

PRECARITY AND IDENTITY AMONG SHIPYARD WORKERS IN TUZLA

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AYŞE ARSLAN

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Prof. Dr. Meliha Altunışık
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Prof. Dr. Raşit Kaya
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Necmi Erdoğan
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Necmi Erdoğan (METU, ADM)

Instructor Dr. Barış Çakmur (METU, ADM)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Şen (METU, SOC)

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last name: Ayşe Arslan

Signature :

ABSTRACT

PRECARITY AND IDENTITY AMONG SHIPYARD WORKERS IN TUZLA

Arslan, Ayşe

MS., Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Necmi Erdoğan

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This thesis analyzes class experiences of shipyard workers in Tuzla. The specific aim of this study is to discuss the effects of precariousness and ethnic identities of workers on the working conditions and the organization of the working class in the context of Tuzla shipyard region. Based on a fieldwork consisting of semi-structured in depth interviews with 22 workers in Tuzla, it also deals with the effects of precariousness on workers' future expectations, the position of the state in Tuzla shipyard region and workers' opinions about this, the effects of religious discourse on the organization of workers, and workers' perceptions of class inequalities. Basically, this thesis argues that in addition to decreasing the cost of the labor, precariousness enables employers to make workers stay away from the class struggle under the conditions characterized by job insecurity and lack of legal protection against dismissals. Moreover, it argues that while there are no serious conflicts depending on being from different ethnicities among shipyard workers, nationalist discourse which mostly associates legal Kurdish political movement with "terrorism" is used by employers in order to prevent the working class struggle, and it plays an obstructive role in the organization of the working class and undermines the potency of the class solidarity of shipyard workers in Tuzla.

Keywords: working class, precariousness, nationalist discourse, Tuzla shipyard region

ÖZ

TUZLA'DAKİ TERSANE İŞÇİLERİ ARASINDA GÜVENCESİZLİK VE KİMLİK

Arslan, Ayşe

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

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Bu tez, Tuzla'daki tersane işçilerinin sınıf deneyimlerini analiz etmektedir. Çalışmanın özgül amacı, güvencesizliğin ve işçilerin etnik kimliklerinin çalışma koşullarına ve işçi sınıfının örgütlenmesine etkisini Tuzla tersaneler bölgesi bağlamında tartışmaktır. Tuzla'daki 22 işçiyle yapılmış yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatları içeren bir saha çalışmasına dayanan bu çalışma ayrıca güvencesizliğin işçilerin gelecek beklentilerine etkileri, devletin Tuzla tersaneler bölgesindeki konumu ve işçilerin bunun hakkındaki düşünceleri, dini söylemin işçilerin örgütlenmesine etkisi ve işçilerin sınıf eşitsizliklerine dair algılarıyla ilgilenmektedir. Temel olarak, bu tez, güvencesizliğin emek maliyetini düşürmenin yanı sıra, iş güvencesizliği ve işten çıkarmalara karşı yasal korumanın olmadığı koşullarda, işverenlerin işçileri sınıf mücadelesinden uzak tutmasını mümkün kıldığını savunmaktadır. Ayrıca, tersane işçileri arasında farklı etnik kimliklere ait olmalarına bağlı olarak ciddi bir çatışma olmamakla birlikte, yasal Kürt siyasi hareketini “terörizm” ile ilişkilendiren milliyetçi söylemin işverenler tarafından işçi sınıfı mücadelesini engellemek için kullanıldığını ve bu söylemin işçi sınıfı örgütlenmesinde engelleyici bir rol oynadığını ve Tuzla'daki tersane işçilerinin sınıf dayanışması potansiyelini zayıflattığını iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: işçi sınıfı, güvencesizlik, milliyetçi söylem, Tuzla tersaneler bölgesi

Babam Mizbah Arslan'ın anısına ve onun nezdinde
hayatı her gün yeniden yaratan tüm işçilere ...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
DDK	Devlet Denetleme Kurulu (The State Supervisory Council)
DİSK	Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (The Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey)
Dok Gemi-İş	Liman Dok ve Gemi Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası (Harbor, Dock and Shipbuilding Workers Trade Union)
DTO	Deniz Ticaret Odası (Chamber of Shipping)
ESP	Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi (The Socialist Party of the Oppressed)
EU	European Union (Avrupa Birliği)
GİSBİR	Türkiye Gemi İnşa Sanayicileri Birliği (Turkish Shipbuilders' Association)
Hak-İş	Hak İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (The Confederation of Real Trade Unions)
IMF	International Monetary Fund (Uluslararası Para Fonu)
Limter-İş	Liman Tersane Gemi Yapım ve Onarım İşçileri Sendikası (Turkish Port, Shipyard, Shipbuilding and Repair Workers Trade Union)
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Movement Party)
OHAL	Olağanüstü Hal (State of Emergency Rule)
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)

TİSK	Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations)
TMMOB	Türk Mühendis ve Mimarlar Odaları Birliği (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects)
TTBİİK	Tuzla Tersaneler Bölgesi İnceleme ve Araştırma Komisyonu (Monitoring and Investigation Commission for Tuzla Shipyard Region)
TUSİAD	Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği (Turkish Industry and Business Association)
Türk-İş	Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (The Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions)
WB	World Bank (Dünya Bankası)
WTO	World Trade Organization (Dünya Ticaret Örgütü)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave the following speech at a ship launching ceremony in the Tuzla shipyard region in 2008, when at the time, work-related accidents in Tuzla had reached their climax:

Hamdolsun şu anda 2002 itibariyle 5 bin kişinin çalıştığı özel sektöre ait gemi inşa sanayi kuruluşlarında bugün 35 bin kişi çalışıyor. Bu hızlı büyüme iş kazalarında artışı da tabii ki beraberinde getirdi. Denizcilik Müsteşarlığımız ve Savunma Bakanlığımız ve diğer taraftan sektör el ele vererek bu sorunu çözmek yönünde önemli adımlar atmaktadır. Demin Metin kardeşim (Kalkavan) hüznü bir konuşma yaptı (iş kazaları ile ilgili). Halbuki duygusal, hüznü olmayacağız. Niye? Atalarımızın güzel bir lafı var; ‘Benim abdestimden şüphem yok ki, namazımdan şüphem olsun’. Yaptığım işi ben eğer inanarak yapıyorsam, doğru yapıyorsam ‘Yola emin adımlarla devam edin’ deriz. Bu sektör büyüyor mu kardeşim, büyüyor. Buna ihtiyaç var mı kardeşim, var. Türkiye’de bu kadar işsiz insan var mı? Var. 5 binden 35 bine çıkıyor. Diğer taraftan ‘işsizlik, işsizlik’ diyeceksin. Öte yandan iş temin edildiğinde de ‘Niçin bu yanlışlar var?’ diyeceksin.¹

In the quotation above, while praising the growing shipbuilding industry for its “success”; on the other hand the Prime Minister attempts to rationalize work-related

¹ “One has to say thank God, that a private sector ship building company which employed 5 000 workers in 2002, now employs over 35 000. Of course, experiencing growth at such a fast pace has brought an increase in work-related accidents. The Naval Secretary and Department of Defense among others have sought to lend a hand and are taking steps to solve these problems. My close friend Metin (Kalkavan) spoke ruefully on the subject. However, we are not rueful, nor are we going to get emotional. Why? Well, it’s like our forefathers used to say; ‘There is no doubt I washed (wudu) correctly, but I don’t know about the prayer’ If I work with the belief that what I’m doing is right, then we say ‘go forth with certainty’. Is this sector growing? Yes my friend, it is. Does it need to grow? The answer is yes my friend. Does Turkey have that much unemployment? Yes – and now from 5 000 we have 35 000. On one side you will hear them cry ‘unemployment, unemployment!’. From the other side you will hear ‘why are these errors occurring?’ when all the while more and more people are being recruited.” See

http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/basbakan_tuzlada_patronlari_savundu-898784

“accidents”² by depicting them as a natural consequence of this growth. What’s more, he advises the shipyard owner –Metin Kalkavan– who made “rueful” speech on the dangers of fatal work “accidents” not to be sad, and blames workers who complain about unemployment for not being grateful for the provision of employment and opposing mistakes of the sector. This speech gives a clear idea about the attitude and position of the government in terms of its class relations.

There are two basic sources of the government’s attention on Tuzla shipyard region. The first one is the growing rate of shipbuilding sector. According to the report of the State Supervisory Council, the shipbuilding sector in Turkey has grown by 360% in the years 2004-2008 (DDK, 2008, 74). This growth has fixed the government’s attention on Tuzla shipyard region. The second reason is increasing amount of fatal work “accidents” witnessed there. Unfortunately, Tuzla became a burning issue in the public thanks to these “accidents”. These fatal work accidents reached their apex in the years 2006-2008; however, they are continuing to this day.

As a consequence of the neoliberal transformation process started in the 1980s, poverty and social inequalities in societies have deepened and the gap between classes has aggravated. The basic reason behind worsening living and working conditions in the working class is the change in the labor regime. In the neoliberal era, in line with the profit maximization objective of the modern bourgeoisie, flexible production has replaced Fordist production, which is characterized by relatively higher job security, wages, social protection, and unionization rates for workers. Flexibilized production relations have increased the precarious form of employment. Precarious employment means more job insecurity, lower wages and less safety at work for the working class. Moreover, parallel to the neoliberal transformation and the rise of precarious employment, the organized power of the working class has weakened. The flexible employment regime has eroded the objective basis of labor unions. Job insecurity and a lack of legal

² The reason for putting *accident* in quotes is its questionable characteristic. Since an accident mostly refers to unexpected, sudden and involuntary events, using *accident* as is has potential to naturalize and legitimize it. Even if the concept of accident will not be always put in quotes hereafter, it should be regarded as it is quoted. In this way, we will have referred to capitalist production relations aiming at decreasing cost of the labor, and responsibilities of employers and the state, which do not solve the structural reasons behind work accidents.

protection against dismissals gives employers an opportunity to easily discharge workers who tend to organize in opposition against unfavorable working conditions. Furthermore, temporality of the work prevents workers' sense of belonging to the workplace. Other than these problems, legal regulations on the national level constitute another obstacle to unionization.

Neoliberal transformation process has not resulted differently in terms of labor in Turkey. Attempts towards precarization of labor have gained wide currency, especially in the 2000s. With the Labor Act no. 4857 enacted in 2003 and changes made in Civil Servant Law no. 657, part-time, temporary and contractual employment gained legal basis. As a result, precarious employment has gained wide currency in the private and public sector. In this respect, there is a need to understand how workers are affected by precariousness in Turkey.

This thesis will be an attempt to partially address this need. It aims specifically to analyze the class experiences of shipyard workers in Tuzla shipyard region. The basic question of this study is “how does precariousness and the identities of workers affect living and working conditions and the organization of the working class in the context of Tuzla shipyard region?”

Further to this major question, the study aims to answer the following secondary questions in the context of Tuzla shipyard region: Namely, how does the rise of subcontracting system affect the labor regime as a whole? To what extent has precariousness had an effect on work-related accidents, poor wages and less social protection? What is the position of the state in class relations? How do precarious conditions affect individual lives and the future expectations of shipyard workers? What kind of effects does the neoliberal transformation have in the organization of the working class in the context of unionization? Do nationalist and religious discourses function as an obstruction to the organization of the working class? In this respect, does the nationalist discourse undermine solidarity of the working class today, as the proletarianization of Kurds has intensified? How do workers perceive existing social inequalities? Do they associate these inequalities with class-based society? Do they accept existing class relations as a given and natural?

This thesis aims to contribute to the class literature in Turkey to the extent that it tries to understand class experiences of shipyard workers who are working under precarious conditions. The specific aim of this study is to show two basic dynamics which constitute an obstacle to the organization of the working class in Tuzla shipyard region. One of the obstacles is the precarization of labor. We will argue that precariousness erodes the objective basis of unionization, and job insecurity and lack of legal protection against dismissals, two main outcomes of precariousness, are used by employers as a way of making shipyard workers stay away from the class struggle. Another focus of this study will be on the relation between nationalist discourse, and the organization and the solidarity of the working class in Turkey. As well as being important for all socio-cultural conjunctures, the role of nationalist discourse in the class relations becomes much more important for Turkey where the Kurdish question affects class perceptions and experiences. One of my main assumptions about the field research was that I would find out the tension between Turkish and Kurdish shipyard workers in Tuzla. However, as will be seen, there is no serious tension between large groups of workers of different ethnicities. Problems generally occur on individual levels. Another assumption was that the nationalist discourse and Kurdish image associated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) prevents shipyard workers from acting in union with *Turkish Port, Shipyard, Shipbuilding and Repair Workers Trade Union* (Limter-İş) which represents class-based labor unionism. As will be seen, employers reproduce the "terrorist" label with reference to PKK in their dealings with Limter-İş, and thus, try to block its attempts at organization by appealing to the nationalist sentiments of shipyard workers. Thus, we will argue that while there are no serious conflicts depending on being from different ethnicities among shipyard workers, nationalist discourse which charges workers with being "traitors" in cases where they act with Limter-İş, has an obstructive role in the organization of the working class and undermines the potency of class solidarity of shipyard workers in Tuzla.

The reason for selecting the Tuzla shipyard region as the principal field of research is the fact, as will be demonstrated, of its being an apt and relevant microcosm of the neoliberal transformation witnessed in Turkey in the last three decades. It gives an opportunity to see spreading precarious employment and its

effects on the working class. The process of flexibilization of labour is almost fully completed through subcontract regime in Tuzla shipyard region. The number of subcontracted shipyard workers corresponds to 90-95% of all workers in Tuzla. Even though there are no exact figures stating the number of subcontract companies, it is estimated that it ranges between 1000-1500. There are many subcontracted firms involved in varying capacities; while some employ around ten workers, others employ over a hundred. Moreover, the Tuzla shipyard region has a multi-ethnic social structure. The majority of shipyard workers are from Black Sea cities. There is also a significant number of Kurdish internal migrant workers coming from the Eastern and Southeastern regions. Alongside these, there are relatively smaller numbers of Arabian workers. Therefore, such a multi-ethnic structure provides an appropriate ground for studying the relations of these groups with each other and the effects of nationalist discourse on the organization of the working class in Turkey.

Current class literature in Turkey enables us to analyze historical and contemporary conditions of the working class in Turkey. However, since the focus of the thesis will be on the precariousness, we will just touch upon some studies making general discussion on the working class, and then, concentrate on the studies on precariousness. There is a group of studies focusing on the workers' political organizations, especially on the trade unions³, and political movements of workers, such as strikes and protests/demonstrations.⁴ In these studies, the basic materials that are used are mostly found in state archives (for ex., unemployment rates or distribution of income groups), legal regulations (such as Work Law, Law on Trade Unions or Law on Collective Bargaining Agreement, Strikes and Lockout) and newspaper archives. There are also theoretical studies trying to explicate and to make discussion on theories on working class.⁵

Including the voices of subaltern is very important to understand class experiences of working class in daily life. In this context, it should be stated that a

³ For detailed history of trade unionism in Turkey, see Çelik, A. (2010) *Vesayetten Siyasete Türkiye'de Sendikacılık (1946-1967)*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

⁴ For examples of this group of study, see Quataert and Zürcher (1995), Akkaya (2010) and Güzel (1996).

⁵ For an example, see Ögütte and Çeğin (2009), Belek (2007), Öngen (1996).

cultural analysis of class, which raises the voices of class itself, has been increasing in recent years. The book of Erdoğan and his Colleagues (2007) which discusses urban poverty over the experiences of the poor is one of the most important examples of cultural analysis of class. In the book, they focus on the emotional and hidden aspects of the class relations. The work of Özügür (2008) is another example worthy of note in this genre. In his work, he focuses on the “global factories” using the example of the Denizli Organized Industrial Zone in the Aegean region of Turkey. Not only does the author promote a discussion on the “formation of class”, but also focuses on working class’ experiences at a grass-roots level. What makes his work more worthwhile is his attempt to write down open/hidden forms of resistance in working class to history. The work of Tanıl Bora, Aksu Bora, Necmi Erdoğan and İlknur Üstün (2011), as another example of culturally sensitive within the analysis of class, focuses on white-collar unemployment. In the book, they deal with unemployment experienced by white-collar workers by sticking to their opinions, emotions and ideological positions.

Moreover, the work of Yasin Durak (2012) has provided an insightful resource in looking at employee/employer relationships in small scale industry in the context of religiosity. In his book, he examines the role of conservative-religious cultural hegemony on the production of workers’ consent and its functionality on hiding the exploitation. One of the findings of the book is that religious-conservatism provides a framework for reconciliation between workers and employers. Moreover, he argues that employers engage in Islamic rituals with workers in order to reproduce workers’ consent. This thesis shares similar arguments with the work of Durak in terms of the usage of religious discourse as a means of legitimizing class inequalities. Similarly, there are similar religious rituals that employers engage workers in, in Tuzla shipyard region. However, Islamic discourse does not dominate relationships between employers and workers here. As it will be seen, workers who do not perform prayer or do not fast in Ramadan are not discriminated against or religious discourse is not used as a way of legitimizing dismissals of workers in the workplace.

It is not possible to state that there are so many academic studies on Tuzla shipyard region. Nevra Akdemir is one of the researchers studying on Tuzla. Her

work (2008) focuses on the subcontracting system and informal production relations in the context of Tuzla shipyard region. She states that there are hierarchical dependency relations in changing sizes depending upon the capital accumulation. According to her, small companies' becoming more dependent, proletarianization of company owners and precarization of labour are some of the most important conditions for shipyards to enhance their capital accumulation. Moreover, she argues that competitiveness causes dispossession among small company owners and workers on the one hand, and causes intensification and centralization of capital and intensification of control on labour, on the other (Akdemir, 2008, 216-217). Another significant work on Tuzla shipyard region belongs to Akdemir and Odman. In their article (2008), they concentrate on the class character of the state, stratification of the working class within the capital accumulation process and the organization of workers with reference to Tuzla shipyard region. They assert that solution proposals of public institutions have a technocratic discourse which individualizes social risks and regard individuals as responsible from these risks. Moreover, for them, they try to conceal class characteristics of workers' problems and create a misconception as if all of employers, workers and the state have common interests by using "enemy within us" discourse and "national development" discourse (Akdemir & Odman, 2008, 59-61). There is another work on Tuzla, which is significant in the context of this thesis. Tuzla Research Group (2009) focuses on neoliberal development in Turkey and the relation between class and ethnicity. They claim that Kurds who migrated to metropolis due to forced Kurdish migration have constituted cheap labor force for the neoliberal market. Moreover, according to them, "terrorism" and "separatism" based on anti-PKK discourse is used for preventing massification of the working class struggle and is successful in preventing Turkish and Arab workers from participating in the protests to some extent.

Available literature dealing with the effects of precariousness on the working class has increased with the experience of TEKEL workers' resistance in 2010 in Turkey. In this context, two of books which are edited respectively by Bulut (2010) and Göztepe (2012) are significant in terms of their effort in understanding precarization of labor and its effect on the working class in Turkey. Essays in the book edited by Bulut (2010) concentrate on the changing forms of the working class

movements and new forms of resistance in Turkey. This book also includes an essay by Ferda Koç, which has a significant place in this study. In his essay, Koç tries to show class characteristics of Kurdish question and discusses the means of collective action instigated by Turkish and Kurdish workers jointly. According to him, the rise of labor movements does not directly result in brotherhood between Turkish and Kurdish workers; it could be realized through developing and practicing political, economic -unionist and ideological- cultural strategies in parallel with this aim. Other collection edited by Göztepe (2012) explains the precarization process of labor with the examples from the world, debates on taking the *precariat* as a new class and discusses new possibilities of analyzing the struggle of the working class. Another book edited by Ayşe Buğra (2010) contributes to class studies with trying to elaborate working and living conditions of workers working under precarious conditions from different sectors, such as health, education, sports (focusing on football) and cultural activities (like cinema). Most of the articles contain examples of interviews with workers and enable readers to hear workers' stories in their own words.

The experience is central to understanding class since class is not a fixed category, but a *lived* relation of people “within ‘the ensemble of the social relations’, with their inherited culture and expectations, and as they handle these experiences in cultural ways” (Thompson, 1978, 150). This thesis is written from the historical materialist perspective and the notion of “class” is employed in the Marxist sense. For Marx, the mode of production does not simply explain the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather, he regards it as a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. Therefore, individuals depend on the material conditions of their production (Marx, 1998, 37). However, while emphasizing on the explanatory feature of material conditions for grasping human reality, he does not refer to one-sided relations between them. He puts on emphasis on the reciprocal nature of the relationship, which refers to a double relationship of production: “The production of life, both of one’s own in labor and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a twofold relation: on the one hand as a *natural*, on the other as a *social relation*” (Marx, 1998, 48-49, emphasis added).

Marx does not conceive social reality atomistically, as made up of clearly bounded, separate, interacting entities; rather, he saw the world as a complex network of internal relations, within which any single element is what it is only by virtue of its relation to others (Sayer, 1987). It is important to put on emphasis on the historical and relational character of Marx's conceptualizations. It is same for the concept of *class*. The emphasis on the word "definite" on the passage from Marx makes the issue obvious:

"The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations. [...] The social structure and the state are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, however, of these individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they *actually* are, i.e., as they act, produce materially and hence as they work under definite material limits, presupposition and conditions independent of their will." (Marx, 1998, 41)

In other words, *class* is not autonomous concept which can be defined "in itself". Indeed, class is not a fixed, stagnant concept. What should be emphasized is its historical and contextual meaning. As well as being an economic formation, "we cannot understand class unless we see it as a social and cultural formation, arising from processes which can only be studied as they work themselves out over a considerable historical period" (Thompson, 1965, 11). In this respect, class will be posited as process, and as lived realities of social life within the context of this thesis.

This study is based on a field research which consists of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 22 shipyard workers in Tuzla district of Istanbul. The interviews were made between December 2012 and April 2013. Interviewees were selected by purposive sampling method. Care was taken to choose workers of both Kurdish and Turkish ethnic origin, in order to understand the relation between workers from different ethnicities and the obstructive role of nationalist discourse in the organization of the working class. Moreover, I tried to reach workers who are members of Limter-İş, members of *Harbor, Dock and Shipbuilding Workers Trade Union* (Dok Gemi-İş) which can be seen as an example of "yellow union", and workers who are not members of any labor union. All interviewees were male and

have been working in the shipyards for several years. The interviews were conducted individually and the best efforts were made to make sure they took place outside of the workplace. However, some interviews had to be made within the workplace due to workers' lack of time. But in these cases they were made alone with the interviewee in a separate division. It was very difficult to get permission to go in shipyards. In fact, it was only made possible thanks to the workers I contacted and those working in the shipyards. Interviews lasted between half an hour and one hour and were recorded with tape. In order to make first contacts, Limter-İş was contacted and almost half of the interviewees were obtained in this manner. In other cases workers interviewed encouraged their colleagues to help with the research as interviewees.

Most of the workers I met came from various cities in Turkey to Istanbul, and were living with their families for several years in Tuzla, or districts close to it. In order to understand the precarious feature of their jobs, questions about working hours, wages, social security premiums and control mechanisms were put to workers. Some questions were asked to understand the effects of precariousness on workers' future expectations and plans. I also asked questions about relations amongst colleagues and sought to understand the role of coming from different ethnicities. Questions on politics were also posed to understand their ideological position of interviewees. Furthermore, some questions on workers' religious beliefs were addressed to understand the role of religious discourse in normalizing social inequalities. Lastly, a set of questions about the relation with employers, the conditions of Turkey, the difference between the rich and the poor were posed to understand workers perception of class differences.

This study has limitations, as any other study in social sciences. Firstly, if the size of the sample was larger, it would better reflect the experiences of shipyard workers in Tuzla. Since this study is based on a limited number of interviews, it does not claim to be wholly representative and does not generalize its findings. However, conclusions reached in the study may give an idea about the conditions of the working class weakened through precariousness and may lead to further questions about the issue. Another limitation is related with the composition of the sample.

This study does not include class experiences of female workers, who are in very limited numbers and working either in the upper levels as engineers or in the lower levels as tea-makers. Therefore, this study lacks gender analysis of the class relations. Moreover, no interviews were made with Arabian workers. There are two reasons for this. The first reason is that individual relationships which were available within the interviews did not enable us to reach Arabian workers. The other reason was general problem faced by employees wanting to engage in this study. Namely, fear of losing job. This explains why most of the workers did not accept the invitation to come for an interview. Many were suspicious about this attempt. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some even asked whether I had a bond with any “organization”. This suspicious approach and fear of losing their job meant using individual relations to gain workers’ trust. Another important limitation of the field research is the gender of the researcher. Being a woman made things difficult for me in the Tuzla shipyard region, which could be defined as a space of males. Moreover, most probably it made interviewees – all of whom are male – less comfortable and, one can hypothesize, more “careful” in their choice of words.

This thesis consists of five chapters. Just after the Introduction, Chapter 2 tries to provide general discussions on precariousness and current obstacles to the organization of the working class. It does so by first analyzing macro-context in which neoliberal transformation has happened and its brief history in Turkey. After that, I will focus on the theoretical debates on the “precarity” and clarify the position of the study among these debates. Then, I will discuss the precarization of labour and problems of labour unions in Turkey. In the last part of the chapter, I will concentrate on the proletarianization of Kurds and the role of Turkish nationalist discourse which has been constituted over certain Kurdish image in the struggle of the working class.

Chapter 3 begins with a brief overview on the rise of the shipyard sector the Tuzla shipyard region. It basically discusses the *flexible labor* regime and widespread subcontracting system, and focuses on its effects on working and living conditions of shipyard workers. In this respects, workers’ main working problems about wages, social premiums and work-related accidents will be addressed. After that, the position of the state in Tuzla shipyard region and workers’ opinions on the

state will be discussed critically. In the end of the chapter, the effects of precariousness on workers' future expectations and plans will be examined.

Chapter 4 deals with the organizational difficulties of the working class in Tuzla shipyard region. In this context, after mentioning labor unions in Tuzla shipyard region and workers' opinions on them, I will concentrate on the obstacles to class-based labor unionism with reference to Limter-İş. In this respect, the effects of precariousness, Turkish nationalist discourse and religious discourse will be analyzed. In the last part of the chapter, I will focus on the workers' perceptions on their class positions and their opinions and feelings towards existing class relations.

In the concluding chapter, I will present basic findings of the study and make some speculations about the discussions derived from the chapters.

CHAPTER 2

NEOLIBERAL TRANSFORMATION, PRECARIZATION OF LABOR AND THE WORKING CLASS IN TURKEY

This chapter begins with the analysis of basic characteristics of neoliberal transformation which has occurred in macro-context. Related with this, we will briefly explain the history of neoliberal transformation in Turkey which began in the 1980s and intensified in the period of AKP government. After that, the theoretical debates about precarity will be explained, and the position of this study will be clarified. Once this clarification has been made, the chapter will discuss the effects of precariousness on labor. Another focus of this chapter will be the precarization of labor in Turkey with reference to legal regulations prepared legitimately as grounds for precarious employment in the private and public sector. Then, we will discuss the negative effects of precariousness on the organization of the working class and examine the conditions and problems of labor unionization in Turkey. In the last section of this chapter, we will concentrate on the negative relations between Turkish nationalism and the solidarity of the working class. In order to do so, after briefly going into the relationship between the Turkish nationalist discourse and the Kurdish question, we will discuss the proletarianization process of the Kurds and the changing composition of the working class in Turkey. Lastly, we will try to show the obstructive role played by anti-Kurdish discourses and practices in the organization of the working class in Turkey.

2.1. Neoliberal Transformation in the Post-1980s

In the late 1970s, with the onset of economic crisis at the world scale, it was understood that the regime based on mass production, redistributive state, and national development could not reproduce itself. Under these conditions, new phase opened in the history of capitalism: neoliberalism. Harvey (2007, 2) defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade”. In line with this theory, state interventions in the economy began reduce, and flexible production models replaced Fordist production, which was distinguished by its strong focus on domestic markets, the development of widely inclusive mass production and consumption, the expanded domain of national state regulation, sustained economic growth, a system of progressive social security provision and finally, the institutionalization of class conflict” (Hirsch, 1999, 278). Jessop (2001, 2) talks about two basic features of global neo-liberal project: the first one is the pursuit of new accumulation strategy based on privatization, liberalization, de-regulation, the introduction of market proxies and benchmarking into the public sector, tax cuts, and internalization (or globalization); the second one is the search for new forms of social regulation to create a multi-tiered market society that complements the market economy.

One of the most basic outcomes of the neoliberal era is the phenomenon of *globalization*. Globalization could be defined as the process of the total integration of the constituent parts of the world economy with each other and with international markets (Boratav, Yeldan & Köse, 2001, 317). Castells argues that even if capitalism always tries to expand endlessly, it was only in the late twentieth century that the world economy was able to become truly global on the basis of the new infrastructure provided by information and communication technologies (2010, 101). Within the context of new global economy, which uses institutional instruments such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the World

Trade Organization (WTO) among others, national barriers to the flow of capital have diminished. The foundations of the global economy have been created by three interrelated policies: deregulation of domestic economic activity, liberalization of international trade and investment and privatization of publicly controlled companies (Castells, 2010, 137). These policies have resulted in the rise of transnational corporations which have built-up ever-more sophisticated global production networks, with different parts of the value chain produced by affiliated in other countries or by unaffiliated companies through arms-length contracts (Paus, 2009, 4).

However, this reconstruction process is not only created by markets; the role of governments, which implement deregulation and liberalization policies, should be emphasized, too. It is misleading to treat state as a neutral entity which is external to the class struggle; rather, “the state is the organized expression of the power configurations, the locus of their formation and preservation, and the instrument of coercion that goes with this power” (Dumenil & Levy, 2002, 46). Bedirhanoglu and Yalman argue that in the neoliberal era, as ever, state power is integral for the construction and the reproduction of the market economy as a ‘form’ of the capitalist relation of production (2010, 108). Under the conditions of neoliberalism, the state provides the institutional framework for the owners of capital to operate within free market and free trade, which are regarded as being of fundamental value.

One of the basic policies of the neoliberal state is reducing public expenditures and privatization of public services. With the end of the “social welfare state” society is almost totally left to the whims of the free market economy. As Harvey states, in the neoliberal era, while personal and individual freedom in the marketplace is guaranteed, each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being, which extends into the realms of welfare, education, health care, and even pensions (2007, 65). Market-based provision of public goods has been expanded in the neoliberal reconstruction process. As a result of the commercialization of public services, inequalities, social and economic polarization and poverty have been aggravated in the societies.

As ever in capitalism, neoliberalism identifies individual freedom to the level of freedom in the market – or, free market. As Harvey claims, neoliberalism assumes

that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market (2007, 3). However, this “social good” does not refer to “public good”, but refers to “individual freedom” and “individual responsibility”. Therefore, rather than questioning the structural reasons for it, individuals are blamed for their “failure” in the free market.

Neoliberal transformation has changed the labor regime, too. Standing argues that once the world began to become an *open* economy system, the *laborist model* in closed-economies (in which social entitlements were tied to the performance of labor, while regulations, social protection, and redistribution were based on the norm of full-time labor by a man) became unsustainable (2009, 42-43). Flexibility, which enables capitalists to answer the changing environment, became one of the basic characteristics of the new production process. Castells (2010, 166) explains the rise of flexible production as such:

When demand became unpredictable in quantity and quality, when markets were diversified worldwide and thereby difficult to control, and when the pace of technological change made obsolete single purpose production equipment, the mass-production system became too rigid and too costly for the characteristics of the new economy. A tentative answer to overcome such rigidity was the flexible production system.

The new model which has emerged under the rubric of flexibility and neoliberalism has destroyed national labor markets which had ameliorated their former inequalities and insecurities (Standing, 2009, 44). The pressure to minimize the cost of labor for the sake of profit maximization leads low wages and unsecured working conditions. Temporary employment challenges the traditional understanding of organizational membership, loyalty, safety, welfare and social integration (Bergström, 2003, 43).

As Hirsch states, policy which is solely concerned with increasing the value of capital assets and securing international competitiveness, must consciously and strategically factor in mass unemployment (1999, 280). As a result of the rise of mass unemployment and job insecurity, competition between workers has increased. Fear of losing one’s job has weakened the power of collective working class action.

As Dumenil and Levy claim, the solidarity of wage-earners has been broken and the compromise which had set limits to the power of finance has been destroyed in the neoliberal era (2002, 55). Moreover, in the macro context, strengthened by neoliberalism's anti-state rhetoric, the financialization of everyday life has played a central role in de-legitimizing class-based struggles (Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010, 109).

2.2. Brief Overview to Neoliberal Development in Turkey

Parallel to global developments at the time, the neoliberal transformation process began in Turkey in the 1980s. The 1970s world capitalist crisis marked the collapse of the inward-oriented, import-substituting model of industrialization (Öniş, 2009, 1) and provided a basis for the legitimacy of neoliberal transformation. In the conditions of Turkey, two stand-by agreements signed with the IMF and the 1980 military coup's violent suppression of all social opposition which had potential to resist to this "savage experiment" of wholesale economic and political restructuring facilitated the neoliberal rupture (Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010).

Up to the end of the 1980s, Turkey implemented policies for trade liberalization and financial liberalization. Boratav, Yeldan and Köse (2001, 318-319) state that the characteristic of this era was structural adjustment with export promotion through the exchange rate and direct export subsidies. According to them, the period was characterized by a severe suppression of wage incomes via hostile measures against organized labor. In the 1980s:

The overall *anti-labor* and *pro-capital* orientation of the economic policies has been the unifying force behind the bourgeoisie and resulted in the mobilization of massive moral, ideological and material support provided by all segments of the business community first to the Junta, and, later, to the Motherland Party (Boratav, 1990, 225).

Turgut Özal was a critical name of the neoliberal transformation of Turkey. He was at the head of the 24 January 1980 program which aimed at export-oriented trade and "market-directed system of resource allocation" (Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010, 111). However, this period did not succeed in creating a market-economy in

Turkey. Öniş argues that as a consequence of weakness of state capacity to achieve macro-economic stability, three consecutive crises happened within a period of less than a decade: 1994, 2000 and 2001 (2009, 3). For him, one of the reasons of this failure is lack of a strong institutional infrastructure for the effective operation of a market-oriented economy (Öniş, 2004, 1-3).

The 1990s were characterized by huge budget deficits and high rates of inflation. The need for regulatory reforms to enhance market openness was rearticulated and the need for state interventions was acknowledged in that era (Bedirhanoglu & Yalman, 2010, 115). As a consequence of this period, the *February Crisis* occurred in 2001, which was the most effective economic bust in terms of paving the way for a new phase of neoliberalism. It pointed to the inherent structural deficiencies of the economy which could not be simply eliminated by pumping additional liquidity into the system (Öniş, 2009, 8). According to Bedirhanoglu and Yalman, the 2001 crisis referred to the internationalization of the Turkish state in the sense of its cooperation in taking responsibility for global accumulation within its borders and its cooperation in setting the international rules for trade and investment (2010, 117).

As a consequence of the negative social effects of the 2001 economic crisis, such as rising unemployment rates and increasing poverty, trust toward existing political parties in the coalition government weakened within society. This paved the way for the rise of a new political party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which defined itself as a “conservative democrat”⁶ party. In the 2002 election declaration of the AKP, in which the need of structural economic reforms including accelerating privatization⁷ and in which providing settings for national and foreign investment was emphasized, reveals its commitment to neoliberal hegemony. The AKP put the case clearly in a brochure published in 2011 by praising the potential of “Rekor özelleştirme: 1986-2002 yılları arasında devlete yük olan kurumların

⁶ See ‘Milli Görüş’ten muhafazakâr demokrasiye’, *Sabah*, 15 August 2003

⁷ JDP explained that it signed 34 billion dolar privatization between the years 2003-2011, while it was 8 billion dolar for the period 1986- 2002. See JDP, *Alnımızın Ak’ıyla 8,5 Yıl: Birlikte Başardık*, (Ankara, 2011), p.11.

özelleştirilmesiyle elde edilen gelir 8 milyar dolar iken, 2003-2011 yılları arasında 34 milyar dolarlık özelleştirmeye imza attık.”⁸ It is quite possible to see determination of the government in the following announcements by the government. Prime Minister Erdoğan, for instance, responded to opposition against the privatization of public investment by stating that: “Yatırım için dünyanın tüm girişimcileriyle görüşürüm. Bakanlarıma da her yerde görüşmelerini tavsiye ederim. Çünkü ben ülkemizi adeta pazarlamakla mükellefim”⁹. Similarly, ex-Minister of Finance Kemal Unakıtan stated in 2007 that: “Özelleştirmede satıyorsun, satıyorsun bitmiyor. Bu kadar komünist bir ülkeymişiz. Komünizm ağdasılıymışız. Ulaştırma, çimento, kağıt, şeker, her şey devlete ait. Bir berber dükkanları kalmış özel teşebbüsün elinde. Özelleştirmelere devam edeceğiz”¹⁰.

One of the basic economic objectives of the AKP has been making Turkey a “paradise” for investors. In line with this purpose, foreign investors benefited from the changes in the incentive structure involving an improvement to legal protections, a reduction in administrative barriers to investment, and from a significant reduction in the corporate taxes (Öniş, 2009, 19). The role of the IMF and European Union (EU) should be emphasized in the economy program of Turkey under AKP rule. Öniş emphasizes the role of AKP government’s strong commitment to IMF and EU in generating a relatively smooth and sustainable recovery process after the 2001 crisis (2009, 27).

Bedirhanoglu and Yalman argue that privatization of the large-scale profitable state enterprises have helped strengthen the negotiation capability of AKP vis-à-vis powerful capital groups because it helped the Party create its own capital base (2010, 120). On the other hand, when looking from the macro context, the

⁸ “Record privatization: If the state procured 8 million dollars from privatizing cumbersome institutions between the years 1986 – 2002, we have signed away 34 million dollars worth of state institutions between 2003 – 2011”.

⁹ “I am holding talks with all the world’s great entrepreneurs for the sake of investment. To my ministers I recommend these kinds of meetings, because I am basically, charged with marketing my country”. See “Ülkemi pazarlamakla mükellefim”, *Milliyet*, 16 October 2005.

¹⁰ “You start selling through privatization – and the sales never ends! We must have been living in such a communist country – living under the spell. Transport, cement, paper, sugar – everything, belonged to the state. Just the barber shop was private! We will continue with privatization” See “Satıyoruz satıyoruz bitmiyor ne komünist bir ülkeymişiz”, *Hürriyet*, 18 July 2007.

economic policies of the AKP governments manifest the symptoms of “jobless growth” because the increases in labor productivity has not been accompanied by an improvement in either real wages or labor participant rates (Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010, 120-121).

As a result of the dissolution of the welfare state, charity organizations have replaced the state in certain responsibilities the neoliberal era, which has become more apparent in AKP era in Turkey. Working and living conditions of working class have become much worse. The effects of flexible employment have caused more job insecurity and dissolution of organized working class, which will be discussed in detail in following parts of this chapter.

2.3. Theoretical Framework of Precarity

Flexible, contingent and precarious employment have become one of the important debates of labor studies in recent years. Precarious employment is characterized by poor wages, job insecurity, lack of protection against dismissals, limited access to representation and little or no health and safety at work etc. Candeias (2008, 4) defines the precarity as a “general process to dismantle and polarise the levels of social rights and standards of living, with very contradictory consequences, for most of the labor force”. According to Tsianos and Papadopoulos (2006) precarity is an experience of “embodied capitalism”. They argue that precarity refers to a form of exploitation of the continuum of everyday life, not simply the workforce, but also of future.

There is a debate on precariat whether it is a “new class” or not. Guy Standing (2011) argues that precariat is a *class-in-the-making*. He defines precariat as an “emerging dangerous class”. For him, temporary low-wage workers tend to be attracted by neo-fascist messages because tensions within the precariat are setting people against each other. He claims that the working class – in conventional sense – is finished and there is a need to define new terminologies in class relations today. Standing emphasizes on the *subjective positions* of the precariat is useful in understanding experiences of classes. However, definition of classes cannot be based

on subjective positions. In the Marxist sense, classes are formed in the level of production relations and precariat is not external to the existing relations of production. Therefore, it would be misleading to define the precariat as a new class. Seymour (2012) also claims that it is mistaken to treat the precariat as an “emerging class”. He says that “the precariat is not a dangerous, exotic, alien thing...it is all of us”.

Even if precarity is a new phenomenon started to be used in recent years and spread in a short time, it has always been inherent in capitalist production relations. It is possible to encounter the debate of precarity, without calling it as “precarity”, within writings of Marx. While talking about different categories of the relative surplus population, he focuses on the *stagnant population* which is characterized by a “maximum of working time” and “minimum of wages”:

The third category of the relative surplus population is the stagnant population. This forms a part of the active labor army, but with extremely irregular employment. Hence it offers capital an inexhaustible reservoir of disposable labor-power. Its conditions of life sink below the average normal level of the working class, and it is precisely this which makes it a broad foundation for special branches of capitalist exploitation. It is characterized by a maximum of working time and a minimum of wages. (Marx, 1976, 796)

Şebnem Oğuz (2012) asserts that treating precariat as a new class stems from regarding industrial proletariat as homogeneous people who are protected by labor unions, work for relatively higher wages under better working conditions and putting precariat who work with job insecurity under worse working conditions. In fact, as Oğuz states, this does not reflect the real situation; there is no such a difference between two groups. Precariousness does not exclude industrial proletariat. Moreover, even if it became invisible in the Fordist era, precariousness exists as a structural characteristic of capitalism (2012, 243-244).

Precarious employment entails a supply of more vulnerable workers such as women, immigrants or racialized groups (Vosko & Stanford, 2004, 8). Duly, women, immigrants (or “second-class” ethnicities), young and uneducated people constitute a significant amount of precarious labor workers. In her book, Vosko (2010) tries to analyze “the interplay of employment norms, gender relations and citizenship boundaries”. She claims that “precarious employment is shaped by the relationship

between *employment status* (i.e. self-or paid employment), *form of employment* (e.g. temporary or permanent, part-time or full-time), and *dimensions of labor market insecurity*, as well as *social context* (e.g. occupation, industry, and geography) and *social location* (or interaction between social relations, such as gender, and legal and political categories, such as citizenship).” (2010, 2) However, while age, gender, education and race are important variables, job insecurity is not limited to vulnerable groups. As Bourdieu (1998, 82) says, “job insecurity is now everywhere”. It is not only in the private sector, but also in the public sector; not only in industry, but also in the institutions of cultural production and diffusion- education, journalism, the media etc. Similarly, Seymour (2012) argues that precarity is being thrust not just on migrants and the poorest, not just on women workers, not just on students and the young, not just on a shrinking manual workforce, but on public sector workers – from the street cleaners to civil servants and health professionals.

The effects of *precarization* are not limited solely to employment of the working class – they also have social and cultural effects on lifestyles, character, imaginations, future expectations etc. Every economic change paves the way for political and cultural changes. So, precarious employment requires new socio-cultural formation. Sennett talks about new characteristics of capitalist culture. He says that individuals have to cope with three main problems in the new form of capitalism: fluidity of time, renewals on abilities and talent, and the disappearance of narratives accumulated throughout the long former years of earlier capitalist recent history. For him, individuals in the new capitalism have to adopt themselves to the fluidity of time (Sennett, 2011, 11-13). Furthermore, Bourdieu (1998) claims that precariousness pervades both the conscious and unconscious mind. He says that casualization affects individuals who suffer it by making the whole future uncertain, it prevents all rational anticipation and, in particular, the basic belief and hope in the future that one needs in order to rebel, especially collectively, against present conditions, even the most intolerable (1998, 82). These debates will provide us with an insight for analyzing future expectations of shipyard workers. Now, we will look at the precarization of labor in Turkey.

2.4. Precarization of Labor in Turkey

Precarization of labor has gained wide currency following years of the end of the 1990s in Turkey. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the number of subcontracted workers has risen from 350.000 to more 1.5 million in the course of ten years (Yerdeniz, 2013). Oğuz (2012) suggests that the control on labor was constituted in distribution area over law wage policies in the 1980s and 1990s, in the first phase of neoliberalization in Turkey. In the second phase, from the end of the 1990s to now, the control on labor came to be provided over precarization and flexibilization policies of labor (Oğuz, 2012, 230). In this respect, in order to understand the transformation of labor policies, we will look at some significant business corporations' reports emphasizing the "need of flexibility" in production relations.

In the report of *Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations* (TİSK) published in 1999, flexibility was presented as a necessity to integrate into the global world economy. It was argued that flexibility would enhance employment and protect business in times of economic crises (TİSK, 1999). Moreover, TİSK wrote a letter to the government, in which they warned the government against the law intending to empower job security. They claimed that the prerequisite of the security of workers is the security of business. Thus, their suggestion was to "modernize" labor regulation through flexibilization policies and to "review" severance and notice pay of workers.¹¹ Another influential business corporation, the *Turkish Industry and Business Association* (TUSİAD), also claimed that flexible employment would increase the rate of employment and make the Turkish economy more powerful. In a report published in 2002, they emphasized the importance of "speed" and "flexibility" for the success of companies in a competitive market (2002, 74). The common point of these discourses is their collective legitimization of flexibility as a factor which decreases the rate of unemployment.

¹¹ See <http://www.izafet.com/ekonomi/380754-tisk-ten-hukumete-mektup.html>

In line with these discourses, legal regulations intending flexibilization of labor were made on labor law. With the Labor Act no. 4857, enacted in 2003, part-time, temporary and contractual employment gained legal basis and expansion of flexible and precarious employment was aimed through establishing private employment offices (Oğuz, 2012, 230). A closer look at the articles of Labor Law shows that the scope of job security has been restricted. As Şafak (2007) says, according to this law, job security compromises only those workers working under a labor contract for an indefinite period in workplaces employing 30 or more workers and working for more than six months. Therefore, job insecurity has become widespread thanks to the passing of this law. In other words, this law seems to be made in accordance with the desires and interests of big business, at the expense of countless workers. As Yücesan-Özdemir and Özdemir claim, one of the basic features of “new” Labor Law, which was firstly seen in judicial precedents and then came to be dominant in doctrine, is denial of the conflict between labor and capital and its appearance as social inequalities (2008, 101).

Seeking competitiveness in the global market has changed the rules of the employment regime in the public sector, too. Flexible working conditions have spread from private to public. Public employment began to be seen as a financial burden on the state; therefore, reforms in the public employment regimes have become one of the main issues on the political agenda (Güler, 2005, 49). In the recent years, while the amount of temporary or contractual employment has been increasing, the number of permanent civil servants or workers in the public sector has been in decline. As Oğuz (2012) states, according to Civil Servant Law no. 657, most of the civil servants who are employed under article 4/A have had their status transformed to “contracted personnel” and the number of individual, temporary, limited and part-time labor contracts have rocketed in the education and health sector. Moreover, as a result of the privatization of public institutions, a significant amount of workers in these institutions have lost their job and came to be employed under article 4/C and are now working for lower wages in temporary jobs (Oğuz, 2012, 230-231). It is quite possible to see the tendency to flexibilize employment in the public sector from the statements of the government. According to the Minister

of Environment and Urban Planning, Erdoğan Bayraktar, Civil Servant Law no. 657 is not appropriate because, for him, civil servants sit back and get paid for it:

Tabii 657 sayılı Kanun da bize uymuyor. Devlet memuru oluyor birisi, ondan sonra yat, uzan, para kazan, böyle bir şey yok. Çalışan, üreten, faydalı olan öne geçecek, ikili ilişkilerle nabız tutanlar değil. Kim ürettiyorsa, kim başarılıysa, kim faydalıysa onlar öne geçecek.¹²

This statement glorifies the “efficiency” principal of neoliberalism. In fact, it means that civil servants will no longer enjoy job security. Progress under the guise of greater “efficiency” is a thinly veiled threat to job security. Bora (2011) talks about the dominant ideological discourse which accompanies the restriction and precarization of public employment. This discourse represents public servants as “parasitic” and “irresponsible” on the one hand, and glorifies individuals working under precarious conditions for always being ready to new opportunities and taking risks, on the other (Bora, 2011, 55). Bayraktar talks from such a “liberal morality”. This discourse shows itself in flexibilization of promotion conditions and payments of civil servants¹³ and rising numbers of contracted workers in public sector¹⁴.

To sum up, it can be said that flexibilization and precarization of labor is no longer the exception, but the rule. Precariousness spreads everywhere and permeates all spheres of daily life for countless individuals. As Yücesan-Özdemir and Özdemir (2008, 122) assert, through neoliberal social policy, most of the victories of the labor movement, gained through struggle, have been revoked, with workers being left to the compulsions of the market, in essence an era of “rampant capitalism”. However, there is another need for the control of labor: unorganized, fragmented and resigned

¹²“Of course statute 657 is unsatisfactory to us. Someone works to get a position as a civil servant and then just sits around, lies back, relaxes and earns money of the back of it. A worker, a producer or a facilitator must come first from now on. They are not of the same value. If you produce, work for success or provide a service, you are going to be given priority” See <http://www.halkizbiz.com/ekonomi/memurluk-yan-gelip-yatma-yeri-mi-h1329.html>

¹³ See “2013’te memur için devrim gibi bir uygulama”, <http://www.haber7.com/ozel-haber/haber/944659-memur-2013te-esnek-calisacak>

¹⁴ See Bedirhanoglu, P. (2010) “Türkiye’de Neoliberal Otoriter Devletin AKP’li Yüzü”, İ. Uzel ve B. Duru (Eds.), *AKP Kitabı: Bir Dönüşümün Bilançosu*, Ankara: Phoenix Publication, p.54.

working class. In this respect, now, we will look at the effects of precariousness on organization of working class and the conditions of labor unions in Turkey.

2.5. The Conditions and Problems of Labor Unions in Turkey

Flexible employment is not simply related with the rate of profit. It has also effects on the organization and struggle of the working class. The production does not only pertain to economy, it also pertains to politics. In other words, capitalist production relations and the various facets of working class attitudes in reaction to the change of social-economic environment – rebellion, resignation and consent determine each other reciprocally. In this context, the effects of precariousness on workers' organization, resistance and/ or resignation become important. Before debating on this issue, we will briefly look at the history of labor unions in Turkey.

The history of trade unionism of Turkey, where industrialization and the formation of working class were occurred relatively late, does not date long back; in 1947 the Law on Trade Unions was brought into effect. However, this was not a complete freedom for trade unions as the right to *strike* was forbidden. Moreover, trade unions were defined as national associations which were unable to act against “nationalism” and “national interests”. In this way, the law aimed at preventing strong opposition from trade unions against the existing political regime. Türk-İş (*The Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions*) was the first trade union confederation established in 1952. It was organized among state employees and adopted the politics of reconciliation rather than struggle to protect the rights of workers (Akkaya, 2004, 146). During the 1960s, constitutional changes paved the way for an expansion of organizational activity and DİSK (*The Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey*) was established in 1967 as a leftist alternative to Türk-İş. Another labor union established in 1976 was Hak-İş (*The Confederation of Real Trade Unions*), which is known to have Islamist leanings.

Between 1967 and the military intervention of 1980, DİSK which enhanced economic circumstances of its members marked the Turkish labor unionism through its successful unionism. However, this relatively liberal environment did not long

last. With the military coup of 1980, all confederations except Türk-İş were closed. Unionization and collective bargaining activities were drastically restricted; the right to strike was banned. Under these conditions, it became easier to implement neoliberal policies which served the interests of bourgeoisie and weaken workers' organizational power. DİSK resumed its activities in 1992. However, return to civilian rule did not pave the way for a removal of the limitations on democratic rights and freedom of the working class engrained in the 1982 constitution and the related legislature enacted by the military regime (Bedirhanoglu & Yalman, 2010, 119).

In the 1980s, as a result of decline of trade unions in global politics and rising pressure on trade unions in local politics, unionization was weakened and workers' right to organize was restricted (Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir, 2008, 131). Today, rising flexibility in production relations and expansion of precarious work are added to existing problems of labor unions. It was mentioned that the number of contracted workers in public sector and the number of temporary and/or subcontracted worker in private sector has been increasing in Turkey. Thus, the objective basis of unionization has been eroded. Moreover, job insecurity destroys workers' sense of belonging to their workplace, which constitutes a strong obstacle to unionization. What's more, the lack of legal protection against dismissals provides an opportunity for employers to discharge workers who tend to organize and oppose working conditions with little opposition. In this way, it is aimed to withdraw all workers from unionization through a threat of job loss. Also, privatization of public enterprises has increased the number of contracted workers and has caused serious unemployment and de-unionization (Dereli, 1998; cited in Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir, 2008, 132). Another attempt to prevent unionization is to use "reconciliation" discourse. Akkaya asserts that many companies, in recent years, have begun to use a discourse which intends to create common interests between management and workers, and aims at generating forums through which workers could express their interests and simultaneously increase their commitment to companies (cited in Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir, 2008, 132). In other words, management tries to reach workers directly by acting in lieu of labor unions (Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir, 2008, 133).

However, it should be stated that the problems facing unionization are not limited to the consequences of the global neoliberal transformation and legal restrictions; labor unions also face a dramatic crisis of representation. When we look at the characteristics of labor unions in Turkey, we see that they have tendency toward pragmatism, limiting their activities to matters related to the members' wages. They have not sufficiently sought to, or succeeded to mobilize the working class and remain as narrow interest-based organizations. Rather than working for class interests of the working class against sovereigns, they usually compete with each other for increasing the numbers of their members, which strengthens the fragmented and weak image of the working class.

Another problem of unionization is labor union bureaucracy. In Turkey, trade unions have vertical organizational structure which constitutes an obstacle to active participation of members. The decision-making mechanisms are usually centralized in the hands of the governing boards. Undemocratic structures and practices have damaged workers' sense of belonging to labor unions. This situation became particularly apparent in the process of TEKEL workers' resistance¹⁵. In that process, Türk-İş, the TEKEL state workers' confederation, fell behind the resistance and even took an obstructive stand.

It can be said that even if unionization was weakened in the neoliberal period starting from the 1980s, the AKP years have seen the greatest deterioration with regard to unionization and the strength of progressive unions in particular (Karaağaç & Yılmaz, 2013). It is difficult to assess the exact rates of unionization. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the rate of unionization among civil servant is 68,77%¹⁶, while the rate of unionization among workers is 9,21¹⁷. On the other hand, while the number of workers subject to collective bargaining was about

¹⁵ As a result of the privatization of Tekel Enterprises, many units of it closed and many workers were left to the unsecured working conditions. Tekel workers who rejected to work under precarious conditions started non-stop 78 days resistance in tents in the streets of Ankara.

¹⁶ http://www.csgeb.gov.tr/csgebPortal/ShowProperty/WLP%20Repository/csgeb/dosyalar/istatistikler/4688_istatistik_2013

¹⁷ http://www.csgeb.gov.tr/csgebPortal/ShowProperty/WLP%20Repository/csgeb/dosyalar/istatistikler/2013_ocak_6856

1.089.549 in 1991, it decreased to 236.039 in 2010.¹⁸ Moreover, the number of workers participating in strikes fell from 166.306 to 3.101 from 1999 to 2009.¹⁹ It should be noted that these official figures may not correspond to the reality. Even if accepted as true, these rates do not consider the significant amount of people working in informal job sectors. If we consider the level of informal employment which now constitutes 40-50% of employment²⁰, it becomes clear that the genuine rate of unionization falls much lower than that presented.

The negative trend in unionization has been a world-wide phenomenon in the neoliberal period. Some of the factors of this trend have developed as a result of precarious employment, lack of legal protection against dismissals, privatization of public enterprises and the representation crisis of labor unions. However, obstacles to unionization are not limited to these. Another way of controlling labor is nationalist discourse. Now, we will look at rising proletarianization of Kurdish people and related with this, the role of nationalist discourse reproduced by employers and state officials in preventing the organization of the working class.

2.6. Nationalist Discourse, Kurdish Issue and the Working Class in Turkey

Nationalism has at various junctures of history, been used as a tool of controlling the labor by the bourgeoisie. In this respect, its role in workers' tendency to resign and/or resist becomes important. In this part, we will briefly look at the nationalist discourse in Turkey, its effects on people's perception of "Kurd" and its effects on the working class.

¹⁸ See http://tisk.org.tr/tr/gostergeler_detay.php?id=1

¹⁹ See http://tisk.org.tr/tr/gostergeler_detay.php?id=2

²⁰ See www.sgk.gov.tr

2.6.1. Nationalism and the Kurdish Question

“Nation” and “nationalism” in the modern sense, are relatively new terms that do not go back more than last two centuries despite being assumed to have existed for centuries. National identities are not given or natural things; they are constructed and learned notions. Anderson (1991) defines nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1991, 6).

Anderson’s definition of *limited* nation could be explained by the existence of ‘other’. Anderson states that the nation is imagined as *limited* since even the largest of them has finite boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. For him, the nation does not imagine itself coterminous with mankind (Anderson, 1991, 7). Therefore, the ‘other’ plays important role in the construction of the nation. The “enemy” is mostly more influential and determinative than defining itself for the subject in the process of “the construction of the identity” (Belge, 2003, 184). An “enemy” can be found inside or outside and differs at different socio-political conjunctures.

In the history of Turkish nationalism, the ‘other’ has changed in time: Greeks, Serbians, Armenians, Circassians, Arabians and Albanians were regarded as the “other” by the Turkish nationalism of different historical periods. When coming to the recent history of Turkish nationalism, it is seen that Kurds have become the most powerful figure of “other” in describing Turkish nation and its interests. As Yeğen (2007a, 142) states, the *Kurdish question* has bothered Turkish nationalism throughout the entire republican era.²¹ However, the “enemy” image of Kurds has never been as powerful as that of non-Muslim communities. As a result of being a member of Muslim communities, Kurds have always been perceived as “future-Turks” who would become Turkish through assimilation (Yeğen, 2006). However,

²¹ For an analysis of the ways in which Turkish nationalism has perceived the Kurdish question in a historical manner, see: Yeğen, M. (2007) “Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish Question”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.30 No.1, pp. 119-151.

the ongoing resistance of Kurds against assimilation policies of the state showed that absolute assimilation of Kurds is unrealizable aim. Yeğen (2007b) adds two important developments which make Turkish nationalism feel that the integrity of the Turkish political community is at risk. First one is constitutional and legal reforms made with the purpose of enhancing candidacy to the European Union (EU). For him, Turkish nationalism understood the fact that tackling the ‘Kurdish question’ with the instruments of the past as massive assimilation or compulsory settlement will be more difficult in a Turkey pursuing EU membership. Second one is the acceleration of the gradual establishment of Kurdish autonomy in Northern Iraq. For him, the establishment of Kurdish self-administration in Iraq and Kurds’ recognition as a constituent people in the federal state is another reason of anxiety over the Kurdish question for Turkish nationalism (Yeğen, 2007b, 17).

Kurds are the second largest ethnic group in Turkey. As Beşikçi states, they “had been mere mountain Turks for a long time; an uncivilized people; a community of unruly smugglers and bandits; an offshoot tribe of noble Turkic communities, whose manners had to be Turkified for the modern nation state” (cited in Akdeniz & Göker, 2011, 327). For a long history of Turkey, the existence of Kurds was neglected. Throughout the history of republican era, they have been subjected to assimilation policies of the state. For a political project to create homogeneous community, Kurdish has been forbidden in the public space. Today, even if the pressure on Kurdish has been reduced to some extent (the first state-run TV channel began to broadcast in Kurdish in 2009), Kurdish is still not “allowed” in public services such as education, health, the local and national government. Moreover, thousands of unidentified murders, the burning down of thousands of villages, forced migration and arbitrary arrests and torture, which intensified in the 1990s, constitute other systematic oppression and assimilation policies.

However, the Turkification attempts of the state did not succeed. Even though a significant number of Kurds have been assimilated, a considerable amount of Kurds have been still resisted assimilation policies. Furthermore, they assert their own identity. They demand democratic constitutional changes to be recognized, to remove antidemocratic articles which are obstacles to freedom of thought and to

attain a political authority in the regional level. In this context, it is important to note the place of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the long history of resistance of Kurds and its effect on Turkish nationalism's perception of Kurds. The PKK has become the most dominant power among the Kurdish national movement and gained considerable mass support from Kurds in the last three decades. Within the context of this study, the identification of Kurds and socialist movement with PKK and "terrorism" plays significant role. In the following chapter, we will look at the obstructive role of Turkish nationalist discourse in the organization of the working class. Now, we will briefly explain the proletarianization process of Kurds and changing composition of the working class in Turkey.

2.6.2. Proletarianization of Kurds

It was mentioned that neoliberalism needs vulnerable groups for precarious employment. "Kurdish labor" is one of the significant components of this group in Turkey. What makes this fact possible is the process of dispossession and proletarianization of Kurdish people. Koç (2010, 100-101) analyzes dispossession of Kurds under two categories: dispossession through economic tools and dispossession through political tools. In the economic sense, in parallel with capitalist development which has diffused into agriculture and dissolved traditional forms, Kurds whose main means of living was based on agriculture have been obliged to leave their villages and look for a job in big cities. This is not specific to Kurds, it has happened all over Turkey; however, what is specific to Kurds is their lack of employment opportunities in their cities due to the small amount of investment, which could be regarded as a result of the armed conflict between PKK and the state. In fact, the major difference between the dispossession process of Kurds lies in political reasons. During the 1980s and 1990s, about 3 to 4 million people were forced to leave their villages in the Southeastern region of Turkey by the Turkish army due to the military conflict between PKK and Turkish army. Almost four thousand Kurdish villages were evacuated in the context of State of Emergency Rule (OHAL). Evacuation policies were allegedly executed due to the security concerns of the Turkish state, in order to undermine popular support of PKK and weaken the movement. According

to the research conducted by Göç-Der, the factors causing migration to the cities were the pressures of the security forces and their applications of the OHAL, along with the enforcement of village guard system (Kurds working for the state, present in every town/village), fear of death, the evacuation of villages and hamlets and bans on high plateaus respectively (Mutlu, 2009). As a result of these “security measurements”, Kurds were obliged to leave their villages unwillingly and suddenly, and resettled in cities such as Diyarbakır, Adana, Mersin, İzmir and İstanbul.

Therefore, it could be said that the proletarianization of Kurds has been realized as a result of the changing general conditions in Turkey and “direct and indirect effects of national oppression policies” (Koç, 2010, 100). In this general context, Kurdish population who have entered a *paid employment relation* constitute a significant source of labor market in the proletarianization process in Turkey (Koç, 2010, 103). Kurds constitute significant amount of reserve army of labor in big cities. Migrated Kurds, among whom literacy rate is lower in comparison with the West (Koç, 2010, 101), provide low costs for capital. According to the study on the migration and displayed population in Turkey, 44.3% of the people migrated to urban areas from Eastern Turkey for security reasons are not employed currently, and 49.3% of the these employed migrants are working informal without a social security (HÜNEE, 2006, 91). Most common informal sectors that Kurds work precariously are the construction sector, agricultural sector, garment production and the shipbuilding industry. Yörük (2009) claims that what makes the construction and “success” of neoliberalism in Turkey possible is Kurdish forced migration. For him, without the labor supply of forcibly migrated Kurds, who were dispossessed, lack bargaining power and are ready to work regardless of the working conditions, the process of flexible capital accumulation and neoliberal construction would be different. In this respect, he asserts that while Kurds became proletarianized on the one hand; the working class in Turkey has been “Kurdicized” in this process (Yörük, 2009).

As a result, it is the fact that Kurds have been proletarianized significantly in the last three decades and changed the composition of the working class in Turkey. However, this does not mean that Kurds were not subjected to paid employment

relation before that period. Of course, there were significant amount of workers living through selling their labor power in the market. Moreover, it does not mean that neoliberal development process in Turkey would not realize if Kurds had not been obliged to migrate to large cities. Nevertheless, dispossession of Kurds, which is mostly resulted from national oppression politics, obliged them to migrate mostly without any plan to big cities and work with low wages under precarious conditions to hold on the cities they resettled. In this sense, Kurdish labor significantly enlarged the reserve army of labor, which gave a golden opportunity to capitalists with the means to exploit this state of affairs; it was exactly what they needed to decrease labor costs and to increase their competitive power in the market. The proletarianization of Kurds has increased the competition in the labor market. This situation strengthened negative perception and attitudes towards Kurds among non-Kurdish groups in the working class. Now, we will look at the obstructive role of Turkish nationalist discourse in the struggle of working class.

2.6.3. Nationalism and the Working Class in Turkey

It was mentioned that Kurds began to be seen as a threat to “Turkish nation” especially after the rise of PKK. In the recent history of Turkey, Kurds, especially supporters of *Democracy and Peace Party* (BDP) which is the main representative of Kurdish national movement in the democratic politics, are the most influential “other” figure of Turkish nationalism. It is quite possible to encounter anti-Kurd discourse and practices in the daily life. It could show itself even in natural disasters. In the example of Van earthquake in 2011, people sending a Turkish flag or stone in the packages to Van²² were discussed as much as that of acting with solidarity. Moreover, nationalist discourse became apparent in the mainstream media and social media²³ after the earthquake. In the one of the national TV channels, Müge Anlı, presenter of a program, made a comment as such: “Askere polise taş atarken iyiydi.

²² See <http://t24.com.tr/haber/arkadaslari-depremin-1-yilinda-yunusu-andi/215856>

²³ For an analysis and examples of nationalist discourse in the social media about the earthquake, see <http://www.altust.org/2012/04/sosyal-medyada-van-depremi-normal-gunde-terorist-depreme-vatandas/>

Şimdi deprem olunca devlet gelsin. Oh ne ala! Herkes haddini bilecek!”²⁴ Another TV channel presenter stumbled and reported the new as following: "Acı haber Van'dan, Türkiye'nin Doğu'sundan gelmiş olsa da hepimizi üzdü."²⁵ However, these could not be regarded as individual reactions; they are a follow-up the nationalist discourse of the government. In the same case, Prime Minister Erdoğan said that: “Ancak askere, polise taş, molotof atarken organize oluyorlar, depremde olmuyorlar.”²⁶

Delal Aydın (2009) talks about the relation between increasing Kurdish population in the big cities due to forced migration and criminalization of Kurds in the media. According to her, the concepts of “solvent abusers” and “street children” used interchangeably in the media function as a way of criminalization of Kurds. Moreover, nationalist individuals declare Kurds as a problem or internal enemy with reference to purse-snatchers’ or thinner-addicts’ Kurdish identity. She also emphasizes the role of some media organizations in the criminalization of Kurds, which use the concept of “terrorism” while reporting the news about thinner addicts or street children and report the news after or before the news about PKK (Aydın, 2009). It is true that significant majority of street children are Kurdish children. According to study of Oral, 92% of street children in İstanbul are the children of Kurdish families migrated from the eastern cities.²⁷ However, it is impossible to see socio-political and economic reasons of this fact in the news. Breaking the connection between Kurdish identity of street children and the significant role of forced migration causes a fearful image of Kurdish. In this respect, Kurdish children selling paper napkins or begging in the street due to poverty become indicators of class characteristics of Kurdish question. Even if the news on street children (or

²⁴“It was all fine when they were throwing rocks at police and soliders. But now an earthquake strikes and they want the state to come and help. Splendid. Everyone should know their place” See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGbRqQlyCdI>

²⁵ “Sad news from Van. Then again, all news from the East is sad” See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=re-javYyTjM>

²⁶ “Although they are organized when they throw molotovs at police and soldiers, there’s no solidarity when an earthquake hits” See <http://gorunumgazetesi.net/siyaset/tanil-bora-milliyetcilik-gecmeyen-ergenliktir>

²⁷ See <http://www.radikal.com.tr/1998/10/17/turkiye/01goc.html>

solvent abusers/purse-snatchers) are not given much publicity in the last few years in the media, the way of reporting the news on street children and the content of the news strengthened “dangerous”, “worthless” and “inferior” image of Kurds.

Anti-Kurdish discourse sometimes turns into a lynch mob frenzy. For example, after the conflict between Kurdish and Turkish workers in Bursa, a thousand people got together and shouted slogans against Kurds in 2005. Similarly, 25 Kurdish construction workers were subjected to almost 500 people’s attack and then left Konya in 2006.²⁸ There are so many examples of such kind of lynch attempts towards Kurds.²⁹ What we aim to show is that nationalist discourse could easily turn into a life-threatening lynch attempts towards Kurds. As Bora states, what mobilizes crowds is seeing the PKK in Kurdish person; whether coming out in dispute over income, or about their supporting ‘own people’ from the local town or neighbourhood and defending their ‘superiority’, waving flags and protesting against the ‘treacherous Kurds’ is always a ‘possibility’. (Bora, 2011b, 12).

Moreover, Ferda Koç (2010) emphasizes *class experiences* which promote racist-chauvinist discourse in Turkey. In this context, he talks about the importance of compulsory military service and “martyr funerals”. Since wealthy families can prevent their sons from going to the front line to an extent, “martyr” funerals mostly take place in the homes of poor families. Furthermore, poor young people are subjected to heavy chauvinist-militarist propaganda during military service. This propaganda also creates negative impacts on the families and with the rising number of “martyrs” and disabled soldiers, popular chauvinistic atmosphere becomes more effective among especially males on military age and their families (Koç, 2010, 97-98).

On the other hand, Saraçoğlu (2011) talks about the ways in which Kurdish migrants living in İzmir, western city of Turkey, have been identified by middle-class by certain pejorative labels and stereotypes. He asserts that new Kurdish image demonstrates the ethnicization of longstanding anti-migrant sentiments in Turkey. According to his study, common stereotypes deployed towards Kurds are as such:

²⁸ See <http://www.sendika.org/2006/08/konyada-kurt-iscilere-linc-girisimi/>

²⁹ For a detailed report of lynch attempts, see Bora (2008)

Kurds are “benefit scroungers”, “separatists” and “ignorant and uncivilized” people and they “disrupt urban life”. He emphasizes two important context in which new image of Kurds has occurred: urban context shaped by the neoliberal transformation of Turkish cities and the internal displacement of Kurdish migrants. Division of Kurdish migrants from the middle-class in the space of city bears on these negative stereotypes. Middle-class defines Kurdishness with the image of Kurds they come into contact in public spaces, for example in bazaars where most of the stallholders are Kurds, in streets where most of the street children polishing shoes and selling tissues are Kurds, in the corners of the city where most of the people selling mussels are Kurdish men from Mardin (Saraçoğlu, 2011). As it can be seen in his study, Kurds are regarded as homogenous and anomalous group and discriminated over pejorative stereotypes in the big cities.

As a result, it is quite possible to see nationalist discourse in the daily life as discriminatory discourses in media and social media, as pejorative labels and lynch attempts towards Kurdish people especially in the western cities of Turkey and as chauvinist-militarist propaganda in “martyr funerals” and farewell ceremonies of soldiers. All of these nationalist/racist practices decrease the possibility of collective action and undermine the solidarity of the working class in Turkey. However, the working class in Turkey experienced TEKEK resistance in which Kurdish and Turkish workers have developed democratic and egalitarian understanding towards each other. Most of the nationalist Turkish workers in resistance have overcome their prejudices towards Kurds. Moreover, Kurdish workers have understood that not all Turkish workers are racist; further, they are open to dialogue. This experience showed that the working class struggle has a potential to change their minds and attitudes, and create brotherhood among workers from different ethnicities in the context of class.

2.7. Concluding Remarks

As a result of the neoliberal transformation process, the oppression on the labour has been increased. Flexible production model which enables capitalists to answer

changing environment has replaced Fordist production. Precarious work characterized by poor wages, job insecurity, lack of protection against dismissals, limited access to representation and little or no health and safety at work has become the dominant employment regime. New labor regime did not only precarized working conditions; it has also precarized the life of working class. It has become almost impossible to make long-standing future plans for the working class. Moreover, the solidarity of wage-earners has been broken and labor unions have weakened in this process. The fear of losing job has weakened collective action and struggle of the working class.

In parallel with the neoliberal transformation process taking place globally, the state has begun to implement privatization and liberalization policies. The precarization of labor has gained wide currency following years of the end of the 1990s. With the legal changes made on Labor Law, job insecurity has become widespread. Furthermore, flexible working conditions have been spread into public sector. Public employment began to be seen as a financial burden on the state. As a consequence, while the number of temporary or contractual employment has been increased, the number of permanent civil servants or workers in the public sector has been decreased. Therefore, precariousness has spread everywhere and penetrated into all spheres of lives of individuals.

Flexible employment is not simply related to the rate of profit, it is a way of control of labor. In this respect, it aims to create unorganized, fragmented and resigned working class. With the effects of precarious employment, lack of legal protection against dismissals, privatization of public enterprises and representation crisis of labor unions, class-based struggle and unionization has weakened in Turkey, as it is the case in the world.

Nationalist discourse functions as another way of control of labor. In the context of Turkey, nationalist discourse constructs itself over anti-Kurd discourse in the recent years. As a result of dispossession and proletarianization of Kurds, which aroused from general conditions of the country and national oppression politics, “Kurdish labor” became one of the significant components of the working class in Turkey. Kurds who have had to work in precarious works to hold on life in big cities

enabled and accelerated neoliberal capital accumulation process. However, on the other hand, this situation has increased the competition in the labor market and strengthened negative perception and attitudes towards Kurds among non-Kurdish groups in the working class. In this respect, anti-Kurdish feelings and lynch mob gatherings against Kurds have increased in the recent years. The issue concerning nationalism and its effects on daily life are important within the context of this study which tries to show obstructive role of it in the organization of the working class in Tuzla shipyard region which has a multi-ethnic social structure including Turkish, Kurdish and Arabian workers. We will focus on the reproduction of nationalist discourse and “terrorist”, “separatist”, “PKK supporter” and/or “traitor” labels towards Limter-İş as a way of blocking its organizational attempts and undermine the solidarity of shipyard workers.

CHAPTER 3

PRECARIOUS WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF SHIPYARD WORKERS IN TUZLA

In the previous chapter, the neoliberal transformation process and the rise of precarious employment in Turkey were introduced respectively. In this chapter – and in parallel with these developments, the rise of subcontracting and its effects on the working class will be analyzed. Firstly we will briefly explain the rise of shipyard sector and the Tuzla shipyard region, and emphasize the state's role in its circumstances. The main focus of this chapter will be on the flexible labour regime and its negative effects on the working class in the context of the Tuzla shipyard region, with reference to day-to-day problems faced by shipyard workers regarding payments, social security rights, lack of security measurements and work-related accidents. Moreover, the position of the state in class relations in the Tuzla shipyard region will be discussed with reference to its approach to working problems of shipyard workers. In the end of the chapter, we will try to demonstrate the effects of precariousness on imaginations and future expectations of shipyard workers.

3.1. The Rise of Shipyard Sector and Tuzla Shipyard Region

In recent years, the ship-building sector has been an investment center both in the world and in Turkey. This results from the fact that 95% of world trade volume is conducted by maritime transport (DPT, 2006, 1). According to the report of The State Supervisory Council (DDK), while world shipbuilding industry has grown up with 89% in the last four years, it has grown up with 360% in Turkey (2008, 74). Shipyards spread along Turkey's seashore, in the Marmara region, Black Sea,

Aegean and Mediterranean coasts; however, 95% of the country's merchant ship building capacity belongs to the Tuzla shipyard region (TTBİİK, 2008, 28).

The Tuzla district is in the southernmost corner of Istanbul. According to the 2012-address based census, 197.657³⁰ people live in Tuzla. The Tuzla shipyard region constitutes a seaport and dock of 6300 meter length, and has a closed space area of 250.000 m². In addition to the shipbuilding industry, there are leather, marble, paintings, and chemical-organized industrial zones included on the site. In this sense, Tuzla is one of the most significant industrial zones in Istanbul. There are two university campuses in Tuzla, which specialise in issues related to navigation. One of them is the recently established Piri Reis University and the other is the shipbuilding engineering faculty of Istanbul Technical University.

There are 48 shipyards³¹ in the Tuzla shipyard region. It could be said that production in shipyard is concentrated in the hands of seven families, most of whom originate from the Black Sea region: Kalkavan, Yardımcı, Sadıkoğlu, Torlan, Bayrak, Çiçekli and Üner (TTBİİK, 2008, 28). According to statistics from the Turkish Shipbuilders' Association (GİSBİR), 41 shipyards in Tuzla are members of GİSBİR which serves to organize the class interests of the local bourgeoisie. Shipyard owners display in an organized front under the coordination of GİSBİR, which enables them to act together on a range of issues from raw material procurement to taxes, from legal counseling to health services and negotiating with the government (Akdemir, 2008, 241).

If we look at the history of the Tuzla shipyard region, we see that transfer of most of the shipbuilding sector to Tuzla has been facilitated by government regulation. *Aydınlı Bay* in Tuzla was declared as a "Shipbuilding and Subsidiary Industry Region" and rented on lease for 49 years by the Ministry of Finance with a government decree on September 22 1969. Nevertheless, as Akdemir and Odman (2008, 53) state, it was only later, between the years 1984-1989 that Tuzla clearly

³⁰

See http://rapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet?adnksdb2&ENVID=adnksdb2Env&report=wa_turkiye_ilce_koy_sehir.RDF&p_il1=34&p_kod=1&p_yil=2012&p_dil=1&desformat=html

³¹ Original names of the shipyards will not be used for the purpose of confidentiality.

emerged as the center of the shipbuilding industry. During this period, Bedrettin Dalan was the mayor of Istanbul. Shipyards in other districts of Istanbul such as Tophane, İstinye, Beykoz and Haliç were transferred to Tuzla, thereby the sector in one region of the city.

Another form of intervention by the state has come in the form of giving support funds to ship owners in return for placing order to Turkish shipyards. Within the *Ship Building, Ship Purchasing, Shipyard Building and Promotion* (GİSAT) fund, 250 million liras was paid by the state between the years 1976 and 1989 (Akdemir, 2008, 144). This incentive pay given by the state spurred on the shipyard sector's expansion.

However, the most rapid increase of the shipbuilding sector in Turkey corresponds without doubt to the period of AKP rule. Fuel for marine mercantile vessels began to be provided for free thanks to the Special Consumption Tax (ÖTV). Meanwhile, port rates were decreased by 50% and new marinas were built under the build-operate-transfer model.³² According to the Ministry of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications, the number of shipyards rose from 37 to 71, and the capacity of Turkish shipyards has risen from 550.000 DWT/year to 3.600.000 DWT/year from 2002 to April 2012.³³ Rapid growth of the shipbuilding sector in this era is also a result of International Maritime Organization's (IMO) changed rules and standards that ships should obey. As a result of new rules, which ban ships which are over 15 years old from sailing beginning from 2005, the number of ship orders increased in international level. This regulation has constituted a chance for shipyards in Turkey and demand towards Turkish shipyards has risen considerably.

Moreover, the role of the close relationships between the AKP government and shipbuilding industrialists should be stated. For example, Minister Binali Yıldırım, who graduated from the Faculty of Naval Architecture and Ocean Engineering, had worked in Camialtı Shipyard in different levels before becoming a

³² See <http://www.denizhaber.com.tr/guncel/6468/binali-yildirim39in-karnesi-pekisi.html>

³³ See <http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d24/7/7-5872sgc.pdf>

minister.³⁴ Moreover, the children of Prime Minister Erdoğan³⁵, Minister Binali Yıldırım and ex-Minister Osman Pepe are engaged in the operation of a shipping line. However, beyond these more overt relations, there also exists direct representation of shipyard owners in parliament. For example, Durmuşali Torlan, the owner of Torlan and Toygem shipyards, is a deputy from the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). Also, H. Kemal Yardımcı, the owner of Yardımcı and Türkter shipyards and Cengiz Kaptanoğlu, the owner of Demsan Shipyard, are ex-deputies from AKP. This direct representation in the parliament enables shipyard owners to make the legal regulations necessary to legitimize their interests, which clash with those of the working class.

As a result of the interdependence of capital markets³⁶, international trade is affected by fluctuations within the global economy. This fact was proven in the Tuzla shipyard region with 2008 economic crisis. The amount of workload and the level of employment in Tuzla shipyard region have been decreased after 2008. It is difficult to get exact information about the level of employment due to shadow employment, but it is estimated that there were 35000-40000 shipyard workers in Tuzla in 2008³⁷ when the production reached its peak point. When coming to 2012, GİSBİR announced that the level of employment decreased to 16.000. In other words, employment ratio has been declined at least half and half in Tuzla shipyard region in last four years, whose effects on workers will be discussed later.

Finally, it should be stated that the growth rates of Turkish shipyard sector for the first decade of the 2000s were inflated rates. The genuine growth rates of the “shining sector” of Turkey, show that Turkey shared 0,8 of production in global

³⁴ See www.binaliyildirim.com.tr

³⁵ Following his elder brother A.B.Erdoğan, R.T. Erdoğan’s younger son N.B.Erdoğan has entered into maritime sector, too. See <http://www.gemipersoneli.com/haber/4521-basbakanin-kucuk-oglu-da-denizci-oldu>

³⁶ See: Castells, M. (2010)

³⁷ According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security’s data lastly mentioned in 2008, the level of employment in the sector of ship building in Turkey was 17.572; however, according to statistic of GİSBİR, it was 33.480 for the same year.

market. This is even accepted within the industry as one of the reasons for the exacerbation of the crisis:

Bazı verileri gözden geçirirsek; Türkiye, gemi inşada zirve yaptığı 2008 yılında uluslararası pazarda % 0.8 pay almıştır. Durum böyleyken, bazı söz sahibi kişilerin “dünyada 5. olduk” demesi, sektörü olduğundan büyük göstererek, rehavet oluşmasına neden olmuştur. Dünya 5.liği adet bazındadır. Tersanelerimize sipariş verenlerin çoğunluğu Türk armatör ve bizzat tersanecilerin kendileridir. Kendi tersanesine sipariş veren 80-90 adet gemi olduğunu rahatlıkla söyleyebiliriz. Türk armatörlerin içerisinde, tersanelere 45 adete varan sipariş verenler olmuştur. Bu rakamlar, Türkiye’yi söz konusu 5.liğe yükseltmiş, hatta o dönem,”sektör % 360 büyüdü” denmiştir. Ne yazık ki, krizle birlikte tüm bu siparişler iptal edilmiş veya ertelenmiş olduğundan kısa sürede tersanelerin hemen hepsi siparişsiz kalmıştır.³⁸ (Vedat Parlar, Board member at Gesan Shipyard and General Secretary of Oruç Reis Sailors Club)

3.2. Flexible Labor Regime and Subcontract System in Tuzla Shipyard Region

As aforementioned, what characterizes the labor regime in the neoliberal era is its flexibility. It enables employers to overcome unpredictability and uncertainty of production. Standing (2011) talks about different dimensions of flexibility. *Wage flexibility* means speeding up adjustments to changes in demand, particularly downwards; *employment flexibility* means the easy and cost-free ability for companies to change employment levels, implying a reduction in employment security and protection; *job flexibility* means being able to move employees around inside the company and to change job structures with minimal opposition and cost; and *skill flexibility* means being able to adjust workers’ skill easily (Standing, 2011, 6).

³⁸“If we scan some of the data, it appears that when Turkey reached the pinnacle of its shipbuilding capacities in 2008 it had a 0.8% share in the global market. When that was the situation, many experts were ready to trumpet Turkey as the world’s ‘fifth’ big manufacturer and this contributed to its consequent sluggishness. There was a real (sluggishness to react) on the basis that it was the world’s fifth biggest shipping industry. Most of the riggers were making orders for ships from their own docks! Of course they could easily order 80 – 90 ships from their own shipyards to be made. Out of all the main Turkish shipbuilders, there were 45 ship orders made. These figures made it look like Turkey, the world’s ‘fifth biggest producer, in spite of everything’ – had enlarged its industry by 360%. What a sudden shame then, that with the crisis, all of these orders had to be eventually cancelled or delayed indefinitely, until the shipyards were left with barely an order.” See <http://www.persementrotasi.com/2010/10/turk-gemi-insa-sanayi-sisirildi-2/>

In essence, flexibility serves to reduce the cost of labor and to destroy or bypass the organized power of the working class via fragmented and dispersed working processes. Companies want to free themselves from the costs of keeping regular workers and try to maximize productivity with minimum expenditure, which is inherent in capitalism but intensified with neoliberalism for the sake of increasing global competition.

As opposed to the earlier Fordist phase of capitalism, in which workers usually enjoyed employment guarantees, what we witness in the neoliberal era is mass unemployment and the permanent threat of unemployment. For Bourdieu, the ultimate foundation of the entire economic order, which is characterized by precarity and placed under the sign of freedom, is in effect the structural violence of unemployment, of the insecurity of job tenure and the menace of layoff that it implies. "The condition of the "harmonious" functioning of the individualist micro-economic model is a mass phenomenon, the existence of a reserve army of the unemployed." (Bourdieu, 1998).

Flexibility eliminates the standard notions of permanent work. It brings atypical contractual relationships, such as short fixed-term contracts, part-time work, informal work, seasonal work and subcontracted labour. Such kind of non-standard work causes low levels of payments and less social protection. Hirsch (1999, 281) claims that the direct abolition of standardized work practices in addition to an indirect deregulation of employment relations by means of a growing disparity in pay and increased pressure for mobility, which are intended by deregulation policies, result in the expansion of the industrial reserve army and intensification of social divisions.

Subcontracting is one of the basic instruments of flexible production. Companies seem to be subcontracting an ever-expanding set of activities, ranging from product design to assembly, from research and development to marketing, distribution and after-sales service (Grossman & Helpman, 2005, 135). Outsourcing does not only refer to providing raw materials, but also producing goods and services to firms in accordance with their needs. Subcontracting regime is a way of increasing "efficiency" of labour and decreasing the cost of labor. The vitality and flexibility of

growing use of subcontracting to small and medium businesses allows gains in productivity and efficiency for large corporations, as well as for the economy as a whole (Castells, 2010, 168). The subcontracting system enables shipyard owners to get rid of the burden of each worker – of their wages, social insurance obligations, and security etc. Shipyards not only consign the bulk of activities to subcontractors, they also consign all the responsibilities of workers to subcontractors. The main advantage of subcontracting for employers is to lower the level of labor costs. It provides an advantage for employers to be more competitive in the market through lowering wages and reducing social security for workers. However, how does this affect the workers? What does precariousness or subcontracting change in the living and working conditions of working class?

The subcontract regime mostly refers to low-quality and low-paying jobs. For the working class, it means lower incomes, job insecurity, fragmented and unorganized working class, and more alienated working process. Subcontracted workers tend to have more difficulties in influencing their working conditions (Bergström, 2003, 1). The fear of job loss causes resignation among workers regarding the dangerous conditions they find themselves working in. Moreover, subcontracting weakens the organization of the working class. Traditional labour movements have withered and the effectiveness of trade unions in the decision-making processes has also been eroded.

The Tuzla shipyard region is like a laboratory of neoliberal transformation in Turkey. The process of flexibilization is almost fully completed through the subcontracting regime. In my field research, 14 workers out of 22 were subcontracted workers. But the ratio of my sample does not show existing ratio of employees of subcontractors to employees of the main firms in general. The gap is much greater. Generally, if there are 1100 workers in a shipyard, nearly 100 of them are employees of the main firm, the rest is subcontracted workers. 90-95% of workers in Tuzla shipyard region are subcontracted workers. According to the report of State Auditing Board of the Presidency (DDK), within the shipbuilding sector in Turkey, the application of subcontracting has spread to the extent that currently around 75 – 80% of employees are seen to be sub contracted (2008, 385).

Even if there is no exact number of subcontracting companies in the Tuzla shipyard region, it is estimated that it ranges 1000-1500. There are many subcontract firms at different scales; while some of them could employ ten workers, others employ over a hundred. The high number of subcontractors in the Tuzla shipyard region is a result of shipyards owners' business initiatives. In order to decrease high levels of payments, shipyards began to encourage their workers – especially foremen who know working process better and could guarantee the same quality – to set up new smaller firms and guarantee giving orders to them in the 1980s. The form this encouragement took was providing workspace, tools and equipment to those new firms. One of the subcontractors tells his story as such:

Taşeronun yanında ustabaşılık yapıyordum. Tüm işleri biz yaptığımız için mühendisler önyak oldu. Firma kur, biz sana iş verelim, işi, ekibini topla, işi sen yap, dediler. Böylece başladım...İşi kurarken maddi bir teşvikleri olmadı ama onlar teklif etmese işe girmezdim. (quoted in Akdemir, 2008, 192).³⁹

By virtue of subcontracting, shipyard owners get rid of the relatively high cost of having permanent workers. However, assigning works to subcontractors is not sufficient on its own, for profit maximization. In order to increase competition among subcontract companies and control the prices on the market, shipyards have encouraged other foremen or workers to set up new subcontracting firms. Nevertheless, right along with reducing prices, this process has resulted in decrease in quality. In the interview made with ship engineers from the *Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects* (TMMOB), the process as is explained such:

Tersaneler, avantajlı olduğu için taşeronluğu tercih etti. Taşeronların fiyatları başlangıçta yüksekti. Fiyatları düşürmek için taşeronları bölüp rekabet yarattı tersaneler. Bunun için taşeron ustanın yanında çalışan, iyi olduğunu bildikleri bir ustaya tersaneler destek sağlar ve firma kurdururdu. Böylece küçük gruplar yaratıp fiyatları geri çektiler. Ama bu çok büyük belalar açtı başlarına; çünkü fiyatların düşmesi kaliteyi de düşürmüştü. Dünyayla rekabet

³⁹ “I was working as a foreman for a subcontracting firm. For all that hard work we did, it was the engineers who initially went for it. Set up a business, they said, and we'll give you a job, pull together a team, they said – you guys will be in charge. That's how it all began... While setting up the business we received no material aid, despite the fact if it wasn't at their insistence I wouldn't have done it.”

etmek için belirli bir kaliteyi yakalamak lazım oysa ... (quoted in Akdemir, 2008, 177)⁴⁰

One of the subcontractors -old foreman- puts it some differently and explains negative effects of rising number of subcontractors, in other words, rising competition as such:

Asıl mesele şurada: Sözleşmeyi [taşeronluk sözleşmesini] imzalarken yanlış olduğunu görüyorsun ama altına imza atıyorsun. Mecburen atıyorsun, çünkü öyle adamlar yetiştiriyoruz ki –ben mesela– kendimden 20 tane taşeron çıkarmışım, bugüne kadar. Kaynakçısıyla... 20 taşeronun yanında 20 kişi olsa 400 kişi olur. Yani, bana bunlar rakip şu anda... ya kardeşin dahi, oğlun dahi senin karşına çıkıyor. Hâlbuki çıksın, çıksın ama fiyat düşüyor bu sefer.⁴¹ (quoted in Akdemir, 2008, 178)

Thereby, there is a complex web of subcontracting in Tuzla shipyard region. Shipyards invite subcontractors for a particular activity and try to decrease the price by having subcontractors compete with each other. Subcontracted workers work within the informal webs of relations which are based on kinship or countryman fellowship. Most of the shipyard workers are from outside of Istanbul. They mostly came to Istanbul over hearing from their relatives or follow country men that job was available in Tuzla. There are groups of workers from Black Sea region, Kurds and Alawites. As well as those who settle in Istanbul with their families, there are also small group of workers who come to work seasonally when the workload is high and go back their hometowns when the workload finishes.

In Turkey, “the principal employer- subcontractor relationship” is defined by law number 4857 which was published in the Official Journal in 16.03.2003.

⁴⁰ “Shipyards decided to opt for the advantages provided by subcontracting firms. Subcontracting prices soared initially. In order to lower prices however, the Shipyards divided them up to create competition. That’s why the guy working with the subcontracting company boss, who knew the work well, got support from the yard and set up his own company. That’s how they made smaller groups and rolled back prices. However, this paved the way for a completely different headache for the shipyards – as prices fell, so did the quality. And for them to compete globally, the quality has to be assured.”

⁴¹ “The actual point is this: While signing the contract (the subcontractor’s contract to the ship yard) you know there is something wrong but you sign. You have to sign, since the kind of guys who are coming up – me, for example – I have set up twenty subcontracting firms myself. With welding... Twenty subcontracting firms with, let’s say twenty workers each, mean four hundred workers. The competition is made: From such a great pool I could be going up against my brother or my son. Bring on the competition, the prices will draw back again.”

According to this law, a subcontractor is defined as anyone “who undertakes to carry out work in *auxiliary tasks* related to the production of goods and services or in a certain section of the main activity due to operational requirements *or* for reasons of technological expertise in the establishment of the principal employer” (Labor Law 4857). However, subcontract relations as found in the Tuzla shipyard region exceeds the limits assigned by this law. This results from indefinite expressions of the law. Expressions like “certain sections”, “operational requirements” or “need for technological expertise” are obscure and open to abuse.

Even if article 4857 says that “The main activity shall not be divided and assigned to subcontractors, except for operational and work- related requirements or in jobs requiring expertise for technological reasons”, it is seen in the Tuzla shipyard region that 90% of main activity is assigned to subcontractors. Ship painting, cleaning, steel work, welding and installation are some of the main activities in the shipyard sector. However, all these roles are fulfilled by subcontracting companies. The report of DDK on the Tuzla shipyard region verifies this fact: “In practice, it is seen that the shipyards assign activities regarding production of goods and services which they should fulfill to subcontractors in the increasing intensity” (DDK, 2008, 379). As Akdemir (2008, 242) states, permanent workers are generally employed in use of expensive machines and equipment which require qualification.

Precarious work produces job insecurity and the permanent threat of unemployment. It is quite possible to observe this fact among shipyard workers in Tuzla. Subcontracting firms work on the shipyards temporarily, they are not fixed to one shipyard in general. The number of workers and time to finish a task required for an order changes for the subcontractors. After finishing their part, they leave that shipyard and seek to get an order from other shipyards. Therefore, workers of that subcontractor have to wait him to take a new order and remain unemployed until that time -of course if a subcontractor does not fire those workers within the working process and wants to continue work with them- or look for a work in other subcontracting firms. In either condition, they are under the threat of unemployment.

Subcontracted workers who have been working in shipyards for long years change too many subcontracting firms. It is valid for the interviewees I met, too. For instance, Bülent (34) who left working in shipyards three years ago stated that he had changed almost fifteen subcontracted companies in four years. Similarly, Selçuk (37) who is a subcontracted worker in Gemar Shipyard said that he does not work under a single subcontractor: “Mesela taşeron var 15 gün işi sürüyo, taşeron var iki ay sürüyo. Çalıştığımız taşeronun işi biterse başka bi taşerona geçiyoruz iş varsa.”⁴² Hüseyin (34) clarifies the matter as following:

Taşerondayız. Ordan oraya, ordan oraya. İşte burada biraz dikiş tutturdum... [Ama] Yıl değil, ay. Tersanelerde yıl çalışmak zor. Çok zor yani bir yıl boyunca şey yapmak...4 ay falan oldu.⁴³

Lack of legal protection against dismissals is one of the basic characteristics of precarious employment. It is possible to see its role in increasing job insecurity in Tuzla shipyard region. Subcontracted workers I met usually emphasized the lack of their employment guarantee. Lack of legal regulations protecting workers from arbitrary dismissals has serious negative impacts on the future expectations, work accidents and organization of working class, which will be discussed in detail in following titles.

Another characteristic of precarious work is long working hours and intensified performance of labour, which are directly related with work-related accidents. According to expressions of workers I met, working hours differ usually between 9-10 hours for a day; however, it could reach to 24 hours with extra hours in a day, which is not an exception but a rule in Tuzla shipyard region. It changes also in accordance to departments. Ahmet (33) states that the extra hours reach 80-90 hours in a month in job security department, while it could exceed 100 hours in the department of pool. Moreover, subcontracted workers work around 25-30 days a month, since they work on the basis of a daily payment. Moreover, when asked

⁴² “For example, one sucontractor can get it done in fifteen days, while the other takes two months. If work dries up for one firm, we move on to another”

⁴³ “We work for subcontractors. I moved around a fair bit. Now I’ve managed to hold on to this for a while (but) Not years – months. It’s tough to work in a ship yard for over a year. It’s tough to be on something for a year... About four months.”

whether they have a chance to refuse to work overtime, Aziz, a subcontracted worker, said that they do not because “misal ben kaynakçıyım, ben yapmadam işi, acil, gemi indircekler, e ben kalmıyorum desem yapacak başka adam yok. E ne olacak, dicesek o zaman sen kendi yoluna bak, ben kendime kalacak adam bulayım”⁴⁴ Therefore, lack of legal protection against dismissals which cause the fear of losing their job prevents workers to reject working overtime.

3.2.1. Low Wages and Lack of Social Security for the Sake of “Competitiveness”

It was stated before that subcontracting means low payments for workers. Competitive firms try to keep payments at a minimum level in order to survive within competitive global market. It is what capitalist objective of profit maximization tells to do. As Thompson (1965) claims, there is not “a whisper of the ‘just’ price, or of a wage justified in relation to social or moral sanctions, as opposed to the operation of free market forces”. The worker is an “instrument” among other items of cost (Thompson, 1965, 203). Labor cost is the best bet for reducing the cost of production when compared to, say, decreasing the cost of raw materials – which is more difficult as it is often not in the hands of companies to do anything. In the Tuzla shipyard region, low wages have become more significant problem for workers in recent years. With the decrease in orders after 2008 economic crisis, wages were reduced considerably and have not been increased thenceforth. The fall of payments has affected all shipyard workers, but subcontracted ones have been affected more severely. Cemal (29) who started to work in shipyards in fifteen years old and still working as a subcontracted worker stated that working conditions of shipyards in terms of wages were better seven-eight years ago, it is worse now. Selçuk said that while was earning 90 liras as a daily wage in 2009, he earns 60 liras today. Such a sharp decrease in earnings makes working in shipyards under the threat of work accidents more unbearable:

⁴⁴ “Well take me – I’m a welder. If I don’t do the job on a boat they are hurrying along the line, if say I can’t do it, there’s no other guys who can. So then they say don’t be surprized if we go about looking for someone who will be there”

7 senedir ücretler düşük. Şimdi aldığım parayı 7 sene önce de alıyoduk. 2007’de kriz oldu ya, bütün ücretler düştü. İnsanlar 1200-1300 lira maaş alırken, krizden sonra maaşları 1000 liraya çektiler. Odur budur hep aynı gidiyo. Hatta düştü. Benim çalıştığım firma mesela vasıfsız eleman alıcak, 800 liraya alıcam diyo. Komik bi rakam. Tersane ortamında, ağır sanayide, bi de bunun riski var yani. Diyelim ki adam konfeksiyonda çalışıyor, 80 lira alıyor ama en azından yaşam riski yok. Ama tersanede çalıştığın zaman bir başkasının yüzünden ölme riskin var. Bir başkasının hatası dahi senin ölümüne sebep oluyor.⁴⁵ (Mustafa)

It becomes more difficult for workers to make a living with decreased payments. Hüseyin states that he could not afford basic needs of his family because while prices of natural gas, electricity, house rents etc. are increasing, their wages have stayed at the same level for the last six years. Similarly, Cemal says that while he could afford to provide his family with food on his daily wage seven years ago, he could not even afford bottled gas canister today:

E şimdi düşün ablacım, ben bi elektrik faturası... Ben yani bazen eve gittiğim zaman böyle elektriği açık gördüğüm zaman bile kızıyorum yani, niye açık kalıyor. Belki ihtiyaçtan ama ben kızıyorum, açmayın. Sonuçta ben çalışmadığım zaman n’oluyo o çoluk çocuk madur olacak.⁴⁶ (Cemal)

Low payments oblige workers to work overtime – including Saturdays and Sundays. In this way, workers are employed for longer hours on lower wages. One of the important reasons for the decrease in wages is high unemployment rates. In the context of the Tuzla shipyard region, the 2008 economic crisis resulted in mass unemployment among shipyard workers and paved the way for lower wages. Mass unemployment was turned into an opportunity by shipyard owners and subcontractors. Enlarged reserve army of the unemployed enabled employers to

⁴⁵ “The prices have been low for seven years. The salary I get today is equal to the one I had one seven years ago. The 2007 crisis as you know ended up decreasing our salaries. While workers were earning nearly 1200 or 1300 TL before the crisis, after, it went down to 1000 TL. It’s back to the same. Actually, it’s probably lower. Take the firm I work for, for example, it plans to hire unskilled personnel for 800 TL. “800” is such a ridiculous sum. Imagine that amount, with all the risks of working on a shipyard or in heavy industry. Suppose that a man works in a textile for 80 TL (for a day) – at least his life is not under the risk. But, working on shipyards includes the risk of death coming from the mistake of one person. Just one false slip and you could be gone.”

⁴⁶ “Just think my dear sister, what an electric bill means for me. Sometimes I even go home and get find the electric has been left on and get really angry – who left that on?! Maybe there’s a perfectly good reason, but what can I say – it drives me mad. At the end of the day, my children suffer for the time I don’t work.”

impose their class interests upon workers more intensively. When thoughts of workers on law payments are asked, the most common mentioned reason is unemployment. For instance, Mustafa (47) stated that: “İşsizlik olduğu için adam düşük yevmiye veriyö. İşsizlik çok, işçi çok. O yüzden ne diyo, 800 liraya gel çalış kardeşim, işine gelirse diyo.”⁴⁷ Mass unemployment resulted also in a tendency to resign among subcontracted workers. When it was asked Aziz whether they do anything to get higher payments, he said that they cannot object to employers about low wages because there are too many unemployed people waiting for a job. Bülent, one of the activists of Limter-İş, explained the process as follows:

Yüzde 50’ye varan kesintiler oldu (maaşlarda). 2000-2500 maaş alan kişi 1300-1000 liraya düştü. (İşçiler) bu kesintiyi göze aldı, işten çıkarılmayı göze almadı. İşsiz kalma korkusu var. Gidiyor bütün kahveler işsizle dolu. E dışarı çıkıyor, tersanelerin önü sürekli işsizlerle dolu iş arıyorlar.⁴⁸

The problem related with payments is not limited with low wages in Tuzla shipyard region, workers also have problems in taking salaries. In most cases, wages are paid lately. For example, Emin (34), who has been working for Toygem Shipyard as a subcontracted worker for a year, states that he left prior firm due to he had been taking wage three or four months later. Mustafa, who receives monthly salary as a subcontracted worker in Seden Shipyard, gives example from himself. He says that they regularly take wages one month after.

Moreover, in some cases, workers cannot take their accrued salaries from subcontractors. It was stated before that there are many subcontract companies of all sizes in Tuzla shipyard region. In the process, some of these companies, especially the small ones, declare bankruptcy and disappear without paying workers’ salaries. Furthermore, this is used as a strategy by some subcontracting firms, which continue to work as a subcontractor under another name in the same region. In each case, workers of subcontractors could not get their two, three or more month’s pay. İsmail

⁴⁷ “The boss is able to offer lower wages since there is mass unemployment. Too many workers, not enough work. Because of this condition he can say – here’s 800 lira, come and work here for a bit.”

⁴⁸ “Wage cuts were around 50%. The wage of the worker with 2000-2500 TL decreased to 1300-1000 TL. The workers preferred to risk keeping their wages instead of being unemployed. Fear of unemployment is so common. Look at the coffee houses full of unemployed people. Stepping outside, you see the unemployed people looking for jobs around shipyards.”

(35) who had worked for seventeen years as a subcontracted foreman in shipyards and left the sector four years ago said that he has 60.000 lira that he could not get from the sector. He put the case as such: “Adam işe başlıyo, çalışıyo çalışıyo içerden hak edişini alıyo. İşçiye bir ay para veriyoy, bi daha iyi bi hak ediş yapıyo, parayı alıyo, eyvallah!! İşçi kapıda, adam kendisi ya İzmir’de, ya Antalya’da, bilmem nereye kaçıyo.”⁴⁹

Another significant problem of subcontracted shipyard workers is related with social security payments. Informality has been one of the big problems in the Tuzla shipyard region. There was high number of non-registered workers especially in the era 2007-2008, when the number of subcontracting firms reached its peak point in parallel with high level of production. However, shipyards have increased the controls over insurances of subcontracted workers after the years 2007-2008 when Tuzla shipyard region was on the national agenda due to work accidents. In that period, problems about working conditions of shipyards in Tuzla were discussed broadly, one of which was lack of social security payments. Yet, in the most of fatal accidents, this case posed no problem:

Bakın şu an bile adam düşüyor, ölüyor, hiç bi sigortası yok. Adam öldükten sonra sigortası ful yatmış gözükyor. Bir ay ful yatmış gösteriliyo. O saate kadar adamın sigortası yapılmamış. Adam daha yukardan aşağı düşmeden, düşmek üzereyken sigortası yatırılıyor. Hâlbuki adam bir senedir yanında çalışıyo, hiç bi gün sigortası yatmamış, sormaya kalktığında diyo ki bende bir aydır çalışıyor, bir ay da yatırmışım diyor.⁵⁰ (Selçuk)

Insurance came to be provided for almost every worker in recent years and it could be said that working process is formalized in this sense, butthere is another problem: insurances are paid over minimum wage. Subcontractors do not provide insurance rate over total wages. Most of the workers I met underlined this problem.

⁴⁹ “A subcontractor starts on a job and works hard enough to get his first payment and pays his workers. This goes on for a couple of and then bang, he gets the big cut at the end and goes off to İzmir or Antalya or wherever.”

⁵⁰ “Look, even this man without any life insurance falls and dies. And just after his dead, his insurance on official documents turns to seem fully defrayed. Fully defrayed for one month. Until the time of dead, there is nothing concrete about the life insurance. The insurance is paid when he is about crash, even before falling from up to down. However the man had been there for one year and even insurance of one day is not paid while the subcontractor asserts the contrary in such a way that the worker was with his firm just for one month and there is nothing wrong with one-month life insurance.”

This is settled situation for subcontracted workers in Tuzla shipyard region. Subcontractors pay minimum wages into the bank and give rest from hand. The latter is unregistered money. It reduces labor cost of employers, but on the other side, it makes workers retire over low payments. In the context of Turkey, it means for workers to live at hunger threshold. As a result of absence of social welfare, workers oblige to accept precarious work after retiring due to pensions insufficient to live on. Mustafa, who is retired but continue to work has two children, one of whom is a university student and the other one is studying for university exam. He states that living on a retirement pension is impossible, in fact, he says “it is not a retirement”.

3.2.2. Living under the Threat of Fatal Work “Accidents”

As stated, precarious work entails unsafe working conditions and constitutes a serious health risks for workers. In this regard, “insecurity” means both job insecurity and health insecurity for workers. It is quite possible to see negative outcomes of precarization in the frequency of employment-related accidents in the Tuzla shipyard region. Shipyard workers pay for precarization with their lives. According to the Limter-İş, 11 workers died at the Tuzla shipyard region in 2007, 19 workers in 2008, 11 workers in 2009, 4 workers in 2010, 5 workers in 2012 and 2 workers in the first half of 2013. However, it should be kept in mind that these figures may substantially diverge from the real figures due to a high amount of unregistered employment. Barring these, there are many “suspicious” worker deaths in Tuzla. Common reasons of fatal occupational accidents are falling down from the scaffold, crane, any high level in the body of the ship; explosion; electrocution; squeezed between blocks, by a heavy metal falling down the crane, forklift; and in a fire.

A growing shipbuilding industry based on subcontracting, and its effects on workers was brought to nationwide attention with a rise in work accidents. Increasing accidents had broad repercussion in the press, especially in the years 2007-2008. In a meeting held in 2008, The Minister of Industry and Trade, Zafer Çağlayan, underlined the fact that the Turkish shipping industry which attained its development

goal targeted for 2013, in 2007 owed this success to the elbow grease of workers as well as entrepreneurs.⁵¹ Nevertheless, something significant was lacking in this statement: the ship building industry has not developed with shipyard workers' sweat, but also their blood. In 2007, 13 workers, in 2008, 29 workers, and in 2009, 15 workers died in the shipyard sector, most of which were working at Tuzla.

One of the most important reasons for fatal accidents is long and dense work hours. In cases where the amount of production increases and pushes the capacity of firms, workers take up the cost by working longer hours under pressure. However, work related accidents are not peculiar only to high production periods, because long working hours and intensified performance of labour are basic requirements for profit maximization, independent of space and time. On the part of the worker, long hours cause loss of concentration and make them more open to accidents. Bülent tells of the experience of his work friend: "Ben Gemar'ta çalıştım, orda bir işçiyle konuştum, bir aydır diyor ben saat 11'de çıkıyorum. Peki nasıl çalışıyorsun dedim, diyor yani uyku gözümde, yorgunum, her an taş bi yerimi kesebilir, düşecek gibiyim."⁵² There is no control mechanism to limit working hours.

According to Harvey, every mode of production needs its own space and time constructions to reproduce itself. He claims that: "Each social formation constructs objective conceptions of space and time sufficient unto its own needs and purposes of material and social reproduction and organizes its material practices in accordance with those conceptions." (Harvey, 1990, 419) In the context of the neoliberal phase of capitalist development, it refers to the intensification of labour in the name of the "efficiency", which is calculated under the claim of the "rationality". Speed means profit, more speed means more profit. These basic rules are the same for the Tuzla shipyard region. Following expressions of a general manager of a shipyard put the issue in the picture:

⁵¹ <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2008/06/12/haber,61C67C4194944AC788DED688FD323D36.html>

⁵² "I worked at Germak and talked with one of the workers here. He told me, he had been knocking off work at 11 p.m. every night for the last month. I asked how such a shift can be possible. He added that he was so sleepy and tired that a light breeze could knock him down."

Otobandaki en yavaş araç hızı nasıl belirlerse tersanede de böyle olur. Bu yüzden hiçbir aksamaya meydan vermeyecek şekilde her şeyi planlarız. Geminin tersanedeki üretim ve donanım sürecinde bir gün dahi gecikme yaşaması, tersaneyi önemli bir bedel ödemeye mecbur bırakır. Bu yüzden hız bizim için çok önemlidir.⁵³ (cited in Akdemir, 2008, 157)

As the manager says, if shipyards do not deliver the order on time, they have to cover the loss of the customer. In the same way, if subcontractors fall behind the deadline stated in the agreement, they have to cover the loss of shipyards. Employers step up pressure on workers for working faster when the order takes longer than expected. In the words of Ismail: “Şimdi işi alan zaten tersane olduğu için, tersane bir an evvel işi anlaştığı zamandan önce bitirip kurtulmaya çalışır. O da napıyo taşeronu baskı yapıyo, taşeron napıcak çalıştırdığı adamlara baskı yapacak. Haliyle bu şekilde birbirini itekleyerek götürüyo yani.”⁵⁴ The losing party in this equation is the working class. Work efficiency refers to life-threatening dangers in workers’ lives as security measurements are ignored for the sake of efficiency. Hüseyin clarifies the issue:

Kâr hırsından dolayı zaten her şey oluyo. Dedğim gibi insanlardan koşturup koşturup verim almaya çalışıyorlar. Herkes koşamıyo. Herkes hızlı çalışamıyo. Ne yapıyor adam, kimisi hızlı çalışırken tepe taklak gidiyo, kimisi hızlandıkça hızlanıyo. Ya herkes bir olmuyo. Bana çık orayı yap diyo ben tamam ben hopena zıplaya çıkıyorum orayı yapıyorum ama kimisi var çıkıyor bi bakıyorsun bir dakika sonra aşşağa indirdiler. Ne oldu, işte adam durduk yere bayıldı. Mesela hasta insan olur, yorgun düşen insan olur veya yükseklik korkusu olan olur.⁵⁵

⁵³ “Think of shipyards as a highway on which there are only signs for the *minimum* speed. Because of this situation, plans in shipyards are made in such a way that all of possible disruptions are eliminated. Just one-day delay of the production and equipage of a ship, costs so much for the shipyard. This is what makes speed the crucial factor.”

⁵⁴ “Now, since the subcontractor is also from the shipyard, the shipyard tries to finish the work before the agreed time. That puts pressure on the subcontractor, and thus, pressure on the workers. Work is carried out in this way.”

⁵⁵ “Everything is the result of a rush for profit. As I told you before, people try to get a bigger turnover by cutting corners at every stage of production. And it is obvious that not everybody can afford to rush a job. And it is not possible for everyone to work so rapid. In this manner, some will be upside down and other will be much more rapid. You know, everybody has his own pace. You order me to climb up and do the job and it is ok for me but for another guy, such a job is out of the question. The guy panicks and faints. He could just as easily fall sick, get tired or develop vertigo.”

According to Kenan Torlak, the president of advisory committee of GİSBİR: "Tersane kazalarının artış eğiliminde olduğu, hele böyle bir eğilimin işverenin tedbirsizliği veya kayıtsızlığının sonucu olduğu şeklindeki değerlendirmeler safsatadır, sorumsuzluktur, yaygaradır ve çalışma barışını bozmaya yönelik nifaklardır."⁵⁶ Actually, what he really means with "labor peace" oppressed workers under precarious conditions, who do not oppose working conditions. He dreams of production relations without class struggle, which cannot be possible at anytime, anywhere.

On 19th June 2008 a meeting was convened upon the invitation of the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, with the participation of DTO (*Deniz Ticaret Odası, Chamber of Shipping*), TOBB (*Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği, The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey*), Dok Gemi-İş and so many employers to discuss the Tuzla shipyard region. After the meeting, a series of technical recommendations in relation to possible solutions, such as instituting related vocational high schools to train qualified employees, and building area of organized industry for supplier industries of watercraft, moving the sector to the nearby Yalova region, and lastly, increasing the number of inspectors of occupational health and occupational safety were made. It is remarkable that none of these is concerned about either workers' social or union rights or structural improvement of their working conditions.

Another offered solution in the meeting was educating shipyard workers for "work health and security". It should be corrected; the case is not about "work health and security", but about "workers' health and security". There is a general tendency to show uneducated workers the most important causes of work-related accidents. In this way, workers' neglect is presented as the source of accidents. According to Erkan Selak, the owner of the Selak shipyard, the only solution in Tuzla is education, nothing else. He states that "Bize bir şey olmaz' mantığını Tuzla'da yok etmemiz

⁵⁶ "Claiming that accidents in shipyards have a tendency to increase and, moreover, claiming that the responsibility for this trend belongs to careless employers are a total fallacy. Further it is irresponsible and can cause a fit between workers."

gerekiyor.”⁵⁷ In other words, for Selak, the reason behind accidents is workers’ carelessness. Similarly, the current DTO manager, Metin Kalkavan, mentioned in the introduction to this piece, expressed his view that workers must get over their ‘nothing to do with us’ syndrome, stating: “İşlediğin çelik, pamuk değil. Biz tekstil atölyesi değiliz. İşçinin ölebileceğini bilmesi lazım.”⁵⁸

Most of the workers I met with, emphasized the importance of education, too. There is a strong tendency among workers to regard uneducated and careless workers as one of the basic reasons of accidents. It is true that uneducated and inexperienced workers are more open to dangers and may cause work accidents. Therefore, all shipyard workers should take a health and safety education and increase awareness against work dangers. However, this approach, which regards lack of education as a main cause of work accidents, ignores structural causes for accidents, and reduces them to individual mistakes. Education cannot ever be sufficient on its own to prevent work-related accidents. In this sense, we can look at the outcomes of the change made in law number 5763 in 2008, which oblige workers to receive education and obtain certificates in order to work in heavy industry.⁵⁹ In line with this law, a worker has to earn a certificate from a training course before starting work at the Tuzla shipyard region. However, when the content of these courses are considered, it could be seen that they are of much use. Workers state that the language used in these courses is mostly theoretical, which makes comprehending the issue more difficult for them. There is no hands-on-training. They claim that educators in the courses memorize the issue from the book; they do not have a grasp of the practical aspects of work. Moreover, the responsibility to have education is assigned to workers. Shipyards want certificates from workers when employing them, but do not take any responsibility. Therefore, certificates turn into a way for shipyards to evade responsibility. Moreover, these courses are commercialized;

⁵⁷ “In Tuzla, we have to eliminate this ‘nothing to do with us’ attitude.” See http://haber.gazetevatan.com/Tuzladaki_Azrail_Bize_bir_sey_olmaz_mantigi_180833_1/180833/1/gu ndem

⁵⁸ “The steel you worked is not cotton. We are not a sewing club – workers have to know they could die.”

⁵⁹ See Official Gazette published in 26.05.2008.

workers have to pay money if they want to receive a certificate. This affects the effectiveness of the courses. Mustafa explains that in his experience: “Sınava giriyoruz. Sınavda soruyor, şıklar var. Bilmediğimizi zaten hocaya soruyoruz o bize söylüyor. Çünkü zaten paralı.”⁶⁰ Thus, private training courses remain a way for employers rid themselves of legal responsibilities of accidents.

Nevertheless, it should be said that even if education given in the courses was not problematic, it would not be a permanent solution. All workers, whether educated or not, are aware that they could easily die if they fall from high levels in the body of ships, touch bare cable or are squashed between heavy blocks. None of these possibilities are related to workers’ education, but related with the working conditions that shipyards provide. Education could help workers in the case where shipyards eliminate structural causes for work-related accidents. If shipyards do not provide sufficient working safety, the education given workers does not make any sense. Following statements of Bülent explain the issue clearly:

2008-2009 benim çalıştığım, kazaların daha yüksek olduğu dönemlerde, iş güvenlik uzmanı diyor ki alanla ilgili vincin gidiş alanı ve kenarında yayanın gidiş alanı var, onun bir buçuk metre olması gerekiyor, bize verilen 40 santim. E biz diyoruz nasıl olacak bu iş. Diyor bu normalde sakıncalı. E sakıncalı da sen bana bunun teorisini anlatıyorsun, diyeceksin ki verdim, ben de buraya iş eğitimi aldım diye imzayı da atıcam. Sonra bi durum olduğunda ne dicesin, ben verdim. Peki kimde kabahat bulacaksın, bana bulacaksın. Yani, senin eğitim vermen bir işe yaramıyor.⁶¹

Some of the interviewees related their own accident stories, whose causes originate from structural insufficiencies. Hasan witnessed one such accident: “Ben sene 2003’te Torlan Tersanesinde çalışıyorum. Kapak kaldırılırken halatlar dayanamadı koptu. Biz üç arkadaş geminin altında çalışıyoduk. Bi sesler geldi,

⁶⁰ “We took exams. The questions in the exam had multiple choice questions. If we didn’t know the answer we could just ask the teacher. We’re paying a fee, after all – there is nothing in it for them.”

⁶¹ “In the times I was working and the percentage of accidents were higher, namely 2008-2009, the occupational safety specialist stated that the area where the winch was going to go on, should be with an in going pedestrian of length 1,5 meters – while the actual length we had was 40 centimeters. Normally, we ask how such a situation could be fixed. The answer was obvious: In ordinary cases this was insufficient. However, we sorted it out like this. You are just talking about this hyperthetically; you give me the go-ahead and I sign as the well-educated one. When something goes wrong you say “Yes, I gave this”. Then who would be the guilty one? Apparently me! In other words, education means nothing in practical case.”

insanlar toplandı. Bi gittik baktık, vincin kulübesinin aşağı düştüğünü gördük. İçine girdik baktık, insan içinde can çekişiyö.”⁶²In this example, the responsible party for the strength of the ropes is the shipyard. Another serious work accident happened to Adnan, in which his three fingers were chopped off. He stated that after the accident happened, he was taken to hospital and underwent surgery; however, he lost one finger. Nothing was done, no legal action was taken against the employer or shipyard. He said that the accident happened because machines that chopped his fingers had not been checked. Workers cannot do anything to prevent accidents in such situation. Providing steel guard nets or safety belts is the responsibility of shipyards, not workers. However, since money paid for workers’ health and safety is a cost element, it refers to loss in profits for shipyard owners.

As a result of ongoing public pressure, the narrowness of shipyard areas was shown by government officials as another reason of work accidents in Tuzla. Faruk Çelik, Minister of Labour and Social Security, stated that the underlying reason behind the number of accidents in Tuzla was narrowness of the working area itself. For him, shipyards try to produce above their capacities. He found the solution in discharging Tuzla shipyard region: “Mühim olan Tuzla’nın bu şekilde anılıyor olmasından Tuzla’yı kurtarmak ve burada mağdur olan, gerçekten ölümlle burun buruna olan ortamdan işçilerimizi uzaklaştırmak. Bunun Tuzla’nın tahliyesinden başka çıkış yolu yoktur”⁶³. It is true that narrowness of production space causes work accidents. However, Çelik was mistaken about something; it would not be a radical solution for accidents. Today, the Tuzla shipyard region has been expanding towards Yalova which has similar problems to Tuzla. Fatal work accidents occur also in Yalova shipyard region (seven workers have died since 2007) depending on ongoing structural causes. In other words, work accidents are not only about production

⁶² “In 2003 I was also working at Torlan Shipyard. While lifting the shutter, corresponding ropes were split. Me and my two other friends were working under the ship. First we heard voices and then people started to rush around. When we went to see what happened, we saw the winch had fallen down. We entered the part of the hull where it had fallen and saw people in pain underneath.”

⁶³ “The important thing to be remembered is that to save Tuzla from the suffering which has plagued it, we have to give the workers who are shoulder-to-shoulder more space to breathe. There is no other way to change Tuzla’s fortunes.” See <http://yenisafak.com.tr/gundem-haber/tuzla-ya-kapatilmali-ya-tahliye-edilmeli-13.08.2008-134497>

space. In this context, Limter-İş asks Çelik valid question: “Evet, Tuzla’da fizik alan dar olabilir doğrudur, genişletmek gerekir ancak tersanelerdeki zamanalan darlaştırmasını nasıl çözmeyi düşünüyor, sayınBakanlık? Zamanı nereye taşıyacak, Sayın Bakan?”⁶⁴ Moreover, Akdemir and Odman (2008, 58) argue that discharging Tuzla shipyard region where the working class has centralized and transpoting to rural areas could be regarded as an attempt to make problems of shipyard workers invisible rather than as a solution.

Under the conditions of precariousness, workers’ health and safety cannot be totally provided in shipyards. The reason is that when workers encounter with dangerous working conditions, they cannot reject to do work. They have two choices in general: being fired from job or keeping silent. Job insecurity and the lack of protection against dismissals make workers more open to accidents. Workers could not object to risks of the work due to fear of losing job. For instance, Selçuk warns subcontractor against the dangers, but subcontractors say “Ne var, ne olacak, orda 5-10 dakkalık iş var, bitir çık.”⁶⁵ In fact, Selçuk knows that accidents can happen in those five or ten minutes, but he cannot object due to fear of losing his job: “Ben dumanın içine giremem veya orda gaz birikimi var, patlama olur diyemezsin, itiraz hakkın yok. Adam sana bişeyleri bahane eder, bu adam çalışmıyor der, atar seni.”⁶⁶ Similarly, Bülent says that:

Örneğin adam sana çok yüksek bi yer var emniyet kemeri vermiyo mesela, ya ne olacak çık şunu 5 dakkada yap in diyo. Bak şu anda emniyet kişileri yok, çık yap diyo. E sen çıkmıyorsun, ondan sonra noldu, adam bir saat sonra geldi sen yapmıyorsun, adam başlıyo ondan sonra sana ters davranmaya, ya seni o anda işten çıkarıyo ya da yani devam eden süreçte sana iyice zıtlşıyo böyle.

⁶⁴“Surely the physical area of Tuzla can be cramped. It is true that this area should be widened. But, what does the dear minister think is needed to solve the problem of cramped *timing*? Where does he think to expand time?” See http://www.limteris.com/haber/haber_detay.asp?haberID=392

⁶⁵ “What is the problem? What will happen? The work can be easily done in a few minutes, finish it and leave.”

⁶⁶ “I can’t say that I can’t go in or there are gases in there, it might blow up; I’ve got no right to object – or they’ll make up some excuse and kick you out”

Yani orda çalıştığına pişman oluyosun ya kendin çıkıyosun ya onlar çıkariyo o şekilde gidiyo yani.⁶⁷

Moreover, shipyards are not directly punished in most cases. Faruk Çelik, Minister of Labour, declared in February 2013 that 44 detain penalties, changing between 5-11 days, have been imposed to shipyards in Tuzla since 2008.⁶⁸ However, 32 of them were imposed in 2008.⁶⁹ This shows that detain penalties were imposed as a result of public pressure in that era. Work-related accidents continue to happen; nevertheless, penalties are reduced because Tuzla fell off the national agenda. It was already stated by Muammer Güler who was governor of Istanbul in 2008 that detain penalties cause to reduce employment rates and make workers become unemployed, and also make the sector go back, and so cannot be accepted.⁷⁰ Furthermore, even if workers or their relatives enter a lawsuit against shipyard, no sanction is imposed to owners of shipyards. Punishments are imposed on senior managers or engineers, who are salaried employee of shipyards. Free-fall boat accident has become a symbol of work-related accidents in Tuzla. In August 2008, a free-fall boat was tested with 19 workers instead of sand bags in GİSAN Shipyard. It was understood that the free-fall boat was defective; however, it cost three workers' lives. According to court decision pronounced in 2013, three engineers were punished by 20 liras for each day, 36.500 liras in total.⁷¹ Even if the initiative of workers' health and security belongs to shipyard owners, they are not imposed any sanctions. Ercan emphasizes this fact:

Patron yukarda durur zaten, bi kaza olursa, ölümcül bir şey olursa ya bi mühendisi bulur, ya müdürü bulur, yetki hep onlardadır zaten, yetki pek

⁶⁷ “For example you are ordered to climb a high place and solve the problem but nobody talks about the safety belt. Look, there is no one related to safety issues so go and do it! Well, you would rather not climb even after one hour and what happens then? You earn the wrath of the supervisor, he starts getting impatient with you and either dismisses that 63a yor threatens you in the following days. In short, you regret working at this place; either you leave the job or they dismiss you. Either way, you are done.”

⁶⁸ See <http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/tuzla-daki-44-isyerine-kapatma-cezasi-verildi/gundem/gundemdetay/21.02.2013/1671392/default.htm>

⁶⁹ See http://www.birgun.net/worker_index.php?news_code=1222419678&year=2008&month=09&day=26

⁷⁰ See <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2008/06/12/haber.61C67C4194944AC788DED688FD323D36.html>

⁷¹ See <http://www.insanhaber.com/guncel/filika-kazasinda-5-yil-sonra-karar-h5237.html>

tersane patronlarında olmaz zaten, imza yetkisi ondadır, geri kalan bir şey oldumu mühendisleri gönderir, ya formenleri gönderir, giderler ifade verirler, ki onlara da bişey olmuyo zaten. En fazla yargılanır bir ay, bir ay sonra serbestler, para cezasına çevirirler biter yani.⁷²

Shipyards do nothing about work accidents in cases where workers having an accident remain silence. For instance, Selçuk, who had an accident when working in Körfez Shipyard said that: “Herhangi bi tazminat falan vermediler. Bizi doktora götürdüler, susturdular bizi yani, yövmiyenizi verdik dediler. O zaman acemiidik daha, kuralları bilmediğimiz için bilemedik, öyle susturdular bizi.”⁷³ Furthermore, shipyard owners have another way of getting rid of heavy burden of fatal work accidents in cases where workers demand their rights: giving money or providing a job to close relatives. The story of Ruhiye Levent, who lost her husband in the shipyard, is one of the examples of this:

Çünkü bizim kanunlarımıza göre bir hukuki süreç başlattığınız zaman 2- 3 yıl sürüyor. Ondan sonra tersane temyize gidiyor bu da en az 5 yıl oluyor. Zaten borç harç içindesiniz, elinizde avcunuzda bir şey yok, 7-8 sene bekleyecek durumunuz da yok. O zaman verilen kan parasını kabul edip oturuyorsunuz. Ben de buna mecbur olanlardan biriydim, bana 60 milyar lira verdiler, ben de şikayetçi olmadım. Pişmanım.⁷⁴

Limter-İş describes this as “blood money”. Shipyard owners reduce families of workers to silence by giving money. In most case, workers’ families get the money, since they do not have any other source of income. Kemal Yardımcı, a

⁷² “The boss stays upstairs, anyway. When some accident occurs or some fatality, he finds an engineer or a manager – they are the only ones with any real authority, after all. Yet, the responsibility does not belong to the boss. The only good a boss does in the shipyard is sign his authority on something. The remaining parts of job is expected to rest upon the expertise of engineers or foremen who go to police stations or courts to give statements and who have no risk of legal sanction. In the worst case scenario, the judgment proceeds for one month and after this the ruling is a fine. Finally it is over!”

⁷³ “There was no compensation or anything. They brought us to doctors, in other words, they basically silenced us. There was no problem since our weekly wages were paid. We were just inexperienced and so we didn’t have any idea about rules. That bought our silence.”

⁷⁴ “In according to our laws, the legal period takes at least two or three years. After the first decision, shipyards appeal against it which leads another five-year period at least. In any case you are in debt and you don’t have any financial savings means you do not have any opportunity to wait the decision of court for seven or eight years. Then you accept “blood money” and lean back. I was also bounded to this situation. They paid me 60 thousand TL and I didn’t register for any complain. I am so regretful.” See <http://yenisafak.com.tr/Gundem/?t=08.02.2008&i=98406&k=16>

shipyard owner who is ex-deputy from AKP, does not only confirm the existence of blood money, but also defends it:

'Kan parası ödenmiyor' diye savunmaya geçmem. Kan parası sırf Tuzla'da mı ödeniyor? Türkiye'nin gerçeklerini biliyorsunuz, kan parası ödeniyor. Anadolu'da yaygın. Ölümlü trafik kazalarında mesela. Kan parası, ölümün üstünün örtülmesi için değildir. Kan parasını bu kadar ucuzlatmak doğru değil. Kan parası mahkemelerle sabitleşen olaydır. 'Sus konuşma' diye cebren verilen para değildir. Karşılıklı anlayışla olanı makbuldür.⁷⁵

Moreover, there have been attempts to normalize fatal work accidents in order to get rid of the heavy burden they create. Fatal work accidents are described by many employers as “natural”. This attempt could be seen clearly in the following statements of Murat Bayrak, ex-president of GİSBİR: "Ağır riskli işyerlerinde senede 5-6 ölümlü kaza oluyor, kazalar işin doğası gereğidir. Kimi suçlayacağız ki? Her ne sebeple olursa olsun, iş kazasını önlemek mümkün değil. Ölümün işin doğası gereği."⁷⁶ Kemal Yardımcı goes a step further and describes accidents as “destiny”: “Gemi inşa sektörü dünyada en ağır ve riskli iş gruplarından biri. Her ne kadar kazalar engellenemez olsa da en azından dünya standartlarına indirilebilir. Benim tersanemde de önceki yıllarda ölümlü kaza oldu. Tersanelerde mukadderat bu.”⁷⁷ However, workers do not think in line with shipyard owners. Most workers stated that accidents could be minimized even if they could not be totally eliminated as long as employers took sufficient measures. For them, accidents are not destiny:

Kaderi burda değil insanların. Çünkü niye, biri öldüğünde cenazesi kılınır, cenazesi kılınırken hoca bile söyler, Allah diyo ki sen önlemini al, sen

⁷⁵ “I can not defend myself by claiming “there is no such thing as ‘blood money’”. Is Tuzla the only shipyard where blood money is paid to workers? Everybody knows about the reality of Turkey, there are blood money exchanges all over Anatolia. Think about car accidents for example. Blood money is not about compensating the dead. It wouldn’t be proper to make this conception. Blood money is legal procedure. It is not money given to complainants by force in order to say “Don’t talk about this!” Mutual agreement about its implementation would be suitable.”

⁷⁶ “5-6 fatal accidents occur in high-risk work environments – accidents are a natural product of the work. After all, who is there to blame? Whatever the reason, it is impossible to prevent work accidents. Deaths are in nature of the work.” See <http://yenisafak.com.tr/Gundem/?t=08.02.2008&i=98406&k=16>

⁷⁷ “Ship construction sector is one of the riskiest in the world. Although it is not possible to eliminate the risk of every accident, it is possible to decrease the ratio according to international standards. There happened some accidents causing death in my shipyard a few years ago. This is destiny of shipyard.” See <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=247411>

önlemini aldıktan sonra yine sana bişey oluyorsa o bendendir. Şimdi bugün biz yüksekte çalışıyosak, ben orda önlem almazsam buna nasıl kader diyebilirsin. Ben orda önlem almadan düşsem ölsem, vatandaşlar vadesi buraya kadarmış, burda olacakmış ölümü gibisine konuşurlar. Ama öyle değil işte. Önlem alınmış olsa, o adam belki evinde hastalıktan ölücek.⁷⁸ (İsmail)

Therefore, even if employers try to depict fatal work accidents as “natural”, shipyard workers have not totally internalized the normalization of work related accidents. All of them are at least in agreement that shipyard owners should have more responsibility about the accidents.

3.3. The Position of the State in Tuzla Shipyard Region and Workers’ Opinions on the State

We have emphasized the role of state in the establishment of market economy and briefly explained neoliberal transformation process in Turkey. Now, we will try to analyze the position of state in Tuzla shipyard region. The following segment of a speech made by Prime Minister Erdoğan during the iftar meal of Turkish Chamber of Shipping and Shipyard Owners’ Cooperative held in 2008, could begin to explain:

Çünkü bu (güven ve istikrar ortamı) eğer gölgelenirse, işte bunu bizzat sizler de çok yaşıyorsunuz. Son zamanlarda Tuzla üzerinde... Hatalarımız yok değil, vardır. *Sizler adına söylüyorum, ama sizin içinizden birisi olarak söylüyorum*; bunu kalkıp da her gün çeşitli eylemlerle, şunlarla bunlarla farklı yere kanalize etmek suretiyle bu sektörü dinamitlemeye kimsenin hakkı yoktur. Yani bu bizim ciğerimizi yakar, ayrı mesele, ama bunu oturup kendi içimizde, ne yapılması gerekiyorsa yapmalıyız ve problemleri, sorunları beraberce çözmeliyiz. Bu sektörü bitirmemeliyiz.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ “Destiny is not written here. Let’s think about how. When someone dies, ordinarily, the imam performs a funeral prayer and reminds the community that God says you should make provisions for risky situations if something bad happens to you even if you are careful. Now think about a person working at high places and making no provision for this highly risky business. How someone can call this destiny? If he dies having fell off the ledge, the people will talk like his number was up and so forth. But it is not like that at all.”

⁷⁹“If this situation (of high confidence and stability) is threatened, you know what happens from experience. About the latest period in Tuzla... Of course we made mistakes. *I am talking on behalf of you and also as one of you*: nobody has the right to disturb the sectorial environment by protesting every day, and channeling these protests into different areas and aiming to blow up the whole sector. In any case these accidents make us suffer great hardship, but we must do what is needed inside the

Erdoğan calls out to shipyard owners as “one of them”. The addressee of this speech, with whom problems of shipping industry are debated, is shipyard owners. Moreover, in the same meeting which was organized upon the initiative of the Prime Minister in June 2008, Erdoğan declared his sadness about the situation that lead Tuzla to become plagued by accidents: “Malesef iş kazaları ve ölümler çerçevesinde başlayan tartışmalar, sektörün başarılarını gölgeyecek düzeye ulaşmıştır.”⁸⁰ Meanwhile, members of the press were “recommended” to avoid using “a language which points the employers and the sector as the source of harms while promoting the struggle of workers about their rights and in this manner while bringing the current problems to the agenda” by the Prime Ministry.⁸¹

According to government officials, keeping fatal work accidents on the agenda is “a game of foreign forces”. The minister Zafer Çağlayan posed the following question at the ordinary monthly meeting of assembly of DTO in June 2008 against the publicity given to the accidents: “Türk iş gücünün, Türk girişimcisinin, Türk insanının bu kadar iş kapasitesine sahip olması, dünyanın önemli üretim merkezlerinden biri haline gelmesi acaba bizim dışarıdaki rakiplerimizi korkutuyor veya ürkütüyor mu veya onları harekete mi geçiriyor?”⁸² In this manner, according to Çağlayan, the currency of news about accidents was totally a conspiracy of the opponents who are intended to block the development of Turkish financial resources. This discourse is a way to distract the workers’ problems away from class struggle. It tries to conceal the class character of the problems. In this way, they aim at mystifying fatal work accidents. In this context, discussing workers’ deaths as part of the context of issues such as “national economic growth” and “national interests” serves this purpose.

circle within ourselves and solve problems in this manner. We must not abandon this sector.” 19 September 2008, *Hürriyet*, <http://arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnews.aspx?id=9941741>

⁸⁰ “Unfortunately, the controversies around the occupational accidents and deaths has come to the point where it has begun overshadowing its sectorial achievements.”

⁸¹ See <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/107766-basbakanlik-tuzla-tersaneleri-tedbir-paketini-acikladi>

⁸² “I wonder whether the highly increasing work capacity of Turkish labour, of Turkish entrepreneurs, of Turkish men and turning (their industry) into one of the world’s most important manufacturing centers, frightens or terrifies our opponents, or provoke them?”

We have talked about attempts to naturalize work accidents. There is a similar tendency among government officials. In the meeting held in 2008, Erdoğan said that: "Böylesine hızlı bir gelişme, dünyanın hangi ülkesinde yaşanırsa yaşansın benzer sorunlarla karşılaşılacaktır. İş kazalarına bağlı ölüm ve yaralanma olayları maalesef dünyanın her yerinde olabiliyor. Gemi inşa sanayinde de oluyor."⁸³ On the other hand, Minister Faruk Çelik stated in a speech made in 2008 that workers continue to die in shipyards: "20 tersane olması gereken yerde 50 tersane olursa ve bu şekilde ruhsatlandırılırsa o karmaşa içinde ne yazık ki bu üzücü olaylar olmaya devam edecek."⁸⁴ These statements, which correspond to those of employers, normalize and legitimize work accidents.

Erdoğan sometimes visits Tuzla for ship launching ceremonies. While the "achievements" of the sector have been appreciated, workers' problems have never been mentioned in these ceremonies. While it was asked of Selçuk whether workers talk with Prime Minister about their problems in these ceremonies, he said that it was impossible to come close with Prime Minister:

İşçi görmüyor ki nerden girip çıktığını. Kimse yanaşamıyor ki. Gemiye indirmeye geliyo, ya Allah bismillah diyo. Zaten ilk başta onu diyo ama Allah için hiç bişesi yok ki. Ben bi vatandaş olarak keşke karşıma çıksada konuşsam. Allah için bişesi varsa o zaman 10 bin tane insanın derdini dinler şurda. Bi gün gelip dinleyemez mi bi başbakan. Hiç mi zamanı yok?⁸⁵ (Selçuk)

This physical distance refers to the political distance between the state and the working class. Aziz says that he cannot see the state in Tuzla: "Defalarca bu

⁸³"Such an immediate development will lead similar problems wherever it occurs. Unfortunately such industrial accidents causing injuries and death may confront us. Such as in the ship construction industry " See [http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/107737-basbakan-tuzlada-47-terसानeden-birkacinin-ruhsati-var](http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/107737-basbakan-tuzlada-47-terσανeden-birkacinin-ruhsati-var)

⁸⁴"If there are fifty shipyard in the place of twenty shipyard area and if these are registered in this way, it is inevitable to confront such vexing accidents."See <http://www.taraf.com.tr/haber/bakan-olecekler.htm>

⁸⁵ "The workers never see how he gets in and out of the ceremony. Nobody tries to figure this out. He comes and launches the ship with a blessing. Already he says this but he has nothing for God. I wish to see him and talk to him as a citizen. If he really had something in the name of God, he would listen the problems of ten thousand people working these shipyards. Could he not just come one day and listen to us? Does he not have the time?"

tersaneyi şikayet etmemize rağmen, sigortaları bildirmemize rağmen, biz bu maaşların üstünde alıyoruz diye şikayet etmemize rağmen hiçbir tersane hakkında ne araştırma başlatıldı, ne bişey yapıldı, hiçbir şey yapılmadı.”⁸⁶ Actually, the state is in Tuzla for this reason. The state is in Tuzla by doing nothing about precarious conditions of workers, by not addressing itself to shipyard workers, by turning a blind eye to unlawfulness of subcontracting system. Mehmet thinks that the state has not done anything for the good of workers. He claims that the state keeps quiet about workers’ problems such as arbitrary dismissals and unpaid salaries: “Sesini duyuramıyosun çünkü devletin verdiği bi destek yok ki...”⁸⁷

According to İsmail, “Bu devlet tamamen kendi halkını, nasıl diyeyim size, rejimin önüne atıyo yani. Alın diyo kendinize bunları yok edin.”⁸⁸ On the other hand, Cemal emphasizes on lawlessness in shipyards. He says that the state does not behind workers:

Yarın öbür gün o hakkımızı savunacağımız zaman yani arkamızda bi dayanak yok yani. Bura uçurum yani. İte ite gidecem yani. Kısacası bunun (devletin işçiye tanıdığı yasal hakların) bi önemi kalmıyor. Çünkü neden, taşeronla teslim edilmişiz...Haklarımız çok var ama hiç biri yok.⁸⁹

On the other hand, Selçuk states that shipyard workers cannot reach out to anyone. He put some questions to Prime Minister:

Şu anda kaç bin tane insan var sesini kimseye duyuramıyo. Duymuş olsalardı o kadar ölümler oldu şimdi bi önlemi alındıydı, bi çaresi bulunduydu. Maalesef biz işçi olarak ezilip gidiyoruz. Mesela bugün başbakanımız görüyo mesela televizyında ölenleri, tersane sıkıntısını. Bi çare neden bulmuyo, neden bulamıyo? ...Bi başbakan demez mi ya bu adam neden burada öldü, niye buradan düştü de öldü ya. Bunun çoluk çocuğu ne oldu acaba. Geride

⁸⁶ “Although we made complaints about this shipyard and report the assurances since we are paid more than written on documents, there was not any research about this shipyards and nothing special done. You are unvoiced since the state has no support for you.”

⁸⁷ “You will not be heard, as you have no support from the state you.”

⁸⁸ “How can I say, this state throws its public in front of the regime. It commands take these and destroy.”

⁸⁹ “If one day we try to defend on our rights, we have nothing protecting us. Here is the rift. I will keep going by rough and tumble. In short, this legal rights of workers secured by the state has no meaning. Because we are left in hands of subcontractors... We have rights and they do not exist.”

bıraktığı çoluk çocuğun ekmeği var mı yok mu? Ben bi gidim bu adam niye buradan öldü. Ha bi gün gelir 10 bin insanı dinlemek zorundadır yani, e nerde?⁹⁰

As it can be understood from workers' expressions, there is a dominant opinion among workers that the state leaves them alone in Tuzla shipyard region. In this sense, it can be said that there is a strong feeling of distrust among significant portion of workers against the state. They emphasize on lawlessness in shipyards and do not trust judiciary. On the other hand, the state has a tendency to play down workers' problems – including fatal work accidents. It discusses problems with “national” terms and tries to hide class character of problems. It handles workers' deaths as a technical problem and ignores its political feature.

3.4. Death of Expectations: Workers' Feelings and Opinions about the Future

Precariousness prevents workers to have dreams about the future. As a consequence of lack of job guarantee, they could not make long-lasting future plans. Sennett explains the change in the meaning and experience of time by suggesting that “time's arrow is broken” (1998, 98). This metaphor refers to unpredictable and uncertain future. Living in such a time causes anxiety about the future. Moreover, workers could not take decisions for today. Most explicit example of this shows itself in workers' incapability to change their job even though they want. There is a dominant tendency to think that they have no alternative aside from working in shipyards. Aziz, a 29 years old subcontracted worker, says that he has to grin and bear working in the shipyards because he cannot change his job: “Mecburuz burda kalmaya. Çalışmaya da mecburuz. Bu saatten sonra meslek değişikliği de yapamıyoruz, mecburen katlanmak zorunda kalıyoruz.”⁹¹ On the other hand, Selçuk emphasizes on

⁹⁰ “There are too many workers who are in silence. If the public was sensitive about their situations and relating precautions were made, surely a solutions could be found. Unfortunately, we are crushed as workers. For example, our prime minister sees what is happening in the shipyards; the deaths and related problems. Why don't he find the cure or why couldn't? How a prime minister does not question accidental death of his citizen? What will happen to his family? Will his wife and children have a home or eating? Or shouldn't I visit the place where the man died to see the cause of accident? One day he will be obliged to listen to ten thousand people, but when?”

⁹¹ “We have to stay here. We have to work also. We can not try another job at this age and so we are obliged to endure it.”

the unhealthy and uncomfortable working conditions. He states that if he had a chance to change a job, he would not work in shipyards even a day more:

Biz öyle bi işyerinde çalışıyoruz ki, bu tersane kesimi gerçekten yani artık mecburi çalışıyoruz. Yani bilsek başka bi yerde ekmek bulacağımızı biz bi gün gitmeyiz yani. O kadar sıkılmışık. Mecburuz çalışıyoruz. Zaten bi insan oranın ortamından kaçır. Toz, pislik, pas, is. Seni sokarlar mesela çamurun içine, geminin en altına, kapalı alan. Çekici vurursun üstüne pas dökülür. Duman bi yandan, maskesizsin. Hiç bi önlemin alınmamış.⁹²

Ercan is a primary school graduate and 32 years old subcontracted worker who has been working in shipyards for 12 years. He talks about the difficulties of learning a job and says that it is impossible for shipyard workers to change a job or working somewhere else. For him, the life of workers is their job; if they do not work, they cannot do anything else. His expressions refer to the fact that the working class can live on by selling their labor power. The fear of losing job arises from this fact:

Bu ülkede bi inşaatçı çalıştığı zaman burda olmasa gider başka bi yerde çalışır çünkü inşaat çoktur, fark etmez, gider başka ilde, başka ilçede çalışır. Ama tersanede kaynak yapıyosa ya da montaj yapıyosa gidip ülkenin başka bi yerinde çalışamaz. Gittiği zaman yeniden bi mesleğe başlaması lazım. Yani, mesleği çalışıp da öğrenen için zordur. Üniversiteyi okuyosunuz bitiriyosunuz, düşünün o üniversite birden bitiyö, yeniden ilkokuldan başlamak gibi. Meslek öğrenmek öyledir. Burda çalışanların hepsinin yaşamları öyledir. İşleri hayatlarıdır. İşleri elinden alındığı zaman onları hayatı bitti demektir. İnsan çalışmadığı zaman ne yapar, hiç bişey yapamaz. Ne ailesine bakabilir, ne geçimini sağlayabilir, hiçbirşey yapamaz. Onların, burda çalışanların yüzde doksanınin korkusu da odur.⁹³

⁹² “That’s the sort of place we work in – we are really basically obligated to work inside the dock. If we had another option, even then it’s not like we could do anything about it. That’s how much of a rutt we’re in. We are forced to work here. Most people would get straight out of here. Dust, filth, dirt, grime. They throw you in the mud – literally under the ship, in the closed area. Hammering away the rust. Smoke seeping in, and you are there without a mask. And this is not taken at all seriously.

⁹³ “If you work as a constructor in Turkey, you can work in any city, since there are somany constructions around other cities, towns. But if you are welding in shipyard or montaging something, it is not possible to go anywhere else and do the same job. Choosing to go somewhere else means learning a new job. That is difficult for a person who learns the job by performing. Think as graduating from a university and then turning back to the starting point. Learning a profession is something like that. The life of everyone here is like this. Profession means life to them. Leaving them without job means leaving them without life. He can not take care of his family or he can not live off or basically he can not do anything. The fear of most of workers in shipyards is this fact.”

On the other hand, it is quite possible to see effects of precarity on workers' opinions about the future, who are working under the threat of fatal work accidents and job insecurity. Selçuk is a 37 years old worker and has two children. When his future expectations are asked, he explains his concerns about the future. He emphasizes the lack of work security measurements and worries about his children: "Biz işçi kesimi olarak, sosyal haklarımız yok, önlem yok, ne zaman öleceğimiz belli değil, nerden düşeceğimiz belli değil. Yarın ölürük, acaba geride kalan çocuklarımıza kimse bişey verecek mi, sosyal hakkı olacak mı..."⁹⁴ Uncertainty of future causes hopelessness among workers. For example Metin, a 52 years old worker who did not go to high school, states that he is hopeless about the future. When asked about his future plans, he says: "Tabi ki insanların planı olur ama o planlara ulaşmanız mümkün değildir bu şartlarda. Herkesin planları vardır ama o planlara ulaşamaz."⁹⁵

Emin, 34 years old subcontracted worker, and his family came from Diyarbakır to Istanbul in 1993 as a consequence of military clash between Turkish State army and PKK.⁹⁶ He says that Turkish soldiers burned their home down and they had to leave their village and move Istanbul. Since they lost everything they had in the villages, he began to work at a small age under hard labour and could not get an education. When his opinions about the future are asked, he also says that he has no hope: "Valla benim hiç bi umudum yok. Böyle gelmiş böyle gidecek. Çünkü bi işe girdiğin zaman var ya, bi tanıdığın olacak. Tanıdık olmadıkça da hiç kimse seni güzel bi işe almaz."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ "Being worker in shipyards, we have no social right, no protection in risky working conditions and death comes through casually by falling down from somewhere in sometime."

⁹⁵ "Of course I have plans for future but it is impossible to realize them in these conditions. Everbody has plans but they are an impossible dream."

⁹⁶ During the 1980s and 1990s, about 3 to 4 million people were forced to leave their villages in the Southeastern region of Turkey by the Turkish army due to the military conflict between PKK and Turkish army. Almost four thousand Kurdish villages were evacuated in the context of State of Emergency Rule (OHAL). Evacuation policies were executed because of Turkish state's alleged security concerns, in order to undermine popular support of PKK and weaken the movement.

⁹⁷ "I have no hope, to be honest. It'll probably go on like this. Because you have to know someone to apply for a job. A good job is possible if you don't have connections."

It was mentioned that shipyard workers live under the fear of not being paid and losing their job. This makes them hopeless about their future. Aziz, a 29 years old subcontracted worker, is married and has a child. He says that he gives up their social and working rights because they work everyday with the fear of not being paid: “Artı biz sosyal haklardan, işçi haklarından geçmiřiz, biz řu an maařlarımızı zor alıyoruz. Yani alıřtıđımız yevmiyeleri bile zor alıyoruz řuan. Onları bile alma korkusuyla alıřıyoruz. Aybařı acaba verecek mi? Tersane sıkıntı yaratacak mı? Biz řu an o řekil alıřıyoruz.”⁹⁸ Under these conditions, making future plans becomes impossible:

Valla ben geleceđi dűřünemiyorum (gűler). řu an ok dar bi alanda bakıyorum geleceđe űnkű őnűmű gűremiyorum ki geleceđe de bakıyım. Gűremiyoz yani, burada őnűműzű gűremiyoz. Ne bir iş gűvencemiz var, ne bi iyi alıřma ortamımız var. bakamıyosun yani, őnűne bakamıyosun.”⁹⁹ (Aziz)

Anxiety about future also results from the course of the country. Osman is a 42 years old subcontracted worker, working with relatively higher amounts. When his opinions about the future are asked, he says that he cannot make plans for the future because of the state of the country: “Yani gelecekte řunu yaparım, řűyle olurum, bűyle olurum diyemiyorsun ki. Yani ortam, űlkenin gidiřatı bazen deđiřiyor, endiřelerim oluyor gelecekle ilgili.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, İsmail, a 35 years old subcontracted worker, is hopeless about the government of Turkey. He fears from becoming unemployed and cannot earn money in the future:

řu anda tek dűřűndűđűm řu, yani řu anki yűnetime bakıyorum, pek ileriye dűnűk bakamıyorum. Bugűn hangi parti de olsa bu řekilde yűnetirse űlkeyi, ben bakamıyorum yani ileriye dűnűk. űnkű bakalım ben ilerde, řurda beř yıl

⁹⁸ “Social rights and workers’ rights are quite hard to get these days. We barely even get our wages. In other words, even our daily wages are not paid now. This fear keeps us working harder and in silence. What will be at beginning of month when is the ordinary payment schedule? Will shipyard make some problems? That is our ongoing working conditions.”

⁹⁹ “Honestly I am in favor of my future (by laughing). My vision is highly narrow now since it is not possible to see even the situation I am in now. It is unrealistic to worry about future in such conditions. We can not see, you know, can not. We have neither job security nor well defined working space. So you can not look in coming days.”

¹⁰⁰ “In other words you can not claim that I will do this in the future or I will be like this or that. The environment around you, state of affairs of Turkey are changing so casually that I become worried about coming days.”

sonrasında ekmek parası kazanabilecek miyim çalışıp acaba? Bilemiyorum ki..¹⁰¹

On the other hand, it is possible to see strong feeling of disappointment and meaninglessness in the expressions of Hüseyin. He is a 34 years old worker and vocational school of higher education graduate. He says that expectations never realize and thinks that everything he did in his life is futile. He states that he wants to make summer holiday, but he cannot (subcontracted workers do not have annual leave right); he wants to live in a village, but he cannot; he wants to get rest in weekends, but he has to work: “Biz çok bişey istemiyoz ama normalini istiyosun onu da yapamıyosun yani.”¹⁰² Lack of financial resources hinders workers’ capability to realize their dreams. When his expectations are asked Hüseyin, he tells he would want to change his job or go to artistic courses: “Param olsa gidip mesleğimi geliştirmek isterim veya bağlamayı öğrenmek isterim. O tür kurslara giderim. Ya da resim. Ben biraz çat pat resim yeteneğim var onu geliştirmek isterim.”¹⁰³ He is married and has one child. His feelings, documented below illustrate the perfectly, the modern Turkish working class’s feeling of loneliness and anxiety about the future:

Şu an neyi düşünüyorum, kendimi yalnız görüyorum. Yani koca bi deryanın içine düşmüş çırpınan bi şeysin sen. Yani bi kapitalizm deryasında. Ve sana bağlı, sana mecbur kalmış, kendi ayakları üzerinde duramayan insanlar var. Bi gün böyle küt diye gittin. Benim sadece tek kaygım o yani. Leş kargaları üşüşür ya. Herkes hor görecek, herkes bi tekme vuracak. Ailem için diyorum yani. Yapmak istediğim şeyleri yapamadan gidiyorum yani, benim için en kötü şeylerden biri de o.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ “The only thing I am worried about now is the administration of Turkey and so I can not think future oriented. If any party which has opportunity of administering Turkey will be like this, no one can judge me because of this. Because it is not guaranteed that I will work and earn money here in coming five years. I just don’t know...”

¹⁰² “We do not want so much but the normal but even this is not possible in our conditions.”

¹⁰³ “If I had money, I would try to development my professional skills or I would try to play saz. I would get such courses. Or painting. I want to develop my little talent on painting.”

¹⁰⁴ “What I am thinking now is me alone in somewhere, sometime. I mean, you are like a convulsive thing in a large body of water. In other words, the large body of capitalism. And there are people who are bounded to you, for who it is not possible to live individually. Think one day you disappeared suddenly. This is my only anxiety. Like hooded crows fly around the death body. Everybody will hurt feelings of your family and kick at them. I mean to my family. The worst thing is that, I am dying without doing what I wanted sometimes...”

However, he does not give up his hope. He still has aims:

Umudu biten insan ölü insandır. Ben çok inişli çıkışlı bi hayat yaşadım ama ben hiç bi zaman umudumu yitirmedim. Planlarımı geleceğe dair şeylerimi yitirmedim. Çok yalnızda kaldım, çok rahat da yaşadım ama ben hiç bi zaman şey yapmadım. Hedeflerim her zaman var, her zaman olacak da yani.¹⁰⁵

There are other workers who state that they do not lose their hope from the future. Serdar, 35 years old permanent worker who is high school graduate, says that he is always hopeful for the future, he primary wish is to be healthy. Ercan is married and has three children. He thinks that people cannot live without hope: “Ya umutsuz insan ölen insandır, illa ki umudun olması lazım, umutsuz yaşanılmıyor. Az da olsa umudun olması lazım. Çocuklarımızı büyütücez, başka bişey yok.”¹⁰⁶ His single future plan is to provide a good future to his children: “Benim gelecek hakkında bi tek çocuklarımdır başka bişey yok. Sadece onlara iyi bi gelecek hazırlamak, iyi okutmak, başka bişey yok.”¹⁰⁷ It is apparent in workers’ statements that their anxiety or hope about the future is explained over their children. Sennett and Cobb assert that children represent one path of hope left for the working class to acquire dignity in anyone’s eyes by moving up to higher class (1993, 49). When their future plans are asked, most of the workers say that they want to provide good education for their children. This could be interpreted like that they do not want their children to do same job with them. Education is seen as a way of moving up to higher class. For example, Osman aims at enabling his two children to get somewhere: “Sağlıklı bir şekilde bu hayatı sürdürmek ve çocuklarımı okutup vatana millete hayırlı bir evlat, bir meslek, kimseye muhtaç olmasın. İşsiz kalıp da gidip onun bunun canını yakıp, onun bunun ekmeğine göz dikmesin. Benim derdim çocuklarımı bi yere

¹⁰⁵ “A man without any hope is the man without spirit. I had an up-and-down life but I have never lost my hope. My plans and my expectations about future have always been there. I had been alone for a long time and had a very comfortable life but I have done nothing. I have always had goals and I will always have some. “

¹⁰⁶ “Yes, I admit that man without hope is a kind of death man; you must have hope in any case otherwise it is not life you have. Hope must be there for you in any amount. We will brought up our children, there is nothing more important.”

¹⁰⁷ “My only concern about coming days is related to my children. There is nothing except them. I just want to provide them a good life and make them have good education. Nothing more...”

getirmek.”¹⁰⁸ However, as Erdoğan (2011a) states with reference to Bourdieu, it is “miracle” for children of low classes to “shine amongst others” under the structural class inequalities. Moreover, even if these children receive a university degree, it is no more a guarantee of moving up to middle-class (Erdoğan, 2011a, 79). Haydar, 35 years old full-time worker, says that he is always hopeful about the future. But, he adds that he has two children and sometimes worries about them. He works in order to provide his children with a better life than his. He hopes that his children will get somewhere better than him:

Ben geleceğe umutla bakıyorum. Her zaman umutla bakmak isterim, umutla da bakıyorum. Yani, umutluyum gelecekte. Kaygı tabi ki duyuyoruz, iki tane çocuğum var benim, yarın onların gelecek korkusu var. Ama ondan sonra diyorum ki ben bir yerlere geldiysem benim çocuklarım daha iyi bir yerlere gelebilir. Yani onları daha iyi yetiştiriyorum kendi hayatımı örnek alarak, yaptığım yanlışları görerek. O yüzden de hep umut var yani. Kötü olduğum gün de öyle, hep bir umut var bende. Bir bahane bulurum yani, içimde umut bitmez yani.¹⁰⁹

It can be said that precarity makes shipyard workers live under fear of losing their job, losing their life or not being paid. Uncertainty of today causes uncertainty of future and hopelessness about the future. Workers could not feel themselves as “master” of their lives, they cannot make future plans. However, the situation may be different for some workers, especially the permanent ones with a relatively secure guarantee for employment and a high annual income. Children are central to workers’ thoughts for the future, future hope and/or anxiety. Their main objective is to provide a better future for their children.

¹⁰⁸ “Living a healthy life and bringing up favorable citizen for my country and providing my children a good education to have good jobs in future is my only concern. Pretending my children from longing possess on other people’s life and earnings is my only care.”

¹⁰⁹ “I have hopes about future. I have always wanted to see like this, looking future with hope. In any case I am hopeful about coming days. Of course sometimes I have doubts on this since I have two children and naturally sometimes I turn to be anxious about their future life. But while having such question then I think basically that if I had managed to do something, they can do better than this. I mean, I want to bring them up better than myself by being aware of older mistakes. Because of this I believe in hope. Even in the bad days I have hope deep inside me. I manage to find some excuse to bring hope to infinity.”

3.5. Concluding Remarks

It is quite possible to observe the neoliberal transformation process of Turkey in Tuzla shipyard region. Subcontracting regime, one of the basic tools of flexible production, dominates the production process in Tuzla. Although labour law article 4857 prohibits employers from assigning main activity to subcontractors, 90% of main activities are fulfilled by subcontractors in the Tuzla shipyard region. The subcontract labor regime entails job insecurity which threatens workers in all aspects of their lives. It results in low levels of incomes and less social protection. As a consequence of job insecurity, subcontracted workers who have been working in shipyards for long years change too many subcontracting firms, which means living under a permanent fear of unemployment. Their daily working hours change between 9-10 hours; however, it reaches sometimes 24 hours with extra hours. In addition to working for low wages, which fall by almost a third after the 2008 economic crisis, workers cannot take their wages on time in most cases. Furthermore, security premiums of workers are generally paid over minimum wage, which obliges workers who retire over low payments to work after retirement. While all of these mean lower labour cost and more profit for employers, they mean poorer working and living conditions for workers.

Moreover, working under precarious conditions prevents workers to make long-lasting future plans. Working under the fear of losing job and under the threat of fatal work accidents prevents them to be hopeful about the future. Workers state that if they had a chance to change a job, they would not be shipyard workers; however, they say that they do not have another alternative. Precariousness creates an uncertain and unpredictable future. There is a strong tendency among workers to explain their hopes and/or anxiety about the future over their children. They want to provide better future for their children. In this sense, it could be argued that they want to realize their unrealized hopes through the benefits of their children. However, this does not refer to high expectations but rather a petition. It is hard to move up the social ladder for children of the workers and moreover, the workers do

not have such expectations which will lead them to move up the social ladder in such a way that they would be retrieved from poor living conditions.

Unfortunately, Tuzla was brought to the nation's attention because of a serious of fatal work accidents. Unsecure working conditions and a lack of serious penalties resulted in rising number of fatal work "accidents" – exacerbated especially in 2007-2008. Attempts to legitimize and naturalize work-related accidents posed an obstacle to solutions of structural reasons of them. The state has done nothing about the subcontracting system operating unlawfully, which is one of the basic reasons of work-related accidents. Moreover, the state does not address to workers about working problems. While the government frequently meets with shipyard owners in various organizations, it is impossible for shipyard workers to reach government officials even in ship launching ceremonies. There is a dominant feeling among workers that the state leaves them alone in shipyards, and does not stand behind them. This makes workers feel powerless. Furthermore, employers and government officials tend to depict work-related accidents as a technical problem, and so, offer technical solutions such as educating workers or discharging the Tuzla shipyard region. In this way, the state conceals class characteristics of the problems. All these show the position of the state in class relations. Then, what do workers need to oppose existing working conditions?

The fulfillment of this depends on the existence of strong organized working class. When workers feel themselves more powerful as a class, they will reject inhumane working conditions more strongly. However, there are many obstacles to the organization of the working class. In this regard, in the following chapter, we will present and discuss general the obstacles to organization of the working class in the context of Tuzla shipyard region. Basically, the focus will be on two main ways of controlling labour: precariousness and nationalist discourse.

CHAPTER 4

OBSTACLES TO THE ORGANIZATION AND UNIONIZATION OF SHIPYARD WORKERS IN TUZLA: PRECARIOUSNESS, NATIONALIST DISCOURSE AND RELIGION

In this chapter, we will try to analyze the organizational difficulties of the working class in the context of Tuzla shipyard region. Firstly, the labour unions active in the Tuzla shipyard region and workers' perceptions of them will be discussed. After that, we will present and discuss the obstructive roles of created misconception that subcontracted workers cannot be a member of a labour union, the job insecurity, fragmented structure of subcontracting system, distrust of workers in collective action, and control mechanisms and collobration of employers. In the second part of the chapter, we will concentrate on the ideological discourses reproduced in Tuzla in order to prevent the struggle of the working class. The main focus will be given to the role of nationalist discourse and practices in relation to Kurdish and Turkish shipyard workers' collective action. Later, we will examine Islamic discourse and religious practices in the Tuzla shipyard region and their effects on the legitimization of class inequalities. In the last part of the chapter, we will try to analyze workers' perception of class inequalities, and opinions and feelings towards existing class relations.

4.1. Labour Unions in Tuzla Shipyard Region and Workers' Opinions on Them

The negative effects of flexible employment and subcontracting on the organization of the working class, has been mentioned in previous chapters. In effect, the segregation of the production process enables firms to get rid of existing labor legislation and makes it more difficult for workers to organize (Sayeed & Balakrishnan, 2004, 105). In this part, we will try to present and discuss labor unions in Tuzla shipyard region and obstacles to class-based labor unionism. There are two trade unions in the Tuzla shipyard region. Dok Gemi-İş, a sole bargaining agency is a member of Türk-İş established in 1947. In the first years of its activism, it was organized among shipyard workers in *Haliç*, *Cami altı* and *Hasköy* in central Istanbul. The second union, Limter-İş, was established in 1976 under DİSK. With the closure of DİSK after coup d'état of 1980, the activities of Limter-İş were banned until the 1990s.

Dok Gemi-İş has 2245 members – all of whom are permanent, full time workers. It does not attempt to organize subcontracted workers who are the main workforce and constitute 90% of all shipyard workers in Tuzla. It avoids conflicting with employers. On the other hand, Limter-İş has 134 members, most of whom are subcontracted workers.¹¹⁰ It acts within the framework of class-based labor unionism. It tries to influence public opinion regarding the problems of shipyard workers and put pressure on the employers and the government.

Dok Gemi-İş, who march under the motto “işveren olmadan işçi olmaz”¹¹¹, exactly meets the conceptualization of what is known as a “yellow union” known as being close to employers. In the 36th Ordinary General Meeting of Dok Gemi-İş, Nalbantoğlu, the president, explains their single purpose as such: “Sendikamız ‘lider

¹¹⁰ While the numbers of members were 7.355 and 1.377 in 2009 for Dok Gemi-İş and Limter-İş, respectively, the figures shows a heavy drop in membership in 2013. While I asked about this issue to Limter-İş, they said that the memberships of hundreds of workers currently working in shipyards were cancelled by the Ministry of Labour. They plan to begin a legal process. See <http://www.csgeb.gov.tr/csgebPortal/csgeb.portal?page=uys>

¹¹¹ “no employer means no employee”, See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQmPMcwt-J4>

ülke Türkiye'yi görmek istiyö. Her alanda lider ÷lke olarak görmek istiyö.”¹¹² He continues and states that they do not demand anything from the government: “Bu kürsülerden hitab edenler genellikle, hükümeti de burda bulduktan sonra, taleplerini sıralarlar. (...) İnanın isteyecek çok bir şeyimiz yok. Ben sadece birkaç teşekkürle devam etmek istiyorum.”¹¹³ These thanks go to the government, due to the importance it has given to the maritime and shipyard sector. It is impossible to find anything related to workers' problems during his speeches. He talks as if he is an employer in the sector. He emphasizes “national development”: “Türkiye lider ÷lke olmalı. Denizcilikte de lider ÷lke olmalı. Kim Türkiye'nin önündeki ÷lkeler? Biz dördüncülüğü hedefliyoruz. Japonya, Çin, Güney Kore. Bizden ne farkları var? (...) Önce isteyeceiz, ondan sonra da liderliğe yerleşiceiz.”¹¹⁴

Another characteristic of yellow union is its antidemocratic character which can clearly be seen in Dok Gemi-İş. It has had only six presidents in 66 years of service. For instance, Nazım Tur, who appealed to the AKP to be elected to parliament in the 2002 general elections, but could not take place as a candidate¹¹⁵, presided at Dok Gemi-İş with the same managerial staff for 18 years, from 1986 to 2004 when he died. H. Necip Nalbantoğlu, a name from Tur's team, has been presiding over the union since 2007. Exclusion of members from decision-making processes is another antidemocratic character of yellow unions. Member workers of Dok Gemi-İş stated that their membership exists on paper; they are not in contact with the union and do not participate in its activities. But then, Dok Gemi-İş does not

¹¹² “Our organization wants to see Turkey as leader. A country which has leadership from different fields.”

¹¹³ “The ones who speak from this platform generally want to address the nation and the government. Believe me, there is not so much to want for us. I just want to carry on working and here a thank you“ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRbRNpUzmjc>

¹¹⁴ “Turkey must be the leader. It must be a leader of maritime industries. Which countries are in front of Turkey? Our aim is to be the fourth after Japan, China and South Korea. What's the difference between us and them? First we have to want leadership, and than we will be the leader.” See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbN6T1cxPN8>

¹¹⁵ See <http://arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnews.aspx?id=97379>

attempt to contact with its members and to deal with their problems. Sabri states that: “Hiç bi etkinlik olmuyo ki zaten sendikanın”¹¹⁶.

It is possible to understand the distance between Dok Gemi-İş and its members from the way Salih, a member of Dok Gemi-İş working in the Tunç-Gemi Shipyard, responds when asked: “Biz komple üyeyiz ama Gem Dok galiba.”¹¹⁷ One of the basic reasons of this distance is the process of membership of workers to Dok Gemi-İş. In the period when fatal work accidents increased and were brought to national agenda and Limter-İş became more active and visible in Tuzla shipyard owners invited and signed collective agreements with Dok Gemi-İş to prevent organizational activities of Limter-İş. Therefore, most of the workers did not become a member of Dok Gemi-İş by their own will, but as a result of shipyards’ attempts. Statements from Nalbantoğlu verify this fact: “Bizimle çalışan, akit olan, *davet eden* (işverenlerin) de başımızın üzerinde yeri var, şu ana kadar bize kapılarını açmayanların da başımızın üzerinde yeri var.”¹¹⁸ Actually, “tutelary unionism” is not peculiar to workers in private sector or in the Tuzla shipyard region. As Karaağaç and Yılmaz (2013) argue, the extent and intensity of a process of cooptation of organized labor, which has been initiated by the AKP especially in public sector, has been unprecedented in Turkey. To illustrate, while the membership of Memur-Sen, which is closely allied to the AKP, grew by a miraculous 1448 per cent in between 2002-2012 and the membership of Kamu-Sen, the nationalist confederation, grew by 27 per cent, the membership of KESK, a progressive and oppositional confederation, decreased by 8 per cent.

Workers’ stories of membership clarify an arranged situation between employers and Dok Gemi-İş. When the process of his membership is asked to Sabri, he says that “İşe girdikten sonra ister istemez üye yaptılar zaten (...) buraya gireni sendikaya üye yapıyolarmış hemen. Notere gittik işte bi imza mimza attırdılar

¹¹⁶ “There are no union activities anyway.”

¹¹⁷ “We are all members of the union, Gem Dok, probably.”

¹¹⁸ “We appreciate the employers who work with us, have contracts with us, who *invite* us and also the ones who even doesn’t open their doors to us.”

galiba. Tam hatırlamıyorum ama. Dok gemi- iş sendikasına üye olduk.”¹¹⁹ Similarly, Haydar (35), another member of Dok Gemi-İş, describes the process as such: “Nasıl olduk... Patronlarımız sendika getireceklerini söylediler kendileri. Bize de isterseniz, üye olmak gibisinde... Gerçi o biraz mecburen oldu ama herkes de istedi.”¹²⁰

According to Ali, a permanent worker in Demsan Shipyard and activist of Limter-İş, after the 27-28 February strike¹²¹, the Minister of Labour made a meeting with GİSBİR and suggested employers to sign agreements with Dok Gemi-İş in order to block Limter-İş since it was exposing illegality and damaging government’s and shipyard sectors’ prestige:

27-28 Şubat’tan sonra hemen bir hafta on gün içerisinde 36 tane tersanede toplantı yaptılar, toplu sözleşme yaptılar. Toplu sözleşme şöyle, işçi sınıfının tarihinde hiç görülmemiş aykırı bi tarzla. İşte bu sendikaya üye olan işçilerin noter masraflarını, her işçi için 40 lirayı her işçi adına patronlar ödedi, patronlar karşıladı. İşçilerin hiçbir tercihi olmadan dediler ki bu sendikaya üye olacaksınız. İşçiler sordu bu sendikaya niye üye oluyoruz. Biz Avrupa Birliği’ne giriyoruz, Avrupa’yla iş yapıyoruz, Avrupa bizden sendika istiyor, bizim sendikamız da bu. Biz sendikalı görünmek istiyoruz, sendikalı olmak istemiyoruz. Oysa asıl niyetleri Limter İş’in önünü kesmekti.¹²²

We have stated that Dok Gemi-İş avoids being in opposition to employers. For instance, it does not participate in protests against any problems of workers including fatal work accidents, but Nalbantoğlu sees nothing wrong in their attitude.

¹¹⁹ “Just after we started to work here, without our permission, they made us member of the union just like everyone else. We went to the notary for some signature process or something like that (I don’t remember what was it exactly). We became members of Dok Gemi-İş Union.”

¹²⁰ “How was it... The employers told us that they would bring union to the site and asked whether we want to be a member or not. Although this was kind of obligation we all wanted it anyway.”

¹²¹ In the morning of 27 February 2008, activists of Limter-İş blocked the main road going to shipyards with the support of shipyard workers. This protest turned into a *de facto* strike and took two days. According to Limter-İş, it was accomplished with the participation 80% of shipyard workers in Tuzla.

¹²² “Just after 27th and 28th of February, just in one week (at most ten days), meetings were organized at thirty six shipyards and labor agreements were hold. But this labor agreements had no precedents from history of working class, in other words these were made in a contrarian way. The expenses of notary of these workers which was 40 Turkish liras for each worker were paid by employer in the name of workers. Without either asking workers or giving information about various organizations, they leaded workers to this union. This was the union which was expected by European Union which would sooner get Turkey in its list of membership and which would lead us to make jobs for Europe, therefore we have to establish the union before other ones. The aim was to be seen as union members instead of being really from a union. The proposed intention was to block Limter İş.”

He stated in the Chamber of Shipping's Ordinary June Meeting in 2008, at a time when fatal work accidents reached their peak, that: "Bizim işimiz bağcı dövmek değil, üzüm yemek"¹²³. He added that their aim is to get Turkish shipyards to the position of number one in the world.¹²⁴ After this speech, it gets harder to distinguish Dok Gemi-İş from any other employers' association. Workers criticize Dok Gemi-İş due to their indifference toward workers' problems:

Dok Gemi-İş ben kendimi bildim bileli tersanelerde var ama hiçbir işçi için değil, patron için var. Ben bugüne kadar görmedim, mesela adam kaza geçiriyor tersanede, sendikası, gidip ilgilendiğini görmedim ben. Gidip biri demedi ki bu adam burda kaza geçirdi, taşeron işçisi de olsa fark etmez. Sonuçta o bir işçi orda. O tersanede çalışan herkesi temsil ediyosan o kapıdan giren herkesin haklarını korumak zorundasın. Bunlarda o yok. Kadrolular da bile kaza oluyo bazen, onlarda bile bişey yaptıklarını görmedim.¹²⁵ (İsmail, subcontracted worker)

A critical attitude towards Dok Gemi-İş is not particular to subcontracted workers, but it is common also among the members of Dok Gemi-İş itself. There is a dominant tendency to see Dok Gemi-İş as "a union of employers". Ahmet said that "Bu sendika (Dok Gemi-İş) patronların getirmesiyle geçmiş bir sendika."¹²⁶ and told that he became a member by attempts of his employer who stated that workers' membership to Dok Gemi-İş is necessary condition for taking ISO 9001 certificate. Sabri, another member of Dok Gemi-İş, reveals the union's passiveness against employers:

Dok Gemi-İş'i patronlar getirmiş kurmuş. Onun için de patron ne diyorsa Dod Gem-İş de tam onu diyo. Patron dese ki bu sene zam yok, belki hiç itiraz

¹²³ "Our intent is not picking the vines, but eating the grapes."

¹²⁴ See <http://www.denizhaber.com.tr/guncel/14025/dto-haziran-ayi-olagan-meclis-toplantisi.html>

¹²⁵ "I have known about Dok Gemi-İş since I was very young but none of its bureaus works for the workers – just for the boss. I have seen nothing to counter this situation. Take a man who had an accident for example... I have never seen anyone from Dok Gemi-İş take care of the worker in such a condition. No one asked about the man who had an accident at the shipyard, including the subcontractors. At the end of the day, that's a worker. If you claim to represent every one working here, you have to vindicate the rights of everyone who walks through that door. Dok Gemi-İş obviously does not the situation like this. It does not matter even if the accidents happen to the main staff, I don't even see them do anything for them either

¹²⁶ "The Union of Dok Gemi-İş is a union which passed through by support of employers."

etmek gibi bi lüksleri yok. Ya da çıkıp bi eylem yapalım, işte bi protesto yapalım, ya da işçiyle bi toplantı yapalım, yok.¹²⁷

On the other hand, Limter-İş has always been in struggle with precarious working conditions and its destructive effects on workers. It states that what shape its struggle line have always been interests of working class, which is above all interests and constitutes reason of existence of Limter-İş.¹²⁸ Some of the demands of Limter-İş could be drawn up as such: abolishment of subcontract (flexible, precarious) work, stopping blood money and work murders, whole and complete worker's health and security, decrease in working hours and increase in wages, abolishment of difficulties to unionization, and insurances on real incomes.

Limter-İş struggles against job insecurity and work-related accidents. Workers, independent of being member of it or not, usually apply to Limter-İş in cases where they have not been able to get their salaries from employers. It tries to organize workers and their families in case of work-related accidents. Moreover, it pioneered an initiative to investigate the reasons for fatal work accidents, "work murders" as it says, in 2007. An independent commission called *Monitoring and Investigation Commission for Tuzla Shipyard Region* (TTBİİK, *Tuzla Tersaneler Bölgesi İnceleme ve Araştırma Komisyonu*) was found consisting of representatives from Limter-İş, TMMOB-İstanbul Coordination Council, *İstanbul Medical Chamber* (İTO), Workers' Health Institute of İstanbul and independent social scientists. The commission published a report on 22 January 2008, in which the structural reasons behind work accidents were discussed. Even if suggested solutions were not implemented by the government and employers, it was a significant step towards creating public awareness about structural problems faced by shipyard workers.

As a last point, it should be stated that activists of Limter-İş speak with authentic knowledge which comes from their experiences in daily and working lives. They are either ex- shipyard workers or still working in shipyards. The office of

¹²⁷ "Employers brought and established the Dok Gemi-İş. Because of this fact, Dok Gemi-İş has always behaved on behalf of employers. Maybe they have no luxury such as rejecting demands of employers like giving no raise to wages. Similarly making a protest or organizing an activity like meetings are even out of question."

¹²⁸See http://www.limteris.com/haber/haber_detay.asp?haberID=281

Limter-İş is in the *İçmeler* neighborhood where mostly shipyard workers live. Furthermore, it is where unionists from Limter-İş live, and always in contact with shipyard workers. Adnan, ex-shipyard worker having close ties with Limter-İş, explains the situation as such:

İşçi için hangi sendikacı gelmiş işçilerin içindeler, işçilerle akşam otururlar çay içerler, sorunlarını paylaşırlar. Sadece yaşam iş yeri değildir, sosyal yaşam içinde de çok şeyler paylaşılıyor insanlarla, sohbetler ediliyor. Pikniklere gidilir, oturulur bi yerde çay içilir.¹²⁹

In sum, while the membership of Dok Gemi-İş, all of whom are permanent shipyard workers, has increased in the recent years thanks to the employers who drew up collective agreements with it in order to prevent the organization of Limter-İş among workers, Limter-İş has always been trying to organize among shipyard workers, especially the subcontracted workers who constitute almost 90 per cent of all workers, under a lot of pressure. Dok Gemi-İş which is allied with shipyard owners refrains from any strong opposition to existing working problems of shipyard workers. It does not have a democratic organizational structure where each member could easily express themselves; none of member workers I met thinks that Dok Gemi-İş represents them. On the other hand, Limter-İş, which has close ties with workers, fights against precarious working conditions and tries to raise the struggle of the working class in Tuzla. Now, we will present and discuss obstacles to the organizational attempts of it.

4.2. Organizational Difficulties of the Working Class in Tuzla Shipyard Region

As mentioned, “difficulties” in the title refer to the organizational difficulties of class-based labour unionism. Great convenience provided to Dok Gemi-İş by employers and the government was mentioned before. Therefore, these difficulties will be discussed with reference to Limter-İş, which is representative of class-based labour unionism in Tuzla.

¹²⁹ “I’d never heard of any unionists who came to workers to drink a glass of tea and talk about their problems. Life is not only made up of working space but also social practices, people can have a good chat and share various things. Picnics are organized and there are places that you sit and drink tea”

4.2.1. Created Division between Permanent and Subcontracted Workers

It was stated that Dok Gemi-İş organizes among permanent workers with the help of shipyard owners. This causes misconceptions that all permanent workers could only be organized under Dok Gemi-İş *or* workers have to be a member of Dok Gemi-İş in order to be a permanent workers. This misconception reveals itself in of the following quote from Sabri:

Burda çalışıyosan o sendikaya (Dok Gemi-İş) üyesin, kadroluysan. Yani burdan istifa edebilmen gerekir öbür sendikaya (Limter-İş) üye olabilmen için. Limter-İş’li de kadroluyu alamaz, Limter-İş’e üyeyse kadroya alabilmesi için o sendikadan Dok Gemi’ ye geçmesi gerekir. Yoksa alamaz yani.¹³⁰

Another misconception, which constitutes an obstacle to the organization of shipyard workers, is that subcontracted workers cannot be a members of trade unions. For example, Cemal, a subcontracted worker who is not a member of any trade union, explains the reason of his nonmembership as such: “Bizim sendikaya üye olabilmemiz için bi kere taşeron sisteminde değil de ana kadro sisteminde çalışmamız lazım ki her türlü sosyal haklarımı savunabilelim.”¹³¹ Similarly, when asked whether he is a member of a trade union, he Osman states that he is not because subcontracted workers cannot be a member of any trade union. Serdar also suggests that “(Sendika üyeliği) Taşeronlarda yok mesela. Kadrolu olarak çalıştığın zaman tersaneler yapıyo.”¹³² Therefore, unionization is regarded by some workers as something provided by shipyards. It is regarded as a right given by the employer.

¹³⁰ “If you work here and you are a permanent staff then you have to be a member of Dok Gemi-İş. Basically, you have to resign from one to be a member of the other (Limter-İş). If someone wants to be a permanent staff he must pass through Dok Gemi-İş. Otherwise, they won’t take him.”

¹³¹ “We can’t be members of a union to defend all our social rights unless we work as main staff – not just in subcontracting.”

¹³² “(Membership of unions) There is not anything like this in subcontractors. Shipyards guide this only in the case where you are a permanent staff.”

It is quite possible to see similar statements among many shipyard workers. In fact, there is no any legal barrier to organization of subcontracted workers under trade unions; however, this misconception functions to prevent unionization of subcontracted workers in the Tuzla shipyard region. This situation is not peculiar to Tuzla. This misconception is a result of the dissolution of permanent labor based on relatively higher social protection, which trade unions are identified with. There is a strong tendency to identify membership of labor unions with permanent workers. Besides, trade unions which do not make much effort to organize among subcontracted workers foster this misconception. However, Limter-İş, which puts effort to organize subcontracted shipyard workers, should be exempted from these labor unions.

When this misconception is asked of Bülent, activist of Limter-İş, he states that they (activists of Limter-İş) always try to overcome this problem by revealing the fact in protests, leaflets, and movements. He mentions that Limter-İş assumes all workers, whether permanent or subcontracted, as its “natural members”. He identifies the existing situation as a problem of alienation of subcontracted and permanent workers to each other. He explains the base of this misconception and the role of employers in it as follows:

Bu tersane patronunun, taşeronun, yani sermaye kesiminin kendisinin uydurduğu bir durum. Uydurunca da işçiler yalan söylenene daha çabuk ikna oluyorlar, daha çabuk kanıyorlar, biraz o. Yani işçilerin söylemi değil bu aslında, patronların söylemi. Çünkü bir durum olduğunda taşeron işçisinin tazminat hakkı yok, ihbar hakkı yok, taşeron işçisinin sendika hakkı yok, taşeron işçisinin hiçbir hakkı yok, izin hakkı yok, resmi tatil hakkı yok, şu yok bu yok...Böyle olduğundan kaynaklı taşeron işçisinin sendikal hakkı da olmaz onların söylemine göre. Böylesi bir koşulda işçi benim sendika hakkım var diyemez çünkü dicesek ki zaten benim izin hakkım yok ki, sendika bunların hepsinin üzerinde, bunları toparlayan bir durum, bu nasıl olsun...¹³³

¹³³ “This is condition completely made up by the the boss of shipyard, used to manipulate the subcontractor based on capital. Workers are prone to believe such lies easily, this is the condition in fact. I mean this discourse is on the behalf of employers rather than workers. Because in any case the subcontractor’s worker does not give them the right to demand compensation, to criticize, to be part of any union in other words he has no right to leave, to use public holidays and so on... In this discourse workers of subcontractors do not have union right. In such a conditions, worker can not claim union rights since unionization is above all these rights and has to be sorted out”

These created misconceptions are not single obstacle to class-based labour unionism. The following segment of a conversation with Mustafa implies other difficulties:

Ama taşeronlarda dedim ya, sendikası yok. Sendikalaşamıyosun taşeronda... Şöyle bişey, Seden'te sendika var şu anda, Seden'in kendi kadrosu sendikalı ama Seden'te 15-20 tane taşeron var, hiçbirisi sendikalı değil. Aynı tersane içinde... Taşeron işçiler sendikalı olmuyo, olamıyor. *Diyelim ki olmak istediler, zaten sorunlar çıkıyor.*¹³⁴

Now, we will go into detail and analyze other obstacles to the organization of the shipyard workers in Tuzla.

4.2.2. Fear of Losing Job: Impassable Doors of Shipyards

One of the basic obstacles to the organization of Limter-İş is the threat of unemployment. It was stated before that precarious work causes to work under job insecurity. Workers I met commonly referred to a fear of losing their job as a reason for not being organized under a labor union. Aziz, a subcontracted worker in Demsan Shipyard, states that due to employers' oppressions and threats, shipyard workers tend to think that "Sendika olmaz, olduğu zaman patronlar kabul etmez, bizi işten çıkarırlar, sendikalı olduk diye çalıştırmazlar, kimse işe almaz."¹³⁵ For him, workers could not be a member of Limter-İş even if they want because if they become a member, employers will dismiss them and not employ them again. Similarly, according to Mustafa, a member of Limter-İş, the basic reason workers stay away from a labour union is fear of losing their job:

İşten çıkarılma korkusu ya, en büyük çekinceleri bu. İşsizlik, başka bişey değil. Yani diyelim bugün ben kendi çalıştığım yerde desem gelin sendikaya gidelim derdimizi anlatalım, noterden bişey çıkartalım desem yine kimse

¹³⁴ "But I said you they are subcontracted workers, in other words they have no union. It is not possible to unionize in the subcontracting firms. It is like in the example of Seden. There is a union at Seden and all of permanent staff in Seden are in the union, but the other 15 or 20 subcontractors are not members of any union. They work for the same firm, though. Subcontracted workers are not members of a union, they cannot. I mean, even if they wanted to be, *it would cause problems.*"

¹³⁵ "We can not talk about a union, because employers do not accept such organizations. They would rather not work with us if they know we are members of a union."

gelmez. Çünkü adam diyo ki geç de verse benim paramı veriyο, napıyım diyo. Sıkıntı çekiyom ama işsiz kalmıyom diyo.¹³⁶

The fear of losing job is not a baseless one. There is so much pressure on members of Limter-İş, especially on active ones in Tuzla. Employers benefit from the opportunities of job insecurity and lack of legal protection against dismissals. Süleyman, who is not member of any trade union, gives an example: “Bazı tersanelerde yürüyüş falan yapıyolardı, iki ay üç ay sonra bakıyodun çocuk boş. Demek ki yol veriyolar. O insan ne yapıyo, korkudan sesini çıkartamıyor.”¹³⁷ Limter-İş stays at the focus of oppressions and threats of employers. Ali, an activist of Limter-İş, states that most of the members of Limter-İş were fired from their jobs with the 2008 economic crisis. The economic crisis constituted an opportunity to “clear” shipyards of “dangerous workers”. Ercan, ex-shipyard worker who is active in a leftist party, says that:

Limter İş her zaman ezilenlerin, çalışanların yanında olduğu için patronlar onlara kolay kolay yer vermezler burda yani, barındırmazlar. Tersane sahiplerinin elinde olan bişeydir yani. Onlar “yok” dedimi, hiç kimse bişey yapamaz. Çoğu işyerinden çoğu arkadaş kovuldu mesela. Niye? Limter İş’e üye olduğu için adam kovuyor, çıkartıyor işten. Sendikaya üye olamazsın diyor.¹³⁸

These statements are not speculation. Many workers talked their own experience. For example, Bülent explained the process of his dismissal from the shipyard the last time he worked there:

¹³⁶ “The biggest fear is being fired. We are talking about unemployment, it is not a small thing. I mean, if I go to work and speak to my coworkers in order to gather together and go to the union to talk about our problems and no one wants to come with me. Because of the importance of being paid wages. Even if it is irregular, it is enough for the worker if the alternative is being unemployed. He admits there is something wrong, but it is incomparable with respect to unemployment.”

¹³⁷ “Some shipyards organized some meetings and just after the workers who joined the movement were fired. You understand there is something wrong. And then people starts to stay in silence because of anxiety of unemployment.”

¹³⁸ “Since Limter İş has always works with the downtrodden and has not relied on employers, it can not take place in the shipyard. In other words owners of shipyards have all of the authority and decisions are in the initiative. Nobody can do anything when they said “No”. Most friends from various working place were when if they became members. Why? Some of workers were fired because they were members of Limter İş. In short, they say you can not be a part of the union.”

İlk önce şey dediler, senin sendikayla bağın var mı? Dedim arkadaşlarım var, tanıyorum. Orda çalışanlardan bazıları benim sendikalı olduğumu, sendikanın o zamanki başkanı Cem Dinç'i tanıyanlar vardı. Böyle bi durum olunca zaten iş bitti sizi çağırcaz falan dediler, çıkışı verdiler.¹³⁹

Nevertheless, this was not a one-off; Bülent was discharged from many shipyards due to his unionist identity. For instance, the Çiçekli Shipyard fired him together with four friends because they participated in a protest following a fatal work accident. Furthermore, he was dismissed from another shipyard for having made a statement about a fatal work accident which occurred there to the press.

Shipyard owners put pressure on subcontractors as well, in order to prevent “dangerous” workers’ employment. In a case where subcontractors do not want to discharge a worker in question, shipyards threaten them with cancelling their service contracts. Moreover, employers cancel the contracts of subcontractors in cases where they want to discharge some “dangerous” workers but fear from workers’ resistance against dismissals. Ali illustrates one such case:

Bizim (Limter-İş) genel başkanımızı, Kanber Saygılı'yı, Dearman tersanesinde taşeronda çalışıyordu, direkman Kanber'i işten çıkarma yerine, nasıl çıkarcaz çıkaramıyoruz, çıkarırsa yine eylem yapacak. Taşeronun sözleşmesini iptal ettiler Kanber abiyi işten çıkarmak için. Taşeronu çağırmışlar, ya demişler ki kardeşim sen Limter İş'in genel başkanını işe almışsın.¹⁴⁰ (Ali)

Shipyards do not only put pressure on subcontractors, but also on workers who work with activists of Limter-İş. Hüseyin mentions his experience in Adar Shipyard, where he started to work as a foreman and took Kanber Saygılı, the president of Limter-İş, to work with him:

¹³⁹ “First of all, they asked me whether I have a link with a union. I said I have some friends from the union. Some of them knew that I was a unionist and moreover that I had links with the president of the union, Cem Dinç. In that kind of situation my work was done. We'll call you, they said – and gave me the boot”

¹⁴⁰ “Our president (president of Limter İş) Kanber Saygılı had been working with a subcontractor in Shipyard of Dearsan. The firm preferred to cancel the agreement with the subcontractor instead of firing Kanber Saygılı to prevent possible protest against his layoff. They met with subcontractor and judged him because of hiring the president of Limter İş.”

Gittik kapıdan giriş yaptık işte evraklarımızı falan verdik O’nu (Kanber Saygılı’yı) görmüşler. Sonra öğlen oldu bi baktım patron geldi biz seninle çalışamayız. Niye? Ya işte bize uygun değilsin. Dün kendin gelip bana diyosun ki sen bu işi çok iyi biliyorsun, ustalığı boşver sen bize ustabaşlık yap diyosun. Bugün de diyosun uygun değilsin. Tamam dedim uygun değilsem değilim. Ben geri döndüm gittim o ara yiğeniyle karşılaştım. “Abi noldu?” Böyle böyle dedim. “Ya ondan değil” dedi. “Sen sendikacıyı getirmişsin galiba, sendikanın başkanını getirmişsin onu görmüşler işte. Seni de sendikacı diye çıkardılar.”¹⁴¹

Being a member of Limter-İş or participating in its activities does not constitute a single reason of being fired from job; to seem when talking with known people from Limter-İş is sufficient to be fired or not to be employed. Ercan tells the story of his work mate:

Geçen yaşadık, biz çalışıyoduk tersanede, birinin işe girişini yaptılar, geldi Hakkı Abi’yle tanışıyorlar ama üyeliği yok, geçerken selam verdi, tanıyoruz birbirimizi. Geldi, Hakkı abiyle merhabalaştı falan, orda tersanenin müdürü bunu gördü. Dedi seni işe alamam. “Niye?” dedi. Sen dedi üyesin. Adam dedi değilim. Gerçekten de değil. Yok dedi üyesin, bunlarla ne işin var. Adam dedi ki ben üye değilim. Yok dedi git noterden üye olmadığına dair bana kağıt getir, seni ondan sonra işe alcam dedi. Çocuk gitti 50 lira verdi boşu boşuna, kağıt aldı geldi, ondan sonra işe aldılar.¹⁴²

Any oppositional attitude against working conditions constitutes a reason for workers to be fired from the job. Ismail states that after being quoted in a journal talking about the problems of shipyard workers, his employer tried to fire him. But, as a result of his resistance, the employer abandoned the idea. Furthermore, workers

¹⁴¹ “We went and checked in and gave our documents. They saw me with him (Kanber Saygılı). Then when it was afternoon, the employer came and said me that the firm can not work us. Why? He said that I was not good enough for them. But the same person had told me that I knew this work bully and that I should work as a foreman rather than as a master. And just in one day he changed his mind and decided that I was not capable of the work. Then I said ok, I am not good enough for your position. I turned back and in this time interval I encounter with his nephew. He asked me “What happened?” and then I told whole of the story. He warned me as “The reason is not your incapability” but that “you went there with a unionist, moreover the president of the union. You are fired because of this.”

¹⁴² “Newly a related case occurred. While we were working in shipyard, a new worker’s check in was made. The man saluted Brother Hakkı since we knew each other but he didn’t have a membership. The director saw the new one when he came to near of Brother Hakkı and greeted him. Then he said he can not hire him. Ordinarily he asked for the reason and the answer was obvious: he was from the union. The man said he had never gone to union but the director was sure since you greeted these men. However the man was telling the truth. But the director was also sure about his own thesis and so he had no doubt to want a document that taken from a notary and provide an evidence about his conditions. The boy went to notary and paid 50 Turkish liras in vain to get such a document and he was hired to the job.”

who support the resistance of their co-workers are also under the threat of unemployment. For example, in “crane occupation” protest in the Adar Shipyard, workers who supported their co workers’ resistance were discharged on the same day:

Bak biz orda (in Adar Shipyard) direnişteyken benim arkadaşlarım vardı, akrabalarım vardı Adar tersanesinin içinde, sabah biz yolu kestik dedik çalışanlar kimse girmesin içeri, onlar bize destek verdiler çalışmadılar, hepsini kamerayla tespit ettiler. Eylemimiz bitti onları hemen işten çıkarttılar.¹⁴³ (Ercan)

Job insecurity turns up pressure on workers and keeps them away from protest. In order to clarify the effectiveness of fear of job loss, Bülent talks of his own experience:

Ben işten çıkartıldığımda bana işçilerin hepsi, 70 kişi çalışıyorduk, bunun 40’ı dedi ki mahkemeye verdiğinde biz senin şahidiniz. Ama beni işten çıkarttılar, kapıda direniş oldu, sonra kriz yaşandı, en yakın, o zamanlar en samimi olduğumuz, sendikaya gelip giden, sendikanın yönetiminde olan arkadaşlar dahi şahitlik yapmadılar. İşten çıkarılma korkusundan kaynaklı.¹⁴⁴

Once workers are discharged from a shipyard, they can not work in there again, they can not even get in the door. “Impassable doors” in the title refers this fact. Shipyards have “high security” doors where one should have an electronic card to pass. And when you are forbidden, it is impossible to get in again. In this way, arbitrary dismissals are easily carried out. Moreover, this eliminates the possibility of discussion with employers against dismissals; if “the last word” is said, workers do not have any chance apart from resisting in front of the doors of shipyards. When it is asked of Bülent whether discharging is just that easy, he says that:

¹⁴³ “Look, while we were in boycott I had friends and some family member in Adar Shipyard. Early in the morning we cut the road in Adar Shipyard and told to the workers not to go inside. They wanted to support our acts and they didn’t work this day. The mobile cam identified each of these. Just after our boycott was over they were all fired.”

¹⁴⁴ “When I was fired by the firm, all of my coworkers, nearly 40 out of 70 in the company, promised to give testimony for me in court. But I was fired and there was resistance in front of the firm all of which led to a crisis. Then, even the ones from the union who were very close to me some days in past did not give testimony in court. The reason was the fear of losing their job.”

İşçiye işten çıkarıyorum dediğinde ben çıkmıyorum deme gibi hakkı var mı...Bana dediğinde ben dedim yok çıkmıyorum, öyle kolay değil, çıkartırsan başına bela olurum dedim. Neticede taşeron çıkartmadı ama giriş kapısından giriş kartlarımızı iptal etmişler... Gişelerden giriş yapamıyosun, yani tersanenin içine giriş yapamıyosun.¹⁴⁵

There are many stories similar to Bülent's. For example, Selçuk states that he was fired five years ago from Sadıkoğlu Shipyard and that he was forbidden to move in since that time. Ali, activist in Limter-İş, also cannot enter any shipyard except Demsan, where he works. The "impenetrable gates" of the shipyards are a concrete symbol of job insecurity. They mean that "if you are dismissed from these doors once, it is impossible to come in again".

4.2.3. Collaboration of Employers and Control Mechanisms

Even if there is competition amongst the bourgeoisie of the global market, they invariably act in unison for the survival of capitalism in the last instance, and thus, for their class interests. It is quite possible to see collaboration between shipyard owners in the following example. It was stated in the previous chapter that were imposed on some shipyards, especially in 2008, due to fatal work accidents. One of the punished shipyards was Selak Shipyard. A demonstration was thus organized under the leadership of GİSBİR and *The Chamber of Turkish Naval Architects and Marine Engineers (Türkiye Gemi Mühendisleri Odası)* against the detain penalty imposed on Selak, with the support of Dok Gemi-İş in May 2008.¹⁴⁶ Those employers who kept silent about fatal work accidents took action when it came to the direct interests of shipyard owners. They stopped work in spite of losing money and forced workers to participate in protest. Selçuk relates the incident as follows:

¹⁴⁵ "When you tell me a worker is going to be fired do I have the right to reject this decision?... When they informed me about being laid off, I refused out right. It can't be that easy, I thought and so I didn't hesitate to say that I would cause trouble if they would insisted. In the end, the subcontractor firm did not fire me – but all of my entrance cards were invalidated... How can a man work if he can't enter the shipyard?"

¹⁴⁶ See http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/isci_oldu_sus_tersane_kapatildi_yuru-879396

Bundan birkaç yıl önce Selak'ta ölüm olayı oldu. Orayı kapatmaya çalıştılar. Bi gün bize öğleden sonra paydos ettirdiler. Hayırdır dedik, birbirimize soruyoruz ne oluyo diye. Dediler Selak bi daha açılsın diye bütün tersaneler anlaştılar, imza topladılar. İşçilere de imza attırdılar, yürüyüş yaptırdılar, Selak'ın önüne topladılar. Dedik hayırdır niye böyle oluyor, dediler Selak'ın açılması için. Biz kendi kendimize dedik, biz niye buraya geldik. Bir arkadaşımızın ölümü için protestoya gelmiş olsaydık tersaneye alınmıyoduk, bu tersane ne diye bu kadar insana paydos ettiriyo da Selak'ın açılması için...¹⁴⁷

There is a strong network between the shipyards in Tuzla shipyard region. They act together to prevent the unionization of workers under Limter-İş. For instance, workers talk about “a black list” which has been distributed to all shipyards. Workers on the black list, who are “detected” that they are participating in activities of Limter-İş or “create a problem” for shipyards, have not been employed in those shipyards. Bülent, who tries to organize shipyard workers and actively participates in the activities of Limter-İş, is one of these workers on the black list. He says that he applied for a job to Tuzla Gem, Gemar, Çiçekli, and Karan shipyards, but none of them employed him. As a result, he gave up looking for a job in shipyards and started to work as a cleaner.

When shipyards determine the names of workers “who should not be employed”, they share the names with each other and act together. Ercan suggests that if a shipyard worker is fired from two shipyards, he cannot get a job in any other shipyards. He says that this has happened several times. Shipyards identify the names of workers who try to organize shipyard workers against bad working conditions and send their names to other shipyards. He gives an example:

Bi olay olmuştu burda, Selak tersanesi var, kavga etmişlerdi para yüzünden, taşeronu dövmüşlerdi, tersane içinde baya bi arbede olmuştu. 10-15

¹⁴⁷ “A few years ago a man died in Selak. They (the state) tried to close Selak (as a punishment). One day, they (employers) made us break off the work. We wondered the reason and tried to understand what had happened. They told us all of the shipyards have an agreement on behalf of reopening of Selak. We asked ourselves the reason which brought us there. If we had been here to protest one of our coworker's death, it wouldn't be possible even entering to the shipyard. The shipyard breaks out the work to reopen Selak.”

kişiydiler, bunların isimlerini almıştı tersane sahibi, bütün tersanelere dağıttılar. Onlar burda iş bulamadı, çekip gittiler.¹⁴⁸

Bülent gives another example from subcontracted workers who have resisted taking their unpaid salaries in Adar Shipyard. He says that when these workers applied for a job in Toygem Shipyard after taking their salaries from Adar, Toygem did not employ them, saying “you are members of a trade union”. In fact, as Bülent says, they were not members of Limter-İş, but there is a possibility now. If a worker stands up to abuse of their rights once, which is contrary to the class interests of employers, (s)he becomes “dangerous” for employers because it may go further. In other words, when employers begin to lose their control on labour, and discharge “dangerous” workers who “cause” this as a means of nipping problems in the bud.

“Dangerous” workers are determined in different ways by shipyards. One of the tools used to determine who constitutes are ‘danger’ is security cameras. Almost all shipyards have cameras on the doors and when there resistance is formed in front of the shipyard, they identify and dismiss workers participating or supporting the action. This has happened in recently in the Adar Shipyard. Aziz talks of the experiences of his colleagues:

Biz sabahleyin kendilerine (to their work mates) açıklama yaptık iki saat işe girmeyin işte, eylemimize destek olun diye. O arkadaşlar eylemimize destek oldular ve eylemimize destek oldular diye işe girdiler bir saat sonra haber geldi onlara, siz kamerada görünmüşsünüz, niye böyle yaptınız diye işinize son verecekler.¹⁴⁹

These practices are well known in the Tuzla shipyard region. However, the purpose of shipyards is not only getting rid of trouble-making workers, but also preventing other avenues for opposition and create a masse of “obedient workers”. Selçuk, who supports Limter-İş but not a member due to fear of losing his job, says

¹⁴⁸ “Something went wrong in Selak like a fight over money issues. Workers beat up a subcontractor which led to a fray in the shipyard. They were nearly fifteen people identified by the boss of shipyard and split up and sent to different shipyards. They couldn’t find any jobs in those places and left(the Tuzla shipyard region).”

¹⁴⁹ “We made an explanation to the coworkers in order to make them support our movement. These friends did support our resistance and because of this support they were called by the employers who saw them by cam recorders. They were warned not to join such movements or they would be fired.”

that if they act with Limter-İş, they would be fired within a maximum of three days because they would be spotted on cameras in front of the shipyards:

Şuan kamera dolu bütün kapılarda, artı bi de o eylemde adam kendi elemanına çektiriyo ya gizli bi yerden. Çekiyo, sonra tek tek tanıyo. Sen sonuçta o tersanede çalışmışsın, tersane sahibi kendi bilmez seni ama mühendisi bilir, formeni bilir, kadrolu elemanı seni tanır. Söylüyolar işte bu arkadaş bu firmada çalışıyo, ertesi günü işinden oluyo.¹⁵⁰

Evidently, the means to identify workers is not simply limited to cameras. Shipyards also draw upon some workers working in shipyards in reaching the names of “dangerous” workers. In this way, the threat of being identified and fired becomes spread out; there is not any “safe” place to escape from this threat. Cameras or workers close to employer could see you in anywhere. Such a case reminds the notion of *panopticon*. Panopticon is a name given to a plan of building in which inspector can see inmates in every time *without being seen*. This feature of panopticon makes people feel as if they are under risk of inspection at any given moment. In fact, the architecture of shipyards is not same as panopticon, but the feeling it creates is essential to understand existing misgivings of workers about being organized. The aim of the panopticon is to discipline people through “invisible eye”. There is similar situation in shipyards. The threat of being seen prevents some workers to be organized. Bülent attributes the reason of workers’ staying away from Limter-İş after 2008 in which they participated in mass protests to the “fear of being seen”:

Patronlar işçileri tamamen kontrol edemez ama sonuçta tersanenin içerisine giriyosa, kapıdaki korku...Başka bir şeye ihtiyaç yok. *Senin her an beni görebilir bir yerde ya da patronun yalakası biri görüp söyleyebilir ya da bi yerde denk gelebilir korkusuyla kendisini garanti altına almak istiyor*. Böylesi bir durumda iki yıl boyunca işçiler sendikaya sadece hukuksal nedenden kaynaklı gelip gittiler. Yani bir etkinlik düzenliyor, diyelim bir iş cinayeti olduğunda basın açıklaması yapılacak, işçiler katılmıyor. Yol kesicek, üretimi durdurucak, ama işçiler sendikanın çağrısına kulak vermiyor. Pek çok yandan riskli bir durum. Böylesi riskli bir durumda da sen işçileri daha radikal, ileri bir eylem yapmaya ikna edemiyorsun. Böyle olunca sendika

¹⁵⁰ “Cameras are recording on each door now and moreover their own personnel makes the record from an invisible point. Firstly he records and then he identifies each. In the final analysis you have been working in shipyard but the boss of shipyard does not know you while engineer, foremen and permanent staff know well enough. They have no doubt to say the workers’ name to the firm and the day after they are all fired.”

yalnıřlařtırıldı. Tersane patronlarının iřçiler üzerinde kurduęu etki. Yani Limter-İř'e geldięi duyulduysa o patronun iřçiyi iřten atma olanaęı kesin vardır.¹⁵¹

As a last point, it should be stated that it is impossible to totally control and design behaviors of workers. Even if the fear of being seen and fired directs shipyard workers' behaviors to some extent, the fear at least disapates enough for workers to take action when the limits are transgressed. This limit could be surge in fatal work "accidents", low incomes, or class-based society, but in any condition the possibility of standing up exists.

4.2.4. Distrust in Labor Unions and Collective Activity

All workers I interviewed, except for Süleyman who thinks that trade unions do not consider the interests of employers, stated that they view trade unions as being significant for the workers. Also, Kamil, a 20 years old subcontracted worker who came from Muř in order to work seasonally, had no idea about Dok Gemi-İř or Limter-İř. Furthermore, he did not know the exact meaning of the term 'trade union'. But, as forementioned, the rest of the workers, independent of whether they were member of any trade union or not, considered trade unions to be significant. According to Ismail, trade unions are significant not only for today's workers, but also for the future of their children. Haydar attaches importance to trade unions too, because "Tek bi kiři hiçbi řey yapamaz ama birlik beraberlik her zaman her řeyin üstesinden gelir."¹⁵² Ercan adds that: "Sendika tabi ki önemli. Sadece tařeron

¹⁵¹ "Bosses can not fully control workers but while you are in the shipyard, the anxiety is there... Nothing more is needed against workers. Workers need to guarantee themselves against the possibility of being seen by the boss or one of his brown-nosers or bumping into him somewhere. Under these conditions workers used to apply the union just for legal reasons for two years. I mean when the union organizes a meeting about an occupational 'murder' and calls out to workers with a public statement, but none of them heed the call. The union plans to cut traffic flux and stop production but none of workers give ear to the call of the union. This is risky from various perspectives. And naturally in such a risky situation it is not possible to persuade workers to protest. This is the effect of bosses of shipyard which shadows life of workers. I mean if it is revealed that a worker has been to Limter İř at some point, it is obvious that he will be fired."

¹⁵² "A single worker can not do anything but by working together anything can be overcome."

piyajasında deęil, btn her yerde. rgtleřmek her zaman iin gzeldir yani.”¹⁵³ However, they voiced concern that “ya mutlaka nemli ama sendika gibi sendika olup da iřinin bire bir her řeyiyle ilgilenip takip ederse”¹⁵⁴ (Osman), “yani iřiden yana olan sendika yararlıdır ama patron sendikasıysa bunun bi yararını gremiyosun”¹⁵⁵ (Sabri), “Tabi sendika sadece sendika olarak durmicak, srekli kontrol ederek, řikayet ederek. Yani biz gitmicez onlar gelecek.”¹⁵⁶ (Serdar).

There is a tendency among workers to approach existing labour unions in general with suspicion. For example, for Haydar, a member of Dok Gemi-İř: “Gnmzdeki sendikaların ne derecede sendika oldukları tartıřılır iři aısından bakıldıęı zaman.”¹⁵⁷ Mustafa, a member of Limter-İř, suggests that “Mesela řimdi diyelim ki ben sendika desem arkadaşlar arasında falan bir kere iřiler sendikalara artık soęuk bakıyorlar. İnsanları sendikadan soęutmuřlar.”¹⁵⁸ When the reason is asked, he says that workers see trade unions as “an employer’s union” and think that “Onlar ayda bi yevmiyemizi alıyorlar ama iřte bize hizmet etmiyorlar”¹⁵⁹. It is possible to see a similar kind of opinion towards labor unions in the following expressions of Mehmet: “Sendikalara baktıęın zaman, bazı sendikaların bařındakilerinin, adını hatırlamıyorum bi sendikanın mdr myd neydi, dediler Kıbrıs’ta baya bi serveti

¹⁵³ “Labour union is surely important. Not only in subcontracted companies, but also everywhere else. Coming together on things is always a positive thing ”

¹⁵⁴ “it is surely important to get united under an organization like unions if it acts on behalf of its members, workers by being interested in their problems and by keeping track of ongoing issues”

¹⁵⁵ “I mean the union is helpful when it works in advance of workers not of employers, because in latter it is not possible to talk about any benefits”

¹⁵⁶ “Of course unions can not stay just as a symbolic organizations, they should regularly control the various situations and make necessary complaints about ongoing misapplications.”

¹⁵⁷ “Looking from the perspective of workers, it leads one to question how much of a union ours actually is”

¹⁵⁸ “Personally, when I talk about unions with my coworkers, you have a kind of look in their eyes. You can tell easily, workers’ have a distanced attitude towards them”

¹⁵⁹ “They (trade unions) get our one daily wage from our salary but you know, they do not serve us”

var. Nasıl bi servet yaptı, nereden? Mesela sendikalı olduğun zaman ayda bir bi yevmiye sendikacının.”¹⁶⁰

Actually, these criticisms are not groundless – what we witness in *yellow unions* is such kind of individual interest-based politics, which creates prejudice against trade unions and prevents workers from organizing under the banner of class-based labour unionism. Moreover, shipyard workers have a lack of trust towards one another in the context of acting together against employers. It was apparent for some workers I met. Cemal is one of them:

Ya bu sektör öyle bi şey ki ablacım kimseye güvenemiyorsun ki. Örnek vereyim, bi şeyi tahsil etmediğimiz zaman bi şirketten mesela bi şirkete çalıştığımız zaman, 3-5 arkadaş bi araya gelip diyor ki işte buna itiraz etsek işte böyle söyliyelim... Sonuçta haksızlığı kabul eden insan imansız insandır yani bu böyle yani. Kuran’da da böyle, her şeyde de böyle. Ne pahasına olursa olsun sesini çıkarmak zorundasın ama bu, bu kişilerle olmaz. Çünkü söylüyorsun tamam diyor, arkanı dönüyorsun yok. Yalnız kalıyorsun. Sosyal hakkın yok, dayanacağın bir şey yok. Ortada kaldığın zaman ne oluyorsun hepden perişan oluyorsun, göze batıyorsun.¹⁶¹

Osman, a subcontracted foreman, also suggests that “Mesela bi şey oluyor toplu halde hadi gidelim konuşalım diyorsun, kapıya kadar gidiyorsun arkanı bi dönüyorsun bi tane adam kalmamış yani.”¹⁶² Similarly, Sabri thinks that collective action is a good thing for workers, but it is impossible. However, on the other hand, he does not lean towards May Day public meetings, he identifies them with vandalism. When the reason of the absence of collective actions is asked him, he refers to reserve army of labour without calling it as such:

¹⁶⁰ “When you look at the unions, some of their leaders – I can’t remember which union leader or whatever, what his name was, but he was going on about how there is big money in Cyprus. How did he go about making money in Cyprus? With a day from our labour, is how.”

¹⁶¹ “You see, my sister, this is the kind of sector which makes you distrust everybody. I can give you an example from my experiences. While you are working for a firm, a few workers come together to object unfairness since it is obvious that obeying such unfairness is a kind of infidelity. You can see this on Kuran or anywhere else. You feel like you have to do something against injustice but it is not possible with such people. Because while he seems to be agree with you, just as you turned your back everything changes. You become lonely in this situation. You have no social right or anything to trust in. Just because of being left alone like this, you become more dangerous for employers and so you become miserable.”

¹⁶² “For example when something bad happens, you speak with other workers and decide to talk together and walk to the doors to protest but when you turn back you see noone behind you”

Niye yok; birlikte hareket ettiği zaman genel olacak, yani tersane içindeki insanları düşünmeyeceksin. Yani ben burdan gittiğim zaman benim yerime bi tane daha adam, bu burdan gittiyse ben buraya daha gelmem diyebilecek adam olacak yani. (...) Şimdi burdan bu tersane, Kaptanoğlu, burdan bu kadar işçi, kaç tane; yüz kişi, iki yüz kişi bi günde çıkarır yarın yüz tane iki yüz tane adam alır. (...) Ya bu nasıl olacak, ben burdan çıktımı benim yerime daha bi adam gelmeyecek ki... çıkacak kapının önüne diycek ki; bu benim kardeşim arkadaşım, bu burdan çıktıysa ben bunun yerine gelemem, bu neyse ben de oyum. (...) Ama burda öyle değil. Ben giderim on liraya öteki gelir üç liraya.¹⁶³

One of the basic obstacles to collective action is the fragmented structure of subcontracting. Even if thousands of workers are gathered in one region, there is a distance in the sense of their relations with each other since they work for different companies. This results also from heavy and intense working conditions. Cemal gives an example from himself: “Bu sektöre gelen insan çok fazla arkadaşlık, diyalok kuracak yani durumda olmuyor çoğu zamanlarda. Ben 2-3 senedir burada sürekli gördüğüm insanlarla inanır mısın hiç konuşmamışım, konuşmamışım.”¹⁶⁴ Aziz emphasizes on the same situation: “Çok bir arada olamıyosun zaten. Herkes çalışıyor, öğlen bi saat yemek yiyor çay içiyor. Bi o şeyde buluşabilir zaten. Onda da zaten iki muhabbet, bitiyor. Çalışma esnasında ise pek muhabbet edemezsin tabi ki, işte çalışıyosun.”¹⁶⁵ Lack of communication brings unawareness about their working problems and causes a distance in terms of class solidarity. For instance, when the problems of subcontracted workers are asked to Salih, a permanent worker in Tunç-Gemi Shipyard, he says that he has no idea about the working conditions of

¹⁶³ “The reason for a lack of such collective action is that collective action necessitates not thinking about people in the shipyard. I mean, when I leave here another one should have the capability to reject coming to the shipyard after such an event. (...) Now, Kaptanoğlu Shipyard could fire hundreds of workers just in a day and then just act as if nothing happened, it can hire another few hundred. (...) How can such a thing happen? No one should come to work here since I was fired. I would expect people to reject such administrations and claim that the workers you once fired without a shadow of doubt are my brothers in a manner that you can not separate one of us from the other. (...) But this is not the actual situation. They send me as a worker whose cost is 10 liras and take another with 3 liras.”

¹⁶⁴ “The grand majority of the people who come and work in this sector can’t have a chat with. Could you believe, the people I’ve seen here day-in-day-out for 2 – 3 years, I’ve never even spoken to”

¹⁶⁵ “You can’t come together. Everyone works and has an hour for lunch and to have a glass of tea. That’s the only time they have to meet. In that space of time you can barely get a word in. It’s not enough time to have a good conversation, so, you’re still working”

subcontracted workers. In such kind of fragmented working conditions, being organized and acting together gets harder for workers:

Şimdi, 30-40 tane tersane var. Her tersanede hiç yoksa 500-1000 tane işçi çalışıyo. 5-10 tane arkadaş bi yerde bi haksızlığa uğradığında savunmaya kalkışıyoruz, gelin savunalım diyoruz ama hangi birine anlatacan ki... Birlik olmak zor yani, çok insan çalışıyo, 1000 kişi değil ki 1000'ni tanısan, konuşsan, aynı kafadan gitsen...¹⁶⁶ (Selçuk)

Atomization of workers is one of the main consequences of precarious work. Contract-based employment has anticollective character and results in individualization among workers. However, it should be noted that there are limited number of subcontracted companies which work in the same shipyard for several years. For example, Osman has been working for 14 years in Seden Shipyard as a subcontracted worker. He says that they are like a brother with other workers. But, when it is asked whether they act together in cases where accidents occur or payments are unpaid, he gives an answer as such:

Şimdi bizim insanlarımız bi tuhaf yani. Şimdi bana dokunmayan yılan bin yıl yaşasın hesabı, mesela ben maaşımı alıyorum mesela, A taşeronu B taşeronu alamıyor. Benim gözüüm onu görmüyor ki. Ya öyleyiz ya. Yani o adam da alamıyor deyip destek veremiyoruz çünkü o ayrı bir taşeron firma. Taşeronluk farklı bir şey ya. Yani normal bir fabrikanın içindeki gibi değil, tersane çok farklı bir şey yani. Normal bir iş yerine benzemiyor.¹⁶⁷

We have said that global market is characterized by high competition. In this context, Turkish shipbuilding sector compete with other national sectors, shipyards in Tuzla compete with each other and subcontract companies compete among

¹⁶⁶ “Right now there are about 30 – 40 shipyards. Each one has about 500 – 1000 people working there. If a few of my friends got together to defend their rights over some injustice or other, we would have no idea who to even go to to complain... Working together is tough – a lot of people are here. You have to go to a thousand people, talk to them, convince them and keep going like that”

¹⁶⁷ “You know, there weird people around us. Just as in the case of idiomatic expression “let sleeping dogs lie”. It is not important whether the other subcontractors are paid or not since I have no problem on receiving my salary. You know, the fact is that. We do not bother the subcontractor who can not receive his salary because he represents another subcontractor’s firm. I mean, issues related to subcontractors are highly different. You mustn’t think as an ordinary industrial factory, shipyards are very different. It does not look like an ordinary working place.”

themselves. Finally, competition extends to workers. Individualization shows itself in a tendency to see work accidents as an individual mistake and workers from “other” ethnicities as a reason of low wages. There is a tendency among shipyard workers in Tuzla to blame another ethnic group coming after them in social hierarchy for low wages. For instance, for Sabri, who is from Erzurum and defines himself as nationalist-Muslim, the reason of low wages is Kurdish workers:

Adam çalışıyo, gerçek usta 100 liraya, iki tane Kürt geliyor diyo ki kardeşim ben çalışırım 50 liraya. Diyo ki; lan bu adama 100 lira verene kadar bu ikisine 100 lira veriyim iki tane adam olsun burda. İki adam çalışıyo biri de ölüyo onu da umursamıyor.¹⁶⁸

On the other hand, Mehmet, who is from Elazığ and voter of Republican People’s Party (CHP), thinks that workers coming from Urfa lower wages:

Dediğim gibi, benim 90 liraya yevmiyeye gitmem lazım. Urfalıları diyo ki abi bana 55 ver ben çalışırım diyo. Benim kadar çalışmıyor. Adam hesabını yapıyo, diyo ki ben bunun yanına bi usta veririm diyo. Ona veririm 45 lira, ustaya yüklenirim, ustaya da 80 verceğime 85 veririm diyo.¹⁶⁹

As Koç states, the proletarianization of the Kurds and precarization of labor has pit Kurdish workers against other workers in the labor market as “competitors” (2010, 108). However, opinions mentioned above cannot be generalized for Tuzla shipyard region; there are other workers who do not see any relation between lower wages and Kurdish or Arabian workers. For example, Ahmet, who is from Eskişehir and supporter of Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), suggests that the reason of low wages is not workers coming from outside of Istanbul, but decline in orders after economic crisis.

¹⁶⁸ “A man, who is really a foreman, works here for 100 Turkish liras unless two young Kurdish men comes and works for 50 Turkish liras. Accordingly, employer prefers to have two workers instead of one by paying 100 Turkish liras in total to both. After a while one of these inexperienced young men dies and that does not touch to the employer.”

¹⁶⁹ “As I told you, I should work for a daily wage around 90 Turkish liras. Then some men from Urfa come and say that they can work for 55 liras. They can’t do the job like we do though. But the business calculation is based on the idea that the performance of young amateur can be balanced with an expert. Under these conditions, while young man is paid around 45 liras the expert gets 85 liras instead of 80 liras.”

On the other hand, according to some Kurdish workers the reason why wages are so low is that Arab workers have come from Urfa. For example, Kamil, a subcontracted worker from Muş, states that: “Araplar piyasayı, işi bozdular. Biz gider 45 e çalışırdık 50 ye çalışırdık onlar geldi dedi bize 25 milyon verin biz çalışıyoruz.”¹⁷⁰ Similarly, according to Hasan, ex-shipyard worker who is from Bitlis, decrease in wages results from Arabian workers coming from Urfa and Harran, who work 50 or 40 liras while he works 90 liras. Hüseyin, Kurdish-Alawite subcontracted worker, makes similar statements: “Araplar ücretleri düşürme konusunda patronun ekmeğine yağ sürüyorlar. Bu işi ben 70 milyondan aşşağa çalışmam diyosun adam geliyo diyo bana 35 milyon ver ben çalışayım. O yüzden çalışamıyosun. Şimdi doldurmuşlar Urfalıları.”¹⁷¹

However, there are other Kurdish workers who do not think as such. For instance, Selçuk, Kurdish worker who has been working in shipyards for ten years, does not respect these opinions. For him, these are merely rumor. Similarly, Mustafa, another Kurdish-Alawi subcontracted worker, does not agree with others’ opinions. He says that:

Zaten Türkiye’de ücretler düşük. Yani Araplar yokken de ben 800 lira alıyodum, onlar geldiler ben yine aynı parayı alıyorum. Ama nedir, işte bunlar geldi bizim ekmeğimizi aldılar...Hayır, böyle bişey yok. Ben inanmıyorum çünkü hep düşük. 7 senedir ücretler düşük. Şimdi aldığım parayı 7 sene önce de alıyoduk.¹⁷²

Actually, those who do the dirtiest jobs with the lowest wages are Arab and Kurdish workers, but of course, not all of them. One of the basic reasons for this case is the fact that they are the ones who came to work in Tuzla shipyard region latest. Therefore, they joined the working relations with the disadvantage of inexperience and try to get jobs by accepting lower wages.

¹⁷⁰ “Arabs ruined not only the job but also the market. We were working for a salary ranged between 45 liras and 50 liras until they came and started to work for 25 liras.”

¹⁷¹ “Arabs literally play into the hands of employers by decreasing wages. While you state not to work for under 75 turkish liras for such a work, he comes and works for 35 liras. So you are out of the game. Now, you can see men from Urfa all around.”

¹⁷² In Turkey the wages have been low from the very beginning. I mean, I have been earning same money since beginning, Arabs did not change anything. But there is another problem such that they came and stipped us of our jobs. I don’t believe anything like this since wages were always low. Wages have been low for seven years. I earn the same amount of money with seven year older one.”

We have mentioned the tendency among shipyard workers to see workers from different ethnicities as competitors. Now, we will go into the detail of relationship between them and discuss obstructive role of nationalist discourse in the organization and solidarity of shipyard workers in Tuzla.

4.2.5. Label of “Terrorist”: Nationalism and Its Obstructive Role in the Organization of the Working Class

In parallel with the neoliberal transformation process new hegemonic project arose in Turkey: the articulation of moderate Islam with Turkish nationalism. In other words, neoliberal politics has cultivated Turkish nationalism, which has always been one of the main components of Turkish politics. The articulation of religion with nationalism is not peculiar to Turkey; the process has followed similar line in the world. But, why neoliberalism needs nationalism? Harvey gives one of the answers:

Forced to operate as a competitive agent in the world market and seeking to establish the best possible business climate, it (neoliberal state) mobilizes nationalism in its effort to succeed. Competition produces ephemeral winners and losers in the global struggle for position, and this in itself can be a source of national pride or of national soul-searching. (2007, 85)

However, nationalism is not only needed for succeeding in the global market; on the other hand, neoliberalism needs nationalism in order to make its destructive effects tolerable. In this context, nationalism provides a moral background in the conditions where social solidarity bonds have been dissolved in the neoliberal era and serves to cover class character of social problems. It homogenizes people on the level “nation” and tries to eliminate class-based conflicts and struggles in this way. As Can says, nationalism puts “national interests” against class-based organizations. It tends to depict class-based social conflicts as “domestic issues” (2011, 177). In this respect, the government’s and employers’ emphasis on the importance of “national development” which is “overshadowed” by work-related “accidents” becomes more significant in terms of class struggle.

It was mentioned in the second chapter that nationalism needs “others”, which can be found inside or outside of the nation, to constitute itself. Nationalism

relies upon myths and presupposes the existence of “enemy”. In the recent history of Turkish nationalism, especially with the rising power of the PKK, basic “other” image, which Turkishness is constituted over, has become Kurds. Nowadays it corresponds to “political Kurds”, which refer to supporters of Kurdish political movement represented by BDP today. We have talked its negative effects in the daily lives, seen as exclusionary practices and lynching attempts towards Kurds. In this part, we will try to analyze obstructive role of Turkish nationalism on the organization of working class in Tuzla shipyard region, which has multi-ethnic social structure.

Workers in the Tuzla shipyard region came from wide variety of Turkey’s cities. There is a significant amount of workers coming from Black Sea cities, which could be regarded as a consequence of the dominance of shipyard owners from Black Sea region in Tuzla. Workers from Samsun, Trabzon, Ordu, Kastamonu, Sivas and Tokat constitute the majority. On the other hand, there are a large number of Kurdish workers coming from Southeastern and Eastern cities of Turkey. Lastly, there is respectively smaller number of Arab workers mostly coming from Urfa. In such a multi-ethnic social structure the problematic of nationalism gains importance.

First of all, it should be stated that there is not serious tension between these different ethnic groups. Most of the workers I met emphasized on this situation. For instance, Salih, who is from Karabük and a supporter of AKP, thinks that the existence of different nationalities is a chance for Turkey. In his attitude, there is an effect of his four-year informal work experience in Japan, where he says he has never faced with exclusionary practices. He claims that discrimination towards different ethnic groups is not possible especially if the management does not allow:

Abicim yukardaki yönetim sağlamsa kesinlikle öyle bi ayrımcılık olmaz yani. Olmadı yani. Zaten Türk Kürt diye bişey yok yani, hepimiz aynı vatandaşız, hepimiz aynı kapta yemek yiyoruz. Yani böyle bişeyi ben düşünemem. Akrabayızdır, o onlan evlenmiş, o onla evlenmiş mesela. Benim köyümde var mesela 20 tane doğulu gelinimiz var. Bizden de giden var o tarafa. Ben böyle bişeyi şahsi olarak düşünemem yani.¹⁷³ (Salih)

¹⁷³ “My dear, if the administration was reliable, such discrimination would never exist. In other words, they couldn’t manage. Moreover, I do not believe a separation between Turks and Kurds since we

Ahmet, a 33 years old permanent worker, is from Eskişehir and defines himself as coming from Oghuzs (which bears essentialist national reference). But, when the relation between workers from different ethnicities is asked him, he states that he has never confronted any discrimination against different ethnicities. He emphasizes on the fact that Kurds are performing in dirtier jobs and suggests that he helps them in the work process:

Ben çalıştığım yerde öyle kimlik ayrımcılığı yapmadım yapan da öyle ciddi anlamda, görmedim. Zaten insanlar zor koşullarda para kazanıyor bu sektörde. Çalışan insanlar işte kaynakçı olsun, montajcı olsun, temizlikçiler olsun onlar bizim gibi değiller yani. Onlar zor koşullarda para kazanıyorlar. Onlara yardımcı olduğumuz da oluyor yani insanlar zorda kalmasın diye. Çok ciddi bi problem yoksa çıkan kaynakta, içinde ufak tefek hatalar varsa, tekrar yarıp yapmaktansa okeyleyip kapattıklarımız da oluyor yani. Bu biraz da düşünce ve kişlikle de alakalı, normalde prosedürüne baktığınız zaman, orayı tamir ettireceksin diyo. Ama bakıyosun, zaten zor koşullarda çalıştığı için insiyatifini kullanıp şey diyebilirsin yani. Her yerde aynı değildir tabi bu. Ben bu ortamda bi ayırım görmedim ama.¹⁷⁴

On the other hand, Haydar, a permanent worker in Tunç-Gemi Shipyard, positions himself in the left and says that even if he does not much appreciate its politics, he votes for CHP in the elections. He states that he is Alewi and he has never been exposed to discrimination due to his identity:

Yok, burda kesinlikle Alevi, Sünni, Kürtsün sen burda dur gibi bi şey yok. Bizim patronumuz mesela Karadenizlidir, Trabzonludur ama kesinlikle bi ayrımcılık yoktur, siyasi olsun, etnik olsun kesinlikle. Burda herkese eşit gibiyiz. Ha ama ne var, siyasi olarak dalaşma, dalaşma derken şaka yollu...

have all the same citizenship and break bread together. I mean, I can not think of this. We are relatives – think of all the married peoples who have different ethnic origins. In our village there were twenty brides from the Eastern part of Turkey. And similarly there are women from our side who went to the East. Basically, I can not personally think like this.”

¹⁷⁴ “I have never discriminated against other identities in the shipyard and moreover I have never seen someone doing this. People have already earned their wages under difficult circumstances. The working peoples either welder or assembler or cleaners are not like us you know. They earn their life under bad working environments. We try to help them to lessen the burden on them. For example, if there are unimportant problems in the welding department, instead of redoing it all, we prefer to overlap the problems and finish the work. I mean, this is a matter of personality and opinion. The regular procedures order you to do the same work from the beginning. But by considering the condition of workers you prefer to take initiative on behalf of worker. Yet this is not the common application. But I have not seen any discrimination here.”

Bizde öyle bi ayrımcılık kesinlikle olmaz. Ben görmedim, varsa bile ben bilmiyorum.¹⁷⁵

Osman, Turkish subcontracted foreman whose employers are Kurdish-Alewi, talks from the opposite side in this relation and makes similar statements. He is a voter of a Turkish nationalist political party, MHP, but he notes that he is not a fanatic. He states that he has never faced with discrimination due to his political position from his Kurdish-Alewi employers. He suggests that there is not a clash between different ethnic groups; if there was, there would be blood bath in Tuzla:

Doğudan geldi diye, Kürt kökenli diye öyle ayırmazlar ya. Şimdi ayıran bazı, çok az kişi vardır ama ben görmedim yani. Sen doğulusun... Mesela benim üç tane patronum var biri gemi inşaat mühendisi mesela, Erzincanlı, Alevi mesela. Diğer iki patronum Bingöllü, o da Alevi ama hiç ayırmadılar yani. Hiç. Bi kardeş abi gibi oldu. Ben ayrıldığını görmedim.¹⁷⁶

Most of Kurdish shipyard workers support expressions above. For example, Mustafa and Metin, who are Kurdish Alewi workers, state that they have not encountered a conflict between Kurdish, Arab and Turkish workers in shipyards; they have not been exposed to discriminatory practices due to their identities in their work life in Tuzla. However, this does not mean that they have never faced with discrimination in their life. Metin tells his experiences with householders in İstanbul when he tried to find a tenement for his family:

Mesela ben bi de buraya geldiğim zaman çok ev aradığım oldu, hangi evi... mesela gittik ev boş. Kiralık üstünde, ev sahibi geliyor, ilk sorduğu soru nerelisiniz. Mesela ben Mardinliyim diyor, biz evimizi başkasına verdikte, başkasına söz verdikte 2-3 güne kadar cevap gelmezse gelin. Niye? Yok efendim siz Mardinli siniz de, çoluk çocuk var, size ev yok. Hatta bir gün bi

¹⁷⁵ “No, I can clearly put it that there is no discrimination based on denominational or ethnic identities of workers as Alawite, Sunni or Kurdish. For example, our boss is from Trabzon where is in the region of Black Sea but there is not any discrimination based on political or ethnical origins. We seem to be equal here. Huh, but I admit there is political quarrel only jokingly. I reject to admit existence of such discriminations in our working place. I have not seen, I do not know.”

¹⁷⁶ “They can not discriminate some one just for his ethnic origin like in Kurdish case. Now, we can talk about some people behaving in this manner but they are not too many or I haven’t seen. You are from East... For example I have three employers one of whom is from Erzincan and is Alawite. He is also the naval architect. The other two are from Bingöl and they are also Alawite, but they have never discriminated against us. Never. They have always been like brothers to us. I have never seen any discrimination.”

adamlarla kavga edecektik. Yok efendim siz doğulusunuz size ev yok. Böyle şeyler çok başımıza geldi.¹⁷⁷

Aziz, a Kurdish subcontracted worker who has been working in Tuzla shipyard region for 14 years, mentions that conflicts occur due to individual problems, not due to different ethnic identities: “Yani sen Kürtsün, ben Türküm ya da sen Arapsın ben Lazım, o Çerkez falan diye kavgalar pek çıkmaz buralarda. Çünkü her biri ayrı bir ilden, ayrı bir kültürden geldiği için kimse kimseyi hor görmüyor burda. Herkes ekmek peşinde olduğu için pek hor görülüyor.”¹⁷⁸ Bülent, Kurdish Alewi worker, makes similar statements. He suggests that problems may occur in the individual level, but there are not serious confrontations between large groups: “Sen Kürtsün ben Türküm, sen Arapsın diye çok karşılıklı en azından benim tanık olduğum bir durum olmadı. Belki birebir söylemler oluyor ama böyle çok karşılıklı, cepheleşen, üç kişi orda- beş kişi burda dövüşen bir duruma denk gelmedim.”¹⁷⁹

The following claims of Selçuk, Kurdish Alewi worker who positions himself on the left politically, constitute an example to individual hostility towards the “other” among shipyard workers. He says that some workers speak with hostility towards the Kurds or swear about PKK guerillas especially when they watch armed conflict depicted on the news. He gives an example from his experience. He tells that he had a fight with some workers in dressing room when Hrant Dink¹⁸⁰ was

¹⁷⁷ “For example, when I first came to here, it took a long time to find an apartment but why... The apartment was suitable to rent at the beginning and then the owner came and the very first question was that: “Where are you from?”. When I said I was from Mardin then they started to juxtapose excuses, like the apartment had been rented by someone else or whether we could come again in a few days. After all this, we were about to hit the guy one day. I swear! There was no apartment for us since we were for East. We have lived so many similar things.”

¹⁷⁸ “Let’s say you are Kurdish and I’m Turkish or you’re Arab and I’m a Laz or any one as Cirassian - that does not lead to a fight here. Since every body comes from separate cities, no one hurts feelings of other. The main reason is of course the fact that nobody wants problems at the place where they earn their life.”

¹⁷⁹ “At least I have never seen a situation against any one because he is Kurdish or Arabic or Turkish. Maybe there exist some individual cases but nothing reciprocal or alignments in this basic has never came up.”

¹⁸⁰ Hrant Dink, an Armenian journalist, was murdered as a result of hate speech in 19 January, 2007 in Turkey.

murdered, because they appreciated killer of Dink for “cleaning” one Ermenian from the world. He states that he cannot work anywhere long due to such reasons. He pictures general situation as such:

Mesela sohbet esnasında biri tutuyo şerefsizler bugün bilmem nerde yol kesmişler, ne istiyolar bizden biz çalışıyoruz falan filan. Şimdi sen anlıyorsun kimi kastettiğini ve orda müdahale ediyorsun. Veya televizyonda akşam bi haber çıkmıştır, onunla alakalı bi şey oluyo, bu tür tartışmalar oluyo. E zaten bi iş yerinde barınan, uzun süreli çalışanlar genelde kronikleşmiş patron yanlısı, kişiliği de o şekilde gelişmiş insanlardır. Ben hayatımda bu yaşıma kadar, aslında doğru bi şey değil ama 6 ay bi yerde çalışamadım şu ana kadar. Çünkü kaldıramıyorum yani.¹⁸¹

Moreover, some Kurdish workers state that they were faced with problems in the beginning, especially in 1990s. Ercan, Kurdish worker who has been working for 15 years in shipyards in Tuzla, tells that Kurdish workers were exposed to discrimination in the first years they came. He states that they could not have talked Kurdish since they get negative reactions from others. He associates this with relatively smaller numbers of Kurdish workers in that period: “Mesela bi işyerinde 30 tane Karadenizli çalışıyoduysa, onun içinde 2-3 tane Kürt ya da doğulu ya vardı ya yoktu. O zaman dışlıyolardı. (Kürtler) konuşamıyolardı, kendilerini ifade edemiyolardı.”¹⁸² However, for him, this situation has changed in the 2000s as a consequence of the increased number of Kurdish workers and changing opinions of Turkish workers.

It is possible to see many common points in the following statements of another Kurdish worker, Selçuk, who has been working in shipyards for more than ten years. He emphasizes on the pressure on Kurdish workers against speaking

¹⁸¹ “For instance, while you are chatting around, one of them starts to talk about the “bastards” who have “no dignity” and are harassing them. Now, it is obvious who the “bastards” are, but you can not say anything there. Or there is a debate about a news bulletin of yesterday’s TV broadcasting and something related to this happens in front of our eyes. As a matter of fact that is not suprising since anyone who succeeded to be a permanent staff in a firm inveterately stay by the boss and that turns to be a part of their personality. Even if I know that it is not a good case, I admit that I have never worked for a firm more than six month up to now. Because it is to hard to bear such conditions.”

¹⁸² “For example, there were only a few Kurdish workers in comparison to thirty workers from the Black Sea region in the firms. They were isolating us at the beginning. (Kurdish workers) couldn’t talk (in Kurdish).”

Kurdish in the first years he began to work in Tuzla. He also associates this pressure with smaller number of Kurdish workers in that period:

Bundan 10 sene önce biz bu piyasada korkuyoduk konuşmaya. Doğu insan azınlıktı burada. Samsunlular vardı Giresunlular vardı, Karadeniz insanı olurdu. Mesela adam yanımızdan geçerdi kardeşim derdi benim anladığım dilden konuşun. Biz böyle tepkilerle çok karşılaştık ama biz boyun eymedik yani, gerek kavgayla gerek güzellikle biz o insanı susturmasını bilmişik yani. Biz konuşmuşuk da devam da ediyoruz. Adam baktı beni susturamayacak. Ya benim ana dilimdir ben konuşmak zorundayım. 3-5 kişi bi araya gelmişik mecbur konuşacaz. Konuşuyok, konuşmaya devam devam devam, bilmiyorum insanlar artık korktu mu alıştı mı. Bilmiyorum yani, şu an alışmış diyelim.¹⁸³

In this respect, it can be said that family and affinity relations make Kurdish workers feel powerful and create a defence against nationalist attitudes. Additionally, some Kurdish workers claim that they are discriminated in the process of finding job.¹⁸⁴ For example, İsmail who is from Erzincan argues that: “Adam zaten işe almıyor mesela. Diyelim ki zdam Batılı, Doğulu bi adam kapısına gelip iş ekmek istedimi, işine yarıcaksa, adam biraz da ileriye düşünen bi insansa zaten işe alıyo. Aldığı zaman da zaten çalışan işçilerle her türlü geçiniyo. Ama öbür türlü, başta tepkisini koyuyo.”¹⁸⁵ Adnan, Kurdish-Alewi worker, gives an example from his experience:

Bu işsizlik döneminde gittiğimiz tersaneler sektöründe arkadaşlarla giderdik, tamam işte biz size haber vercez- çok iyi ustaydım gerçekten, ben mesleğimin

¹⁸³ “We were afraid to speak in market just ten years ago. Workers from East were so limited in comparison to the workers from cities of the Black Sea region like Giresun. For instance, he was reactive of not understanding our language while passing by. Such reactions were so common but we did not resign ourselves to these. Whether by fight or by kindness we achieve to turn down such voices. We had talked in Kurdish and we will continue. They saw it is not possible to turn down our voices. How can they think I will give up speaking in my mother tongue? When we come together we will speak in Kurdish. We have always been speaking up to now and I don’t know whether they get used to the situation or afraid of us. I really do not know, but let’s say they got used to.”

¹⁸⁴ Here, it should be noted that there is significant amount of Kurdish subcontractors in Tuzla shipyard region. They mostly employ their countrymans and in this sense there is a clientelism among Kurdish workers, too.

¹⁸⁵ “They are already reactive to your wealth. Assume the boss is from West, when a worker from East come to him he does not hesitate to hire him if he is a forward looking man. Afterwards the worker fends for himself. But otherwise, the boss reacts at the first meeting.”

erbabıyım diyebilirim. Bir gemiyi, projeciğim ben, sıfırdan alıp yapabilirim yani, ham maddesini alıp. Bunu bilen insanlar şimdi bana yok diyorlar.¹⁸⁶

Under the light of these, it could be argued that as well as there are nationalist attitudes against Kurdish workers, they do not result in strong conflicts which involve with large groups. Ali, Kurdish-Alewi worker who has been working in Tuzla shipyard region for 25 years, explains the reason behind this as such: “Yani eğer dışarda semtlerinde şey olmuş olsa bile, dahi milliyetçi davranmış olsa bile dahi, işyerinde onun iş yaşamını etkileceğini, burdaki yaşamını etkileceğini bildiğinden kaynaklı çok öyle konulara girmiyor.”¹⁸⁷

We have talked about the findings of Saraçoğlu’s work (2011) on Kurdish image of middle-class in İzmir in the second chapter. This work is very important in terms of this thesis because it enables us to analyze differences in practices and perceptions of the working class and middle-class towards Kurds. Saraçoğlu states that the Kurdish image of middle-class is produced and reproduced by practices in urban social life. In this respect, spaces where poor Kurdish migrants and middle-class come into contact become decisive. Saraçoğlu clearly explains the role of following experiences in the identification of Kurdish migrants by pejorative labels: hearing Kurdish migrants speaking “rankly” in public transportation vehicles in the label of “ignorant”; buying rotten fruit from Kurdish stallholder with the image of a “benefit scroungers”; Kurds’ acting together when they are in dispute with someone out of their community in the label of “separatist”; being robbed by someone from *Kadifekale*, a slum where mostly Kurdish people live, in the image of “disrupters of urban life”; encountering children selling tissues in the corners of the city in their being of “invader of the city” (Saraçoğlu, 2011, 66).

A substantial number of Kurdish migrants live in slums and they are separated from middle-class spatially in this manner. However, as can be seen, they

¹⁸⁶ “In the unemployment times we were going to shipyards with our friends. I was one of the best experts of my job but they were telling me that they would call us. I am such a designer who can build a ship by its raw stuff from scratch. The people who are aware of this fact reject my application now.”

¹⁸⁷ “They do not prefer to dwell on the matter even if something like nationalist reactions occurred in their neighbourhood since they do not want any problem in their working place.”

frequently interact with each other in the course of the public life. The reason behind having different Kurdish image of the working class and middle-class arises from the public spaces they encounter with each other. Kurdish and Turkish workers are neighbours living in the same districts. Therefore, spaces they contact with each other are not limited with public spaces such as bazaars, public transportation vehicles or streets of the city. For example, Cemal, Kurdish worker, says that their neighbours are from western and Black Sea cities, but they do not have any problems with each other. Selçuk, another Kurdish worker, mentions that they have neighbours from Black Sea region, with whom they have very good relations, visit each other. However, there are some others who despise them and do not even greet. In other words, Kurds' and Turk's being a neighbour does not directly eliminate prejudices or nationalist sentiments; however, it paves the way for interaction and overcoming the biases.

The expressions of Sabri, Turkish worker who has strong nationalist sentiments, present two-sided and contradictory nature of this relation. He says that he has Kurdish friends whom he likes very much. Moreover, he thinks that Kurdish people are brought up in worse conditions; he describes Kurds growing in Muş, Bingöl, Diyarbakır etc. (eastern cities where Kurds mostly live) as “down-trodden”, “orphan”, and “unfortunate sods”. However, he says therein after that he does not want to go to bazaars since he does not like the language of the stallholders from the East or Southeast:

Ya ne biliyim, pazarcı milleti hoşuma gitmiyor yani. Böyle bağartısı gürültüsü. Sanki çocuklara böyle eğitim dışı şeyler gibi geliyor. Hani bilmem anlata biliyom mu? Bazı böyle bizim doğunun ya da güneydoğunun insanının konuştuğu ters geliyor insana. O yüzden ona da karşıyım, biz genellikle markete gidiyoruz.¹⁸⁸

It should be noted that what enables him to go to the supermarkets is his being a permanent worker working for relatively higher amounts. In other words, his material conditions which enable him to go to supermarkets make him close to

¹⁸⁸ “What do I say, I don't really like these ‘bazaar-people’. The way they shout. It's like something affecting our children – you get me? The way some of these people from the South and South-East speak kind of gets on people's nerves. That's the thing I'm not into generally – so we just go to the supermarket, now”

middle-class in Izmir who have an image of Kurds as speaking in coarse language. Therefore, spatial closeness does not directly result in egalitarian relations between Turkish and Kurdish people nor does it directly eliminate nationalist sentiments. Thus, we cannot argue that Turkish workers who live with Kurdish workers in the same neighbourhoods absolutely do not have pejorative labels like the middle-class. Even if they are neighbours of each other, Turkish workers' encounter with Kurdish migrants in the city and could reproduce similar pejorative stereotypes towards Kurds, too. Generally, the middle-class, who are spatially separated from Kurdish migrants but encounter with them in the course of public life, produce and reproduce pejorative labels towards Kurds as a result of their experiences. On the other hand, the Turkish working class is not spatially separated from Kurdish migrants; they live in same neighbourhoods and work in same workplace. This provides a chance for interaction between these groups. Nevertheless, it does not directly mean the elimination of nationalist sentiments.

Furthermore, there are nationalist attitudes which sometimes turn into discrimination towards Kurdish workers in the Tuzla shipyard region. It is quite possible to see tendency to differentiate "ordinary Kurds" from "political Kurds" who are supporters of Kurdish political movement and hostility towards the latter one. For instance, Sabri, 29 years old permanent worker who is from Erzurum and working in Tuzla shipyard region for six years, says that Turks, Lazs, Kurds etc. are like five fingers of one hand. He attributes the unity of these different ethnicities to being Muslim: "Biz Müslüman insanız, Müslüman Müslümanın kardeşidir zihniyetini taşıyan..."¹⁸⁹ However, he attaches annotation to his expressions that: "*Devlet sınırları içerisinde kardeşçe yaşadığımız müddetçe, şahsen benle çok iyi.*"¹⁹⁰ Therefore, he subjects to a condition to live within the borders of the state. This expression targets Kurds who are supporters of the PKK, which is aimed at establishing a socialist state independent from the Turkish Republic, but abandoned from this aim in the last ten years. Afterwards, he already tells his opinions openly:

¹⁸⁹ "We are Muslims who believe in the ummah."

¹⁹⁰ "I individually, have no problems with anyone as long as they can live together with us within the boundaries determined by the state"

“Adam çıksa benim karşımda PKK terör örgütüne destek verse, valla ben polis falan çağırمام onu öldürür denize atarım. Böyle bir yapımız var. Hani öldürür demiyelim de tepki gösteririm, öyle bi şeyimiz olur ama bunun dışında öyle bi şeyimiz yok.”¹⁹¹ He sees the Kurdish issue as a problem of economic underdevelopment. He thinks that the state should solve Kurdish problem by making investments in the East and Southeast, but he is against “giving credence” to PKK guerillas or BDP deputies: “Bi milletvekilinin emniyet amirine tokat attığını gördük basında. Ben amir olsam o kadını öldürürdüm orda. Resmen tut boğazını kes yani. Sen bi milletvekilisin, terör olayından dolayı gel bu amire tokat at yani. Çok sabır gerektiren bi iş yani, gerçekten.”¹⁹² Following statements of Sabri summarizes his opinions which refer to Islam in the emphasis on “fraternity” and excludes supporters of the PKK from this “fraternity”:

(Hükümet) terör olaylarına çok taviz veriyor diye düşünüyorum. Mesela hangi ilçeydi bilmiyorum, savcılarını götürdüler oraya, yargılamalar, şunlar, bunlar teröristleri. Bunlar yapılmaması gerekiyor diye düşünüyorum. Yoksa yapılan açılımları destekliyoruz. Çünkü benim kardeşim yani. gelse kapıyı vursa, selamın aleyküm dese, tanrı misafiriyim dese açarım kapıyı gel kardeş, ev de bi tabak çorba varsa beraber yiyelim derim. Ya da yarın bir gün gel sana şurda bi tane ev tutalım, kızım varsa ya da kardeşim varsa, eğer çocuk da böyle temiz bi çocuksa, hem kız alırım hem kız da veririm yani, öyle bi sıkıntımız olmaz.¹⁹³

Turkish nationalism identifies the Kurdish political movement with “terrorism”. As a result of this understanding; there is a tendency to make differentiation between Kurds and “terrorist” Kurds who are in the same political line

¹⁹¹ “Honestly, if the man admit his support of terrorist group of PKK, I do not hesitate to kill him right over there and throw into the sea instead of calling police. That is our nature. Well, maybe I do not kill but I certainly react to this. Nothing more than this.”

¹⁹² “We saw a Minister slap a chief of police in the face. If I were him, I wouldn’t hesitate to shoot her right there. I would grab her and slit her throat just there. How dare she slap a chief of police as a parliamentarian because of a terrorist activity. The situation of chief of police requires such an exacting sense of mission.” For the news about the issue Sabri talks, see <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/bianet/128801-tuncel-i-atilan-gaz-bombalari-cileden-cikartti>

¹⁹³ “I think the government compromises a lot with terror. It’s like, I can’t remember whereabouts, but they brought out a prosecutor to defend one of these terrorists. Apart from all that, we support the peace process. Cuz my brother, if my brother pops by the house completely unannounced I’ll say come on in and have some soup or whatever is about. Or tomorrow come over and we’ll sort you out a place to stay, you might have a daughter or I might have one to give away – who knows, there’s no problem there”

with BDP. This tendency is apparent in the following expressions of Serdar, 35 years old worker from İstanbul, who makes distinction between Kurds and “supporters of the PKK”. He sees the Kurdish issue as an economic problem, too and offers economic solutions:

Gereksiz şeylere el atmaktansa ekonomiye daha çok yatırım yapsalar, bu hak hukuk vesaire diye koşturacaklarına doğuya, güney doğuya daha fazla yatırım yapsalar. Devlet olarak ilk onlar götürüp daha sonra özelleştirseler işletip. İlk olarak devlet olarak götür sonra özelleştir sorun değil. İşlerliğini bi sağla. Ondan sonra hiçbir insan zannetmiyorum ki Türk-Kürt. Kürt demiyorum ben ona, Kürtlerin içinde çok karşı olan insanlar var. Çok azınlık olarak bakıyorum ben o PKK yandaşlarına.¹⁹⁴

The identification of the political line of BDP with terrorism constitutes a serious obstacle to the organizational power of Limter-İş to the extent that it is identified with Kurdish political movement. This is not new phenomenon for Turkish politics; labels such as “terrorist”, “traitor” or “separatist” have been used by different political parties or bourgeoisie in line with their interests in cases where they see a threat against their existence. These labels provide a base for the legitimacy of their ideology. In this way, they appeal to nationalist feelings of masses and try to unite them in “common enemy”. It was stated that in recent years, “common enemy” of Turkish nationalism refers to the PKK and Kurds in a similar political position with it. It is possible to see the effects of this discourse on workers. Considerable amount of workers’ reason of staying away from Limter-İş is created “terrorist” image of it, which is identified with PKK. Following conversation with Osman is one of the most explicit examples this:

Onlar yani, (Limter-İş’in) içindeki arkadaşlar var mesela, terör destekleyen tipler de var yani. PKK mesela. Bire bir adam destekliyor, savunuyor... Artı tam iç yüzünü bilmiyorum ama duyuyoruz yani. İçindeki insanları gördüğümüz zaman... Bire bir görmedim şimdi ama duyuyoruz. Onların yakın arkadaşları falan. Yani öyle pek sıcak gidilip gelinecek bi şey değil yani. Ben gittim gördüm ama bir arkadaşım bilmiyordu, daha ilk geldiği

¹⁹⁴ “They stop spending on rubbish and invest in real things, and all this talk of legalities should go well. First work on it as a state and then do all the privatization. If they accept this as a state first, we can move on with the privatization. One thing at a time. After that no-one will care who is Turk and who is Kurd. I don’t call them Kurds. With Kurds there are many people in opposition. I look down on those PKK supporters”

dönemler, onun hatırı ricasını, o da orda görevliymiş, o şekilde. Şu anki aklım olsa hayatta gitmezdim. Çünkü başındaki adamları görüyorum ya...¹⁹⁵

Osman says that he has not experienced by himself but he hears that activists of Limter-İş support the PKK. His judgments rest on what he hears. This is common among shipyard workers; “terrorist” label towards Limter-İş is circulated as a rumour in Tuzla shipyard region. It could be said that this discourse finds a response within shipyard workers. Mehmet who is a supporter of CHP and is not member of any trade union states that he appericiates protests of Limter-İş against bad working conditions, but he has drawbacks about Limter-İş. When it is asked what kinds of drawbacks he has, he generalizes his expressions and says that workers think that Limter-İş helps the “organization”. This “organization” refers to PKK. He explains workers’ reason of staying away from Limter-İş as follows:

Şu var, sendika bölümü dediğin zaman insanlar biraz uzak duruyo. Dediğim gibi zannediyolar ki örgüte katılmış hesabına...O yüzden uzak duruyo. Bazen ben de bakıyom bazen BDP’nin bayrağı geliyor. Sevmeyenler var, istemeyenler var. Şöyle açık bişey söylüyim, tersane bölgesini araştırdığın zaman sahiplerinin çoğu milletvekili, mesela bizimki milletvekili aday adayı (from MHP).¹⁹⁶

As it can be understood from Mehmet’s statements, there is an effect of shipyard owners’ political identities on workers. Workers regard being a member of Limter-İş as supporting “terrorist organization”. Hüseyin who is a member of Limter-İş and defines himself as leftist states that:

Genelde muhafazakar, milliyetçi tipler...O’nu (Limter-İş’i) hani solcu gibi görse neyse, solcular dese neyse. Onu da demiyo. “Teröristler.” “Sendika

¹⁹⁵ “I mean them, the ones who support the terrorists, are inside Limter-İş. For example, PKK. The man exactly supports and defends this organization... In addition I have no information about the detail but I have heard something. Especially when we saw the people within Limterİş... I admit that I have never seen something about this but I have always heard about. Their close friends for example... You know, I mean it is not such a place that you can visit with a mind at peace. I went to the place of Limter-İş but just for one of the new friends who was one of office bearers. If I knew then what I know now, I would never go to this place. You see, I know the chiefs of organization.”

¹⁹⁶ “However, when you are talking about departments of organization, workers tend to keep away. As I told you before, they behave as if it turns to be joining an illegal organization... That is why they are keeping away. Sometimes I also saw, they bring the flags of BDP but you know, there are also people who do not like this party just as the ones who admire. I can put it clearly like this, when I was looking for shipyards I found out that most of the owners were parliamentarians. For example, the owner of the shipyard I work for is candidate for nomination as a parliamentar from MHP.”

teröristtir.” “Hep terörist dolu.” Genelde bu şekilde düşünüyorlar. Anlayışla karşılayan, biraz daha ılımlı olanlar genelde demokratlar, Aleviler, Kürtler. Mesela Araplar kolay kolay gelmez.¹⁹⁷

Ercan’s expressions support those of Hüseyin. Ercan is from the group who made “crane occupation” protest in Adar Shipyard and became a member of Limter-İş after this protest. He states that he was appreciating Limter-İş, but did not become its member because it was excluded and looked at “with different eyes” in shipyard region. When the other reasons of workers’ staying away from Limter-İş are asked, he suggests that:

Burda çalışanların çoğu Karadeniz tarafıdır, bizim doğudan biraz nadirdir çalışan. Var ama onlar kadar yok. Onlarda (Karadenizlilerde) milliyetçilik çok, onların ruhunda var milliyetçilik. O yüzden üyeleri azdır aslında Limter İş’in. O yüzden sevmiyolar Limter İş’i. O yüzden, aslında sendikanın öyle bir anlayışı yok da, öyle bi politikası yok da onlar öyle görüyolar. Bu ülkede solcu oldunmu PKK’lisindir. Öyledir yani bu ülkede.¹⁹⁸

In this respect, this thesis verifies the findings of the study of Tuzla Research Group (TRG, 2009), which argues that “terrorism” and “separatism” based anti-PKK discourse which is used for preventing massification of the working class struggle is effective in the Tuzla shipyard. They assert that anti-Kurdish movement discourse is successful in preventing Turkish and Arab workers from participating in the protests to some extent (TRG, 2009). Moreover, it could be stated that identification of any opposition with “terror” and/or “PKK” is not particular to Tuzla; it is a common situation in Turkey as a means of suppressing opposition. To illustrate, in the TEKEL resistance, Minister of State, Hayati Yazıcı, claimed that the PKK had a hand in the resistance: “İşe şeytan karıştı, hani 72 buçuk millet derler ya, Türkiye’de ne varsa,

¹⁹⁷ “Generally they are conservative or nationalist... There would be no problem if they saw Limter-İş as a leftist organization. But no, they insist on the idea that they are all “terrorists” and “organization is also terrorist” and “it is full of terrorist”. Their general tendency is like this. The more understanding and steady ones are mostly Alawites, Kurdish worker. For instance, Arabic worker comes hardly.”

¹⁹⁸ “Most of workers here are from Black Sea in comparison to fewer workers from East. There exists some but not so many. People of Black Sea are so nationalist, it is much better to put it like nationalism comes from their spirit. Because of this in Limter-İş they are so few. That is why they do not like Limter-İş. So, they saw like this even if the organization does not have such a perspective. In Turkey, being leftist means being from PKK. It is like this here.”

buna PKK da dahil bu işe fitne sokmaya başladı.”¹⁹⁹ Representing the TEKEL workers’ resistance as diabolic and associating it to the PKK was a strategy to block mass support and weaken the resistance. In this way, Yazıcı tried to discredit workers in resistance. A similar discourse is produced and reproduced by shipyard owners in Tuzla shipyard region, too, as a way to keep workers out of Limter-İş. For example, Cengiz Kaptanoğlu, one of the partners of DEMSAN Shipyard, says that fatal work accidents are “MİT’lik olay”²⁰⁰. He associates them with Limter-İş:

Bir tersanede aynı hafta içinde 2 işçi ölür mü? Benim ölen kardeşim, 5 senede 9 gemi inşaa etmiş. Neden kimse ölümlerle ilgili Emniyet Müdürü’ne soru sormuyor? Bu işler polislik, MİT’lik işler. Ölümlerin gerçek sebeplerini bulmak isteyen bizlerin üstüne değil, emniyet güçlerine gitsin. Eylem yapan, yürüyen 30 kişi.²⁰¹

In this way, Kaptanoğlu tries to conceal his responsibilities in fatal work accidents, and at the same time tries to destroy the legitimacy of Limter-İş. In this way, he tries to kill two birds with one stone. Erkan Selah, owner of Selah Shipyard, goes a bit further and claims openly that Limter-İş is a extension of the PKK. He states that Limter-İş was in support of the forced closure imposed upon his shipyard. He says that: “Bu sendika (Limter-İş) bölücü örgütün devamı gibi onların propagandasını yapıyor.”²⁰² He continues: “Gemicilik baba mesleği. 1954 yılından bu yana tersanecilik yapıyoruz. Tersanemizin kapatılmasının nedeni basının yargısız infaz niteliğindeki haberleri ve bölücü örgütün propagandasını yapan sendikadır.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ “There is something like demonic possession on this matter. You know like in the idiom which states there are seventy two nations all around the World. Take this idiom on target of Turkey such that including PKK each of communities cause a kind of disorder for whole society.” See <http://www.haberturk.com/polemik/haber/205554-tekel-eyleminde-pkklilarin-da-parmagi-var>

²⁰⁰ “an event characteristic of MİT (National Intelligence Service)”

²⁰¹ “Is the death of two workers from the same shipyard in a week normal? My dear brother had built up nine ships in five years. Why nobody asks about the deaths to the chief of police? These are the work of police, or even of MIT. The ones who want to find out the real causes of deaths have to go to security forces rather than us. We are just thirty workers who are protesting against death of their relatives.” See <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=8985558>

²⁰² “This trade union (Limter-İş) can be thought as a follow-up separatist organization since it makes propaganda for them.”

²⁰³ “Navigation is the profesion remaining my ancestry. We have been in this market since 1954. Our shipyard was closed because of the news which were products of extrajudicial execution and because of the organization which behaves on behalf of separatist organizations.” See

Actually, Selah knows that Limter-İş is an organized form of working class struggle and since this threatens his class interests, he tries to make Limter-İş illegitimate and prevent its organization among shipyard workers by referring to “common enemy”. In fact, he attains his aim in some extent.

Mustafa, a member of Limter-İş, emphasizes on employers’ role in creation of “terrorist” image towards Limter-İş: “Patronlar hiçbir zaman sendikaya sıcak bakmazlar. Özellikle DİSK’in herhangi bir sendikasına hiç sıcak bakmazlar. Onlar da tabi laflar çıkartıyolar bunlar teröristtir, bunlar PKK’lıdır, veya ne biliyim bunlar komünisttir.”²⁰⁴ Similarly, Bülent, an activist of Limter-İş, claims that shipyard owners and subcontractors label workers, who object to current working conditions, with PKK, which is the best thing they can do to prevent workers’ opposition. İsmail, ex-shipyard worker who has close ties with Limter-İş, emphasizes on the role of employers on workers:

Şimdi ne olacak, bazen adamla konuşuyosun, diyosun ki kardeşim sendika budur, şudur. Adam diyo ki “yok, onlar terörist, onlar budur, onlar şudur”. Ya adama diyorum ki hiç gidip içine baktın mı, hiç gidip konuştun mu, yaptıkları çalışmalarla ilgili gidip hiç bilgi aldın mı, yok. E Kim diyo sana bunu? “O diyo, bu diyo, patronlar diyo.” E zaten patron istemiyo senin oraya gitmeni. Sen zaten gitsen üye olsan, bugün onlarla beraber burda yönetime el koysan, bütün sosyal haklarını alacaksın.²⁰⁵

As mentioned before, linking any opposition with “terror” and/or PKK is a common situation in Turkey. In other words, threatening workers to stand with “traitors” is not peculiar to Tuzla shipyard region. The role of the state in reproducing this discourse is also very important. It could be argued that the position

<http://www.kenthaber.com/Haber/Genel/Dosya/manset-alti/tersane-sahibi-sucluyu-buldu-/03fac085-c041-4171-9482-36b15f7c981d>

²⁰⁴ “According to the bosses, unions can not be useful. Especially any organization in the name of DİSK can not be good. In this manner, they see no harm in forming rumour about these organizations such as they are either ‘terrorists’ or ‘agents of the PKK’ or ‘these are communists’.”

²⁰⁵ “What will be from now on? Sometimes we try to talk to people about the organization and to explain its mechanisms. But mostly we encounter conditions in which workers say “No, they are terrorists, or this or that”. I ask the worker whether he has even gone to inside or talked to anyone or got information about its works and his answer is “No”. Then I naturally asked where he heard such things and the answer is standard “From him or someone else; maybe boss said”. In any case bosses will not want you to go there. Because if you go to there and be part of the administration than it would not be so hard to get your social rights.”

of state, which was discussed on the context of work-related accident in the previous chapter, is not different on the context of the organization of working class. The “terrorist” image of Limter-İş is reproduced by police officers. Ali, an activist of Limter-İş, says that subcontractors try to prevent workers by using this discourse in cases when workers could not get their salaries and apply to Limter-İş. Moreover, he argues that police officers who try to block workers’ resistance use the same discourse and reproduce it. He tells his own experience:

Taşeronlar da söylüyor dönem dönem sıkıştıkları zaman, para vermedikleri zaman, biz Limter İş’e gidicez dediği zaman diyor siz o teröristlerden hayır mı bekliyorsunuz, o teröristlere mi gidiceksiniz gibi söylemler var. Ve bunu devlet de polis eliyle özellikle, mesela biz daha önce Demsan’ın Sağbaş döneminde burda bi direniş vardı. Direnişte biz gemiyi işgal ettik. Gemiye işgal ettiğimizde emniyet müdür yardımcısı telefonla çağrı atıyor, yav işçiler diyor, siz kiminle birlikte hareket ettiğinizi biliyor musunuz? Devlet düşmanıya, terör örgütüyle, her gün askerimizi katleden PKK’lılarla bir olup bize karşı mı çıkıyorsunuz? Ordan inin çağrısı yapıyor megafonla bi tane emniyet yetkilisi, açıktan sendikal faaliyeti engellemek, yada dışı bir şey yapıyor, elbiseyle yapıyor, devletin adına yapıyor.²⁰⁶

The role of the state in the Tuzla shipyard region is to try to break-up workers’ protests. For example, when Prime Minister Erdoğan came to Tuzla to attend an opening ceremony in Dearman Shipyard in 2008, members and activists of Limter-İş were taken into custody because they wanted to talk with Erdoğan.²⁰⁷ However, this is not a single case for activists of Limter-İş; five members were also detained in 2006 when protesting the explosion in Dearman in which several workers were seriously injured.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, 76 shipyard workers including members and executives of Limter-İş were detained in 28 February strike in 2008 and 15 workers

²⁰⁶ “Subcontractors also say something like this especially when they have problems about salaries or other things. They also mean that workers shouldn’t trust such organizations since they are in service of separatist “terrorist” groups. Moreover state also use such discourses with help of police services. As an example we can apply the protest of Demsan when Sağbaş was the chief. We occupied one of ships during these protests. When we were on the board, a call from secretary of police office was telling workers whether they know with whom they were acting. You know, they mean that you are acting together with militants of the PKK which is the separative organization who kills Turkish soldiers every day. One of the authorities from police office announced workers to get off the board which means inhibiting activities of the union in formal clothes which is illegal since he was here as a representative of state.”

²⁰⁷ See <http://www.sendika.org/2008/05/basbakan-tuzlada-limter-isliler-gozaltinda/>

²⁰⁸ See <http://www.sendika.org/2006/08/limter-isliler-gozaltinda/>

were severely injured by police.²⁰⁹ The attitude of the state toward Limter-İş and workers' resistances is open. This attitude makes workers, especially the nationalist ones, withdraw from the resistance since they do not want to be up against police. Moreover, harsh attitude of police and custodies stiffen "terrorist" image of Limter-İş. Bülent, activist of Limter-İş, tells the story to exemplify workers' concerns about seeming as "a traitor" from outside. He says that workers who organize with Limter-İş in 2008 protests unfurled a Turkish flag as a guard against this perception. However, this did not prevent disinformation and manipulation of employers:

Esenyol'dan gelen işçiler var, dediler ki abi bize ha bire PKK'lı PKK'lı diyorlar Limter-İş için. Böyle olmadığını göstermek için, biz Türk bayrağı açmaz. Biz dedik siz bilirsiniz ama sendika olarak biz açmayız dedik. Sonra taşeronu görüyorum ben, önünden geçiyoruz, camdan bakıyor. Kocaman Türk bayrağı açmış işçiler, Limter-İş'in pankartı var, onun arkasında da bayrak açmışlar. Eylemden sonra dediler ki siz PKK'nın bayrağını açtınız orda. Bak yani, bunu görüyor patron, patronun önünden geçiyoruz biz (...) sendikaya katılmayanlar, biraz daha mesafeli olup sendikaya aslında çok gelip gitmek istemeyenler, düşmanca bakanlar siz PKK'nın bayrağını açtınız dediler, o yüzden biz size daha gelmeyiz, sizinle konuşmayız dediler. (...) Yani, katılan işçi ama patron diyor ki böyle, o işçi de diyor ki evet ya bunlar PKK'nın bayrağını açtılar.²¹⁰

Bülent says that workers who come to Limter-İş firstly come in suspense. Following expressions of him are also significant in understanding identification of Limter-İş with PKK, and its obstructive role:

Onlara söylenilen, orda PKK'nın bayrağı altında Apo'nun resmi asılı... Kapıdan girdiğinde, ben kaç tanesine denk gelmişimdir, gelip orda araştıran, dedim ki gel içeriye de bak, bakalım aradığın resim orda da var mı. Önyargı böyle üretiliyor. Buraya gelmemesi için, onun bütün duyguları okşanıyor. Gelmemesi için ne yapılması gerekiyorsa yapılıyor. Tehdit ediliyorsa tehdit ediyor, işten atmaysa işten atıyor..Onun en yakıcı yeri neyse, sen Türk'sün

²⁰⁹ See <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=248705>

²¹⁰ "There were some workers from Esenyol and they said that they heard from other people that Limter-İş was within PKK. In order to show this is not the condition, we must unfurl Turkish flag. We said that is not a problem for us but you can not do this in the name of union. Then I saw subcontractor while we were passing in front of his office. He just looked at us. There was a huge Turkish flag behind the poster of Limter-İş in the area. After the demonstration they accused us opening flag of PKK there. You see, that is the boss who saw us with Turkish flag. All of the people who are distanced to the union or who really do not want to come to the office or who glare at union shared this accusation and stated not to come to the union or talk us again. (...) In other words, it is the worker who was with us in the area but the boss states the "truth" and then workers approve that there was flag of PKK there."

onlar Kürt, onlar bölücü, burayı kullanacak. İşçilere biz bildiri dağıtırken bile dahi bu konuda azılı olanlar bildiriye bile almıyor. “Limter-İş mi, tamam kalsın.”²¹¹

However, it should be noted that despite having planted the “terrorist” label in workers’ minds towards Limter-İş, this changes when they act with Limter-İş. Ali, activist of Limter-İş, states that workers definitively come to Limter-İş when they cannot solve their problems in the workplace: “Ve bir çok işçimize de söylemiştir ya bi de size terörist falan diyorlardı ama bizim işimiz bozuldu geldik, siz hiç de öyle değilmişsiniz diyor.”²¹² The experiences of Ercan, who became the member of Limter-İş after the “crane occupation” protest in which Limter-İş supported them, explains the changed perception of his work mate who participated in the same protest:

Mesela bizim bazı arkadaşlar vardı, biz Adar tersanesinde direnişteyken, direniş bitti konuşuyoruz sendikada, baktım bi tanesi, o da Karadeniz tarafından, MHP’li, yıllarca MHP ocaklarında çalışmış. Hani, gördü ya sıcaklığı samimiyeti, bizim onlara davranışımızı, gelen arkadaşları gördü, o akşam haklarımızı aldık sendikaya geldik konuşuyoruz. Kalktı ayağa dedi “ben sizden şikayetçiyim”. Niye dedik, “ya dedi siz bugüne kadar bu sendikayı iyi tantıtamamışsınız” dedi. Ya dedi “bize hep diyolardı solcular, bilmem neciler, bize hep böyle anlatıyolardı”.²¹³

To conclude, it can be said that bourgeoisie and the state try to criminalize organized working class struggle. This criminalization is mostly done with reference to PKK in Tuzla shipyard region. Nationalist feelings of shipyard workers are

²¹¹ “They said of them, they march under a PKK flag and a picture of Apo (PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan), When I walked through the gate, I don’t know how many of them I bumped into, but I thought – ‘look, let’s have a look and see if we can find the flags you mentioned!’ They create prejudice like that. They stoke the flames just to dissuade them. Whatever it takes. If we have to be threatened, so be it. If we have to be fired, so be it. In any case, you are Turk, they are Kurdish – they are like this and that. When they are giving out announcements they don’t even give them out to Limter-İş – they are just like ‘Oh, is it Limter-İş? Okay, forget it.’”

²¹² “Although they say such things to most of workers, when the worker has problem with them and come to us he sees that we are not as they narrated.”

²¹³ For example, just after the protest in Shipyard Adar we incidentally learned that some of our friends from region of Black Sea were members of MHP when they were young. They had worked for this party for a long time. You know, whence he saw the intimacy within union, our attitude toward them and our other friends everything started to change. When we turned back to the office after gaining our rights he stood up and said “I have complaints about you”. We couldn’t understand first, and asked the reason. Then he added, “I mean, you haven’t presented this organization in a good manner until now”. You know, he said, “We had always been said that you were leftist or something else and that was going on”.

provoked by equalizing Lîmter-Îş with terrorism. Therefore, nationalist discourse is used as a way to marginalize organized working class struggle. In this sense, as mentioned in the second chapter, nationalist discourse functions as a way of controlling labour. In fact, identification of socialist movements with PKK is used as a general strategy to discredit these movements in Turkey. In this context, it can be said that unsolved Kurdish problem and Turkish nationalism mostly provoked over this problem constitute an obstacle to the organization of the working class.

4.2.6. The Role of Religion and Islamic Discourse

Another tool of bourgeoisie to legitimize its ideology and to make class conflicts invisible is religion. In this context, “anticommunism” and “atheism” correlated with it have always been one of the instruments to make masses stay away from socialist movement. However, it should be noted that anti-propaganda of communism is not as popular as in the era when there was a socialist block in the world. On the other hand, the “atheist” label is used whenever needed to prevent social opposition by appealing to the masses’ religious. Here, we will not make detailed discussion on increasing effect of conservatism and its penetration into almost every field of daily life. We will try to briefly look at the effects of religious discourse in equalizing workers with employers and reproducing consent of the working class.

As Erdoğan (2012) claims that explaining the relation between labor and capital with religious terms is one of the neoliberal-conservative ideological tools of oligarchy in Turkey to provide social control of labor and prevent class conflict turn into antagonism. In this context, a certain number of questions were directed to workers in order to understand the role of religious discourse in class relations. As a result, half of the interviewees defined themselves as religious. When it was asked whether workers can perform prayer, all of them stated that they can. There are small mosques in some shipyards. For example, Salih, 49 years old permanent worker in Tunç-Gemi Shipyard, mentioned that there is a small mosque in the shipyard and he performs five times prayer in a day. He stated that nobody including employers intervenes with him. On the other hand, all of workers could go to mosque for Friday

prayers in Tuzla shipyard region. Almost all workers said that shipyards provide bus to transport workers to mosque in their one-hour launch break in Fridays. In other words, shipyards provide workers free bus for Friday prayers while they do not do the same thing for workers' daily transformation between home and work. In this respect, it can be argued that the attitude of shipyards does not result from their effort to "make workers' life easier". Then, why they provide convenience to workers to worship? It would be reductionist to claim that shipyards have direct interest in it. If so, there would not be need for anything else apart from religion to control labor. However, Islamic discourse constitutes a tool to make class character of poverty indistinct to the extent that "it does not attribute institutional character to poverty; on the contrary, it individualizes poverty" (Çiğdem, 2011, 215). Islamic discourse commands people to trust in God and be resigned under all conditions. In this context, poverty is introduced as a test for checking people whether they endure or revolt. The poor ones are guaranteed to get in return for their sufferings in the after-life if they do not revolt. In this context, as Erdoğan (2012) argues, dominant Islamic tradition, which legitimizes class inequalities by literazing them and moralizes the exploitation by individualizing, provides ideological ground to articulate with neoliberalism.

In addition to reproducing resignation, Islamic discourse and practices create an illusion of equality. For example, performing prayer with employers collaterally makes workers to think as if they are equal. In this way, class inequalities become indistinct. We have talked about Durak's study (2012) on the religious-conservative hegemony in the Konya Organized Industrial Zone in the second chapter. He mentions that employers and employees engage in rituals such as fast-breaking meals, religious holidays and funeral ceremonies together in Konya. For him, these rituals refer to the "struggle for attaining symbolic authority" and reproduce the control on labor. It is quite possible to see reproduction of Islamic discourse in Tuzla shipyard region, too. Employers go the same mosque with workers in Fridays. Sabri, who gives an importance to earning "*halal*" money, stated that his employer (one of the owners of Demsan Shipyard) performed prayer along with him: "Yan yana namaz kıldığını gördüm yani. Adamla yan yana namaz kıldık. Mesela Ramazan'da iftar verirler bazen, kumanya verirler. Her bayramda mesela toplanırlar herkezele tek

tek bayramlaşırlar en alttan en üste kadar.”²¹⁴ As Selçuk says, employers also victual workers in religious days and give importance to religious holidays. In this way, they reproduce cultural norms of religiosity and try to gain workers’ consent. While the alliance between neoliberalism and conservatism aims at taking maximum surplus value from workers through subcontracting in the one hand, it does “charity works” such as giving fast-breaking meals or providing provisions to workers on the other hand. In this respect, “philanthropy” is used as one of the dominant tools to absorb class inequalities. However, it should be stated that religious discourse and practices in Tuzla are not reproduced as strong as in Konya. This is due to the enterprises’ being at different scales in Tuzla and Konya. While the small and medium sized enterprises enable employers to closely interact with workers and control labour by religious-conservatist discourse in Konya, large scale shipyards do not enable such kind of direct and intense control on labour through religious discourse. For example, while employers in Konya engage in funeral ceremonies or weddings of workers, it is impossible to talk about such thing in Tuzla. This also results from the huge gap between class positions, and so cultural practices of shipyard workers and shipyard owners.

Furthermore, statements made above on the role of religious discourse do not mean that using Islamic discourse totally accomplish reproducing interests of bourgeoisie and consent of working class. Moreover, it is possible to encounter different interpretation of Islam. For instance, when it is asked Selçuk, who is *hafız* and devoutly religious, whether they do something as workers for their rights, he identifies accepting injustice with faithlessness with reference to Kur’an: “Sonuçta haksızlığı kabul eden insan imansız insandır yani bu böyle yani. Kuran’da da böyle her şeye de böyle. Ne pahasına olursa olsun sesini çıkarmak zorundasın.”²¹⁵ But, even if he interpretes being Muslim as objecting to injustices, he does not tend to organize against existing injustices because he fears from losing his job and does not

²¹⁴ “I saw him (one of his employers) performing salaah all together once. We prayed together side by side. For instance, they (employers) sometimes give us iftar or food packages. Moreover they come together at religious holidays and exchange bairam greetings from older to younger.”

²¹⁵ “Ultimately you can see this in the Qu’ran or anywhere else. You have to do something against the injustice at all costs.”

trust in his work mates about collective action. Furthermore, Selçuk thinks that the Prime Minister Erdoğan is not religious person. When the reason asked, he says that if he was religious, he would listen to problems of workers and find a solution. In this manner, he identifies religiosity with listening workers' problems, thinking about families of workers died in a work accidents and taking workers' side:

(Erdoğan) bence dindar değil. Bence insanları kandırma amacıyla o şekil yapıyor, dindarlığa vuruyor kendini. Ben öyle görüyorum. Eğer dindar bi insan olsa, eğer kıldığı namaz kabul oluyorsa başbakanımızın bir gün gelir şu tersane işçisini konuşturur. Bir gün gelir, bi toplar bu gün iş başı yapmayın ben sizi dinleyecem der ya (...) Gemiye indirmeye geliyo, ya Allah bismillah diyo. Zaten ilk başta onu diyo ama Allah için hiç bişesi yok ki. Ben bi vatandaş olarak keşke karşıma çıksa da konuşsam. Allah için bişesi varsa o zaman 10 bin tane insanın derdini dinler şurda.²¹⁶

Almost all of the workers who do not describe themselves as religious state that they are not discriminated due to their distance with Islam. For example, Süleyman, an Alewi worker, states that he does not go to mosques, but sometimes goes to djemevi, temple of Alewis. However, he says that he has never been subject to discrimination in the workplace. Adnan, another Alewi worker, mentions that most of the workers fast in the Ramadan, he does not. But, this does not constitute a problem; shipyards provide a meal for workers who do not fast. He states that some of his work mates say him to fast, but it does not turn it into pressure: "Zaman zaman insanlar oruç tutuyodu, ben tutmuyodum bana yemek geliyodu fabrikada. Üç kişilik yemekler geliyodu ama insanlar bunu yadırgamıyodu. Sadece arAda bir şunu derlerdi arkadaşlar "ya niye tutmuyosun, tut sen de" diyolardı."²¹⁷ At this point, findings of this study differ once again from the one of Durak who says that employers use religious references when necessary for example to legitimize dismissal of workers by claiming that they do not have "proper life" with religious-conservatism (2012,

²¹⁶ "I don't think he (Erdoğan) is a religious man. I think he uses other people's feelings about religion by devoting himself to Islam. I see the situation like this. If he was a believer and his prayers were valid, he would come to the shipyard and ask about the problems of workers in the shipyards. He could come and stop the production in order to listen us. (...)He comes and launches the ship with the basmala ('Ya Allah bismillah'). He says this but he has nothing to do with God. I wish to see him and talk to him as a citizen. If he really had something in the name of God, he would listen the problems of ten thousand people working these shipyards. Is it so impossible for a prime minister to listen his citizens? Doesn't he have any time?"

²¹⁷ "While some people were fasting and I wasn't, I was eating in the factory. The food was given just for three worker but no body found this odd. But sometimes they were asking 'why don't you fast?'"

44). It is hard to encounter similar cases in Tuzla shipyard region. None of the workers I met state that they face with problems related to religion. Islamic discourse is not used as a means of legitimization of the dismissals of workers.

It could be said that religious-conservative discourse is not used as much as nationalist discourse to block workers' resistances in the Tuzla shipyard region. This might be due to the effect of paying relatively less attention to the role of religious discourse in preventing the organization of the working class within the framework of this research. However, the direction of interviews made with workers has an effect on this case. Workers did not put much emphasis on the issue and passed over. When the effect of religious discourse in preventing their organization was asked Bülent, activist of Limter-İş, he stated that some workers say to them "It would be better if you had faith in God". But, he added that this discourse is not as decisive as much as the nationalist discourse:

(Dini söylem kullanılıyor) ama çok belirleyici olmuyor, patronlar bu dili tuttursa da.. Burda bize karşı söylenebilecek, akla gelen her şey söyleniyor. Yani burda yer almasın diye söylenilecek her türlü iftirayı ya da onları etkileyebilecek her türlü söylemi yapıyorlar...Ama sorun şu, bunların söylediklerinin hepsi etkili midir? Değil. Daha çok bunlar teröristtir, terörist meselesi de onlar için bölücü PKK'dır onlar için. Bu diğerlerine göre daha etkilidir. Çünkü diğerlerinden kaynaklı biz burda hiç sıkıntı yaşamadık. Bundan kaynaklı gelip de bize "bundan kaynaklı biz gelmiyoruz" diyene çok rastlamadık birkaç tanesinin dışında.²¹⁸

To sum up, religious discourse is used as a way of social control of labor, but is not as effective as the nationalist discourse in preventing the organization of shipyard workers in Tuzla. Even if shipyard owners tend to reproduce religious discourse and practices as a way of attaining consent from workers, it does not happen intensively on an individual level between employers and workers, contrary

²¹⁸ "(Although religious discourse is used), even if the boss speaks within same discourse, it is not so identifier. You can hear so many things against us in a wide rage here. I mean, they do not hesitate to make statements in most functional discourse or to cast aspersion which will lead in sending us away from shipyard. But the question arising from here is that: Are these maneuvers so affective? Obviously not. Rather it turns into problem when they accuse them as militants of PKK which is the most dangerous separatist organization according to them. This is more effective than the other accusations since we know that we had no problems related to other discourses. Except a few examples, we did not encounter any one who says "We do not come here just because of this".

to small or middle-sized enterprises. Moreover, religious discourse does not turn into discriminatory practices against nonreligious workers.

4.3. Workers' Perceptions on Class Relations

Workers' relations with employers and how they give the meaning to this relation is important in understanding the production of consent or points of resistance. Most of the workers, except those working in Tunç-Gemi and Demsan shipyards, mention that they have not ever met and talked with the owner of shipyard they work. Sabri, permanent worker in Demsan Shipyard, says that the shipyard owner shake hands of workers individually in bairams, says "may it be easy" (*kolay gelsin*) when sees workers in the field. When it is asked whether it is good thing for workers, he says it is:

Bu çok iyi bişey. Çok çalıştığım yer vardır burdan önce. Çalıştığım yerlerde, masalar bile ayırdı yani. Patron masası, mühendis mAdası, işçi mAdası, işçinin kademesi. Böyle sınıf sınıf ayırdıklarını gördüm. Ha burda öyle bişe yok. Patron geliyor benle sıraya giriyor, yemek alıyor, yemek yiyo. Tabi kalkarken tabağını kaldırmıyor ama o kadar da olsun yani. Ona da bir şey diyemeyiz. Ha ben olsam yapar mıyım? Ben olsam belki sıraya girmem yani. Patronsam patronum yani. Yemeğim önüme gelsin isterim yani. Hatta buraya da değil binaya gelsin isterim. Bu da şahsi görüşüm. Patronsam patronluğumu yaparım ama işçiyi de korurum, bi lira istiyosa iki lira veririm memnun olsun.²¹⁹

He appreciates employers' friendly attitudes and at the same time justifies their privileged practices. He is supporter of AKP and thinks that economy is getting better in Turkey. However, he defines the rich as bloodsucker on the poor. He is aware of surplus value he produces and says that employers increase their capital by

²¹⁹ "That is something very important. I had worked for so many places before here. In these old places even the tables of workers were separated from the tables of other personnel. Tables were categorized as boss table, engineer table, worker table and yet rank of worker. You see, there is no such thing here. Boss comes to have his lunch by cuing with us to get his portion. Surely I know he has never removed his plates but it is not that much. We can not say anything about this. Well, would I do this if I were the boss? Maybe I would not cue for my lunch. You know, I would be the boss. I mean, I want my lunch on my desk. Moreover I would want it to be in service in my office. That is my personal opinion. While I would not be different from any other bosses, I would always protect workers under me in such a way that I would not be closefisted to money."

means of workers' labour. He emphasizes on the difference between the rich and the poor in the sense of faithfulness and generosity:

Sonuçta işçisin ne olacak. Belki tepeden bakma hani... insanlık namına böyle yüksekte bakmaz da yani şey görmez de. Ama bana kişisel bi şeyini söyleyim; bence zengin insanlar fakir insanların üzerinde bir sülüktür. Kan emici bi yaratıktır yani. Zenginler, yüzde sekseni için söylüyorum, fakirlerin üzerinde, çalışan insanın üzerinde bir sülüktür ve onların kanından zengin olup nemalanan insanlardır. Benim şahsi görüşüm. Öyle çünkü ben burda olmasam patron orda oturamaz. Ben burda iskeleyi yapmasam patron gemi bağlayabilir mi? Bana veriyor bin lira maaş ama getirdiği gemi yanaşıyo bi milyon dolar. Desen ki bi yüz lira çıkar bahşiş ver, vermez. Vermez yani, gözüne gelir o. Belki burda beş bin metre beton attık bi kilo tatlı getiren olmadı. Git garibanın evine bi kat beton at bide sana bi maaş fazladan verir ama garibandır. Yoktur, borç alır gene der ki bu adam memnun olsun ya benim işimi yaptı.²²⁰

Cemal, subcontracted worker in Demsan, also thinks that the owners of the shipyard are good people, say “may it be easy” to workers, they are not arrogant people. He justifies privileged positions of employers, too. When the gap between the rich and the poor is asked, he says that the gap gets bigger day to day: “Yani bu zenginle fakir arasında tabi ki dağlar kadar fark var. Yani eskisine göre şimdi daha çok oldu. Önceden birazcıktı, en azından fakir çalışıyordu ama kandini de rahat yaşatıyordu, şimdi o şansı da kalmadı. Şimdi zenginle fakirin arasında dağlar kadar fark var.”²²¹ However, he takes the employer-worker relation as given and says that he does not aim at having same conditions with employers. He just wants employers to be fairer:

²²⁰ “In the end, you are worker. Maybe it is getting on workers' high horse... But something like this can not be done for the sake of humanity. But I put something personal here those riches are blood suckers of poor people. I mean blood sucker in literal sense. For most of riches it is true that they bleed poor people namely people who work within their market dry. Their wealth is based on this fact. That is also my personal opinion. Because the boss can sit in his office only if I work for him. If I did not build up seaport, how would it be possible for him to moor the ship? While forthcoming ship costs nearly one billion dollar, my salary is around 1.000 Turkish liras. If you asked to make do with around 100 Turkish liras, he would ignore your request. I mean he really does not because it comes to his mind. Just think that, we might lay concrete around five thousand meters, no body brought us any desert as a matter of courtesy. Even a poor man would try to pay you much more when you went to lay concrete for his house under construction. It is obvious that he has no money but he prefers to please the worker since he made his work.”

²²¹ “I mean, of course there is a huge gap between the poor and the rich. You know, this gap expanded with respect to past few years. In the good old days, although the poor were working, it was possible for them to have a comfortable life. We can not talk about such a situation. Nowadays, they are chalk and cheese.”

Sonuta patrondur, tabi ki yerine gre belli konumlarda olması gerekir tabi ki. Biz bugn onların olduėu ortamlarda bulunacaėız diye bi gayemiz yok zaten. Bu nesiller boyu byle... O tr konulara girsem anlatsam bitmez nk iim ok dolu. Nasıl olması gerekir? Patronun bize iř olanakları saėladıkları gibi birazcık da sosyal haklarımızı birazcık da savunsalar bu bizim iin yeterlidir. Sonuta ben demiyorum ki patron benle gelsin bu yaėmurun altında... Sonuta o bize olanak saėlıyor ki biz de alıřıyoruz kazanıyoruz oluk ocuėumuza. Birbirine baėlıdır ablacım. Halatı dřn, ama bařı bi yere baėlıdır hepsi baėlı deėil.²²²

Ahmet, another permanent worker in Demsan Shipyard, describes the owners of the shipyard he works as unpretentious and friendly people. He says that Cengiz Kaptanoėlu, one of the owners of Demsan, talks with workers in the workplace. He claims that shipyard owners are not ungenerous; they pay workers higher than the market prices. He is supporter of MHP and thinks that the gap between the poor and the rich is increasing incrementally. He sees the government who implements policies in favour of employers as responsible from the gap, but he does not see inequalities as a structural problem. He suggests that his employers are not ungrateful people and give workers their due. He is against the huge gap between the rich and the poor, but does not question the legitimacy of existing class relations, too.

Such kind of optimistic attitude towards employers exists also among workers in Tun-Gemi Shipyard which is relatively small, family company. Salih, ten-year permanent worker in Tun-Gemi, considers himself lucky with regard to his employers. He says that owners of the shipyard always ask about the health of workers, ask whether they have problems. Similarly, Haydar, seven-year permanent worker in Tun-Gemi, suggests that their relation with employers is like a brother relation. He emphasizes that his employers help workers for example, when they need medical support. He says that their employers do not have complexes; they eat and talk with workers:

²²² “He is the boss in the last instance. Of course that brings him to some special positions in specific cases. In any case, we do not intend to share the same environment with them now. That is the actuality for generations. I am so uncomfortable about this situation so I do not prefer to dwell on the subject. But how should it be? We are looking for some kind of social rights just as their serving on occupational opportunities from the bosses. I do not mean the boss should work with us in poor conditions. I am aware of the fact that just because he gave me this job, I manage to earn my life. These are all tied up, my dear sister. Think of it like a rope, it’s just the end that is tied to something, not the whole body.”

Mesela çoğu tersanede patronu görmezsiniz. Patronu geçerken anca görürsün. Bizde öyle bir şey yok. Bi de patron gelir burda oturur, buraya gelir takılır, naber nasılsın falan... En basiti mesela bi sağlık sorununuz olsa, çözemiceğimiz büyük mesela, gidip yardım isteriz, napabiliriz abi, benim böyle bi sorunum var. O hemen arar arkadaşlarını, doktor var mı diye. Öyle yani. gerçekten diğer tersaneler gibi değil yani, aile şirketi gibi burası. Mesela oturur beraber yemek yeriz, şey yaparız, öyle kompleksleri yok yani ben patronum sen işçisin diye. Öyle bir şey yok yani.²²³

In this respect, having close relationships with workers, dealing with workers' personal problems, "friendly attitudes" such as talking with workers in the workplace or exchanging bairam greetings function as a way of attaining workers' consents. These practices make workers feel themselves worthwhile and make class inequalities sufferable to some extent. What they want is employers' being fairer, not the abolishment of class. They seem to have internalized the privileged position of employers. Nevertheless, even if they do not question legitimacy of class inequalities, they are highly aware of the increasing gap between the rich and the poor and complain about this.

However, as it was mentioned, a significant amount of workers from different shipyards state that they do not have met or talked with the owners of shipyards they work. When it is asked whether he has ever met and has had a conversation with shipyard owner, Mehmet, a one-year permanent worker in the Adar Shipyard, says that he has not. He states that shipyard owners do not talk with workers; they sometimes come to shipyards but just to control workers like "sergeant":

Yok (muhabbet) olmuyo. Tersane armatörleri işçilerle pek fazla muhatap olmaz. Bi mühendis, bi usta başları, bi de taşeronun sahibi. Nadiren gelip gemide gezerler, sadece tersane içinde gezerler. Kimi armatörler var mesela, çavuş gibi gezerler, bakarlar napıyosun ne ediyosun. İşçi çekiniyo.²²⁴

²²³ "For example you do not see the boss in most of shipyards. Something like this is possible only when the boss is passing by. That is not our case. Moreover our boss comes to here to hang out with us and inquires our wealth... Basicly if we had a health problem that our budget was not enough, we would go to him and explain our problem. He would just call his friends if there were any doctors around. That is the case. This is not like other shipyards, really. It is just like a family company. For instance we have our lunch all together, in other words he ignores the hierarchy constructed between worker and boss. There is not anything like this, you know."

²²⁴ "No, I can not talk about any conversation. Ship owners do not prefer to be object of workers. Only engineers, foremen and subcontractors... Only these rarely come to the ship and walk around

So, he describes the relation between workers and shipyard owners over the feeling of fear. When asked about the control mechanisms used on workers in his workplace, he says that there are surveillance cameras watching them. Moreover, since workers do not have any break apart from lunch break, in the case where workers smoke cigarettes in the working hours, foremen or managers warn them. When his feelings are asked about the rich or shipyard owners, he says that he feels nothing. When the reason is asked he mentions that there are ten luxury cars belonging to shipyard owner in the shipyard, but the transport service is not provided to workers. He says that the shipyard owner openly said workers that he would not provide free service for the transformation of workers. For Mehmet, this is “injustice”. Therefore, the phrase of “feeling nothing” refers feeling hard done by.

Osman, a 14-year subcontracted foreman in Seden Shipyard, says that the shipyard owner sometimes come to the shipyard, but does not talk with workers. Furthermore, he states that he cannot meet subcontractor, too, because subcontracting company he has been working is relatively bigger one employing between 60- 80 workers. He meets managers under the subcontractor. When his feelings about the rich are asked, he claims that everyone cannot do everything; there is need both for garbage man, driver and employer in a society for production:

Tabi insan o şartlarda yaşamayı ister, o koşullarda. Ama herkes o koşullarda yaşadığı zaman kim ne iş yapacak bi de o var. Yani bu şeye yeri gelir çöpçü de lazım, şoför de lazım, patron da lazım. Yani bu bir çark, bu çarkta her türden insan olması gerekiyor. Herkeş aynı anda zengin olursa hiç kimse bir iş yapmaz, üretim olmaz.²²⁵

However, when the reason of his being worker and his employer’s being an employer is asked, he suggests that his employers’ wealth is inherited from his father who bought a land from Istanbul, and blames his own father for not having made a more logical decision to buy a plot in Sivas. He seems to accept the rules of

shipyard. Some ship owners walk around just as commander in order to check your performance. Workers retrain form this.”

²²⁵ “Surely ever body wants to have such a life, under such circumstances. But who would work when every body had the same life standard? I mean, we also need a garbage man and a driver and of course an employer. You know, this can be thought as a wheel in which various people lives. If ever body became rich in the same time, no body would do any job and that will lead to end of production.”

capitalism as given. He claims that employers do not consider workers' benefits; they merely think their own interests. Nevertheless, he tends to come to terms with the existing situation: "Öyle olmayı (devlet bünyesinde güvenceli çalışmayı) ben de isterdim. Olmamış, herkes aynı yere giremez."²²⁶

Adnan, an ex-shipyard worker, says that they met employers in the doors of shipyards in the processes when they protest against abuse of workers' rights. He is an activist for Marxist-socialist political party (*The Socialist Party of the Oppressed*, ESP) and puts an emphasis on the elimination of intermediate layers in social classes: "Yoksul iyice yoksul oluyo diyebilirim sana, ama zengin de gerçekten zengin oluyo ciddi anlamda. Süreç öyle bir süreç ki bir denge yok. Ya aşağıdasın ya yukardasın. Hani, orta tabakadaki insanları da yok ettiler."²²⁷ He believes in the need to change capitalist system. Aziz, a 29 years-old subcontracted worker, makes similar statements when the same question about the relation with employers is directed to him. He mentions that he has a talk with subcontractors, but not with shipyard owners. The shipyard owner he met is the owner of the Adar Shipyard, whom he met while protesting against their unpaid salaries: "Tabi tersane sahipleriyle yok (tanışmıyoruz). Bugüne kadar tersane sahipleriyle bi tek, tersanede gezerken gördüğümüz hariç, bi tek tanıştığımız Adar tersanesinin sahibi oldu, o da eylem esnasında kendisini tanıdık. O şekil. Başka herhangi bi tersane patronu gelip görüşmez."²²⁸ When asked about the conditions in Turkey, he compares his living conditions with the past and worries about the future:

Ülkenin zenginleri artıyor ama fakirleri de çoğalıyor bir yandan. Fakir olanlar biraz daha fakirleşiyor. Ben bakıyorum mesela dört sene beş sene evveline, mesela çalışıyodum aynı bugünkü yevmiyeyi alıyodum, benim elektrik faturam geliyordu en fazla 40 milyon, şimdi geliyor 100-150 milyon. Kira veriyodum 200-250 milyon, şimdi 450-500 milyon kiralar. Bakıyorum her

²²⁶ "I also want to be like those who work within a guaranteed job in a government office. But it could not happen. It is not possible for everyone to have same job."

²²⁷ "I can clearly state poor gets poorer while riches get richer substantially. We are in such a process that there is no balance. You are either on bottom or up. I mean, they destroyed the middle class."

²²⁸ "We do not know the ship owners. We just met the owner of Adar Shipyard during one of the protests, apart from that we just saw some while walking around the shipyard. That is the situation. None of the ship owners would come to meet you in anyway."

şey iki katına çıkmış ama bizim kazandığımız para yine aynı. Yani giderler çok yükseldi ama kazanç yine aynı. Ülkenin gidişi biraz daha böyle giderse bizim halimiz ne olacak onu bilmiyorum işte. Yani birkaç sene sonra böyle devam ederse biz geçinemez duruma geliriz.²²⁹

Emin also says that shipyard owners do not talk with workers, they contact with subcontractors when necessary. He mentions that they do not even say “may it be easy” to workers when they see workers at work. Ercan similarly states that workers do not see shipyard owners much: “Tersane sahibini kimse kolay kolay görmez, zaten işi olmaz. Tersane sahibi tersaneye bile gelmez yani, müdüre emanet eder gider yani. Arada ya uğrar ya uğramaz.”²³⁰ He is 32 years old subcontracted worker and supporter of Kurdish political party (BDP). When the conditions of Turkey are asked, he talks about increasing gap between classes. He argues that rightist political parties always aim at making the rich richer and the poor poorer, and so, the aim of AKP is the same. When his feelings and opinions about the rich are asked, he says he feels nothing. He states that he does not give importance to “materiality” (he means any materiality obtained by money). As Erdoğan claims, the *virtue* plays an important role for poor/subaltern subject in the construction of herself/himself and becomes a way of coping with material poverty and spiritual pain (2011b, 49). It is possible to see similar tendency in Ercan’s expressions, too. He refers to moral values and glorifies his labour and elbow grease. He says that he has not ever wanted to be in the place of the rich. He explains the reason of this with spiritual concepts such as “tranquility”, “happiness” and “sincerity”, which he thinks the rich lack. In this way, he depicts himself with humanistic and moral values against the rich:

²²⁹ “While the number of the rich people in Turkey is increasing, the number of poor people is increasing in same way. The poor get poorer. I am just thinking about my own experience and see this. I was working with the same salary four or five years ago, while my electric bill was around 40 Turkish liras. However it is nearly 100 to 150 now. Moreover I was paying around 200-250 for my apartment at these times and now this turned to be 450-500. You see everything jackknifed. I mean, while incomes are stable the expenses are raised. I have no idea about our future if the financial situation in Turkey would shape in this manner. You know, such a possibility will affect our standard of living.”

²³⁰ “Ship owner does not see any one and moreover he does not need such a thing. In other words he even does not come to the shipyard and in this manner prefers to leave the administration to the director. He may come sometimes or not.”

Benim huzurum ondan (zenginden) daha çok. Ben ondan daha çok mutluyum, ondan daha çok insanların içindeyim. Benim dostlarım onun dostlarından daha çok samimi, daha çok güvenilir. Onun her şeyi para üzerinedir. Parası var ama mutlu değildir, benim mutlu olduğum kadar hiç bi zenginin mutlu olduğunu zannetmiyorum. Onun için para hiç bişeydir yani.²³¹

Selçuk, Kurdish subcontracted worker in Gimat Shipyard, says that they do not know much about shipyard owners, they just know subcontractors. He thinks that living conditions of workers get worse and says that: “Tok açın halinden anlamaz ki...”²³² When his feelings about the employers driving luxury cars are asked, he states that they work in unhealthy conditions with low wages but employers drive those cars thanks to workers. He thinks that he has been wronged:

Tanıdığımız taşeron patronları olur, birbirimize derik çektiğimiz rezilliğe bak, yaşadığımız yere bak, çalıştığımız hale bak. Çektiğimize bak, aldığımız paraya bak, adam bindiği arabaya bak derik. O bizim sayemizde kazanıyo tabi. Biz dumanı yutarık, sıkıntıyı çekerik, adam biner cipine gezer.²³³

Selçuk’s expressions about the Kurdish workers’ problems were mentioned before. When it is asked whether working for Kurdish or Turkish employer makes difference for him, he says that when the rights of workers are the matter, Kurdishness or Turkishness loses its importance. He mentions that he works more comfortable with Kurdish subcontractors from whom he could demand his rights, but the important thing is whether employer protects workers’ rights or not.

Şöyle, Kürt-Türk diyoruz da iki taraf da insan. Biz işçi olarak Kürt de olsa Türk de olsa sana hangisi iyiye..Hangisi iyiye dersin keşke böyle patronlar çoğalsa. Sonuçta, hak konusuna geldiğinde Kürtlük- Türklük diye bişey kalmıyor. Kürt de yese senin hakkını savunmak zorundasın, Türk de olsa savunmak zorundasın. Şuan bizim piyasada tanıdık Kürt taşeronlar var,

²³¹ “I live in peace in comparison to life of riches. I am happier than them and I am a part of society more than them. My friends are much more real and confidential than they are. All of their lives’ consist of is money. Money does not bring happiness you know; I do not think any rich person can be as happy as me. In this manner money means nothing to me.”

²³² “Half the World knows not how the other half lives”

²³³ “We know some subcontractors from past years. While we speak, we tell each other to look at our misery, the place we live in and the place we work in. The money we are paid in comparison to the vileness we are in is nothing. And now think of the car which the ship owner has. He earns so much by our labour. It is us who swallow the smoke or who have problems and it is him who walks around with his beautiful car.”

akraba sayılırız, mutlaka ben onu farklı görürüm çünkü benim nazım geçer ona, hakkımı yiyemez. Ben onunla tartışırım, mesela bu sakız benim hakkım değil mi, niye vermiyosun der alırım ondan ama tanımayan yabancı, Türk ya da başka bi taşeron olsun sen alamazsın. Ya kavgâ edersin, ya işinden olursun.”²³⁴

All Kurdish workers state that an employer’s being Kurdish or Turkish is not important. For them, what is important is their rights being protected. Cemal, Kurdish worker in the Demsan Shipyard, says that: “Benim için insan olması, iyi olması yeterli. Memleketi yurdu fark etmez. İnsan olan iyi olsun bi de insan haklarına birazcık daha duyarlı olsun yeter.”²³⁵ Kamil, a Kurdish subcontracted worker, agrees that the national identity of the employer makes no difference. He states that his former employer was Kurdish, but his current employer who is Turkish is better than him. Similarly, Aziz argues that the important thing is getting properly the higher payment on day: “Valla pek bi farkı yok aslında da. Hani, biz genellikle şuna bakarız, en iyi hangi taşeron sağlamsa biz onun yanına gideriz. Biz zaten pek patronla muhabbet falan olmaz zaten. İşine gidersin, çalışırsın, hakkıyla en iyi kim verirse ücreti onun yanında çalışırsın.”²³⁶

To conclude, one-third of workers define the owners of the shipyards they work as prudent, good people because they greet and ask about them. Although workers appreciate such behavior in employers and their consent is reproduced to some extent in this way, they are also aware of the fact that employers get richer by means of workers’ labour. On the other hand, most of the workers mention that they have never met with shipyard owners. They say that shipyard owners rarely come to

²³⁴ “That is to say, while we use a separation like Turkish vs. Kurdish, in fact both of them are human beings. It shouldn’t bother you whether I am Kurdish or Turkish since I am good at my work. You hope to see the ship owners turn to their best. In the final analysis, when we are talking on rights, a separation over ethnic identity becomes invalid. You have to assert whether the worker is Turkish or Kurdish. There are Kurdish subcontractors who are my relatives and so with whom we have a special relationship and so they can not be unfair to me. Since we know each other I pay off even the chewing gum and take it from him but if he was a Turkish (or from another nation) subcontractor nothing such that would be possible. You will either fight or be fired.”

²³⁵ “In my view, the important thing is mankind of them. It does not matter where he is from or where his motherland is. My only expectation from a man to be a good one and has some respect about human rights.”

²³⁶ “Honestly, there is no difference. Generally we look for the best subcontractor who we can work with. If he is confidential, we try to work with him. Conversation with the boss is not in question in any way. You go to work and do your best and in this manner try to work with the one who promise the best salary.”

shipyards and do not talk with workers. Most of the workers feel as downtrodden; they think that “we work in bad conditions with low wages, but employers gain money”. However, except activists of Limter-Îş, workers do not question the legitimacy of existing class relations. They aim at “fairer” working conditions, but not abolishment of classes. In this respect, it could be argued that even if workers do not represent *class for itself*, “a stratum organized in active pursuit of its own interests” (Wright, 2006, 62), they do not resign totally. Moreover, Kurdish workers state that employers’ being Kurdish or Turkish does not make difference; what is important for them is working in good conditions. In this sense, it can be said that class interests outweigh national identities.

4.4. Concluding Remarks

Employers’ class interests require unorganized and fragmented working class. In line with this need, they use all tools to prevent the organization of workers in parallel with their class interests. In the context of Tuzla shipyard region, obstacles to class-based labour unionism refers to organizational attempts of Limter-Îş. One of them is created misconception that subcontracted workers cannot be a member of a labour union. There is another misperception that permanent workers have to organize under Dok Gemi-Îş, which is one of the examples of “yellow union”. In order to block organization of Limter-Îş, shipyard owners make collective agreements with Dok Gemi-Îş. Another significant tool of employers to prevent workers’ organization is job insecurity and lack of legal protection against dismissals, which are outcomes of precariousness. Abstract dismissals towards organized workers cause a fear of losing jobs and make workers stay away from Limter-Îş. Both shipyard owners and subcontractors oppress workers not to act with Limter-Îş. In the contrary case, they determine the names of these workers by cameras or some workers close to them and do not employ them again. There is a strong network between employers, they share the names of “dangerous” workers with each other and act collectively to prevent organization of shipyard workers under Limter-Îş.

Another obstacle to the organization of the working class is the absence of trust in collective action and labour unions. Even if there is a strong tendency to see labour unions as significant for workers, they approach in suspicion to existing labour unions. In this respect, they distinguish the “universal” (labour union) from the “particular” (existing labour unions). Generally, they do not trust in their work mates and do not believe in collective action. Moreover, fragmented working structure of subcontracting and heavy and intense working conditions makes collective action more difficult in Tuzla shipyards. Shipyard workers working for different subcontracting companies cannot find much chance to communicate with each other and so, cannot develop class solidarity in these conditions.

The obstructive role of Turkish nationalism is one of the most important reasons for shipyard workers to stay away from Limter-İş. Turkish nationalism which is defined over Kurds in similar political line with BDP is used as a tool to prevent organization of Limter-İş. There is a created “terrorist” image of Limter-İş, which is blamed as being continuation of PKK. This discourse is produced and reproduced by employers and police officers to make workers feel themselves as “traitor” as long as they act with Limter-İş. What they aim is marginalizing Limter-İş. In fact, it succeeds in considerable extent. Activists of Limter-İş state that significant amount of shipyard worker have a “terrorist” label towards Limter-İş in their minds and do not want to act with them for this reason. Nationalism also shows itself in relations of workers from different ethnicities. Some workers claim that they could not talk Kurdish freely in the first years due to nationalist reactions of some workers. But, problems occur in the individual level today, there are not serious clashes between large groups. All Turkish shipyard workers I met state that they are against the discrimination based on Kurdish identity. Both Turkish and Kurdish workers mention that they have good relationships with each other. However, this relationship gets into danger when the matter is PKK. In other words, even though there is not dominant anti-Kurdish discourse, there is obvious anti-PKK discourse among Turkish workers I met. Moreover, it should be noted that there is not such kind of relatively positive relation between Kurdish and Turkish labor in everywhere. Most of the Kurds working in Tuzla have been working in ship building sector for several years and are settled in İstanbul with their families. This normalizes living

with together and creates a potential for the communication. However, Kurds working as seasonal agricultural workers or as building workers in cities in West, Black Sea or Central Anatolia regions do not have much chance to establish egalitarian relationship with people living in there; they have external relations with settled people. In most cases, they are subject to serious discrimination²³⁷ in the working process or in daily life of the city. Therefore, the situation of Kurdish labor in Tuzla shipyard region cannot be generalizable for all Kurds in Turkey. Future studies may compare the conditions of seasonal Kurdish laborers and settled Kurdish laborers.

Another ideological discourse used as a way of control of labour to prevent the organization of the working class is religious discourse. Employers reproduce Islamic discourse and practices in Tuzla shipyard region. They provide free bus for workers in Fridays to go to mosques. Moreover, “philanthropy” is used by employers as a tool to absorb class inequalities. Nevertheless, religious discourse is not used as effective as nationalist discourse to block organization attempts of Limter-İş. By using both nationalist and religious discourses, employers try to create common ground with workers and make workers think that all of them are equal. In this way, they try to get workers’ consent and legitimize themselves.

Another important issue in producing consent of workers is the relation of workers with employers. Significant amount of workers state that they have not met with owners of shipyards they work. However, workers in Damsan and Tunç-Gemi mention the opposite; owners of these shipyards get in contact with workers. This makes workers feel themselves better and think well of shipyard owners. In this context, workers consent is reproduced in some extent, but not totally. Almost all workers express that employers’ can only be employers thanks to workers’ labour. Most of the workers tend to consider existing class positions as given. They mostly want better working conditions, but do not question the legitimacy of existence of class. There is a tendency among them to define themselves with moral values against the rich. Additionally, almost all Kurdish workers argue that working for

²³⁷ See <http://www.bianet.org/english/labor/109120-discrimination-adds-to-the-plight-of-seasonal-workers> ; <http://www.evrensel.net/news.php?id=18528> ; http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/emette_kurt_isciler_gitti-1081761

Kurdish or Turkish employer does not make difference for them. What is important for them is working under better conditions. Most of the workers claim that the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing; the poor gets poorer and the rich gets richer. They say that living conditions of them get worse and their purchasing power is decreasing. Nevertheless, they do not refer to class-based society as a source of the problem. In this respect, even if they do not represent united mass defending their class interests, they do not completely resign.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been an attempt to understand the class experiences of shipyard workers in Tuzla. It mainly discussed the effects of precariousness on working and living conditions of the working class and obstacles to the organization of the working class in the context of Tuzla shipyard region. Tuzla was brought to public agenda with fatal work “accidents” in the years 2007-2008. In this period, shipyard workers were organized in large numbers against increasing “accidents” in strikes which was pioneered mostly by Limter-İş. However, except small sized resistances against unpaid wages, there is not such kind of organized movements in Tuzla shipyard region today. This study tried to analyze reasons behind workers’ staying away from the organization. It concentrated on two basic obstacles to the organization of shipyard workers: effects of precariousness characterized by job insecurity, lack of legal protection against dismissals, and fragmented and dispersed working organization, and effects of the nationalist discourse which is reproduced by shipyard owners and government officials to prevent the organization of shipyard workers.

In the neoliberal era, flexibility has eliminated the standard notion of permanent work and brought atypical contract-based employment. Subcontracting is one of the main types of the flexible employment. As a result of shipyard owners’ attempts, there are hundreds of subcontract companies which fulfill 90-95% of the main activity in Tuzla shipyard region. In this respect, the Labour Law no. 4857 which prohibits employers from assigning main activity to subcontractors is violated every day in Tuzla. Subcontracting enables shipyard owners to get rid of coping with wages, social insurances, security etc. of workers. It allows gains in efficiency and

decreases the cost of labour. In this way, corporations strengthen their competitiveness in the free market. On the other hand, the decrease in labour cost refers low wages, lack of social premiums and dangerous working conditions, and more efficiency in production refers long working hours and intensified production process. Therefore, while subcontracting is an advantage for the employers, it is just the opposite for the working class, which results from the conflicting interests of bourgeoisie and the working class.

All of the problems mentioned above are valid for shipyard workers in Tuzla. Subcontracting firms generally work on the shipyards temporarily. The number of workers and time to finish a task changes in accordance with the size of order. As a result, subcontracted workers who have been working in shipyards for long years change too many subcontracting firms. In other words, they work under permanent fear of unemployment. They work for 9-10 hours in a day, but daily working hours sometimes reach 24 hours with extra hours. Moreover, they work for low wages. Especially after the 2008 economic crisis, with the sharp decrease in orders, the wages of the shipyard workers fall by almost a third. Since it has become more difficult for workers to make a living with decreased payments, they work also in weekends. Furthermore, workers have serious problems in taking their wages. In most of the cases, employers do not pay workers' wages on time. In this way, while they oblige workers to work for them until they get their unpaid wages on the one hand; they decrease the labour of cost further on the other hand. Another significant problem of subcontracted shipyard workers faced in the fieldwork is security premiums paid over minimum wage. This obliges workers who retire over low payments to work after retirement. In this way, the cost of labour is reduced through enlarged reserve army of labour and increased competition between workers.

Class interests of employers require profit maximization. In line with this aim, employers always try to decrease the cost of the production. One of the basic ways of it is reducing costs made on workers' safety. According to data of Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 735.803 work related "accidents" were happened in the years 2002-2011 in Turkey. 10.804 of them resulted in deaths and 14.665 of them

resulted in disability.²³⁸ Tuzla shipyard region has become one of the symbols of the work related “accidents”. 154 workers died in Tuzla shipyard region until 5 December, 2012.²³⁹ The reasons behind this high rate are long working hours, pressure on workers to be faster and lack of sufficient security measurements. “Efficiency” turns into life-threatening dangers for shipyard workers. Shipyards try to legitimize accidents through depicting “careless” workers as a source of them. In this way, they attempt to make structural reasons of accidents invisible and to evade their own responsibility. Precariousness which is characterized by high job insecurity constitutes an obstacle for workers to reject to do dangerous tasks. Job insecurity is not only used as a way of obliging workers to accept working for low wages under the lack of security measurements; it is also one of the significant obstacles to the organization of the working class.

Contrary to Fordist phase of capitalism, in which workers usually enjoyed employment guarantee, the characteristic of neoliberal era is mass unemployment and permanent threat of unemployment. It was quite possible to see its negative impacts among shipyard workers during the fieldwork. Employers’ basic tool to prevent workers to organize against poor working conditions is dismissals. Workers’ any opponent attitude against working conditions turns into a threat of being fired from their jobs for. In this manner Limter-İş is primary addressee of oppressions of employers since it represents class-based labour unionism. Workers who are activists of Limter-İş, participate in activities of it or have friendship relations with activists of Limter-İş are under the threat of being dismissed. Lack of legal protection against dismissals give employers an advantage to prevent the struggle of the working class. The collaboration of shipyard owners show how they can act together in line with their class interests through sharing “dangerous” workers’ names with each other and not employing them in any shipyards. This makes shipyard workers who have to sell their labour power in order to survive stay away from the struggle.

Precariousness does not affect only working conditions; it also causes unpredictability and uncertainty about the future. Lack of job guarantee prevents

²³⁸ See <http://www.sendika.org/2012/06/akpli-yillarda-10-bin-804-isci-oldu/>

²³⁹ See <http://www.sendika.org/2012/12/tersanelerde-154uncu-can/>

workers to make long-lasting future plans. Most of the shipyard workers stated that they are hopeless about the future. Moreover, subcontracted workers were even worried about near future. They live with a threat of losing their jobs, cannot take their wages or lose their lives as a result of work “accidents”. This makes them anxious about their families. It was quite possible to see anxious feeling in the expressions of Hüseyin subcontracted worker who feels himself lonely and like a “convulsive thing in the sea”. His basic fear was dying unpredictably so that he would leave his family alone among hooded crowds. Furthermore, workers mentioned that some of their prospects are not filled up due to financial problems. Most of the subcontracted workers want to leave their job and work under better conditions, but they state that it is impossible for shipyard workers to find a job in other sectors. Workers tend to explain their hopes and/or anxiety about the future over their children. They want to provide a good future and better education for their children. In this sense, they want to realize their unrealized dreams over their children. Nevertheless, this does not refer to high expectations but rather a petition. It is hard to move up the social ladder for children of the workers living under structural class inequalities, and the workers do not have such expectations which will lead them to move up the social ladder.

The existence of the state in Tuzla shipyard region serves the class interests of bourgeoisie. The addressee of the state on the issue of problems of shipyards has always been shipyard owners. The state considers work-related accidents as “something overshadowing the achievements of the sector”. Keeping work accidents on the agenda is depicted as a “game of foreign forces”. To the extent that the state refers to “unknown enemies” who want to prevent “national economic growth of Turkey”, it mystifies work-related accidents. In this way, employers who has main responsibility in accidents are protected. The state’s attempts to normalize and legitimize work accidents through depicting them as a natural outcome of rapid growth show great similarity with those of employers. Furthermore, the state makes its presence felt through doing nothing about structural reasons of work accidents. Sanctions imposed on shipyards underwhelm, which constitutes one of the basic reasons of ongoing work accidents. The position of the state within class relations becomes much clearer in the resistance experiences of the working class. Police

officers try to prevent resistance of shipyard workers by using violence. It includes harsh intervention and custodies. Police interventions were intensified in the years 2007-2008 when the organization of shipyard workers seriously threatened the class interests of shipyard owners. Even if there are not harsh police interventions due to lack of large scaled worker protests today, as can be understood from the “crane occupation” protest in January 2103²⁴⁰, police forces still intervene in workers’ resistance when “necessary”. In this way, the struggles of the workers are marginalized and criminalized. As a result, workers, especially the nationalist ones who do not take a stand against the state, tend to stay away from class struggle.

One of the significant obstacles to the class-based labour unionism is great convenience provided by employers to “yellow labour unions”. Employers make collective agreements with these labour unions in order to prevent the organization of workers under socialist labour movements. “Tutelary unionism” is not specific to today or Tuzla shipyard region; it has always been the problem of the labour movement in Turkey, but it has intensified in the period of AKP governments especially in the public sector. The representative of yellow labour unionism in Tuzla is Dok Gemi-İş. It acts with the motto of “işveren olmadan işçi olmaz”²⁴¹ and gives great importance to “national development”. Shipyards make collective agreements with Dok Gemi-İş, which creates a misconception that permanent workers could only be its members. However, all of the workers I met, including members of Dok Gemi-İş, who became a member of it as a result of employers’ initiatives, were aware of the fact that it does not struggle for interests of workers. Moreover, since unionization is characterized by permanent job, there is a misconception among some shipyard workers that subcontracted workers cannot be a member of labour unions. This also results from regarding unionization as a right given by employers.

Another obstacles to the organization of the working class within class politics is lack of trust in collective action. Even if all of workers have a positive image towards labour unions as a “universal” concept, they lack trust in existing

²⁴⁰ After compromising with the shipyard owner and stopping their protest, four shipyard workers were taken into custody. For a detailed new, see <http://www.denizhaber.com/HABER/31767/12/ada-teranesi-vinc-eylemi.html>

²⁴¹ “no employer means no employee”

labour unions, in the “particular” ones. Moreover, they do not believe that workers can act together. In other words, they do not trust also in each other. This results from precariousness which prevents workers from taking collective actions due to fear of losing job. Since the lack of legal protection against dismissals results in dismissals of workers who oppose working conditions, workers refrain from taking a collective action. Most of the workers do not see power in themselves to change their working conditions. Atomization of workers, which is one of the main outcomes of precarious work, results in individualization among workers. It shows itself among shipyard workers in a tendency to consider one of the basic reasons of work accidents as individual mistakes of workers. Furthermore, individualization strengthens competition among workers. There is a tendency among some shipyard workers to see different ethnicities as a source of low wages. While some Turkish workers blame Kurdish and Arabian workers to decrease wages, some Kurdish workers blame Arabian workers. However, this is not dominant in all shipyard workers; significant amount of the workers I met did not associate low wages to workers from different ethnicities. Related with this, there is another obstacle which becomes much more important in the conditions of Turkey to the working class struggle: nationalism.

Nationalism is used as a tool for controlling labour to the extent that it affects resignation and/or resistance of the workers. In this context, the role of Turkish nationalist discourse dominant in Turkish politics is important to understand existing working class struggle. Nationalist discourse eliminates class differences and equalizes individuals at the level of “nation”. “National interests” precedes everything in nationalist discourse. In this way, it makes conflicting class interests invisible. It homogenizes people on the level of “nation” and provides moral background in the conditions where social solidarity bonds have been dissolved in the neoliberal era. Moreover, nationalism unites all people from different classes against “common enemy”. In this respect, Kurdish image created by Turkish nationalist discourse becomes important for labour movements in Turkey where Kurds have been considerably proletarianized in the recent years through dispossession basically as a result of national oppression politics.

Kurds have been significantly proletarianized through dispossession and migrated to big cities in large numbers especially in the last three decades in Turkey. Even if general conditions of economy which has diffused agriculture and dissolved traditional forms were effective in proletarianization of Kurds, significant reason behind Kurds' migration and becoming one of the most important parts of precarious labour force in big cities was national oppression politics. As a result, the composition of urban population and the working class in big cities has changed in the last three decades. Kurdish migrants who were dispossessed and migrated suddenly, without a plan became one of the main labour forces of informal sector and precarious employment.

Today, most of Kurds assert their own identity and demand constitutional changes to be recognized. There is a significant role of PKK, which has gained considerable mass support from Kurds, in the last three decades of Kurds' resistance. The rise of PKK strengthened Kurdish image considered as a "threat" to "Turkish nation". Anti-Kurd discourse and practices produced by the nationalist discourse show itself in the media and social-media as discriminative expressions towards Kurds and criminalization of them. Moreover, anti-Kurd discourse has turned into lynch attempts towards Kurds in western cities, especially towards Kurdish workers and organizations of BDP, in the recent years. On the other hand, as it is seen in the study of Saraçoğlu (2011), Kurdish migrants have been identified by pejorative labels and stereotypes in the big cities they settled, as "benefit scroungers", "separatists", "ignorant and uncivilized" and "disrupters of urban life". These pejorative labels are produced through experiences of middle-class in urban space. Middle-class comes into contact with Kurdish migrants in public spaces such as in bazaars where most of the stallholders are Kurds, in streets where most of the street children polishing shoes and selling tissues are Kurds, in the corners of the city where most of the people selling mussels are Kurdish men from *Mardin*, southeastern city of Turkey. At this point, it should be noted that experiences of the working class differ from those of middle-class in terms of spaces they interact with Kurds. While middle-class is separated from Kurdish migrants in terms of their living and working spaces, the working class lives in same neighborhoods and works in same workplaces with Kurds. This paves the way for interaction and overcoming

the biases. Field research in Tuzla showed that Turkish shipyard workers do not have absolute anti-Kurd discourse. Even if nationalist discourse causes some problems between workers in individual level, it does not result in serious conflicts between large groups. Kurdish workers stated that they have good relations with Turkish people they live and work with. Furthermore, even the most nationalist worker I met stated that both Turkish and Kurdish workers are trying to earn their bread in shipyards. In this sense, it could be said that workers see the fact that they share common fate. This does not mean that Turkish workers do not identify Kurds by pejorative labels in no way, but, as a general tendency, they do not have anti-Kurd discourse preventing them make friendship with Kurdish workers. Nevertheless, it was obvious that this common fate is not shared with Kurds who are supporters of PKK. In other words, even though there is not dominant anti-Kurd discourse among Turkish shipyard workers, there is dominant anti-PKK discourse. Furthermore, relatively egalitarian relationship existing among Kurdish and Turkish workers in the context of Tuzla shipyard region cannot be generalizable. Experiences of Kurdish seasonal agricultural workers or construction workers working in Western cities may show differences. Basic difference is the fact that while Kurdish shipyard workers mostly have been working in ship building sector for several years and are settled in Istanbul with their families, seasonal workers do not have this chance. Seasonal workers have external relations with settled people in cities they work, and are subject to serious discrimination in the working process or in daily life of the city.

Turkish nationalist discourse tends to identify Kurds especially the ones who are in similar political line with BDP, most significant representative of Kurdish political movement, by label of “terrorist”. In this sense, employers benefit from the opportunity of Turkish nationalist discourse and appeal workers’ nationalist feelings to make them stay away from labour movements. In this respect, “terrorist” and “traitor” labels which are mostly associated with Kurds functions as a way of controlling labour and prevent the struggle of the working class. It was quite possible to see its obstructive effects in Tuzla shipyard region on the organizational attempts of Limter-İş which is blamed to be continuation of PKK. Employers and state officials reproduce nationalist discourse in Tuzla and use it against class politics. They try to cover class characteristics of social inequalities by emphasizing the

importance of “national interests” and make workers stay away from Limter-İş by making them feel as “traitor” as long as they act with Limter-İş. This discourse succeeds in considerable extent in Tuzla. It was possible to see its negative effects among some shipyard workers who have misgivings about Limter-İş due to its association with PKK to the extent that they have anti-PKK discourse. Labels such as “terrorist”, “separatist” or “continuation of PKK” towards Limter-İş are afloat in Tuzla shipyard region. Activists of Limter-İş stated that having “terrorist” label towards Limter-İş in their minds is one of the basic reasons of workers staying away from Limter-İş. In this respect, nationalist discourse which identifies Limter-İş as “separatist” and unsolved Kurdish question which provides a basis for it constitute one of the most significant obstacles to the organization of the working class.

Another ideological tool of bourgeoisie to control labour is religion. Islamic discourse is used as another way of absorbing class inequalities. Performing prayer with employers remind that they are “equal” to the extent that both of them are subject to same religious rules. Moreover, belief in after death and divine retribution makes class inequalities sufferable for workers. Religious practices are reproduced by employers in Tuzla shipyard region. Some shipyards have small mosques and some of them provide a free bus for workers for Friday prayer. Employers also give an importance to religious days, in which some of them victual for workers. In this respect, this thesis verifies findings of Durak’s study (2012) on the religious-conservative hegemony in the Konya Organized Industrial Zone, which claims that employers try to reproduce control on labour by engaging in religious rituals with workers. Religious practices are used as a way of naturalization and legitimization of class inequalities and taking consent of shipyard workers in Tuzla shipyard region, too. Nonetheless, religious discourse and practices in Tuzla are not reproduced as strong as in Konya due to the enterprises’ being at different scales in Tuzla and Konya. While the small and medium sized enterprises enable employers to closely interact with workers, for example to engage in funeral ceremonies or weddings of workers, and control labour by religious-conservatist discourse in Konya, large scale shipyards do not enable such kind of direct and intense control on labour through religious discourse. This also stems from the huge gap between class positions, and so cultural practices of shipyard workers and shipyard owners. Moreover, workers

who define themselves nonreligious are not discriminated in Tuzla shipyards. Alewi workers stated that shipyards provide a meal for workers who do not fast in Ramadan. In this respect, this study does not share similar results with the work of Durak. While employers use religious references when necessary to legitimize dismissals of workers in small and middle sized enterprises in Konya, Islamic discourse is not used as a way of legitimization of dismissals of workers in Tuzla. Furthermore, it would be misleading to argue that there is a single interpretation of Islam. Some workers I met stated that Islam commends people not to be silent against injustices. Even if it is rare to encounter such kind of interpretation of Islam, it may provide a resistant point to this extent. As a last point, religious-conservative discourse is not used as much as nationalist discourse in Tuzla shipyard region. Activists of Limter-İş mentioned that although employers use every tool to prevent their organization and sometimes use religious discourse in line with this aim, it is not used as effective as nationalist discourse.

The question whether workers accept class hierarchies as legitimate is important to understand tendencies among them to resign and/or resist. All of the workers except two of them who are supporters of AKP stated that the gap between the rich and the poor has been increasing seriously in the recent years and to make a living gets harder for workers. Moreover, they feel that the state leaves workers alone in the shipyards and does not stand behind them. Most of the workers were aware of the fact that they are exploited, even if they did not define it as exploitation. The feeling of “being exposed to injustice” was dominant among them. However, the main conflict was not defined by workers as between worker and employer, but defined generally as between the rich and the poor. Furthermore, “friendly” attitudes of some employers, such as greeting or asking about workers, make class inequalities sufferable to some extent. All workers, except activists of Limter-İş, accept existing class relations as given and do not question legitimacy of class. What they aim is not abolishment of classes, but fairer working conditions. In this respect, we can conclude that even if workers do not represent *class for itself* having class consciousness entirely, they are partially aware of their class interests and do not resign totally.

It should be stated that the problems mentioned above are not specific to shipyard workers. Building workers and coal miners dying every day as a result of work accidents, cleaning workers working under precarious conditions, couriers working on the road under the threat of death, non-appointed teachers, airplane pilots and air hostesses working for long hours, seasonal agricultural workers dying in traffic accident, garment workers, solid-waste collectors, labourers working in the sandblasting of denim and hundreds of them share similar problems. All layers of the working class from blue-color to white-color are exposed to destructive effects of precariousness. Even if fragmentation within the working class obstructs to be aware of commonality of their problems and weakened organized class power obstructs to act with together, the possibility to create common resistant point and struggle in line with their material interests always exists. Otherwise, the history would be only history of the oppressors.

Moreover, under the light of these debates, it could be said that obstructive role of nationalist discourse could be overcome through raising the voice of the working class struggle. But, the content of this voice would be important to bring Turkish and Kurdish workers together in the class struggle. Socialist movements which understand the effects of assimilation policies implemented on Kurds and include their problems into the struggle could pave the way for long-lasting solidarity between Kurdish and Turkish workers. Moreover, as the experience of TEKEL resistance showed, when workers from different ethnicities come together for their class interests, they can remove discriminative role of nationalist discourse and create common language of class struggle. As a last point, it could be argued that there is reciprocal relation between the working class struggle and anti-nationalist discourse. The more sensitive the class politics to the Kurdish question could eliminate the Turkish nationalist discourse and empower the working class struggle in Turkey.

This thesis aimed at contributing working class struggle in Turkey to the extent that it represented and discussed main obstacles to the organization of the working class. It hopes to be helpful for class studies in Turkey.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWEES

#	Name*	Gender	Age	Birth Place	Marital Status	# of years worked in shipyards	Working as a...	Level of Education	Labour Union Membership	Mother Tongue
1	Ahmet	M	33	Eskişehir	Married	10 years	Permanent Worker	High School	Dok Gemi-İş	Turkish
2	Sabri	M	29	Erzurum	Married	6 years	Permanent Worker	High School Drop out	Dok Gemi-İş	Turkish
3	Cemal	M	29	Bitlis	Married	14 years	Subcontracted Worker	Primary School	None	Kurdish
4	Kamil	M	20	Muş	Single	1 year	Subcontracted Worker	Primary School	None	Kurdish
5	Ali	M	50	Erzincan	Married	23 years	Permanent Worker	Primary School	Limter-İş	Kurdish
6	Mehmet	M	33	Elazığ	Married	12 years	Permanent Worker	Primary School	None	Turkish
7	Osman	M	42	Sivas	Married	14 years	Subcontracted Worker	High School	None	Turkish
8	Selçuk	M	37	Muş	Married	10 years	Subcontracted Worker	Primary School	None	Kurdish
9	Hasan	M	32	Bitlis	Married	10 years	Subcontracted Worker	Primary School	Ex-shipyard worker	Kurdish
10	Bülent	M	34	Malatya	Married	4 years	Subcontracted Worker	High School Drop out	Ex-shipyard worker (Activist in Limter-İş)	Kurdish
11	Süleyman	M	45	Adıyaman	Married	20 years	Permanent Worker	–	None	Kurdish
12	İsmail	M	35	İstanbul	Married	17 years	Subcontracted Worker	Primary School	Ex-shipyard worker	–
13	Adnan	M	37	İstanbul	Married	20 years	Subcontracted Worker	High School Drop out	Ex-shipyard worker	Kurdish
14	Mustafa	M	47	Erzincan	Married	10 years	Subcontracted Worker	Primary School	Limter-İş	Turkish
15	Aziz	M	29	Muş	Married	14 years	Subcontracted Worker	Primary School	Limter-İş	Kurdish
16	Hüseyin	M	34	Erzincan	Married	8 years	Subcontracted Worker	Vocational H. School	Limter-İş	Kurdish
17	Salih	M	49	Karabük	Married	14 years	Permanent Worker	Primary School	Dok Gemi-İş	Turkish
18	Haydar	M	35	İstanbul	Married	8 years	Permanent Worker	Vocational H. School	Dok Gemi-İş	Turkish
19	Ercan	M	32	Muş	Married	13 years	Subcontracted Worker	Primary School	Limter-İş	Kurdish

20	Metin	M	52	Muş	Married	20 years	Subcontract ed Worker	Primary School	Limter-İş	Kurdish
21	Serdar	M	35	İstanbul	Married	7 years	Permanent Worker	High School	Dok Gemi- İş	Turkish
22	Emin	M	34	Mardin	Married	8 years	Subcontract ed Worker	Primary School	None	Kurdish

*The original names of the interviewees were not used for the purpose of confidentiality.

APPENDIX B: A Sample of Interview

Ayşe Arslan: Kaç yaşındasın abi?

Ercan: 32 yaşımdayım.

AA: Eğitim durumun?

E: İlkokul.

AA: Nerelisin?

E: Muş.

AA: Kaç yıldır Tuzla'dasın abi?

E: 15 yıl oldu.

AA: Tersaneler bölgesinde kaç yıldır çalışıyorsun, tersane işinde?

E: 12-13 yıl falan oldu.

AA: Devam ediyor musun hala?

E: Devam ediyorum.

AA: Hangi tersanededesin?

E: Şu an Gesan'dayım.

AA: Peki, ne iş yapıyorsun abi orda?

E: Kaynakçıların ustabaşıyım.

AA: Bu iş için bi eğitim aldın mı?

E: Yok, işte öğreniyosun. Eğitimi yok.

AA: Taşeron firmaya mı bağlısın?

E: Taşeron firmada çalışıyoruz. Genelde taşeron firmadır, kadro yok zaten. Çok nadirdir yani. bir tersanede 1000 kişi çalışıyorsa onun 50 kişisi ancak kadroya bağlıdır.

AA: Peki, sigortalı mısın?

E: Sigortalıyız.

AA: Zamanında yatıyo mu sigortalarınız?

E: Yatıyo.

AA: Eksiklikler oluyo mu?

E: Eskiden çok oluyodu, son 99'dan bu yana, kazalardan bu yana düzenli ödüyolar bi nevi ama yine de kaçırıyolar. Yapabildikleri kadar yapıyolar yani.

AA: Peki, maaşlarınız zamanında yatırılıyor mu?

E: Yok, krizden bu yana hiç yatırılmıyor zaten. İki ay maaş alamıyolar, üç ay maaş alamayanlar var. Düzenli hiç bi şekilde yatırılmıyor. En kötü ihtimal yine 10 günden fazla oynar yani.

AA: Zamanında yatmıyor yani?

E: Yok, kesinlikle.

AA: Peki, çalışma saatleriniz belli mi abi, günlük-haftalık?

E: Yani o işyerine göre değişiyö. Kimi 35 saat çalıştırıyor, kimi 40 saat çalıştırıyor, kimi 42 saat çalıştırıyor. Öyle değişiyor yani.

AA: Sen kaç saat çalışıyorsun?

E: Şu anda biz 38 saat çalışıyoruz.

AA: Peki, sıkı bir denetim yapılıyo mu çalışırken?

E: Şimdi denetim şöyle bişeydir, bu bizim ülkede hep vardır zaten, böyle gelmiş böyle de gider, denetim sadece kağıt üzerinde olur. Memurları gönderirler, gelir içerde oturur çayını içerler, orda kağıt üzerinde raporunu tamamlayıp çıkar giderler.

AA: Güvenlik önlemleri nasıl? Çok fazla işçi ölümleri, kazalar oluyor. Bunlara nasıl bakıyosun?

E: Şimdi, sonuçta ağır sanayi, bunun önüne geçilmez yani.

AA: Geçilmez mi?

E: Kesinlikle geçilmez çünkü ağır işkolunda çalışıyoruz, her taraf ağır sanayi, bunların önüne kesinlikle geçilmez. Yani minimum yüzde bire de indirseler o da yeter aslında. Ama onlar için çaba sarf ediliyor mu, gerçekten yaklaşık 3-4 seneden beri çaba sarf ediliyor.

AA: Önlemler yeteri kadar alınıyor mu sence?

E: Biraz da şöyle bakmak lazım. Biraz da kişinin kendisine bağlı. Yani çalışan kendi önlemini kendi alması lazım. Hani, onlar kendini kurtarmak için yasal yollar, yasal prosedürler neyi gerektiriyorsa onlar onu yaparlar. Ama o biraz da çalışanın kendine bağlı, çalışanın kendini koruması lazım. Ha, iş rahatsızlıkları mesela, iş hastalıklarını önlemek çalışanın kendisi önüne geçemiyö, patron, işverenin onu temin etmesi lazım ama ölümcül kazaların önüne çalışan da geçebilir yani. Çoğu da onun elinde mesela.

AA: Peki iş hastalıkları var mı burda tersaneye özgü?

E: Var tabi ki.

AA: Ne gibi mesela?

E: Mesela akciğer kanseri gibi, tüberküloz gibi... Sonuçta kömürden oluşan maddeler var burda, gazların içinde çok hastalık olur.

AA: Peki, bu kazalar olduğunda tersane patronları yeteri kadar sorumluluk alıyolar mı?

E: Hiç sorumluluk yok ki onlarda... Bi tane mühendis bulur, ya bitane bişey bulurlar... Mesela Gisan Tersanesinde oldu, 96'daydı yanlış hatırlamıyosam, filika kazasında kaç kişi öldü, mühendisler 36'şer bin lira para cezası kesildi, günlük 20 TL. Tersane sahibi bir gün bile gözaltına alınmadı yani. Patron yukarda durur zaten, bi kaza olura, ölümcül bir şey olursa ya bi mühendisi bulur, ya müdürü bulur, yetki hep onlardadır zaten, yetki pek tersane patronlarında olmaz zaten, imza yetkisi ondadır, geri kalan bir şey oldumu mühendisleri gönderir, ya formenleri gönderir, giderler ifade verirle, ki onlara da bişey olmuyo zaten. En fazla yargılanır bir ay, bir ay sonra serbestler, para cezasına çevirirler biter yani.

AA: Olan?

E: Ölene olur, ölenin ailesine olur hatta. Ölen de gider yani.

AA: Peki Tuzla'da yaşamaktan memnun musun abi?

E: Ben Gebze'de yaşıyorum, insanın memnun olmaması için başka bişeyi bilmesi lazım, başka yerleri, başka iş kollarını, başka hayatları bilmesi lazım. E biz de onları bilmiyoruz. Biz yıllardır burda çalışıyoruz, burda yaşıyoruz, bize göre, herkes kendi hayatından illa ki şikayetçidir ama bir yere kadar şikayetçidir. Belki de bizim bilmediğimiz hayatlar bizim hayatımıza göre çok daha güzeldir veya daha kötüdür. Ama biz böyle gördük, böyle yaşıyoruz, böyle gidiyo yani.

AA: Ailenle mi yaşıyorsun abi?

E: Eşim, çocuklarımla.

AA: Kaç çocuğun var?

E: 3 tane.

AA: Peki, herhangi bir sendikaya üye misin abi?

E: Daha yeni olduk.

AA: Hangisine?

E: Limter İş'e.

AA: Burda galiba iki tane sendika var. Hem Dok Gemi İş var, hem Limter İş var.

E: Dok Gemi İş sendika sayılmaz aslında biraz da..(güler)

AA: O nasıl bir sendika?

E: O patronun sendikası. Patronların Limter-İş girmesin diye kendi aralarında kurdukları bir sendikadır.

AA: Peki, Limter-İş'i nasıl görüyorsun? Ya da önceden nasıl görüyodun?

E: Hani, Limter İş pek fazla burda şey görmüyor çünkü patronlar buna karşı olduğu için, Limter-İş her zaman ezilenlerin, çalışanların yanında olduğu için patronlar onlara kolay kolay yer vermezler burda yani, barındırmazlar. Tersane sahiplerinin elinde olan bişeydir yani. Onlar "yok" dedimi, hiç kimse bişey yapamaz. Çoğu işyerinden çoğu arkadaş kovuldu mesela. Niye? Limter İş'e üye olduğu için adam kovuyor, çıkartıyor işten. Sendikaya üye olamazsın diyor.

AA: Sen hiç böyle bir şey gördün mü abi yakınında?

E: Çok gördüm, çok gördüm.

AA: Limter-İş'e üye oldu diye?

E: Tabi, tabi çok işten çıkartıyorlar. Hatta geçen yaşadık, biz çalışıyoduk tersanede, birinin işe girişini yaptılar, geldi Ali Abi'yle tanışıyorlar ama üyeliği yok, geçerken selam verdi, tanıyoruz birbirimizi. Geldi, Ali Abi'yle merhabalaştı falan, orda tersanenin müdürü bunu gördü. Dedi seni işe alamam. "Niye?" dedi. Sen dedi üyesin. Adam dedi değilim. Gerçekten de değil. Yok, dedi, üyesin, bunlarla ne işin var.

AA: Görünmesi bile yetiyor yani?

E: Adam dedi ki ben üye değilim. Yok dedi git noterden üye olmadığına dair bana kağıt getir, seni ondan sonra işe alcam dedi. Çocuk gitti 50 lira verdi boşu boşuna, kağıt aldı geldi, ondan sonra işe aldılar.

AA: Sen nasıl üye oldun abi? Yani uzun bir süre olmamışsın..

E: Yok, yeni oldum zaten. Bizim bir eylemimiz olmuştu.

AA: Adar Tersanesindeki eylem mi?

E: Evet. O eylemden sonra biz olduk.

AA: Fikrin değişti mi o süreçte Limter-İş'e karşı.

E: Benim fikrim hep aynıydı, değişmedi de, ben biliyodum yani. Fikrimde bi değişiklik yok. Biliyoduk ama hani dediğim gibi, insanın hayatı işidir zaten. Hep

dışlandıkları için, hep farklı gözle baktıkları için çok fazla sıcak bakmıyoduk. Allah için bi de ihtiyacımız olmadığı için, o eylemde ihtiyacımız vardı, üye olduk yani. yoksa, tanıyorum, biliyorum yani..

AA: Peki, Limter İş'e karşı nasıl ön yargılar var? Neler konuşulur hakkında?

E: Şimdi her zaman bir de bu ülkede solcuların yeri yoktur. Her zaman farklı gözle bakarlar. Hele burdaki kesimler, tersane sahipleri kökenleri hep MHP'lidir, hepsi mafyadır, hepsi İstanbul'da çok kuvvetlidir. Bi tanesi Ali Torlak, MHP milletvekili. Ada Tersanesi sahibi geçen dönem MHP milletvekili adayydı Kartal'dan. Bitanesi Rahmi Koç. Hepsi yani büyük başlı adamlardır, mafyalardır. Türkiye'de solcu kesimi sevmezler zaten. Limter İş'in de görüşü o konuda olduğu için o taraftan bakıyolar yani.

AA: Peki, milliyetçilik engel oluyo mu sence Limter İş'e üye olmak konusunda? Milliyetçi bi tepki var mı?

E: Şimdi şöyle bişey var, burda çalışanların çoğu Karadeniz tarafıdır, bizim doğudan biraz nadirdir çalışan. Var ama onlar kadar yok. Onlarda milliyetçilik çok, onların ruhunda var milliyetçilik. O yüzden üyeleri azdır aslında Limter İş'in. O yüzden sevmiyolar Limter İş'i. O yüzden, aslında sendikanın öyle bir anlayışı yok da, öyle bi politikası yok da onlar öyle görüyolar. Bu ülkede solcu oldunmu PKK'lisindir. Öyledir yani bu ülkede.

AA: Bu direk engelliyo mu sendikaya gelmelerini?

E: Tabi, tabi. Mesela bizim bazı arkadaşlar vardı, biz Ada tersanesinde direnişteyken, direniş bitti konuşuyoruz sendikada, baktım bi tanesi, o da Karadeniz tarafından, MHP'li, yıllarca MHP ocaklarında çalışmış. Hani, gördü ya sıcaklığı samimiyeti, bizim onlara davranışımızı, gelen arkadaşları gördü, o akşam haklarımızı aldık sendikaya geldik konuşuyoruz. Kalktı ayağa dedi "ben sizden şikayetçiyim". Niye dedik, "ya, dedi, siz bugüne kadar bu sendikayı iyi tanıtamamışsınız" dedi. Biz dedik "asıl biz iyi tanıttık ama siz anlayamamışsınız, sendikacılık budur zaten" dedik, "siz başka yöne çektiniz". Ya dedi "bize hep diyolardı solcular, bilmem neciler, bize hep böyle anlatıyolardı". Ama tabi siz gözünüzü kapatıyodunuz, siz onlara bakıyodunuz, içinizden hiç biriniz gelip de sendikada bi çay içmediniz, hiç insanlarla konuşmadınız, hep dışardan bakıyodunuz, ya işte bunlar solcudur, bunlar

PKK’lidir. Sabah eylem yaptıklarında siz başınızı öne eğip çekip gidiyodunuz. Hani insanın içine girmedi mi bilmiyolar. Ama zordur yani onların fikirlerini değiştirmek.

AA: Peki, siz Adar’da direniş yaparken çalışma arkadaşlarınız size destek oldular mı?

E: Orda çalışanlar oldu, baya bir oldu. Dediğim gibi, bu ülkede bi inşaatçı çalıştığı zaman burda olmasa gider başka bi yerde çalışır çünkü inşaat çoktur, fark etmez, gider başka ilde, başka ilçede çalışır. Ama tersanede kaynak yapıyosa ya da montaj yapıyosa gidip ülkenin başka bi yerinde çalışamaz. Gittiği zaman yeniden bi mesleğe başlaması lazım. Yani, mesleği çalışıp da öğrenen için zordur. Üniversiteyi okuyosunuz bitiriyosunuz, düşünün o üniversite birden bitiy o, yeniden ilkokuldan başlamak gibi. Meslek öğrenmek öyledir. Burda çalışanların hepsinin yaşamları öyledir. İşleri hayatlarıdır. İşleri elinden alındığı zaman onları hayatı bitti demektir. İnsan çalışmadığı zaman ne yapar, hiç bişey yapamaz. Ne ailesine bakabilir, ne geçimini sağlayabilir, hiçbir şey yapamaz. Onların, burda çalışanların yüzde doksanının korkusu da odur.

AA: İşimi kaybederim?

E: İşimi kaybederim. Bak biz orda direnişteyken benim arkadaşlarım vardı, akrabalarım vardı Adar tersanesinin içinde, sabah biz yolu kestik dedik çalışanlar kimse girmesin içeri, onlar bize destek verdiler çalışmadılar, hepsini kamerayla tespit ettiler, eylemimiz bitti onları hemen işten çıkarttılar.

AA: Öyle mi? Destek verenleri?

E: Aynen öyle. Bizim iş bitti ertesi gün onların çıkışını verdiler, çıkarttılar.

AA: İnsanlar da dolayısıyla artık çekinmeye başlıyor?

E: Yapacak bişey yok. Yarın öbür gün bişey oldumu o adam kafasını eğer işine bakar çünkü iki yerden kovuldumu bitiy o zaten. Hatta bu çok yaşanmıştır yani. Bi tersanede böyle sendika girdiği zaman, kim o sendikayı getirmişse, kaç tane adam getirmişse onların listesini alırlar, tersaneler sayılıdır burda, tersane sahibi o adamların ismini alır. Öyle bi olay olmuştu burda, Selah tersanesi var, kavga etmişlerdi para yüzünden, taşeronu dövmüşlerdi, tersane içinde baya bi arbede olmuştu. 10-15 kişiydiler, bunların isimlerini almıştı tersane sahibi, bütün tersanelere dağıttılar. Onlar burda iş bulamadı, çekip gittiler.

AA: Birlikte hareket ediy o yani patronlar da?

E: Tabi ki. Hele onların GİSBİR'i var, bu aralar durdu ama neticede onların. Kurdukları bi dernek, hastanesi onların, bütün herşey onların. Birbirini kolluyolar zaten. Kaç tane, 20 tane tersane var burda. O konuda hep birlikler yani. Çalışanın pek fazla yapacak bişeyi yok yani. Bazen de boynunu büküp çalışacak işine bakacak yani.

AA: Peki, sendikayı önemli buluyo musun?

E: Ya, sendika tabi ki önemli. Sadece taşeron piyasasında değil, bütün her yerde. Örgütleşmek her zaman için güzeldir yani. Zaten biz örneğini gördük orda, çoğu insan da gördü. Sendika olmasaydı biz orda hakkımızı alamazdık yani. Çünkü bi kişi bir hiçtir yani, ama birlik oldumu her şeyi başarabilirsin.

AA: Peki, çalışma arkadaşlarıyla ilişkiniz nasıl abi, ortam nasıl?

E: Normal hayat şartlarında insanlar nasıl geçiniyorsa bizde de öyledir yani, pek fazla bişey yok yani.

AA: Burda farklı insanlar var, Arap, Türk, Kürt.. Bunların arasındaki ilişki nasıl, herhangi bir gerginlik oluyo mu?

E: Eskiden oluyodu, biz ilk dönemlerde buraya geldiğimiz zaman.

AA: Ne zaman?

E: 99'larda, son dönemlere kadar hemen hemen öyleydi. İlk başlarda çok dışlanırdık, hatta Kürtler geldimi hiç bi zaman Kürtçe konuşamazdı.

AA: Konuşamazdı?

E: Tabi dışlardı. Azlardı, mesela bi işyerinde 30 tane Karadenizli çalışıyoduysa, onun içinde 2-3 tane Kürt ya da doğulu ya vardı ya yoktu. O zaman dışlıyolardı, konuşamıyolardı, kendilerini ifade edemiyolardı. Ama son dönemlerde bilinç değiştiği için onlar da rahatladı.

AA: Oturduğun yerde böyle bi rahatsızlığa ayrımcılığa maruz kaldın mı?

E: Yok hiç görmedik biz oturduğumuz yerde.

AA: Peki ücretler zaman içinde düştü mü abi?

E: E tabi ki. Şimdi tersaneler yurt dışı endeksli olduğu için, yurt dışına bağlı olduğu için bu son dönemdeki kriz tersaneleri çok etkiledi. Çalışan sayısı da çok etkilendi.

AA: Krizden sonra mı?

E: Tabi ki. Yarıdan fazla düştü yani. 99'a kadar burda kayıtlı 45 bin kişi çalışıyordu burda Tuzla'da. Bir 10 bin kişi de kayıtsız vardı. Şu anda 20 bin kişi yoktur çalışan. Çok düştü yani.

AA: Peki ücretlerinize yansıdı mı bu?

E: Yasımaz mı. Patronun fırsatı zaten, çalışan çok olduğu zaman ücretler düşüyo başka çaresi yok.

AA: Peki patronunla tanışıyo musun?

E: Tanışıyorum tabi.

AA: Taşeron sahibi?

E: Evet.

AA: Büyük tersane sahibiyle?

E: Yok. Tersane sahibini kimse kolay kolay görmez, zaten işi olmaz. Tersane sahibi tersaneye bile gelmez yani, müdüre emanet eder gider yani. Arada ya uğrar ya uğramaz.

AA: İşçi-patron ilişkisi nasıl?

E: Taşeron olarak kişiden kişiye değişiyö. Taşeronların hepsi de bizim içimizden gelen insanlar. Beraber çalışmışızdır, üç beş sene sonra şirket açmıştır, böyle taşeron olmuştur yani, yoksa başka bi yerden gelmiş değildir yani. Beraber çalıştığımız insanlardır. İlişki değişmez kolay kolay çok fazla. Genellikle arkadaş gibiyiz. Tersane patronuyla kimse görüşmez kolay kolay.

AA: Haksızlığa uğradığını düşünüyö musun genel anlamda baktığın zaman?

E: Hakların yenildiği zaman haksızlığa mutlaka uğrarsın, emeğinin karşılığını almadığın zaman. Tersaneler bölgesinde kimse emeğinin karşılığını almaz, kimse almıyor. Bildik bileli böyledir. Eskiden sigortadan kırıyorlardı, izinlerini alıyorlardı ki şuanda da yok zaten, çalışanların hepsi kuru maaşa çalışıyorlar zaten. Ne senelik izin alıyolar, ne istirahatleri var, ne hafta sonları var, ne mesaieleri var, ne servis hakları var, ne ücretlerini zamanında alırlar. Bunlar hep sıkıntıdır yani. Hep haksızlığa uğrarlar. Böyledir, böyle de gider yani, millet birleşmediği sürece..

AA: Ne yapmak lazım sence?

E: Yani bunun tek çaresi örgütleşmek, başka bi çaresi yok.

AA: Neden sence bir araya gelemiyö işçiler burda?

E: Dedığım gibi işçiler hep işlerinden korkuyolar, hep işlerini korkusu var onların içinde. O olmasa çoktan birleşmişti. Başka bi sektör olsaydı, başka tersaneler de olsaydı bu sefer tersane sahipleri mecbur olurdu. Bugün bi sendika girsin desin ki, Limter İş atıyorum, desin ki bütün burdaki üyeler sendikaya gelsin, o tersane anında kapayı kapatır, o adamların hepsini dışarı çıkartır, o kadroyu hemen tekrar kurar yani. Çünkü çalışan çok, talep çok olduğu için onların umrunda değil yani. O yüzden yani. Örgütlenmediği sürece, bi çatı altında birleşmediği sürece çalışanlar haksızlığa uğrar yani. böyle gider yani.

AA: Peki, AKP hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz, hükümet hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

E: Ben pek siyasetten anlamıyorum ama (güler)

AA: Nasıl değerlendiriyosun memleketin halini?

E: Şöyle bişey, ben hep böyle görmüşümdür, ne olursa olsun sağ partinin bi amacı vardır: zengini zengin etmek, fakiri fakirleştirmek. Sağ partinin amacı odur. Kendi yanındakileri her zaman yükseltir, kendi yanında olmayanları her zaman küçültür. Hep böyle gelmiştir. AK Parti'nin de amacı odur yani.

AA: Şuan sence zengin yoksul ayrımı gittikçe artıyor mu, azalıyor mu?

E: Tabi, gittikçe de artar yani, daha da artar. Hele bi kaç sene sonra daha da artar. Bu sefer hani Türkler, Kürtler, Lazlar, ırkçılıkla ayrım olmaz, zengin-fakir ayrımı olur. Ülkede bu böyle devam etse, böyle olur, zengin-fakir ayrımı olur.

AA: Sen hangi partiye oy veriyosun abi?

E: Tek partimiz var bizim, hep sol partiye oy veriyoruz.

AA: BDP mi?

E: Evet.

AA: CHP hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

E: Onun nerde olduğu pek fazla belli değil ya.

AA: 4x4 ciplere binen zenginleri gördüğünde ne düşünüyorsunuz, ne hissediyosun? Ne geçiyor içinden bir işçi olarak?

E: Hiçbir şey. Benim için fark etmez. İsterse 4x4'e binsin, isterse 5x5'e binsin. Pek fazla maddiyata önem veren insanlar değiliz. İsteddiği kadar zengin olsun, istediği kadar parası olsun, pulu olsun. Ben akşama kadar çalıştığım o parayı ömrümde değişmem hiç bi şekilde. İnsanın emeğiyle, alınının teriyle kazandığı para gibi hiç

bişey olmaz yani. Onun bindiği arabaya ben binmek istemem, onun yerinde olmak hayatta istemem hiç bişekilde.

AA: Öyle mi?

E: Kesinlikle.

AA: Neden?

E: Benim huzurum ondan daha çok. Ben ondan daha çok mutluyum, ondan daha çok insanların içindeyim. Benim dostlarım onun dostlarından daha çok samimi, daha çok güvenilir. Onun her şeyi para üzerinedir. Parası var ama mutlu değildir, benim mutlu olduğum kadar hiç bi zenginin mutlu olduğunu zannetmiyorum. Onun için para hiç bişeydir yani.

AA: Peki gelecek hakkında ne düşünüyorsun? Planların, kaygıların, umutların var mı?

E: Benim gelecek hakkında bi tek çocuklarımdır başka bişey yok. Sadece onlara iyi bi gelecek hazırlamak, iyi okutmak, başka bişey yok.

AA: Umutlu musun yoksa bu daha çok kaygı mı?

E: Ya umutsuz insan ölen insandır, illa ki umudun olması lazım, umutsuz yaşanılmıyor. Az da olsa umudun olması lazım. Çocuklarımızı büyütücez, başka bişey yok.

AA: Peki, geçiminize yetiyor mu kazandığın para? Cumartesileri çalışıyorsun, Pazar günleri de çalışıyor musun?

E: Pazarları da çalışıyoruz. Yani şöyle bir şey var, aldığımız kadarını harcıyoruz, kazandığımız kadar yiyoruz. Belki biz çok kazansaydık çok yerdik, az kazansaydık az yerdik. Ne kazanıyosak kendimizi ona göre ayarlıyoruz. Demiyoruz ki biz bu maaşla gidip daireler, katlar, villalar alıcaz. Bu maaşla ne yetiyosa hayatımızı ona göre idare ediyoruz, yolumuzu ona göre çiziyoruz. Dediğim gibi paranın bi önemi pek fazla yok yani.

AA: Dindar mısındır abi? Düzenli ibadet yapıyo musun?

E: Tabi.

AA: Peki tersanede çalışırken yapabiliyor musun?

E: Yapıyoruz ya.

AA: Sıkıntı yaşamıyo musunuz?

E: Şöyle bi sıkıntı, her işte olduğu gibi bazı iş güzarlar vardır yani. Kendi menfaatini öne sürenler vardır, çalışanlar da olsun, patronlar da olsun. Onların yüzünden bazı sıkıntılar oluyo ama sen bişey yaptığın zaman karşındakini de düşünerek yaparsan hiç bi şey olmaz. Çalışıyosan, o işi kendi işin gibi bildiğin zaman patron sana hiçbişey diyemez. Kendi işinmiş gibi gör, hiç bi sıkıntı olmaz yani.

AA: Sen görüyo musun kendi işin gibi?

E: Mutlaka, o benim ekmeğim, benim ekmek tekmem, ben ekmeğimi ordan kazanıyorum. Ben sabah gittiğim zaman o benim işimmiş gibi görüyorum, öyle çalışıyorum. Onun için, arada bir olacaktır sevmeyenler, ırkçılar olacaktır, ayrımcılar olacaktır, hoşuna gitmeyenler olacaktır. Bunlara da aldırış etmiyoruz.

AA: Ama ciddi bir problem yaratmıyorlar yani?

E: Kesinlikle. Ben denk gelmedim, belki denk gelenler vardır ama ben hiç yaşamadım.

AA: Çok sağol abi, çok teşekkür ederim.

APPENDIX C

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enformatik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Arslan
Adı : Ayşe
Bölümü : Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : Precarity and Identity among Tuzla Shipyard Region

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans ☒ Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☒
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir. ☐
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz. ☐

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: