

# THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN TURKEY<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Although the history of the trade union organisations in Turkey goes back to the Ottoman Empire, it was only in the post-WW II period that the number of permanent wage- and salary-earners increased to a great extent, and the legislative framework for trade union activity was promulgated. Employees employed under the status of "worker" (mainly but not exclusively blue-collar workers) enjoyed the right to establish trade unions from 1946 onwards, but the right to strike was prohibited until 1961.

In the 1963-1980 period, the workers exercised the rights to form trade unions, to bargain collectively and to strike quite effectively, supplementing these rights with political rights.

The public servants, the majority of which were white-collar employees, were deprived of the rights to bargain collectively and to strike. They could form trade unions in the 1965-1971 period. They were allowed to form associations other than trade unions in the 1971-1980 period.

During a period of industrialisation through import substitution, economic growth, relatively low levels of unemployment and Cold War, organised workers and especially workers in the public sector enjoyed considerable improvements in their living and working conditions.

## Trade Unions Before the 12 September 1980 Military Coup

Before 12 September 1980, there were four main trade union national centres (Confederations) of "workers": TÜRK-İŞ (Confederation of Trade Unions of Turkey), DİSK (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey), HAK-İŞ (Confederation of Real Trade Unions of Turkey), MİSK (Confederation of Nationalist Trade Unions).

Politically, TÜRK-İŞ was heterogeneous, comprising the whole range of the political spectrum. It pursued what was called a "supra-party policy." Although it occasionally confronted the governments, its main line did not come into conflict with the policies of the Turkish state.

DİSK was under socialist leadership, though the struggle between different sections or factions of the socialist left caused serious internal problems.

HAK-İŞ had close ties with the National Salvation Party and tried to develop an Islamic trade union theory and practice, which proved to be in vain.

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**MİSK acted as the workers' branch of the Nationalist Movement Party and advocated a corporatist trade union movement, symbolised by the motto "single trade unions and compulsory trade union membership."**

## **12 September 1980 and After: New Conditions and Problems**

**The 24 January 1980 austerity program and the ensuing military coup of 12 September 1980 constitute a turning point in the history of the trade union movement in Turkey.**

**The activities of DİSK, HAK-İŞ and MİSK were suspended; TÜRK-İŞ's activities were severely restricted. HAK-İŞ was permitted to operate on 20 February 1981 and MİSK on 23 May 1984. MİSK was unsuccessful in its campaigns and was dissolved in 1988. On the other hand, 1955 persons holding leadership posts at DİSK and affiliated unions were taken in custody and tried at the military court in İstanbul. 261 of these trade unionists were convicted to terms in prison ranging from 5 years 6 months 20 days to 15 years 8 months in 1986. However, the Military Supreme Court of Appeals acquitted the accused and permitted the re-activation of DİSK and affiliated unions on 1991, following the repeal of Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code in April 1991.**

**The TÜRK-İŞ leadership supported the military coup. The Secretary General of TÜRK-İŞ, Sadık Şide, served as the Minister of Social Security, which led to the suspension of TÜRK-İŞ from the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) membership for some time. Although it criticised the text during the initial phase of its discussion, during the referendum for the 1982 Constitution, TÜRK-İŞ did not oppose the draft text and was later severely criticised for its seemingly neutral attitude, which was generally interpreted as support for the Constitution.**

**However, in spite of this attitude, the activities of some trade unions affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ were suspended either by the martial law authorities or by military courts and some leaders were prosecuted. During the period until the end of 1983, all kinds of trade union activities were either prohibited or closely scrutinised by the security forces. All strikes were forbidden. Collective negotiations were replaced by the decisions of the government-dominated Supreme Board of Arbitrators, which repealed much of the gains of the previous two decades.**

**The 1982 Constitution and the Act No. 2821 concerning Trade Unions and Act No. 2822 concerning Collective Agreements, Strikes and Lock-Outs (promulgated by the five-member National Security Council, without even being debated in the appointed Advisory Assembly) violated blatantly the basic trade union rights and freedoms.**

**Trade union activity was officially permitted at the beginning of 1984; but the severe restrictions of the legislation of the military period, coupled with the still existing martial law made it impossible for trade unions to exercise even the rights in the legislation in force. Although there was collective negotiations, it was not free by any standards.**

**Under these circumstances, the credibility of the trade union movement was severely injured in the eyes of the membership. The trade union movement, which had cherished hopes of revival of free trade unionism as soon as a civilian government came to power, soon faced disappointment.**

**The Motherland Party in power continued the anti-labour policies even more vigorously. The trade union movement soon discovered that the Motherland Party had no intentions of democratising the current legislation. On the contrary, new legislation that further deteriorated the situation for the trade unions was promulgated.**

The implementation of the austerity program of 24 January 1980 during these years had changed the general attitude of conservative parties concerning the trade union movement.

Whereas during periods of economic growth the conservative parties considered trade unionism as the legitimate expression of the free will of workers and respected basic trade union rights of freedoms, following the crisis of the late 1970s, there was a radical change of this attitude, not only in Turkey, but also in the industrialised countries as well.

Employers began to pursue anti-labour policies, to question the legitimacy of the trade unions, to resort to union-busting practices, to dismantle the welfare state, to avoid protective labour legislation. The opportunities created by the innovations in communications and transportation technology enabled a new international division of labour under the control and in line with the interests of transnational companies, which increased their power even further during the last two decades.

The manufacturing industry was relocated, so that by the mid-1990s, the number of manufacturing industry workers in the developing world exceeded the number in the industrialised world. The workshop of the world was no longer what it had been for the last 200 years. The increase in the structural unemployment weakened the trade union movement and created conditions for the cheaper sale and purchase of labour-power. All these global developments were reflected in Turkey, as well.

The industrial relations system and the trade unions which had been constructed under conditions of economic growth, relatively low levels of unemployment, industrialisation through import substitution producing mainly for the domestic market and Cold War had to go through a major metamorphosis under these new developments.

The industrial relations system was restructured in Turkey during the military rule, but it took about 6-7 years until the workers and the trade unions could grasp the radical changes that had taken place and start to adapt to the new circumstances. This change started in 1986-1987 and began to yield results in 1989.

Any attempt to understand and evaluate the performance of the trade union movement in Turkey without taking into consideration this radical change in the environment and the belated response of the workers and trade unions is to be in vain.

There was a rapid impoverishment of the wage- and salary-earners, without any discrimination as to branches of industry, occupation, political affiliation, ethnic origin or creed. The inability of the workers and trade unions to adapt to the new environment destroyed the workers' confidence in the trade unions and in their own strength. Individualistic attempts to solve increasing problems were on the increase.

The trade unions, which until 1980 had been quite successful in increasing the purchasing power of their members and improving their living and working conditions considerably, without any struggle that required the active participation of the members, now proved to be impotent. A number of trade unions were not even successful in mobilising their members to go on strike. Some strike ballots ended in defeat. In some strikes, some of the workers did not join in and continued to work, without meeting with serious sanctions from the trade unions. Real wages began to decline, with negotiated increases in wage rates far below the going rates of inflation.

The index of average real gross wages of the workers employed by the General Directorate of Highways is a quite reliable indicator of the picture in the public sector.

YOL-İŞ, the trade union representing the workers in the General Directorate of Highways, had concluded a collective agreement in early August 1980, coming into force on 1 March 1980. It was a successful agreement and the workers did not feel the adverse economic effects of the military coup until about 2 years later. The wage increases as stipulated by this collective agreement as of 1 March 1981 increased the real wages even higher. However, an almost continuous decline in real gross wages continued until February 1989, when the level of real gross wages was only 38 percent of the March 1980 level. The collective negotiations for the 1989 round continued during spring. Thus the real average gross wages declined even further. When the new collective agreement was concluded to be valid in the 1 March 1989 - 28 February 1991 period, wages were increased retroactively, as of 1 March 1989, increasing the real wage level to 68. Following vacillations, the collective agreement concluded for the 1 March 1991 - 28 February 1993 period increased the real wage level to 185, as of 1 March 1991. Further real increases were secured in the following 3 years and the workers could preserve the real wage level in 1994 in spite of the 5 April 1994 austerity program, thanks to the collective agreement with wage indexation. However, from 1995 onwards, with wage indexation cancelled, real average gross wages declined to about the March 1980 level in two years.

Index of Average Real Daily Gross Wages of General Directorate of Highways Workers (1980 March : 100) <sup>2</sup>

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
January	....	77	98	78	68	56	53	50	47	43	73	72	149	172	187	169	125
February	....	76	93	78	66	55	52	49	45	38	70	68	141	165	176	160	120
March	100	128	96	85	82	69	63	59	50	68	88	185	199	228	231	178	134
April	98	126	94	84	78	68	63	57	47	64	83	174	192	218	185	168	126
May	95	123	93	82	74	67	62	55	46	62	81	169	190	208	169	162	120
June	93	118	91	81	70	67	60	55	45	61	79	164	189	205	167	159	117
July	91	116	91	80	69	66	59	54	45	59	80	161	187	195	164	155	115
August	91	114	92	80	67	65	59	54	43	57	78	155	180	190	161	149	110
September	87	107	89	77	66	62	57	62	48	86	86	190	209	230	227	160	124
October	83	105	86	74	63	58	53	59	45	80	81	178	195	215	207	148	116
November	81	102	84	72	61	55	52	55	43	77	77	169	186	202	192	141	111
December	80	101	82	70	59	55	51	50	42	76	76	162	181	195	180	136	107

## Adaptation to New Conditions: New Mentality and New Forms of Struggle

The rapid impoverishment gradually led to the opposition of the workers and the trade unions. The NETAŞ strike of late 1986 was a turning point. In 1987 and 1988, strikes increased. In retrospect, these years seem as the warming-up period of the labour movement which had been dormant since 1980.

Then, with the defeat of the Motherland Party in the local elections in March 1989, what is called the "spring actions" started. For the first time in the history of Turkey, the whole country was shaken and shocked by the mass demonstrations and protests of the public sector workers, who were well known for their docility.

In the 1989-1993 period, the trade unions were successful in regaining the confidence of the membership, mobilising them for legitimate mass actions and increasing the purchasing power of the wages of the organised sections of the workforce considerably.

<sup>2</sup> 1980-1994: YOL-İŞ, 5. Olağan Genel Kurul Çalışma Raporu, Ankara, 1995, p.333.

The problems which the workers faced during the 1984-1988 period led to a radical change of attitude, which was gradually reflected in the trade union policies. With a time lag, the workers and the trade unions adapted to the structural change in the basis on which the industrial relations system was constructed and in the industrial relations system.

The purchasing power of wages was increased to above pre-coup levels. Much of the restrictive legislation of the military period was de facto rendered ineffective when violated by hundreds of thousands of workers simultaneously.

The average real gross wage data concerning the workers employed by the General Directorate of Highways was given above. The data of the İstanbul Chamber of Industry on the distribution of value-added in the largest 500 industrial establishments in Turkey are also indicative of this change.

In the largest 500 industrial establishments of Turkey, the share of the wages and salaries in value-added was 52.6 percent in 1982, 33.5 percent in 1988 and a peak figure of 82.3 percent in 1991. Then the decline began. It became 60.7 percent in 1994 and 49.7 percent in 1995.

The fluctuation of the share of wages and salaries in the private sector was less. It was 42.5 percent in 1982, 29.5 percent in 1987 and again a peak figure of 55.8 percent in 1991.

The changes in the share of wages and salaries in the public sector, however, was spectacular. Being 74.9 percent in 1983, it rapidly declined to 35.4 percent in 1988, suddenly shooting up to 55.5 percent in 1989, 76.0 percent in 1990 and 130.4 percent in 1991. From this peak figure, it declined to 105.2 percent in 1993. The decline was more rapid following the 5 April austerity program. It was down to 76 percent in 1995 and continued to fall in 1996. The repercussions of the austerity program on wages and salaries were more severe in the public sector.

Distribution of Value-Added in the Largest 500 Industrial Establishments (%) <sup>3</sup>

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
<b>All 500 Industrial Establishments</b>														
Wages and Salaries	52.6	55.5	46.4	40.4	37.9	34.4	33.5	46.6	59.9	82.3	75.0	68.8	60.7	49.7
Interest	27.6	28.9	22.2	24.6	37.9	38.2	43.9	35.0	30.5	44.0	39.7	36.8	37.7	29.8
Rent	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7
Profit	19.4	15.2	31.0	34.5	23.7	27.0	22.3	18.0	9.2	-27.1	-15.3	-6.2	0.9	19.8
<b>Private Industrial Establishments</b>														
Wages and Salaries	42.5	42.7	38.2	39.4	32.6	29.5	31.8	39.1	48.5	55.8	50.3	48.0	42.2	39.0
Interest	31.0	29.9	33.1	36.2	45.1	35.1	38.4	30.4	24.8	30.7	25.4	24.8	28.1	29.6
Rent	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.8	0.8	1.0	0.9
Profit	26.1	26.9	28.0	23.7	21.6	34.9	29.3	30.0	26.2	12.5	23.5	26.4	28.7	30.5
<b>Public Industrial Establishments</b>														
Wages and Salaries	68.4	74.9	57.4	41.3	44.3	40.5	35.4	55.5	76.0	130.4	117.5	105.2	91.4	76.0
Interest	23.0	27.5	7.4	14.6	29.4	41.9	50.1	40.4	38.4	68.4	64.2	57.7	53.6	30.4
Rent	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2
Profit	10.4	-2.6	35.1	43.9	26.1	17.4	14.3	3.9	-14.7	-99.2	-82.0	-63.2	-45.3	-6.6

The indices of real labour cost per hour in the private sector of the Confederation of Employers' Associations exhibit a similar trend. The data cover only about 300 thousand employees in the largest manufacturing establishments in Turkey and, thus, is not representative of the whole working population. There are also other

<sup>3</sup> İstanbul Chamber of Industry, İstanbul Sanayi Odası Dergisi, Türkiye'nin 500 Büyük Sanayi Kuruluşu Özel Sayı, September 1996, İstanbul, 1996, p.81.

controversial issues as to the components of the "labour cost." However, as a time series, it is quite reliable.

There is a continuous decline in real labour costs from 1981 onwards until 1986. Then, following the strikes in the private sector in 1987, the mass industrial actions from 1989 onwards and the mass strikes of 1990 and 1991, a peak figure equal to twice the level in 1980 is reached in three consecutive years (1991-1993). Then the decline begins, bringing real labour cost index down to 128.2 in 1995.

#### Average Labour Cost/Hour in the Private Sector <sup>4</sup>

Years	Total Labour Cost/Hour (TL,Nominal)	Index of Real Labour Cost/Hour
1980	181.25	100.0
1981	263.18	106.3
1982	325.40	100.5
1983	397.70	93.4
1984	558.64	88.5
1985	808.32	88.3
1986	1,054.86	85.6
1987	1,622.12	94.8
1988	2,680.48	89.3
1989	5,897.00	115.9
1990	11,082.00	135.9
1991	27,132.00	200.4
1992	45,595.00	198.0
1993	77,018.00	201.3
1994	124,806.00	158.2
1995	195,825.00	128.2

The changes which led to a large increase in real wages can be enumerated as follows:

**There was a considerable increase in the consciousness of workers for united action as the way out of the problems.**

Previously the workers were divided along political, ethnic, religious, occupational and similar lines. However, the impoverishment experienced during the 1982-1988 period did not differentiate between the workers. The real wages of all sections of the working population decreased rapidly. All workers were deprived of and lost similar rights and freedoms.

This common experience strengthened the tendency among the workers for joint actions. As has been repeatedly stressed in trade union meetings, class fraternity dominated over political fraternity, ethnic fraternity and religious fraternity. This change enabled the realisation of joint mass actions of people who in the past had confronted each other as political rivals in the same workplaces.

**In Turkey, political party affiliation or sympathy had always been given priority over trade union affiliation in the past; this was reversed.**

Before 1980, it would have been impossible to mobilise the sympathisers of the political party in power against anti-labour actions of the government. However, due to the disappointments of the workers with their expectations of the political parties, starting with 1987 but especially from 1989 onwards, trade union affiliation began to dominate over political affiliation for the increasing portion of the working people.

<sup>4</sup> TİSK, 1995 Çalışma İstatistikleri ve İşgücü Maliyeti, "1995 Yılı Çalışma İstatistikleri ve İşgücü Maliyeti'nin TİSK Araştırma Servisince Değerlendirilmesi," Publ.No.161, Ankara, 1996, p.3.

Thus, during the spring wave of protest against the Motherland Party in power, workers who had voted or even actively propagated for this Party during elections, protested it together with other workers. In 1995, when the True Path Party and People's Republican Party were protested due to their adverse attitude during the collective negotiations of public sector workers, the sympathisers of both of these Parties were actively involved in the protest actions against the government and specific Parties in question.

There was a considerable increase in the solidarity among the working people. Workers willingly participated in fund-raising activities for strikers.

Since the right to strike was severely curtailed under the legislation in force, the workers resorted to all forms of legitimate mass actions, the legality of which was quite frequently dubious and questioned.

The most effective form of these actions was the mass sick-outs, in which all workers requested to be transferred to the hospitals for medical examination and marched to the hospital in mass, demonstrating on the way. Work slow-downs, work-to-the-rule, late reporting for work, sit-down strikes, workplace occupations and various other forms of resistance and opposition were used to substitute for the rights banned or restricted in the current legislation.

Sometimes the security forces were called in to intervene. Sometimes the employers resorted to litigation. However, in the majority of cases, the mass character of these actions prevented any retaliation and these actions continued almost with impunity.

The most important mass actions during the 1989-1993 period were the general strike of TÜRK-İŞ on 3 January 1991 and the miners' march from Zonguldak to Mengen on 4-8 January 1991. In 1989, the industrial actions were initiated at the workplace level and at the trade union branch level and then generalised. Starting with 1991 onwards, these actions became more organised. Almost all of the important industrial actions, rallies and demonstrations were organised by TÜRK-İŞ.

In spite of the several limitations on the right to strike under the legislation in force, the number of strikers and of workdays in strike almost doubled the record figure in the pre-coup period.

Until 12 September 1980, the highest number of strikers in one year was in 1980: 84,832 workers had gone on strike. The number of workdays in strikes was 1,303,253. In 1990, the number of strikers was 166,306 and the number of workdays in strikes was 3,466,550. In 1991, the respective figures were 164,968 and 3,809,354. Thus, the trade unions exercised the severely restricted right to strike quite effectively.

The support of the public and of the media was an important factor in the successful conclusion of the collective negotiations.

The workers used their voting power, if not their real political power, to their own benefit.

In the local elections in March 1989, some of the workers who had voted for the Motherland Party changed their choice and the Motherland Party could get only 21 percent of the total votes cast. The Motherland Party in the spring of 1991, with a prospective general election, was obliged to change her attitude with respect to the workers' demands.

In the public sector, the 1989 round of collective negotiations turned the tide backward. For the first time during almost the last decade, the decline in the real wages was reversed. In the 1991 round of collective negotiations, the losses in purchasing power of wages during the last decade were recovered. However, other rights and freedoms in the collective agreements that had been cancelled by the Supreme Board of Arbitration in the 1980-1993 period could not be re-gained.

### **Counter Offensive: New Austerity Program and New Problems**

The Turkish economy was in a deep crisis in 1993. The Government started on 5 April 1994 a new austerity and stabilisation program. The main guidelines of this program had been publicised before the press conference of Prime Minister Tansu Çiller on 5 April.

On the same day, at 12:30, Bayram Meral, the President of TÜRK-İŞ also had a press conference. Meral opposed categorically this austerity program and accused it as being a program of the IMF and the World Bank. His comments were as follows:

"The stated stabilisation program comprises the proposals of the IMF and the World Bank, which are the brains and the spokespersons of international monopoly capital... Under such circumstances, there are two alternatives. One of the alternatives is to accept this stabilisation program silently and try to diminish a bit the harm it will cause for us through various compromises. The second alternative is to struggle, mobilising our legitimate and democratic power, to make the specific circles who are responsible for this crisis to bear the burden of the crisis. We choose the second alternative."

The Democracy Platform met on the afternoon of 5 April 1994. In its declaration, the following were stated:

"We shall not accept these measures silently... As the citizens of this country, we are determined to struggle. We consider the country-wide opposition to this program to be legitimate and support it. We shall defend our workplaces. We shall organise the reactions against these attacks which will lead to unemployment and the impoverishment of the working people."

The Presidential Council of TÜRK-İŞ, after its meeting on 6 April 1994, evaluated the stabilisation program as follows and called upon all democratic mass organisations to act in close co-operation to counter this offensive and all trade unionists and workers to resign from the two partners of the Coalition Government:

"The Presidential Council of TÜRK-İŞ is in total opposition to the Stabilisation Program, accepted by the DYP-SHP Coalition Government and made public on 5 April 1994, from the perspective of its fundamental mentality, its mode of preparation, objectives and envisaged implementation."

Those who reacted first were the workers of public enterprises which were to be privatised under this program.

The Zonguldak coal mines were either to be privatised or closed down until the end of 1994. Genel Maden-İş organised a large demonstration on 9 April 1994 in Zonguldak to protest the privatisation and liquidation of public enterprises. Petlas, a tire company in Kırşehir, was to be privatised. Kırşehir had the largest rally in its history on 16 April 1994 and the workers of Petlas marched until Kırıkkale. Petrol-İş organised another rally in Yarımca to protest the privatisation plans of Petkim. The Sümerbank Beykoz Shoe Factory workers had a demonstration in Beykoz. TÜRK-İŞ

organised a rally in Ankara on 24 April 1994, to protest inflation and unemployment, its first demonstration in Ankara since 1969.

The austerity program of 5 April proved to be a turning point in the life of the working people in Turkey. New problems arose. Some issues that up to then not been of significant importance, turned into serious problems.

Some of these were as follows:

**Acceleration of privatisation and deregulation:** The trade union movement, as a whole, advocates the social state and considers the state economic enterprises and the public sector in general, the basic instrument for the realisation of this basic objective of the Republic of Turkey. The privatisation especially of health and education has adversely affected the life standards of the working people. Although there are varying opinions as to the sale of public economic enterprises, there is unanimity concerning opposition to the privatisation of strategic enterprises, such as the Telecom, thermal power plants, etc. Privatisation has led to the dismissal of a large number of workers. In some cases, the main objective of the purchasers was to acquire valuable urban land through such transactions, and thus, the establishment has been liquidated, with the total labour-force being retrenched. Deregulation, on the other hand, together with a very lax implementation of the consumer protection legislation, has led to price rises and quality problems. Deregulation tendencies in the labour market has led to clandestine employment.

**Contracting-out and sub-contracting of services and products under public provision:** In the absence of job security, contracting-out leads to decrease of employment in the formal sector and increase of employment in the clandestine economy, which lead to de-unionisation and the de facto destruction or repeal of protective labour legislation. Although Turkey has ratified the ILO Convention No.158 concerning the termination of employment at the initiative of the employer, the national legislation has not yet been amended to bring it in harmony with this international instrument.

**Clandestine employment of domestic and foreign workers:** According to the official sources, the number of clandestinely employed workers has exceeded 4 million, about 33 percent of all wage- and salary-earners. Although there are strict restrictions and bans of the employment of foreigners in Turkey, the number of foreign workers working in the black economy has increased considerably since 1991.

**Increase of unemployment and underemployment:** The government policies concerning agriculture and animal husbandry, the terrorist activities of the PKK and the government's counter strategy, privatisation and the customs union with the European Union have all added to the army of unemployed. The family ties which previously provided support being slackened, the unemployed are being forced into a desperate situation, ready to work for any wage and under the worst conditions. With increased migration to the urban areas, a new stratum has been created: the new urban poor. These extremely poor people, devoid of a regular income, constitute the breeding ground for anti-democratic, anti-secular and anti-trade union extremist movements.

**Customs union and mass dismissals and deterioration of working conditions:** When the Turkish economy confronted the customs union with the European Union without much preparation, quite a number of small and medium-sized workplaces were either closed or had to reduce employment. The survivors, unable to borrow with very high rates of interest to improve productivity through new investments, resorted mainly to save on labour costs by ignoring protective labour legislation and basic safety

regulations, black employment and longer hours of work without overtime pay. All these developments undermined the trade union movement during the recent years.

**Suspension of activities of establishments for de-unionization purposes:** Some companies, using some loopholes in the legislation, resorted to the suspension of their activities to de-unionise the workers. Another similar practice was to divide and subdivide the establishment on paper into new companies, again with the objective of de-unionization.

**Flexibility:** On grounds of a unilateral concept of flexibility, the employers and the government try to repeal some of the gains of the trade unions and the workers, especially concerning the organisation of work in the workplace. These attempts undermine workers' rights and trade union activities.

**Precarious forms of employment on the increase:** Temporary employment, seasonal employment, employment for a specific duration, contract labour, part-time work, labour leasing and various other forms of atypical employment relationships were promoted and constituted important obstacles in trade union recruitment and activities.

**Homeworking and other forms of bogus self-employment:** Some employers, to evade the stipulations and sanctions of the protective labour legislation, actively promoted homeworking and other forms of bogus self-employment. Since, under the current legislation, this form of relationship is not considered a "contract of labour," these genuine workers cannot benefit from the labour legislation and cannot exercise their basic trade union rights. The development of trade union consciousness among these strata of the working population is also much more difficult.

**Child labour:** A problem of increasing importance is the intolerable and still deteriorating situation with respect to child labour. As a result of large scale migration to the urban areas of an unskilled adult labour-force, increased unemployment, the impoverishment of the working population, the increased cost of formal education and its decreasing monetary returns both in the short and long run have all led to an increase in the incidence of child labour, especially in the black economy. This cheap substitute for much of the adult labour-force is impossible to organise in trade unions and has a negative impact on average wages.

**Arrears in the payments to workers:** A problem of increasing frequency and importance is the arrears in the payment of wage increases, bonuses, overtime pay and other fringe benefits. This practice has become quite common in the public sector. For some unions, one of the most important tasks has been the apportionment and supply of funds for these payments.

**Compulsory retirement practices:** The governments, in order to decrease the employment in the public sector, began to resort to compulsory retirement practices following the increase in real wages. In 1987 and 1988, due to the very small difference between the wages and the pensions, almost all workers who acquired the right to a pension, would voluntarily retire. However, following the increase in real wages, this differential grew considerably and the tendency for voluntary retirement has been reversed. Then, the governments initiated compulsory retirement programs. Since the retired were not replaced by new recruits, the number of workers employed and members of trade unions declined considerably. This practice was terminated in 1996, but is today again on the agenda.

**Export processing zones:** In line with the new international division of labour, the demand to establish free trade zones was discussed in the late 1970s in Turkey. The military coup d'état turned the whole country into a free trade zone with respect to labour rights and freedoms. Thus, it was only in 1985 that the Act on Free Trade Zones was promulgated, which prohibited all strikes for a period of ten years following the establishment of the specific zone. Although export processing zones have not gained importance in Turkey, there is always the latent threat of dangerous practices experienced by trade unions and workers in other parts of the globe.

**Attempts to dismantle the social security system and to promote private pension schemes:** The Social Insurance Institution in Turkey has been one of the main pillars of the social security system. However, due to various reasons not to be discussed here, the Institution has been forced into almost bankruptcy. The governments, in their attempts to dismantle even the meagre aspects of the social state, exploited the funds of the SII in various ways, imposed an undemocratic management board after the military coup, mismanaged the Institute through widespread nepotism. In 1986 and 1993, attempts to appropriate and privatise the health institutions of the SII were in vain, thanks to the opposition of the trade unions and other democratic organisations. In 1988, a compulsory provident fund was established. What was envisaged was most probably the abolition of the social security system, to be replaced by individualist security systems. This could not be realised; but the SII was not rehabilitated. The trade union movement could not force a reform of the system in line with the interests of the insured. It was again on the defensive, trying to preserve the legislative rights with respect to the right to a pension and medical treatment. On the other hand, it was not willing to take serious action to prevent the continuous decline in the quality of the service provided and the level of real pensions.

**Anti-trade union propaganda:** Following the mass industrial actions and the increase in real wages, a systematic propaganda to isolate the unionised workers from the rest of the population has been carried out. Especially during the confrontation between TÜRK-İŞ and the Government, some persons holding responsible posts even tried to provoke the enmity of the public servants, pensioners, petty tradesmen and artisans and the small peasants to the trade unions. The trade unions are not represented in the management board of the Turkish Radio and Television Agency, pursuant to an enactment during the military regime that cancelled the previous representation. On the other hand, under Act No. 3984 of 13 April 1994, trade unions are not allowed to establish or be partners of television channels or radio stations. The preservation of this anti-democratic prohibition further aggravates the problems of the trade union movement.

**Post-Fordism Discussions:** Although there is considerable literature on the impact of new technologies on industrial relations, from the experience in Turkey, I am of the opinion that these have been considerably exaggerated. The attempts to imitate the Japanese industrial relation systems in Turkey have also had a very limited scope and effect.

### **Confrontations Under New Conditions**

The trade union movement in Turkey had to counter a number attacks during the recent years, leaving aside the further improvement of living and working conditions. Since the end of 1993, it has been on the defensive. Of the above stated problems, some have led to severe confrontations between the government and the trade unions.

**The first confrontation concerned the attempts of the government to refrain from paying the wage increases in the public sector as stipulated by collective agreements during the last quarter.**

This was an unprecedented action on the part of the government. After a march of about one thousand trade union officers to the Prime Ministry on 12 July 1994 to protest this attitude, on 20 July 1994 the first nation-wide general sit-down strike took place. The Democracy Platform actively supported this action of TÜRK-İŞ. The Government withdrew its proposal and paid the wage increases as had been provided for by the collective agreements in force, though with a delay.

**The second major confrontation concerned the government budget bill for 1995.**

The government, in the budget bill, proposed to curtail some basic rights of public sector workers. The status of tens of thousands of workers were to be changed to "civil servant," their wages were to be frozen until salaries of civil servants of similar position would reach them; they were to be deprived of the rights to bargain collectively and to strike.

The payment of 52 days wages a year as bonus to public sector workers under Act No. 6772 were to be cancelled. The duration of work for temporary workers was to be limited to three months a year, thus depriving them of basic social security benefits.

On 26 November 1994, about 100 thousand workers marched to the Mausoleum of Atatürk and then to the Parliament. It was the second march to the Parliament in the history of the trade union movement. The bill was amended and these provisions were cancelled. Thus, this march became the first incident in which the trade unions could force the government, through demonstrations, to withdraw an anti-labour bill.

**The third major confrontation concerned the social security reform program of the government in April 1995.**

In April 1995, a bill to amend the Social Insurance Act was submitted by the Council of Ministers to the Parliament for debate. The bill envisaged the severe curtailment of the right to retirement and other social security rights. TÜRK-İŞ organised a large demonstration in İzmir on 30 April 1995 and in Rize on 21 May 1995 and threatened with new rallies and other forms of industrial actions in other parts of the country, in case the bill was debated in the Parliament. The bill was withdrawn.

**The fourth major confrontation concerned the collective negotiations of about 600 thousand public sector workers.**

There was wage indexation in public sector collective agreements since 1989. In 1995, TÜRK-İŞ, on behalf of the affiliated unions within the scope of this round of collective negotiations, requested wage increases to compensate for the loss of purchasing power during the previous 6-month period, the last quarter of the previous collective agreement. This meant a 40.0 percent increase of wages for about half of the workers and about 52.2 percent for the remaining half.

The Government proposed an annual increase of only 5,4 percent on 10 July 1995. TÜRK-İŞ responded by demonstrations. The largest of these demonstrations took place in Ankara on 5 August 1995, "Respect for Labour March and Rally." On 8 August, there was a decision to occupy the workplaces overnight.

Then, following other minor actions, legal strikes began on 8 September and the following weeks, supplemented by various other industrial actions of workers that were outside the scope of strikes.

As a result of this confrontation, the CHP withdrew from the government. The minority government formed by Tansu Çiller had the vote of confidence in Parliament on 15 October 1995. More than 100 thousand workers from all over the country came to Ankara, overcoming various obstacles and sometimes barricades of the security forces. DSP openly declared a vote of non-confidence if the dispute was not settled. The vote of confidence was a failure for Tansu Çiller.

The strikes, which were the largest in the history of Turkey, ended on 27 October 1995. The workers were forced to accept an agreement which would lead to a loss of about 45 percent of their purchasing power in the 1994-1996 period, without taking into consideration the last 6-month period of the term.

The fifth major confrontation concerned the compulsory provident fund scheme in practice since April 1988.

All wage- and salary-earners in the public sector and in the private sector are within the scope of this scheme, except for those in private sector enterprises employing less than 10 employees. Under this scheme, the employee pays 2 percent of his/her gross wages and the employers contributes the sum equal to 3 percent of the wages of the employee. The fund is under the direct and total control of the government.

In 1996, the governments tried to abolish this system, without specifying the exact dates of the payment of the accumulated savings. The trade unions, stating that the 3 percent contribution of the employers was actually a part of the total labour cost, requested its addition to the wages in case of the liquidation of the scheme and demanded the payment of the accumulated sum in a period of 3 months. Some rallies and demonstrations were organised in various parts of the country.

This issue was of specific importance, because it brought together all of the public servants and the majority of the workers, without distinction to whether they are union members or not. The trade unions took advantage of this situation to rally large masses of the working people behind them and to counter the attempts of the government to isolate the trade unions from the other sections of the population.

An act was enacted on 28 August 1996, with provisions which directly contravened the demands of the trade union movement. Before large demonstrations and other industrial actions, TÜRK-İŞ contacted Süleyman Demirel, the President of the Republic and S.Demirel, in September, sent the mentioned Act back to the Parliament for re-debate. It has been kept pending ever since.

The sixth major set of demonstrations and industrial actions was of a political nature.

Following the Susurluk accident in November 1996, the attempts of various gangs and armed tribes, closely connected with drugs and arms smuggling, to use the state to their own benefit was disclosed. On the other hand, the attempts of some illegal religious sects to get hold of the state power, to destroy secularism and to rehabilitate a state based on religion, thus changing the basic characteristics of the Republic of Turkey, became evident. TÜRK-İŞ organised a march and rally on 5 January 1997, with the participation of about 200 thousand people. The trade unions tried to rally the large majority of the population for the preservation of the unity and independence of the Republic of Turkey, for the defence of human rights and the democratic and secular social state of law.

These important confrontations and some other disputes led in the recent years to the greatest industrial actions of workers in the history of Turkey.

The governments, rather than urging the functioning of tripartite bodies such as the Economic and Social Council, has preferred to act unilaterally, creating confrontations between the trade union movement and the Government. However, the trade unions, on the whole, have been successful in preserving the legislative gains of the past.

On the other hand, the trade unions could not succeed in keeping their purchasing power intact or democratising the anti-democratic remnants of the military rule period in the legislation in general and in labour legislation in particular. However, through mass actions, they prevented the implementation of various sanctions in case of some industrial actions, whose legality are controversial.

### **Trade Union Rights and Freedoms in Turkey and Ratified ILO Conventions**

The basic legislation concerning trade unions are the 1982 Constitution, Act No.2821 concerning Trade Unions, Act No.2822 concerning Collective Labour Agreements, Strikes and Lock-Outs, the Labour Act No.1475. These acts and many provisions in other acts, regulations and decrees violate basic trade union rights and freedoms.

Turkey has ratified 36 ILO Conventions. However, the governments in Turkey are continuously being criticised by the ILO for violating basic trade union and workers' rights.

The ILO supervisory bodies have seriously criticised the Governments of Turkey for having violated, above all, Convention No.87 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, Convention No.94 concerning Labour Clauses in Public Contracts, Convention No.98 concerning the Application of the Principles of the Right to Organise and to Bargain Collectively, Convention No.111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, Convention No.151 concerning Protection of the Right to Organise and Procedures for Determining Conditions of Employment in the Public Services and Convention No.158 concerning Termination of Employment at the Initiative of the Employer.

The reports of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations to the International Labour Conferences each year, the reports of the Committee on the Application of Standards of the International Labour Conferences and the reports of the Committee on Freedom of Association include many comments, interventions and resolutions on the violation of basic trade union rights by the Governments of Turkey.

Turkey was awarded a special paragraph in the final report of the International Labour Conference Committee on the Application of Standards in 1983 for having violated Convention Nos.98 and 111 and in 1989 for having violated Convention No.111.

The most comprehensive criticism of the labour legislation in Turkey by the ILO supervisory bodies is the Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association in 1996 concerning the representation made by TÜRK-İŞ under Article 24 of the ILO Constitution against the Government of Turkey, alleging violation of Convention No.87<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> ILO, Reports of the Committee on Freedom of Association, "Cases Nos.1810 and 1830: Representation Made by the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (TÜRK-İŞ) under Article 24 of the ILO Constitution Alleging Non-Observance by Turkey of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention," **Official Bulletin**, Vol.LXXIX, Series B, No.1, s. 146-165.

## **Trade Unions in Turkey in 1997.**

Under Act No.2821 concerning Trade Unions, the establishment of workplace, regional or occupational unions, federations of unions in the same branch of industry and councils of unions in a specific region are forbidden. Trade unions can only be established to function at the national level in a specific branch of industry. The branches of industry are specified in the Act. There are 28 branches of industry. Trade unions active in various branches of industry may establish confederations of trade unions.

Under the pertinent Act, application for trade union membership is to be registered by a public notary and after this application has been accepted, a copy of this membership registration form is to be submitted by the trade union to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Thus, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, at least theoretically, has a complete list of trade union members.

However, since the changes of employment, dismissal, retirement, death and resignation from trade union membership are not registered with the same care, the statistics of the Ministry published twice annually increasingly exaggerate the trade union membership.

While the number of dues-paying membership of "workers' trade unions" has been on the decrease due to various practices during the recent years, the official data of the Ministry claim increases and a union density of 66 percent in January 1997, which is totally groundless.

According to the data of the Ministry, the number of workers in Turkey was only 4,111,200. However, according to the most reliable source, the population census of 1990, there were in Turkey 8,990,727 wage- and salary- earners. Of this figure, about 2 million are employed in the status of public servant or contract personnel. Of the remaining 7 million having the rights to exercise basic trade union rights under the Acts No. 2821 and 2822, only about 1.3 - 1.4 million are unionised.

According to the official figures of the Ministry, however, there were in January 1997 2.7 million trade union members in Turkey. Although there are variations as to the branches of industry and trade unions, taking half of the stated figures in the official statistics would very roughly reflect the real dues-paying membership. Of this total figure, about 75 percent are organised in TÜRK-İŞ unions, about 2 percent in autonomous and MİSK trade union and the rest divided between DİSK and HAK-İŞ trade unions.

The public servants trade unions are organised under 4 national umbrella organisations: KESK, Türkiye Kamu-Sen, Memur-Sen and Demokrat Kamu-İş. Taking into considerations the membership claims of the trade unions and various observations, it can be concluded that, very roughly, about 500 thousand public servants are organised in these trade unions. KESK represents about 300 thousand, Türkiye Kamu-Sen represents about 150 thousand public servants. The rest are divided between Memur-Sen and Demokrat Kamu-İş.

In summary, the union density in Turkey is about 22-23 percent. During the recent years, the loss of membership of the "workers' trade unions" has been more than offset by the gain in membership of the public servants trade unions.

According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of 17 January 1997, the trade unions affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ and the number of their members are as follows: Tarım-İş (agriculture, 45,581), Orman-İş (forestry, 83,883), Türkiye Maden-İş (mining, 63,672), Genel Maden-İş (mining, 44,807), Petrol-İş (chemicals and petroleum, 81,412), Tekgıda-İş (food, 190,225), Şeker-İş (sugar, 35,319), Teksif (textile, 285,547), Deri-İş (leather, 16,489), Ağaç-İş (wood, 14,117), Selüloz-İş (paper mills, 16,499), Basın-İş (printing, 5,328), Basisen (banking, 43,237), Bass (banking, 12,530), T.Çimse-İş (cement-glass, 59,707), Kristal-İş (cement-glass, 17,624), Türk Metal (metal working, 219,866), Dokgemi-İş (shipyards, 5,852), T.Yol-İş (construction, 195,433), Tes-İş (energy, 120,856), Tezkoop-İş (trade - clerical services, 49,499), T.Koop-İş (trade - clerical services, 41,449), Tümtis (road transport, 8,464), Demiryol-İş (rail transport, 29,939), Türkiye Denizciler Sendikası (marine transport, 12,557), Hava-İş (civil aviation, 12,238), Liman-İş (docks, 7,694), T.Haber-İş (communications, 38,492), Sağlık-İş (health, 15,209), Toleyis (hotels and catering, 31,710), T.Harb-İş (defence, 32,806), Türkiye Gazeteciler Sendikası (journalism, 4,349), Belediye-İş (municipalities, 169,046).

According to the latest official statistics of the Ministry, the trade unions affiliated with DİSK and the number of their members are as follows: TİS (agriculture, 225), Yeraltı Maden-İş (mining, 31), Lastik-İş (chemicals and petroleum, 23,833), Petkim-İş (chemicals and petroleum, 19,310), Gıda-İş (food, 25,161), Tekstil (textiles, 50,374), Deri-İş (leather, 1,721), Asis (wood, 621), Tümka-İş (paper mills, 2,703), Basın-İş (printing, 3,096), Bank-Sen (banking, 14,844), Cam Keramik-İş (cement-glass, 23), Birleşik Metal-İş (metal working, 61,707), Limter-İş (shipyards, 73), Devrimci Yapı-İş (construction, 17), Tekges-İş (energy, 35), Sine-Sen (cinema, 31), Sosyal-İş (trade - clerical services, 28,913), Nakliyat-İş (road transport, 8,083), Yeni Haber-İş (communications, 45), Dev Sağlık-İş (health, 718), Oleyis (hotels and catering, 25,911), Aster-İş (defence, 22), Genel-İş (municipalities, 43,596).

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security gives the following information about the membership of HAK-İŞ affiliated trade unions: Öz Tarım-İş (agriculture, 475), Öz Gıda-İş (food, 73,761), Öz İplik-İş (textile, 72,696), Öz Ağaç-İş (wood, 7,896), Öz Çelik-İş (metal working, 91,353), Öz Sağlık-İş (health, 160), Hizmet-İş (municipalities, 76,646).

MİSK was re-established in January 1994 under the name of BİSK (United Trade Unions Confederation). However, its name was soon changed into MİSK (Confederation of Nationalist Trade Unions). The founding trade unions of MİSK were Yeni Bes-İş (energy, 2,942), Tek Tarım-İş (agriculture), Genel Deri-İş (leather), Türk Genel-Sen (municipalities, 983) and Tek Yapı-Sen (construction). According to the latest data of the Ministry, only Yeni Bes-İş and Türk Genel-Sen have members.

KESK was established on 11-12 November 1995. The affiliated public servants trade unions and claimed membership figures (which seem to be a little bit exaggerated) are as follows: Eğitim-Sen (education, 99,104), Tüm Bel-Sen (municipalities, 50,000), Tüm Maliye-Sen (finance, 25,000), Haber-Sen (communications, 30,000), Enerji Yapı Yol-Sen (energy and construction, 30,801), SES (health, 70,000), Tarım-Sen (agriculture, 10,400), Maden-Sen (mining, 7,000), BTS (transport, 10,185), Tüm Sosyal-Sen (social security, 9,032), Tüm Yargı-Sen (justice, 7,180), Or Kam-Sen (forestry, 12,000), Şeker-Sen (sugar, 2,716), Emek-Sen (social security, 1,550), Tüm Banka-Sen (banking, 2,400), ÖES (university teaching staff, 1,578), Bem-Sen (municipalities, 6,800), Kültür-Sen (Ministry of Culture, 3,100), Tüm Gıda-Sen (food, 2,700), Asim-Sen (defence, 7,000), Genel Sanayi-Sen (industry, 2,200), Lim-Sen (docks, insignificant), Turizm-Sen (tourism, 751). KESK claims, as of October 1996, a total membership of 391,497.

Türkiye KAMU-SEN was established in 1992. The affiliated public servants trade unions are as follows: Türk Haber-Sen (communications), Türk Eğitim-Sen (education), Türk Sağlık-Sen (health), Türk Büro-Sen (clerical activities), Türk Tarım Orman-Sen (agriculture and forestry), Türk Genel Hizmet-Sen (municipalities), Türk Enerji-Sen (energy), Türk Ulaşım-Sen (transportation), Türk İmar-Sen (construction), Türk Banka-Sen (banking), Türk Asim-Sen (defence).

Memur-Sen was established in 1995. The affiliated public servants trade unions are as follows: Eğitim-Bir (education), Bem-Bir-Sen (municipalities), Sağlık-Bir-Sen (health), T.Birlik Haber-Sen (communications), Sağlık-Sen (health), Enerji-Bir-Sen (energy), Kamu Büro-Sen (clerical activities), Öz-Büro-Sen (clerical activities), Tok-Sen (agriculture and forestry), Belediye-Sen (municipalities). Memur-Sen claims a membership of about 100 thousand, which seems to be quite an overestimation.

Demokrat Kamu-İş was established in 1995. The constituting trade unions were DES (education), DİS (administrative services) and DESHİS (health).

TÜRK-İŞ and DİSK are members of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Asian and Pacific Regional Organisation (ICFTU-APRO), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the OECD Trade Unions Advisory Committee (OECD-TUAC). HAK-İŞ applied for affiliation to the ICFTU and the ETUC in 1993. TÜRK-İŞ objected to this application, claiming that HAK-İŞ did not include in its basic objectives the preservation of the democratic, republican and secular character of the state and country. Although this issue was discussed a couple of times at the ICFTU Executive Committee, the application is kept pending for a final resolution. The ETUC Executive Committee is observing the relations of HAK-İŞ with the ICFTU before taking up the issue for a final decision. KESK applied for membership to the ICFTU in 1996.

Industrial unions are affiliates of the International Trade Secretariats. Of the public servants trade unions, only KESK affiliates have membership ties with these international organisations.

Co-operation between different trade union confederations was not very common before 1980. Co-operation and solidarity began to increase from 1989 onwards. In November 1993 an informal umbrella organisation, "the Democracy Platform, the Common Voice of the Working People" was created, comprising TÜRK-İŞ, HAK-İŞ, DİSK, the two informal organisations of public servants trade unions that later amalgamated to constitute the KESK, Turkish Chambers of Architects and Engineers, Turkish Chambers of Physicians, etc. The Democracy Platform was replicated in more than 50 provinces, with differing constituents and without any centralised structure. The Democracy Platform supported the general action of 20 July 1994 and organised joint May Day celebrations in 1994 and 1995. Due to discussions concerning HAK-İŞ's attitude on privatisation, HAK-İŞ withdrew from the Platform in February 1995. The Democracy Platform faded away, though never officially declared liquidated, in 1996. However, the May Day was celebrated by TÜRK-İŞ, HAK-İŞ, DİSK and KESK in 1996 in İstanbul. Although on 16 January 1997, the general secretaries of TÜRK-İŞ, HAK-İŞ, DİSK, KESK and Türkiye Kamu-Sen met to discuss common problems for the first time, it did not lead to concrete steps and actions. A joint declaration by TÜRK-İŞ, HAK-İŞ and DİSK general secretaries was issued on 4 February 1997.

## **Structural Change in the Trade Union Movement:**

The trade union movement in Turkey was on the rise in the 1989-1993 period. Trade unions could mobilise their membership for legitimate mass actions and could get public support. The negotiated collective agreements were effective in increasing real wages. Most of the prohibitions and restrictions of the 1982 Constitution and the labour legislation were by-passed almost with impunity. Public servants had established their trade unions and could mobilise quite a large portion of the public servants for demonstrations and various forms of industrial actions, with hopes of collective negotiations and concomitant real salary increases in the short run.

However, with new problems or the aggravation of already existing ones, the trade unions as a whole were pushed to the defensive. The basic problems especially from 1993 onwards could not be solved through collective negotiations. New instruments of struggle had to be developed. The structure of the trade union movement had to be adapted to the new set of industrial relations, based on

- (a) almost a permanent economic crisis situation with short intervals of recovery,
- (b) high level of structural unemployment,
- (c) a new international division of labour shifting manufacturing industry production to the developing countries,
- (d) the downfall of the communist parties in Central and Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union,
- (e) new technologies and production methods which can undermine trade union consciousness and trade union organisation.

Capitalism, which was socialised especially in the post-WW II period, tended again to become the "pure" or "vulgar" capitalism of the 19th century in its perception of labour rights. The social welfare state, basic trade union rights and protective labour legislation had all together constituted the basis of the social consensus in the industrialised market economies. Employers started to repudiate these basic concepts. The social welfare state was dismantled. The legitimacy of the trade union movement and basic trade union rights guaranteed by the ILO instruments began to be questioned. Protective labour legislation was either challenged by attempts at "flexibility" or simply ignored through employment of black labour.

Trade unions are organic bodies. These fundamental changes had their repercussions in the daily functioning of trade unions. New ways and means of tackling new problems started to be discussed. With a time gap and mainly with the trial and error method, new solutions were reached or created.

The trade union movement today is in a process of change. The basic areas in which a transformation is in process can be grouped in the following manner:

**The trade union movement is endeavouring to surpass "collective agreement trade unionism."** Traditionally, TÜRK-İŞ had mainly been emphasising the wages and other rights and benefits that could be improved through collective negotiations and agreements. In today's circumstances, such a restricted perspective is doomed to fail even to preserve the gains of previous struggles. The preservation of the purchasing power and other rights and benefits and improving the living and working conditions require a wider perspective and more comprehensive struggle, including the participation in the struggle to preserve the integrity and independence of the Republic of Turkey and her "democratic and secular social state of law" characteristics, contributing to the democratisation process, struggling for job

security, for the prevention of black employment, for the abolition of obstacles for the free exercise of basic trade union rights and freedoms, for the defence and realisation of the social state of law, etc. These are essential for the strengthening of the trade union movement and the improvement of living and working conditions.

One important danger for the trade union movement and the unionised workforce is being isolated from other strata of the working population. Any trade union movement which deals solely with the daily problems of its membership and ignores the problems of the unorganised sections of the workers and public servants, of the pensioners, the unemployed and other people is apt to be isolated. Thus, the trade union movement should strive to be the leader of the whole people in the struggle for a better world and country to live in. The new urban poor is a stratum which will increase in importance in the near future in Turkey. Developing relations with it should be one of the top items in the agenda of the trade union movement.

The trade union movement has always been for dialogue and for the solution of conflicts and problems through negotiations. However, when attempts in this sphere prove to be in vain, legitimate mass actions are unavoidable. During the 1989-1993 period, these industrial actions of only certain sections of the workers and public servants were necessary and sufficient to secure high real wage increases. However, following the 5 April austerity program, the industrial actions in the form and scope they were realised proved to be insufficient. They are still necessary, but their form and scope should be extended further to render them more effective. Through experience it was observed that, various forms of industrial actions and legal strikes in the energy, telecommunications and banking sectors are of vital importance for the government and the employers. These constitute the Achilles' heel or the nerve centres of the system. During the 1989-1996 period, no effective industrial actions have been realised in these sectors. However, especially with the privatisation attempts of the Government in the energy and telecommunications sectors, it is highly probable that the scope of the industrial actions will expand to include these areas, as well. From the perspective of the effectiveness of industrial actions, activities such as urban railway, marine and bus transportation, civil aviation, ports and education and health services and highway transport during winter are of secondary importance. Production of other goods and services occupy only the third place. On the other hand, the trade union movement, through issues such as the savings in the provident fund, social security problems and inflation, will be able to align and mobilise larger sections of the working population in the future.

The trade union movement in Turkey has only very infrequently and sporadically used consumer boycotts as a means of trade union struggle. A more systematic attempt to use this instrument is being discussed, to fight against unjust dismissals and violation of basic trade union rights and to support membership recruitment campaigns and strikes. The consumer boycott organised by Petrol-İş against BP, Shell and Mobil in 1996 is only the beginning of a more systematic approach. These campaigns will be used mainly against holding companies, extending the boycotts to all companies within a holding group. The consumer associations under the control of working people and workers' and public servants' consumer co-operatives will also be active in such actions.

The present trade union structures are insufficient to wage a more comprehensive struggle for the improvement of living and working conditions in the age of "pure" or "vulgar" capitalism. During the 1995 public sector strikes involving workplaces employing more than 300 thousand workers, the workplace, provincial and regional strike committees that were established did not function as desired. The shop stewards systems in the workplaces proved to be insufficient.

The horizontal relations between branches of different trade unions in the same locality were not sufficient enough to mobilise large sections of the membership for actions and to recruit support and solidarity. The trade unions generally lack special bureaus and committees for women workers and young workers. The spouses and children of the union members do not have almost any contacts with the trade unions. Most of the trade union education activities are not participatory, creative, beneficial from the point of view of current problems. The international relations of the trade unions are not based on mobilising solidarity for joint problems. Although trade unions are the most democratic organisations in our society, still much has to be done to improve the participation of membership to the formulation of new policies, to the adoption of resolutions and to the control of the trade union activities and to eradicate various undemocratic practices. These are only a small portion of the shortcomings and faults of the trade union movement in a period of globalisation under the control of and in line with the interests of international monopoly capital. These and similar issues are being discussed at various levels of the trade union movement.

Another area in which a structural change is taking place, is the political involvement of the trade union movement. It is necessary to discuss this subject a bit more in detail.

Since 1946, when it was re-permitted to establish trade unions on a class basis, trade unions in Turkey have had contacts and unofficial links with the political parties. It was and, to a certain extent, still is quite common for confrontations within a specific trade union to be along political lines. On 13 February 1961, trade unionists from the Council of Trade Unions of İstanbul established the Workers' Party of Turkey. TÜRK-İŞ, on the other hand, tried to establish the Workingmen's Party of Turkey during the first few months of 1962. The Workers' Party of Turkey, as the attempt of a handful of trade unionists without grassroots level support, without a program (the program of the Party was issued 6 months after its establishment) and without links with the intellectuals, failed and was handed over to M.A.Aybar, a democratic socialist on 9 February 1962. Attempts to establish the Workingmen's Party of Turkey was legitimised by the resolution of a representative body of TÜRK-İŞ (Committee comprising the presidents of all affiliated federations, councils and trade unions), had contacts with the intellectuals and had a well-structured program. However, there was again no grassroots level support, and thus, it could not even be established.

TÜRK-İŞ, since 1962, pursued a "supra-party policy", keeping officially independent from all political parties, having generally close ties with the political party in power and never deviating from the state policy. TÜRK-İŞ tried to act as a pressure group from outside. For instance, a campaign was launched prior to the 1965 general elections against 9 parliamentarians from various political parties. Sometimes, more systematic attempts were made to co-operate with a specific political party or to influence the policies of a party by promoting membership. However, all these attempts, which were relatively successful during the pre-1980 period, proved to be in vain in the period of "pure" or "vulgar" capitalism. Then, especially following 1987, a new tendency developed and became the general rule. TÜRK-İŞ began to challenge the Motherland Party in power. In the 1989-1991 period, it was possible to mobilise all workers against the Government. The unity of the trade union movement against the True Path Party - Social Democratic Party Coalition Government was again secured. The short-lived True Path Party - Motherland Party Coalition Government and the Government in power also had the trade union movement against them.

It is only during the last decade that, the unity of the workers and the trade union movement against the Government and the political party in power was secured. Then, with increasing distrust for the political parties, this "unity against" the Governments and political parties, began to be transformed into "unity for" political activity. The legitimate mass actions and legal strikes forged a new of unity among workers of different ethnic origins, creed, political sympathies, occupations, etc. The new systems of industrial relations necessitated a unity on the political arena, as well. Although all other confederations advocated the independence and non-direct-involvement of the trade unions in party politics, TÜRK-İŞ followed a different course.

The proposals for TÜRK-İŞ to take the initiative in establishing a workers' party began to be on the agenda seriously from 1987 onwards.

The 16th Congress of TÜRK-İŞ, in December 1992, adopted the following resolution:

"The solution of the problems and the realisation of the demands mentioned above require the strengthening of the independent power of the trade union movement in the political arena, it being felt and the exercising of it when necessary in line with democratically adopted resolutions."

Bayram Meral, President of TÜRK-İŞ, while addressing the participants of the May Day Rally in 1993 in İstanbul, said,

"As the working class, we are to develop our independent power in the political arena and use it effectively. If the existing political parties continue to close their ears to the demands of the working class and to blow the horn of the capitalists, the working class shall establish its own political party. This is the voice of the grassroots. Such a political party, in a short period of time, will either be the political party in power or the major opposition party. I believe in it with all my heart."

Then, TÜRK-İŞ started to formulate the basic political, democratic and economic demands of the trade union and labour movement and to discuss them at various bodies. Regional meetings were organised from November 1993 onwards in various provinces. Basic demands, leading to a program, were discussed and formulated in the declarations of these meetings. Before the local elections in 1994, TÜRK-İŞ published a brochure and distributed it widely: "Interrogate the Political Parties". In 1995, TÜRK-İŞ distributed a new set of demands before the May Day. The Democracy Platform accepted some of these demands as the joint manifesto. TÜRK-İŞ, on 5 May 1995, sent these demands to all of the political parties and requested the views of the parties on the subject. In spite of the repetition of the request, only the Motherland Party, the People's Republican Party and the Workers' Party answered. Some trade unions adopted this document in their congresses in 1995. Then, in December 1995, the 17th congress of TÜRK-İŞ adopted this document, which comprises the basic political, democratic and economic demands and proposals of the trade union movement. This document is like a party program.

In 1996, the necessity of establishing a party to advocate and promote the interests of workers, public servants, pensioners, the unemployed, the petty tradesmen and artisans and peasants began to be debated and discussed at various levels and bodies of TÜRK-İŞ. This provoked discussions in the press, as well. Following a positive feedback, on 3 December 1996, the Council of Presidents of TÜRK-İŞ adopted the following resolution:

"The Council of Presidents shall continue to give the necessary attention to the subject of the development and strengthening democratically of the independent power in the political arena of the working class and trade union movement. The working class and TÜRK-İŞ should put their weight in politics. The discussion by all our organisations of

the subject of the establishment of a political party under the leadership of TÜRK-İŞ and in line with the resolutions of the TÜRK-İŞ General Congress shall be continued."

On 21 December 1996, a meeting in İstanbul of all high level trade union officers adopted the following resolution:

"The problems of the working class cannot be solved solely by collective labour agreements. The place of the solution of the fundamental problems of our country and our people is the Parliament. While our people preserve their faith in the pluralist, participatory and democratic parliamentary system, due to the incorrect policies pursued by the political parties represented in the Parliament, they are rapidly losing all their belief and confidence in these parties. The Parliament should not be the club of the wealthy. Today, there is a political vacuum in our country. TÜRK-İŞ, the vanguard and the hope of our people, should fill in this vacuum; all working people, above all our working class should fill in this vacuum. Our working class and all other working people, who constitute 95 percent of the population of Turkey, should put their weight in politics and in the Parliament. The working class should no longer be those who are the ruled, but be those who rule. TÜRK-İŞ should give more weight and accelerate the activities for the formation of a political party that shall defend the interests of workers, public servants, pensioners, the unemployed, petty tradesmen and artisans and peasants, who constitute 95 percent of the population of our people and that shall defend Turkey."

There are still legal obstacles for such an initiative. Article 52 of the Constitution which categorically prohibited political activity of trade unions and their relations with political parties was repealed in 1995. However, similar provisions with serious sanctions are still in force in the Trade Unions Act and the Political Parties Act. In spite of these explicit prohibitions, TÜRK-İŞ is determined to play a determinant role in political life. Whether this will take the form of the establishment of a political party has not yet been decided upon by the competent bodies of TÜRK-İŞ. However, if such an attitude is adopted, TÜRK-İŞ will be seeking the co-operation of other democratic mass organisations for such an initiative. In such a case, the trade union movement's experience and dexterity in by-passing anti-democratic and anachronistic prohibitions shall solve the problem.

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