

THE SOCIAL STRUGGLE IN THE YENİ ÇELTEK COAL BASIN (1975-1980):
SOURCES OF POLITICISATION IN SELF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

ZEYNEP ÖZTÜRK

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND CULTURAL STUDIES

DECEMBER 2022

Approval of the thesis:

THE SOCIAL STRUGGLE IN THE YENİ ÇELTEK COAL BASIN (1975-1980): SOURCES OF POLITICISATION IN SELF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

submitted by **ZEYNEP ÖZTÜRK** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Science in Media and Cultural Studies, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Sadettin KİRAZCI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Barış ÇAKMUR
Head of Department
Department of Media and Cultural Studies

Prof. Dr. Necmi ERDOĞAN
Supervisor
Department of Media and Cultural Studies

Examining Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Metin ÖZUĞURLU (Head of the Examining Committee)
Ankara University
Department of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations

Prof. Dr. Necmi ERDOĞAN (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Media and Cultural Studies

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Barış ÇAKMUR
Middle East Technical University
Department of Media and Cultural Studies

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: Zeynep ÖZTÜRK

Signature:

ABSTRACT

THE SOCIAL STRUGGLE IN THE YENİ ÇELTEK COAL BASIN (1975-1980): SOURCES OF POLITICISATION IN SELF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

ÖZTÜRK, Zeynep

M.S., The Department of Media and Cultural Studies

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Necmi ERDOĞAN

December 2022, 164 pages

The following research attempts to provide an explanation of both the causality of the labour and social struggle process that emerged in the Yeni Çeltek coal basin between 1975 and 1980 and to reveal its effects on its participants. The qualitative research method used to analyse this case is the use of fieldwork interviews and archival material.

This study focuses on the labour processes and collective agency as sources of the movement. The analysis aims to show the process of political transformation in the conceptions of the struggle of the workers and more generally of the people of the basin. In this sense, it will be shown how solidarity and the pursuit of justice form the basis for the lower classes to build practices of self-governance in both the workplace and everyday life.

The political stance of *Devrimci Yol*, which proposes struggles organised from below against locally felt problems, as opposed to traditional procrastinatory approaches, for

ordinary people to become subjective agents, will be a source for understanding forms of politicisation.

Keywords: Yeni Çeltek, Revolutionary Way, Workers' Council, Self-Governance.

ÖZ

YENİ ÇELTEK KÖMÜR HAVZASINDAKİ TOPLUMSAL MÜCADELE (1975-1980): ÖZYÖNETİM UYGULAMALARINDA SİYASALLAŞMANIN KAYNAKLARI

ÖZTÜRK, Zeynep

Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Kültürel Çalışmalar Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Necmi ERDOĞAN

Aralık 2022, 164 sayfa

Bu araştırma, 1975-1980 yılları arasında Yeni Çeltek kömür havzasında ortaya çıkan emek ve toplumsal mücadele sürecinin hem nedenselliğini açıklamaya hem de sürecin katılımcıları üzerindeki etkilerini ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır. Bu süreci analiz etmek için nitel araştırma yöntemi, yani saha çalışması görüşmeleri ve arşiv malzemesi kullanılmıştır.

Çalışma, hareketin kaynakları olarak emek süreçlerine ve kolektif eylemliliğe odaklanmaktadır. Analiz, işçilerin ve daha genel olarak havza halkının mücadele anlayışlarındaki siyasi dönüşüm sürecini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu anlamda, dayanışma ve adalet arayışının alt sınıfların hem işyerinde hem de gündelik hayatta özyönetim pratikleri inşa etmelerine nasıl zemin oluşturduğu gösterilecektir.

Devrimci Yol'un, sıradan insanların öznel failer haline gelmesi için geleneksel ertelemeci yaklaşımların aksine, yerelde hissedilen sorunlara karşı aşağıdan

örgütlenen mücadeleler öneren politik duruşu, siyasallaşma biçimlerini anlamak için bir kaynak olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Çeltek, Devrimci Yol, İşçi Konseyi, Özyönetim.

I dedicate this work to the memory of the countless 'Yolcu' who had sacrificed their all to achieve a life with dignity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to the people whose narratives form the basis of this thesis, and my special thanks go to the protagonists of this story, the mine workers.

The inspiration for this thesis came from my own experience of organised struggle and from deep discussions with activist friends, too many to name here. I owe them all my thanks.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Necmi Erdoğan for his support and invaluable contributions. His interventions on drafts as well as his enlightening questions helped me a lot to improve this thesis. I would also like to thank my thesis defense committee members Barış Çakmur and Metin Özügürlü for their valuable feedback.

I am indebted to Ömer Turan for his intellectual guidance in the early years when I first formed the idea for this research. And I would like to extend thanks to Doğan Çetinkaya for his time in discussing this project.

I am grateful to my dear aunt, Serpil Altuğ, who has always supported me to pursue my academic achievements. I am extremely lucky for this. I would also like to thank my dear friends Nisa Göksel, Nur Tuğçe Biga, Kevser Özçelik, Barbara Leyrer, Branca Koza, Nurgül Çakır, Emre Kızılay, and my life partner Jannis Menn for their endless support. In particular, the deep political discussions we had with Nisa, Jannis, and Barbara are priceless. I must also thank Tuğçe for accompanying me on the field. Nisa and Jannis read chapter drafts and provided feedback. This was an invaluable contribution to this study. Jannis has always put his faith in me and the importance of this study. I am deeply grateful to him for walking with me through every stage of this thesis and for his encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Aren't you judging me for defending workers and peasants? You are judging me for that. If this is a crime, then I committed this crime yesterday, I am committing it today and I will commit it tomorrow! It is better to die one day with dignity than to live without dignity. (A mine worker- Yeni Çeltek Documentary, 1:20:28)

The social struggle that emerged in the Yeni Çeltek coal basin covers the years 1975-1980. The process that started with the gathering of workers in the Yeni Çeltek mine under the roof of a progressive trade union became the basis of a social struggle that developed at the basin level.

The relevance of the Yeni Çeltek case study is that this movement is the most peculiar and potent example in Turkey because of its capacity to question political legitimacy through self-management practices. In other words, this is due to its capacity to function as a revolutionary movement by transforming social relations and shaping cultural and political dynamics around class-based identities.

However, only a few works of literature have analysed the history of the rise of social struggle in the second half of the 1970s in the Yeni Çeltek coal basin. Previous research has not analysed in depth the dynamics and consequences of the movement. The emergence of the miners and oppressed groups in the basin as subjective agents within a causal framework has not been explored. The lasting impact of social struggle on subjects, i.e., on their transformations of consciousness and behaviour, has not been examined. Accordingly, the aspect of self-governance practices that question the

legitimacy of political centres (state and ruling classes/elites) has not been addressed. Moreover, organisation at the shop-floor level and the social movement rising across the basin were not addressed as a combined social struggle experience. Furthermore, the impact of the political perspective of the Revolutionary Way (hereafter Devrimci Yol) organisation on the rise of the social struggle in the basin has not been sufficiently researched.

On the other hand, there have no in-depth studies been conducted on how left-wing political organisations became political actors in these years, or how their praxis affected workers and popular classes. The great part of the research on leftist/revolutionary political organisations in Turkey tends to narrow its attention on the understanding on how those organisations succeed or fail because of their political approaches/actions. The two perils of this perspective rely on understandings the oppressed as passive agents and the political organisations as external actors. In this sense, specifically on Devrimci Yol, the movement that reached the widest masses of its period, research is also quite limited. In this study, Devrimci Yol is considered not only as a political organisation but also as a broad popular movement. Both the mentality that constituted the political line of Devrimci Yol and its political actions that allowed it to become a popular movement is remarkable. This is because, compared to other political organisations of the period, while engaging lower class groups, Devrimci Yol did not limit their capacity to exercise their influence. For example, the case of Yeni Çeltek, part of the Devrimci Yol movement, analysed in this thesis, is one of the finest examples of the capacity of the lower classes to develop forms of political action. As a result, in the second half of the 1970s, the Devrimci Yol movement not only became a political actor but was also able to create debates and alternative stances on how the relations between the lower classes and revolutionary organisations are meant to be considered.

In a similar vein, the trade unionism of the Turkish Underground and Surface Revolutionary Mine Workers' Union (hereafter, Yeraltı Maden İş) is one of the most peculiar examples of political trade unionism in the labour history of Turkey. However, the research on Yeraltı Maden İş has not analysed it in the context of the

questions of how the relations between the political organisation and the trade union might be a reinterpretation of the trade unionism that developed in line with the will of the workers, and how it might be possible for an economic and political struggle to go hand in hand.

The counter-hegemonic repertoires of self-governance practices will be the focus of this study, when showing the politicisation processes of the participants of the struggle. This thesis seeks to answer how and what kind of radical transformations self-management can bring about in the political and cultural spheres. In this sense, I will reveal formations of self-governing practices, which were activities that alters the collective struggle and was altered by it at the same time, both in the workplace and in everyday life.

The gradual social struggle process involves two major phases. The period between 1975 and 1977 involves the miners' struggle for unionisation. The second phase, between 1977 and 1980, focuses on the shift of miners' demands from the economic sphere to political grounds involving the control of labour processes and the simultaneous development of social movements and self-government practices in the basin. To a better understanding of the trajectory of the social struggle in Yeni Çeltek, I will analyse the ways in which Devrimci Yol characterised the struggle both as a political organisation and as a social movement.

The research, which is a combination of historical and analytical work, builds on a large part of the labour and social movements literature. Buechler categorises approaches to social movements in two forms: cultural and political versions (Buechler, 2011: 161). The cultural version of studies on social movements tends to limit its attention to understanding the cultural dimensions of action. Thus, they identify the foundations of social movements "not with class, but with the different values and ideologies that define the movement" (Buechler, 2011: 50-51) and in a sense limit the concept of class with solely its economic aspects. The peril of this approach is that it is based on understanding class phenomenon as a passive factor with a low degree of influence on the formation of social movements. These views,

espoused by several New Social Movements (NSMs) theorists, suggest a disconnect between past and present social movements.

Another approach, called the political version of NSMs, argues that there is a continuity between old and new social movements. “In contrast to the cultural version, the political version...analyses the contemporary class structure and defines the social basis of NSMs in class terms” (Coşkun, 2006: 74,75).

This study also draws on the literature on labour movements and factory councils. The literature includes historical experiences, such as the Russian experience of workers’ councils, as well as a number of cases ranging from Latin American (e.g., Bolivia 1940-1950, Peru 1969-1971, Chile 1971) miners’ strikes and processes of workers’ control to the well-known story of the strike of British miners (1984-85). However, what connections might we discover between workers’ control, or self-governance practices, and politicisation?

Since the Russian workers’ councils were the carrier element of revolutionary processes, Gramsci draws attention to the political trajectories of the workers’ councils as follows:

The Factory Council is the model of proletarian state... The experience of collaborating to produce efficiently and usefully develops solidarity among the workers and reinforces the existing links of affection and comradeship... It is within this kind of factory organization that the dictatorship of the proletariat can be realized (Gramsci, 1994: 120).

In this sense, the miners’ experience of self-management in Yeni Çelttek draws its practical lineage from the experience of Soviet workers’ committees, and its theoretical grounding from Gramsci’s (2000) view that workers’ councils are the constitutive agents of socialism from the present to the future.

On the other hand, the reason why workers prefer to have a degree of control over their own labour processes has to do with workplace experiences in addition to external social conditions. These experiences at work are in many cases also related to ethical-political issues such as dignity and a sense of justice. Such references play an important

role in the emergence of motives of resistance or consent. This is due to the complex class culture of the workplace. To give examples from the works in the literature that best exemplifies this, Michael Burroway's work showing that labour processes in the workplace can produce consent and Paul Willis' work linking the masculine cultural structure of male industrial workers and occupational safety problems (Fantasia, 1988: 15). On the other hand, studies that have examined how transformations are realised through participation in strike processes (Fantasia 1988; Hirsch 1990) show the impact of collective struggle on the process of workers' transformations.

At the broader level, this study differs from much of the literature that views labour and social movements as both crises at the macro levels of capitalism and as part of modernisation or progress in that it unconditionally emphasises the determinism of the role of the subaltern classes in constructing counter-hegemony against the state and ruling classes. Hegemony was repeated in different contexts by Gramsci (1971) in his *Prison Notebooks*. The concept of hegemony can be summarised as the construction of political, moral, and intellectual leadership by a class - just as Gramsci expected this class to be the working class.

The case analysed in this study is connected to political processes that aim for a large-scale social transformation, such as a revolution. Therefore, the movement process has been evaluated within the historical and political context of the 1970s in Turkey, the years when the class struggle was at its peak. The Yeni Çelttek case is therefore part of a larger phenomenon.

On the other hand, the history of how oppressed groups became political actors in Turkey has not been analysed in depth. Besides, "Quantitative research on the general picture of labour protests in the country through press and trade union surveys is limited in Turkey as in the world" (Birelma, 2022: 1867). In labour historiography of Turkey, the focus is on the strike processes and factory occupations that took place in the 1960s and 1970s and the relations amongst state, trade unions, and labour. The number of studies focusing on mine workers is very limited. One study that has an important place in the literature is by Donald Quataert. In his comparative history of

mining, in *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield*, Quataert analyses the role of the state and the position of mine workers from 1822 to 1920.

However, the interactions between the lower classes and the state/elites/ruling classes in Turkey, with or without conflict, occupy an important place in the literature. The argument for a far stronger role of the state or elites in the process of social and economic constructions dominates the literature on the state debate in Turkish historiography. (Heper, 1985; Mardin, 1973; Keyder, 2004; Öniş, 1998) A group of scholars points out the state as the key actor on the core of strong state tradition (Heper, 1985) or of centre-periphery relations (Mardin, 1973). Their approach is generally related to the concepts of patrimonialism (Weber) and despotism (Montesquieu). According to these state theorists, Turkey could be treated in terms of a tradition of a patrimonial or despotic state, and this, on the other hand, involves emphasising the specificity of the Turkish state. Secondly, the basic distinction which is de facto undeveloped occurs between the state and society, and thereby the working-class is described in a passive manner.

In response to this line of argument, several scholars explain the state's position on the hegemony question in terms of policymaking process and tackle the labour-capital conflict as an important subject of research, even if not always the most important one. (Savran, 2002; Yalman, 2002; Yeldan, 2003; Sayer, 1998). These scholars who embrace the class perspective raise questions about the state-labour-capital relations, claiming that the scale of class conflict is gravely underestimated. This part of the literature is generally concerned with the relations between state and classes by illustrating the state as a strategic relationship managed by entities. Many of these studies are theoretically influenced by the Marxian political-economic approach, agreeing mainly that production relations constitute the structure of society. In this vein, borrowing from Yalman (2002) this study tends to view the construction processes of the Turkish state as "hegemonic projects". Therefore, as a subject of hegemony, workers or oppressed classes are major actors in politics.

1.1. Method

This study relies on semi-structured interviews with 20 respondents, primarily with the miners (among the 11 miners interviewed are the branch president and prominent workers who were members of the workers' council, as well as ordinary workers), but also with key leaders (including Sedat Göçmen- the Devrimci Yol's cadre in charge of the Black Sea region at that time, Mehmek Kök -the Devrimci Yol's cadre in charge of the Yeni Çeltek basin, and Çetin Uygur -the general president of the Yeraltı Maden İş union), trade union staff, and the local people conducted in the spring of 2013, summer and winter of 2021, and spring of 2022. Those who attended were primarily chosen through purposive sampling based on suggestions from the participants.

The aim of this study is to ensure that subjectivity is not superficial and to demonstrate labour and social movements as filtered through the lens of participants in the process. Therefore, participants' interpretation of the meaning of their own experiences offers us the possibility of a deeper investigation. In other words, this allowed for an attempt to research how the dynamics of resistance and class formations are expressed by the oppressed groups themselves.

As the main theme of this study is workers' self-management, participants were asked a series of questions about their understanding of the class struggle to understand how they perceived their transformative role during their action as well as their own transformation during and after the movement process. Interviews were also complemented with archival materials from print and broadcast media, including documentaries, publications of the political organization (Devrimci Yol) and the trade union (Yeraltı Maden İş). In addition to media sources, the data covers training materials, brochures, and flyers.

Due to the inductive mode of analysis, the statements of the interviewees are the main element in the formation of the concepts and terms that shape the study. The interviews also enabled me to question the framework of the research proposal that I formulated at the beginning of the study. For example, I initially assumed that economic-based concerns and the economic trajectories of poverty were the dominant drivers of

movement dynamics. However, following the interviews, the phenomenon of labour movement shows that other reasons, which will be developed in the thesis, are at least as influential as others on the continuity of the struggle. “Marxist, feminist, and other perspectives of critical theory argue that the quality of research should be judged in terms of its political effects rather than its capacity to formulate universal laws or apparently objective truth” (Seale, 1999: 9). In this sense, my aim is to trace the unwritten, silenced accounts of the social struggle around the Yeni Çeltek miners, point out new emancipatory visions today by giving voice to the interests of subaltern classes. As Portelli points to Benjamin’s well-known quote: “For an experienced event is finite at any rate, confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite because it is only a key to everything that happened before and after it” (as cited in Portelli 1991).

On the other hand, the difficulty with historical research based on interviews is that memories might not be accessible due to lack of recollection. Moreover, different contexts of the past and present can lead to contradictory recollections of what one felt and thought in the past, rather than forgetting. However, one of the aims of qualitative researchers is not to “search for ‘objective’ evidence” (Thompson, 2000: 226), but for people’s genuine feelings and thoughts. Moreover, the data from the interviews is oversaturated in terms of establishing links between the present and the past. Also, I am not concerned about the past being seen through the lens of the present, because one of my aims is to show the permanence of transformation that extends to the present, not to conduct a retrospective reality check.

Since I reached the interviewees through their several notable old friends, they agreed to be interviewed. However, especially a few miners interviewed were very careful and evasive about what they said in a recorded interview. In addition to this, since I went to the region as a foreigner, I spent a long time on each interview, knowing that it would take time for them to trust and accept me. During this time, activities such as eating together, chatting, and drinking tea created the atmosphere of an ordinary home visit and the interviewees felt more comfortable. Of course, it is not possible for people to immediately accept an outsider. However, it should be noted that my activist

identity, rather than my academic identity, had a positive effect on the establishment of minimum trust between me and the interviewees, as I was already experienced and careful about various issues ranging from dress to codes of behaviour.

While there were no difficulties in reaching miners and other groups interviewed in the region, there were sometimes difficulties in reaching the leaders and members of former political organisations and getting them to agree to be interviewed. This group of interviewees adopted a rather cautious attitude and preferred to give average answers to some questions. A similar tendency was observed in a couple of miners who had been militants of political organisations.

For the analysis of the data collected after the interviews, each interview was transcribed by me and evaluated together with the field notes. The findings will be presented throughout the thesis to explain the main issues such as the political course of the social struggle, the patterns of collective action, and the politicisation processes of the actors.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

The framework I have developed to address the dynamics and politicisation patterns of social struggle in the Yeni Çeltek basin focuses on two main modes: the miners' class consciousness formations and the power alliance of the local oppressed groups and the other elements (such as intellectuals) of the local society leading to a social struggle. At the same time, I draw attention to the praxis of the Devrimci Yol organisation and the Yeraltı Maden İş union as two key actors during the struggle process.

In this thesis, I seek to address several key questions about the conflicted relationship between capital and labour, politicisation of everyday life, and the role of those as an agent of social struggles. The main aim of this study is to analyse the stages of labour movement and politicisation as a continuum. On the one hand, there are the practices of the Yeni Çeltek miners' self-management that have been put into practice following

the economic and social rights gains, and on the other hand, there is the social uprising across the Yeni Çeltek basin. Solidarity is the key concept to further explore the points of contact between these two.

To further understand the processes of politicisation, relations with political organisations and trade unions, other pillars of the labour struggle examined here, will be explored. What is understood by politicisation is primarily the policy spheres in which the struggle touches. As stated by Burawoy “politics is defined first by its arena, and only secondly by its goal or function” (Burawoy, 1985: 112). For example, what kind of relations can we discover between the social struggle and state politics, production politics, everyday life, and so on? What kind of transformations do social struggles lead to in these relations?

In this research, I will examine how self-government practices affect the politicisation of those who implement them. In this sense, to enhance the understanding of the workers’ self-management in the form of workers’ councils, it should be noted that what is typically meant by workers’ self-management is both “the supervision, control and surveillance of the production process”. (Sirianni, 1982: 22) Besides, beyond the economic logic of it, “workers’ control refers to the struggle of workers on the shop floor to gain sufficient command of the work process to bring dignity to their proletarian lives” (Brown, 1997: 11). The main factor enabling the politicisation of the labour movements is based on class struggle in the trajectory of class consciousness and class interests. The issue of political consciousness opens space for us to understand the ways in which ordinary people make sense of and participate in collective action for social changes. In this sense, the movement dynamics which are based on the collective action frames will constitute the focal point of the study. As stated by Scott, “the objective of a social analysis of the ideology of class relations is not somehow to tease out a consensus of agreed-upon rules but rather to understand how divergent constructions of those rules and their application are related to class interests” (Scott, 1985: 310).

In that sense, as stated by Sturmtal, councils are “a ‘transmission belt’ between the revolutionary leadership and the masses of workers in the plants during the revolutionary period, and an organ of public administration when the revolution succeeded.” (Sturmtal, 1964: 4) In this sense, miners’ self-management should be understood from the realm of a “political council” perspective, as described by Sturmtal.

On the other hand, in terms of social movements, surely different types of movements exist. I argue that the social movement analysed in this study comes close to being revolutionary and counter-hegemonic through its ability to connect specific issues and experiences to a broader political perspective. In such movements, the experiences of self-governance in everyday life are concretely grounded within social life, while concretely presenting a critique of existing social relations and institutions (Cox and Nilsen, 2014: 16).

Ultimately, this study frames three components to explain the processes of political consciousness of the social struggle participants: injustice, solidarity, and identity. Injustice refers to the moral outrage against economic inequality and marginalisation; solidarity refers to the political solidarity that sustains the collective action, and identity refers to the process based on class positions that unite people as ‘we’.

1.2.1. Class Consciousness and Workers’ Self-Management

“Class is not a fixed state (or you may call it a ‘fixed and closed subject position’), but a mesh of linkages” (Özügürü, 2011: 185). In this context, by class struggle, I refer to organised struggles whose “class formations, not atomised individuals, are the characteristic vehicles” (Wright, 2000: 192); by class consciousness, I refer “those aspects of consciousness which have a distinctive class character” (Wright, 2000: 193) which have impacts on perceptions and acts. In this study, I seek to analyse class conflict as it is practiced on a local scale. Therefore, a further discussion of the phenomena class consciousness may provide us with a helpful framework.

To begin with the sense in which I do not use the term “class consciousness”, I should point out that by class consciousness I do not mean enlightenment of the workers towards the realisation of their own interests or situation. This kind of enlightenment, which is thought to occur immediately only in a revolutionary situation, implies an essentialist hypothesis of unconscious or falsely conscious workers. All in all, class consciousness is such a ‘contradictory consciousness’ (Gramsci, 2000) that it cannot be defined as right or wrong.

In that regard, in his seminal work, *The Making of the British Working Class*, Thomson explains “class as a relation (not a structure or category), class consciousness as a cultural as well as economic creation, human agency as a vital element in the making of history, and politics as the central meaning of that history” (Scott, 1998:68) Thompson’s approach emphasises the relevance of class experience and the forms of struggle that emerge from these experiences

On the other hand, “the great contribution of Gramsci, a contribution developed by Poulantzas, was to recognize that ideological and political relations are objective with regard to class struggles.” (Przeworski, 1986: 67.) The practices of class and class consciousness are embedded in the ways in which lower classes shape their world in everyday life and cultural structures. However, the ability of economic struggles against existing ideologic and political structures to demand political rights requires a strong political struggle by the working class.

In this context, the character of the role of the state should be considered. Similar to Gramsci’s hegemony perspective, Poulantzas also argues that the state represents two sides of the coin (persuasion and repression): “The State’s role in the constitution of the relations of production and in the delimitation-reproduction of social classes derives from the fact that it does not confine itself to the exercise of organized physical repression” (Poulantzas, 2014: 44).

And by stating that the state is uniquely involved in the process of reproduction of ideology, he presents ideology as a multidimensional concept:

The State plays an equally specific role in organizing ideological relations and the dominant ideology. Ideology does not consist merely in a system of ideas or representations: it also involves a series of material practices, embracing the customs and lifestyle of the agents and setting like cement in the totality of social (including political and economic) practices. Ideological relations are themselves essential to the constitution of the relations of possession and economic property, and to the social division of labour at the heart of the relations of production (Poulantzas, 2014:44).

Therefore, the struggle of the oppressed must produce a comprehensive response to the determinations of the capitalist mode of production and the hegemony of the state at the economic, ideological, and political levels. In this sense, economic, political, and ideological factors contributing to the ability of capitalists to reorganise labour according to their interests can be found in the labour process. Marx summaries this process in a very striking language as follows:

[T]hat within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker; that all means for the development of production undergo a dialectical inversion so that they become means of domination and exploitation of producers ; they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate [entfremden] from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power ; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness ; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the juggernaut of capital (Marx, 1982: 798,99).

In that context, labour process consists of three pillars, as Gartman explains:

(1) purposeful human activity, that is, work itself; (2) the object of that work, the object that humans modify to meet their own needs; and (3) the instrument of that work. The last two elements Marx groups together and calls variously ‘means of production’ and ‘productive forces’ (Gartman, 1978: 388).

The relation between labour and the means of production as well as property relations, “i.e., the relation of ownership by humans of the means of production” (Gartman, 1978: 389), expresses class relations both within and beyond the sphere of production.

Based on this relationality, workers' attempts to overthrow capitalist domination over their own labour in the production process might lead to the undermining of the property relations that permeate society. This kind of agency of workers to make decisions about their own lives, for example through forms of self-management as the most obvious example of this, might bring about a self-realisation of their identity (i.e., class consciousness) and a process of emancipation in which workers become self-perfected. In this sense, labour processes and processes of political struggle are two sides in the formation of class consciousness.

In this context, the trade unionism of the union examined in this study is conceptualised as political syndicalism. I adopt this term because it provides an appropriate basis for analysing the combination of economic and political struggle and the relationship between political organisations and trade unions.

1.2.2. Ethical-Political Appeals: Solidarity and Justice

A critical question for this research is how social solidarity transforms into class-based political solidarity. Indeed, we could find the roots of the concept of solidarity mainly in the works of Comte and Durkheim. "The sociological roots of the term describe the cohesiveness or commonality of a group or population" (Scholz, 2012: 6). Solidarity contains moral codes and may at times be the source of the seeking for justice in society. In this context, the articulation between theological approaches, and solidarity is remarkable. For example, "Liberation theology, a particular branch of theology originating in the Latin American Catholic Church in the late 1960s, seeks to reinterpret the gospel in light of the plight of the poor" (Scholz, 2012: 8).

The political solidarity I am referring to here, on the other hand, is the solidarity of lower classes in their struggle for shared objectives and sentiments that go beyond their common material interests which is because "common interest alone is somewhat misleading; their opposition to injustice or oppression unites the group". (Scholz, 2012: 10). The centrality of solidarity and moral outrage against injustice for contentious politics is emphasised as the state perceives solidarity practices and

pursuits for justice as a threat and acts with the logic of marginalisation and oppression.

As Scholz summarises:

Political solidarity is a unity of individuals each responding to a particular situation of injustice, oppression, social vulnerability, or tyranny. Each individual makes a conscious commitment to a cause. A number of things contribute to or motivate an individual's commitment to the sort of political engagement, social activism, and personal transformation compelled by political solidarity. An exhaustive list is impossible simply because that motivation is so personal. Anger, hope, sympathy, pity, fear, self-confidence, self-interest, friendship, and countless other feelings may contribute, as might a host of other intellectual factors, arguments, experiences, or perspectives (Scholz, 2012: 51).

In this context, interpreting solidarity from a class perspective, we might argue that it is the most important element in breaking free from the atomising effect of capitalism and in being able to act together. "Solidarity, therefore, is about much more than...providing hope and charity to the impoverished and oppressed. It is about supporting projects for social change..." (Power and Charlip, 2009: 4). This is how political solidarity differs from the forms of social and moral solidarity that may already exist in society.

This framework provides an ethical-political context for the concept of solidarity. The importance of the ethical-political repertoire of movements, then, should be emphasised, which occupies an important place in the literature on workers' self-management. As Vieta put it:

Ethical-moral positions justifying workers' control and self-management often begin with critical theories and assessments of capitalist modes of organising the economy and the workplace, which I covered at length in theorists and proponents of workers' control and self-management who start from the ethical-moral position, often taking up Marxist or social anarchist perspectives, ground their views on the ethical legitimacy of workers' control and self-management for minimising and eventually eradicating exploitation and alienation and maximising the self-determination and self-actualisation of associated forms of labour (Vieta, 2020: 319).

Movements are most effective to the extent that they can unite people around certain ethical-political tendencies. And that requires embracing views about what is good for

people. Obviously, this is more than an essentialist question of “goodness”, it is a class question.

As a result, workers become as responsive to political issues as they are to economic ones to change the existing order. However, even when workers tend to use their productive power to change the structural relationship between capital and labour, they do not at all times do so. To better understand the variables underlying the reasons for this, it is necessary to consider not only the moments of resistance to taking control of the power that derives from the position in production, but also the processes through which a broader insurgency - in which morality and ethics are also part of- is constructed. As Holloway (2019) notes, “Money, like value, like the state, like capital, as Marx points out, are forms of social relations, but it is crucial to understand that social relations are relations between agents, between active subjects.” (Holloway, 2019: 157)

1.2.3. Social Movements

In the labour and social movements literature to provide an analytical framework is the conceptualisation of contentious politics. By this concept, I imply a broadly collective political struggle, in which suppressed classes unite and act against economic and political power bases. The fact that workers, peasants, women, students, and other elements of social movement lack the resources that the state and the ruling classes have, leads them to construct different forms of struggle.

Social movements aim to bring about change to the extent of their demands by exerting pressure on economic and political institutions. Bringing together different actors under one identity is essential for the coherence, and continuity of the movement (McAdam, Sidney, and Tarrow, 2001). Social movements typically develop repertoires mobilised around solidarity to achieve wider networks. Solidarity structures might be reproduced both at the level of awareness around shared perceptions and ideas in everyday life practices. Thus, the function of solidarity in the

reconfiguration of cultural structures is primary in the case studied in this study, as it is in that of various social movements.

“The irreducible act that lies at the base of all social movements, protests, rebellions, riots, strike waves, and revolutions is contentious collective action.” (Tarrow, 2011: 29). Tarrow explains the structure of these collective actions that might constitute social movements with the concept of “movement framing”, whose four characteristics are a collective challenge, common purpose, social solidarity, and continuous interaction. (Tarrow, 2011: 31). Such characteristics of a social movement enable us to distinguish between the movement itself and the process of its formation. The characteristic that defines the movement itself is continuity. Lacking this continuity, the movement will fizzle out; that is, “movements will evaporate into the kind of individualistic resentment... will harden into intellectual or religious sects, or their members will defect from activism into isolation.” (Tarrow, 2011: 12).

As Della Porta and Diani argue that social movements are based on several forms of protests, contentious issues, common beliefs and solidarity, and informal networks. (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 16) These categories refer to the resources necessary for the continuity of the movements. Oberschall describes resources as “anything from material resources...- jobs, incomes, savings, and the right to material goods and services – to nonmaterial resources - authority, moral commitment, trust, friendship, skills, habits of industry...” (Oberschall 1973: 28) “Political mobilization is, in this respect, much like any other branch of social life. It is motivated, coordinated, and facilitated by shifts in resources.” (Crossley, 2002: 79). As stated by Oberschall, “for outbursts to become movements there must be organization and leadership within an aggrieved population that come from whatever pre-existing forms of network, association or community that exist within that population.” (Oberschall, 1973: 95).

In addition, it is important to note the importance of moral imperatives in the formation of social movements, which is another of those key factors (Jasper, 1998; Scott, 1990; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001). In many cases, “The shared understandings and practices we call culture” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001: 23) rooted in a

moralistic frame led to broad-based resistance movements. Explaining the food riots in 1800s Britain, Thompson (1966) notes that such riots were legitimized by interpreting the injustice of rising food prices in terms of immorality. He states that this legitimacy derives from traditional values, which he calls a form of “moral economy”. (Thompson, 1966: 63).

As a final point, “understanding the relationship between group consciousness and collective action has been a major focus of social science research.” (as cited in Taylor and E. Whittier) Collective actions are grounded on identities and consciousness, the divisions of the notions of “us” uniting actors for struggle and “them” denoting a specific enemy. Therefore, “politicisation of identities is key to the dynamics of contention.” (van Stekelenburg, van Leeuwen, and van Troost, 2013:1) Through movements, we can examine the formation of political identities. As Della Porta and Dianni put it: “identity operates as an organizing principle in relation to individual and collective experience: for example, it helps actors to identify their allies and their adversaries.” (Della Porta and Dianni, 2006: 93). I refer to the politicisation of collective identities related to social identities rather than the politicisation of individuals. Besides, “salience of a collective identity does not necessarily make that identity politically relevant; collective identities must politicize to become the engine of collective action.” (van Stekelenburg, van Leeuwen, and van Troost, 2013:1)

Consequently, how the movement itself transforms collective identities and how actors relate to each other are key questions to be addressed to find explanations for how the movement in Yeni Çelttek developed a capacity for hegemony. Hegemonic initiatives “entail a situation where revolutionary movements from below launch a ‘war of manoeuvre’ against a beleaguered, passive, decaying order” (Cox and Nilsen, 2014: 97). Movements from above influence social order and everyday life by creating structures, while movements from below attempt to organise and mobilise to fight based on people’s own experiences and existing problems. In addition to the importance of understanding the driving factors of movements and the reasons for their rise, an important question is how the subjects and movements transform and what happens after movements. Since movements from below are not trapped within static

structures, their capacity for impact on societies is also broad and capable of transcending the boundaries of space and time.

Social movements allow us to develop hypotheses and theories, past, present, and future, about how politics operates in practice. In this context, the following research aims to shed light on the present and future of social movements in Turkey, while explaining the case study of Yeni Çeltek.

1.3. Chapter Outline

The current research study is organised into five chapters. The introduction explains the methodology of the research and the theoretical framework that will be applied to analyse the dynamics of labour and social movement. The second chapter describes the historical context in which the social struggle emerged, the local dynamics and actors of movement, and its chronology. The third chapter explains the driving factors of the miners' struggle for unionisation and presents the concept of solidarity as key to the miners' practice of self-management. The final sub-section of this chapter examines the workers' council as the main structure in the miners' struggle. The contribution of strikes to workers' emerging class consciousness is further discussed. The objective of this chapter is to explore the dynamics of miners' class formations and thus their integration into the collective resistance. The fourth chapter argues that the miners' successful exercise of self-governance has supported other oppressed groups to become potent actors for social transformation and has been a precursor to solidarity-building across the region. In this context, the impact of Devrimci Yol's praxis, the prominent political actor of the movement, on both political consciousness processes and cultural transformations is addressed. In the concluding chapter, there is a summary and a brief discussion of the implications of the Yeni Çeltek case for contemporary labour and social movements in Turkey.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONTEXT

The Yeni Çeltek case should be evaluated in the historical context that will be explained in this chapter. It is part of a wider labour and social movement of that period.

Labour and social struggles in the Yeni Çeltek coal basin can be framed in terms of the development of lignite mining and the transformation in agriculture. Mining, which plays an important role in the economy of the region, has resulted in the proletarianization of male workers, but there has not been a complete break with agriculture.

This section consists of three parts. Starting with a historical background, the first part provides a background that explains the developments of the period that allowed or triggered the rise of the labour and social movement. The second part presents the socio-economic situation of the region and explores the possible preconditions for the resistance movements in the basin. The third part, introduced by the chronology of the miners' actions, identifies two organisations as political actors, the political organisation (Devrimci Yol) and the trade union (Yeraltı Maden İş), involved in the case of Yeni Çeltek. The chapter will conclude with a summary in the conclusion.

2.1. Historical Context

2.1.1. The Rise of the Labour Movement and Trade Unionism

To be brief regarding the period, the 1970s was a period of broader working-class movements mobilised by workers, intellectuals, and students. They were able to organise independent unions as well as labour-based political organisations/parties which aspired to large-scale democratic rights and freedoms, and to participate in the policy-making process although it was not strong at the parliamentary level. In the policymaking circle, labour rights arose at the same time as the constitutional amendment of 1961 (after the military coup in 1960) and during a period of integration in market relations. The goal of this integration was to “consolidate the power of the industrial bourgeoisie as the leading force of the ruling classes through the safeguards of the 1961 Constitution.” (Savran, 2002: 11) The consolidation was followed by the restoration of labour rights, for instance; higher wages, right to organise, and job security. However, in 1977 the economic crisis which underlies “the contradictions of capital accumulation based on import substitution industrialisation” (Savran, 2002: 13) erupted. Through military fascism (1980) the crisis was brought under control and several market reforms were applied to modify financial “misrule”. These reforms were an attempt to establish a liberalised market which means de-regulation of the labour market by even forbidding trade unions for a period.

The period 1960-1980 is defined by Erik J. Zürcher (2017) as the “second Turkish Republic”. The 1960s and 1970s witnessed rising unionisation, increased strikes and workplace occupations, the first time a socialist party (the Workers’ Party of Turkey) took a seat in parliament and was eventually shut down by the state, the shift of the social democrats (the Republican People’s Party) to the left of centre, and on the other hand the consolidation by the state of right-wing and ultra-nationalist groups that contributed to increased political violence.

One of the defining features of the 1960-1980 period is that the labour-capital conflict emerged to take a decisive role in policymaking for the first time in Turkey. The transformations underlying these changes were based on economic restructuring,

however, such economic reform necessitated a loosening of coercive political control. Therefore, directly after the military intervention, a progressive liberal constitution was drafted.

The interests of capital were the driving forces behind the constitutional change that influenced the dynamic characteristics of the social movements. During the 1960s, a new Constitution (1961) laid the ground for the dramatic growth of organised labour and leftist movements. 1960s were the years of increasing numbers of students and industrial workers. (Zürcher, 2017: 253) While students were organising protests with the demand for democratic universities (especially in İstanbul and Ankara), workers were organising their trade unions for gaining economic and social rights.

Considering the development of Turkish labour history, the right to strike¹ in the 1961 Constitution within the scope of fundamental rights and freedoms has had a significant impact. However, the practical implementation of the Constitution was again driven by the will of the workers, i.e., from the bottom up. In this sense, the ‘Saraçhane Rally’ (1961)², “the first labour rally of the Republic of Turkey” (Koçak and Çelik, 2016: 647), with the theme of strike and collective bargaining, is noteworthy in terms of showing the influence of workers in the implementation of the right to strike and trade union rights enshrined in the Constitution. Legislation on trade union rights, guaranteed by the Constitution, was enacted with a two-year delay (July 1963), and the Saraçhane rally was organised for the enactment of trade union regulations without delay and dilution. (Koçak and Çelik, 2016: 652). The Kavel strike (1963), which was an outcome of the Saraçhane rally (Koçak and Çelik, 2016: 675), also took place before the law on strikes could be implemented. In 1963, the Kavel strike was another important labour action that demonstrated the will of the workers regarding union

¹ Today (2022), strikes have been *de facto* banned in Turkey and the working class has been gradually losing its vested rights.

² According to reports in national newspapers, the rally was attended by about one hundred thousand people. (as cited in Koçak and Çelik)

rights and strikes that would be put into practice in 1963. The strike at the Kavel cable factory is an important turning point in the history of labour in Turkey in terms of the practical implementation of strikes by workers and the achievement of gains while the right to strike was still prohibited under the Labour Law. (Aydın, 2010)

The mass attraction of workers towards the rising labour movement has also brought about changes in the field of trade union struggle. For instance, “large-scale metalworkers’ strikes led to a split in the state-sponsored Turkish Trade Union Confederation (Türk-İş), culminating in the formation of the militant Confederation of Revolutionary Worker Unions, DISK”. (Tugal, 2007: 9). Forced to leave³ Türk-İş and organised in the private sector, the unions Maden-İş, Lastik-İş and Basın-İş, together with Gıda-İş and Türk Maden-İş, founded the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey (Akkaya, 2002: 71). The fact that the increasing number of workers who switched from Türk-İş to DISK and that DISK had sparked militant, anti-systemic labour protests was a factor that alarmed the state. Therefore, Law No. 1317 stipulates that the establishment of a confederation requires the gathering of one third of the insured workers. In 1970, the number of insured workers was 1.3 million, while the number of DISK members was 50 thousand (Akkaya, 2002: 75)⁴. This regulation was admittedly intended to prevent the survival of DISK by creating a threshold. The fact that number of strikes and strike days increased after the establishment of DISK (Sülker, 1987: 24) and hence DISK’s progressive union stance began to disturb employers. Türk-İş, on the other hand, adopted the method of establishing good relations with governments and reaching compromises rather than a confrontation...this relationship reinforced the corporatist relations between both parties (Akkaya, 2002: 83).⁵

³ Because of their progressive trade unionism.

⁴ The number of industrial workers, which was 938,122 in 1960, reached 2,300,468 in 1980. (2002: 65)

⁵ For instance, “Just after the 1960 coup, the administration of the only Turkish Trade Union Confederation, Türk-İş, came under dispute due to close relations of the chairman of the Türk-İş, Nuri Beşer with Prime Minister Adnan Menderes” (as cited in Emre). “One week after the coup, Beşer

In response to the state's intervention in DİSK, workers took to the streets for two days in June 1970 to defend their freedom to choose a union and DİSK to which they were members. This event went down in history as the uprising of June 15-16. Workers turned to DİSK because of its progressive trade unionism that went beyond Türk-İş's unionism limited to collective bargaining. After the June 15-16 uprising, while militant workers were blacklisted, the DİSK management did not protect these workers who were its members (Akkaya, 2002: 76). This shows that although DİSK's approach to so-called class and mass unionism initially helped to strengthen the class struggle, it failed to fully embrace the political orientation of labour.

The 1961 Constitution and the new labour law of 1963 enabled the uprising of trade unions (Pamuk, 2020: 149), however; The Justice Party (AP), the government of the time, was trying to design the Labour Law and Trade Union Law in line with the interests of employers as well as further bureaucratisation of the trade unions. The Workers' Party of Turkey⁶ (TİP), with 15 deputies in the parliament, continued its struggle against this, while workers continued their struggle in the workplaces as well as on the streets. The high wage and high employment policies also accelerated union organisation (Akkaya, 2002: 84). "Workers in the state-owned industries had constituted the core of the labour movement of the 1960s and 70s—organized trade unionists who received relatively high wages and good benefits." (Keyder, 2004) On the other hand, workers' involvement in the trade union struggle cannot be explained solely in terms of material interests. In other words, the labour movement they create challenged capitalist class hierarchies and inserts itself into the political sphere and seeks equality and justice in the social and cultural sphere.

Therefore, on March 12, 1971, with a military memorandum, the state started to prune the constitution, closed the TİP, the only socialist party in parliament, and broke the

resigned under pressure from the trade unions. A pro-CHP administration came to the helm of Türk-İş." (Emre, 2008: 431)

⁶ "All 12 founders of the TİP were trade unionists" (2016: 655) and several of them were also founders of DİSK.

power of the rising labour movement. In the face of these developments, DISK entered a period of retreat and, as it was expressed at the 5th Congress in 1975, it moved away from the TİP and towards a social democratic line, that is, towards the Republican People's Party (CHP) (Akkaya, 2002: 76)⁷ However, by 1979, the CHP had entered a rapprochement with Türk-İş, while DİSK turned to other endeavours.⁸

The easiest and most easily controllable variable in a capitalist economy is wages (Akkaya, 2002: 85). Therefore, at the end of the 1970s, when Turkey's import-substitution economic policies were not working, the government resorted to programs that involved more control of labour, for example by imposing strike bans, or by registering and punishing militant workers.

2.1.2. The Socialist Movement

The period between 1975 and 1980 was a period of the considerable upsurge for the socialist movement in Turkey. In addition to the mobilisation of workers and students, the political debates of intellectuals about Marxist terminology played a significant role in thriving a socialist movement during the 1970s. The theoretical debates that developed in the 1960s and would later influence socialist organizations in the 1970s to fall into two strands. As explained by Zürcher,

The major debate in Marxist circles in the mid-1960s was about which historical phase Turkey was in. Mehmet Ali Aybar and the main faction of the WPT⁹ ...expected success to come from a growing class-consciousness and political awareness among Turkey's workers... Another influential group, led by Mihri Belli, held that Turkey was an Asiatic society with feudal characteristics, that the proletariat was too weak, and that revolutionary change could only be brought about by a coalition of intellectuals and officers. This current, which was called

⁷ Meanwhile, the TİP (II. TİP) was founded for the second time. However, "DISK purged the socialist trade unionists and executives close to the TİP." (2002: 77)

⁸ Yeraltı Maden İş's application to affiliate to DİSK, which is an example of a different model of unionism along socialist lines that will be presented in this study, was rejected repeatedly and only accepted in 1978. This seemingly relates to DISK's decision to distance itself from socialist organisations until the end of the 1970s.

⁹ The Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP)

Millî Demokratik Devrim (National Democratic Revolution) took over the Federation of Debating Societies in 1968 and turned it into the organization 'Revolutionary Youth', known by its Turkish acronym as Dev Genç. (Zürcher, 2017: 255)

At the end of the 1960s, revolutionary youth organised in universities under the roof of Dev-Genç and later established different political organisations. A few of them, including the most effective THKP-C of Mahir Çayan (People's Liberation Party/Front of Turkey- Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi Cephesi) and THKO of Deniz Gezmiş (People's Army of Turkey- Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu), agreed that the socialist revolution could be engaged with armed guerrilla warfare. In essence, these organisations' goal was a total break with the bourgeoisie with the people's war. However, with the military memorandum of 1971, the state bloodily suppressed such movements and massacred the leaders¹⁰ of these organisations.

After these tragic experiences, the Turkish socialist movement entered a phase of recovery in the second half of the 1970s. This time, organisational structures more connected to the struggles of the poor and labour had emerged that had developed lasting support networks in cities and urbanizing areas. In fact, they sought to become more mass. Ultimately, the socialist movement achieved considerable public support. How this support was achieved is an inevitably significant question for this study, as it shows how lower classes and socialist movements relate to each other.

As noted by Samim, the spectrum of opposition left groups can be divided into three groups:

First, there was the largest organisation, Devrimci Yol, which was...very loose, almost a federation. Secondly, the Maoists possessed paper, *Aydınlık*...Thirdly, in the factories and in some trade unions¹¹ the traditional Communist Party (TKP)

¹⁰ In particular, the assassination of the two leaders, Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Çayan, remains of great historical and symbolic significance in cementing the ties between the people and the socialist movement in Turkey.

¹¹ Particularly the DİSK-affiliated Mine Labour Union (*Maden-İş*) and Banking and Insurance Workers' Union (*Bank-Sen*)

exercised considerable influence¹². The independent, the pro-Maoist (or pro-Chinese), and the pro-Soviet (Samim, 1981: 61).

Meanwhile, the eternal rivalry between the right-wing parties and the CHP continued in the parliament. The elections in 1964 and 1969 were won by the Justice Party (AP), the successor of the Democrat Party, whose leader (and President) Adnan Menderes had been executed in a military coup. After the military coup in 1971, Turkey was governed by coalition governments (except for the CHP government of 1978-1979) between 1973 and 1980.¹³ The two major problems Turkey faced in the 1970s, which no government could find a solution to, were political violence and economic depression. The governments not only did not solve the problems but also fuelled them¹⁴, state power was transferred to extreme right-wing militants and the rising socialist movement was tried to be suppressed in this way. Both the 1971 and 1980 military operations explicitly pointed the finger at labour activists as the perpetrators of popular uprisings.

As noted by Zürcher,

During the Nationalist Front governments of the years between 1974 and 1977, the police and the security forces had become the exclusive preserve of Türkeş's NAP¹⁵, and even under Ecevit's government of 1978–79, they had remained

¹² Although such an influence of the TKP within the trade unions is mentioned, it also defended the domestic bourgeoisie against the monopoly foreign bourgeoisie. For example, their support for the social democrats (CHP) in the 1973 and 1977 elections was due to this.

¹³ 1974-1977 and 1979-1980: Nationalist Front (*Milliyetçi Cephe*)- right wing coalition.

¹⁴ The massacre of 1 May 1977, the perpetrators of which have still not been revealed and which is known to have been carried out by the deep state, is the most striking example of violence against the left. While hundreds of thousands of people were celebrating 1 May in Taksim, shots were fired from the roof of a hotel and 34 people lost their lives in the chaos. Today, Taksim has a great symbolic meaning for socialists, but for years the state has refused permission to celebrate 1 May in Taksim and has even tried to change the political content of Taksim, for example by building a mosque or attempting to build a military museum in Gezi Park.

¹⁵ Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*)

heavily infiltrated by fascists who shielded and protected the Grey Wolves (Zürcher, 2017: 263).

During the 1970s, the pace of social struggles can largely be seen as a mechanism of a series of initiatives pioneered by revolutionary activists. However, it is a question worth pondering to what extent socialists were able to penetrate the everyday life of mobilised people in the 1970s and to what extent they were able to transform it in line with their ideals. As stated Belge,

One thing that Turkish socialists will have to grasp is the necessity of being a constant and influential political presence in ordinary conditions and in normal life, rather than wait for the so-called ‘pre-revolutionary’ chaos and tumult to find some kind of an opportunity to force things towards a ‘revolution’ (Belge, 2009: 19).

In fact, on the one hand, it is possible to say that the general tendency of socialist organisations - a habit that continues today - was to recruit militants from among the mobilised masses to prepare for a revolutionary situation. This has led to the formation of an instrumental rather than a deep relationship between the organisations and the people. This instrumentality was doomed to lose its effect when it lost its purpose - for example when the state violently suppressed socialist movements. And on the other hand, it should not be overlooked that socialist discourse and practice had met with struggles for rights that embraced all segments of society. Certain professional groups were particularly interested in the left. According to Belge, “the mass sympathy of doctors, lawyers, and engineers for the ‘Marxist’ left is not something the world is used to.” (Belge, 2009: 44) However, even today in Turkey, the professional chambers comprising these occupational groups are on the left wing.

One of the main factors in the attachment of the lower classes to socialist movements was the palpable effects of the economic crisis, such as rising prices and the black market, following the growing prosperity of the 1960s and early 1970s. The shantytowns emerged in the cities - especially in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Adana (Zürcher, 2017: 269) - with the increase in migration from rural to urban areas, where

those who felt the effects of declining welfare mostly lived, places that were also the neighbourhoods where socialist movements found the most support.

In addition to economic-based concerns, the marginalisation of the lower classes by the state, i.e., their exclusion from politics and decision-making mechanisms, brought them closer to socialist organisations. However, the extent to which socialist organisations have been able to contribute to their struggle to be heard is a matter of debate. The general tendency of the socialist movements of the period was to act in the dualism of economic demands and gains, and an over-centralisation for seizing the power that prevented the lower classes from making decisions about their own lives as subjective agents. The organisation Devrimci Yol, which will be explained in this study, represents a different line against this mentality and practice. In any case, this objective potential for development and the lack of adequate knowledge and experience of the organisations is both a common feature of socialist groups and a paradox of the 1970s (Ersan, 2014: 12).

It is easy to notice that the Kurdish movement and the women's movement have not been included in what has been said so far. The boundaries of the study have been limited to the Turkish socialist movement.

2.1.3. An Overview of Mine Labour in Turkey

Turkey has approximately 1.5 billion tonnes of hard coal, of which 730 million tonnes are visible, and a total of 17.5 billion tonnes of lignite reserves, most of which are visible reserves (Tamzok, 2016: 234). “Zonguldak, which is in north-west Turkey, bordering the Black Sea, has been the country's sole source of hard coal since the middle of the nineteenth century.” (Nichols and Kahveci, 1995: 1) Turkey contains approximately 2.1 % of the total world coal reserves and has an important place in terms of lignite.¹⁶ Amasya-Eski Çeltek, Yozgat-Yerköy, Kütahya-Tunçbilek-

¹⁶ <https://www.mta.gov.tr/v3.0/arastirmalar/komur-arama-arastirmalari> (date of access: 10.9.2022)

Değirimsaz and Aydın-Nazilli-Girenez mines are among the oldest lignite mines in Turkey. Since the 1970s, there has been a decline in hard coal production and a steady increase in lignite production used to meet electricity demand. “Dramatic rise of the oil prices from 1973 onwards...resulted in a significant energy crisis in Turkey... To overcome the energy crisis, orientation towards the domestic coal was encouraged” (Çelik, 2019: 97).

The Mineral Research and Exploration Institute (MTA) was established on 22 June 1935 with Law No. 2804 for the purpose of systematic exploration of the mines.¹⁷ “State-run enterprises, specifically Sümerbank and Etibank (founded in 1933 and 1935 respectively), were emblems of the Turkish government’s efforts at industrialization.” (Nacar, 2009: 143) These banks established several factories for the realisation of industrialisation plans. “New factories and mines contributed to industrial growth in Turkey in the second half of the 1930s... The industrial production index decreased 22 per cent between 1938–1939 and 1944–1945.” (Naca, 2009: 143)

On the other hand, the developments in the mining sector, which is a result of Turkey’s economic progress and industrial modernisation efforts, do not seem to reflect positively on the situation of mine labour. In this context, the forced labour law in Zonguldak (Milli Korunma Kanunu, National Protection Law, 1940-1948) is of great importance for better understanding the control mechanisms of mining labour. Since the mines are located in rural areas, the workers in the mines are basically peasants. It is a difficult task to convince them, who earn enough money from agriculture and animal husbandry to make a living, to work continuously in mines with terrible working conditions. Therefore, with that regulation enacted in 1940, the state forced men aged 16 and above from the mine basin to work long hours under very poor conditions. A miner in Zonguldak describes the conditions at that time as follows:

In 1940 because of the mukellefiyet [forced labour] I started working in the mines. I was a tirkacı [transport worker]. I put the coal in a container to take it to the

¹⁷ <https://www.mta.gov.tr/v3.0/kurumsal/tarihce> (date of access: 10.9.2022)

chute. In the pit the air ventilation was worked by hand. It was very hot and the air was clouded...We worked almost naked. I was so miserable that I escaped after the first week. I went to my village to hide. After two days six gendarmes came. They couldn't find me. Instead of me they took my wife to their headquarters. They only released her when I gave myself up. Sometimes they even took babies. They tortured people. When they captured people who escaped from the mines they beat them (Nichols and Kahveci, 1995:3,4).

Between 1940 and 1947, 700 workers lost their lives in the mines.¹⁸ Today, the number of miners whose names are inscribed on the miners' monument in Zonguldak is 4500.¹⁹ The figures alone show the severity of the situation.

If we look at political developments, we can say that the most important development in this period was the transition to multi-party life in 1946. In 1950, the CHP, the founding party of the state, lost the elections and left power to the DP. This process led to changes in the class composition of political power. (Boratav, 2003: 93) The distinction between the Istanbul-based commercial bourgeoisie and large landowners²⁰ (1) and the bourgeois cliques close to the government and the Anatolian-origin commercial bourgeoisie (2) represents the fundamental division of the ruling classes of the period. Another important feature of 1946 was the removal of legal obstacles to the establishment of trade unions, although in practice repression continued until the 1960s.

As mentioned earlier, the period between 1960-1980 was the golden age of the working-class movement in Turkey, of which miners were a part.²¹ During this period, many unionisations struggles and protests for the rights of miners took place. The protest of 5,000 workers at Karadon mine in 1965 against the unequal distribution of

¹⁸ 16 Tonnes: A Movie About Conscience and Free Market, 2011, dk. 56.04.

¹⁹ 2011, dk. 57.41

²⁰ This group was the founders and supporters of DP.

²¹ This, by no means, implies that miners did not display elements of resistance before the 1960s.

merit raises, the resistance of 25,000 miners at Kozlu and Üzülmez mines in 1968 and the protest their unions, the seizure of production by Çorum/Alpagut mine workers in 1969 because they could not receive their wages are prominent examples in the history of labour in Turkey. However, the right to strike was not exercised in these protests in accordance with legal provisions. The first strike organised by underground miners in accordance with the law was carried out by the miners of Yeni Çeltek, the main subject of this thesis, in 1976.²² Until 1980, strikes, protests, and resistance of miners continued in accordance with various demands. Another unique feature of the unionisation in Yeni Çeltek was that it was the first time that such a progressive union was organised in the public sector, which would later join DİSK. As mentioned before, the public sector was largely organised by the state-sponsored Türk-İş.

During this period when the labour movement was on the rise, wages increased steadily, as did unionisation. State investments in the mining sector increased in direct proportion to the increase in industrialisation. While the total number of mine workers was 72,500 in 1968, it had reached 97,150 in 1980 (Encyclopaedia of Turkish Trade Unionism -2, 1998; as cited in Göktaş, 2022: 24). In fact, these people are mostly poor peasants who, for economic reasons, have abandoned agricultural activities to work in mines. In the same period, when practices such as forced labour were no longer on the agenda, workers were persuaded to work in the mines both to earn a regular income and to gain access to improved working conditions and wages. Thus, it is seen that the labour control politics of the state had undergone a change.

One thing that is true in the mining sector is that no matter how much conditions improve, accidents in the workplace continue. In cases where miners are organised and ensure that occupational safety is properly implemented, accidents are likely to be prevented. However, especially today, with privatisation and subcontracting on the rise, many miners continue to lose their lives in what we would call workplace

²² <https://disk.org.tr/disk-etkinlikler-dizini/>

homicides. Industrialisation and economic progress, in this respect, had been thriving at the expense of workers' lives. "Similar to the 1960s and 1970s, surface mining was the dominant form of coal production in the 1980s and 1990s and the number of deadly mine disasters was quite limited" (Çelik, 2019: 104) During the 2000s, there was a dramatic increase in miner deaths. The main reason for this being both the disorganisation of labour and the disregard for human life rendered by free market conditions.

90% of mining enterprises have been transferred to the private sector during the last 20 years of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-AKP) (Çelik, 2019: 101). As Çelik notes, "what is significant regarding the state-capital-labour relations in the two forms stems from the fact that state, as the sole customer of coal, makes the industry attractive for investors by providing a guarantee of purchase." (Çelik, 2019: 101) This situation paves the way for accidents by making occupational safety control mechanisms inoperative and bringing more intensive and faster results for more production.

The biggest mining disaster in Turkey's history, the labour murder in Soma in 2014, in which 301 miners lost their lives, has once again put occupational safety issues in mining on the agenda. In the days when this subsection of this thesis was being written (October 2022), another disaster occurred in Bartın and 42 miners lost their lives. President and AKP leader Erdoğan updated the word "*fitrat*"²³ he had used after the Soma disaster, this time with the word "fate". Worse still, the state does not apply the necessary legal sanctions in such cases. For instance, in the Soma case, none of the employers who were primarily responsible was punished.

Today, because of the severity of impoverishment and the disappearance of the possibility of making a living through agriculture and animal husbandry in the countryside, there is a great deal of worship of the mines, despite so many deaths and

²³ "Originally an Arabic word that does not have an exact equivalent in English, *fitrat* denotes the inherent nature of a person or a thing." (Adaman, Arsel and Akbulut, 2018: 515)

poor working conditions. The mining sector, which thrives on forced labour and grows in direct proportion to the rights of labour, appears to have built its persuasion mechanisms on the defeat of labour.

2.2. Yeni Çeltek Coal Basin: Internal Dynamics of the Social Struggle

Yeni Çeltek is a functioning coal mining area, located within the Suluova district of Amasya province in Northern Turkey.

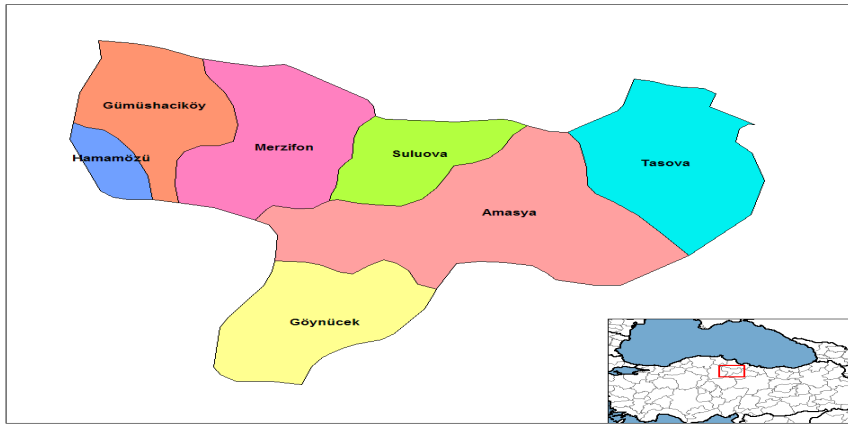


Figure 1: The Map of the Coal Basin²⁴

The idea of opening the Yeni Çeltek underground mine in 1955 arose from the establishment of the Suluova Sugar Factory (1954) because of the need for lignite to turn beets into sugar at high temperatures.

Another coal mine called Eski Çeltek, which was established in 1927, had been operating in the region prior to this. An example of the rural-urban migration phenomenon that accelerated economic growth in Turkey in the 1960s, the establishment of the Suluova Sugar Factory and the Yeni Çeltek mine had a decisive impact on increasing the population of Suluova. While 15,073 people lived in Suluova in 1955, this number increased steadily to 35,131 by 1975. (Tüysüz, 2010: 80) The

²⁴ <https://www.worldmap1.com/map/amasya-map> (date of access: 10.12.2020)

growth of industrial activities intensified the process of urbanisation, leading to a shifting of the labour force from agriculture to industry or migration, in other words, the proletarianization of the working population through the formation of a local labour market. Among the districts where the movement examined in this study emerged are Suluova and neighbouring districts such as Vezirköprü, Havza, Merzifon and Gümüşhacıköy, and hence The Yeni Çeltek basin is described in terms of a labour pool rather than pit location. The main reason for this is that the miners lived not only in Suluova but also in other districts and mostly in their villages.

2.2.1. Economic Life

As for the livelihoods of the people in the basin, by the 1960s the region had limited industrial activities, such as sugar refining at the Suluova sugar factory, mining, and flour milling. But still, around the region, the main livelihoods were from agriculture and their allied activities or animal husbandry. Agricultural production, particularly sugar-beet and tobacco farming, was the basis of the economy in the area. From a socio-economic point of view, it is possible to say that the people of the region generally lead a poor life. Agricultural opportunities, mainly tobacco production, were also limited and thus unemployment was one of the main problems faced by the community. For this reason, working in the Yeni Çeltek mine was seen as an important source of livelihood and there were many who wanted to work there, even though job security was negligible, and the salaries were relatively low. Mining appeared as an important economic activity that transformed the rural structure in terms of gender roles. Women were involved more in agriculture since male family members started to work in industrial areas mostly in the mines (Yeni Çeltek and Eski Çeltek). Whereas some families had had their own land, others were daily wage labourers.

Additionally, as in most rural areas in that period, state services were severely limited in the basin. The region has been deprived of the provision of basic services, the improvement of roads, parks, schools, and health care facilities, disposal of domestic waste, and environmental cleaning as well as maintenance of public safety.

2.2.2. Everyday Life

When we look at the ways in which miners and other male indigenous people socialise, coffeehouses, where they came together in daily life, come to the fore. Going to coffeehouses to gamble and make small talk or for supporting each other emotionally in the face of a problem, was a common social activity for them. Coffeehouses are a decisive part of the public sphere for men, which is still common in Turkey.

Visits to neighbours were common as another form of socialisation, particularly when men were at work, women would visit each other's homes or prepare food to share. To clarify a few things in the case of gender, women were expected to do all the domestic duties such as cooking and childcare, and their social life included limitations, for instance, meeting friends after dark or leaving the home was not condoned by the society.

Beyond being an economic activity, farming underpinned everyday familial and neighbourhood relationships. More specifically, people helping during the tobacco harvest was quite common throughout. Traditionally, people of the region lived in close-knit communities and relied on mutual aid, a general tendency in farming that might be described as an economic activity that "knew not money" (Polanyi, 2001: 54) at the micro-level as well as a leisure time occupation in that the facilities were provided in the interest of the community.

We can observe different reflections of mutual aid mostly in the forms of social interactions and symbolic rituals, which are collective practices. Particularly, participation in weddings and funerals was particularly important in terms of mutual aid. For example, bringing a gift, group dancing (especially *halay*), or sharing a meal is typically part of these rituals.

2.2.3. Specific Characteristics

One of the main characteristics of the basin is that, unlike rural areas in general at the time, the region experienced more intense proletarianization due to mining. The specific characteristics of such proletarianization affected economic and everyday life

in the region in different ways. Most miners resided in small towns and villages and were partly engaged in farming, which caused miners to develop a sense of identity as villagers-workers. Therefore, “villagers” here also mean the miners since they were workers-villagers, in other words, partly proletarianized peasants. Therefore, miners’ central role in the development of social opposition in the Yeni Çeltek basin did not remain in the background.

In addition, the mines (Eski Çeltek and Yeni Çeltek) were a unifying centre of the region. The working conditions of the miners allowed this since they were coming to the mine from the surrounding villages and towns by shuttles and returning to their places of residence after the work was over. The key role of the miners would remain intact because, first, the mine itself “promoted common ties to workers from other villages and thus broader bonds of community beyond the village” (Quataert and Duman, 2001: 154).

The second region-specific cultural-political characteristic is related to the region’s political structure, which more easily allows opposition elements to flourish and strengthen. The region was predominantly populated by local Alevis and Sunnis, with immigrants from neighbouring provinces and a small number of people of other ethnic origins, such as Armenians and Kurds. Although the region is heterogeneous, politically people were divided into two polarised camps (conservative right and social democrats). To give a clear picture of the diversity in the region, in the 1977 general elections, while the Justice Party (AP- conservative) received 37% of the votes, the Republican People’s Party (CHP- social democrat) received 45%. In the region, the Alevi and Sunni populations lived together; while the Alevi mostly voted for the social democratic party, the Sunni votes were largely divided between the nationalist and conservative parties. On the other hand, the political meaning of the voting behaviour we express statistically here in terms of the basin itself is questionable.

The following chapters will show how the basin-specific and general socio-economic characteristics described above affected the repertoires of social struggles in the basin. The information about the basin described during this part has been mostly obtained

through interviews and documentary data from archives since academic studies in the cultural and political structure of the Yeni Çeltek mine basin are very limited.

2.3. The Chronology of the Miners' Struggle and the Actors

Table 1: Chronology

August 1975	The recognition of the Yeraltı Maden İş Union
April 1976	The first strike
May 1976	The fist collective agreement- considerable improvements in material compensation and working conditions
May 1978	The second strike- the expanding authority of the workers in the workplace organisation
April 1980	The third strike and lockout Workplace closure and the miners' control over production
June-September 1980	Production shutdown and occupation of the mine
12th September 1980	Military Coup D'état and the end of the struggle

This study embraces a five-year period of labour movement that evolved as a self-management experience, from August 1975 to September 1980, during which two strikes and one strike in the form of the mine occupation emerged. Yeni Çeltek miners staged strikes three times in total between the years 1975 and 1980, which shows that they went on strike in each period of collective bargaining.

A social struggle emerged across the region after the first strike process. The local population began to get involved in the union struggle at Yeni Çeltek through demonstrations in support of the strikes and food aid was provided by the locals during strike periods. After the first successful strike (1976), which lasted 23 days, when no consensus could be reached in the 1978 collective bargaining negotiations, the workers

decided to stage a strike again, which lasted 26 days. After the strike, a successful collective agreement was signed. In the third collective bargaining negotiations held in January 1980, the workers went on strike again after a compromise could not be reached, but this time the employer decided to lock out the miners and announced that he would close the workplace. Ultimately, workers did not obey the decision to close, and the control of production remained with the miners. After about a month of self-production, due to de facto violence by the state and right-wing extremists (such as when the miners' shuttle bus was shot at on the way to work, the gendarmerie came to the mine and threatened the workers, increased violence in the neighbourhoods and villages where the workers lived, and so on), the workers stopped production and began a strike in the form of a workplace occupation. The occupation ended with the attack of the military on 12th September 1980. The union leadership and many of its members and many of the local people were arrested and subjected to physical torture by the military junta. The arrested miners were dismissed and not reinstated.

2.3.1. Yeraltı Maden İş

Yeraltı Maden İş was established by Çetin Uygur, on 20 July 1975. The union was active for about 5 years across the country until the military coup of 12 September 1980 when all union activities were prohibited.

The areas where the Yeraltı Maden İş union organised is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 2: Mining workplaces where Yeraltı Maden-İş was organised and collected by collective bargaining agreement²⁵

Employer	Public/Private	Collective agreement	Province/ State
Yeni Çeltek A.Ş.	Public +Private	Yes	Suluova/Amasya
YKİ-ŞLİ	Public	Yes	Aşkale/Erzurum

²⁵ Bütün, 2015: 33

Table 2 (continued)

TKİ	Public	Yes	Saray/Tekirdağ
BİLFER Ltd.Şt.	Private	Yes	Hekimhan/Malatya
ÇİNKUR A.Ş.	Private	Yes	Belbaşı/Maraş
TDCİ	Public	Yes	Divriği/Sivas
KBİ A.Ş.	Public	Yes	Murgul/Artvin
Paşabahçe TAŞ	Private	Yes	İstanbul
Paşabahçe TAŞ	Private	Yes	Marmara Adası/Balıkesir
Yeni Çeltik A.Ş.	Private	Yes	Cizre/Şırnak
Özdemir Antimuan	Private	Yes	Turhal/Tokat
Ahmet Eren	Private	Yes	Tomarza/Kayseri
Sümerbank	Public	No	Amasra/Zonguldak
Tekel Genel Md.	Public	No	Tuzla/İzmir
Muhtelif Şirketler	Private	No	Bigadiç/Balıkesir
Kömür İşletmeleri A.Ş.	Private	No	Ermenek/Konya
TKİ-OALİ	Public	No	Çayırhan/Ankara

The total number of members of the Yeraltı Maden İş union was over 12 thousand total by the year 1980 (Encyclopaedia of Turkish Trade Unionism 3, 1998; as cited in Göktaş, 2022: 39).

The principles of Yeraltı Maden İş were specified in their regulations as follows:

Aim of the Union:

a) To develop the working class and humanity economically, socially, and culturally in order to provide freedom and humane living conditions in line with democracy and human rights principles; to materialize social justice and social security; to strive to eliminate all forms of exploitation.

...

- e) ...believes in the necessity of and fights for gathering workers in powerful revolutionary trade unions where they will have a say in the solution of even daily problems.
- f) ...believes that mere economic struggle is not enough for workers to gain their basic rights and freedom and that political organisation and struggle are also essential (Yeraltı Maden İş Constitution, 1975). (Translated by the author.)

In this sense, although Yeraltı Maden İş structurally limited its role to the organisation of working life and the acquisition of legal rights, in practice, it assumed the task of contributing to the workers' struggle for socialist revolution in line with the ideology of the working class. The main emphasis in this direction was on the need for workers' councils to become functional. In a way, it would pave the way for workers to become the founding agents of their own unions:

In yellow unions...the union does not belong to the workers. A clique seizes the union and creates elements outside of the workers...that serve the interests of the clique and the bourgeoisie... This is the case in reformist unions too. As a revolutionary union, Yeraltı Maden İş, has a democratic-centrist organisation. The most important dimension of such an organisation is the councils. This is what makes workers' have a say and decision, not just empty words. Councils reinforce the organic relationship between branch heads and the workers at the bottom (Yeraltı Maden İş Education Notes, pp. 122-126). (Translated by the author.)

In this link, the founders of Yeraltı Maden İş believed that progressive trade unionism should have promoted not only economic-democratic rights (improving wages and working conditions) but also political and ideological struggle (workers rallying around a class identity by creating forms of self-organisation). Accordingly, for their emancipation, workers should have organised themselves into a revolutionary union that would allow them to prepare themselves through regular union meetings, training sessions, and the dissemination of educational materials about working-class ideology.

Yeraltı Maden İş did not regard itself as the supreme representative of the workers and drew the limits of trade unionism, as workers themselves would achieve their own emancipation:

The capitalists know their ideology well. The workers, on the other hand, must learn. The political struggle is for the power of the working class. The working class wages its political struggle... for its power... The trade union is not a political organisation. It will not take power. But the workers must know what their class politics should be and at the same time they must be orientated toward this struggle (Yeraltı Maden İş Annual Activity Report, 1975-1976). (Translated by the author.)

This approach recalls Perry Anderson's remarks on trade unions:

As institutions, trade unions do not challenge the existence of society based on a division of classes, they merely express it. Thus trade unions can never be viable vehicles of advantage towards socialism in themselves; by their nature they are tied to capitalism. They can bargain within the society but not transform it (Anderson, 1967: 264).

In this context, by separating itself from the dominant leftist trade union understanding of those times, the approach of Yeraltı Maden İş demonstrated resistance to entrenched bureaucratic power and contract unionism. Therefore, instead of limiting workers' management capacity, workers were encouraged to participate more and more in all aspects of labour processes and, moreover, to control them, which could be called self-management, taking off from concrete circumstances. Çetin Uygur describes it with the expression "to forward by life itself" when describing the unionism of Yeraltı Maden İş based on workers' councils/committees. For example, in my interview with him for this study, he used the following expressions:

I can say this comfortably; our union activity...always happened in contrast to classic textbook trade unionism. It is led forward by life itself. (Çetin Uygur) ²⁶

Yeraltı Maden İş differs from other forms of unionism of the period both in that it aimed to create a political resistance movement by aiming to spread the struggle in the

²⁶ "Şunu çok rahatlıkla söyleyebilirim; sendikal çalışma sendikal örgütlenme...o bilinen klasik, kitaplara da geçen herkesin de bilip söylediği sendikal çalışmanın dışında aykırı bir biçimde yürüdü hep. Yani yaşamın içinden çözümler üreterek gidiyor. Hayatın içinden çözümler üreterek gidiyor", Çetin Uygur, interviewed in İstanbul, 12 June 2013.

workplace to wider populations and in that it implemented the practice of workplace committees that paved the way for workers' self-management.

Yeraltı Maden İş distinguished itself from other forms of a trade union that served the 'interests of the bourgeoisie' by emphasising the need for workers to have a say and decision-making power through workers' councils. The structure of the majority of the leftist-oriented trade unions in that period was bureaucratic which caused them to be top-down as well as top-heavy. As a result, labour relations were compressed into formulaic "trade unionism", whereby state-run trade unions served as a component for articulating the interests of the ruling classes as well as of the state and the positioning of workers within it. As mentioned before, the structure accommodated both the state-affiliated Türk-İş as well as most of the leftist unions that were gathering under the roof of DİSK.

Nevertheless, to become a part of a progressive Confederation, immediately after its foundation, Yeraltı Maden İş applied for membership to DİSK. The application was repeatedly rejected by DİSK management who expected it to merge with DİSK affiliated trade union, Dev Maden-Sen (Revolutionary Miners Union). Conflicting relations continued after 1978, the year when the membership of Yeraltı Maden İş to DİSK was finally accepted. The ideological and practical differences stemming from the fact that DİSK was partly dominated by the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) as well as its close relations with the social democratic CHP were effective in this conflict because of Yeraltı Maden İş was involved in Devrimci Yol movement. The relationship between.

2.3.2. Devrimci Yol

Devrimci Yol was a revolutionary Marxist organisation, or a popular movement, that lasted from mid-1977 until 1980²⁷. Devrimci Yol (1977) -with its predecessor youth

²⁷ Today, there are several political organisations in Turkey that continue the political traditions and approaches of Devrimci Yol.

organisation Devrimci Gençlik (1975)- became the largest and most popular socialist organisation in Turkey in the second half of the 1970s. (Bora, 2017: 33) As it was a very large-scale movement, a comprehensive analysis of Devrimci Yol is beyond the scope of this study. However, here we will focus on those related to the mentality of mass organisation, which makes it unique.

A significant aspect of this peculiarity refers to Devrimci Yol's understanding of the rank-and-file organisation. As will be discussed in more detail in the analysis that follows, understanding of the mass organisation and its practical ramifications were mainly incorporated with the idea of the need for the self-organisation of the proletariat in the form of a revolutionary party. For such a grassroots organisation, it was acknowledged by Devrimci Yol that a cultural and political struggle that would be filtered through everyday life was also needed, in addition to economic one. To put it in Marxist terms, capitalist production (base), including production forces, or the materials and resources, has sweeping implications for the social structure (superstructure), including the culture and ideology necessary to shift to the capitalist mode of production, as well as the superstructure that legitimises the base.

While Devrimci Yol prioritised this two-dimensional struggle, this framing also included the question of the transformation or abolition of the State, the apparatus included in the "superstructure". As is well known, this is a multi-layered issue. As stated by Gramsci, "the state possesses 'educative' and 'ethical' functions which will remain, indeed expand, under socialism as the state in the narrow sense (as an instrument of coercion and class domination) withers away" (Gramsci, 2000: 430) Therefore, in response to this influence of the State, a form of a grassroots organisation that is strengthened through the concrete problems of everyday life is essential for the transformation of the cultural and political sphere.

In this context, Devrimci Yol reinterpreted and formulated Marxist praxis and adopted the specific conditions of Turkey. The formulation of Devrimci Yol, although there are points of divergence, shows similarities with examples of revolutionary struggle

in Latin America²⁸, such as Revolutionary Defence Committees in Cuba, Civil Defence Committees in Nicaragua, Sandinista Neighbourhood Committees, and so on, both in terms of the reference to the people's war and the anti-imperialist discourse. This can be observed concretely in the practice of Resistance Committees. Resistance Committees formed by Devrimci Yol were popular resistance units against the united violence of the state and right-wing extremists, with a very large mass of sympathizers mobilised in various neighbourhoods²⁹. While the committees embraced various social groups, it enabled the massification of the resistance movement and the people to practice self-governance (i.e., creating and participating in decision-making mechanisms by organising public meetings to create solutions together to the locally felt problems) and self-defence (i.e., arming against right-wing extremists and state forces).

On the other hand, Devrimci Yol was a proponent of neither the Communist Party of the Soviets nor The Chinese Communist Party, in spite in those times the vast majority of revolutionary organisations in Turkey defining their revolutionary ideas in terms of their perspectives on the political distinction between those socialist countries. However, Lenin and Mao were among the revolutionary leaders the Devrimci Yol's militants read and were influenced by. In fact, Devrimci Yol derives its theoretical foundation in Mahir Çayan's formulation, from which, this is expressed as the breakdown of 'artificial balance', which has similar aspects to Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' and Althusser's concept of 'ideological apparatuses'.

Another point to be underlined regarding the cadre/mass relationship is the underlying criticism of the Turkish left. In his study on Devrimci Yol's Resistance Committees, Bozkurt explains this in detail as follows:

²⁸ Specifically in terms of workers' and miners' self-management, the processes of workers' self-management that developed in some South American countries in the 1970s, such as Bolivia, Chile, Peru, etc., were closely followed by the movement, and were covered in the movement's journal, and occasionally criticised.

²⁹ The Resistance Committees first emerged in the Şentepe neighbourhood of Ankara. (Kara, 2012: 41)

One of Devrimci Yol's most important criticisms towards the past and present leftist currents in Turkey was their awkwardness in their relationships with the masses...it accused different segments of the Turkish Left of being 'intellectual priggish'... (Devrimci Yol, 1977g). According to Devrimci Yol, who focused on abstract debates over concepts and who did not consider the political practice served pacifist and sub-missionary notions about the anti-fascist struggle (Devrimci Yol, 1977g). It is worth noting that movement's strong anti-elitism dominated its discourse and practice as a whole and its emphasis on concreteness, practical conditions and action was evident in that regard. This characteristic had also implications with respect to Movement's assessment of 'the people' as well as the manners it preferred to reach the masses... Forasmuch as according to Devrimci Yol the revolutionary act should be based on 'the masses' (Bozkurt, 2008: 65).

And, as stated by Erdoğan:

An important point that sets Devrimci Yol apart from the traditional left and makes it appear like a 'social movement' is the social polarity that not only takes class conflict as its base, but also considers the original dynamics of social formation and the political conjuncture, and moves away from +narrow economism -as well as the understanding that an anti-fascist collective must be created to solve this polarity ... The Resistance Committees were formulated to canalize the anti-fascist defence and solidarity tendencies that were born among the public towards 'a revolutionary axis'... Resistance committees tend to define 'logic' not as a series of revolutionary events depending on their anti-hegemonic perspective, but as an organic process (Erdoğan, 1998: 26, 28, 29). (Translated by the author.)

Given this, as defined by Devrimci Yol itself, it is possible to refer to Devrimci Yol as a "Movement" since it articulates revolutionary struggle as praxis rather than ideology in the abstract. As mentioned by Erdoğan, a revolutionary movement needs to be grounded in the popular masses, which can be formulised as the narrowest cadre within the largest mass (Devrimci Gençlik Journal, 1976: 3) This approach has provided a kind of fluidity and reciprocity in the relationship with people. The article aimed specifically at its militants, titled "How should the public be treated?" in the first issue of Devrimci Yol journal dated May 1, 1977, is quite remarkable in this respect. As can be understood from expressions in that article, such as "don't think of yourselves as teachers", and "education is exchanging", Devrimci Yol has formulated an organising principle, in other words, "neither too far ahead of the people, nor too far behind". This

ensured both the breaking of hierarchical structures in the relationship and the integration with the masses with a reference to finding points of alignment with the moral and cultural values of the people. In this sense, militants should not disrespect the beliefs of the people, be attentive to certain issues that are viewed negatively by the people (such as drinking, and gambling), adapt to the dress code of the region (especially avoiding expensive and extravagant clothing as well as wearing make-up), use local language expressions instead of high Turkish when speaking, help with household chores during home visits (such as washing dishes or making the bed if staying in that house), and so on.

Another effective feature in this expansion is that it emphasises the contribution of different elements of the people (peasants, unemployed, women, students, etc.) or intellectuals (teachers, academics, artists, etc.) in addition to the leadership of the proletariat and uses the concept of “the people” as a subject in its discourse. As Erdoğan put it:

Devrimci Yol, rooted in Mao’s analysis of contradictions and in line with the distinction made by the Althusserian tradition between the mode of production and social formation, and between the fundamental contradiction and the dominant contradiction, defines the principal contradiction as the contradiction between the ‘people’ (the working class, the poor peasantry and all the oppressed) and the ‘oligarchy’ (the alliance of ruling classes, including the landlords and usurious moneylenders, dominated by the monopoly bourgeoisie) (Erdoğan, 1998: 26). (Translated by the author.)

Therefore, the discourse of Devrimci Yol is full of expressions such as ‘springing from life itself’, ‘life itself’, and ‘being one with life in all domains’ (Bora, 2017: 42). This feature, on the other hand, was interpreted and criticised as “populism” by various elements of the Turkish left. This discussion is beyond the scope of this study, but to make a general point, Devrimci Yol’s political discourse may be similar to discourses in populist repertoires, and the language of mass movements should be inclusive. However, this inclusiveness, contrary to what is claimed, does not mean that the movement was based on populism.

Moreover, the form of relationship with the people is not a matter of populist tactics or strategy, but a process of co-transformation with an ethical emphasis involving militants. The statements of Mehmet K k, who was in the professional cadre in the city of Amasya, including Yeni eltek, between 1977 and 1980, which I interviewed for this study, are remarkable in this sense:

We choose a modest life. When I say being like the people, we are not like the people intellectually. We live modestly like them, we prefer it. It comes from our hearts. We did not do this for populism, for the people to like us. I didn't do it so that they would like me and accept me. (Mehmet K k)³⁰

To summarise, Devrimci Yol has a highly unique place in the history of the left in Turkey in terms of the characteristics of the ways in which it established relations with the people or, in its own word, the “masses”. The originality here was to open the paths of resistance for the people to take the initiative to solve their own problems without being bound to abstract Marxist formulas, which makes Devrimci Yol one of the least bookish movements of the Turkish left (Yurtsever, 2008: 270). The second was to learn from the people without putting teaching the people at the centre, to listen to the concrete problems of the people, and try to explain socialism to the people starting from there. The best way to explain socialism to the people was not through fancy sentences, but through actions in which they were the subjects. In this sense, in their relations with the masses, Devrimci Yol militants avoided turning their religious values into an issue of conflict and tried to transform religion and therefore traditional values rather than confronting them.

Most of the time the cadre and the masses would integrate, and hierarchical boundaries would disappear. This strengthened the flexible, spontaneous, and reflexive aspects of the movement that allowed for the subjectification of elements of the people. This

³⁰ “Burada biz m tevazı bir hayatı seiyoruz. Halk gibi derken d şünsel olarak halk gibi olmuyoruz biz. Yaşayış olarak onlar gibi m tevazı yaşıyoruz, onu tercih ediyoruz. O bizim içimizden geliyor. Pop lizm olsun, halk bizi sevsin diye yapmadık biz bunu. Yani ben şahsen öyle yapmadım. Beni sevsinler, kabul etsinler diye yapmadım bunu”, Mehmet K k, video interview, 22 May 2022

approach also questioned understandings that reduce revolution to a matter of a change of power that can happen overnight and is based on practicing counter-hegemony as an alternative social model to the hegemony of the state and the ruling classes. In general, in the localities where the Committees had been able to do this, they have turned the issues of everyday life that have a political meaning at the micro-levels that have been covered up into issues of resistance, from the fight against the black market to intervening in problems within the family (especially the bad habits of young people and men, such as gambling and alcohol), to the construction of informal settlements - that is, publicising state lands in practice and building settlements collectively, to ensuring environmental cleanliness to clear the roads of mud and make them passable through collective work with the “No more mud!” campaign.

A unique example that has an important place in the history of social struggles in Turkey is the nine-month-long local government experience in Fatsa, which was ended by state violence in July 1980. This experience in Fatsa, which was implemented in line with the ideological and practical programme of Devrimci Yol, was another variant of the self-governance processes in the New Çeltek basin, where people’s committees took over instead of workers’ committees. When we observe the driving factors of the social struggle in Fatsa and the subsequent local governance experience, similar to the Yeni Çeltek basin (although conditions are more developed and relatively better in urbanised areas), we find widespread poverty, lack of infrastructure and municipal services, and marginalisation.

In the 1979 local elections, Fikri Sönmez, an independent candidate affiliated with Devrimci Yol, was elected mayor. Before these elections, popular resistance committees in the region had already been organised and been engaged in social struggles ranging from the black market and the problems of hazelnut producers to the inadequacy of municipal services. Fikri Sönmez was one of the most prominent figures in the developments in the region. As stated by Morgul:

Fikri Sönmez was a key link between the revolutionary youth movement on the one hand and the hazelnut producers, agricultural workers, and the urban poor on the other. He played a crucial role in the shaping of the revolutionary cadres’ decisions and actions in accordance with the desires and reactions of the common

people. This was what made him one of the most important actors in the history of the social struggles in Fatsa. (Morgül, 2007: 138).

After Fikri Sönmez took office, in regular public meetings the participation of the mayor, municipality employees, and neighbourhood representatives, the works carried out in the previous period were explained and their accounts were given (Bayrak, 2017: 117). The example of Fatsa local government is an important example that shows the processes of politicisation by activating around the concrete problems of the people. The political logic of Devrimci Yol of creating resistance spheres based on the concrete situation also emerges from the slum neighbourhoods of Istanbul to the factories of Adana. Considering that Devrimci Yol had around 40,000 followers (Samim, 1981: 60), it is an indisputable fact that these methods of establishing contact with the masses worked. For a better understanding, we will examine the relations with the local people in the Yeni Çeltek basin in Chapter IV.

2.4. Concluding Remarks

This chapter seeks to show the historical context and the local dynamics in which the social struggle will unfold as well as Devrimci Yol and Yeraltı Maden iş which were key political actors. As demonstrated during the chapter, both the cultural characteristics and everyday life experiences of the people of the region and more specific conditions has explained appear to be key to exploring the contexts for integrating them into the struggle.

In this sense, Yeraltı Maden İş and Devrimci Yol are presented on the basis of the characteristics that supported the development of the movements in the basin.

In the next chapter, the differences between labour processes before and after the movement in the Yeni Çeltek mine will be presented, and the patterns of resistance of workers in this context will be examined.

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT OF THE LABOUR STRUGGLE IN THE YENİ ÇELTEK MINE

This chapter examines the working conditions in the Yeni Çeltek mine prior to the authorisation of the Yeraltı Maden İş union in the workplace, how miners responded to these conditions and what kind of changes occurred in the behaviour and perceptions of miners with the unionisation activities. The experience of workers' councils will be discussed in this chapter within the framework of the problematic of becoming politicized and subjective agents.

In this context, it will be argued that the miners' labour movement is a result of political processes with reference to certain key concepts such as dignity, exploitation, and injustice as well as economic ones.

To explain the antecedents of the miners' collective action, the first section provides a portrait of workers' working conditions prior to the resistance processes. The second section will show the processes by which workers acted, the logic of self-management, and basin-wide solidarity, investigating the impact of solidarity-based initiatives on the struggle process. The final section analyses workers' councils, structures that are claimed to be crucial for workers to exercise self-management. The chapter concludes with a summary.

3.1. Internal Dynamics of the Miners' Struggle

There were about a thousand workers at the Yeni Çeltek mine, working three eight-hour shifts. Coal was mined underground at night, while during the day work was

carried out such as the transfer of the coal produced and repair work. The underground section was labour-intensive. The labour force was heterogeneous in several respects: migrants from the other provinces, Alevi locals and Sunni locals. Although it is possible to distinguish between skilled and unskilled workers, job descriptions were not entirely formalised. Salary levels were also poorly regulated; sometimes miners were paid as much as the coal they mined. Differences in qualifications between labourers were often based on experience, with the more experienced traditionally teaching the newer ones the work. Rather than leading to status distinctions between workers, the character of the work fostered co-operation, sharing and co-operation between workers was also a collective means of preventing occupational accidents.

The authorised union at the workplace was the Turkish Mine Workers' Union, which was affiliated with the Türk-İş Confederation. Mehmet Yılmaz (called Satışoğlu in the interviews) had been the head of the union, but at the same time, he had been the subcontractor who profited from the black market for coal. In other words, there was a union in Yeni Çeltek only existed on paper before Yeralatı Maden İş. As such, it was not the case that workers were involved in collective bargaining processes or that their opinions on workplace issues were considered.

Indeed, the situation the miners faced had arisen through the “naturalising” (Scott, 1990: 70) effect of the imposition of paternalistic power relations through this trade union. These maintained the labour control strategy, which enabled Satışoğlu to conduct the entire labour process on behalf of the workers who were therefore excluded from participating in the trade union mechanism, along with the strengthening of material and moral dependency of the miners frequently by referring to the family in his relationship with the workers.

Moreover, Yeni Çeltek miners were facing several problems concerning their working conditions, which were mainly low wages, job insecurity, and precarity. These problems extended to the recruitment mechanism, workload, and organisation of work.

Ultimately, two factors that hinder miners' opposition stand out: one is the open pressure and humiliation as well as occasional violence and threats. And the other is

building a consent mechanism by giving a moral image of family unity, giving some workers a share of the profits from the black market, or making them believe that they are unable to change the situation (which is the other side of the effect of humiliation).

If we start by analysing how the miners perceived this process, they were certainly aware that something was contrary to their material interests as well as psychological benefits but did not had the means to express themselves. And hence they felt powerless, silenced, and worthless. For example, when describing the period before Yeraltı Maden İş, Nevzat expresses it as follows:

We could not look after each other, we could not... It naturally makes you feel humiliated. They insult a friend that you hang out with, and you can't look after him. You can't stand up to them... It was like 'let the sleeping dogs lie' ... Because there was no unity amongst the workers. (Nevzat)³¹

Nevzat notes that he felt humiliated. And he stresses his inability to resist it, on the other hand, because that there was no strong unity among the workers. When asked during the interviews, other interviewees also explicitly attributed their inability to act collectively as the reason for their inability to raise their voices against such difficulties they experienced.

Although not against pressure from the managers, there had been cooperation and solidarity among miners, which were limited and depended on the initiative of individuals and functioned more as part of a survival mechanism, such as the reproduction of mutual aid by senior workers teaching newcomers safety precautions and the intricacies of the job or co-operation in risky situations. As more sector-specific, for example the first responders to accidents in the mine were naturally co-workers. This was a situation in which the collectivity and solidarity between workers were reproduced.

³¹ "Sahip çıkamıyorduk birbirimize, sahip çıkamıyorduk... Aşağılanmış hissediyorsun haliyle. Bir arkadaşına, oturup kalktığın bir arkadaşına hakaret ediyorlar, sen sahip çıkamıyorsun. 'Ne oluyor!' diyemiyorsun... Bana dokunmayan yılan bin yaşasın gibiydi... Çünkü işçiler arasında birlik yoktu", Nevzat, interviewed in Merzifon district, 31 July 2021.

On the other hand, this kind of solidarity might have been more easily articulated in terms of naturalising labour exploitation mechanisms and gaining consent as a part of the labour control mechanism. For example, workers might be expected to work with a sense of loyalty to the employer and to cooperate with each other in a form of solidarity to avoid disruption of work. In addition, as a form of exploitation, it is a common tactic of employers to increase the workload by keeping the number of workers low and to present this as “solidarity”. It is evident from the interviews that working conditions at Yeni Çeltek were also affected by such labour management relations.

Therefore, the function of solidarity before Yeraltı Maden İş was limited to a consent or survival mechanisms. It did not extend to the engagement of miners in collective resistance or in class solidarity, as such workers had never attempted to solve their problems collectively and thus solidaristic experiences remained limited to be a part of traditional social arrangements such as mutual aid. On the other hand, without glorifying the revolutionary potential of such social values, these traditional dynamics have a considerable impact on developing allegiance to class struggle or embracing of broader realisation of their status as a class, since class consciousness is formed at the grassroots. However, workers’ pre-existing tendency towards solidarity and collectivity would facilitate a ground for their struggle.

Back to the miners’ perceptions, the feeling of anger that develops a response to those experiences of humiliation frequently expressed by the interviewees. It was frequently stated by the interviewees, by connecting it with trajectories of injustice, that the working conditions and labour management relations had undermined the miners’ sense of dignity. The sense of dignity, like solidarity, is not the ground for class conflicts; rather, it is a subjective view that varies depending on the individual instance and the normative ideals of various periods. But in the case of Yeni Çeltek, the accumulation of anger that came with humiliation appears to have set the stage for subsequent collective outbursts developing around class consciousness.

For example, instead of explaining his anger arising from the experience of humiliation as a personal matter, Cemil recognizes humiliation and having to remain silent in the face of it as a form of exploitation:

Anyway, that's where the robbery, exploitation lies, it lies underneath it, that's where it starts...if he scolds you, for example, if you can't even say that because of fear...that's the biggest exploitation, that's robbery!... Our honour would be broken...We had no one behind us. Until the trade union! We didn't have any interlocutor to tell our problems to anyone, that is, to express that we were wronged. I mean there was no one. We used to work there like porters. We wanted to talk, but we couldn't. There were those who spoke, but they were very few, they were very weak. It would be puny. (Cemil)³²

Cemil expresses his discomfort that there was no mechanism to correct the injustices they experienced at the workplace and that more generally that was a form of exploitation. Referring to the concepts of injustice, exploitation, and dignity, Cemil points out that he had been excluded from the control mechanism over his own labour.

Moreover, the interviewees did not directly mention this, but as another form of muting workers' voices which meant inactivating them and not allowing them to speak directly, the exploiters might put a kind of moral responsibility made by persuasion on the workers. The context of this moral responsibility of unspeaking might span a wide spectrum, including respect that stems from the more powerful one or to guard against responding to evil with further evils. Thus, "discretion in the face of power requires that a part of the 'self' that would reply or strike back-must lie low" (Scott, 1990: 114).

The formal walls had been blurred between Satıřođlu and the workers, which can range from informal forms, such as swearing or physical violence, to using the labour of workers' wives for free to clean his own house, to forcing them to vote for the

³² "Zaten iřte zaten o soygun, smr dediđim iřte orada yatıyor zaten, onun altında yatıyor, orada bařlıyor zaten iř...sana mesela azarlıyorsa; onu diyemiyorsan dahi korkudan...iřte en byk smr budur yani, soygun budur yani!... Onurumuz kırılırdı...Bizim arkamızda kimse yoktu. Sendika genele kadar! Kimseye byle hani derdimizi anlatacak, yani haksızlıđa uđradıđımızı ifade edebilecek bir karřımızda bir muhatap yoktu ki. Yoktu yani. Giderdik affedersin yani Őey gibi alıřırdık orada hamal gibi. Konuřmak istedik ama konuřamazdık ki ya. Konuřanlarımız vardı ama ok azdı byle cılız kalırdı yani. Cılız kalırdı", Cemil, interviewed in Kayadz village, 1 December 2021.

political party of his choice, and so on. During the interviews, miners complained about the disorganisation of work and informal processes resulting from the lack of a mechanism to voice their grievances, and that being silenced caused them a deep sense of loss of honour. This situation apparently shows that the sense of dignity in a moral framework is quite important for them. This is because the interviewees perceive “silence against injustice” against themselves or their friends as generalised unethical/immoral behaviour. However, for certain workers, previous personal experiences of resistance transferred to later collective resistance. For example, Erdem explains that during all the periods he had worked, he had always been in favour of speaking out against injustice:

Then you lose your character. A human being must have something...nobody can live without honour, that's what I think. Let me say this much. I did not want to live by bowing to others - neither then nor now. Once I pick up my axe, I don't care about engineers, managers, or other authority. My problem is with injustice. I don't violate anyone else's rights, and I don't let others do that to me. My late father used to say, 'my son, lose everything but not your honour'. (Crying) I haven't lost my honour. (Erdem)³³

Just like Erdem's, amongst all interviewees' overwhelming sentiment was moral indignation against injustice or, as certain miners call it, exploitation. From the miners' perspective, injustice frames generally encompass both economic exploitation and the emotional and moral sides of repression.

As a last point is that the focus of workers' anger is the union and its president rather than the employer. More specifically, when talking about the previous trade union and its president, the miners referred to their sense of betrayal in a few categories such as

³³ “Ya şimdi ona şey yaptın mı kişiliksiz oluyon yani. Bir inanın bir ne bileyim yani bir kendini şey yapacak bir şeyi olmalı yani...yani onursuz yaşanmaz, ben onu diyom. Ben bunu diyim yani. İnsan başkasına eğilerek, onun eteğinde- öyle yaşamaktansa ben öyle yaşamayı istemiyordum yani yavrum o dönemlerde de şimdi de. Bu elime kazma sapını çektim mi ben ne işletme müdürü tanırım, ne mühendis tanırım, ne görevli tanırım ne bir şey. Benim şeyim haksızlığa. Kimsenin hakkına şey yapmam, benim de hakkımı o konuda yedirmem. Rahmetli babam ‘oğlum’ derdi ‘her şeyini kaybet onurunu kaybetme’ derdi. (Ağlıyor) Ben onurumu kaybetmedim”, Erdem, interviewed in Kayadüzü village, 2 December 2021.

invalidity of decision-making procedures, cosy relations between the former trade union and the employer, lack of accountability, informal relations and so on. Therefore, the corrupt forms of a trade union structure that is intended to defend the rights of workers apparently constituted perceptual and concrete obstacles to uniting under a roof of workers, by denying them trust, which is one of the most important elements to acting collectively.

3.2. Construction of the Struggle and the Awakening of Political Consciousness

3.2.1. Begin to Build the Struggle: From Ideology to Practice

The arrival of the Yeraltı Maden İş Union to the region was in 1975. Deciding to establish another union in Yeni Çeltek because of a personal conflict with Türk-İş management, Satıřođlu initiated the arrival of Çetin Uygur, whom he met in Ankara where trade union headquarters are still usually located. By anticipating Çetin Uygur to act appropriately under the influence of Satıřođlu, the notary, as such, was taken to the workplace and the miners were made to resign from the Türkiye Maden İş Union with the knowledge of Satıřođlu and became a member of the Yeraltı Maden İş Union with his encouragement. As it is clear from this, the workers had not reacted spontaneously to struggling for unionisation.

Çetin Uygur, on the other hand, defying Satıřođlu's expectations, set out to launch a fully-fledged class struggle in Yeni Çeltek. He was a mining engineer unionist who had been involved in the class struggle since his student years and identified himself as a socialist.

Workers were initially hesitant to trust Yeraltı Maden İş and Çetin Uygur because, after all, this new union had been introduced by Satıřođlu. However, when Çetin Uygur, the head of Yeraltı Maden İş, met with the miners, it was immediately clear that he would not act under the domination of Satıřođlu. Osman, who would later become the branch president of the union, recounts this first encounter as follows:

Okay, but who is Çetin Uygur, who is Yeraltı Maden İş? How do we know that he will not be a continuation of Satıřođlu? When Çetin Uygur was talking to

Satışoğlu, he said ‘from now on you will not be able to act as you want’ in front of all the workers. Then we said, ‘Alright!’. (Osman)³⁴

And from then on, they began to see Çetin Uygur as the one who broke the reign of Satışoğlu:

Cetin Uygur is here... This man is overthrowing Satışoğlu’s reign. (Erdem)³⁵

However, Çetin Uygur’s claims about creating a different workplace organisation from the old one did not seem realistic to the workers:

At the first meeting, I remember this: When Çetin Uygur and his friends came, he said: ‘Guys, this workplace is our meal ticket. We will create workplace discipline. We will establish committees in the workplace. We will listen to all the underground and aboveground workers of the workplace one by one. Here, we will both produce and manage. And we’ll be the first in Turkey.’ When he said these, the workers thought to themselves ‘could this really be?’ -and everyone was asking each other weird questions: ‘where did this man come from? How did it happen? Look what this guy is saying!’ (In the Yeni Çeltek Documentary)

The union started to organise first-hand workers’ meetings. Through questionnaires and discussions, information was obtained about the profile of the workers and their views and demands on working conditions. Accordingly, a draft collective agreement was prepared by union lawyers. This draft was again opened for discussion at the meetings. After the draft was accepted by voting, collective bargaining negotiations with the employer began. The booklet “A Revolutionary Perspective on Collective Bargaining” (1979) by Yeraltı Maden İş represents the unions’ vision on the matter of collective agreement:

In many unions...the draft is prepared by a few people and the workers don’t even know what is going on... We, as a revolutionary union, have to see collective

³⁴ “Tamam da Çetin Uygur kim, Yeraltı Maden İş kim? Satışoğlu’nun devamı olmayacağı ne malum? Çetin Uygur, Satışoğlu ile konuşurken dedi ki ‘bundan sonra istediğin gibi hareket edemeyeceksin’ dedi, bütün işçilerin önünde. O zaman biz dedik ki ‘Tamam!’”, Osman, interviewed in Suluva district, 17 March 2013.

³⁵ “Çetin Uygur gelmiş... Satışoğlu’nun saltanatını yıkıyor.”

bargaining as a means and a platform for transferring consciousness to the workers... Our demands, which first started with questionnaires and then turned into a draft...should be examined and explained together in a meeting attended by all the workers, and submitted to the employer after approval by the workers... Workers have a say and decision in Yeraltı Maden İş... They make and defend their decisions jointly in their unions. They constantly monitor their union (A Revolutionary Perspective on Collective Bargaining, 1979). (Translated by the author.)

However, the employer rejected the demands each time. When a compromise could not be reached, the workers voted for a strike decision, and thus, after the strike decision, the process ended with the victory of the workers. Ultimately, the miners experienced concrete gains that were realised through collective action. From autumn to summer of 1976, the first time the draft collective agreement was discussed and approved by the workers, the collective agreement negotiations and the strike took place over a period of about nine months. During this period, there are two of factors that enable transformations in workers' consciousness as well as the collective agency of their movement.

Firstly, the ideological educational materials and the seminars and meetings where the issues contained therein were discussed had an impact on the miners' perception of class, providing an intellectual basis for their struggle. In this sense, the educational materials published, and seminars given by the union are noteworthy as one of the sources of workers' ideological transformation. When we look at the training booklets of Yeraltı Maden İş, we come across various topics in the context of the workers' struggle against the ruling classes and the state. Frequent examples from the workers' own conditions are given and the topics are explained in this manner. In addition, the union organised seminars for workers from time to time to discuss the topics covered in the booklets. The contribution of the seminars, which take the form of the transfer of intellectual as well as practical knowledge, to the development of class consciousness in Aydın is clear:

They started offering us union seminars. We sat in, and the instructor came and talked about primitive communal society. Until then I didn't know what primitive communal society was, what imperialism was, what communism was, this and

that - I didn't know any of that. I didn't know what capitalism was. But we realised that there is a big difference between the worker and the employer... I mean, there is a big difference between the worker and the boss. (Aydın)³⁶

Aydın explains that he realised that there was a big difference between himself and “bosses”. Another important example of this is that certain miners stated that they had not fully grasped their class position before, that they knew nothing about how to conduct collective struggle and therefore could not speak out, and that they were “enlightened” with Yeraltı Maden İş. It is important to note that the metaphor of enlightenment here does not imply “the stripping away of all illusions so that the proletariat can see the world ‘with sober eyes’” (Sirianni, 1982: 250), but rather that the miners’ sense their self-realisation as enlightenment. This focus on self-realisation is rooted not only in the projections of the abstract intellectual debates and ideological training at the level of consciousness but also in their actual experience, which can contain contradictions and conflicts. This leads us to the second point.

If one pillar of the struggle was ideological education and discussions, the second pillar was to develop structures that would provide experience in applying these abstract discussions in practice. These structures are none other than the organisation of workers’ councils and committees. The workers council was an autonomous body of 66 workers formed and chosen by the workers to represent them during dialogue with top management. In addition, every 20 workers came together to form workers’ committees. As a result, a workers’ council was solely made up of employees and members of it were allowed to argue whatever they chose without influence from management. They took an active role in voicing and resolving workplace problems and participated in discussions about general union policy and principles. Also, there was an Assembly of Representatives, that was solely responsible for carrying out the

³⁶ “Bize sendikal seminer vermeye başladılar. Seminerlere oturduk, hoca geldi ilkel komünel toplumdaki bahsetti. Ben o zamana kadar ilkel komünel toplum nedir, ee efendim emperyalizm nedir, komünizm nedir, şunlar bunlar- onların hiçbirini bilmiyordum. Kapitalizm nedir bilmiyordum. Haa anladık ki işçiyle işveren arasında çok büyük fark var... Yani işçiyle, emekçiyle patron arasında çok büyük fark var”, Aydın, interviewed in Kayadüzü village, 31 July 2021.

strikes, made up of the spokespersons of these workers' councils. (Item: 24a, Yeraltı Maden İş Constitution) On the other hand, there was an Assembly of Workplace Chief Representatives elected by the union representatives. Every four months, the General Board of Directors, Representatives of Workers' Councils, and the Council of Chief Workplace Representatives held meetings together. (Item: 25, Yeraltı Maden İş Constitution)

Fundamentally, the workers' council was responsible for the ongoings of working-class members formed to implement the miners' control on labour processes. Miners in a workers' council might be thought to be within effective governance of the workplace, rather than only bargaining with employers through collective agreements. Therefore, Workers' Councils were a type of bottom-up workplace democracy in which Yeni Çeltek coordinated labour process through elected representatives.

3.2.2. Miners' Demands and Gains Based on the Self-Management Formulation

The collective bargaining processes and strikes were two-dimensional, both to change the circumstances of the industry, and to win gains against the capitalist classes, as part of the wider class. The content of the miners' demands was therefore political as well as economic because collective bargaining processes and strikes were a ground of experience based on anti-capitalist struggle. From the perspective of trade union management and the miners' leaders, the first of the two main reasons for this is that these are the processes in which the experience of self-management through workers' councils and workers' committees and the degree of solidarity is practically at its peak. During strike processes, both work - as already mentioned, work could not be completely stopped for safety reasons - and the entire organisation of strike activities in the workplace was undertaken by the miners' leaders. The second is that the ideological and political formations that come from this logic of self-management can be more quickly and deeply rooted in the perception of the miners in these processes because the demands and gains are formed within a specific political discourse, which is anti-capitalist. The importance of the organisation of councils in the workplace as precursors of the socialist order of tomorrow is due to the ability of councils to erode

the workings of this capitalism today (the process) and at the same time prepare workers for the revolutionary situation (the moment). As such, underlying the persistence of workers' participation in management is also the commitment to establishing a space of discourse, and practice against the ideological hegemony that labour control mechanism implemented by political centres, i.e., the state and ruling classes, seeks to impose on workers.³⁷

³⁷ For example, in the late 1970s the government was to claim that it was taking steps to encourage workers to participate in workplace management. It was seeking to contain and control the demands and acts of resistance rising from the labour front, in other words, regulate and absorb class struggle at the at shop floor level. In this sense, the "Social Agreement" signed on July 20, 1978, between Bülent Ecevit, the leader of the social democratic party (CHP) and prime minister of the time, and the Türk-İş confederation is an important example. In this agreement, described by the government as improving social dialogue, the issues for cooperation are summarized in six articles, two of which are about workers' participation in workplace management. While the fourth article specifies the need for workers to participate in labour processes, the fifth article, which immediately follows, sets the limits of this participation in favour of the employer:

4- ... a participation model that envisages their participation in production, investment and management decisions will be prepared...

5- ... clauses that hinder the effectiveness of the manager in management shall not be included in collective agreements... (The clauses mentioned in this section are not financial clauses, but clauses relating specifically to labour utilization and employment) ... Keeping this rule in mind, joint efforts will be made to organise and ensure workers' participation in management and responsibility in a way that will accelerate the increase in productivity and profit and add a new dimension to our democracy. (Social Agreement, 20 July 1978)

Since the issue of workers' self-management is undeniably intrinsic to the philosophy of socialism, the state's initiative on this issue can be read as a step towards changing the socialist content of the concept of "workers' self-management" and keeping it within narrow limits. As noted parenthetically above, what was at stake for the state, beyond the material interests of workers, was the restriction of practices that strengthen workers' self-management, expressed in terms of labour utilization and employment, to the detriment of employers. Analysing the relations between state politics and production politics is beyond the scope of this study, however at least it can be said that as to the function of this agreement itself, it clearly shows the desire of the state to prioritise profit from production, to regulate labour relations, and ultimately absorb labour militancy.

Various employer organisations reacted differently to the agreement. For example, while MESS (the Union of Metal Goods Industrialists) viewed the agreement positively, the Turkish Confederation of Employers' Unions (TISK) strongly opposed the agreement. In addition, the opposition right-wing parties argued that "the country was being dragged into communism" and opposed the agreement. DISK (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions) did not participate in the agreement. It is therefore possible to speak of an ongoing state of conflict within the state itself, a crisis of hegemony. (Benli, 2015: 180)

Evidently, there is a genuine ideological contrast, both at the level of discourse and practice, between the motto "we are the ones who produce we will also be the one who governs!" chanted by the members of the Yeraltı Maden İş Union and the state's resistance to the involvement of workers in the control mechanism at the workplace. The vision of Yeraltı Maden İş was from the start, fundamentally, in

In this context, the achievements of the miners are as follows:

Economic and social rights: In addition to wage increases, workers also gained social rights such as annual coal and firewood entitlements; clothing and holiday allowance; assistance in case of death, birth, and marriage. Seniority increases, incentive bonuses and bonuses were opposed on the grounds that they undermined solidarity among workers. Although seniority increases are encouraged by employers, they are not among the demands of workers because they are thought to cause old-new worker segregation among miners. Since solidarity among the workers and collective control of the workplace was the primary issue, it can be said that all demands were shaped in this direction. Incentive bonuses were also opposed for the same reason. Incentive bonuses could be given when a certain level of production was exceeded, meaning that workers' work was accelerated and intensified. However, some of the workers might have not wanted to work hard enough or been weak. In this case, the workers could have blamed each other since the level of production required for the bonus would not be reached. It would also mean that miners would become bosses over each other, controlling each other's labour for the benefit of the employer, and this was therefore unacceptable. Other bonus schemes were opposed on the grounds that they might encourage competitive impulses among workers. It was also thought that such bonuses could be an obstacle to actions such as work slowdowns.

Occupational health and safety: Firstly, it should be noted that mining-related fatalities were considered quite normal by employers and the state³⁸, whereas those are naturally one of the most sensitive issues for Yeni Çeltek miners. Interviewees frequently mentioned that they worked in the face of death. The issue of occupational safety was indeed an important driving factor in the struggle for unionization. Miners

conflict with both the social democrats' practices of persuasion, which amounted to experiments in bourgeois democracy, and the right-wing's more traditional practices (paternalism) and coercive methods (despotism) of direct repression of labour.

³⁸ This approach continues today. For example, after 301 coal miners lost their lives in the workplace massacre in Soma on May 13, 2014, the prime minister of the time declared that "This is the fate of this work".

secured the necessary measures for workplace safety and worker health (such as regular inspections of the workplace and the presence of a medical doctor in the workplace) through collective agreements. They also achieved a reduction in the pace of work and the refusal to accept overtime in advance, in the interest of workers' health. In addition to worker health, overtime was restricted on the grounds that it led to competitive and individualistic tendencies among workers (because at the end of the month workers compared their salaries). Performance-related pay was abolished because unfixed wages caused work accidents as workers tried to work faster.

Another major issue of concern was the proper compensation of the families of workers who lost their lives due to a lack of workplace safety. In its training booklets, the union had emphasized that the life of miners cannot have a monetary price, and therefore the priority is to ensure occupational safety, as opposed to the employer mentality that regards workers as commodities to be paid for. It is still a common strategy for employers to pay families to convince them not to file lawsuits against the companies. Today, for example, a part of the families of miners who lost their lives in Soma due to a major lack of occupational safety have been persuaded in the same way to intervene in the lawsuit process in favour of the employer.

Job security: Another important issue was to prevent workers from being easily fired if they disagreed with the manager on any issue or made any mistake about work. Miners were also very uncomfortable with workers being forced to do work outside their own jobs or suddenly changing departments. They demanded clear job descriptions when they were hired. The fact that miners had a say in hiring and firing was the result of a structural transformation guaranteed by collective bargaining. In this structure, there are two pillars responsible for workplace organization: the workplace committee and the central committee. The workplace committee was a body composed of 3 workers and 3 employer representatives, and since no member had a voting advantage, workers and employers had equal power. The central committee was a higher body formed in the same way and took charge of problems that the workplace committee could not solve.

In the case of dismissals and disciplinary penalties, workers had equal power to make decisions or to change them. In practice, it is possible to say that the effectiveness of the workers who were members of the workplace committee was considerable, as it was also backed by pressure from the grassroots.

In disciplinary matters, employers had the right to dismiss workers without notice and without compensation if they caused damage that could not be paid for with 10 days' wages. There was no clear counter to this in the collective agreement because it was already specified in the labour law. Thus, the organisation of workplace discipline emerged as an important area where solidarity among the workers came to a head. Since they could not change anything legally, they sought to create practical methods of solidarity in the workplace. They made up for mistakes together, they didn't tell managers about mistakes, they didn't use their structural power to get their colleagues fired when mistakes were exposed, and they kept sharing information on how to do the work at the highest level to reduce mistakes, and so on. This was effective in developing a new form of solidarity based on class culture because against the employer's idea of discipline as the unconditional submission of the workers and they are being seen as the only ones responsible for mistakes, the workers discovered that discipline was not necessarily a matter of oppression and submission, but a matter of organising, and transformed its content through solidarity.

As can be seen, the workers' gains and demands developed in parallel with the aim of strengthening the practice of self-management in the workplace. Thus, the political power of the workers was not ephemeral, but woven into permanent structures and practices. Workers' narratives show that such self-governance practices grounded both their positional power and their ideological proclivities.

3.3. Workers Councils as Self-Management Practices

3.3.1. Transformation of Solidarity

It is necessary to understand what motivates miners, and their perceptions, but more important is how they react. The experience of the works councils provides us with an opening to demonstrate this. The council experience in Yeni Çeltek might firstly be evaluated as a body that allows the dynamics shaped by the solidaristic practices that drive workers to struggle to be transformed in their meanings with political motivation.

I have already mentioned the existence of mutual aid as a form of solidarity and a tendency towards collectivity, both in the case of miners and in the region. Those appear significant for taking cultural traditions that the movement built upon into account so that we can see how they paved the way for broader political and social transformations. In this respect, it can be said that friendship among co-workers was one of the significant dynamics in the organisation of the workplace, and hence the miners were involved increasingly in solidaristic experiences via these networks. Also, the solidarity-promoting behaviours and words of the leader workers appear to have had a notable impact on the spread of solidarity practices in the workplace. The leaders utilised their prestige among their co-workers to solve problems through persuasion, for example in a case in which labour rules were violated or an accident happened.

The workers attempted to solve any problem related to the organisation of work with solidarity, in a way that protected the collective structure against the employer representatives. Such solidaristic practices were not limited to workplace issues and the organisation of work but extended to resolving certain situations that may lead to dismissal from work.

Let me give you an example; let's take the pumper...he burns a water motor. They bring another one, that also gets burned. The other pumper misses his shift, so the first one works his shift as well. They blame this guy, they will fine him...for burning the motors. The president of the union Osman Fahri Şanlı said, 'ok, how long should one man work under the ground?', 8 hours. 'After 8 hours, this man worked for another 2 shifts, what can he do?'... Or if there was a voltage problem and the motor burned, is this his fault? No. Then the employer says 'correct, this

man is not guilty'... We defended that man... Among workers, there was something powerful, there was solidarity. (Aydın)³⁹

In that sense, horizontal modification based on solidaristic practices of the division of labour is therefore an important step for the council movement. Committee organisation functioned to open the division of labour to de-hierarchical forms of production, considering the work potentialities and general wellbeing of the miners. This decreasing level of the hierarchy had also further paved the way for participatory democratic practices in the workplace. Overall, each of the micro-solidarity practices in fact helped to increase workers' control over the production process at the macro level.

Another example is the prioritisation of the poor in the region in recruitment as a form of solidarity with the poor. It is a well-known fact that due to the harsh working conditions in mining, stronger and more durable candidates are generally prioritised for recruitment. However, Osman explained that priority is not given to the strongest, but to those who need it the most:

When workers were to be hired... we wanted to recruit the unemployed from the villages in the region. We were looking for miners, which is very difficult to find. Why? They need to be both poor and have the strength to lift a 5-meter pole. The poor eat onions and bread. Now how is this man to lift a 5-meter pole? It is so difficult to find miners... And the employer also wants to choose. We send them 40 people, some of the poorest. So, whoever gets chosen is already our man. (Osman)⁴⁰

³⁹ “Şunu örnek vereyim ben sana; şimdi tulumbacı diyeyim...su motorunu yakmış. Bir su motoru daha gelmiş, o da yanmış. Öbür tulumbacı arkadaşı vardiyaya gelecek insan gelememiş. O tulumbacı onun vardiyasında da çalışmış. Bu adamı suçlayacaklar, bu adama ceza yazacaklar...Sen bu motorları yaktın diye. Sendika başkanımız Osman Fahri Şanlı dedi ki tamam, ‘insanın kaç saat çalışma hakkı var’ dedi ‘yeraltında?’, 8 saat. ‘8 saatten sonra 2 vardiya daha çalışmış, bu adam nasıl yapsın?’ dedi... Veyahut da elektrik az geldi de bu motoru yaktıysa bu insanın bir kabahati var mı? Yok. O zaman işveren diyor ki ‘doğru’ diyor, ‘bu adamın suçu yok’... O adamın hakkını savunduk... İşçi arkadaşlar içinde kuvvetli bir şey vardı dayanışma vardı.”

⁴⁰ “Sonra işçi alınacağı zaman... yöredeki köylerden işsizleri işe aldirmaya çalıştık. Bir de öyle bir maden işçisi arıyoruz ki çok zor bulmak. Neden? Hem fakir olacak hem de 5 metre direği kaldıracak güce sahip olacak. Fakir olan zaten soğan ekmeğ yiyor. Şimdi bu adam nasıl 5 metre direği

As Osman noted, potential employees had been determined by the council, before the employer could choose from among them. This had a reinforcing feature for the solidaristic and egalitarian aspects of the justice values of the local population and has been instrumental in increasing the prestige of the union in the region.

It is noteworthy that the workers councils were not limited to specific technical issues but produced general facts derived from solidarity codes. Thus, solidaristic orientations have become more normative and generalised, rather than merely based on common interests. Solidarity amongst workers, on the other hand, contributed to their political consciousness by increasing the sense of unity among the workers. Aydın gives the following example of solidarity practices among themselves:

We had a solidarity fund. Among the workers, based on need. Let's imagine Zeki's house burns down. He gets the priority. What would we give? One wage. 1000 Lira each from 900 workers, a total of 900,000 Lira. We could then rebuild Zeki's house in no time. These are of what we call very good decisions! (Aydın)⁴¹

Such practices, which Aydın expresses as “very good decisions”, are remarkable examples in terms of showing how the oppositional aspects of workers' solidarity cultures are transformed into concrete action. Workers frequently mentioned similar experiences throughout the interviews and several of them defined those as a kind of class solidarity.

A perception and practice of being “us” based on solidaristic actions referred to definite political processes. The solidarity practices mentioned here include both interactions among workers themselves and between workers and people of the basin. The strikes were not limited to those directly involved in the workplace which served to ensure that the solidarity of the miners had a potent instrumental character.

⁴¹ “Dayanışma sandığımız vardı bizim. Önce işçiler arasında. Atıyorum dayanışma sandığına işçileri sıraya koyalım. Atıyorum bu işçilerin içinde Zeki'nin evi yandı kardeşim ya. Birincilik onun işte. Kaç tane kesildi? 1 yevmiye. 900 insandan 100'er liradan 900 bin lira. Zeki'nin evini 5 dakikada yaptırduk. Bizim kararlarımız işte- çok iyi olan kararlarımız bunlar işte.”

During all three strike processes there was a crucial driver which was the continued support of the people in the surrounding area. The women and the youth of the region had a larger role to perform, such as providing meals for miners. While some of them baked bread and sent it, others donated one of their animals (sheep or lamb) to the miners:

Whenever there was any disturbance in Yeni Çeltek, our villagers used to go immediately. We have people working in all three shifts. We are there 24 hours a day... The mine is right inside our village and our lands... 1-2 kilometres away. We were immediately aware of the mine's location in our village. Think of 980 workers. So, for example, some people got together and bought a sheep. (Aydın)⁴²

The village Aydın mentioned (Kayadüzü) is the closest village to the mine and therefore the interaction is naturally high. However, the effects of the strikes had managed to reach the whole basin. Zeki explains the impact of the strikes and the miners' struggle in general on other villages with reference to the central position of the miners:

The region has come to such a situation that in a period of 6 months - not much - the whole region has become focused on the organisation of Yeraltı Maden İş. Because there are people from everywhere, from every village, every village, every district, every neighbourhood, and every hamlet in the Yeni Çeltek mine. The organisational work there extends to the villages. It expands like that immediately. In other words, it is like a fishing net here, you throw a ball, and when you throw the net, it expands, just like that fishing net. (Zeki)⁴³

In their places of residence, the miners talked about the strike, the union and the struggle in general and asked for solidarity from their families, relatives, friends and

⁴² "Yeni Çeltek'te herhangi bir rahatsızlık olduğu zaman bizim köyümüz hemen gidiyordu. 3 vardiyanın 3'ünde de çalışan insanlarımız var. 24 saat oradayız... Hemen bizim köyün bizim topraklarımızın içinde maden. Onun için yani. 1 km-2 km. Hemen her şeyden haberimiz oluyordu... Her gün bizim köyümüzden insan geliyordu. 980 tane işçi düşün yani. Herkesin ailesi bir tekne ekmeğinin gitse. 10 ekmek- işte adam atıyorum beslemiş, yan yana gelmiş gençler bir tosun almışlar..."

⁴³ "Çeltek'te mesela böyle bir şey olduğu zaman hemen 10 kişi 20 kişi oturur 1 kişinin ekmeğini yedik yani. Mesela grev olduğu zamanlarda bizim paramız yok. Biz para alamıyorduk mesela ama köylerden gelen yardımlarla orada yemekler pişirip yemekler yedik yani", Kemal, interviewed in Havza district, 31 July 2021.

neighbours. They were not paid during the periods of the strikes. They were supported by money from this solidarity fund and donations of food from the local community. Kemal described the solidarity during the strikes as follows:

In Çeltek, for example, when something happened, 10 or 20 of us would sit down and eat the bread of one person. For example, when there was a strike, we had no money. We couldn't get any money, but we used to cook and eat there with the help from the villages. (Kemal)⁴⁴

Women's (especially miner's wives, sisters, and daughters) participation in support groups during the struggle initially reshaped miners' appreciation of how gender could reconfigure understandings of solidarity. Most of the miners I spoke to were talking about the support of their wives during strikes, violent events, or the military coup that ended the struggle. This can be considered as the involvement of women in the labour struggle by taking part in the public sphere, rather than individual support. Atkin's explanation of the support of women during the miners' strike (1984-85) in Durham might be applied to the case of Yeni Çeltek as well:

The strike gave women their moment of glory within the community. Historically, their role was one of bearing, nurturing, the early education of children and of being a support system to their menfolk. With the start of the strike the role of the support system changed, they were now supporting the community as well as their families (Atkin, 2001: 249).

The emergence of wider support for striking workers is noteworthy. It could be argued that the miners' own families are key actors here, and kinship and friendship links are indeed important elements. However, this does not adequately answer the question of how the strikes came to be on the agenda of wider groups. In this respect, it is an important factor that increases the support of the people for the miners was the promise the miners to provide coal to the people:

⁴⁴ "Çeltek'te mesela bir şey olduğu zaman 10 kişi, 20 kişi otururduk, bir kişinin ekmeğini yerdik. Mesela grev olduğu zaman paramız yoktu. Para bulamıyorduk ama köylerden gelen yardımlarla orada pişirip yiyorduk."

We promised the people that they could buy coal without a queue. Because the people supported us... (Osman)⁴⁵

Unfortunately, due to the existence of the black market, local coal consumption had become a chronic problem in the region. Not surprisingly, during the strike, workers in the villages and towns where they lived announced that this strike was in the interest of the whole region. For example, they went to coffee houses and told the people there about the strike or made speeches in the village square. Thus, the workers also gained respect and leadership in the eyes of the local people. The locals, who would not easily take an outsider's word for it, seemed to heed the words of the miners from within their own community.

Ultimately, the miners had the advantage of being both ordinary residents and respected pioneers. Here, it is seen that the workers had become the trusted authority on the circulation and consumption of coal, which was a vital ingredient in the lives of the locals, by concretely providing an economic basis for a wider social struggle. The relations created by the right to speak in the circulation of coal was an expected outcome of mutual aid, but moreover, a step that challenges the existing order.

Such progressive breakthroughs were not limited to being involved in the management of coal distribution. Different examples, such as building schools, repairing mosques, and environmental cleaning, can be given in filling the vacuum created by the state in the region. Several functions of the state were taken over, including economic-social services and security, in other words, the union was a figure to fill the. The striking common aspect of such actions is that they were extra-ordinary and unusual; in other words, they were unlike the ordinary activities of daily life.

Aydın's narrative is quite remarkable in this respect:

We were trying to do what the state could not do. For example, Kayadüzü (Belvar)-then a town, not a municipality. There was no secondary school. Why

⁴⁵ "Biz halka söz vermişiz; artık sırasız kömür alabileceksiniz. Çünkü halk bizi desteklemiştir..."

not? 150 children were studying. Then we said, ‘build a school yourself’. (Aydın)⁴⁶

Another example is of workers sharing their collective bargaining rights to meet the heating needs of local schools:

Especially that solidarity we had, it was one of a kind. For example, I have the right to 600 kilos of wood and 4 tonnes of coal for free. We, as the executive board of the union, took this. The employer accepted it, and we accepted it... We filled the lorry and brought it to the corner of the school. (Aydın)⁴⁷

Besides, according to Fevzi, their struggle was supported by the population in the basin because they were ‘right’:

Because the union was right, everyone was defending it. The worker... was right in his fight. That’s why. (Fevzi)⁴⁸

To legitimise their struggle, workers appealed to a strong moral-ethical position, of which they themselves were a part. Beyond the material gains, therefore the processes in which the local people were directly affected as much as the miners led to recognise the rightness of the struggle. Ultimately, the process of struggle also strongly involves ethical-moral appeals, specifically in terms of the dynamics of solidarity and justice.

3.3.2. The Perception of Collective Power

From the perspective of union executives, workers’ councils were predecessors of much larger workers’ controls and even experiments of a socialist order at the micro level. In this vein, Çetin Uygur underlined a working class, which was organised

⁴⁶ “Devletin yapamadığını biz yapmaya çalışıyorduk. Örneğin Kayadüzü (Belvar)-o zaman kasaba, belediye değil. Ortaokul yok. Niye olmasın? 150 tane çocuk okuyor. O zaman dedik kendi okulunu kendin yap.”

⁴⁷ “Hele şu dayanışmamız vardı ya, bir taneydi ya. Mesela benim yıllık bedava 600 kilo odun hakkım var, 4 ton da kömür hakkım var. Bunu sendikanın yönetim kurulu olarak biz almışız. İşveren de kabul etmiş, biz de kabul etmişiz... Kamyonu doldurduk getirdik okulun köşesine.”

⁴⁸ “Haklı diye, sendikaya haklı diye, herkes savunuyordu. İşçi...davasında haklıydı. Onun için”, Fevzi, interviewed in Gümüşhacıköy district, 2 December 2021.

around class consciousness and would have the power to decide through the workers' councils. Çetin Uygur described this structure in a newspaper interview as follows:

(Workers) can gain social rights..., health and safety..., organise their working environment. Even if it does not bring the emancipation of the worker, it is necessary to move forward...to fight on better ground. Democratic centrism is favoured in organisational structure recently. We agree with it. Only in this way it is possible for the worker to have a voice and a say. But how will this happen? Although many unions seem to adopt this principle, they don't use it. Since we know this, we chose to establish internal bodies to make the voice and will of the workers at the bottom heard, to give them a real voice and make the organisation operative. These are the Workers' Councils, and we are the first to implement them (Cumhuriyet, 1 June 1976, p.4). (Translated by the author.)

Çetin Uygur did not consider the economic and social rights gained through trade union struggle sufficient for, as stated above, "workers' emancipation". In this context, the council organisation was considered as a basis for the development of both collective efficacy and self-realisation.

The workers, on the other hand, naturally viewed the union as the source of structural power since it was Yერთı Maden İş that rescued them from their predicament. They frequently stressed that the trade union had always been a powerful leverage. Moreover, they were satisfied with the feeling of being taken into account:

The union always...looked after us. They hold us in high esteem. (Fevzi)⁴⁹

The union was a powerful leverage, but most of interviewees think that this power was based on themselves. Certain workers also clearly expressed that they felt that they were the cornerstone of the union:

The workers already support the union. If the worker is not after the union, the union cannot survive... Now of course the union will ask the workers. For example, the employer is raising wages by this much, will you accept this, let's go on strike, are you ready, can you stand it? Of course, there were negotiation

⁴⁹ "Sendika her zaman...sahip çıktı. Adam yerine koydu."

meetings. We assured the union that we could get these rights, that we could get better conditions. (Refik)⁵⁰

In this regard, practices of joint decision-making and discussion through meetings organised through workers' committees had been experienced in the pre-collective bargaining processes. In this process, workers discussed the articles of the collective agreement and decided on them by voting. Yeraltı Maden İş represents the union's vision on the matter of collective agreement:

In many unions...the draft is prepared by a few people and the workers do not even know what is going on... We, as revolutionary unions, must see collective bargaining as a means and a platform for raising consciousness among the workers... Our demands, which first started with questionnaires and then turned into a draft...should be examined and explained together in a meeting attended by all the workers and submitted to the employer after approval by the workers... Workers have a say and decision in Yeraltı Maden İş. They make and defend their decisions jointly in their unions. They constantly monitor their organisation (A Revolutionary Perspective on Collective Bargaining, 1979). (Translated by the author.).

Another important practice was the participation of council spokespersons in collective bargaining negotiations. It was a solid experience that made the workers believe their collective power. The involvement of such a large group of self-elected representatives (66 miners) in collective bargaining was a very solid foundation for workplace democracy as well. Also, being involved in decision-making and bargaining for their material interests was a way of being involved in the mechanism of discourse.

The narratives of the representatives who participated in the collective bargaining negotiations demonstrate that workers did indeed take the initiative during the

⁵⁰ “İşçi zaten sendikanın peşinde. Sendikanın peşinde olmasa o sendika orada zaten duramaz. Sendika tabii ki işçiye soruyordu. İşte örneğin maaşlarda şu kadar zam veriyor işveren. Buna razı olur musunuz, greve gidelim, hazır olabilir misiniz, dayanabilir misiniz? Tabii ki görüşme toplantıları yapıyordu. O hakları alabiliriz güvencemiz vardı sendikaya”, Refik, interviewed in Kuyucak village, 26 November 2021.

negotiations, discovering and practicing their own methods of fight against the employer:

We went, the employer went in, came back out: ‘I will only meet with the representative’. I said, ‘We are all workers’ representatives. Bring as many representatives of the employer as you have. We won’t be disturbed. They didn’t meet for 3 days and 5 days. We said, ‘You know what you want.’ After 10 days, they had to meet with 66 people. Not behind closed doors. How can I decide our future for 2 years on my own? This is the way it is because everyone is aware of everything in matters concerning the workers... This is the part that is not usual and that they cannot break the organisation of Yeraltı Maden İş. This is the mechanism. (Osman)⁵¹

I was present in all of them during the collective bargaining negotiations... 25 cents per hour night raise... the employer representatives said, ‘Well, we can’t accept this.’ When they said, ‘We can’t accept it,’ the employer representative, the legal advisor, how grabbed this man and dangled him out of the window. Do you know what they said?... ‘OK,’ they said, ‘hold on, we are signing the contract’. The contract was signed that day. So, we signed such a contract there. We came. It was a good contract. (Zeki)⁵²

During the negotiations, having a say on working conditions, which no one could perceive as better than themselves, strengthened the miners’ sense of dignity because they were able to defend their position against the boss. For example, Osman described how it was a source of pride for many workers to have workers representatives participating in collective bargaining negotiations:

In the past, you used to go to collective bargaining negotiations with 2 workers, but we took the whole council - 66 people. Because the spokesperson of the

⁵¹ “Biz gittik, işveren içeri girdi, geri çıktı: “ben temsilci ile görüşürüm sadece” dedi. Ben de dedim ki “biz hepimiz işçi temsilcisiyiz. Siz de kaç kişi işveren temsilcisi varsa getirin. Biz rahatsız olmayız.” 3 gün 5 gün görüşmediler. “siz bilirsiniz” dedik. 10 gün sonra 66 kişi ile görüşmek zorunda kaldılar. Kapalı kapılar arkasında değil yani. Ben 2 yıllık geleceğimize tek başıma nasıl karar vereyim?... İşçilerle ilgili olan konularda, herkes her şeyden haberdar olduğu için bu şekilde... Zaten alışıldık olmayan ve Yeraltı Maden-İş örgütlülüğünü kıramadıkları taraf zaten bu. Mekanizma bu.”

⁵² “Toplu sözleşme görüşmelerinde hepsinde ben de vardım... Saat başı 25 kuruş gece zammı... işveren temsilcileri, ‘E bunu biz kabul edemeyiz’. ‘Kabul edemeyiz’ deyince, işveren temsilcisi vardı hukuk müşaviri, biz bu adamı nasıl tuttuk pencereden aşağı sallandırdık. Ne dediler biliyon mu?... ‘Tamam’ dediler ‘durun, sözleşmeyi imzalıyoruz’. O gün sözleşme imzalandı. Yani böyle de bir sözleşme imzaladık biz orada. Geldik. Güzel bir sözleşme oldu”, Zeki, interviewed in Suluova, 8 July 2021.

council would come and communicate to his friends of 20 workers. Since their representatives attended the negotiations, it was a source of pride, of course, they say ‘my representative is there!’ (Osman)⁵³

As can be understood from the statements of Osman and Zeki, workers’ participation in decision-making is not only crucial but also in terms of strengthening the sense of collective power. The participation of workers’ representatives in collective bargaining negotiations, which had never been possible before, was true of confidence in the collective power.

In describing the experience of the Soviet workers’ committees, Sirianni points out such as the involvement of workers in decision-making mechanisms and self-improvement as underlying dynamics. We can adapt Sirianni’s words to Yeni Çeltek:

Although the protection of their jobs and standard of living was the primary motivation for workers control, an underlying passion for dignity, self-improvement, and general democratization was unmistakable. After years of extreme managerial abuse, social exclusion, and political repression, this is hardly surprising (Sirianni, 1982: 33).

In this context, a slogan identified with the council movement in Yeni Çeltek, “We are the ones who produce, we will be the ones who govern!” was frequently mentioned by the miners during the interviews.

For example, Erdem, who refused to be a member of Yeraltı Maden Is at the beginning, stated that what impressed him the most was the idea that “the producer should govern”, when I asked him why he had chosen to be a part of the Yeraltı Maden Is:

What convinced us is that the producer must be the...one who govern... It’s a form of governance. At least, the workers had a say. Isn’t this the best thing?...

⁵³ “Eskiden toplu sözleşme görüşmelerine, 2 işçiyle gidiliyordu; ama biz bütün konseyi -66 kişi götürdük. Çünkü konsey sözcüsü gelip 20 kişilik arkadaşlarına iletcek. Temsilcileri görüşmelere katıldığı için de bir gurur kaynağı oluyor tabii ‘benim temsilcim orada!’ diyor.”

It's a satisfying feeling to have a say. So, we're at least standing up for who we are... (Erdem)⁵⁴

In Erdem's statements, loss of self-expression, raises preliminary concerns about the link between actions of subordination. The workers I interviewed frequently expressed together having a say in the workplace and living with dignity, unlike those times when they felt shame about not being able to maintain their assertion of personal dignity. Moreover, a sense of enhanced class identity enabled miners to become activated both at work and in everyday life.

Nevzat and Cemil, think self-awareness brought them self-confidence:

You used to be a passive, wimpy person...after becoming conscious, you gain self-confidence. You have a good grasp of what to do. (Nevzat)⁵⁵

Whatever we learned, we learnt from Yeraltı Maden İş... That is, we realised there that we were getting the benefit of our labour... Self-confidence - I mean, everyone felt self-confidence. (Cemil)⁵⁶

Cemil also points to the connection between being organised and feeling strong:

There was solidarity, sincerity, and friendship among the workers... Being organised means power. Organisation! (Cemil)⁵⁷

Çetin Uygur frequently emphasised during our interview that he observed that the collective struggle of miners based on councils had a form that paved the way for

⁵⁴ "Bizi şimdi Allah var yani ikna eden, üretenin yöneten...olması gerektiği... Valla yönetim şekli. En azından işçinin söz hakkı olması. O kadar güzel bir şey değil mi yani?... Söz hakkının olması çok iyi bir duygu. Yani en azından kimliğimize sahip çıkmış oluyoruz...", Erdem, interviewed in Kayadüzü village, 2 December 2021.

⁵⁵ "Eskiden pasif, pısrık birisisin...bilinçlendikten sonra kendine bir özgüven geliyor. Ne yapacağını iyi kavrayabiliyorsun."

⁵⁶ "Biz ne gördükse... Yeraltı Maden İş Sendikası'ndan gördük... Yani çalıştığımın emeğini aldığımızı orada fark ettik... Kendimize güven- Herkes kendine bir özgüven duydu yani."

⁵⁷ "İşçilerde dayanışma vardı, bir samimiyet vardı, dostluk vardı...Örgütlü olmak güç demektir ya. Örgüt yani."

workers' self-realisation and collective efficacy. And in another interview, Çetin Uygur shares his experiences and opinions on this issue as follows:

The wife of a miner said: my husband couldn't put two words together, but he became a spokesperson, if you can silence him now, go ahead. In other words, as he learns and realizes his rights, his speech becomes even more enriched as he starts to become a person not only with his own employer, but also with his own place of residence, but now as a person understanding the world. It was such a process that no trade union movement in Turkey could make (In Yeni Çeltek Documentary).

3.3.3. Class Consciousness and Collective Action

Workers' councils are formations of the collective power of workers that allowed workers to be "precisely in the organisms which represent the factory as a producer of real objects and not of profit that he gives an external, political demonstration of the consciousness he has acquired" (Gramsci, 1971: 202). The coming together of workers in committees is in itself a transformative action for it changes both given conditions and workers themselves. "The activities of workers against capital contain in themselves transformative potential, for in the course of struggling to liberate their 'social being,' they are simultaneously liberating their 'subjectivity'" (Fantasia, 1988: 10). In this sense, the workers' council in the Yeni Çeltek mine had been the main body organising the struggle and had developed itself in a process of collective struggle. Therefore, both taking control of labour processes and developing as a collective action appear to have had an impact on the transformation of workers' consciousness. As the slogan "We are the ones who produce, we will be the ones who rule!" indicates, the miners' struggle basically claimed that social life could be built in different ways.

What made the class identity of the miners powerful was its ability to facilitate the function of gathering a group of people under one roof. In other words, the miners realised that "we are all in the same boat", instead of suffering alone. By virtue of becoming organised, they developed a new collective mentality that allows them to think and act in ways that were considerably different from how they would on their own. 'Family' emerges as a concept that emerges in workers' development of multiple

forms of class consciousness. A few workers I interviewed referred to the concept of the family when talking about the solidarity amongst their colleagues. When referring to “we”, one of the common references was “family”. However, they attributed the family’s cohesion to common interests and political targets by emphasising that class solidarity was the main factor that brought them together:

For example, there were 980 people. We all trusted each other, there was no discrimination, this is this, that is that... We were like a family. We were like a family. It was the union’s training that brought us there, its opinion... If it wasn’t so, we wouldn’t have come together anyway. The fact that all those workers stayed together depended on what the union gave them. (Refik)⁵⁸

As Refik’s words refer, the miners’ unfolding unity developed in terms of class per se in their commitment to each other as in a family unit. The resources and experiences that help to develop these commitments have been described in the two subsections. Strike processes, on the other hand, provide us with a basis for better understanding the links between class consciousness and collective struggle.

From the perspective of the union management and the workers’ leaders, the first of the two main reasons for this were that these were the processes in which the experience of self-management through workers’ councils and workers’ committees and the degree of solidarity was practically at its peak. During strike processes, both work - as already mentioned, work could not be completely stopped for safety reasons - and the entire organisation of strike activities in the workplace was undertaken by the miners’ leaders. The second was that the ideological and political formations that came from this logic of self-management could be more quickly and deeply rooted in the perception of the miners in these processes, because the demands and gains were formed within a specific political discourse, which was anti-capitalist. The importance of the organisation of councils in the workplace as precursors of the socialist order of

⁵⁸ “Mesela 980 kişi vardı. Hep birbirimize güven duyuyorduk. Ayrım yoktu yani, şu söylemiş bu böyleymiş. Hepsi 980 kişi bir ev ailesi gibi görüyorduk herkesi... bir aile gibiydik. Bizi oraya getiren zaten sendikanın eğitimiydi, onun görüşüydü bizi bir araya getiren. Öyle olmasa zaten bir araya gelmezdik. O işçilerin hepsinin bir arada durması, sendikanın verdiği şeylere bağlıydı”

tomorrow is due to the ability of councils to erode the workings of this capitalism today (the process) and at the same time prepare workers for the revolutionary situation (the moment).

The first strike was seeking to address employment grievances with financial concerns foremost. Gains with the union contract after the first strike, since the workplace was previously unorganised, marked the first victory of the miners over an established political economic order. However, as workers became more conscious after the first strike period, the motivation for the wage-related part of the strike waned. Secondly, within a political context, strikes might be viewed as workers' discovery of collective action as an effective tool, rather than bureaucratic legislation, against the combined labour opposition of state and employer. Subsequent processes reinforced this experience, as it had never been possible to reach an agreement with the employer without a strike.

The first strike is notable in that it resulted in major gains and was the first time that workers experienced victory. The union started working in the fall to create a system where workers would be involved in decision-making. And by June, when the first strike took place, the workers were well prepared in many ways, namely, they had gone a long way to lay the spirit of the first visible act of their struggle. As explained earlier, every 20 workers elected a spokesperson for the councils to be formed, and these spokesmen formed a House of the Council Spokespersons. Thereafter, every 25 spokespersons elected a representative, thus a House of Representatives was formed. In the event of a strike, the responsibility for maintaining internal and external relations and resolving any problems that would arise belonged to this House of Representatives. After all, in this process of building the organisational structure as well as a sense of unity and trust, the union and the miners were already well organised and well-equipped for the first strike.

Such a role of workers' councils in strike processes would become even more important in the later process of workplace control. In the other two strikes, the decision-making and implementation processes were similar, the only difference being

the gains. The characteristics of the strike processes and workers' perceptions, which will be shown below, are a synthesis of the three strike processes.

Strike meetings were attended by large groups of miners; however, most miners did not intensively participate in the organising drive. This shows that the labour leaders who emerge through the councils take more initiative. Leadership was therefore a decisive factor in the organisation and continuity of workers' struggle. While the organising drive was carried out by a core group of members of workers' councils and committees - and the most prominent of the tasks assigned to the councils in the union regulation was the organisation of strikes- workers were directly involved in organising activities, such as discussions on the draft contract, training seminars, coming together to vote for a strike decision, and so on. During a strike, workers alternately walked off the job and some workers did not walk off the job at all. This was specifically related to the fact that a complete cessation of work at the mine was impossible from a safety point of view. Despite some personal conflicts and debates, the miners, who were engaged in the strikes, were a cohesive group. The union was also able to win over anti-union or noncommittal miners after the victories were assured. From the perspectives of both miners and union executives, one of the key features of strikes was a unifying effect based on trust and solidarity, both amongst workers themselves and between Yeraltı Maden İş and workers.

For example, Çetin Uygur notes that a strike was not just an activity with superficial goals, but a form of action that paved the way for deeper goals for the working class and allowed workers to seize the opportunity to take the initiative:

Workers and unionists are not afflicted with a kind of strike syndrome. Our decision is not an outburst of anger, nor is it a spontaneous act. It is a conscious departure. While the worker fights alongside the union in which he has a say and decision, his guide should be class consciousness. He should take into account workers' centuries-old practices, their own practices (Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 1 June 1976, p.4). (Translated by the author.)

Strikes and collective bargaining processes were the most concrete means of collective resistance to reduce the employers' authority and make them more vulnerable to

demands from “us”. This sort of confrontation between employers and workers strengthened workers’ perceptions of gaining power against the employer around the realisation of self-management:

The negotiations... were not over in a day. It would take days, weeks, or months. Do you understand? The negotiations... were not over in a day. In fact, I’ll tell you how, there would be times that it would last 7-8 months. So, we were on strike... in the meantime the workers woke up... We said that if we produce, we will manage it! Because that’s what the union was about; ‘we will be the ones who produce, we will be the ones who manage!’ That was our slogan... We both produced and managed, and we did very well. (Cemil)⁵⁹

In that sense, strike processes were characterised by Yeraltı Maden İş as a “school of war”, which means it had been thought that strikes served as schools to strengthen the workers’ capacity for resistance and unity. Particularly during the last strike process, which will be shown in detail in the next chapter, the actual violence that workers were subjected to by the state forces and right-wing extremists reinforced their perception of *de facto* warfare. The characterisation of strikes as a school of war shows as well that transformation was expected from strike processes at the political level. In other words, strikes were seen as actions that were organised from the grassroots and would build class consciousness. In the article published in, for example, Devrimci Yol’s journal with the same title, it is written as follows:

As long as the bosses own the factories, we should not think that a few cent increases in collective agreements will solve our problems. Strikes and resistances must be schools where the masses are trained for political struggle, for the struggle for power... Strikes must be turned into manoeuvres for this struggle for power. The education of the masses takes place in action. The broad masses learn by living and by evaluating the events they experience... The enemy has become clear. He is against the increase in our wages. He has thrown off his 'father' mask. In such a situation... the workers resent the boss, and they realise the importance

⁵⁹ “Bu hemen bir günde bitmezdi. Günler sürerdi, haftalar, aylar sürerdi. Anladın mı? Hatta nasıl diyeyim sana ya öyle gün olurdu ki 7-8 ay sürerdi... Grevdeydik... O arada işçi uyandı,...Biz üretirsek biz de bunu yöneteceğiz dedik! Çünkü sendika neydi; üreten de biz olacağız tüketen de biz- yöneten de biz olacağız! Bizim sloganımız buydu yani. Üreten de biziz yöneten de. Hem ürettik hem yönettik. Çok da iyi ettik yani.”

of workers' unity. Strikes reveal the true face of the state, the army and the laws (Devrimci Yol, 1977 b). (Translated by the author.)

As noted above, strikes were seen as part of a wider struggle, as its constitutive principle. One function of strikes was to make workers aware of the situation they were in and to build a confrontation with the boss. What is defined as the removal of the "father" mask from the face of the boss refers to the collapse of the persuasion mechanisms that the ruling classes have established over the oppressed classes, which stem from the paternalistic tradition.

The article continues with the slogan "There is no emancipation alone; either all together, or none of us!"⁶⁰ and emphasizes class solidarity by underlining those strikes should work to overthrow the individualist culture of capitalism:

There is no place for individualism in this war. The striking masses of workers and especially the vanguard workers must endeavour to overthrow individualistic tendencies during the strike (Devrimci Yol, 1977 b.). (Translated by the author.)

Through the strikes, the miners atomised before, now were gathering around a unity; the former silence was now beginning to speak, and the former distrust was now turning into self-confidence and trust in one another. The anger that had been veiled before now seemed to have shifted to a focus since workers were aware of their own roles and that of the union and the employer. On the days when the workers took the decision to strike and implemented it, a miner wrote the following poem:

The worker both works and stays poor
Won't these atrocities ever end?
We should get together and ask for our rights
...In the gardens of us the poor
Won't the troubled nightingale cheer up and sing
...He takes money without working and praises himself
Extols himself and insults the poor
If I pronounce his name, the authorities will crush me

⁶⁰ This slogan, which was frequently used by revolutionary organisations in those years, is one of the most prominent slogans expressing solidarity and is still being shouted in mass protests today. For example, it was one of the loudest slogans during the Gezi Resistance in 2013.

Is his ill-gotten money never enough?
(Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 4 June 1976, p.4)⁶¹ (Translated by the author.)

It was quite new for the workers to decide to strike and to have their poems published in a national newspaper by those who were not even allowed to speak before.

As another striking point, we understand from the narratives of the miners that strikes were not just an instrumental but collective activity in which workers have fun, laugh, dance, chat, or fear together. In other words, the miners' behaviour and attitudes were shaped by the strikes themselves; it was characterised by the establishment of trust, increased confidence between groups and the improvement of relations and solidarity. Most of the miners I interviewed focused on, not only the repercussions of strikes in terms of financial gains, but also how the struggle process inspires changes in their perspectives on both the external and internal. Ultimately, they created their own realities and meanings using the language that was accessible to them in their culture, by having fun, as in strikes, or using their own methods during collective bargaining.

For such a reconstruction, strike processes might be seen as a determinant part of the struggle process in restructuring what was observed both in the collective and in the individual domain. If we look at the atmosphere during the strikes, we will indeed encounter that the miners appeared to be talking about an almost festival that included music, dancing, eating, and shouting their slogans together. In this sense, strikes

⁶¹ “İşçi hem çalışır hem fakir gezer
Bu zulümler başımızdan gitmez mi?
Birlik olup hakkımızı arayak
...Fakirlerin bahçesinde bağında
Dertli bülbül neşelenip ötmez mi
...Çalışmadan para alır da kendini över
Düşünmez vicdansız, fakire söğür
İsmi söylesem iktidar döğür
Kazandıkları haram para yetmez mi?”

became to be a process that interrupted everyday life but were at the same time a part of it. The description of the strike as “enjoyable” in workers’ narratives is meaningful in this respect:

We were eating, we were dancing the halay. (laughs) Drums, zurnas, everything was fun. It was a lot of fun. (Refik)⁶²

Fevzi also talked about an enjoyable strike scene where they dine and socialise:

...we were having tea there; the soup was coming out... The man would come and say, ‘I’ll play the drum here for 10 days’, he didn’t get any money. (Fevzi)⁶³

Aydın said this pleasing environment rose their morale:

Everyone dances (halay) and plays the drums and clarion. Then our morale gets a boost. (Aydın)⁶⁴

Indeed, the strike also seems to have opened new possibilities for communication amongst the workers, to the extent that dancing or drinking tea together allowed for establishing friendly relations. It was possible that this entertainment practice had led to both closer relations and a culture of resistance that will develop from these relations because such a practice of solidarity amongst striking workers strengthened their sources of resistance. For example, in Turkey, people still dance the *halay*, mentioned by Refik above, during strike actions today as an important collective resistance symbol based on solidarity., which is called strike *halay* (*grev halayı*). The *halay* dance is performed by holding hands and forming a circle, and participants usually sing along to the song. It is also very popular at weddings and festivals. There is no difference in physical activity between dancing at a strike and dancing at a wedding, but there is

⁶² “Yemek de yiyorduk, halay da çekiyorduk. (gülüyor) Davullar, zurnalar, her şey eğlenceliydi yani. Çok eğlenceliydi.”

⁶³ “...orada çay içiyorduk, çorba çıkıyordu... Geliyordu adam ben çalacam davulu, burada 10 gün ben davul çalacam diyordu, para almıyordu.”

⁶⁴ “Herkes (halay) çekiyor, davul-zurna çalıyor. O zaman bizim şeyimiz daha çok yükseliyor moralimiz.”

certainly a difference in meaning as an element of resistance. Sennett says, “the rituals are part of the fabric of earned authority” (Sennett, 2013: 156). Similarly, as Hunt put it, “a successful hegemony needs to incorporate values and norms” (Hunt, 1990: 311). These are not limited to rituals, but slogans are also important symbols that strengthen the resistance component of strikes. As mentioned earlier, the slogan that came to the fore at Yeni Çeltek and is still remembered by all interviewees today is “we are the ones who produce we will also be the one who governs!”

3.4. Concluding Remarks

To analyse the labour and social struggles in the Yeni Çeltek basin, this chapter seek to demonstrate the dynamics that created the struggle and main the structures and actors that developed it. In this context, I seek to show how political and cultural transformation was constructed around the dynamics that the miners already possess as they interact with each other in concrete situations of action. In particular, these actions include strikes and collective bargaining, which paved the way for workers to take greater control of labour processes.

As the miners’ statements make clear, the miners, the key actors of the movement, became developed a political consciousness while participating in strike actions and council work. This political consciousness encompasses practices of solidarity combined with class identity repertoires of collective action and moral and economic concerns about injustice. As a result of the collective action process, solidarity patterns developed ideological repertoires that allow for the emergence of political solidarity beyond the social solidarity patterns of mutual assistance. In this sense, the miners appear to believe in the possibility of changing political conditions or policies through their collective struggle.

The objective reality miners were facing before the strike was mainly that of a lack of work safety and low wages. At the same time, however, it is clear from the workers’ narratives that the humiliation they are subjected to within the paternalistic character of labour processes, such as humiliation, develops moral indignation in workers

because they perceive their dignity to be at stake. Similarly, they complained that they could not sufficiently develop solidarity with their colleagues. Almost all the workers interviewed spoke enthusiastically of the economic recovery that followed the strikes. But although their emphasis often started with this, it did not limit itself to it. It is clear from their expressions that they felt in control over the labour process and the satisfaction this gave them. It appears that participation in the collective struggle transforms their political consciousness in terms of class identity through their involvement in and becoming to have further control over labour processes.

The first and second strikes had opened the way to new economic and social rights such as improving wages, and working conditions, and probably more importantly allowing emerging self-management practices through the council movement. In this case, the strike processes were instrumental in achieving a wider struggle at the level of the workplace as well as across the region in at least three aspects:

- Facing a common enemy, building class unity amongst the miners with the sense of “we” under the roof of Yeraltı Maden İş
- Effectively bringing political transformation to the basin as the strikes were intensive processes in which demands that would strengthen the implementation of self-management are discussed and practiced
- Providing a bridge where solidaristic experiences were formed between the miners and the local population

In the next section, the basin-wide effects of the miners’ struggle, the interactions between the actors of the movement in this process and the recent strike process are discussed around the issue of politicisation.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL STRUGGLE IN THE BASIN AND DEVRİMCİ YOL'S POLITICAL ACTIVISM

The previous chapter explored how workplace-level struggles emerged and their impact on miners. This chapter will show the conditions and consequences of the basin-wide expansion of the miners' struggle.

In terms of the labour and social struggles in Yeni Çeltek, it is possible to say that the movement started with the struggle in the economic field (economic and social rights of miners), yet the elements that ensured the continuity of the movement lay in the self-organisation mechanism of the people. This mode of organisation was not spontaneous but under the guidance of a political organisation with an understanding of concrete solutions to existing problems that revealed the character of a movement from below.

The chapter is organised as follows: The first part will trace the development of the struggles beyond the mine, but not independent of it, and the second part will show the specific aspects of the political development of Devrimci Yol in the basin. It will clarify how the process that started with the miners' collective struggle for rights was articulated into anti-state practices and the politicisation process of the actors in this process. The last part will show the miners' workplace control, resulting in the state's suppression of regional resistance by using lethal violence to reverse solidarity practices.

4.1. The Local Actors In the Social Struggle

Since the case examined in this study encompasses both the labour movement in the Yeni Çeltek mine and the social struggle process in the Yeni Çeltek basin and the interactions between them, the participants of the movement cover a wide range. As the movement in the basin was rooted in the struggle of the miners, they were efficient drivers of the social struggle. However, the movement involved many segments of the local society, especially women, youth, and teachers.

On the other hand, the actions in the case described in this study do not represent a spontaneous reaction. The emergence of the movement in the workplace, its spread across the region and the building of self-management practices over time was the outcome of an organisational strategy based on praxis-oriented Marxism. Therefore, another actor of the movement is the activists of the Devrimci Yol political organisation in the basin. In this sense, Cox and Nilsen explain the concept of praxis when describing the community organising processes of the Irish working-class in the 1970s; similarly, praxis refers to “starting from locally felt needs, extensive discussion processes and the exercise of local control” (Cox and Nilsen, 2014: 50) in terms of the local organising processes in the Yeni Çeltek basin.

After the first strike, the political situation in the basin became quite different. The miners’ leaders had acquired a political identity and thus the links between the union, the workers’ councils, and Devrimci Yol became clear. For example, Devrimci Yol’s journal was distributed in the workplace and the militant who came to the basin from outside stayed in the vicinity of the mine and maintained contact with the miners, the miners’ leaders participated in the political discussions in the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant-Youth Associations (Devrimci İşçi Köylü Gençlik Dernekleri) founded by Devrimci Yol during their spare time, and they shared these discussions in coffee houses where their political ideas gradually passed on to the people there, and so on.

While the leadership of the miners was decisive in mobilising the locals, for this to continue they had to create their own dynamics, particularly those rooted in actions such as resistance and solidarity that exposed the class basis of poverty. Indeed, it was

in these actions that they would recognise the need to mobilise, in line with Devrimci Yol's doctrine of revolutionising within the movement and practice.

In this sense, political activists played a remarkable role, functioning as a transmission line. To draw a framework for the relationship between activists and local popular classes, Cox and Nilsen describe the role of political activists in movements as follows:

In the process of organising and mobilising, activists may come to 'join the dots' between their, situated experiences and the underlying structures that engender these experiences... This process – which we call the movement process – can be likened to a journey in which activists starts from 'the inside' – a lifeworld marked in all its aspects by the powerful workings of social movements from above – and work their way towards 'the outside' – an alternative social organisation of needs and capacities (Cox and Nilsen, 2014: 72).

In that regard, the foci of the emerging social struggle that developed through the political activism of Devrimci Yol can be categorised into several levels. The first of these is the Resistance Committees⁶⁵ against fascism, which had various functions ranging from ensuring the security of life of the people to establishing decision-making mechanisms for everyday life. The second is the rapidly growing number of Revolutionary Worker-Peasant-Youth Associations in the districts and villages of the basin, where all kinds of issues related to daily life were dealt with. The third is workers' councils, and it should be noted that by 1978 there was also a revolutionary workers' committee (consisting of 50 miners) formed separately by Devrimci Yol. Fourth, the narrow organization of Devrimci Yol's militants and the forms of direct relationship these militants developed with the people. All four of these elements reflected different dimensions of mass organisation functioning in a localist manner, that is, autonomous of the actual intervention of the central committee of Devrimci

⁶⁵ It should also be noted that the defensive actions of the resistance committees, such as the night vigils, were supported by members of other revolutionary organisations. This is important to show the solidarity aspect of the sometimes-conflicted relations within the left in the basin.

Yol. This local autonomy is, in general, an important element in the movement's ability to reflex quickly and remain active without aggravation.

How all such elements come together to drive social struggle in the basin can be summarised under a few headings:

Control of the circulation of coal: Before 1977, the organisation of the sale of coal was entirely determined by the black market, after 80 percent of the coal was sold to the state-owned sugar factory. Once the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant-Youth Associations became active in the region, workers' committees began to control the exit of 20 percent of the coal from the production area and the Resistance Committees and the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant-Youth Associations began to control its organisation and distribution. Coal was sold to the people of the basin without intermediaries and at low prices. In addition, to distribute it to the poor, workers gave up a certain percentage of their annual coal allowance and the Resistance Committees ensured that it reached those in need free of charge. A few well-established families running the black market in the basin, some of whose members also worked in the mines, were gradually neutralized through persuasion or confrontation by the year 1979.

Control of labour forces: Workers' councils began to take control of the labour process in line with the rights enshrined in the collective agreement. Recruitment was the most prominent issue to be addressed in cooperation with the Resistance Committees and Associations. The Associations were the first point of contact for job applications; namely those who wanted to get a job applied to the management of the association. As mentioned earlier, applicants needed to satisfy two basic qualifications for hiring: being poor and not being anti-labour (i.e., fascist). The members of the Resistance Committees, who had a wide network of contacts, decided who met these qualifications and forwarded their recommendations to the workers' councils. An important detail here is that committee members did not recommend workers from their own families, lest it is thought that they were pulling strings. The unions and workers' councils were the final decision-makers. It was also ensured that those recruited resided in different villages, as it was envisaged that miners would be

revolutionized by progressive trade union activity and thus carry the labour mobilisation to the areas where they lived.

Demonstrations: The demonstrations organised in the basin, mostly in the city centre, can be considered in a wide spectrum. These include May Day demonstrations; demonstrations in solidarity with the miners' strikes; demonstrations of beet producers; festivals, concerts, and open-air film screenings⁶⁶. There were situations where this ritual took the form of political actions. For example, many militants were killed in attacks by right-wing extremists. The funerals of these militants, which turned into revolutionary action, were widely attended by the public. The funerals were characterised by large marches and slogans until the body left the mosque and was taken to the cemetery. Such events were organised by the members of the Resistance Committees and the Associations and announcements of these demonstrations were made in coffee houses, in the open markets, in front of mosques or in village and town squares by spreading flyers or making speeches.

Making decisions about everyday life issues: Under the leadership of the Resistance Committees and the Associations, the people of the basin formed and participated in decision-making and solution mechanisms for everyday issues. Some of the wide range of practices include building schools, repairing mosques, redefining the rules of public events (such as banning the firing of guns as a sign of celebration at weddings or opposing gambling in coffeehouses), redefining the rules of private life (such as women reporting their husbands to the Resistance Committees in cases of domestic violence or neglect), and so on.

All the activities mentioned above that required money were carried out with the solidarity of the population, with no financial assistance from any institution.

⁶⁶ In particular, the film *Maden* (1978), directed by Yavuz Özkan, was screened multiple times in the towns and villages of the basin. The film depicts the resistance of workers in a mine employing revolutionary motifs. Yeraltı Maden İş contributed financially to the production of this film.

4.1.1. Resistance Committees

The formation of the Resistance Committees in the basin developed after the Associations. In addition to the miners who pioneered the founding of the Associations, young people young people, mostly aged between 17 and 25, who regularly and loyally took part in the activities of the Associations became the founder and executive elements of the Resistance Committees. Likewise, some of those who came to the forefront of the Resistance Committees joined the armed wing of the movement and carried out activities in this direction.

The Resistance Committees have functioned as the nuclei of popular power in situations where the people had learnt democracy and self-government, where parts of power, not the whole, had been taken away. (Kahraman: 2022, 88). In that sense, they were initially organised based on anti-fascism. In those years, it was quite common for people to be attacked and left to die in the streets by ultra-nationalists named *ülküçü* (Grey Wolves) -fascists as leftists call them- thus, the revolutionaries tried to gain positions in the basin free of “fascists”. The fact that the Alevi population did not feel safe due to state-sponsored attacks in various regions of Turkey, and the fear that these attacks would reach the basin, provided a basis for the functioning of the Resistance Committees. This was a sort of survivalist solidarity probably, increased the sense of cohesion, in the same way that miners in the workplace clung together, in the function of workers’ councils to defend their positions against a common enemy (the employer or the state). In a regional sense, as frequently mentioned by the interviewees, the common enemy was the fascist, referring mainly to the far right, which has been in the discourse as an enemy of labour. In a broader context, the Resistance Committees were both creating self-defence against fascists (i.e., state-sponsored right-wing extremists) on a concrete level (such as holding armed night vigils) and producing *anti-fascism* on the level of ideological discourse that emphasised a common struggle for the poor. Such self-defence was literally based on a defence and organisation of space in the districts and villages.

The issue of the transformation of everyday life and space, in which all relations of production and consumption are involved, points to an important context inherent to the Resistance Committees. The control of space has given the Resistance Committees the means to establish their own power and the concrete practical implementation of the future social order they aim to realize. Like how the workers' councils began to take control of the workplace, both structurally and spatially, the Resistance Committees attempted to take control of the basin.

4.1.2. Revolutionary Worker-Peasant-Youth Associations

The Revolutionary Worker-Peasant-Youth Associations had begun to operate in the districts and villages of the region in 1977. The decision to establish the Associations was a decision made by Devrimci Yol because of observations made by some members of the executive committee who visited the region. The Associations were not directly a branch of Devrimci Yol, but autonomous organizations with their own presidents and management staff. Teachers and miners were particularly prominent in the presidencies of the Associations. Miners were especially encouraged to participate in the management of them.

The activities of the Associations can be considered in a broad framework. The Associations were places where intellectual reading and discussion seminars were organised with students and young people, or where one could chat and drink tea as a leisure activity. Miners would also visit these places while waiting for the workplace shuttle to take them to their shifts, where they would drink tea and socialize with each other. In terms of this kind of socializing space, it is possible to say that the Associations have become alternative meeting centres to the coffeehouses in the region. Just like the coffeehouses, the visitors to the Associations were mostly men. Nevertheless, a small number of female high school students and women activists also visited the Associations to participate in conversations and political discussions. In this respect, it is possible to consider the Associations as an activity that paved the way for women's social visibility in the public sphere.

The Associations were places where problems in everyday life were discussed. For example, solutions to problems specific to a district or a village were determined through public meetings. The topics discussed were very wide ranging, depending on the situation and the need. Aydın, who was member of the Associations, explains the issues decided with a basic example from everyday life as follows:

We made decisions. We said, for example: ‘The village is muddy. We’ll get together. You bring your tractor, and we’ll clean together. Everyone will grab their brushes’. (Aydın)⁶⁷

The inclusion of basic and simple everyday life issue, i.e., environmental cleaning, in people’s action repertoire with an oppositional character, reveals the self-activity-based character of the social struggle; in other words, the practical way in which people build their own lives and realise themselves.

4.1.3. The Revolutionary Workers (Miners) Committee

Devrimci Yol had formed an *unofficial* revolutionary workers’ committee composed of its own sympathizers in 1978. This committee included certain miners who were members of the workers council as well as others who were not involved in union activities. These ‘revolutionary’ miners made efforts to bring revolutionary ideas to their fellow miners in the workplace. They were also armed and played a security role in the event of an attack on the miners or the people of the basin. It should be noted here that Devrimci Yol, in addition to its mass activity, also had an armed wing and was preparing to wage armed struggle on a larger scale. The revolutionary miners in charge of security were in cooperation with this armed wing. Further information on the content and activities of the revolutionary workers’ committee is not available today, as it was then, because it was unofficial, and interviewees avoided mentioning it.

⁶⁷ “Karar alıyorduk yani. Diyorduk ki mesela: ‘köyümüzün ortası çamur. Hepimiz birleşeceğiz. Sen sen sen traktörünü getiricen, bu çamuru bu pislği temizleyeceğiz. Herkes eline süpürgesini alacak’.”

4.2. Devrimci Yol's Engagement with the "Masses" in the Basin and Interactions Between the Actors of the Movement

The relationship between the local committee of Devrimci Yol and other actors is illustrated below. As can be seen, there was an equal relationship between the union leadership and the local Devrimci Yol committee because both were linked to Devrimci Yol central committee. While the Devrimci Yol local committee had the authority to make decisions on the political situation in the region, the union leadership had the final say on decisions regarding the workplace.

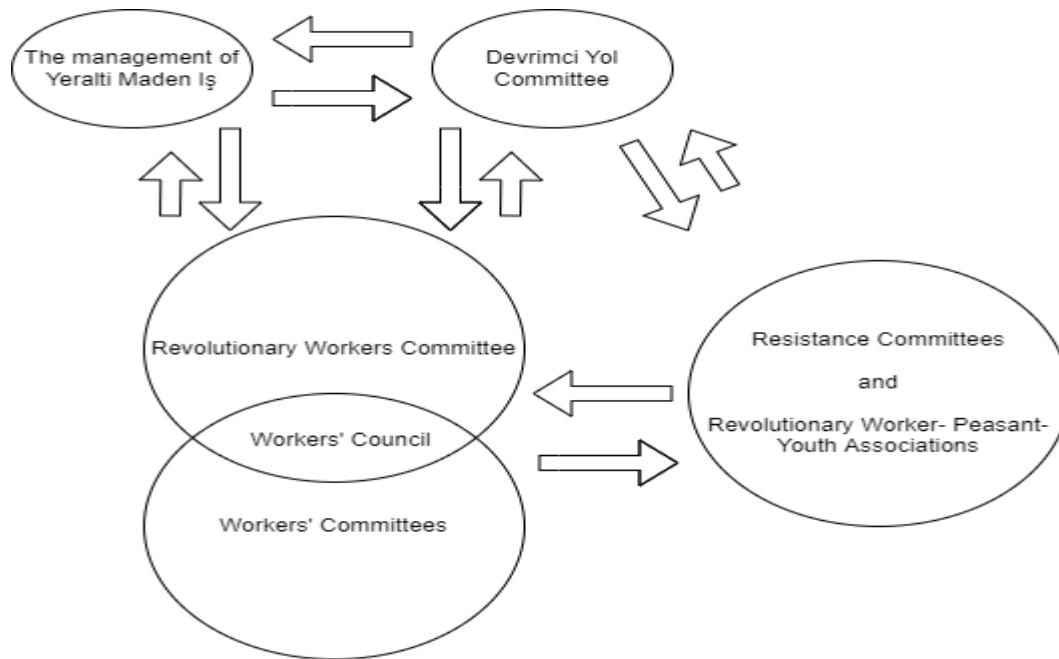


Figure 2: The Relationship Between the Actors

In the relationship between the Devrimci Yol local committee and the workers' committees, the local Devrimci Yol Committee had ideological guidance in the decisions taken by the workers councils. However, there was no direct interference in the functioning and representation of the councils. However, there were closer and closer relations between the revolutionary workers' committee formed by Devrimci Yol and Devrimci Yol committee. These workers defined themselves as followers of Devrimci Yol. This committee was active in the functioning of the movement and decisions taken in the workplace.

The relationship between the Devrimci Yol committee and the Resistance Committees and the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant-Youth Associations was similar. A number of people who became prominent and became leaders in the Resistance Committees or in the Associations began to identify themselves as Devrimci Yol followers in due course. A part of those people, even though they took part actively in the social struggle in practice, they did not identify themselves as Devrimci Yol followers. For example, in interviews with several members of the Associations, several did not even recognise the name of Devrimci Yol. The same was true for a few of the miners interviewed. These interviewees used the word “we” as the subject when describing what happened. This data points to an important point regarding the organising perspective of Devrimci Yol, which is that it avoided limiting the people’s mobility by not putting its own name forward. Thus, the participants of the social struggle found a ground to grow as subjective agents. To put it more precisely, Devrimci Yol did not try to “enlighten” the subjects by calling them to become its sympathizers, it aimed to transform them in their conditions based on their own dynamics, while an understanding of the struggle that did not take conditions into account was unacceptable. (Devrimci Yol, 1977b) Devrimci Yol invited people to be part of the movement, not to become an apparatus of itself, unlike the traditional socialist parties of that period. Considering the development of the social struggle in the basin, this mode of organisation was quite effective to mobilise people.

Massification of the struggle might be attributed to the fact that the movement did not centre on actions detached from the people (especially armed actions, which were widespread at the time), avoided a deterministic approach, and was aware that the vanguard party mission would be bestowed upon it by the masses in the process leading to revolution. It was frequently underlined by Devrimci Yol that the revolutionary vanguard party could be formed through the development of the masses’ ability to govern themselves (as in the examples of workers’ committees and resistance committees), and that this could not happen in a top-down manner.

Here lies the answer to why Devrimci Yol does not declare itself as a vanguard revolutionary party (despite having the largest number of supporters in Turkey) and

remains a 'Movement'. Devrimci Yol, which found the argument that a vanguard party logic that could not integrate with the people could seize power in an instant far from the truth, spent all its efforts on shaping the nuclei of the revolutionary party within the revolutionary process and directing such cores towards the revolution. This approach was the fundamental determinant of its relationship with the people in the basin.

4.2.1. Devrimci Yol and the Politicisation of the Miners

Starting with the categorise of the relationship between Yeraltı Maden İş and the local committee of Devrimci Yol under two headings: first, relations with the union leadership, and second, relations with the miners.

Çetin Uygur's role in this relationality is particularly important because he was a figure of great political influence on the miners. The miners had a deeply personal, if not initially political, commitment and respect for Çetin Uygur. Çetin Uygur was a very influential figure for the workers and it was clear from the interviews that he was more than a trade unionist to the miners, he was a labour leader. All interviewees still describe Çetin Uygur as an exemplary, honest, and trustworthy leader.

In this sense, he emerges as a key figure in the functioning of organising networks. In the interview I had with him, Çetin Uygur clearly express that he was a part of Devrimci Yol:

I was in Dev-Yol committees until 1980. (Çetin Uygur)⁶⁸

This was also stated by the cadre, Mehmet, that the movement later sent to the basin in our interview:

I: Did Çetin Uygur have a relationship with the central committee of Devrimci Yol?

⁶⁸ "1980'e kadar Dev-Yol'daki komitelerde bulunan kişiydim."

Mehmet K k: There was. We had two branches of relations; one of them was through etin Uygur. So, I know that, but I don't know how it was run.⁶⁹

This link is relevant in the context of the relationship forms between the trade union and political organisation. It should be also noted that other members of the trade union leadership and union lawyers were also Devrimci Yol's followers.

etin Uygur oversaw and led the struggle in Yeni eltek mine but as the general president of the union, he was also involved in other union activities in various provinces and could not be present in the basin all the time. Therefore, a political gap developed both in the workplace and in the basin between 1976 and 1977 (after the first strike), things were not going smoothly, and the attacks on union activity by black marketeers and right-wingers increased. There were also several attempts by militants of a traditional socialist party (the Communist Party of Turkey) to become a focal point of control in the workplace. For this reason, Devrimci Yol sent Mehmet to the basin in 1977 with the task of both streamlining the organising of the miners and organising the social struggle across the basin.

As might be expected, at first there were minor confrontations between some of the miners' leaders and the cadre. Particularly in rural areas, the acceptance and trust of outsiders is not an easy and quick process. However, when the workers learned that Mehmet was a friend of etin Uygur and some others in the union leadership, their attitudes softened, relations didn't remain tense. This proves that both networks and leadership was a potent factor in organising.

Mehmet describes how etin Uygur supported him in developing relationships with the workers:

Osman Fahri Őanlı...didn't trust everyone. That was his character. There were times when we were icy to each other but then etin Uygur said to him- without demand from me- "If this person"- and Osman Fahri was a branch chairman in

⁶⁹ "etin Uygur'un Devrimci Yol'un merkeziyle bir iliŐkisi var mıydı? Vardı. İki koldan y r yordu bizde iliŐkiler; bir tanesi etin Uygur  zerinden y r yordu. Yani onu biliyorum. Ama nasıl y r d Đ n  biliyorum."

those days- ... ‘if it is necessary, he will attend your meetings’ ... I didn’t actually attend their meetings. There’s not much point in attending the meeting because we would speak tete-a-tete and have debates. We would evaluate the events together anyway. (Mehmet K k)⁷⁰

As a way of respecting the will of the workers, by not attending workers’ committee meetings, Mehmet was showing that his goal was not a power grab. The aim was to discuss political issues with the workers through the conversations based on mutual learning. He says  etin Uygur contributed to how to do this:

Our relationship with  etin Uygur was very good. We had an extraordinary relationship. I really saw him as a labour leader, we recognised him. Everyone respected his experience, everyone respected him... I still respect him... How do you explain things to workers, labour, capital, surplus value, and profit? I learnt a lot from  etin Uygur, about communication with workers. (Mehmet K k)⁷¹

In the interview with the branch president of the union Osman Fahri Őanlı, on the other hand, it was apparent that he was at times dissatisfied with the political activities of Devrimci Yol through Mehmet at the workplace. And it was equally clear that from his statement “they couldn’t pass me”, the final decision was left in any case to the miners themselves:

Well, I don’t like the Dev-Yol people very much (laughing). Why? Because they say, ‘Let’s bring revolutionaries and make them miners.’ No way. Here they all came, they couldn’t pass me. OK, we hired them, but why let a revolutionary rot in the mine? There are other friends. Instead of making them revolutionaries... I

⁷⁰ “Osman Fahri Őanlı...herkese g venmez.  yle bir huyu vardır onun. Epey aramız Őey oldu onunla sođuk geđtiđi zamanlar da oldu ama  etin Uygur ona dedi ki- benim talebim olmadan- “bu arkadaŐ” dedi- Osman Fahri Őube baŐkanıydı o zaman- ... “gerekli g r rse” dedi “sizin toplantılarımıza da katılacak” dedi... Ben toplantıya katılmadım gerđi, toplantıya katılmanın bir anlamı yok, zaten bire bir konuşuyoruz...tartıŐıyoruz. GeliŐmeleri deđerlendiriyoruz zaten bire bir.”

⁷¹ “ etin Uygur’la iliŐkimiz  ok iyiydi. Olađan st  bir iliŐkimiz vardı. gerđekten biz onu bir iŐi  nderi olarak g rm Őt k, tanımiŐtik. Deneyimine, kendisine herkes sayđı g steriyordu... halen sayđım vardır... İŐilere Őeyi nasıl anlatırsın, emek, sermaye, artı deđer, kar?  etin Uygur’dan  ok Őey  đrendim. İŐilerle iletiŐim konusunu.”

won't let militants underground; workers will be militants. My worker is militant.
(Osman)⁷²

As Osman mentions above, some local activists from across the basin had been recommended to work in the mine. However, workers' leaders did not see this as appropriate and did not accept it. Nevertheless, certain local activists are known to have worked in the mine, albeit briefly, to help with organising work. This example illustrates a minor conflict between the political organisation and the grassroots and how it was resolved.

Although Osman was a supporter of Devrimci Yol, he always kept his distance:

I don't care where he is in Dev-Yol or what this or that is, as long as he is a revolutionary. It doesn't concern me. We never said that no one except Dev-Yol could come. If Çetin Uygur is a Dev-Yol member, we don't object to him.
(Osman)⁷³

Osman was inspired by Çetin Uygur and sympathised with Devrimci Yol. According to his words. There was no exclusion of miners belonging to other political movements, at least at the formal level. However, a miner from a different political organisation who was a member of the councils mentioned in our interview that he was sometimes excluded at various levels. In addition, journals of political organisations other than Devrimci Yol were not allowed to be distributed in the workplace. This situation disturbed the minority of miners in the workplace who belonged to other revolutionary organisations. However, they continued to participate in the union mechanism as well as the struggle in practice. Secondly, Devrimci Yol's sending of cadres to the region also seemed to disturb a local activist group that had

⁷² “Şimdi ben Dev-Yol'cuları pek sevmiyorum. (gülüyor) Neden: Çünkü onlar diyor ki 'devrimcileri getirelim madenci yapalım.' Olmaz! Burada işte hepsi geldi, beni geçemediler. Tamam, aldık işe; fakat devrimciyi niye madende çürütüyorsun? Başka arkadaşlar var. Onları devrimci yapmak varken... Benim ona ihtiyacım var... Militanı yeraltına sokmam, işçiler militan olacak. Benim işçim militan.”

⁷³ “O Dev-Yol'un neresindeymiş, bu neymiş benim kafamı yorar. Benim için devrimci olsun yeter. Beni ilgilendirmiyor. Dev-Yol haricindeki kimseye de gelemezsin demedik (Emeğin Birliği, Halkın Kurtuluşu). Çetin Uygur Dev-Yol'cuysa, biz ona itiraz etmiyoruz.”

been supporting the union struggle from the very beginning (since 1976) and had organised around the Devrimci Gençlik (Devrimci Yol's predecessor) journal and later acted together with Devrimci Yol. In the interviews, the common emphasis of both these activists and the miner belonging to the other organisation was that the local people and themselves had started the struggle, that they were already competent to lead it and did not need a leader. They stated this from today's perspective, but they did not take any oppositional stance at the time. Devrimci Yol, then, had the ability to absorb these kinds of power conflicts and contradictions. Therefore, the inclusiveness of praxis of Devrimci Yol appears to be had worked.

In accordance with the organisational logic of Devrimci Yol, the union was not conceived as a branch of Devrimci Yol, but as its projection on another plane, in other words, as a reinterpretation of the movement's ideological and political framework without dogmatisation, with the prominence of the miners and the union management. Çetin Uygur summarises this as follows:

Even if the [union] administration is coming from the same political organisation, the centre of the political organisation does not have the skill to manage directly the local organisation. No focus of political organisation can manage these organisations. Those organisations are produced by the masses within them. You shower them with all the knowledge, evaluations, and observations like spring rain. Together with the central management, you can try to enrich and shape them with this information; but you never, ever tell the organization to "Take this decision, take this step!" From the moment you do this, that organization is over. That mass is over. That mass ceases to be a mass struggling for its own future, it ceases to struggle for its own class. (Çetin Uygur)⁷⁴

As Çetin Uygur summarised, it was ultimately for the main elements of the struggle, the miners, to make decisions, not directly the political organisation's militants. But if

⁷⁴ "Yönetim aynı siyasi örgütten olsa bile, siyasi düşünce odağı o örgütü yönetme olanağına sahip değil. Hiçbir siyasi düşünce odağı bu örgütsellikleri yönetemez. O örgütsellikleri o örgütün bünyesindeki o kitleler üretir. Onlara bütün bilgiyi, bütün değerlendirmeleri ve tespitlerini bir ilkbahar yağmuru gibi yağdırırsın. Onların bu bilgilerle zenginleşmesini ve şekillenmesini sağlayabilişin yönetimle; ama asla ve asla onun örgütüne "Şu kararı al, şu adımı at!" diyemezsin. Bunu yaptığın andan itibaren o örgütsellik bitiyor demektir. O kitle bitiyor demektir. O kitle kendi geleceği ile ilgili mücadele eden bir kitle olmaktan çıkar, kendi sınıfı için mücadele etmekten çıkar."

so, how, and what kind of relations should have been forged between the miners and the political organisation?

I put this question to Mehmet:

In fact, it is necessary to establish good communication. It is necessary to establish a genuine, sincere relationship without lies or deception. We had it, we all had it, this is really a thing. Also, I was a teacher... so I trusted my communication skills. Second, we come from the same class, we had the same characteristics... we were people who could understand the public. So, there was a matching there. Revolutionaries live modestly... In Yeni Çelttek, I had miner's boots on my feet. I always wore them. I can say I didn't have a second pair of pants. I mean, there would be 1-2 sets of clothes sent from Ankara with friends... This wouldn't go unnoticed by the workers! In other words, if you wear different shoes, if they feel that they are expensive, they will notice this. Because they work in very hard conditions to earn that money. During strikes, their slogan was: 'Those with underground graves have a strike!' Each time they go underground, they risk their lives. They do this because they have no other way. (Mehmet Kök)⁷⁵

Mehmet emphasises an ethical mode of communication and relationship and relates it to his own background. He also states that he respected the local people's lifestyle and circumstances and took care in the way he dressed as a way of showing that he was almost one of those local people. To mention Mehmet's background briefly, he grew up in a village (in Izmir/Ödemiş) and his father was a construction worker. One of the reasons why Devrimci Yol sent him to the basin was probably because his characteristics were suitable for the local lifestyle.

The narratives of the interviewees support Mehmet's point. It is evident from the narratives that ideological transmissions at the intellectual level constitute only one aspect of the struggle and, moreover, that their impact has faded over the years. The

⁷⁵ "Doğru bir iletişim kurmak gerekir aslında. Yalansız, dolansız... hakiki, içten, samimi bir ilişki kurmak gerekir. O da bende vardı yani- bizde vardı, hepimizde vardı bu cidden özellik. Dolayısıyla ben öğretilmişim zaten... yani güvenirim aslında iletişim becerime. İkincisi, aynı sınıf kökenden geliyorsun, aynı özelliklere sahipsin... halkı anlayabilecek insanlarsın. Dolayısıyla bir denk gelme olayı vardı orada. Devrimciler mütevazı yaşar onlar için... Yeni Çelttek'te, maden işçisinin postası vardı ayağında. Hep onla- hep onu giydim. İkinci pantolonum olmadı desem yeridir. Üzerimde yani Ankara'dan gönderilmiş 1-2 giysi filan, arkadaşlarla gönderilmiş 1-2 giysi filan olurdu... Yani işçinin gözünden kaçmaz! Yani bir tane farklı bir ayakkabı giysen sen, pahalı olduğunu onu hissetse, görse kaçmaz ondan, görür onu mutlaka. Çünkü o, o parayı kazanabilmek için neler yapıyor orada.

influence of how they were treated and the moral qualities of the leaders, on the other hand, occupied a major place in the narratives. What emerges from the narratives of the miners who developed close relationships with Mehmet is that they still feel a solid loyalty and respect for him, as they do for Çetin Uygur. It is evident from the interviews that workers frequently repeated moral issues such as trust and honesty, demonstrating that these were of great importance to them.

As a crucial point, these moral and ethical considerations on which miners base their evaluations of Çetin Uygur and Mehmet Kök are also reflected in the way they view themselves. For example, I asked Aydın, one of the miners at the forefront of the movement, how they became politically effective in the basin. He responded by framing certain moral aspects of themselves:

It may be effective in this way: ‘workers there are honest people. People who do not have any bad or deception in them despite working the toughest jobs shift after shift. Revolutionaries, honest human beings. They are always trustworthy’... as we were revolutionaries, we knew no lies, hypocrisy, or lack of honour... we did not otherize each other... we had lots of respect for the elders. We were respected in the village owing to this. (Aydın)⁷⁶

The relationship of trust and internal solidarity that miners have with each other was different in that it was more personal than that of such external actors. One miner, who I believe was part of the revolutionary workers’ committee in Yeni Çeltek, described his relationship with his co-workers as follows:

I never had a problem with anyone. I’m friends with everyone... Everybody loved and respected me. Likewise, I loved and respected them. I never wronged anyone. When I went to our teahouse, even if 15 or 20 people had tea, I would pay for

⁷⁶ “Şöyle etkili olur: ‘kardeşim oradaki çalışan işçiler dürüst insanlar. Her vardiya en ağır işte çalıştıkları halde, hiçbir insana ne bir kötülük ne bir hile ne bir şey hiçbir şey düşünmeyen insanlar. Devrimci yapı dürüst insanlar. Bu insanlara her zaman güvenilir’... devrimci olduğumuz için yalan, riyalık ve kesinlikle namussuzluk yoktu bizde... diğer insanları ötekileştirmeden... büyüklerimize saygı çoktu bizde. Büyüklerimize saygılı olduğumuz için köyde itibar görüyorduk.”

everyone. For all 15-20 people. I had tolerance for people. I was friendly and compassionate. (Refik)⁷⁷

The themes highlighted by Refik and Aydın show that moral values of society such as respect for elders, openness, sharing, honesty, tolerance, and similar social values were accepted as a requirement of being a revolutionary, and those motivated miners to become activists in a more practical sense. These all reflect the deep quality of the political logic of the struggle that was framed in moral and cultural terms, beyond economic ones.

In this sense, from the perspective of Devrimci Yol, linking everyday life with political struggle was a means of contextualizing behavioural patterns and moral values with political struggle. The following statements in the article “Working in Trade Unions and Revolutionary Trade Unionism” in Devrimci Yol’s journal show this explicitly:

We prove the correctness of our policy regarding the trade unions by the self-sacrificing, consistent struggle of the Revolutionaries working in the trade unions and by their personal conduct worthy of a Revolutionary...by the concrete political objectives we present to the masses of workers (Devrimci Yol, 1977c). (Translated by the author.)

As the second factor, solidaristic practices, it is seen concretely that the politicised mechanisms of solidarity have emerged from such social values and everyday life practices. The transformative function of solidarity emerges both in the build-up of new types of social relations and in the attempt to consolidate them as a naturalised structure. Solidarity among the workers themselves was of particular importance as the starting point for the construction of a new form of solidarity. The connection between such solidarity practices and the practice of self-management was explained by Devrimci Yol as follows:

⁷⁷ “Valla benim hiç kimseyen bir kötülüğüm olmadı. Herkesnen dostluğum var... Herkes severdi, sayardı. Ben de onları sever, sayardım. Kimseye bir yanlışlığım olmazdı. Lokale geldim mi yani çok af edersin, 15 kişi 20 kişi çay içse ben hiç paraya tenezzül etmezdim, çıkarır verirdim. 15-20 kişinin. Ben insanlara daha hoşgörülü davranırdım. Daha arkadaş canlısıydım, sevecendim.”

The welfare funds...are used more as a safety net for workers in difficult situations...in cases of resistance and dismissal than for the day-to-day economic benefits they provide. The emphasis is on developing workers' habits of self-management...getting them used to collective struggle and living in solidarity and getting rid of individualism (Devrimci Yol, 1977c.). (Translated by the author.)

As the third factor, heroization, refers to specific roots of the politicisation dynamics of certain interviewees. The perceptions of heroism in collective memory, which might be evaluated within moral frameworks, is a significant factor that was effective in interactions with Devrimci Yol. These perceptions have important historical underpinnings. For example, as explained earlier, Deniz Gezmiş resisted until the last moment of the 1971 military memorandum that led to his capture and execution. Mahir Çayan and his friends were murdered while carrying out acts of resistance to save Deniz Gezmiş and his other friends who were to be executed. These events emphasise solidarity, resistance, and sacrifice under the banner of heroism. From past to present, these stories are told among the people, like folk tales.

Fevzi, for example, is apparently highly influenced by these historical events. He defines himself as a Mahir Çayan supporter:

We were Mahir Çayanists at that time. They kidnapped (soldiers) to save Deniz Gezmiş. They gave the order to shoot him too, they killed him too. Everyone calls him a hero. He died valiantly. (Fevzi)⁷⁸

Fevzi's perception of heroism was also evident when he spoke about the revolutionaries in the region⁷⁹:

Mehmet Kök was caught dead on the mountain with his gun, dead! He took 8 bullets... The other one, Ekrem Savcı, was covering Mehmet Kök so he wouldn't die. Both had eight bullets. That's a great sacrifice. Not every man can do this...

⁷⁸ "Biz o zaman Mahir Çayan'cıydık o zaman. Deniz Gezmiş'i kurtarmak için (askerleri) kaçırdılar. Onu da vur emri verdiler, onu da öldürdüler. Herkes ona kahraman diyor. Yiğitçe öldü."

⁷⁹ During the military coup, Mehmet, like revolutionaries in many other parts of Turkey, together with a few of his friends in the Revolutionary Road committee, took up armed resistance, and after a clash, a friend (Ekrem Savcı) and he were captured and wounded, and one of their friends (Duran Köse) was killed in the clash. (Akçam, 2016: 215)

People were saying ‘we would gladly go even to death’... We believed they wouldn’t do wrong, and they didn’t do wrong. They defended the working class... They were interrogated all the time, but they didn’t testify. I had respect for him. He was honest. (Fevzi)⁸⁰

To summarise, when the miners talked about those attributed as revolutionaries, including themselves, they referred to moral frames that we can explain under the pillars of certain elements such as solidarity, honesty, and altruism in addition to certain traditional values. And meaning they attributed to revolutionaries was not detached from themselves and they seemed to identify with this identity.

However, one more interesting aspect emerged in the miners’ perception of themselves as activists. It emerged from several of the interviews that although the miners considered themselves to be sufficiently combative and resistant, they repeatedly stated that their educational background was insufficient and therefore they would not be as militant as educated militants. Kemal’s words are striking in this respect:

I am also a revolutionary... But I am not as revolutionary as them. So, let’s be frank now, these people studied better, their conditions were better - they received an education. They knew what a union was, they knew how to talk better... We didn’t have all that knowledge. As I said before, a man who herded cattle for 7 years then went to the army, came back, and got a job in the mine. He saw all the fighters there. He joined them and followed their path. (Kemal)⁸¹

It is a class issue that the workers see themselves as intellectually inadequate and point to this in negative contexts. At the intellectual level, the elements that demean the oppressed and set up their demeaning of themselves is another aspect of the hegemony

⁸⁰ During the military coup, Mehmet, like revolutionaries in many other parts of Turkey, together with a few of his friends in the Revolutionary Road committee, took up armed resistance, and after a clash, a friend (Ekrem Savcı) and he were captured and wounded, and one of their friends (Duran Köse) was killed in the clash. (Akçam, 2016: 215)

⁸¹ “Ben de devrimciyim... Ama onlar kadar devrimci değilim. Yani şimdi açık konuşalım, onlar daha güzel okumuş, onların şartları daha güzel- eğitim almış. Sendikanın ne olduğunu bilen insanlar, konuşmayı daha iyi bilen insanlar... Bizim o kadar bir bilgimiz yoktu ki zaten. Biz ee demin de dediğim gibi işte 7 sene davar gütmüş bir adam gelmiş askere gitmiş, gelmiş, madene girmiş. Ama ondan sonra madene bakmış ki orada bir sürü mücadeleci insanlar var. İşte katılmış, bir yola girmiş.”

of the state and the ruling classes in Turkey and has seriously permeated the social structure. That is probably why the narratives of certain miners revealed a sense of their own intellectual incompetence. In this sense, beyond this external factor, when we examine the subjective conditions, we observe a movement that had threatened existing social hierarchies but had not yet reached such a far-reaching development that such hegemonic relations are completely overthrown. Moreover, in one way or another, miners were introduced to these radical ideologies through outside intellectuals or educated local activists.

However, it is worth showing the approach of Devrimci Yol on this issue. Devrimci Yol's accusation that certain revolutionary organisations based on intellectual levels fail to integrate with the people was based on the criticism of strengthening such class distinctions between the public and militants rather than overthrowing them. In this regard, Devrimci Yol regards focusing on intellectual debates as "detaching the political struggle from everyday life". As a result, Devrimci Yol militants did not see their role as either enlightening the workers and other popular classes or fighting on their behalf. Mehmet's answer to my question on this subject explains this well:

The doctrine of Devrimci Yol was to organise completely with the working class and the people... So, who will make the revolution? The forces of the people. That is the assumption, no? Who will fight? The forces of the people, the will of the people. This is what we're talking about. Then shouldn't we be humble and fight together? Inside, not outside. We must be there, right? If they are doing it, we must be there too. If we [militants] will do it alone- we couldn't do it in anyway. (Mehmet Kök)⁸²

Mehmet makes a truly helpful link between people's will and organisational action and summarises his own task as struggling with the people to support the revolutionization process of the movement.

⁸² "Devrimci Yol'un öğretisinde tamamen işçi sınıfıyla ve halkla birlikte örgütlenmek... Yani devrimi kim yapacak? Halkın güçlü kolları. İfade böyle dimi? Kim mücadele edecek? Halkın güçlü kolları, halk iradesi. Bundan söz ediyoruz biz. O zaman bizim şey olmamız gerekmiyor mu, mütevazı ve kolektif, içinde olmamız gerekmiyor mu onlarla birlikte? Dışında değil. Orada olmamız lazım o zaman. Dimi? Onlar yapacaksa bu işi bizim de orada olmamız lazım. Biz yaparsak- şimdi yani yapamadık işte biz."

For further radicalisation, or revolutionization as Mehmet calls it, movements need to build up certain strategic alliances and develop an effective counter-hegemony. This leads us to analyse the processes of social struggle in the basin and Devrimci Yol's relations with the local people and their perceptual structures.

4.2.2. Devrimci Yol's Basin-Wide Relations: "Worker-Peasant-Youth, United for Revolution!"

During the social struggle, the local activists of Devrimci Yol, including several miners, exercised effective leadership to the extent that they fostered and organised the unrestricted expression of class struggle based on solidaristic practices. We might explain this as a kind of enabling the struggle to stand on its own foundations, in other words, as enabling the popular agency by presenting concrete situations. By the people, as underlined before, I mean not only the miners, but also different components of society, such as youth, teachers, peasants, artisans, women, and the unemployed, who were influential at different levels in the social struggle. The function of Devrimci Yol in this context can be summarised as bringing all these groups together and integrating them into the struggle. Moreover, as will be shown in this subsection, it was only when the people of the basin came into touch with activists and began to defend their rights with them that they began to act to build new social and cultural structures as alternatives to the old ones.

In this respect, the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant-Youth Associations and Resistance Committees were at the forefront of the progress of the struggle in the region. In fact, the idea behind the initial formation of the Associations was essentially to create places where miners could socialise as well as structures ensuring that the struggle in the workplace and the movement in the region could be linked. Thus, a social struggle that would cover the entire basin was emerging. In the interview with Emin Yüksel, one of the lawyers working for Yeraltı Maden İş, he mentioned that he had contributed to the drafting of the bylaws of the Associations and grounded the relationship between the Associations and the miners as follows:

The workers in Çeltek go to Merzifon, Havza and Suluova in 3 shifts. Associations were established for them locally in Merzifon, Havza, Suluova, and these later expanded – as a region – to other places. Revolutionary Worker-Peasant-Youth Association. The name says it. What are the characteristics of miners? They live in the village, work the land, and work in the mine. This characteristic is very important... Also, they have children... there are youngsters in those villages... Villager, class [worker], and youth. Something that unites all of this. In other words... organizing that relationship brought revolutionary politics to Yeni Çeltek and also introduced the miners in Yeni Çeltek to the idea of revolutionary struggle. (Emin Yüksel)⁸³

In the Associations, miners were also involved in decision-making. As mentioned earlier, the economically and socially unifying aspect of the mine has come to serve the movement process through the politicisation of miners. These unifying elements were both the fact that the mine was an important industrial activity for the region (it was Yeni Çeltek coal that keeps the sugar factory running, and much of the region's agriculture was widely based on sugar beets) and that it was a workplace that united miners from different villages. For most of the miners, the connection to the village was maintained both because it was their place of residence and because they were still engaged in agriculture in their spare time. The fact that some of the active members and the management of the Associations in the villages were miners, and even the presidents of certain Associations were elected from among the miners, was an expected result in this respect.

Other the two most prominent groups operating in the Associations and the Resistance Committees were the teachers and the youth, who constituted the majority of Devrimci Yol agitators in the basin, apart from the workers. These were followers who became

⁸³ “Çeltek'teki çalışan işçilerin Merzifon, Havza, Suluova'ya 3 vardiya içerisinde gelip gitmeleri söz konusu. Onlara lokal olarak Merzifon'da, Havza'da, Suluova'da, daha sonra genişledi – bölge olarak genişledi- diğer yerlerde dernek kuruldu. Devrimci İşçi Köylü Gençlik derneği. Adı üzerinde. Maden işçilerinin özelliği ne? Hem köyde ikamet ediyorlar hem üretimde tarımda çalışıyorlar hem madende çalışıyorlar. Dolayısıyla, onların o özelliği çok önemli... Aynı zamanda ne var? bunların çocukları var...o köylerde gençler var... Köylü unsuru var, sınıf (işçi) unsuru var, genç unsuru var. Bütün bunları birleştiren bir şey. Yani... bölgedeki siyasetin- devrimci siyasetin- Yeni Çeltek'le ilişki kurmasını sağlayan, aynı zamanda Yeni Çeltek'in de- Yeni Çeltek'teki maden işçilerinin de o devrimci mücadeleyle tanışmasını sağlayan bir şey düşünce o ilişkiyi örgütlemek,” Emin Yüksel, interviewed in Gümüşhacıköy district, 2 December 2021.

militant in the process and developed closer ties with the Devrimci Yol's committee in the region. The transformation of sympathizers into militants, which we can also call cadre-building activity, took place in two ways: the first, and probably more important, was to take on more responsibilities and tasks in the Resistance Committees and the Associations (such as leading armed vigils, which were an important part of the anti-fascist action, distributing Devrimci Yol's journal, organising mass demonstrations and events), and in the meantime to test one's suitability in practice, both in terms of trustworthiness and behaviour. In the process, those who showed trust-breaking characteristics, such as letting down, lying, and continuing bad habits (such as drinking and gambling), remained sympathizers. The second was to develop a one-to-one relationship with cadres and engage in various ideological conversations. These conversations were mostly based on the articles in Devrimci Yol's journal. Militants who proved to be capable of assuming responsibility in the process were tasked with scattering to villages and districts and forming sympathizers and militants there - this was done by passing on the political methods and codes of behaviour they had been taught. The role of these local activists in the movement seems to be very important, as they were the key figure in connecting directly with the local people. They were more easily accepted because they already knew and had local characteristics. It appears significant to understand the motivations of the inhabitants of the region to engage with the political organisation, initially generated by the local activists, to analyse the movement.

Starting with the young, for example, Orhan, one of the young at the time who took part in the activities of the Associations, the brother of a miner explains his motivations for engaging as follows:

I returned from military service, there was an association in my village... I was a member of the association... Most miners were also members of it. I was doing farming... I saw the activities of the association. They were building schools and roads. Helping the elderly with jobs they couldn't do... If an old person bought tiles but couldn't carry them, we immediately sent 3-5 men from the association. We would send a truck... So, I joined the Association thinking that we would make our voices heard together, rather than individually. Is building a school or a road a bad thing? We did not have a secondary school in our village. There were about 1500 households, but no school. The association did this, with the help of

all the villagers - it was decided, and we did it. We asked around for help: ‘we are building a school, help us’. We also worked with picks and shovels... The mosque was about to collapse. The imam was scared to climb the minaret. So, the association built one. We pulled bricks, we carried mortar. The village headmen sometimes said, “help us... young men, we have these problems, can you help us?” ... For example, they completely cut off the water of a neighbourhood in Suluova. They did not provide water for 10 days. What did we do? Those with tractors, we carried water there with tankers. We did not leave those people without water... (Orhan)⁸⁴

Orhan’s examples of solidarity practices answer the question of how solidaristic networks function in practice. In villages, problems between individuals usually resolve by the headman. In Orhan’s narrative, we can observe the intermediary position of the village authority, namely the headmen⁸⁵, and his cooperation with the Associations.

On the other hand, when I asked about the position of the Associations in the event of an outbreak of a problem in the public or private sphere, Orhan explained as follows:

For example, we refused to go to his wedding. No violence... First, a warning was made. If he said, “you can’t tell me what to do”, then we did not go to his wedding. Do you know what it’s like to have a wedding alone? It’s not all about a wedding. Let’s say his tractor or car overturned. Nobody went to help... What would he do? He got lonely. When we said, ‘We warned him at the Association, but he still gambles, drinks and yells at night, shoots’, the members agreed silently among themselves... For example, there would be border disputes (field or

⁸⁴ “Askerden gelmişim, köyümde bir dernek vardı... Dernek üyesiydim... Genellikle madenciler de aynı derneğin üyeleri idi. Ama bak Devrimci İşçi Köylü- yani biz de köylü olduğumuz için. Ben çiftçilikle uğraşıyordum... Baktım derneğin çalışmalarını gördüm. Okul yapıyor, yollar yapıyor. Yaşlıların göremeyeceği bir iş varsa, bunlara yardım ediyor... Kiremit getirmiş kiremidini çekemiyor yaşlı, hemen dernekten 3-5 tane adam gönderirdik. Giderdik biz onu kamyonlan indirirdik... Yani bireysel değil de, böyle kitle olarak daha... sesimizi duyururuz hesabınan, ben derneğe girdim. Okul yapmak yol yapmak kötü bir şey mi? Köyümüzde ortaokulumuz yoktu. Köyümüz 1500 hane falandı. Ama okul yok. Dernek bunu şey yaptı, köylü imece usulü- buna karar verildi ve yaptık da. O yandan bu yandan yardım istedik: ‘okul yapıyok, yardımcı olun’. Bizler gittik, kazma kürek çalıştık... Cami şeydi yıkılmak üzereydi, imam çıktı mı korkuyordu ezan okumaya. O zaman minare de yaptık biz dernek olarak. Tuğla çektik, harç taşıdık. Muhtarımız geliyor, diyor “bize bir yardımcı olun... gençler şu sorunlarımız var, bize bir yardımcı olabilir misiniz?” ... Mesela Suluova’da bir mahallenin suyunu komple kestiler. 10 gün su vermediler. Biz ne yaptık? Bütün traktörleri olanlar tankerlerle oraya su taşıdık. O halkı susuz bırakmadık”, Orhan, interviewed in Merzifon district, 2 December 2021.

⁸⁵ Imams as another traditional authority figure, like headmen, had an impact on the production of consent and approval for the movement.

garden). We would go with the headmen or the elders to reconcile the dispute. They would demarcate (the field). (Orhan)⁸⁶

As can be seen, the traditions and practices of solidarity, from which forms of mutual aid emerged, became the grounds not only for integrating solidarity into movement but also for the certain sanctions that regulated the organising of society.

As an interesting point, Orhan was quite clear that the Association in his village and he himself were not affiliated with a political organisation:

There is no such thing as an organisation. We didn't take orders from anyone. They came from inside, from our bosom... (Orhan)⁸⁷

As is clear from Orhan's narrative, he sees himself as the founding element and the executive of the Association's activities. This is an embodiment of Devrimci Yol as a form of social-political movement that is spontaneous, local, open to autonomous influences and initiatives, and shaped around conjunctural problems (Erdoğan, 1998: 33). In addition, Orhan's view of the Associations as an element that belongs to them lies behind the fact that family, kinship, and friendship networks played an essential role in their struggle. Strong familial and social ties had fostered relationships of trust, responsibility, and mutual protection in the social sphere. This makes it possible for more general political issues to become subjectivized and thus deepen their impact. For example, during the social struggle, from the funerals of local militants killed by state forces or right-wing extremists turning into large demonstrations to the great support for miners' strikes, a grassroots solidarity exposes the importance of social

⁸⁶ "Mesela düğününe gitmiyorduk. Şiddet yok... Önce uyarılır. Eğer 'siz karışamazsınız, ben yaparım' diyorsa, o zaman düğününe gitmiyorduk. Bir insanın tek başına düğün yapması ne demek biliyor musun? Sade düğün değil. Diyelim ki traktörü, arabası devrildi. Kimse kaldırmıyor, gelmiyor... Ne yapacak? Yalnızlaşıyor. 'Dernekte söyledik, ona ragmen kumar oynamaya, geceleyin içip içip bağırılmaya, silah atmaya şey yapıyor' dediğimizde zaten üyeler kendi aralarında içten içe tamam diyorlardı... Mesela sınır anlaşmazlığı oluyordu (tarla ya da bahçe) Biz gidiyorduk muharımızla ya da daha yaşlı bu işlerde tecrübelilerle bunları barıştıralım diye. Onlar sınır çiziyordu (tarlaya)."

⁸⁷ "Örgüt diye bir şey yok. Biz bir yerden emir almıyorduk ki. Bizim kendi içimizden, bağrımızdan kopan..."

and familial ties. When I asked the interviewees where or how they were becoming a part of the movement, most of them pointed to such networks. Thus, we clearly observe how social solidarity provides material for actions of political solidarity. This is because politicised solidarity structures had encouraged people to commit to specific goals and to each other within the movement process.

To give an example how such networks worked for young local activists, Veli, who was a high school student at the time and is still on the executive staff of a left-wing political party today, explains the process of integration into the movement and becoming an activist as follows:

When the political atmosphere rises in the neighbourhood you already live in, you start to move in a certain direction. You start to choose...where you are going to go. Naturally, we...preferred the left. Did we read and learn a lot? No. We have an influenced leftism... Influenced by the behaviour of the environment. This is what determined our leftism... (Veli)⁸⁸

After he emphasised the influence of social networks and the general trend of the period on his politicisation process, continued as follows:

We had an association called DİKG-DER as those who came from Devrimci Yol. Just as there was a coffee culture, there was an association culture. People didn't go to coffee houses, but to the association. It was predominantly male. (Veli)⁸⁹

Unlike Orhan, for Veli, the link between the Associations and the Devrimci Yol organisation is quite clear. Moreover, according to Veli's statements, the Associations had begun to provide an alternative to the coffeehouses, which were the socialising environments where networks in everyday life are most functional for men.

⁸⁸ "Zaten yaşadığınız mahallede siyasi atmosfer yükseldiğinde, belli bir yöne doğru hareket etmeye başlıyorsunuz. Nereye gideceğinizi seçmeye başlıyorsunuz. Doğal olarak biz... solu tercih ettik. Çok okuyarak ve öğrenerek mi? Hayır. Etkilenmiş bir solculuğumuz var. Çevrenin davranışlarından etkilendik. Solculuğumuzu belirleyen de bu oldu", Veli, interviewed in Gümüşhacıköy district, 3 December 2021.

⁸⁹ "Devrimci Yolcular olarak DİKG-DER diye bir derneğimiz vardı. Nasıl kahve kültürü varsa dernek kültürü de vardı. İnsanlar kahveye değil derneğe giderdi. Erkek ağırlıklıydı."

It is also necessary to mention the role of figures we can term as intellectuals at the local level. The role of teachers in the movement was important in terms of networking, developing strategies and building trust. In those times, teachers were particularly respected in rural areas. Likewise, in the basin, they had a natural influence on young people and the local population. Teachers organised seminars, both in schools (especially high schools) and in the Associations, with narrow or broad participation, leading to ideological debates. A Devrimci Yol affiliated teacher who was involved in the establishment process of the Associations, and was on the board of directors of the Association in the district where he worked explains why they see the need for association activities as follows:

We saw that the people, young people and so on, were unorganised. We said let's save them from coffeehouses. Together we established the Association... The reason why we need the association was that young people were not politicized. We said, let's create a horizontal organisation, at least raise public awareness... Of course, this was a beginning step, the next ones would come... So, these two things have to go hand in hand; you will be aware, and when the time comes... you will do whatever is necessary. So, the association was a tool for us. Our aim, of course, was to establish a solid order in the society... We had the Associations in our villages. For example, when there was a strike in Çeltek, villagers took food and drinks to them. For months. Why? Worker solidarity, or a peasant-worker alliance, had happened... No movement can work without the support of the people. Workers, civil servants, tradesmen... When we embrace everyone, we can achieve this. (Ali)⁹⁰

The narrative focus is on the role of the Associations in starting a politicisation process and thus building class solidarity across the basin. He underlines the goals of forming

⁹⁰ “Burada baktık halk, gençler filan biraz örgütsüz. Dedik bunları kahve köşelerinden falan kurtaralım. Hep beraber Devrimci-İşçi-Köylü-Gençlik Derneği’ni kurduk... Derneğe ihtiyacı duymamızın sebebi; baktık ki gençler politize olmuyor hiçbir zaman yani. Dedik ki böyle bir yatay örgütlenme yapalım, en azından halk bilinçlensin...Tabii bu bir basamak, ondan sonrası gelecek... Yani bu iki şeyin atbaşı gitmesi lazım; bilinçli olacaksın, yeri gelince...ne gerekiyorsa onu da yapacaksın. Dernek bizim için bir araçtı yani. Amacımız tabii ki ileri aşamalarda toplumda sağlam bir düzenin oluşturulması meselesi... Bizim köylerimizde derneklerimiz vardı. Örneğin Çeltek’te grev olduğu zaman bu köylülerin hepsi oraya yiyeceklerini içeceklerini...götürdü. Aylarca yani. Neden? İşçi dayanışması yani; köylü-işçi ittifakı oluştu... Halk desteği olmadan hiçbir hareket yürümez. İşçi, memnur, esnaf... Tüm kesimleri kucakladığımız zaman zaten bu olayı başarabiliriz yani”, Ali, interviewed in Gümüşhacıköy district, 3 December 2021.

a progressive bloc by embracing different actors in society and uniting them under the concept of ‘the people’. The teachers’ intellectual input to these goals of the struggle was the transfer of pragmatic knowledge rather than to extensive theoretical discourse. This kind of education process prevented the movement from becoming unwieldy, as it involved daily life and the analysis of concrete conditions together with the local people. better understand his role as a teacher-director of one of the Associations, I further ask how Ali developed a dialog with the locals.

We would sit on crossed legs⁹¹, and share our food with them. For instance, they would make pasta and invite us. This would be all they could afford. They themselves ate it anyway. We would be happy to share their food. We grew up in similar places too. If we had been high society revolutionaries, we could’ve looked down on them. But we came from a similar place to them... If you want to process something, you must be accepted first into that society... As we were coming from a similar environment... (Ali)⁹²

He underlines how revolutionaries should treat the people:

You must respect their way of life. If they have a strong religious view, you should not delve into those subjects. You should instead try to touch upon those issues indirectly. In other words, these ethereal concepts cannot be approached by saying ‘this is not true’. First, you will make yourself accepted, you will understand their problems, you will listen, and you will find solutions together. (Ali)⁹³

What is clear from what he says is how important the form and quality of the personal and political relationship with the people is to create possibilities for transformation

⁹¹ In Turkey, in rural areas, meals are traditionally eaten on a floor table, sitting cross-legged throughout the meal. Beyond tradition, floor tables are also associated with poverty.

⁹² “Bağdaş kurup otururduk, yemeğimizi onlarla paylaşırdık. Örneğin, yapmıştır bir makarna, seni davet etmiştir. Olanı bu, gönlünden bu kopmuş. Kendi yediği zaten bu. Onu memnuniyetle yedik. Öyle olduğu süreç içerisinde de kabul gördük. Çünkü biz de o ortamdan çıktık. Belki farklı bir ortamdan gelip de sosyete devrimciliği yapmış olsaydık, onlara tepeden bakabilirdik. Ama biz de o yapıdan geldiğimiz için... Çünkü bir şeyi işlemek istiyorsan, önce seni o toplumun kabullenmesi gerek... Zaten aynı çevrenin çocuğu olduğumuzdan dolayı...”

⁹³ “Bir defa onun yaşam biçimine saygı duyacaksın. Dini açıdan belli şeyleri çok fazla ise, kesinlikle o konuların içerisine girmeyeceksin. O meseleleri dolaylı olarak anlatmaya çalışacaksın. Yani şu uhrevi kavramlar- ‘şu yoktur, bu yoktur’ biçiminde kesinlikle yaklaşılmayacak. Önce kendini kabul ettireceksin, son sorunlarını anlayacaksın, dinleyeceksin, beraberce çözüm üreteceksin.”

according to the given situation. One of the intrinsic factors for the success of social struggle lies in this manner of approach. Just like a pedagogue, he resorted to cognitive methods of ideological transmission. He explains the political perspective behind such methods here as follows:

The only reason for Devrimci Yol (choosing it), is the concrete analyses of Turkey. You cannot adopt a Russian or Chinese revolution for use in Turkey. This is because Turkey has 1400-year-old religion, tradition, family ties, and culture... Mahir says 'a concrete situation needs a concrete analysis'... We organised in line with Turkey's concrete realities. (Ali)⁹⁴

If one aspect of culture is to reproduce the existing system, another aspect contains oppositional elements that are open to being transformed against it. As described earlier, one example is the oppositional forms that solidarity, which is the container of these elements (such as religion and other social traditions), transforms into. The matter with the most limitations within this cultural structure, on the other hand, was the gender issue.

As for the place and motivation of women in the social struggle, I asked teacher Ali whether women frequently visit the Associations that had taken shape as an alternative to man-only coffeehouses:

(The Associations were) predominantly male. Because at the time, young girls did not even go out on the streets. We had tobacco so you wouldn't see a single girl on the street. They would be working in the fields, they wouldn't have any free time... When parents went to the tobacco fields, the girls had to cook, clean, and look after their younger siblings. (Ali)⁹⁵

⁹⁴ "Devrimci Yol olmasının (onu tercih etmemin) tek sebebi, Türkiye'nin somut tahlilleri yapıldığından dolayı yani. Sovyet Birliği'nde ya da Çin'de yapılan bir devrimi siz Türkiye'de uygulayamazsınız. Sebebine gelince, 1400 yıllık burada oturmuş bir din var, bir gelenek var, bir aile bağları var, bir kültür var... Mahir der ki 'somut durumun somut tahlili yapılmalıdır'der... Türkiye'nin somut gerçekleri neyse ona göre örgütleniyorduk biz yani."

⁹⁵ "(Dernekler) erkek ağırlıklıydı. Çünkü o dönemlerde burada genç kızlar bile sokağa çıkmıyorlardı. Tütün meselesi vardı bizim burada. Caddede bir tane kız çocuğu bulamazsın yani. Tarlalardan çıkamaz, zamanı olmaz çünkü... Anne baba tütün yaparsa, o yemeği yapacak, evi süpürecek, küçük kardeşi varsa ona bakacak."

As mentioned above, the role of women in the movement has its limitations. In addition to the aforementioned economic-based barriers, strong family ties, while contributing to the movement in other respects, appear to have operated in reverse for women in certain situations. For example, when I asked Adil's wife to what extent she contributed to the ongoing struggle, she responded by referring to traditional gender roles:

I was taking care of the children. We used to go support the strike, with children in our arms. We would hear things, but we couldn't go out as we had kids. I didn't go around a lot... People did not sleep at night; they would stand guard. Tea would be brewed and taken to them. (Ayşe)⁹⁶

Women's role in the process was more in the form of support and solidarity, such as brewing tea and taking it to the night watchers or cooking and taking food to strikers, as Ayşe mentioned. This aspect of solidarity was directly linked to gender roles. According to the archival data, this was an expected result. This is because what I have obtained from historical documents is that the activists of the movement were mostly men. This showed that most women participated in the movement within the framework of their roles without becoming activists. However, a non-exhaustive analysis risks rendering women's contributions to the struggle nearly invisible. The data obtained from the interviews indicate that there were situations where most women went beyond these roles.

The interviews revealed that a small number of women participated in the movement consistently and took part in the leadership of the organising activities. A wider group of women did not participate much in the movement process due to gender roles, or participated within the framework of these roles. But although these women were not involved in the protests or wider demonstrations consistently, they developed strong

⁹⁶ "Ben çocuklarla ilgileniyordum. Greve desteğe gidiyorduk, çocuğu kucağımıza alıp. Duyuyorduk bir şeyler; ama çıkamıyorduk biz çocuk olunca. Ben pek öyle bir yere gitmiyordum... Gece yatmıyordu millet; nöbet tutuluyordu. Çay demleyip götürülüyordu", Ayşe, interviewed in Merzifon district, 16 March 2013.

reactions to continue the social struggle in extraordinary situations. And this paved the way for their own politicisation.

The first of these was the involvement of women in the violent clashes that broke out at the beginning of the union struggle between supporters of the former trade union and workers defending Yeraltı Maden İş:

I remember them with respect and gratefulness. The village Belvar is just over there, the women of Belvar [Kayadüzü] came to the riot with their axes and picks... They were right there in the riot. It lasted two or three hours, there were guns. The guns just kept going. The army came, and they circled the hills, but they couldn't get in. It was that kind of a riot! (Zeki)⁹⁷

In another example, Nevzat speaks of his wife's support as follows:

We would go (to a rally), she would slip a gun into her bosom and go. When the police raided our home, the gun was there. They raided, and she slipped the gun into her bosom and left from the back door (laughs) (Nevzat)⁹⁸

Cemil's wife Elif, who participated in part of the interview, describes her reaction to a right-wing miner during Cemil's detention by the police as follows:

E: 'Wait for them, they will be sentenced' he said. He's an acquaintance from the mine. Rightist. But with them, he pretends to be a leftist. We took our shoes off and beat him up. He said this at the court. He said 'Cemil's wife beat me up'.

I: Were you leftists then?

E: Of course!⁹⁹

⁹⁷ "Saygıyanan, minnetle anayım, Belvar köyü şurada, Belvar köyünden kadınlar kazmalarınan küreklerinen geldiler o çatışmaya... O çatışmanın içerisinde bunlar. Ya iki buçuk-üç saat çatışma, silahlı çatışma. Silahlar hiç susmuyor. Asker gelmiş, bilmem ne gelmiş. O tepeleri çevirmişler, içeri giremiyorlar. Öyle bir çatışma."

⁹⁸ "Şimdi giderdik (mitinge), koynuna silahı sokar giderdi o mahallede. Polisler evi basıyor, silah da evdeydi. Evi basıcık, bu yandan girincik, o silahı koynuna sokmuş, öteki kapıdan çıkmış gitmiş (gülüyor)"

⁹⁹ "E: Konuşun konuşun' dedi, 'onları bekleyin, onlar ceza alacaklar' dedi. Madende çalışan, tanıdık. Sağcı. Bunların yanında kendini solcu gösteriyor. Ayakkabılarımızı çıkardık, bastık sopayı buna. Onu gitmiş ifadede vermiş mahkemede. 'Cemil'in karısı beni dövdü' demiş."

In a similar context, Zeki's wife Ayşe shares the following example:

At that time, I had two golden earrings. Our friends needed money, they said, 'Sister Ayşe, give us these earrings, we need them a lot. We'll pay you back later.' I took them out and gave them without hesitation.

Ultimately, while a part of the women was not very involved in the struggle, for several women, the process of struggle provided a practical sense of politics, beyond traditional roles- i.e., that of the supportive housewife.

Another component of the struggle was groups with Alevi identity. If we look at the internal factors triggering social movement, besides the characteristics of the basin as a mining region, a specific factor stands out as an effective driver, namely the intense participation of the Alevi population in the movement. "The Alevis' support for leftist politics including the social democrat parties and socialist organizations is one of the common generalizations accepted about Turkish politics". (Ertan, 2019: 4) During the 1970s it is possible to say that Alevis were increasingly affiliated with left-socialist political organisations. The exclusion of Alevis as a sectarian minority has historically led them to take anti-state positions. More specifically, the horrific attacks on the Alevi population in the second half of the 1970s (i.e., in Maras- 1978, in Çorum- 1980) strengthened the Alevi reaction against the state.

The state-supported massacres of Alevis living in the provinces of Maraş (1978) and Çorum¹⁰⁰ (1980) created unrest and uneasiness among the local Alevi population. The Resistance Committees in the basin were largely based on the need of Alevis for self-defence. Sunnis who identified themselves as leftists or revolutionaries were similarly motivated by active self-defence against right-wing extremists. In this respect, the manifestation of the logic of resistance committees in the region, which was part of a more general praxis, also encouraged Sunni-Alevi solidarity. Above all, such

¹⁰⁰ Çorum is located on the border of the basin.

solidarity was an element that was considered to avoid the possibility of similar violent incidents in the basin.

In addition to making the need for self-defence immanent in the movement, Devrimci Yol also employed the context of solidarity derived from religious references as the driving force of the movement. As such, the reason for the unification of Alevi and Sunni under the anti-fascist bloc was not derived from only a survival mechanism, but also traditional solidaristic ties. Both Alevi and Sunni sects are deeply rooted in solidarity, a fundamental doctrine of Islam that makes it possible for such culturally constructed solidarity to be attached to the political realm, in other words, to be politicised.

What is meant by the politicisation here is not the cutting away of social value systems, but the transformation of their content. It is possible to place the connection between the social struggle process and religiosity in the basin in this context. The first is that the Alevi's pre-existing orientation towards leftist movements was transferred to the movement and the Alevi population became a kind of driver. Indeed, the village with the strongest resistance (Belvar) is an Alevi village. Second, the solidarity dynamics between Alevi and Sunni could be reproduced in the political context, in the anti-fascist front. In this sense it can be said that traditional values of the locals, which are also part of religiosity, contain elements of opposition as well as compliance with the system.

Various groups of society came together in pursuit of a common goal by pooling their interests and values. For a prominent example, when people take steps towards self-governance on objective issues such as security, education, transportation, etc. and came together in solidarity. There is another dimension, however, which is "not simply by actors' real understanding of their shared interests, but also by their imagining commonality with others" (Bayat, 2005: 901) Designs and narratives that collectively manifest in imagination and discourse and historical collective memory and thus achieve social reality, have constituted an engaging reference point for the struggle of subjective perceptions. Particularly in situations of increased the state repression and violence, such mechanisms of imagination had come into function.

The story narrated by Mehmet explains it as follows:

Yeni Çeltek had a mosque. He was the imam at the mosque. We were interrogated at the same time. He would come downstairs and say, ‘Hold on boys, our prophet was also tortured’. (Mehmet Kök)¹⁰¹

In addition to imagining, the manifestation of the heroizing of revolutionary leaders shown earlier is, for the imam in this story, the exemplification of the prophet’s spirit of resistance. The Imam’s words shed important light on how social struggles can be inclusive even in different or contradictory situations. The distance between leftist movements in Turkey and religion has been used by the state as a constant propaganda tool, but it also has a grain of truth. However, as seen in the example above, the incorporation of religious elements into social movements can pave the way for a broader united resistance, and this is what is happening in the basin for both Alevis and Sunnis.

Likewise, Aydın makes the following connection between the death of Imam Hüseyin, who is seen as an important symbol of the search for justice in Alevi doctrine (the Kerbela incident), and his participation in the movement:

There is the incident of Karbala... Since then, Alevis have always opposed injustice. They are on the side of the oppressed people. They do not favour oppression. (Aydın)¹⁰²

It is evident from the narratives that such religious references reinforced the unifying power of movement, adding deeper dimensions to solidaristic practices and imaginations. In this sense, a reason for the success of this movement is the fact that it was possible to capture the developing momentums in a process in which imaginations and concrete reality were able to function in tandem. From the

¹⁰¹ “Camisi vardı Yeni Çeltek’in. Camide imamlık yapıyordu. Biz aynı süreçte sorgudaydık onla. İniyordu geliyordu diyordu ki ‘dayanın çocuklar, peygamberimiz de çok işkenceler görmüş’ diyordu.”

¹⁰² “Kerbela Vakası vardır... Ondan bugüne Aleviler hep haksızlığa karşı çıkarlar. Ezilen insanın yanında olurlar. Ezmek taraftarı olmazlar”

perspective of Aydın, for example, this implies the slogan they chant is something that arises spontaneously:

All for one and one for all. A closed fist. The slogan emerges spontaneously...
'Workers-peasants-youth, unite for revolution!' The slogan arises spontaneously.
(Aydın)¹⁰³

Aydın's words evoke the fundamental role of the leadership of Devrimci Yol, 'systematizing the spontaneous tendencies of the people' (Erdoğan, 1998: 28).

Yet for all such systems to be sustained, a relationship of trust between activists and the public needed to be developed. Rural people may resent or feel unaccepted if they are treated critically or patronisingly, especially in religious matters. For them, religious values can be a set of meanings on which they build many social values. Therefore, the approach of an intellectual from outside the region and the local people to the phenomenon of religion is quite different. Here is a story about how Mehmet could deal with such challenging situations:

For example, especially these people from Belvar, since they were completely homogeneous... they were more attached to their own rituals, they would ask, 'What are you?' I would answer, 'I am whatever you take me to be,' I would say, 'I am both Alevi and Sunni. I am neither, I am both'. I would say, 'I am what you take me to be'. They thought, 'He is one of us.' For example, you attend their funerals. They... they don't welcome outsiders in their rituals, and prayers, as they make Cem. But I was allowed to be there with them. (Mehmet Kök)¹⁰⁴

This shows that the revolutionaries were not only effective militants who respond to popular demands and promote their interests but also actors in perceptual and

¹⁰³ "Birimiz hep, hepimiz biriz. Sıklı bir yumruk. Slogan kendiliğinden oluyor... 'İşçi-köylü-geçlik, devrim için birleştik!' Yani slogan kendiliğinden geliyor."

¹⁰⁴ "Mesela bana sorarlardı özellikle bu Belvarlılar, onlar tamamen homojen oldukları için...kendi ritüellerine daha bağlıydı onlar, 'Hoca sen nesin?' derlerdi. 'Ya ben ne kabul ederseniz oyum' derdim, 'hem Aleviyim hem Sünniyim'. Hiçbiri değilim, tamam mı? Her ikisiyim. 'Siz nasıl kabul edersiniz öyleyim', derdim. 'Hoca bizden' derlerdi onlar tamam mı? Mesela cenazelerine filan katılırsın. Onlar... dışarıdan insan pek ritüel anında, dua anında hani Cem yapıyorsunuz o anda dışarıdan birisi olmasını pek şey karşılamazlar. Ama ben orada bulunurdum."

emotional processes of solidarity and identification. Funerals, like many other rituals, were events based on solidarity.

Ultimately, both concrete experiences and processes of discourse and imaginative construction characterise the solidaristic foci of the movement across the basin. All these elements come together as a hallmark of the practice of self-governance. The experience of self-governance of the people is the result of their synchronized participation in the decision-making mechanisms of everyday life and the heterogeneous commonality of the ways in which they perceive the common, but also contradictory and subjective, aspects of their interests. Although such a structure did not ensure a high level of ideological commitment of each of the actors involved in the movement, it gave support and legitimacy to the political struggle. Moreover, it has paved the way for the formation of a new common sense around repertoires of solidarity. Such attempts of the people in the basin to become the subjective agents of their own lives are complementary to the practice of self-management in the form of the miners' workplace occupation, which will be shown in the next subsection.

4.3. The Workplace Occupation and the State's Response

It was the general aim of ending the rising social movements in Turkey because, three months after these events in Yeni Çeltek, the military coup of 12 September 1980 was carried out and all opposition bushels and labour movements were suppressed, revolutionaries across the country were killed or imprisoned. Therefore, the state intervention in Yeni Çeltek can be considered a part of this process. However, on the other hand, what is more important for this study is to consider what was indeed going on locally because the closure of a workplace due to the labour movement there was not a common but a rare phenomenon.

In May 1980, the miners went on strike again after the collective bargaining negotiations failed to yield results with the demands of increased wages, shorter shifts and working days, and improvements in living standards. The employer then decided to close the mine indefinitely and the workers took control of the mine and resumed

production. After a month of producing and managing a wide range of activities, from workplace organization to the sale of coal, the miners were forced to stop production and return to strike action. The main reason for this was the loss of labour power due to increased attacks, which meant that miners had difficulty getting to the workplace and were in fear for their lives because, for example, workers' shuttles were being shot at. In addition, not all miners could be expected to share the same determination and conviction in the decision, which could lead to disruptions at work.

In the interviews, when miners described the motivation for the workplace control decision taken in response to the decision to close the workplace, the main emphasis was on the motives of outrage and fear of losing their jobs. For example, Fevzi explains how he felt when he first heard about the closure decision:

It's very sad. Your workplace closes down. We were ready to die to defend it. This world order takes people's food from them. They snatch your bread from your hands! (Fevzi)¹⁰⁵

After five years of struggle and victories, the decision to close the workplace was bitter for the workers. In order to protect their gains and their jobs, they decided to resist, as they had done until then. Another motivation for this decision, according to the workers' narratives, was their view that the closure decision was a political move carried out by the employer-state alliance. The employer had cited a few reasons for the closure that had no real basis in fact. According to the employer, the mine was loss-making and there were insufficient coal reserves. However, the miners practically exposed this lie; at the end of a month of production and management, after the workers had received their salaries, they sent the profits to the employer's account, proving that the enterprise was not making a loss. In response to the claim that there were insufficient reserves, moreover, the union brought in engineers from the Chamber of Mining Engineers, an independent association, to check and confirm that there were

¹⁰⁵ "Çok acı bir şey. İşyerin kapanıyor. İşyerine sahip çıkmak için ölümü bile göze aldık biz. Aşını elinden alıyor düzen. Aşını, ekmeğini elinden alıyor!"

indeed sufficient reserves. Ultimately, the employer's claims were concretely refuted. This motivated the workers to struggle even harder. After all, they had practically proved that the employer was lying. In this case, it became clear beyond the rhetoric that the closure decision was politically motivated and an assault on their rights and struggle.

According to both union and the opposition media accounts; this decision was the political framing of anti-worker policies. In a statement given to a daily newspaper published by Devrimci Yol, Demokrat (December 26, 1979 - September 12, 1980), Çetin Uygur explains the decision of the closure was totally political and not judicial as follows:

It is the political authority that made the decision to close down Yeni Çeltek. With this decision, they have added a new one to their existing attacks. This is another game to turn the workplace into a fascist place (Demokrat newspaper, 4.6.1980, p.4). (Translate by the author.)

Likewise, a worker, who also made a statement to the same newspaper, says the employer's ultimate goal is to dismantle the revolutionary organisation in Yeni Çeltek:

I live in Havza, in a household of seven. I earn 9,500 liras. After 1.1.1980, we started a collective contract. In the meetings the employer offered three wages...Our union, Yeraltı Maden İş, insisted on a collective contract meeting. This meeting ended in disagreement. The employer resolved to shut Yeni Çeltek down... they claim that they are losing money...In fact, they aren't. The daily production is 250-300 tonnes. The income is 1,500,000 liras... They aren't losing anything; the aim is to ruin the revolutionary organisation... The mine has 15 meters of coal...They say, 'There is no coal' and don't allow mining (Demokrat Newspaper, 4.6.1980, p.4). (Translated by the author.)

What was said in the interview with the same miner 41 years later revealed that he still saw the closure decision in the same way:

It was our workplace; it was our meal ticket. So, we wouldn't let anyone look at it sideways. We would protect it at all costs... It doesn't hurt here anyway, you are lying... We will see that you are not doing any harm here... 'Workers,

villagers, and youth united for the revolution!’ These were our slogans. I mean, these guys couldn’t bear these slogans. (Cemil)¹⁰⁶

Ultimately, unlike movements where capitalism and the state represent a certain level of political action, the movement in the Yeni Çeltek basin, organised by subjective actors on the ground based on local needs, seems to have succeeded in eroding the legitimate domains of the state in the social structure over time. While the economic logic of collective action disrupts capitalist accumulation, its political logic disrupts political legitimacy. (Meyer, 2008: 31) According to the data obtained from the statements of some workers, they evaluated not only the employer but also the state in the category of enemies against their labour struggle. From the narratives of several miners, it is understood that the movement processes laid the groundwork for eroding the legitimacy of the state:

Fevzi: The state never supports the worker. The state is on the side of the exploiter.

I: Were you against the state then?

Fevzi: Of course. Because we are people who defend our labour...¹⁰⁷

For Fevzi, the position of the state at the opposite pole was quite clear because he felt its effects in a direct way. In addition to direct oppression, the state was drawn into a variety of social, cultural, and ideological actions that took place outside of its purview in an indirect way, which might be called the state’s ideological hegemony. When workers sought to take a strategic position against this hegemony, their first aim was to turn their demands and actions into political issues. The state’s response, as

¹⁰⁶ “Orası bizim işyerimizdi, orası bizim ekmek tekmemizdi. Hiç kimse oraya yan gözle baktırtmazdık yani. Orayı biz gözümüz gibi korurduk ya... Zaten bura zarar etmiyor, sen yalandan yani... Biz burada senin zarar etmediğini anlayacağız... ‘İşçi, köylü, gençlik devrim için birleştik!’ Bunlar bizim sloganlarımızdı. Bu sloganları bu adamlar çekemiyorlardı yani.”

¹⁰⁷ “Fevzi: Devlet hiçbir zaman işçinin yanında olmaz, sömürenin yanında olur.

Devlete karşı mıydınız yani?

Fevzi: Tabii. Biz emeğimizi savunan bir insan olduğumuz için...”

evidenced by developments during the last strike, was to block the further and prolonged politicisation of demands.

In this sense, what was written in the section about the state in the education brochure of Yeraltı Maden İş is elucidating:

All domestic and foreign bosses, in other words, the enemies of the working class and laborers, claim the state is unbiased and independent... some also strive to show the state as compassionate... But the state is neither mother nor father. As the state disciplines abuse by using religious, artistic, philosophical, and cultural education tools...as it strives for persuasion, it uses law enforcement, i.e., coercion, as its main means of discipline (Yeraltı Maden İş Education Notes, pp. 72-74). (Translated by the author.)

Several workers, on the other hand, pointed primarily to more immediate enemies rather than the state. Cemil, for example, pointed to the local followers of MHP (Nationalist Movement Party, which held the paramilitary power of that time), who were also called fascists:

They couldn't stand us. That's why we went to prison. The people on the other side - I mean, the people who were members of the MHP at that time, they couldn't interfere with us. They were afraid of us. Because we were organised. What did they do? I don't know, they went and reported names, they made complaints. (Cemil)¹⁰⁸

However, in one way or another, the process of self-management that came with the last strike clearly expresses an attempt to subjectivise the oppressed or silenced classes in the basin by the state, and to change the codes in the cultural and political sphere by the miners and the local population. Even the state itself recognised this as such. The social struggles in the basin were seen as a threat to the state regime and this was clearly expressed as a violation of the Constitution in the reasoned judgment of the

¹⁰⁸ “Bizi çekemediler yani. Zaten bizim cezaevi yatmamız hepsi de ondan oldu. bizim karşıdaki insanlar- yani o zamanın MHP’lisi işte insanlar ne bileyim yani gelip bize müdahale edemediler. Yani çekinirlerdi bizden. Çünkü biz örgütlüydük. Ne yaptılar? Ne bileyim yani, gittiler isimler bildirdiler, işte ne bileyim şikayette bulundular.”

Yeni Çeltek case. (Yeni Çeltek Case Reasoned Judgment). The miners were accused of attempting to abolish the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, and organizing an illegal strike was cited as one of the reasons for this, although they had applied the normal legal rules of industrial relations:

They [strikes] all became illegal. Our three strikes became illegal. And then we paid for them. All workers were punished. Everyone. Those who did not join in anything were also punished. Those who didn't care were punished too. Of course, we were also punished. (Zeki)¹⁰⁹

The process was in which the struggle intensifies, the sides become more crystallized. In contrast to previous strike processes, the involvement of the state was clear at that time:

The Governor of Amasya's statement that 'The workplace is closed, the workers are working illegally' and the 'spokesperson' of the employer of Yeni Çeltek, the statements of the governors of Çorum, Ordu, and Amasya that "There are Yeni Çeltek mine workers behind the Çorum, Merzifon, Suluova, Havza and Fatsa incidents". Calling the governor of Amasya and saying, 'You haven't closed Yeni Çeltek yet', the Minister of Culture saying, 'Let's make the workers resign and disperse, let's say we have the workplace closed, the law will follow', and the Minister of Energy saying 'Yeni Çeltek is dangerous, we closed it' (Göktaş, 2022: 73). (Translated by the author.)

The facts that Göktaş summarised above were an important indicator that the state was determined to end the movement in Yeni Çeltek and the region and acted with the employer to cut the centre vein of this movement. It was a highly political interpretation that led the government to label the Yeni Çeltek mine "dangerous" by linking its workers and revolutionary practices.

When I asked this question to the workers I interviewed, I got answers that, as mentioned above, the government was aiming to end five years of bitter labour

¹⁰⁹ "Hepsi yasadışı oldu zaten. Bizim 3 tane grevimiz yasadışı oldu. Ondan sonra da bunun hesabını verdik. Bütün işçiler ceza aldı. Herkes. Hiçbir şey bilmeyen insanlar da ceza aldı. Bana ne diyen insanlar da ceza aldı. Tabii bizler de ceza aldık."

struggle in Yeni Çeltek with unpredictable outcomes (such as the sense of “danger”) both in terms of the state and ruling classes. This uncertainty is also evidenced by the withdrawal of control by the state and employer in Yeni Çeltek. And workers saying “we will continue production” was a position won against this decision.

The self-management practice in the form of workplace occupation was perceived by the state as a threat because of the miners becoming overwhelmingly powerful, while an increasingly politicised role was assumed by the miners. Ultimately, the miners’ struggle once again was able to merge with the social struggle across the basin. A miner emphasises the economic importance of the mine for the basin and therefore the struggle will be carried out together with the people of the basin:

There are revolutionary workers in Yeni Çeltek. They’ll shut it down to dissipate them. But they will not be able to dissipate the workers and the people. There are a lot of villagers who benefit from our presence. We shop from them. If the mine is closed, they will go hungry too. We will therefore fight together with the people; we will continue to produce together... They cannot beat us. The people and the shopkeepers benefit from our presence, they say that they support us (Demokrat, 4 June 1980, p.4). (Translated by the author.)

As can be concluded from the above statements, workers’ decision to take control of the workplace was influenced by the reassurance of a rising struggle across the basin. Practices of solidarity between the local community and the miners (such as massive community support during strikes and miners providing coal to the community) appear to have provided the basis for workplace control. As such, workplace control is a positive outcome of the mobilisation not being confined to the workplace. It is also an indication that the progress of miners’ self-governance is being woven as a process. That is, taking control of the workplace, which came at the end of a five-year struggle, had its own strong foundations. Union branch chief, Osman Fahri Şanlı, explained it as follows:

The worker has understood that he can be the one who governs as well as the one who produces. We also include this principle in our collective agreement texts. It is not something new. This is the basis of our trade union understanding (Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 3 August 1980, p.4). (Translated by the author.)

As Osman mentioned, the strike was not different from the previous one in terms of content. It was, on the other hand, different because it was more radical and incisive in its form of action. After having to make the decision to cease production after a month, workers continued their action at the workplace in the form of occupation. They carried food and water underground. If there was an attack that would force them to leave the workplace, they planned to retreat underground so as not to abandon the workplace. All activities during this period were tightly controlled in cooperation with the Devrimci Yol and workers' councils. Several Devrimci Yol militants would often go to the workplace or stay there during this period. Yet, it became difficult to organise a resistance where the workplace was always the focus. For example, it was necessary to stay in the mine not only during the day but also at night to keep watch. It was more difficult than before to carry on with daily life and to continue the resistance at the workplace, but the miners remained determined even during this period because of the continued support from the community and because the solidarity and collectivity at the workplace were very strong and had already become politicized. However, that night the putschists attacked the mine, there were too few workers at the mine and they were unable to carry out the resistance they had planned.

All the workers were tried, and some were arrested. The union management, staff, and lawyers, including Çetin Uygur, were also tried and sentenced. Deadly torture was inflicted on anyone associated with them. Both miners and local people were accused of being members of a "terrorist organisation", in what was to be called the Yeni Çeltik Devrimci Yol case. At the forefront of the state's strategy to undermine the power of the popular classes and the practice of regional self-governance was to create the image of being "exploited" by "terrorists". This meant evacuating the content of the movement created by the people themselves. In other words, the sense of solidarity and cohesion they had experienced was stolen from them. In the interviews, when talking about this latest process, a few miners sometimes told me, although I did not ask, that the movement was not planned or led by any political organisation. It was to be expected that they would be sensitive about this because they had been intimidated and repressed by the state through deadly persecutions. The traumas of these

experiences still seemed very fresh. Some miners did not want to continue their interviews because they were crying and became distraught. Yet their political transformation seemed just as permanent. Nevzat, for example, describes his traumatic experiences but says he has no regrets, proving the lasting impact of the movement:

I am there internally. In spirit! So, I'm there. I don't have any regrets. My thoughts are always there, with them. With the workers. I was tortured for 96 days. They used to drive us in cars at night, beat us, torture us...in the water. But we didn't know where it was taking place. We had a sack over our heads, our hands were tied behind our backs. They would take us like this to torture and bring us back in the morning... our feet would not fit in our shoes. Our hands were so bad our fingers wouldn't meet. (Nevzat)¹¹⁰

All other interviewees, like Nevzat, stated that today they still know they were right and have no regrets. As shown throughout the study, they were indeed expressing this with a politicised consciousness. Therefore, fear could not be the only dynamic behind some interviewees' insistence that they were not led by a political organisation. Each of them had already been punished by the state and their legal processes were closed. Thus, another dynamic, and probably the more important one, appears that they still refused to allow their struggle, which was growing in their own hands, to be stolen from them. This is the other one of the important findings from the data that shows that the movement in the basin was a genuine experience of self-governance. They moved often on their own initiative, creating their own emancipatory forms, and a wide variety of loose formations, as mentioned neighbourhood, and workplace committees, breaking the predetermined dogmatic patterns of revolutionary movements.

¹¹⁰ "Ben ruhen oradayım. Ruhen! Oradayım yani. Bir yılmıgım, bir pişmanlıgım olmadı da olmaz da. Benim hep düşüncem, fikrim, şeyim hep orada yani onlarla birlikte. İşçilerlennen birlikte. 96 gün işkence gördüm. Bizi arabalan gece götürürlerdi, döverlerdi, işkence yaparlardı...suyun içinde. Ama nerede yapıldığını bilmezdik. Kafamıza çuval geçirilmiş, ellerimiz arkadan bağlı. Öyle götürürlerdi işkenceye, sabaha karşı getirirlerdi... ayağımız ayakkabılara sığmazdı. Ellerimiz kötek gibiydi, parmaklarımız kavuşmazdı böyle."

What the state called aiding and abetting Devrimci Yol was legal accusations against miners and local people. If one aspect of the state's strategy here was to pacify the main actors of the struggle as stated above, another aspect was to separate Devrimci Yol and its sympathizers from each other and to end the legitimacy of both the movement by portraying Devrimci Yol as a marginal apparatus disconnected from the people. However, just by looking at the reasoned verdict, it is seen that a thousand people have reached the final stage of the trial. Even if it is impossible to specify exactly, the number of those who were detained, interrogated, and released after a period of detention is said to be over five thousand. The interviewees' statements also support this. For example, when I asked Osman his opinion on whether Devrimci Yol was accepted by the people of the basin, he replied as follows:

Well, in the case we are on trial, I have seen that there are, to use my own expression, forgive me, there are scoundrels. There are drummers, there are tavern keepers; in other words, there is no professional group that does not exist. This means that Dev-Yol has reached everyone. (Osman)¹¹¹

Beyond the local level, it is also a fact that the leftist movement in Turkey, of which Devrimci Yol was an important part as a popular movement, influenced policies at the national level. The following statement by Kenan Evren, the main actor of the military coup and president of Turkey (1980-82) after the coup, clearly demonstrates this: "If we had not done it, those in Fatsa would have done it." Kenan Evren refers to Devrimci Yol as "those in Fatsa" and explicitly implies that there would have been a revolution without the military coup. As a rehearsal for the military coup, a joint operation was carried out in this district on July 12, 1980.

Another strategy employed by the state at the local level was aimed at breaking the dynamics of solidarity as the primary bonding mechanism of the social movement was its grassroots solidarity. The most important element that enhanced solidarity in the

¹¹¹ "Şimdi yargılandığımız davada ben gördüm ki kendi tabirimle, affedersin kahpesi var, davulcusu var, meyhanecisi var; yani olmayan meslek grubu yok. Demek ki Dev-Yol herkese ulaşmış."

movement process was the strengthening of collectivity by pruning individualistic tendencies. As mentioned earlier, this process was framed by moral and ethical considerations. The state, on the other hand, forced people to turn each other in, to scapegoats so to speak; people were forced to name family members, relatives, or friends and tell what they had done. Such confessions were obtained under the threat of severe torture. This meant that people stopped protecting each other and started acting against each other, opposite their moral incentives during the movement. Certain people became confessors by force, others because they were already close to right-wing organisations.

What is clear is that the state considered the developments in the basin as an attack on its sovereignty. The movement's characteristic of proposing and implementing concrete solutions to problems, in other words, the filling of the state's authority vacuum with counter-hegemonic actions involving everyday life, has become a threat to the state's hegemony. Aydın's narrative provides a clear example of this:

Can you imagine? The judge said to us, 'Are you the state?' He said, 'How can you build a school?' We were trying to do what the state could not do. (Aydın)¹¹²

4.4. Concluding Remarks

This chapter considers of three topics related to the impact of the social struggle in the Yeni Çelték basin: the dynamics of the participation of the actors in the movement, the political transformations of their consciousness, and the repression and violence of the state following the radicalisation of the conflict.

Spontaneous and natural leaders emerged during the movement, but the leadership of the political organisation, Devrimci Yol, remained the key to sustaining the movement. The fact that most activists were indigenous explicitly shaped the character of the culture of movement. These activists made much easier to work and organise

¹¹² "Düşünebiliyor musun? Hakim bize dedi ki 'siz devlet misiniz?' 'Ya oğlum siz devlet misiniz, nasıl okul yapıyorsunuz' dedi. Devletin yapamadığını biz yapmaya çalışıyorduk."

networks. On the other hand, the workers' self-governing experience and the occupation of the workplace as a final point revealed a political consciousness that strengthened itself through action. In this light, a reciprocal effect of the role of miners in the rising social struggle in the basin is evident.

The main motive of the social movement in the basin was to fight for the eventual seizure of political power by the oppressed classes. Before that, however, "social movements may also succeed in terms of changing...value systems which, in the long run, may confront political power". (Bayat, 2005: 898) The realisation of the transformation of value systems appears to be one of the important pillars of the movement.

I have analysed the movement process by focusing on its stages. At these stages, I argued that political organising strategies and progressive trade unionism were decisive for the pattern of struggles in and outside the workplace. Overall, the implementation of collective agencies, their dynamics, and the role of different actors are presented as categories that will enable us to better understand the movement.

In conclusion, this chapter shows how transformations of ideology, cultural structures, and perceptions in a political process through the influence of collective agency explain how miners, various oppressed actors in the basin, intellectuals, and activists collectively construct power.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The experience of self-management in the Yeni Çeltek mine and the parallel emerging popular control structures and self-governing in the basin exemplify pathways through which miners and other popular classes had been able to reconceptualise economic and social relations in order to directly address and interrupt the injustices and inequalities created by the current economic system. This movement in the Yeni Çeltek basin demonstrates both the possibilities of reversing the labour-capital relationship and of construction of alternative socio-economic relations supported by a wider solidarity network. In this context, it appears that the miners formed an alliance with other strata of society and oppressed groups, and that was a key source of the movement's success. Therefore, the social struggle in Yeni Çeltek has a dual character. The rise of the movement in Yeni Çeltek is due to horizontal alliances, i.e., class-conscious networks of miners and the popular classes organised in committees and aimed at transforming state power. In addition, it is relevant to emphasise the influence of intellectuals on the struggle process.

Solidarity is one of the two aspects of cooperation rooted in society. Another is that of ritual in connection with solidarity. Throughout the social struggle, rituals were utilised to represent elements of resistance. As we have seen throughout the thesis, these relations had been transformed through the reconceptualization and transformation of social values and norms that were inseparable from their economic and political content.

Therefore, self-governing practices were meant to be not only to challenge the established set of governing ideas and customs, but moreover to construct new political in areas from which they were excluded. In this context, the miners' struggle growing around class consciousness in the first sense embarked on revealing a radical disassociation between the culture of the oppressed and elites/ruling classes, in other words, as described by Thompson it "reconstruct the view from below". (Thompson, 1993: 22) In this sense, the case of Yeni Çeltik illustrates examples of constantly mobile popular control initiatives at various levels, displaying an anti-hegemonic stance, that also had major goals including revolution.

In the context of politicisation, to emphasise a point made in the theoretical section, Gramsci's concept and explanations of hegemony highlight the role of ideology in class formations and relations. The transformations of consciousness described throughout the thesis, which can be called "politicisation", are categorised as an attempt at counter-hegemony by the lower classes as an ideological as well as structural response. This process of politicisation was explained as a result of both structural factors and ideological or emotional ones. The former is not necessarily more important than the latter, nor is there necessarily an absolute opposition between them.

The ideology of class relations provides a basis for explaining how class identity is appropriated by the oppressed in order to transform the relations of production in their favour. As we saw in chapter three, the miners' dominant participation in the control of labour processes as well as in the political struggle had an impact on their sense of self-emancipation. The miners' developing consciousness also contributed to the reversal of the economic and social logic of everyday life and played a leading role in the rise of the basin-wide struggle shown in chapter four. As I have sought to show throughout this study, the experience of workers and other oppressed elements of society through the practice of self-management and the creation of their own new reality here and now has effectively transformed them into subjective agents. Attempts to co-operatively manage their resources and capacities had brought them both economic benefits and a sense of reclaiming their dignity. In other words, as seen

during the study, interviewees often moralised against the economic and political hierarchies arising from the capitalist system, such as inequality and injustice.

As demonstrated during the thesis, the interviews revealed the importance of the contribution of emotional processes, such as moral outrage, to structural processes and the will of actors. The miners sought not only improved wages but also redress for the mistreatment they had suffered at the hands of management, including unfair layoffs and disciplinary matters. Moreover, such class consciousness appears to be shaped around also certain cultural references such as collectivism and solidarity rooted in everyday life as opposed to individualism. As such, political solidarity developed in a process in which both its intellectual and practical notions were re-formulated.

During the thesis, I have focused on the process of movement and its transformative impact on individuals and society rather than on the causes of the movement and point to its political consequences. All of this is based on how class identity is interpreted by the oppressed themselves, and in this context, the data from the interviews have been presented throughout the study. The findings point to the lasting effects of strike and protest experiences. Such experiences have played a role in increasing actors' commitment to the movement and becoming activists. The Yeni Çeltek case has had lasting consequences for actors in terms of politicisation. In this context, the manifestation of miners' defence of a broad spectrum of anti-capitalist struggle has emerged as the experience of self-governance. The lasting effect was found in the case of Yeni Çeltek to stem from the practices of self-governance in both workplace and neighbourhoods, which was the main theme emphasized throughout the study.

Following the suppression of the movement in Yeni Çeltek, the state's expectation was that the traces of movement would be easily erased, but on the contrary, the effects of the movement can be seen and felt in the basin even today. Observations from my three trips to the region and interviews with actors attest to this. Namely, the political activities carried out by the current political extensions of Devrimci Yol in the basin continue, and some miners, teachers, and young people who participated in the movement process in the past are still involved in these activities today. Moreover,

since many people lost their jobs after the movement, economic hardships were solved through solidarity networks. Solidarity among family, relatives, and friends continues in similar ways, and these networks were observed to still be an important element in politicisation. Thus, contrary to the popular expectation that the effects of 1970s labour activism have been erased and leave no trace today, the case examined in this study shows that the transformation can and has been profound and lasting.

5.1. How does the Yeni Çeltek Experience Open Spaces for Today's Social Opposition in Turkey?

It is an indisputable fact that the contexts of the labour and social movements of the 1970s and today in Turkey and around the world are quite different. However, one characteristic of repertoires of the contentious is that they can be learnt and adapted by future generations. A social struggle at a particular moment in time, in one way or another, might influence the subsequent historical course of events and thus have lasting consequences. When we look at the forms of action, discourses, and symbols, and their representation in contemporary opposition movements, it is likely that we will find references to the past. One of the best examples of this is that the famous slogan of the New Çeltek miners, 'We are the producers, we will be the rulers', has also found a place in the union struggle of the miners in Soma today. (Çelik, 2019: 160)

Regardless of the political and cultural ways in which the bridges between the social movements of the past and the present are built, these movements are based on common denominators of understanding, which is the general tendency of the period. I believe the experience of Yeni Çeltek has lessons for today on how to undermine capitalism without ignoring the general determinism of capitalism, but also considering certain issues such as locality, specificity, and participation. Yeni Çeltek is one of the best historical examples of how oppositional elements can be transformed into revolutionary nuclei by arising from the concrete conditions of the people themselves and in line with their will for their own future emancipation. On the other hand, we should avoid exaggerating the meaning of Yeni Çeltek and its impact today.

The movement in the basin was left unfinished by being subjected to state aggression before it had matured sufficiently, could not move from a defensive position to a more decisive position, and could not unite with other resistances at the national level.

On the other hand, the social struggle explained throughout the study challenge traditional approaches that see them as “instruments” of revolution by constantly postponing the self-organising practices. This struggle, therefore, typically is a part of the political visions of Devrimci Yol that moved beyond the dilemma of ‘either revolution or reform’. What I mean is that the processes of struggle that began with the initiative of the revolutionary militias are owned and shaped by subjective agents themselves.

Devrimci Yol’s praxis, which was a subjective result of this unique character of Devrimci Yol at that time and which I think might be a source of inspiration for today’s political organisations, was also the way for it to become a social movement by establishing unbreakable, permanent ties with the popular classes. In this context, his political stance might be summarised as organising here and now within the framework of a concrete analysis of concrete circumstances.

Likewise, Yeraltı Maden İş’s understanding of trade unionism differs sharply from both the trade unionism of its time and today. The unions affiliated with all three confederations operating in Turkey today (DİSK, Türk-İş, and Hak-İş) see workers as wage earners who pay dues to them and do not have a vision of organising struggles from below. Today, corporatist wage unionism is entrenched in Turkey as a result of state interventions to control trade unions. While union strategies are limited to the demand of increasing wages, demands such as job security, job safety, and reducing working hours despite the recently dramatic increase in working hours are not on the agenda of the unions, which weakens union security.

All the trade unions affiliated to Hak-İş and Türk-İş have become so bureaucratised and almost mini-companies. Based on my own observations and experiences, I must state the following: In order to get more dues, these trade unions often turn to the

minority of high-paid workplaces, i.e., workplaces with relatively better working conditions, and fight with each other over this. As a tradition, every year they compete in the number of their members. However, too unwieldy, and reluctant to devote resources and time to further unionisation, they turn to international companies in Turkey because they think that unionisation in those will be easier because of international agreements. It does not even occur to them to improve the labour law in their own country by applying pressure from the grassroots. As such, they do not give care about the millions who work in inhuman conditions. Their relationship with their members does not go beyond financial matters. This is what they call trade unionism today.

In this sense, one of the important questions to be asked is how workers might become the proper owners of their trade unions as well as of their labour as producers, not only wage earners. In this sense, the importance of the formation of workers' councils in paving the way for the emancipation of workers as producers remains relevant. In this regard, I think that, as an example of political trade unionism, Yeraltı Maden İş shows how a trade union gains a strong stance and a historical character to the extent of the will of the workers who form it. Thereby, without going in the direction of syndicalism or social democracy, overcame the economy-politics distinction and made the political agencies of workers possible. For this form of trade unionism does not reduce state power to the production level and organises its struggle in such a manner as to challenge state power in all its dimensions as far as possible. The empirical evidence presented in this thesis is thus a contribution to overturning the economist approach to labour movements in Turkey.

In Turkey, from the TEKEL Resistance (2009) to the Gezi Resistance (2013), to the Metal Storm (2015), the capacity of workers and popular classes to bring influence by raising a political posture and attempting to form social struggles was considerable in the early 2010s. However, particularly since 2015, the disorganisation of the oppressed has been dramatically growing. Surely, this downward trend has been influenced by the aggressively anti-working-class policies of the state. The consequences of this disorganisation for workers are severe. For example, during the 2000s, there has been

a dramatic increase in miner deaths. The situation is similar for construction workers. Moreover, informal labour is so widespread in many sectors that it is difficult even to reach the real number of accidents. The main reason for this is both the disorganisation of labour and the disregard for human life rendered by free market conditions. Another consequence that concerns the lower classes is that social values that enable survival and struggle, such as solidarity, collectivity, and the pursuit of equality and justice, which were particularly emphasised during the 1970s, have been becoming less and less relevant today. For, as Erdoğan points out, Turkish society has been gradually losing the positive norms that held it together in the past:

If society is not simply the name of a group of people who ‘stand together’ or are ‘obliged’ to live in the same territory, but a way of existence of people who are bound together by a series of human (political, economic, cultural, moral, legal, etc.) constitutive ties (‘social bond’, ‘asabiye’), are there such ‘positive’ norms that ensure the cohesion of what is called ‘Turkish society’?... To the extent that what is at stake here is ‘moral-intellectual unity’ as Gramsci used to define hegemony, our negative answer also indicates that Turkey is in an ‘organic crisis’. In fact, this is not a new situation. Because the last fifty years of ‘Turkish society’ are full of various restoration (or ‘passive revolution’) projects that have tried to suppress or ‘manage’ this ongoing crisis through authoritarian, fascist, nationalist-conservative, etc., even though they have taken different forms over time (Erdoğan, 2015). (Translated by the author.)¹¹³

The aforementioned organic crisis gradually weakened revolutionary organisations as well as the struggles of workers and oppressed elements in general in Turkey. They have been radically undermined by changes affecting the form of society at the hands of the state and ruling classes. Nevertheless, social values that once prevailed in one way or another in social structures never completely disappear. And that is exactly why in Turkey today, it is an indisputable fact that genuine solidarity practices have a revolutionary meaning against the state’s various policies of individualization, isolation, and targeting. In this sense, it is valuable that concepts such as equality, justice and solidarity are still grounding themselves in Turkey’s social struggles.

¹¹³ <https://www.birgun.net/haber/turkiye-bir-toplum-mu-92688>

Solidarity and other ethical political elements emerging in today's movements are particularly important, both in themselves and in their potential to influence society after the movements have faded.

Therefore, this study is a contribution to open new spaces for the recent self-governing perspectives, from surviving to political change, in Turkey. In this sense, I sincerely hope that this study, which is a call for the Turkish left to currently pay more attention to counter-hegemonic orientations, will be a modest contribution to bringing back to the agenda today the idea of "economic, political, and intellectual and moral unity around a new common sense, a new collective will" (Erdoğan, 1998: 35), which Devrimci Yol failed to realise in the 1970s. To end on a more optimistic note, it is encouraging that every interviewee still agreed with that final sentence: We are the ones who produce, and we will be the ones who will govern!

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Yeni Çeltek kömür havzasında ortaya çıkan toplumsal mücadele 1975-1980 yıllarını kapsamaktadır. Yeni Çeltek madeninde işçilerin devrimci bir sendika çatısı altında toplanmasıyla başlayan süreç, havza düzeyinde gelişen bir toplumsal mücadelenin temeli olmuştur.

Yeni Çeltek vaka çalışmasının önemi, bu hareketin özyönetim pratikleri aracılığıyla siyasi meşruiyeti sorgulama kapasitesi nedeniyle Türkiye'deki en özgün ve etkili örnek olmasıdır. Başka bir deyişle, toplumsal ilişkileri dönüştürerek ve sınıf temelli kimlikler etrafında kültürel ve siyasi dinamikleri şekillendirerek devrimci bir hareket olarak işlev gösterme kapasitesinden kaynaklanmaktadır.

Ancak, Yeni Çeltek kömür havzasında 1970'lerin ikinci yarısında yükselen toplumsal mücadelenin tarihini analiz eden az sayıda çalışma bulunmaktadır. Önceki araştırmalar hareketin dinamiklerini ve sonuçlarını derinlemesine analiz etmemiştir. Havzadaki madencilerin ve ezilen grupların nedensel bir çerçevede içinde özne aktörler olarak ortaya çıkışı araştırılmamıştır. Toplumsal mücadelenin öznel üzerindeki kalıcı etkisi, yani bilinç ve eylem dönüşümleri incelenmemiştir. Buna bağlı olarak, özyönetim pratiklerinin siyasi merkezlerin (devlet ve egemen sınıflar/elitler) meşruiyetini sorgulayan yönü ele alınmamıştır. Ayrıca, işyeri düzeyinde örgütlenme ve havza genelinde yükselen toplumsal hareket birleşik bir toplumsal mücadele deneyimi olarak ele alınmamıştır. Ayrıca, Devrimci Yol örgütünün siyasi perspektifinin havzadaki toplumsal mücadelenin yükselişine etkisi de yeterince araştırılmamıştır.

Öte yandan, sol siyasi örgütlerin bu yıllarda nasıl siyasi aktörler haline geldiği ya da siyasi düşünce ve eylemlerinin işçileri ve halk sınıflarını nasıl etkilediği üzerine derinlemesine çalışmalar yapılmamıştır. Türkiye’deki sol/devrimci siyasi örgütler üzerine yapılan araştırmaların büyük bir bölümü, bu örgütlerin siyasi yaklaşımları/eylemleri nedeniyle nasıl başarılı ya da başarısız olduklarını anlamaya odaklanma eğilimindedir. Bu bakış açısının iki tehlikesi, ezilenleri pasif özneler ve siyasi örgütleri dış aktörler olarak anlamaya dayanmaktadır.

Bu anlamda, özellikle döneminin en geniş kitlelere ulaşan hareketi olan Devrimci Yol üzerine yapılan araştırmalar da oldukça sınırlıdır. Bu çalışmada Devrimci Yol sadece siyasi bir örgütlenme olarak değil, aynı zamanda geniş bir halk hareketi olarak ele alınmaktadır. Devrimci Yol’un hem siyasi çizgisini oluşturan zihniyet hem de bir halk hareketine dönüşmesini sağlayan siyasi eylemleri dikkat çekicidir. Çünkü Devrimci Yol, dönemin diğer siyasi örgütleriyle karşılaştırıldığında, alt sınıf gruplarıyla ilişki kurarken, onların etki kapasitelerini sınırlandırmamıştır. Örneğin, bu tezde incelenen Devrimci Yol hareketinin bir parçası olan Yeni Çeltek vakası, alt sınıfların siyasi eylem biçimleri geliştirme kapasitesinin en iyi örneklerinden biridir. Sonuç olarak, 1970’lerin ikinci yarısında Devrimci Yol hareketi sadece siyasi bir aktör haline gelmekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda alt sınıflar ve devrimci örgütler arasındaki ilişkilerin nasıl ele alınması gerektiğine dair tartışmalar ve alternatif duruşlar yaratabilmiştir.

Özyönetim pratiklerinin karşı-hegemonik repertuarları, mücadelenin katılımcılarının siyasallaşma süreçlerini gösterirken bu çalışmanın odak noktası olacaktır. Bu tez, özyönetimin siyasi ve kültürel alanlarda nasıl ve ne tür radikal dönüşümlere yol açabileceğine cevap aramaktadır. Bu anlamda hem işyerinde hem de gündelik hayatta kolektif mücadeleyi değiştiren ve aynı zamanda onun tarafından değiştirilen faaliyetler olan özyönetim pratiklerinin oluşumları incelenmiştir.

Aşamalı toplumsal mücadele süreci iki ana aşamadan oluşmaktadır. 1975-1977 yılları arasındaki dönem madencilerin sendikalaşma mücadelesini içermektedir. İkinci aşama, 1977-1980 yılları arasında, madencilerin taleplerinin ekonomik alandan emek

süreçlerinin kontrolünü içeren siyasi zeminlere kaymasına ve havzada toplumsal hareketlerin ve özyönetim pratiklerinin eşzamanlı olarak gelişmesini içermektedir. Yeni Çelttek'teki toplumsal mücadelenin yörüngesini daha iyi anlamak için Devrimci Yol'un mücadeleyi hem siyasi bir örgüt hem de toplumsal bir hareket olarak nasıl karakterize ettiği analiz edilmiştir.

Tarihsel ve analitik çalışmanın bir bileşimi olan araştırma, emek ve toplumsal hareketler literatürünün büyük bir kısmına dayanmaktadır. Buechler, toplumsal hareketlere yönelik yaklaşımları kültürel ve siyasi versiyonlar olmak üzere iki şekilde sınıflandırmaktadır (Buechler, 2011: 161). Yeni toplumsal hareketler (YTH) üzerine çalışmaların kültürel versiyonu, dikkatini eylemin kültürel boyutlarını anlamakla sınırlama eğilimindedir. Böylece, toplumsal hareketlerin temellerini “sınıfla değil, hareketi tanımlayan farklı değerler ve ideolojilerle” (2011: 50-51) özdeşleştirmekte ve bir anlamda sınıf kavramını yalnızca ekonomik yönleriyle sınırlamaktadırlar, bir diğer deyişle, indirgemektedirler. Bu yaklaşımın tehlikesi, sınıf olgusunu hareketlerin oluşumu üzerinde düşük derecede etkiye sahip pasif bir faktör olarak anlamaya dayanmasıdır. Bu görüşler, geçmişteki ve günümüzdeki toplumsal hareketler arasında bir kopukluk olduğunu da öne sürmektedir.

YTH'lerin siyasi versiyonu olarak adlandırılan bir diğer yaklaşım ise eski ve yeni toplumsal hareketler arasında bir süreklilik olduğunu savunmaktadır. “Kültürel versiyonun aksine, politik versiyon... çağdaş sınıf yapısını analiz eder ve YTH'lerin toplumsal temelini sınıfsal terimlerle tanımlar” (Coşkun, 2006: 74,75).

Bu çalışma aynı zamanda işçi hareketleri ve fabrika konseyleri literatüründen de yararlanmaktadır. Bu literatür, Rusya'daki işçi konseyleri deneyimi gibi köklü tarihsel deneyimlerin yanı sıra Latin Amerika'daki (örneğin Bolivya 1940-1950, Peru 1969-1971, Şili 1971) madenci grevleri ve işçi kontrolü süreçlerinden İngiliz madencilerin meşhur grev hikayesine (1984-85) kadar uzanan bir dizi vakayı içermektedir. Fakat, işçilerin kontrolü ya da özyönetim pratikleri ile siyasallaşma arasında ne gibi bağlantılar keşfedebiliriz?

Rus işçi konseyleri devrimci süreçlerin taşıyıcı unsuru olduğu için Gramsci işçi konseylerinin siyasi yörüngelerine şu şekilde dikkat çekmektedir:

Fabrika Konseyi proleter devlet modelidir... Verimli ve yararlı bir şekilde üretmek için işbirliği yapma deneyimi, işçiler arasında dayanışmayı geliştirir ve mevcut sevgi ve yoldaşlık bağlarını güçlendirir... Proletarya diktatörlüğü bu tür bir fabrika örgütlenmesi içinde gerçekleşebilir... (Gramsci, 1994: 120).

Bu anlamda, Yeni Çeltek'teki madencilerin özyönetim deneyimi pratik olarak Sovyet işçi komiteleri deneyiminden, teorik olarak ise Gramsci'nin (2000) işçi konseylerinin bugünden geleceğe sosyalizmin kurucu özneleri olduğu görüşünden beslenmektedir.

İşçilerin kendi emek süreçleri üzerinde bir dereceye kadar kontrol sahibi olmayı tercih etmelerinin nedeni, dış toplumsal koşulların yanı sıra işyeri deneyimleriyle de ilgilidir. İşyerindeki bu deneyimler birçok durumda haysiyet ve adalet duygusu gibi etik-politik konularla da ilgilidir. Bu tür referanslar, direniş veya rıza güdülerinin ortaya çıkmasında önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu durum, işyerinin karmaşık sınıf kültüründen kaynaklanmaktadır. Literatürde bunu en iyi örnekleyen çalışmalardan örnekler vermek gerekirse, Michael Burroway'ın işyerindeki emek süreçlerinin rıza üretebileceğini gösteren çalışması ve Paul Willis'in erkek sanayi işçilerinin eril kültürel yapısı ile iş güvenliği sorunları arasında bağlantı kuran çalışması sayılabilir (Fantasia, 1988: 15). Öte yandan, grev süreçlerine katılım yoluyla dönüşümlerin nasıl gerçekleştiğini inceleyen çalışmalar (Fantasia 1988; Hirsch 1990) kolektif mücadelenin işçilerin dönüşüm süreci üzerindeki etkisini göstermektedir.

Daha geniş bir düzeyde, bu çalışma, emek ve toplumsal hareketleri hem kapitalizmin makro düzeylerindeki krizler hem de modernleşme ya da ilerlemenin bir parçası olarak gören literatürün çoğundan, madun sınıfların devlete ve egemen sınıflara karşı hegemonya inşa etmedeki rolünün belirleyiciliğini kayıtsız şartsız vurgulaması bakımından ayrılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada analiz edilen vaka, devrim gibi büyük ölçekli bir toplumsal dönüşümü hedefleyen siyasi süreçlerle bağlantılıdır. Bu nedenle hareket süreci, Türkiye'de sınıf mücadelesinin zirvede olduğu 1970'li yılların tarihsel ve siyasi

bağlamı içinde değerlendirilmiştir. Dolayısıyla Yeni Çeltik vakası daha geniş bir olgunun parçasıdır.

Öte yandan, Türkiye’de ezilen grupların nasıl siyasi aktör haline geldiğinin tarihi derinlemesine analiz edilmemiştir. Ayrıca, “basın ve sendika anketleri aracılığıyla ülkedeki işçi eylemlerinin genel tablosuna ilişkin nicel araştırmalar dünyada olduğu gibi Türkiye’de de sınırlıdır” (Birelma, 2022: 1867). Türkiye’de emek tarihi yazımında 1960’lı ve 1970’li yıllarda yaşanan grev süreçleri ve fabrika işgalleri ile devlet, sendikalar ve emek arasındaki ilişkilere odaklanılmaktadır. Maden işçilerine odaklanan çalışmaların sayısı ise oldukça sınırlıdır. Literatürde önemli bir yere sahip olan bir çalışma Donald Quataert’e aittir. Quataert, karşılaştırmalı madencilik tarihinde 1822’den 1920’ye kadar devletin rolünü ve maden işçilerinin konumunu analiz etmektedir.

Bununla birlikte, Türkiye’de alt sınıflar ile devlet/elitler/yönetici sınıflar arasındaki çatışmalı ya da çatışmasız etkileşimler de literatürde önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Türk tarih yazımında devlet tartışmasına ilişkin literatüre, devletin ya da elitlerin toplumsal ve ekonomik inşa sürecinde çok daha güçlü bir rol oynadığı argümanı hâkimdir. Bir grup akademisyen, toplumsal sınıfları en azından bir niteleyici olarak kabul etmelerine rağmen, güçlü devlet geleneğinin (Heper, 1985) veya merkez-çevre ilişkilerinin (Mardin, 1973) özünde devletin kilit aktör olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Yaklaşımları genellikle patrimonyalizm (Weber) ve despotizm (Montesquieu) kavramlarıyla ilişkilidir. Bu devlet kuramcılarına göre, Türkiye patrimonyal ya da despotik bir devlet geleneği açısından ele alınabilir ve bu da Türk devletinin özgüllüğünün vurgulanmasını gerektirir. İkinci olarak, fiilen gelişmemiş olan temel ayrım devlet ve toplum arasında ortaya çıkmakta ve böylece işçi sınıfı pasif bir şekilde tanımlanmaktadır.

Bu argüman çizgisine yanıt olarak, bir grup akademisyen devletin sınıf sorunu karşısındaki konumunu politika oluşturma süreci açısından açıklamakta ve emek-sermaye çatışmasını her zaman en önemlisi olmasa bile önemli bir araştırma konusu olarak ele almaktadır. Sınıf perspektifini benimseyen bu akademisyenler, devlet-

emek-sermaye ilişkileri hakkında sorular sormakta ve sınıf çatışmasının boyutunun ciddi şekilde hafife alındığını iddia etmektedirler. Literatürün bu kısmı genellikle devlet ve sınıflar arasındaki ilişkilerle ilgilenmekte ve devleti kurumlar tarafından yönetilen stratejik bir ilişki olarak göstermektedir. Bu çalışmaların birçoğu teorik olarak Marx'ın ekonomi-politik yaklaşımından etkilenmiştir ve temel olarak üretim ilişkilerinin toplumun yapısını oluşturduğunu kabul etmektedir. Bu doğrultuda, Yalman'dan (2002) ödünç alarak, bu çalışma Türk devletinin inşa süreçlerini "hegemonik projeler" olarak görme eğilimindedir. Dolayısıyla, hegemonyanın bir öznesi olarak işçiler veya ezilen sınıflar siyasetin başlıca aktörleridir.

Yeni Çeltek madenindeki özyönetim deneyimi ve buna paralel olarak havzada ortaya çıkan popüler kontrol yapıları, madencilerin ve diğer popüler sınıfların mevcut ekonomik sistemin yarattığı adaletsizlik ve eşitsizlikleri doğrudan ele almak ve kesintiye uğratmak için ekonomik ve sosyal ilişkileri yeniden kavramsallaştırabildikleri yolları örneklemektedir. Yeni Çeltek havzasındaki bu hareket, hem emek-sermaye ilişkisini tersine çevirmenin hem de daha geniş bir dayanışma ağı tarafından desteklenen alternatif sosyoekonomik ilişkilerin inşasının olanaklarını göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda, madencilerin toplumun diğer katmanları ve ezilen gruplarla bir ittifak kurduğu ve bunun hareketin başarısının kilit bir kaynağı olduğu görülmektedir.

Bu anlamda Yeni Çeltek'teki toplumsal mücadele ikili bir karaktere sahiptir. Yeni Çeltek'te hareketin yükselişi yatay ittifaklardan, yani komiteler halinde örgütlenen ve devlet iktidarını dönüştürmeyi amaçlayan madencilerin ve halk sınıflarının sınıf bilinçli ağlarından kaynaklanmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, entelektüellerin mücadele süreci üzerindeki etkisini de vurgulamak yerinde olacaktır. Gramsci'nin belirttiği gibi: "Bağımsız bir entelektüeller sınıfı yoktur, ancak her toplumsal grup kendi entelektüeller tabakasına sahiptir ya da bir tabaka oluşturma eğilimindedir." (Gramsci, 1971: 60). Yeni Çeltek örneğinde, işçi ve halk sınıfları ile aydınlar arasındaki dayanışma, harekette etkili bir faktör olarak öne çıkmıştır.

Dayanışma, toplumda kök salmış işbirliğinin iki yönünden biridir. Bir diğeri ise dayanışma ile bağlantılı olarak ritüeldir. Toplumsal mücadele boyunca ritüeller direniş unsurlarını temsil etmek için kullanılmıştır. Tez boyunca gördüğümüz gibi, bu ilişkiler, ekonomik ve siyasi içeriklerinden ayrılmaz olan toplumsal değer ve normların yeniden kavramsallaştırılması ve dönüştürülmesi yoluyla dönüştürülmüştür. Sennett, ritüeller kazanılmış otoritenin dokusunun bir parçasıdır demektedir (Sennett, 2013: 156). Benzer şekilde, Hunt'ın ifade ettiği gibi, “başarılı bir hegemonyanın değerleri ve normları içermesi gerekir” (Hunt, 1990: 311).

Dolayısıyla, özyönetim pratikleri yalnızca yerleşik yönetim fikirleri ve geleneklerine meydan okumak değil, aynı zamanda ezilenlerin dışlandıkları alanlarda yeni politikalar inşa etmesi anlamına geliyordu. Bu bağlamda, madencilerin ilk anlamda sınıf bilinci etrafında gelişen mücadelesi, alt sınıfların kültürü ile seçkinler/egemen sınıflar arasında radikal bir kopuşu ortaya çıkarmaya, başka bir deyişle Thompson'ın tanımıyla ‘aşağıdan bakışı yeniden inşa etmeye’ girişmiştir. (Thompson, 1993: 22)

Siyasallaşma bağlamında, teorik bölümde değinilen bir noktayı vurgulamak gerekirse, Gramsci'nin hegemonya kavramı ve açıklamaları, ideolojinin sınıf oluşumları ve ilişkilerindeki rolünü vurgulamaktadır. Tez boyunca anlatılan ve “siyasallaşma” olarak adlandırılabilir bilinç dönüşümleri, alt sınıfların hem ideolojik hem de yapısal bir tepki olarak karşı-hegemonya girişimi olarak kategorize edilmiştir. Bu siyasallaşma süreci hem yapısal faktörlerin hem de ideolojik ya da duygusal faktörlerin bir sonucu olarak açıklanmıştır. Birincisinin ikincisinden daha önemli olması gerekmediği gibi, aralarında mutlak bir karşıtlık olması da gerekmez.

Sınıf ilişkileri ideolojisi, üretim ilişkilerini kendi lehlerine dönüştürmek için sınıf kimliğinin ezilenler tarafından nasıl sahiplenildiğini açıklamak için bir temel sağlar. ‘İşçilerin sermayeye karşı faaliyetleri kendi içlerinde dönüştürücü bir potansiyel barındırır, çünkü işçiler ‘toplumsal varlıklarını’ özgürleştirmek için mücadele ederken aynı zamanda ‘öznelliklerini’ de özgürleştirirler’ (Fantasia, 1988: 10). Üçüncü bölümde gördüğümüz gibi, madencilerin emek süreçlerinin kontrolüne ve siyasi mücadeleye baskın bir şekilde katılmaları, kendi kendilerini özgürleştirme duyguları

üzerinde etkili olmuştur. Madencilerin gelişen bilinci aynı zamanda gündelik hayatın ekonomik ve sosyal mantığının tersine çevrilmesine katkıda bulunmuş ve dördüncü bölümde gösterilen havza çapında mücadelenin yükselmesinde öncü bir rol oynamıştır. Bu çalışma boyunca göstermeye çalıştığım gibi, işçilerin ve toplumun diğer ezilen unsurlarının özyönetim pratiği ve burada ve şimdi kendi yeni gerçekliklerini yaratma deneyimi, onları etkili bir şekilde öznel faillere dönüştürmüştür. Kaynaklarını ve kapasitelerini kooperatif olarak yönetme girişimleri onlara hem ekonomik faydalar hem de saygınlıklarını geri kazanma duygusu getirmiştir. Diğer bir deyişle, çalışma boyunca görüldüğü üzere, görüşülen kişiler genellikle kapitalist sistemden kaynaklanan eşitsizlik ve adaletsizlik gibi ekonomik ve siyasi hiyerarşilere karşı ahlaki bir duruş sergilemişlerdir.

Tez boyunca gösterildiği üzere, görüşmeler, ahlaki öfke gibi duygusal süreçlerin yapısal süreçlere ve aktörlerin iradesine katkısının önemini ortaya koymuştur. Madenciler sadece ücretlerinin iyileştirilmesini değil, aynı zamanda haksız işten çıkarmalar ve disiplin konuları da dahil olmak üzere yönetimin ellerinde maruz kaldıkları kötü muamelenin telafi edilmesini de istemişlerdir. Dahası, bu tür bir sınıf bilincinin, bireyciliğin aksine kolektivizm ve gündelik hayata kök salmış dayanışma gibi belirli kültürel referanslar etrafında şekillendiği görülmektedir. Bu nedenle siyasi dayanışma hem entelektüel hem de pratik kavramlarının yeniden formüle edildiği bir süreçte gelişmiştir.

Tez boyunca, hareketin nedenlerinden ziyade hareketin sürecine ve bireyler ve toplum üzerindeki dönüştürücü etkisine odaklandım ve siyasi sonuçlarına işaret ettim. Tüm bunlar, sınıf kimliğinin bizzat alt sınıflar tarafından nasıl yorumlandığına dayanıyor ve bu bağlamda çalışma boyunca görüşmelerden elde edilen veriler sunuldu. Bulgular, grev ve protesto deneyimlerinin kalıcı etkilerine işaret etmektedir. Bu tür deneyimler, aktörlerin harekete olan bağlılıklarını artırmada ve aktivist olmalarında rol oynamıştır. Yeni Çeltik vakası, aktörler için siyasallaşma açısından kalıcı sonuçlar doğurmuştur. Bu bağlamda, madencilerin geniş bir yelpazede anti-kapitalist mücadeleyi savunmasının tezahürü, özyönetim deneyimi olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Yeni Çeltik

örneğinde kalıcı etkinin, çalışma boyunca vurgulanan ana tema olan hem işyerinde hem de havza genelinde özyönetim pratiklerinden kaynaklandığı görülmüştür.

Yeni Çelttek'teki hareketin bastırılmasının ardından devletin beklentisi hareketin izlerinin kolayca silineceği yönündeydi, ancak tam tersine hareketin etkileri bugün bile havzada görülebiliyor ve hissedilebiliyor. Şöyle ki, Devrimci Yol'un mevcut siyasi uzantılarının havzada yürüttüğü siyasi faaliyetler devam ediyor ve geçmişte hareket sürecine katılan bazı madenciler, öğretmenler ve gençler bugün hala bu faaliyetlerin içinde yer alıyor. Ayrıca hareket sonrasında birçok kişi işini kaybettiği için ekonomik sıkıntılar dayanışma ağları ile çözülmüştür. Aile, akraba ve arkadaşlar arasındaki dayanışma da benzer şekillerde devam etmekte ve bu ağların siyasallaşmada hala önemli bir unsur olduğu görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla, 1970'lerdeki emek aktivizminin etkilerinin silindiği ve günümüzde hiçbir iz bırakmadığı yönündeki yaygın beklentinin aksine, bu çalışmada incelenen vaka, dönüşümün derin ve kalıcı olabileceğini ve olduğunu göstermektedir.

1970'lerde ve bugün Türkiye'de ve dünyada emek ve toplumsal hareketlerin bağlamlarının oldukça farklı olduğu tartışılmaz bir gerçektir. Ancak, mücadeleci repertuarların bir özelliği de gelecek nesiller tarafından öğrenilebilir ve uyarlanabilir olmalarıdır. Zamanın belirli bir anındaki bir toplumsal mücadele, şu ya da bu şekilde, olayların sonraki tarihsel seyrini etkileyebilir ve böylece kalıcı sonuçlar doğurabilir. Eylem biçimlerine, söylemlere ve sembollere ve bunların çağdaş muhalif hareketlerdeki temsiline baktığımızda, geçmişe göndermeler bulmamız muhtemeldir. Bunun en güzel örneklerinden biri, Yeni Çelttek madencilerinin meşhur sloganı 'Üreten biziz, yöneten de biz olacağız'ın bugün Soma'daki madencilerin sendikal mücadelesinde de yer bulmuş olmasıdır. (Çelik, 2019: 160)

Geçmişin toplumsal hareketleri ile bugün arasındaki köprüler hangi siyasi ve kültürel yollarla kurulursa kurulsun, bu hareketler dönemin genel eğilimi olan ortak anlayış paydalarına dayanıyor. Yeni Çelttek deneyiminin, kapitalizmin genel belirleyiciliğini göz ardı etmeden ama yerellik, özgüllük, katılımcılık gibi bazı hususları da dikkate alarak kapitalizmin altının nasıl oyulabileceğine dair bugün için de dersler içerdiğini

düşünüyorum. Yeni Çelttek, muhalif unsurların halkın kendi somut koşullarından doğarak ve kendi gelecek kurtuluş iradeleri doğrultusunda nasıl devrimci nüvelere dönüşebileceğinin en iyi tarihsel örneklerinden biridir. Öte yandan Yeni Çelttek'in anlamını ve bugüne etkisini abartmaktan kaçınmak gerekir. Havzadaki hareket yeterince olgunlaşmadan devlet saldırısına maruz kalarak yarım kalmış, savunma pozisyonundan daha kararlı bir pozisyona geçememiş ve ulusal düzeydeki diğer direnişlerle birleşememiştir.

Öte yandan, çalışma boyunca anlatılan toplumsal mücadele, öz-örgütlenme pratiklerini sürekli erteleyerek onları devrimin “araçları” olarak gören geleneksel yaklaşımlara meydan okumaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu mücadele tipik olarak Devrimci Yol'un ‘ya devrim ya reform’ ikileminin ötesine geçen siyasi vizyonunun bir parçasıdır. Demek istediğim, devrimci milislerin inisiyatifiyle başlayan mücadele süreçlerinin bizzat öznel failer tarafından sahiplenildiği ve şekillendirildiğidir.

Devrimci Yol'un o dönemdeki bu özgün karakterinin öznel bir sonucu olan ve günümüz siyasi örgütlenmelerine de ilham kaynağı olabileceğini düşündüğüm pratiği, halk sınıflarıyla kopmaz, kalıcı bağlar kurarak toplumsal bir hareket haline gelmesinin de yolu olmuştur. Bu bağlamda onun politik duruşu, somut koşulların somut bir analizi çerçevesinde şimdi ve burada örgütlenmek olarak özetlenebilir.

Aynı şekilde Yeraltı Maden İş'in sendikacılık anlayışı da hem kendi dönemindeki hem de günümüzdeki sendikacılıktan keskin farklılıklar göstermektedir. Bugün Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren üç konfederasyona (DİSK, Türk-İş ve Hak-İş) bağlı sendikalar, işçileri kendilerine aidat ödeyen ücretliler olarak görmektedir ve aşağıdan mücadele örgütlemek gibi bir vizyona sahip değildir. Bugün Türkiye'de korporatist ücret sendikacılığı, sendikaları kontrol etmeye yönelik devlet müdahalelerinin bir sonucu olarak yerleşmiş durumdadır. Sendikal stratejiler ücretlerin artırılması talebiyle sınırlı kalırken, iş güvencesi, iş güvenliği, son dönemde çalışma saatlerinde yaşanan dramatik artışa rağmen çalışma saatlerinin azaltılması gibi talepler sendikaların gündeminde yer almamakta, bu da sendikalara güvenceyi zayıflatmaktadır.

Hak-İş ve Türk-İş'e bağılı tüm sendikalar o kadar bürokratikleşmiş ve adeta mini şirketler haline gelmişlerdir ki, daha fazla aidat alabilmek için çoğu zaman azınlıkta kalan yüksek ücretli işyerlerine, yani görece daha iyi çalışma koşullarına sahip işyerlerine yönelmekte ve bunun için birbirleriyle kavga etmektedirler. Bir gelenek olarak, her yıl üye sayılarını yarıştırlar. Ancak çok hantal oldukları ve daha fazla sendikalaşmaya kaynak ve zaman ayırmak istemedikleri için Türkiye'deki uluslararası şirketlere yönelmektedirler çünkü uluslararası anlaşmalar nedeniyle buralarda sendikalaşmanın daha kolay olacağını düşünmektedirler. Tabandan baskı uygulayarak kendi ülkelerindeki iş kanununu iyileştirmek akıllarına bile gelmez. Hal böyle olunca da insanlık dışı koşullarda çalışan milyonları umursamazlar. Üyeleriyle ilişkileri mali konuların ötesine geçmez. Bugün sendikacılık dedikleri şey işte budur.

Bu anlamda sorulması gereken önemli sorulardan biri, işçilerin sadece ücretli çalışanlar değil, üreticiler olarak emeklerinin olduğu kadar sendikalarının da gerçek sahipleri haline nasıl gelebilecekleridir. Bu anlamda, işçilerin üretici olarak özgürleşmelerinin önünü açmada işçi konseylerinin oluşumunun önemi geçerliliğini korumaktadır. İşçi konseyleri, işçilerin kolektif güç oluşumlarıdır. Bu bağlamda, Yeraltı Maden İş'in bir siyasal sendikacılık örneği olarak, bir sendikanın kendisini oluşturan işçilerin iradesi ölçüsünde nasıl güçlü bir duruş ve tarihsel bir karakter kazanabileceğini gösterdiğini düşünüyorum. Böylece sendikalizme ya da sosyal demokrasiye yönelmeden ekonomi/politik ayrımını aşarak işçilerin siyasal öznelliklerini mümkün kılmıştır. Çünkü bu sendikacılık biçimi devlet iktidarını üretim düzeyine indirgemez ve mücadelesini devlet iktidarına mümkün olduğunca tüm boyutlarıyla meydan okuyacak şekilde örgütler. Bu açıdan, bu tezde sunulan ampirik kanıtlar, Türkiye'deki işçi hareketlerine yönelik ekonomist yaklaşımın tersine çevrilmesine katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Ezilenlerin giderek güçsüzleşmesi ve örgütsüzleşmesi, bugün devletin agresif bir şekilde işçi sınıfı karşıtı politikalarından güçlü bir şekilde etkilenmektedir. Bunun bir sonucu, 1970'lerde özellikle vurgulanan dayanışma ve kolektivite gibi toplumsal değerlerin giderek önem kaybetmesidir. Erdoğan'ın da işaret ettiği gibi, Türkiye toplumu geçmişte kendisini bir arada tutan olumlu normları giderek kaybediyor:

Toplum basitçe “bir arada duran” veya aynı topraklarda yaşamak “zorunda kalan” insanlar topluluğunun adı değil de bir dizi insanı (siyasal, ekonomik, kültürel, ahlaki, hukuki vs.) kurucu bağ (“toplumsal bağ”, “asabiye”) ile birbirine bağlanmış olan insanların varoluş biçimi demek ise, “Türkiye toplumu” denen şeyin tutunumunu sağlayan böyle “pozitif” normlar var mı? ...Burada söz konusu olan, Gramsci’nin hegemonyayı tanımlarken kullandığı ifadeyle” ahlaki-düşünsel birlik” olduğu ölçüde, verdiğimiz olumsuz cevap Türkiye’nin bir “organik bunalım” içinde olduğuna da işaret ediyor demektir. Yeni bir durum da değil bu aslında. Zira “Türkiye toplumunun” son elli yılı, zaman içinde farklı şekiller olsa da süregiden bu bunalımı otoriter, faşist, milliyetçi-muhafazakâr vb. yollarla bastırmaya veya “idare etmeye” çalışan muhtelif restorasyon (veya “pasif devrim”) projeleriyle dolu. (Erdoğan, 2015)

Söz konusu organik kriz, Türkiye’deki devrimci örgütlerin yanı sıra genel olarak işçilerin ve halkın mücadelelerini de giderek zayıflattı. Devletin ve egemen sınıfların eliyle toplumun biçimini etkileyen değişimler tarafından zayıflatıldılar. Bununla birlikte, bir zamanlar toplumsal yapılarda şu ya da bu şekilde hâkim olan toplumsal değerler hiçbir zaman tamamen ortadan kalkmaz. İşte tam da bu nedenle bugün Türkiye’de, devletin çeşitli bireyselleştirme, yalnızlaştırma ve hedef gösterme politikalarına karşı gerçek dayanışma pratiklerinin devrimci bir anlam taşıdığı tartışılmaz bir gerçektir. Bu anlamda eşitlik, adalet ve dayanışma gibi kavramların Türkiye’deki toplumsal mücadelelerde hâlâ zemin buluyor olması çok kıymetlidir. Günümüz hareketlerinde ortaya çıkan dayanışma ve diğer etik politik unsurlar hem kendi içlerinde hem de hareketler sönmüldükten sonra toplumu etkileme potansiyelleri açısından özellikle önemlidir.

Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, özyönetim perspektiflerine bugün yeni alanlar açmaya yönelik bir katkıdır. Bu anlamda, Türkiye solunun günümüzde karşı-hegemonik yönelimlere daha fazla eğilmesi için bir çağrı niteliği taşıyan bu çalışmanın, Devrimci Yol’un 1970’lerde gerçekleştiremediği “yeni bir ortak akıl, yeni bir kolektif irade etrafında ekonomik, siyasi, entelektüel ve ahlaki birliktelik” (Erdoğan, 1998: 35) fikrinin bugün yeniden gündeme gelmesine mütevazı bir katkı olmasını içtenlikle diliyorum. Daha iyimser bir notla bitirmek gerekirse, her bir görüşmecinin şu son seslenişe katılıyor olması cesaret verici: Üreten biziz, yöneten de biz olacağız!

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Soyadı / Surname : ÖZTÜRK

Adı / Name : Zeynep

Bölümü / Department: Medya ve Kültürel Çalışmalar / Media and Cultural Studies

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): THE SOCIAL STRUGGLE IN THE YENİ ÇELTEK COAL BASIN (1975-1980): SOURCES OF POLITICISATION IN SELF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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