Belli and lathe worker Emin Sekün. The activities of the TKP were continued under the leadership of “Party Leader” Şefik Hüsnü Deymer. One of the “trusted four” of Şefik Hüsnü, Hüsametdin Özdoğu, in April 1945 had founded the İstanbul Vilayet Komitesi, the “Committee of Istanbul Province” and started organizing laborers. Cells attached to this committee also had been formed.

Nail Vahdeti Çakırhan, together with Celal Benneci, had founded the *İleri Demokrat Cephe*, the “Progressive Democratic Front” among intellectuals.

Ahmet Fırıncı’s job was to organize the “revolutionary assistance committee struggling against bourgeoisie.”

Kerim Soyka’s job was to organize the TKP in Izmir.

Sometime later Hüsametdin Özdoğu transferred to the TSP, which was in the process of getting organized. Upon this development Mehmet Bozışık and Celal Benneci joined the Istanbul province committee.

While the TKP was continuing its activities in this manner, the Law on Societies was revised in June 1946 to allow political parties on the basis of classes. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the TKP transferred its underground organization masked under the name the TSEKP. Şefik Hüsnü when founding the TSEKP had wanted some

well known names and with this purpose in mind had contacted Cami Baykurt, Sadrettin Celal Antel, Zekeriya Sertel, Sabiha Sertel. However, they refused to join.

According to Alöç these communist networks, that were led by Reşat Fuat Baraner in 1943-1944 and by Mihri Belli and Emin Sekün in 1944-1945 and Şefik Hüsnü Deymer in 1945-1946, had spread like a “spider’s web” all over Turkey.<sup>208</sup>

Apprehensions and arrests that started with the communiqué of December 16, 1946 of the martial law command continued in the following months. At the end of these investigations, a law case was started in the No. 2 military court of the Istanbul martial law command for 56 people including Şefik Hüsnü and Esat Adil. The defendants were accused of founding societies prohibited pursuant to Article 141/1 of the criminal code and also of joining such societies as mentioned in Article 141/3.

While the trial was in progress, martial law ended on December 22, 1947, thus the trial was transferred to the Second Criminal Court of Istanbul.<sup>209</sup>

The legal proceedings had been started against socialist parties, unions and newspapers. However, it proceeded as a TKP trial. The decisive session of the court was on July 7, 1948. The 2nd Criminal Court in rendering its decision had accepted the existence of the TKP’s secret activities during a long period which covered the years 1945, 46. According to the court the TSEKP was a continuation of the secret TKP and its reconstructed form. For this reason, those who were members of the TKP and who later became founders and administrators of the TSEKP received sentences according to the Turkish Criminal Code, Article 141/1. Those who joined the secret society and later

---

<sup>208</sup> Kâzım Alöç, “Türkiye’de Komünizm ve Irkçılık/İfşa Ediyorum”, *Yeni Gazete*, April 12-May 26, 1967.

<sup>209</sup> *1947 TKP Davası*, pp. 149-150.



became only members of the TSEKP received sentences in accordance with Article 141/6 of the same law.<sup>210</sup>

Şefik Hüsni was sentenced to five years, Ahmet Fırıncı, Hüsamettin Özdoğru and Nail Çakırhan four each, 18 defendants three each, one defendant two, and 22 one year. Eleven defendants, including Esat Adil and Mustafa Börklüce, were acquitted.<sup>211</sup>

According to the court's decision, "It was not clearly established that Esat Adil had founded the Turkey Socialist Party to serve communist ideologies and aims, and therefore had wanted to join the Workers and Peasants Party."<sup>212</sup> However, İhvan Kabacıoğlu, Hüsamettin Özdoğru and Süleyman Taki, who were the founders and administrators of the TSP, were sentenced for their activities in the "secret TKP."<sup>213</sup>

In the court's decision, there was no statement to the effect that either the "secret TKP" or other socialist parties had any foreign connections. Kemal Karpat, who attended some sessions of the court which were conducted in secret as an intern also stated that the court could not establish "that these parties had any foreign connections or that they received any financial aid from a foreign government."<sup>214</sup>

In fact, during the period that we are investigating, whether there was a TKP secret organization or were activities is subject to much debate. Since the subject of our

---

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., pp. 209-210.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., pp. 211-216.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

*"Esat Adil'in Türkiye Sosyalist Partisi'ni Komünist maksat ve gayelere hizmet için kurduğu ve bu maksatla Emekçi ve Köylü Partisile birleşmek istediği anlaşılamamıştır."*

<sup>213</sup> This decision that was later confirmed by the First Section of the Supreme Court of Appeals was considered an acceptance, as a result of revisions made in Article 141, passed in 1949, meant that communist parties could not be established but socialist parties could. Tunaya, p. 697.

<sup>214</sup> Karpat, p. 367.

thesis is not TKP history, we will not go into detail. However, in order to understand the real reason why the socialist parties and unions were closed, a brief commentary is necessary. In the first place, the body of evidence that was presented during the trial essentially consisted of “documents” that were seized in Şefik Hüsnü’s house, some of which were in his handwriting and others typed by him, and the testimonies of the defendants.

Although the defendants insisted that their testimonies were taken by the military judge under pressure and torture and therefore did not reflect reality, this was not accepted by the court.<sup>215</sup>

An article entitled “A History” written by Şefik Hüsnü in the old script by hand was accepted as evidence of the existence of the TKP. However, Şefik Hüsnü explained that he had written this “history” for publication in an anti-fascist magazine in England.<sup>216</sup> The court considered this document, “in view of its contents, in the form of a report to a higher authority.” However, after this statement, the court continued “even if this had been prepared for publication in an anti-fascist magazine or whether it was a report to a higher authority.” It is obvious that the court could not arrive at a definite conclusion on “A History.” But the court accepted what was written in “A History” as a history of all secret activities that had been conducted since the beginning of World War

---

<sup>215</sup> *1947 TKP Davası*, p. 207.

<sup>216</sup> According to the information given by Dr. Hulusi Dosdoğru, a defendant in the trial, based on information he gathered from another defendant of the trial, Nail Çakırhan, this so-called “report” was one of the “cheap notebooks made of yellow paper” and used to “jot down notes” by Şefik Hüsnü. This “yellow notebook” was found on Şefik Hüsnü’s table at the time of his arrest. Atilla Akar, *“Eski tüfek” sosyalistler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989), p. 92.

II.<sup>217</sup> Secret organizations and activities during 1945 and 1946 were based on these same secret organizations.<sup>218</sup>

Based on documents that we have, it is understood that there were no TKP documents found on the persons or homes of defendants other than Şefik Hüsnü.

It is interesting to note that in the court's decision, Şefik Hüsnü is referred to not as the "Secretary General" but as the "TKP's head." According to Alöç's accusations as well as the court's decision, the TKP had none other than Şefik Hüsnü serving as central committee administrator, and indeed there was no central committee.

According to the court, the TKP, which was reorganized in 1945 and for a "long period" had been active, had not participated in any demonstrations nor had published anything. Contrary to what the TKP had done in previous years, like publishing announcements and distributing these in factories and in streets and pasting them on walls were also not done during this period. According to the court's decision, for example, the defendants who had founded the TKP's Paşabahçe's cell confined their activities to "various meetings" and "to spread communism among themselves."<sup>219</sup>

On the other hand, it is observed that the memoirs of "*Eski Tüfek*" (old communists) socialists for the period of 1945-1946, there are many contradictions. These memoirs do not lead us to any concrete information as to the existence of a "secret TKP" or whether it was active during that period.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>217</sup> The "secret activities" mentioned here are the activities that were the subject of the "TKP Court Case" in 1944 and the 1945 "Progressive Youth Alliance Court Case."

<sup>218</sup> *1947 TKP Davası*, p. 157.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131-217.

<sup>220</sup> For some of these memoirs, please refer to: Atilla Akar, "*Eski tüfek*" sosyalistler (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989). Emin Karaca, *Eski Tüfeklerin Sonbaharı* (İstanbul: Toplumsal Dönüşüm Yayınları,

The same uncertainty can be found in the books of anti-communist authors like Tevetoglu and Sayilgan. These authors who give detailed information about the TKP's prior activities for the period 1945-46 claim the existence of "a secret TKP" and claim that the TSEKP was a continuation of the TKP all based on this "report" of Şefik Hüsnü.<sup>221</sup>

Finally, documents that have been published recently under the heading "Desantralizasyon/Separat Kararları", "Decentralization/Separat Decisions" contain important new findings. These documents present convincing evidence that the TKP had stopped its illegal activities in 1937 pursuant to the "anti-faşist halk cephesi", "anti-fascist people's front" policy adopted by the Communist International in its 7<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1935.<sup>222</sup>

In conclusion, with the lack of documents, there is a great deal of doubt on the contention that there was a secret TKP in 1945-46. It is more likely that the old TKP members had certain activities first to establish the "Progressive Democratic Front" and later a legal political party.

These activities were accepted as "secret TKP activities" and that the TSEKP was a continuation of the TKP.

---

1996); Hayk Açıkgöz, *Anadolulu Bir Ermeni Komünistin Anıları* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2006); Zihni T. Anadol, *Truva Atında İlk Akşam* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1988,); Vartan İhmalyan, *Bir Yaşam Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınları, 1989,); Mihri Belli, *İnsanlar Tanıdım, Mihri Belli'nin Anıları* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2002, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition).

<sup>221</sup> Tevetoglu, pp. 501-510 and pp. 547-577; Aclan Sayilgan, 1968, pp. 229-260 and 313-315.

<sup>222</sup> *Vedat Türkali ile GÜVEN üzerine-Desantralizasyon/Separat Kararları Belgeleri* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2000), *passim*.

In the court's decision the programs and activities of both TSP and TSEKP were not viewed as criminal activities. There was no court case against Hâbil Amato and Fuat Bileke, founders of the TSEKP, nor Macit Güçlü and Aziz Uçtay, the founders of the TSP. Probably because no evidence could be found that they had joined the secret organization. Also, unions, magazines and newspapers shut down under the orders of the martial law command were not the subject of the court case.<sup>223</sup>

In another court case that was opened in Eskişehir Mehmet Tan and Fahri Dik who were among the founders of Eskişehir Independent Industry Labor Union received two year sentences for making communist propaganda in a declaration that they had published.<sup>224</sup>

### Labor Law and Labor Unionism of 1947

In the communiqué issued by the Martial Law Command the reasons for shutting down the socialist parties and unions associated with them were that they had been founded under cover and were trying to establish the primacy of one class over others and also to disrupt the existing economic and social rules of the country.<sup>225</sup>

---

<sup>223</sup> *1947 TKP Davası*, p. 218.

<sup>224</sup> Speech of the Minister of the Interior Şükrü Sökmensüer, *Ayın Tarihi*, No. 158, January 1-31, 1947, pp. 24 and *Vatan*, December 18, 1946.

<sup>225</sup> *Vatan*, December 17, 1946.

According to the Minister of the Interior, Sökmensüer, the decision of the Martial Law Command was based on the aims that these “parties and unions were contrary to Article 1 of the Law on Societies and that they were ‘hiding their purposes’ in accordance with Section B of the same law.”<sup>226</sup>

However, the court case that was opened against the socialist parties was in essence a trial of the TKP and the unions were not included in the court case.

In this case, it is necessary to interpret the closing of the unions not as a legal matter but rather as a political one and should be evaluated in view of subsequent developments.

Two months after the closing of the TSP, the TSEKP and the unions associated with them, on February 20, 1947, a proposed law under the heading İşçi ve İşveren Sendikaları ve Sendika Birlikleri Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı, the Proposed Labor and Employer Unions and Union Federation,<sup>227</sup> was accepted and became law at the Grand National Assembly. The law had one provisional and thirteen other articles. In the government’s statement of reason it was stated that it had become necessary to have a

---

<sup>226</sup> *Ayın Tarihi*, No. 158, January 1-31, 1947, pp. 10-25.

<sup>227</sup> In accordance with information given in the press, the proposal was first entitled “İşçi ve İşveren Meslek Dernekleri ve Dernek Birlikleri”, The Laborer and Employer Professional Associations and Union of Associations. *Cumhuriyet*, 25.11.1946. The words of Vedat Dicleli, a member of Parliament representing Diyarbakır, support this information. He said: “Esteemed friends, we are using the word union instead of association. One should not be afraid of this word. In the same manner that we use the word ‘hat’ instead of the word ‘serpuş’ (an old word for headgear), we now use labor union instead of labor association.

“Sayın arkadaşlarım, doğrudan doğruya dernek kelimesi yerine artık sendika ismini kullanıyoruz, bu kelimeden ürkmemek lâzımdır. Nasıl ki serpuş yerine şapka demiş isek bugün de işçi derneği yerine sendika kelimesini kullanacağız.”

TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, Dönem: VIII, Meeting: 1, Vol. 4, Ankara, 1947, pp. 298-299; Mesut Gülmez, 1995, p. 214.

law in view of the fact that in major cities many labor organizations were increasing after associations based on classes were allowed.<sup>228</sup>

According to Minister of Labor, Irmak, the government was obliged to enact a new law because the established labor groups had moved away from their original purposes.<sup>229</sup>

Irmak was explaining the principle adopted in the preparation of the union law in the following matter:

Our principle is to inculcate into these newborn associations the independence nationalist and statist views and to insure that their activities will be beneficial to their vocation, to the nation and to the public good...

Our motive in everything we do is the nationalist motive. Nationalism is like air and water that the country needs. Therefore, we have found in natural that we accepted national motives in the labor associations.<sup>230</sup>

In the statement of reason of the law, the same view was expressed:

This law proposal has been inspired by our desire to provide the opportunities to labor and to those involved in labor and employers in their efforts to form organizations, and this is in harmony with our regime which is independent, nationalist and statist.

...In conformity with the nationalist character of our regime, the unions will also be nationalist, will operate under nationalist principles and will not become international in character.<sup>231</sup>

---

<sup>228</sup> Gülmez, 1995, p. 219.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., pp. 222-223.

<sup>230</sup> TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, Term VIII, No. 4, 47. Bileşim, 20.2.1947, pp. 301-302; Adnan Mahiroğulları, Cumhuriyetten Günümüze Türkiye’de İşçi Sendikacılığı (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2005), p. 60.

*“Prensibimiz; hürriyetçilik, milliyetçilik ve devletçilik görüşünü bu yeni doğmakta olan derneklere istikamet olarak vermek ve bunların gerek mesleklerine ve gerekse millete, kamu menfaatlerine yararlı olmalarını temin etmektir...”*

*Bütün hareketlerimizde izlediğimiz motif milli motiftir. Millilik memleketin hava gibi, su gibi muhtaç olduğu zaruriyededir. Binanealeyh, işçi birliklerinde milli motiflerle hareket etmeyi tabii gördük.”*

<sup>231</sup> TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Devre VIII, Toplantı. 1, C. 4, No. 88, p. 1; Makal, 2002, p. 233.

According to the Ministry of Labor, there were three types of unions in the world. They were: against the state, under state control, and in association with the state. The unionism that would be established in Turkey would be the third kind.<sup>232</sup>

One of the important provisions of Law No. 5018 was the prohibition of political activities on unions. Since there was no union law in 1946 there was no possibility of a prohibition for unions to have connections with political parties. The Labor Unionism of 1946 which was associated with political parties sprang up from this “void.” Article 5 of the new law stated that the unions “could not be involved in politics, could not engage in political propaganda and could not have political publications” and “could not be the intermediaries of any political entities, activities” was explicitly stated. Unions were “national organizations” and “could not be involved in activities against nationalism and national interests.”<sup>233</sup>

In this way, legally, the Labor Unionism of 1946 or anything similar to it was becoming impossible.<sup>234</sup>

After the closing of socialist parties and unions associated with them and after the adoption of Law No. 5018, the RPP started work to create a unionist movement

---

*“Bu kanun tasarısı, hürriyetçi, milliyetçi ve devletçi olan rejimimizin çalışma hayatında işçi ve işveren sıfatıyla faal olanların meydana getirecekleri teşekküllere hür bir gelişme imkanı sağlamak fikrinden mülhem olmuştur.*

*... Rejimimizin milliyetçi karakterine uygun olarak sendikaların da milli teşekküller oldukları, milliyetçi bir zihniyetle çalışacakları ve beynelmilel mahiyet alamayacakları tasarıda tespit edilmiştir.”*

<sup>232</sup> Mahiroğulları, p. 60.

<sup>233</sup> Makal, 2002, p. 236.

<sup>234</sup> According to Gülmez, the overriding characteristic of the 1947 law was that it was a “reaction law.” The main concern of the lawmaker was not to establish a legal framework for the organizational efforts of the unions and to fill the void that existed but rather was to take under control these activities which were progress in a way that the political power had not approved. Gülmez, 1995, p. 238.



under its guidance and control. These activities were carried out by a Worker's Bureau established under the Istanbul Provincial Head. The chief of this bureau was Dr. Rebi Barkın and his assistant was Sabahattin Selek. Sixteen unions, that were established under the guidance of this bureau, came together on March 24, 1948 and founded a new İSB.<sup>235</sup>

Starting on April 17, 1948, *Hürbilet*, a weekly newspaper under the ownership of Dr. Rebi Barkın and the editorship of Sabahattin Selek, began publication. A short time later the newspaper was transferred to the İSB.<sup>236</sup>

The RPP Worker's Bureau tried to convince the unions that their main duty was to increase production. The views expressed in the prologue of the *İstanbul Demir ve Madeni Eşya İşçileri Sendikası*, the Istanbul Iron and White Goods Labor Union, by-laws give an idea about this new unionism:

A nation's welfare can be measured in accordance with its production. In order to increase production it is necessary to organize labor. In the development of labor activities, our union will play a major role. Our purpose is not to struggle against the employers but rather to cooperate with them for increased production and an increase in the welfare of the worker.<sup>237</sup>

These efforts of the governing party caused a new understanding of unionism.

---

<sup>235</sup> Sülker, 1955, pp. 72-73.

<sup>236</sup> Mustafa Görkem Doğan, "Governmental Involvement in the Establishment and Performance of the Trade Unions during the Transition to Multi Party Politics. The Case of the Worker's Bureau of the Republican People's Party", Master thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2003, p. 173.

<sup>237</sup> Sülker, 1955, p. 74.

"Bir milletin refahı, yaptığı istihsalin derecesi ile ölçülür. Çok istihsal elde etmek için de iş hayatının tanzimi gerektir. İş hayatının düzen içinde gelişmesinde sendikamızın da rolü olacaktır... Gayemiz, işverenlerle mücadele etmek değil, bol istihsal ve işçinin refahı yolunda onlarla işbirliği yapmaktır."

The defining characteristic of this “Labor Unionism of 1947” was that it was controlled and was under trusteeship and as such it was the direct opposite of the 1946 unionism.<sup>238</sup> In this way the Labor Unionism of 1947 which was born under the guidance and control of the political power later became the dominant style of unionism in Turkey.

Seyfi Demirsoy, a 1947 unionist who became the editor of *Hürbilet* after Sabahattin Selek, in later years became head of *Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* (Türk-İş), Confederation of Labor Unions of Turkey. He described the developments in a speech he gave in 1966:

we grabbed the unions from the hands of the communists by beating them up. One day this is what was said to us in Çiftesaraylar: “we’ll put up the gallows on the bridge.” “We’ll hang you there. We do not look for our honor behind our wives’ skirts.” They used to come to our meetings. How could we introduce them? They used to say “I, communist Zeki Ural, I communist Ahmet Güner.” Please remember 1947 and 1948 the opposition was ferocious, everybody with the opposition and the government was weak. I want to remember with a great deal of appreciation and thanks those friends of ours who were the first founders of the unions.<sup>239</sup>

---

<sup>238</sup> Toprak, 1996, pp. 19-29.

<sup>239</sup> The closing speech by Seyfi Demirsoy, the head of Türk-İş, during the 6th General Meeting of Türk-İş. The unionist Zeki Ural, mentioned in Demirsoy’s speech, is one of the founders of the Textile Workers Union of Turkey which was associated with TSP. Belgelerle Türk-İş Tarihi-II (1963-1980), (Türk-İş 17th Olağan Genel Kurulu, 5-10 Dec. 1995, Ankara), pp. 121-122.

“biz sendikaları komünistlerin elinden döve döve aldık. Bir gün Çiftesaraylarda söylenen şu idi bize: ‘Darağaçlarını köprüde kuracağız’. ‘Dar ağaçlarını köprüde kuracak, sizi orada sallandıracağız. Biz namusumuzu karımızın eteğinde aramayız’ derlerdi. Gelirlerdi toplantılarımıza, onları tanıtmak istediğimiz zaman nasıl tanıtacaksınız? ‘Ben komünist Zeki Ural. Ben komünist Ahmet Güner’ derlerdi. Hatırlayın 1947-1948’i; muhalefet azgın halde, herkes muhalefetin peşinde, hükümet zayıf. Ama hakikaten sendikaların ilk kurucuları olan arkadaşlarımızın bu hizmetlerini taktirle yad etmek isterim.”

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The single-party rule period in Turkey ended in 1946. With the transition to the multi-party period the Turkish socialist parties that had previously been forced to exist illegally now legally could begin to organize themselves.

Firstly the TSP was founded on May 14, 1946 under the leadership of Esat Adil Mütecaplioğlu. Besides their organizational activities, the TSP also published a daily newspaper called *Gerçek* and a weekly magazine titled *Gün*.

And on June 19, 1946 the TSEKP was founded under the leadership of Dr. Şefik Hüsnü Deymer who had for many years shouldered important duties during the Turkish communist movement. The official publication of the TSEKP became the weekly *Sendika* newspaper which began its existence on August 31, 1946.

At the same time, in 1946, the ban on creating societies based on and in the name of class was lifted. Thus the opportunity for the organization of unions was granted after

the Law for the Maintenance of Order, created on March 4, 1925, had officially banned them.

Immediately after the TSP and the TSEKP were founded, they began to organize the worker class into unions. Named “Labor Unionism of 1946” the lifespan of this movement only lasted for six months. Both socialist parties, unions created by these parties and their supporters, and newspapers and magazines that espoused the views of the parties were shut down by the Martial Law Command on December 16, 1946.

Because there are no official records that can be accessed,<sup>240</sup> the exact number of unions associated with these socialist parties and their member worker numbers cannot be exactly determined.

In studies on the subject, very different numbers have been put forward. In fact, Sülker has given two different estimates regarding the number of unions founded in 1946, to which he included unions besides the ones founded by the socialist parties. In one study he gives the number as 100<sup>241</sup> and in another study he gives this number as

---

<sup>240</sup> Koç relays a document that he came upon in 1983 at the Labor General Management of the Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance. After the founding of the Istanbul Petroleum Workers Union on 11.9.1950, the Ministry of Labor sent a letter to the Istanbul Police Directorate and requested information about the founding members. Parts of the reply are as follows: “Sabri Özcan, one of the founders, is a founding member of the Bakırköy Cloth Workers Union which was closed by the Martial Law Command of 16.12.1946 ... Ahmet Engin, when he was working as a secretary in the Zonguldak Coal Mines in 1946, befriended Turgut Etingü who was known to have communist ideas and who was one of the founders of the Zonguldak Coal Basin Workers Union and also the Above-ground Mine Workers Ereğli coal operations and that Ahmet had communist ideas as well, as stated in the written report of the Zonguldak governor’s office dated 24.12.1946, No. 1666.” Yıldırım Koç, *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi Tarihi* (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2003), Genişletilmiş İkinci Basım, p. 88.

“Kuruculardan, Sabri Özcan, 16.12.1946 tarihinde Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı kararı ile kapatılan Bakırköy Bez Fabrikası İşçileri Sendikası kurucu üyelerindendir... Ahmet Engin; 1946 senesinde Zonguldak Maden Kömür Ocaklarında Asma Ocağı kâtibi bulunduğu sırada Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı kararı ile kapatılan Zonguldak Maden Kömür Havzası İşçileri Sendikası kurucularından ve Ereğli Kömür İşletmesi üst madencilerinden komünist fikirli Turgut Etingü’nün arkadaşlarından olduğu ve komünist düşünceli bulunduğu dosyasında mevcut Zonguldak Valiliği’nin 24.12.1946 gün ve E. 1666 sayılı yazısından anlaşılmıştır.”

<sup>241</sup> Kemal Sülker, “1946’da 100 Kadar Sendika Kuruluyor“, *Bilim ve Sanat*, October 1982, No. 22, pp. 20-23.

200.<sup>242</sup> In his article about Labor Unionism of 1946, İleri says, “According to government records, the newspapers have said that 600 business unions have been founded.”<sup>243</sup> A report in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper published after the unions were shut down stated that 700 unions had been founded in a short period of time.<sup>244</sup> Anadol mentions that the number of unions had reached 737.<sup>245</sup>

In his speech to the Parliament, İrmak, the Minister of Labor of the period, said the number of “labor gatherings” which had taken such titles as unions, associations, alliances or societies had reached 100.<sup>246</sup> Sökmensüer, the Minister of the Interior of the period, gave the number of unions of which he stated all of their founders and executive boards were made up of communists as 38.<sup>247</sup>

According to the union regulations and news reports that appeared in the union press which were studied as part of this thesis, six unions that began with the name “Turkish” and the Turkish Labor Unions Federation were founded by supporters of the TSP. In the same resources it was determined that 23 unions, one Workers’ Club and ISBs in Istanbul, Izmir and Kocaeli were founded in connection to the TSEKP.

---

<sup>242</sup> Kemal Sülker, “Cumhuriyet Döneminde İşçi Hareketleri“, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. VII, p. 1844.

<sup>243</sup> İleri, 1978.

<sup>244</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, December 19, 1946.

<sup>245</sup> Zihni Anadol, *Kırmızı Gül ve Kasket* (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1989), p. 9.

<sup>246</sup> *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Dönem: VIII, Toplantı: 1, Vol. 4, 47. Birleşim, 20.2.1947, Ahmet Makal, Türkiye’de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1946-1963 (Istanbul: İmge Kitabevi, 2002), p. 226.

<sup>247</sup> *Ayın Tarihi*, No. 158, January 1-31, 1947, pp. 10-25.

The 1946 unionism began right after the ban on the organization based on class was lifted on June 5, 1946.<sup>248</sup> And it came to an end after the Martial Law Command shut down both socialist parties and unions associated with them on December 16, 1946.

After the ban on organizations based on class was lifted in 1946, a transition occurred from the “banning of unions” to “freedom for unions,” but a union law that allowed for the freedom for unions to move towards a “right to unions” did not materialize.<sup>249</sup> For this reason, unions, under circumstances where there were no legal measures that defined their rights, were founded and existed based on the Societies Law. In addition to this, during this period martial law was still in effect in Istanbul, the center of the union movement.

While it is not possible to exactly determine the number of members of the unions founded during this period, it will not be misleading, using current documents, to try and make estimates regarding the extent of the union organization.

According to an article published in *Gün* magazine, only after a month had passed since its founding, 4,500 members had joined the Turkish Textile Workers Union and the number of members which had joined the Turkish Maritime Workers Union had well exceeded 1,000.<sup>250</sup> *Sendika* reported that the Tobacco Workers Union had more than 1,000 members.<sup>251</sup> In a news report by Aziz Nesin published in *Gün*, 2,000 workers

---

<sup>248</sup> The first labor union that was founded on July 15, 1946 by the supporters of socialist parties was the Marine Workers Union of Turkey.

<sup>249</sup> Gülmez, 1995, p. 236.

<sup>250</sup> *Gün*, October 20, 1946.

<sup>251</sup> *Sendika*, August 31, 1946.

had participated in a meeting held on November 17, 1946 by the Turkish Tekel Workers Union.<sup>252</sup>

The numbers given should be accepted with a certain amount of caution as the unions may have exaggerated their membership numbers in order to make themselves appear stronger. However, the numbers can be accepted as an indication of the popularity of unions among the workers.

As a result declarations by the government regarding 1946 unionism exhibit similarities to those made by the unionists.

The Minister of the Interior declared that unions had in a short period of time “sprouted from the ground” in various cities all over the country.<sup>253</sup>

The Minister of Labor described what happened as follows:

After the final change and development the Societies Law has gone through, it is now possible for societies to be founded based upon class and trade in our country. Shortly following this development, in many parts of our country, in other words in our large cities, we have found ourselves facing a quickly developing and growing unionization movement.<sup>254</sup>

As a result, despite all the negative conditions of the time, it can be seen that the 1946 unionism experiment quickly spread and was accepted by the working class in a short time, like six months.

---

<sup>252</sup> *Gün*, November 23, 1946.

<sup>253</sup> *Ayın Tarihi*, No. 158, January 1-31, 1947, pp. 10-25

<sup>254</sup> *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, Dönem: VIII, Toplantı: 1, Vol. 4, 47. Birleşim, 20.2.1947; Makal, 2002, p. 226.

“*Cemiyetler kanununun geçirdiği son istihale ve gelişmeden sonra memleketimizde de sınıf ve meslek esası üzerinde Cemiyetler kurulması imkân dahiline girmiş bulunuyor. Bu gelişmeden az sonra, memleketimizin birçok yerlerinde, ezcümle büyük şehirlerimizde, süratle baş gösteren ve ilerliyen bir sendikalaşma hareketi karşısında bulunduk.*”

The reasons for this success first of all can be found in the incredibly negative conditions the working class found themselves in during the single-party rule period.

As was described in detail in the second chapter, the years between 1923 and 1946 were especially rough on the working class. Conditions worsened during the Second World War and with the rapid increase in the cost of living, real worker wages were slashed in half.<sup>255</sup>

Acting as a representative of the CHP among the workers from the beginning of 1947, Dr. Rebi Barkın defined the reaction of the workers against the one-party period in a report he prepared in 1948:

Our party has been eagerly involved in these activities for the past ten months. As a result not only are the purposes of the party being fulfilled but also a national service, domestic and foreign, is being served. The poor conditions of the workers mentioned above had made them disgruntled, offended and even hostile towards us. When I entered the ranks of the workers as a member of the CHP and the means of executing these duties, I was faced with hostility and even hatred.<sup>256</sup>

The reaction of the working class against these tough working and living conditions during the single-party rule period was one of the important reasons for interest in the 1946 unionism. Expecting their living conditions to be changed after the end of the war, the workers saw union organization as a solution to their problems.

---

<sup>255</sup> The unfavorable conditions that the working class faced throughout World War II years are explained in detail by Nacar. Can Nacar, "Working Class in Turkey During the World War II Period: Between Social Policies and Everyday Experiences" (Masters thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2004).

<sup>256</sup> Rebi Barkın, "Türkiye'de İşçi Meselesi," January 10, 1948. Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 490.01/1439.8.1.

*"Partimiz 10 aydan beri fiilen bu işlerle uğraşmaktadır. Bununla yalnız bir parti işi değil aynı zamanda içeriye ve dışarıya karşı milli bir hizmet de ifa edilmektedir. İşçilerin yukarıda bahsettiğim kötü durumları onları bize karşı küskün, kırılgan ve hatta düşman bir hale getirmiş idi. Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'nin bir mensubu ve bu işleri tanzim ile görevlendirilmiş bir organı olarak işçi arasına girdiğim zaman husumet ve hatta kin ile karşılaştım."*



On the other hand, during the single-party rule period, any attempt at organizing and looking for rights by the workers was suppressed violently and the working class was unable to take part in societal life. The working class tried to adapt to life under the multi-party rule and find a place in the social and political life during 1946 when the political regime in Turkey experienced a great change and the ban on union organizations was lifted. The 1946 unionism was an early period example of the working classes' attempt at adapting.<sup>257</sup>

The priority for unions founded in 1946 was to quickly organize among the workers and legally establish their permanency. However activities were not limited to those. The unions attempted to follow up on wide ranging subjects like labor organizations and activities in other countries, from political developments in the country to the cost and difficulties of earning a living and the health and working conditions of workers.

Unions founded by the supporters of the two socialist parties based their activities primarily on the concept of "class." The main characteristic and differentiating aspect of the 1946 unionism was this acceptance of class unionism based upon the socialist world view.

Another reason that should be taken into consideration for the unions to have spread in such an attention-grabbing manner among the working class in a limited amount of time was the connection between the 1946 unionism and the socialist parties. The socialists, in contrast to other political waves, defined themselves as the party of the working class and based their political organization and activities on the working class.

---

<sup>257</sup> It is possible to evaluate the TSP and the TSEKP, starters of the Labor Unionism of 1946, as the first of the efforts by the socialists in Turkey to adapt to a multi-party system.

For this reason, despite all the bans and pressures during the single-party rule period, they had the experience of organization among the working class. Also, there was no experienced “union” class for them to compete against, which would happen in the coming years. Thus, the socialists showed greater development in union organization in comparison to other political parties during 1946, the year when unionism truly began in Turkey.

In any case that the union preparations carried out by the supporters of the TSP and TSEKP in Adana, Ankara, Eskişehir, Istanbul, Izmir, Kocaeli, Zonguldak and Samsun were worker-dense cities that socialist parties and the TKP had been active in during previous periods. As a result it can be seen that there was continuity in the socialist and labor movement.<sup>258</sup>

The shutting down of the unions a short while later shows the “success” of the socialist parties and unions in organizing.<sup>259</sup>

In another report prepared by Dr. Rebi Barkın towards the end of 1949, these union developments experienced in 1946 were analyzed as follows:

The discovery activities of the communists in the winter of 1946 were only of use in an unsupervised area. In actuality the two political parties that were separately managed by the two communists but were joined in their purposes, awakened a great movement within the labor community of Istanbul, and in a short period of a few months easily organized the workers of Istanbul around numerous disruptive unions. This situation reached the level of threatening the general security, and the Martial Law Command raided these unions, catching the perpetrators red-handed, and as a result hundreds of people were arrested and taken to court. If they had been more careful to avoid any extreme actions that were considered

---

<sup>258</sup> Şehmus Güzel, *Türkiye’de İşçi Örgütlenmesi (1940-1950)*, unpublished assistant professorship thesis, Ankara University, 1982.

<sup>259</sup> Karpat states that the socialist ideology was adopted by some unions and some members of the intelligentsia in an “unexpected fashion” and claims that this is one of the reasons why the socialist parties were subjected to legal measures. Karpat, 1959, p. 366.

unlawful, under the current democratic rule and especially after the lifting of martial law, the intervention by the government towards these organizations would not have been easy and a serious period of disturbance would have occurred.<sup>260</sup>

The lifting of the ban on class-based organizations led to the birth of the 1946 unionism. This decision taken during the transition to the multi-party rule was a major change for the Turkish political system.<sup>261</sup>

During the single-party rule period between 1923 and 1946, the existence of classes and the struggle of the classes were rejected.

The Kemalist ideology accepted the Turkish society as “a classless, unprivileged, molded mass.” As early as 1923, Mustafa Kemal had defined the Turkish people as follows at a speech he made during the opening of the Izmir Economical Congress:

Our people are not people who can be separated into classes. On the contrary, they are made up of classes that need each other. My listeners at this moment are farmers, tradesmen, merchants and workers. How can anyone of these be against the other? Who can deny that the farmer needs the tradesmen, the tradesmen needs the farmer and the farmer needs the merchant and everyone needs each other and the workers.<sup>262</sup>

---

<sup>260</sup> Rebi Barkın, “İşçi Sendikaları ve İşçilerin Teşkilatlandırılması Hakkında Rapor,” September 12, 1949. Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 490.01/1439.8.1.

“Komünistlerin 1946 kışındaki kesif faaliyeti ancak boş bırakılmış bir sahada verimli olabilmıştır. Filvaki iki komünistin zahiren ayrı ayrı idare ve fakat gayelerde iştirak Kabul ettiği iki siyasi parti İstanbul’un işçi muhitlerinde büyük bir hareket uyandırmış ve birkaç ay gibi kısa bir zamanda İstanbul’un işçilerini müteaddit bozguncu sendikalar etrafında kolayca teşkilatlandırmıştı. Bu hal, adeta umumi emniyeti tehlikeye düşüren bir mertebeye varmış ve sıkıyönetim idaresi bu sendikaları basarak tahrikçileri suçüstü yakalamış ve o zamanlar yüzlerce kişi tevkif olunup mahkemelere verilmişti. Eğer bunlar daha ihtiyatlı hareketle suç teşkil edecek aşırı hareketlerden içtinap etselerdi, bugünkü demokratik nizam içinde ve bilhassa sıkıyönetim kalktıktan sonra hükümetin bu teşekküllere müdahalesi kolay olmalıydı ve başımıza ciddi bir gaile çıkacaktı.”

<sup>261</sup> Feroz Ahmad, in the section of his book describing Turkey’s transition to a multi-party system, considers the lifting of this prohibition as “the most important decision.” Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 106.

<sup>262</sup> “İzmir İktisat Kongresi’ni Açış Söylevi”, II, pp. 108-112; Taha Parla, *Kemalist Tek Parti İdeolojisi ve CHP’nin Altı Ok’u, Türkiye’de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynakları*, vol. 3, second edition (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1995, pp. 252-253.

“Bizim halkımız menfaatleri yekdiğerinden ayrılır sunuf halinde değil; bilâkis mevcudiyetleri ve muhassalai mesaisi yekdiğerine lâzım olan sınıflardan ibarettir. Bu dakikada samilerim çiftçilerdir, sanatkârlardır, tüccarlardır ve ameledir. Bunların hangisi yekdiğerinin muarızı olabilir. Çiftçinin

The same principle was accepted by the RPP in their 1931 program under the heading, “Main Principles”:

One of our main principles is not to regard the Turkish people as made up of different classes but rather, from the viewpoint of private and social life, made up of various professions in the form of divisions of labor.

These are the working classes that make up the Turkish society: a) small farmers, b) small industrialists and tradesmen, c) farm workers and laborers, d) independent businessmen, and major industrialists, large landowners, large entrepreneurs and merchants.

The proper working of one is essential for the livelihood and happiness of each other and society in general. The aim of our party under this principle is to provide harmony of interest among the classes in an orderly and unifying manner rather than encourage class struggle. Benefits are in direct proportion to ability and effort.<sup>263</sup>

This principle that rejects the existence of social classes is summarized as “no classes, but division of labor.”<sup>264</sup>

During single-party administration, policies concerning the working class were formed in this prohibitive and oppressive understanding. After the adoption of the law entitled “Public Law and Order” on March 4, 1925, all organizations by workers were prohibited. Strikes became punishable in accordance with revisions made in the Penal

---

*sanatkâra, sanatkârın çiftçiye ve çiftçinin tüccara ve bunların hepsine, yekdiğerine ve ameleye muhtaç olduğunu kim inkâr edebilir.”*

<sup>263</sup> Tunçay, 1992, p. 449.

*“Türkiye Cümhuriyeti halkını ayrı ayrı sınıflardan mürekkep değil ve fakat ferdî ve içtimaî hayat için iş bölümü itibariyle muhtelif mesai erbabına ayrılmış bir camia telâkki etmek esas prensiplerimizdendir.*

*a) küçük çiftçiler, b) Küçük sanayi erbabı ve esnaf, c) Amele ve işçi, ç) Serbest meslek erbabı, d) Sanayi erbabı, büyük arazi ve iş sahipleri ve tüccar, Türk camiasını teşkil eden başlıca çalışma zümreleridir.*

*Bunların her birinin çalışması, diğerinin ve umumi camianın hayat ve saadeti için zaruridir. Fırkamızın bu prensiple istihdaf ettiği gaye sınıf mücadelesi yerine içtimaî intizam ve tesanüt temin etmek ve birbirini nakzetmiyecek surette menfaatlerde ahenk tesis eylemektir. Menfaatler, kabiliyet ve çalışma derecesiyle mütenasip olur.”*

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

Code in 1933. They were also prohibited in the Labor Law of 1936, and finally in 1938 with the revisions made in the Law on Societies, class-based organizations were prohibited.

However, subsequent to the democratic front winning World War II, Turkey, in order to join this front and as a result of its internal dynamics, had changed its single-party system. During the process of establishing a multi-party system, the prohibition against class-based organizations was lifted.<sup>265</sup>

With this important change the reality of social classes was admitted. The “compulsory” acceptance of classes did not mean the acceptance of class struggle.<sup>266</sup>

The class unionism that came into being during the void that was created during the process of changing into a multi-party system after World War II was suppressed forcefully by the party in power. In spite of all these negative conditions, a union movement under the direction and supervision of the political power was created in place of the Labor Unionism of 1946 that had been adopted and spread by the workers.

In a report<sup>267</sup> regarding labor and union issues prepared by the CHP General Secretariat and approved by the Party Council on February 6, 1948, a series of observations concerning the period were made and the policy of the party concerning

---

<sup>265</sup> In the report by the Internal Affairs Commission, the reason for the revision in the proposed law was explained thusly: “the government thought that the prohibition of the founding of associations based on class in Article 9 would obstruct the development of political parties and therefore proposed that this provision be nullified, and this proposal was accepted.” TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, Dönem: VII, Toplantı: 3, Vol. 24, No. 152, p. 5; Makal, 2002, p. 219.

<sup>266</sup> In his memoirs Sadi Irmak, who was Turkey’s first Minister of Labor, described his thoughts during those days in this fashion: “That day when I was alone, I reached a decision on my own. The social problem of Turkey should not be left to class struggle but the referring of the state should be adopted.” Sadi Irmak, “Çalışma Bakanlığının Kuruluşu ile İlgili Olarak İlk Çalışma Bakanının Anıları”, *50 Yılda Çalışma Hayatımız*, p. 12.

<sup>267</sup> RPP Secretary General Konya Parliamentarian Tefik Sılay, “CHP İzmir İl İdare Kurulu Başkanlığına yazılmış resmi yazı”, 1.3.1949, Ankara; in Mustafa Görkem Doğan, 2003.

this was established. During the subsequent years of the multi-party system, the policy that was adopted not only by the RPP but all parties that came to power showed why the Labor Unionism of 1946 experiment was terminated and for what reasons:

- 1- There is a large body of workers in Turkey. This body is of great importance to the party as a source of votes.
- 2- It is necessary that our party establish relations with these worker groups who are not very friendly to us.
- 3- If no assistance is provided to the implementation of the Law on Labor Unions, the social benefits extracted from the implementation of this law will not be realized.
- 4- It is absolutely not correct to allow unions to be on their own. This is dangerous not only from the viewpoint of the party but it is from the viewpoint of the country.<sup>268</sup>

---

<sup>268</sup> Rebi Barkın, 1949.

*“1- Türkiye’de büyük işçi kütlesi vardır. Bu kütle oy bakımından parti için büyük bir ehemmiyeti haizdir.*

*2- Bize karşı dost olmıyan bu işçi topluluğu ile partimizin meşgul olması lazımdır.*

*3- Sendikalar kanunun(un) tatbikatına yardım edilmezse bu kanundan beklenen büyük sosyal fayda kaybolur.*

*4- İşçi sendikalarını kendi haline bırakmak asla doğru olmaz. Bu, yalnız parti bakımından değil memleket bakımından da tehlikelidir.”*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Açıkgöz, Hayk. *Anadolulu Bir Ermeni Komünistin Anıları*. İstanbul:2006, Belge Yayınları.

Ahmad, Feroz. *The Making of Modern Turkey*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Ahmad, Feroz and Bedia Turgay. *Türkiye’de Çok Partili Politikanın Açıklamalı Kronolojisi 1945-1971*. Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1976.

Akar, Atilla. “*Eski tüfek*” *sosyalistler*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989.

Akgül, Hikmet. *Şoför İdris Anılar*. İstanbul: Yar Yayınları 2004.

Akkaya, Yüksel. “Türkiye’de Emek Tarihinin Sefaleti Üzerine Bazı Notlar”, *Toplum ve Bilim* 91, (Winter 2001/2002), pp. 285-294.

*Akşam*, September 1946-January 1947.

Alöç, Kâzım. “Türkiye’de Komünizm ve Irkçılık/İfşa Ediyorum”, *Yeni Gazete*, April 12, 1967-May 26, 1967.

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

Anadol, Zihni. *Truva Atında İlk Akşam*. 1988, Milliyet Yayınları.

*Ayın Tarihi*, No. 158, January 1-31, 1947.

Barkın, Rebi. “İşçi Sendikaları ve İşçilerin Teşkilatlandırılması Hakkında Rapor,” September 12, 1949. Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 490.01/1439.8.1.

Barkın, Rebi. “Türkiye’de İşçi Meselesi,” January 10, 1948. Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 490.01/1439.8.1.

*Belgelerle Türk-İş Tarihi-II (1963-1980)*. Ankara: Türk-İş 17. Olağan Genel Kurulu, 5-10 Aralık 1995.

Belli, Mihri. *İnsanlar Tanıdım, Mihri Belli’nin Anıları*. İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2002, 4. Baskı.

*1947 TKP Davası, Kırkılı Yıllar-4*, Edited by Rasih Nuri İleri. İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2003.

Boratav, Korkut. *Türkiye’de Devletçilik*. Ankara: Savaş Yayınları, 1982.

Boratav, Korkut. *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908-2002*. Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2004, 8. Baskı.

*Cumhuriyet*, June 1946-January 1947.

*Cumhuriyet Dergi*, April 9, 1995.

Doğan, Mustafa Görkem. "Governmental Involvement in the Establishment and Performance of the Trade Unions during the Transition to Multi Party Politics. The Case of the Worker's Bureau of the Republican People's Party" Master thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2003.

Dosdoğru, Sâbire, M. Hulusî Dosdoğru. *Sağlık Açısından Maden İşçilerimizin Dünyü, Bugünü*. İstanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1990.

*50 Yılda Çalışma Hayatımız*. Ankara: T. C. Çalışma Bakanlığı, 1973, pp. 11-12.

Erişçi, Lütfü. *Türkiyede İşçi Sınıfının Tarihi-Özet Olarak*. İstanbul: Kutulmuş Basımevi, 1951.

Fişek, A. Gürhan, Şerife Türcan Özsuca, Mehmet Ali Şuğle. *Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu Tarihi, 1946-1996*. Ankara: Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1997.

*Gerçek*, July 7-25, 1946.

Göldaş, İsmail. *Takrir-i Sükun Görüşmeleri*. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1997.

Gülmez, Mesut. "Bir Belge, Bir Yorum: 1909 Tatil-i Eşgal Yasası ve Grev", *Toplum ve Bilim* 12 (Winter 1980), pp. 50-64.

Gülmez, Mesut. *Meclislerde İşçi Sorunu ve Sendikal Haklar (1909-1961)*. Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi, 1995.

*Gün*, February 16-December 14, 1946.

Güngör, Fatih. "Amele Teali Cemiyeti", *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, Volume I, p. 40.

Güzel, Şehmus. "İkinci Dünya Savaşı Boyunca Emek ve Sermaye", *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si'ne İşçiler (1839-1950)*, ed. Donald Quateart-Eric Jan Zürcher. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998, pp. 197-225.

Güzel, Şehmus. "Sendikal Basında 'Sendika' Gazetesi Örneği", *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi (Yazılar-Belgeler)*. İstanbul: Sosyalist Yayınlar, 1993, pp. 288-301.



Güzel, Şehmus. “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e İşçi Hareketleri ve Grevler”, *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Volume III, pp.803-828.

Güzel, Şehmus. *Türkiye’de İşçi Hareketi 1908-1984*. İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996.

Güzel, Şehmus. “Türkiye’de İşçi Örgütlenmesi (1940-1950)” Assistant professorship thesis. Ankara University, 1982.

Irmak, Sadi. “Çalışma Bakanlığının Kuruluşu İle İlgili Olarak İlk Çalışma Bakanının Anıları”, *50 Yılda Çalışma Hayatımız*. Ankara: T. C. Çalışma Bakanlığı, 1973, pp. 1-9.

Işık, Yüksel. *Osmanlı’dan Günümüze İşçi Hareketinin Evrimi (1876-1974)*. Ankara: Öteki Yayınevi, 1995.

Işıklı, Alpaslan. “Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türk Sendikacılığı”, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Volume VII, pp. 1826-1838.

İhmalyan, Vartan. *Bir Yaşam Öyküsü*. İstanbul: Cem Yayınları, 1989.

İleri, Rasih Nuri. “1946 Sendikacılığı”. *Vatan*, January 26, 1978.

İleri, Rasih Nuri. *T.K.P. Gerçeği ve Bilimsellik Quo Vadis İbrahim Topçuoğlu?* İstanbul: Anadolu Yayınları, 1976.

*İş İstatistikleri*. Ankara: Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü, 1945.

*İşçi Haberleri*, April 24-December 11, 1953.

Karaca, Emin. “Aldatıcı Bir Özgürlük Ortamında İki Sosyalist Parti”, *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. VI, pp. 1930-1931.

Karaca, Emin. *Eski Tüfeklerin Sonbaharı*. İstanbul: Toplumsal Dönüşüm Yayınları, 1996.

Karpat, Kemal H. *Turkey’s Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959.

Koç, Yıldırım. *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı ve Sendikacılık Hareketi Tarihi*. İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2003, Genişletilmiş İkinci Basım.

Koçak, Cemil. “Siyasal Tarih (1923-1950)”, *Çağdaş Türkiye 1908-1980*, Vol. IV. İstanbul: Cem Yayınları, 1989.

Kosova, Zehra. *Ben İşçiyim*. Edited by Zihni T. Anadol. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996.

Kurdakul, Şükran. *Cezaevi'nden Babıali'ye Babıali'den TİP'e-Anılar*. İstanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2003.

Mahiroğulları, Adnan. Cumhuriyetten Günümüze Türkiye'de İşçi Sendikacılığı (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2005), p. 60.

Makal, Ahmet. *Türkiye'de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1946-1963*. İstanbul: İmge Kitabevi, 2002.

Makal, Ahmet. *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946*. Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999.

Nacar, Can. "Working Class in Turkey During the World War II Period: Between Social Policies and Everyday Experiences" Master thesis. Boğaziçi University, 2004.

Ökçün, Gündüz. *Osmanlı Sanayii 1913, 1915 Yılları Sanayi İstatistiki-Tarihi* İstatistikler Dizisi Volume IV. Ankara: T. C. Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1997.

Ökçün, Gündüz. *Tatil'i Eşgal Kanunu, 1909, Belgeler-Yorumlar*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1982.

Özçelik, Mustafa. *Tütünçülerin Tarihi*. İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2003.

Pamuk, Şevket. *500 Years of Prices and Wages in İstanbul and Other Cities*. Ankara: State Institute of Statistics Prime Ministry Republic of Turkey, 2000.

Parla, Taha. *Kemalist Tek Parti İdeolojisi ve CHP'nin Altı Ok'u, Türkiye'de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynakları*, Vol. 3. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1995, İkinci Baskı.

Pekin, Faruk. *Demokrasi, Sendika Özgürlüğü ve Sosyal Haklar*. İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1985.

Sayılğan, Aclan. *Solun 94 Yılı (1871-1965)*. Ankara: Mars Matbaası, 1968.

Selek, Sabahattin. "Bursa'da İşçi Durumu ve Partimiz," March 10, 1950. Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 490.01.1442.15.1.

*Sendika*, August 31-December 14, 1946.

Sertel, Zekeriya. *Hatırladıklarım*. İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

*SES*, October 16-December 11, 1946.

Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, Volume VI.

Sülker, Kemal. “1946’da 100 Kadar Sendika Kuruluyor“, *Bilim ve Sanat*, October 1982, No. 22, pp. 20-23.

Sülker, Kemal. “Cumhuriyet Döneminde İşçi Hareketleri“, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. VII, p. 1844.

Sülker, Kemal. *Türkiye’de Sendikacılık*. İstanbul: n. p., 1955, Sendika Kültürü Serisi No. 1.

Sülker, Kemal. *Türkiye Sendikacılık Tarihi I*. İstanbul: Bilim Kitabevi Yayınları, 1987.

Şişmanov, Dimitir. *Türkiye İşçi ve Sosyalist Hareketi*. İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1990, Second Edition.

Tanör, Bülent. *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri*. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005, 13. Baskı.

Tevetoğlu, Fethi. *Türkiye’de Sosyalist ve Komünist Faaliyetler (1910-1960)*. Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1967.

Topçuoğlu, İbrahim. *Neden 2 Sosyalist Partisi (1946): T.K.P. Kuruluşu ve Mücadelesinin Tarihi (1914-1960)*. Vol. I. İstanbul: Eser Matbaası, 1976.

Topçuoğlu, İbrahim. *Neden 2 Sosyalist Partisi (1946): T.K.P. Kuruluşu ve Mücadelesinin Tarihi (1914-1960)*. Vol. II. İstanbul: Eser Matbaası, 1976.

Topçuoğlu, İbrahim. *Neden 2 Sosyalist Partisi (1946): T.K.P. Kuruluşu ve Mücadelesinin Tarihi (1914-1960)*. Vol. III. İstanbul: 1977, Üçler Matbaası.

Topçuoğlu, İbrahim. *Türkiye’de İlk Sendika Sarıkışla’da 1932*. İstanbul: Öncü Kitabevi, 1975.

Toprak, Zafer. “1909 Tatil-i Eşgal Kanunu Üzerine”, *Toplum ve Bilim* 13, (Spring 1981), pp. 141-156.

Toprak, Zafer. “1946 Sendikacılığı, Sendika Gazetesi, İşçi Sendikaları Birlikleri ve İşçi Kulüpleri”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, July 1996, No. 31, pp. 19-29.

Toprak, Zafer. “Şirket-i Hayriye Amele Cemiyeti ve 1925 Grevi”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 30, (June 1996), p. 6-14.

Tunaya, Tarık Zafer. *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler 1859-1952*. İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1995, Second Edition, same press, First Edition: İstanbul: 1952.

Tunçay, Mete. *1923 Amele Birliği*. İstanbul: BDS, 1989.

Tunay, Mete. *T. C.'nde Tek-Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması (1923-1931)*. İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1992.

Tunay, Mete. “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Sosyalizm (1960’a Kadar)”, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Volume VII, pp. 1950-1954.

*Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi: Ana Nizamname ve Faaliyet Programı*. (İstanbul: F-K Basımevi, 1946)

*Türk Sözü*, July-December, 1946.

*Türkiye’de Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Gelişmenin 50 Yılı*. Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Basımevi, 1973.

*Ulus*, June 1946-January 1947.

Varlık, Bülent. “İzmir İşçi ve Esnaf Kurumları Birliği”, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, Volume II, p. 175-176.

Varlık, Levent. “Türkiye’de Çıkarılan İlk İş Yasası Üzerine Görüşler”, *Toplum ve Bilim 13* (Spring 1981), pp. 107-134.

*Vedat Türkali ile GÜVEN üzerine-Desantralizasyon/Separat Kararları Belgeleri*. İstanbul, TÜSTAV, 2000.

*Vatan*, September 1946-January, 1947.

*Yeni Adana*, July-December 1946.

*Yeni Gazete*, April 12-May 26, 1967.

*Yeni Sabah*, June-December, 1946.

Zaim, Sabahattin. *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi ve Ücretler*. İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Neşriyatından, 1956.

Zürcher, Erik Jan. *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*. Ankara: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 1992.

Zürcher, Erik Jan. *Turkey: A Modern History*. London:I. B. Tauris, 2004, New Edition.