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TITLE: The First Strike Attempts in Republican History: The 1925 Telegraphers' Strike

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PAGES: 110-132

ORIGINAL PDF URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/3825454>

The First Strike Attempts in Republican History: The 1925 Telegraphers' Strike *Cumhuriyet Tarihi'nin İlk Grev Girişimlerinden: 1925 Telgrafçılar Grevi*

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Araştırma Makalesi

Süreç

Geliş Tarihi: 27.03.2024
Kabul Tarihi: 07.06.2024
Yayın Tarihi: 30.06.2024

Benzerlik

Bu makale, en az iki hakem tarafından incelenmiş ve intihal yazılımı ile taranmıştır.

Değerlendirme

Ön İnceleme: İÇ hakem (editörler).
İçerik İnceleme: İki dış hakem/Çift taraflı
kürleme.

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Etik Beyan

Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur. Sebile Yıldız Aybak – Büşra Bigat Akça

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Çıkar Çatışması

Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.

Finansman

Bu çalışmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır.

Yayıncı

Published by Mehmet ŞAHİN Since 2016- Akdeniz University, Faculty of Theology, Antalya, 07058 Turkey.

Yazar Katkıları

Yazar-1 (%70)
Yazar-2 (%30)

Atıf

Yıldız Aybak, S. – Bigat Akça, B. (2024). The First Strike Attempts in Republican History: The 1925 Telegraphers' Strike. *Turkish Academic Research Review*, 9/2, 110-132, <https://doi.org/10.30622/tarr.1459713>

Öz

19. yüzyılda Batı'da sanayileşmeyle birlikte modern anlamda emek ve işçi kavramları ortaya çıkmaya başladı. Esasen dünyanın birçok ülkesinde daha erken dönemlerde çalışma hayatında birtakım isyan ve direnişler görülmüştü. Ancak günümüzdeki anlamıyla işçilerin haklarını korumak için gerçekleştirdikleri grevler İngiltere'de başlayan sanayileşmenin ürünü olmuştur. Osmanlı Devleti'nde ücretli işçi sınıfı da Batı'daki gelişmeler ışığında devletin sanayileşme çalışmalarının yoğunlaştığı 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren ortaya çıkmaya başladı. Bu dönemde işçiler, çalışma hayatında karşılaştıkları sorunlara yönelik memnuniyetsizliklerini belli eden farklı tutumlara giriştiyse de grev hareketleri tam anlamıyla 19. yüzyılın son çeyreğinde cereyan etti. 23 Temmuz 1908'de II. Meşrutiyet ilan edildikten sonra işçi hareketlerinde artış yaşandı ve devamında 9 Ağustos 1909'da Meclis-i Mebusan'da grev ve lokavt kanunu olan "Tatil-i Eşgal Kanunu" kabul edildi. Tatil-i Eşgal Kanunu ile grev hareketleri tamamiyle ortadan kalkmadı ancak büyük oranda azaldı. 1914 yılından itibaren Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın etkisiyle işçi hareketlerinde bir süre durgunluk yaşandı. 30 Ekim 1918 tarihinde Mondros Mütarekesi imzalandıktan sonra ise 1908'de kurulmuş olan işçi örgütlerinin yanı sıra yeni işçi örgütleri de faaliyetlerini artırdı. Sonuç olarak 19. yüzyılda Batı'da başlayan sanayileşme süreci, işçi hareketlerini ve işçi haklarının korunmasını sağlayan önemli bir faktör oldu. Osmanlı Devleti'nde de farklı koşullar altında benzer bir süreç yaşandı. Mütareke dönemi Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın yıkıcı etkileri, ülke genelinde önemli ekonomik sıkıntılar yaşanması gibi sebeplerle Osmanlı için zorlu bir dönemdi. Uzun savaş yılları ve yıkımları nedeniyle gıda stokları tükenme noktasına geldi, ithalat yolları neredeyse tamamen kapandı. Bu durum Osmanlı topraklarında üretimin azalmasına ve tüketim maddelerinde kıtlık yaşanmasına sebep oldu. Özellikle İstanbul, bu ekonomik sıkıntıları daha yoğun şekilde hissetti. Şehir, hem savaşın doğrudan etkileri hem de mülteci akınlarıyla karşı karşıya kaldı. Mültecilerin gelmesiyle birlikte, İstanbul'da nüfus hızla artarken kaynaklar ise giderek azaldı. Bu durum, kentteki ekonomik darboğazı daha da derinleştirdi. Gıda ve diğer temel ihtiyaç maddelerinin kıtlığı, fiyatların yükselmesine ve karaborsacıların faaliyetlerinin artmasına neden oldu. Karaborsacılar, gayri-meşru yollarla kıt kaynaklara ulaşarak ekonomiyi manipüle ettiler ve fiyatları kontrol altına aldılar. Anadolu'da ise durum farklı değildi. Savaş koşulları, tarım ve üretim faaliyetlerini olumsuz etkiledi. Üretimdeki azalma ile birlikte ihracat da düşüşe geçti. Tarıma dayalı ekonomik yapının hakim olduğu Anadolu'nun birçok bölgesinde, savaş dolayısıyla tarım ürünlerinin miktarı ve kalitesi düştü. Bu durum hem iç piyasada hem de dış ticarete ciddi kayıplar yaşanmasına neden oldu. Mütareke dönemi, Osmanlı Devleti için ekonomik açıdan zorlu bir geçiş dönemi oldu. Savaşın yıkıcı etkileriyle birlikte ülkenin her köşesinde ekonomik dar boğazlar yaşandı. Bu dönemde, sadece İstanbul değil ülkenin her yerinde halk zorlu ekonomik koşullarla mücadele etmek zorunda kaldı. Devletin yeniden yapılandığı ve modernleşme çabalarının yoğunlaştığı Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nin ilk yılları, Türkiye için önemli bir dönüşüm sürecini işaret ediyordu. Bu süreçte işçiler de çeşitli cemiyetler ve örgütler aracılığıyla faaliyetlerini sürdürerek haklarını aramaya devam ettiler. Çalışma hayatında daha iyi koşullar talebinde olan işçiler, grev gibi etkili araçları kullanarak seslerini duyurmaya çalıştılar. Grevler, işçilerin haklarını savunmak için sıklıkla başvurdukları bir yöntem oldu. Ücretlerin artırılması, çalışma saatlerinin düzeltilmesi ve daha iyi çalışma koşulları gibi konularda işçiler grevler düzenleyerek taleplerini dile getirdiler. Cumhuriyet döneminde dikkat çeken grevlerden biri 1925 yılında Adana, Samsun ve Trabzon telgraf memurları tarafından yapılmaya çalışılan grev girişimidir. Bu grevin işçi grevlerinden farkı memurlar tarafından yapılması ve devletin bunu direkt olarak kendisine tehdit olarak algılamasıdır. Temelde, telgraf çalışanlarının ücret ve çalışma koşullarının iyileştirilmesi arzusunu taşıyan grevin hükümete iletiliş şekli ve metnin hazırlanışı esnasında yaşananlara dair çalışanlar tarafından verilen çelişik bilgiler, Ankara'da birtakım şüpheler doğurdu. Bu bağlamda 1925 yılında ülkenin içinde bulunduğu kaotik ortam, grev girişiminde bulunan Telgraf memurlarının Ankara İstiklal Mahkemesi'nde yargılanmalarına neden oldu. 1925 yılı Telgrafçılar grev girişimi konusunda Ankara İstiklal Mahkemesi belgelerinin TBMM tarafından açılması ile yeni bilgi ve belgelere ulaşılmıştır. Bu doğrultuda, çalışmada Ankara İstiklal Mahkemesi'nde yargılanan telgrafçıların ifadeleri ve tahkikat raporları ilk defa değerlendirilmeye çalışılacaktır. Çalışmanın bu özelliği nedeniyle Cumhuriyet tarihi literatürüne katkıda bulunması hedeflenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi, Grev, İşçi Hareketleri, Telgraf, Samsun, Trabzon, Adana.

Research Article

History

Received: 27.02.2024

Accepted: 07.06.2024

Date Published: 30.06.2024

Plagiarism Checks

This article has been reviewed by at least two referees and scanned via a plagiarism software.

Peer-Review

Single anonymized-One internal (Editorial Board). Double anonymized-Two external.

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Complaints

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Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare.

Grant Support

The author(s) acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research.

Published

Published by Mehmet ŞAHİN Since 2016-Akdeniz University, Faculty of Theology, Antalya, 07058 Turkey.

Author Contributions

Author-1 (%70)

Author-2 (%30)

Cite as

Yıldız Aybak, S. – Bigat Akça, B. (2024). Cumhuriyet Tarihi'nin ilk grev girişimlerinden: 1925 telgrafçıları grevi. *Turkish Academic Research Review*, 9/2, 110-132, <https://doi.org/10.30622/tarr.1459713>

Abstract

In the 19th century, with industrialization in the West, the modern concepts of labor and workers began to emerge. In fact, in many countries of the world, there had been some revolts and resistances in working life in earlier periods. However, the strikes carried out by workers to protect their rights in today's sense were the product of the industrialization that started in England. In the Ottoman Empire, the paid working class began to emerge in the second half of the 19th century, when the state's industrialization efforts intensified in the light of developments in the West. In this period, workers took different attitudes that showed their dissatisfaction with the problems they encountered in working life, but the strike movements took place in the last quarter of the 19th century. With the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era on July 23, 1908, workers' movements began to increase. Therefore, on August 9, 1909, the "Tatil-i Eşgal Law", which is the strike and lockout law, was accepted in the Meclisi Mebusan (Parliament). Although strike movements did not completely disappear with the acceptance of the "Tatil-i Eşgal Law", they largely decreased. Workers' movements experienced a period of stagnation from 1914 onwards due to the effects of war conditions. After the signing of the Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918, both the existing labor organizations established in 1908 and new labor organizations increased their activities. Consequently, the industrialization process that began in the West in the 19th century became a significant factor influencing labor movements and the protection of workers' rights. A similar process was experienced in the Ottoman Empire, however it developed under different conditions. With significant economic difficulties experienced throughout the country due to the destructive effects of World War I, The Armistice period was a challenging one for the Ottoman Empire. Owing to the long years of war and destruction, food stocks reached the point of depletion, and import routes were almost completely closed. This situation gave rise to a decrease in production in the Ottoman territories and a scarcity of consumer goods. Specifically, Istanbul felt these economic difficulties more intensively. The city faced both the direct impacts of the war and influxes of refugees. With the arrival of refugees, the population of Istanbul rapidly increased while resources gradually diminished. This deepened the economic bottleneck in the city even further. The scarcity of food and other essential commodities led to price increases and an increase in the activities of black marketeers. Black marketeers manipulated the economy by reaching scarce resources through illegitimate means and controlling prices. The situation was no different in Anatolia. War conditions negatively affected agricultural and production activities. The decrease in production naturally also affected exports negatively. Especially in many regions of Anatolia known for its agriculture-based economy, the quantity and quality of agricultural products decreased due to the war's effect. As a result, casualties were experienced both in the domestic market and in foreign trade. The Armistice period was also an economically challenging transitional period for the Ottoman Empire. Economic bottlenecks were experienced throughout the country due to the destructive effects of the war. During this period, not only Istanbul but also the entire country had to struggle with difficult economic conditions. The early years of the Republic of Türkiye marked an important period of transformation for the country. During this period, there was a restructuring of the state and intensified efforts towards modernization. However, the working class did not remain silent during this process. On the contrary, workers continued their activities through various associations and organizations to demand their rights. Workers demanding better conditions in the workplace attempted to make their voices heard by using effective tools such as strikes. Strikes became a common method that workers frequently resorted to defend their rights. Workers organized strikes to demand increases in wages, improvements in working hours, and better working conditions. One notable strike during the early years of the Republic was the attempted strike by telegraph workers in Adana, Samsun, and Trabzon in 1925. Although the strike fundamentally aimed to improve the wages and working conditions of telegraph workers, conflicting information provided by workers during the preparation of the strike's communication and text raised suspicions in Ankara. In this context, the chaotic environment in the country in 1925 led to the trial of telegraph workers who attempted the strike at the Ankara Independence Court. Although the strike attempt by telegraph workers in 1925 is mentioned in several sources, the statements of telegraph workers and the clarification of the incident remain incomplete. Therefore, in this study, the statements of telegraph workers tried in the Ankara Independence Court and investigation reports are attempted to be evaluated. Because of this feature of the study, it is expected to contribute to the literature on the history of the Republic.

Keywords: History of the Republic of Türkiye, Strike, Labor Movements, Telegraph, Samsun, Trabzon, Adana.

Introduction

As a word having entered Turkish language from French, “*Strike*” is a concept defined in different ways from sociological and legal perspectives, however it has been used to describe different phenomena throughout the ages. Since the 19th century, strike has gained the meaning of “*collective and voluntary interruption of work by workers in order to secure various benefits*” (Sur, 1987: 6-7).

Although there were some strike attempts in accordance with this definition in the historical process, these took place as small-scale labour movements (Deniz, 2018: 470; Sur, 1987: 30; Ulucan, 1981: 10-11). With the Industrial Revolution, strikes began to be realised as actions in accordance with their current meaning. After the Industrial Revolution in England, the fact that the majority of the population, regardless of men, women and children, were employed in unhealthy and heavy conditions with low wages led to various actions. The legal recognition of labour movements also began in the early 19th century in England. However, it took until the early 20th century for strikes to be fully legalised. It was in the 20th century that strikes gained a legal status in many countries of the world other than England (Deniz, 2018: 471; Sur, 1987: 30).

It is necessary to briefly touch upon the political, economic, and social situation of the Ottoman Empire in the years when the West was transitioning to mechanisation and a new order. Long before industrialisation, the changes and transformations that took place in Europe towards the end of the classical period of the Ottoman Empire had begun to affect the Ottoman Empire directly or indirectly. The discovery of new trade routes because of the geographical discoveries made in this period reduced the importance of the trade routes dominated by the Ottoman Empire. In the face of this situation, the Ottoman Empire continued to maintain its power for a while by taking some economic measures. However, the central authority was gradually shaken by the fact that the systems and institutions that had been in place for centuries in the military, social and economic fields within the state began to suffer setbacks. Local beys, called ayans, began to exploit the local population and turned into local dynasties with the rights they acquired (Kodaman, 2007: 12-16; Quataert, 2004: 62; Zürcher, 2010: 37; Lewis, 2015: 30-31)¹. In addition, the successive defeats in the wars that were fought put the state in a difficult situation in many respects (Quataert, 2004: 74-75). Although economic and political steps were taken to save the Ottoman Empire from its downturn, it is very difficult to say that the Ottoman Empire kept pace with the Reform and Renaissance movements during the period of enrichment and enlightenment that emerged as a result of the discoveries in the Western world. Changing conditions caused the Ottoman Empire to fall behind its contemporaries. In the face of this situation, although the rulers tried to get rid of the current situation with a change of attitude towards the West and reforms, the desired result could not be achieved (Lewis, 2015: 41-45). On the other hand, the Industrial Revolution, which inevitably took place with the scientific and technical advances that emerged in Europe, especially in production, affected the Ottoman Empire along with other countries (Küçükkalay, 1997: 51-61).

As in the Ottoman-British Treaty of 1838, the Ottoman Empire further expanded the economic privileges it had granted to European states, particularly Britain, and this left the state out of economic developments (Kütükoğlu, 1974: 108-117). In this period, when the economic superiority of the West began to be felt more and more, the “*Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayun*” was signed in 1839. Thus, the Tanzimat Period, in which many new and

¹ Although these developments will not be discussed in detail, these developments can be listed as the economic and military shaking of the state with the deterioration of the fief system, the problems that emerged in the land order as a result of the spread of the Iltizam System, which was put into practice by making concessions from the Fief System in the face of the increasing cash needs of the state due to the wars in the 16th century, the weakening of the central authority as of the 17th century and the prominence of the provincial administrators accordingly. Bkz. Kodaman, 2007: 12-16; Quataert, 2004: 62; Zürcher, 2010: 37.

important developments were to take place, began. Although the other developments will not be discussed, while concessions continued to be made to the European States through the trade treaties concluded during the Tanzimat Period, attempts were made to establish some production facilities (Önsoy, 1984: 9; Seyitdanlioğlu, 2009: 66; Sur, 1987: 30-31). At this point, it is an important development that the Land Law of 1858, which introduced the right to private property in land, was extended to foreigners with an edict issued in 1867 (Baskıcı, 2003: 32; Kenanoğlu, 2006: 134; Şener, 2007, p.67). With the granting of property rights to foreigners in this way, facilities started to be established with the help of foreign experts.

It was under these conditions that the concept of workers and wage labour emerged in the Ottoman Empire. However, in the Ottoman Empire, which was in the grip of economic and political modernisation movements and industrialisation, workers did not have the organisation to strike at first. Due to the difficult situation of the state, the negative perspective towards workers' organisations was quite influential (Yaşar, 2014: 81). In the following periods, new job opportunities and labour force emerged with the construction of railways, ports and shipyards, which led to the emergence of workers' rights and workers' strikes (Aslan, 2009: 34-35).

1. First Labour Movements in the Ottoman Empire

From 1839 onwards, machine strikes have been recorded at various times. In the early 1870s, the Ottoman Empire saw the first strike actions in the sense of collective work stoppages in defence of occupational rights and interests. Until this date, women workers protested the installation of a mechanical comb in Samakov in 1851. The action was abandoned after a promise that the comb in question would never be used again. There were also some other actions, such as the burning of a factory built on a cemetery in Bursa in 1861 by the people of Bursa. However, these were considered as machine-breaking actions owing to the fear of unemployment caused by the introduction of the machine phenomenon into industrial life and were not seen as a strike movement in the full sense (Gülmez, 1985: 792; Karakışla, 1988: 29).

The workers' resistance in the Zonguldak coal mine in 1865 is widely recognized as the first strike, despite differing perspectives in this regard (Aslan, 2009: 42). The Beyoğlu Telegraph Office employees organized the first significant strike movement in February 1872. A salary disagreement led to a walkout by the railway workers in Ömerli-Yarımburgaz and İzmit in April of the same year. The first strike, which some sources refer to as the first strike, happened on January 24, 1873, when workers at shipyard building sites went on strike because they had not received their salaries in a long time. The workers went to “*Bâb-ı Âli*” to demand their rights with petitions to the government. In the following years, many strikes were organised by different shipyard workers. Apart from the shipyard workers, various strikes were organised by bricklayers, shoemakers, painters, Haydarpaşa Railway Workers, “*Şirket-i Hayriye*” workers, Tophane workers and Haliç Ferry Workers. These strikes were mostly organised with the demands of wage shortages and the provision of accumulated wages. There were also a few labour movements related to the non-payment of wages in depreciated currencies and the intensity of working hours (Gülmez, 1985: 808). In addition, some strikes also included demands for week holidays and working hours. 43% of the strikes before 1908 took place in public investments and 57% in private investments (Yaşar, 2014: 80).

Similar to the petition examples, the workers' movements at this time were disorganized and presented their demands in a way that was compromise driven. Indeed, groups like the Pro-worker Society (1871) and the Ottoman Worker's Society (1894) were formed in secret, disbanded after a year, and reorganized in 1901–1902; nevertheless, these organizations did not organize workers in the same sense as trade unions in the West. The first of these served as a charitable institution by undertaking tasks such as finding jobs for workers, while the second was a more class-

conscious organisation, but its work was short-lived due to the conditions of the period (Aslan, 2009: 40; Gülmez, 1985: 794; Güzel, 1985: 810). The Strike Committee, established in 1876 by the Izmir tailor workers to manage the strike, was considered a meaningful attempt as a form of organisation (Güzel, 1985: 808). Nevertheless, the labour movements and organisation of this period are considered important in terms of bearing the buds of the developments in 1908 and afterwards (Güzel, 1985: 804).

In the early years of the 20th century, even the word strike was censored under the influence of the repressive regime and strikes began to stagnate (Gülmez, 1985: 794). However, the labour movement revived in the atmosphere of freedom that emerged with the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy II and 1908 became a key year for strikes. The 1908 strikes brought a new dimension to the Constitutional Monarchy II in terms of labour-capital relations (Toprak, 1996a: 6). In the two months following the re-proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy, strikes were observed in places where workers were concentrated and in various branches of labour. With these initiatives, workers tried to improve their living and working conditions. Strikes took place mainly in the transport (railway, tramway and port company strikes), lighting, mining, and tobacco sectors. There were also various strikes in private enterprises (Gülmez, 1985: 794-797; Güzel, 1985: 8). Especially workers working under harsh conditions in foreign capital enterprises went to seek their rights (Deniz, 2018: 475; Toprak, 1996b: 6).

Following the Second Constitutional Monarchy, there was a significant increase in worker organization and strikes during a period of labor scarcity brought on by war and mobilization. After 1908, nominal salaries increased by around 20% because of these causes (Ökçün et al., 1985: 756). During this time, in addition to pay increases, strikes were called for with a host of new demands, including reducing working hours, controlling annual paid leave, adjusting weekday holidays, and even implementing labor inspections and restructuring the company (Güzel, 1985: 811–812; Karakışla, 1988: 190–205). In the face of the gradual increase in strikes, the “İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti” enacted a legal regulation on 8 October 1908 under the name of the Kanun-ı Muvakat about the Law on “*Tatil-i Eşgal*”, without submitting it to the parliament, with the decision of the “*Heyet-i Vükela*”. (Doğan, 2012: 282). The “*Tatil-i Eşgal*” Law enacted in 1909 to stop the increase in strikes was a more comprehensive version of the regulation enacted in 1908. With this law, trade unions were banned, previously established trade unions were dissolved, and those who violated the law were sentenced to fines or imprisonment. Attempts were made to prevent strikes through conciliation committees, and strikes were prohibited while conciliation was in process. The other articles of the law were generally focused on solutions through conciliation without strikes, and only in the sixth article, the right to strike was recognised if the conciliation board did not take a decision (Doğan, 2012: 285-289). Although strikes were tried to be taken under control with the “*Tatil-i Eşgal*” Law, strikes could not be stopped, but the number of strikes decreased. Apart from the law, the decline in the number of strikes was influenced by the Tripoli and Balkan Wars, the loss of Thessaloniki, which was one of the most influential cities after Istanbul in the labour movement, and the fact that the Union and Progress Party became more dominant in the administration after the “*Bab-ı Ali*” Raid in 1913 (Yaşar, 2014: 83).

After 1913, when the “İttihat ve Terakki” increased its power, dissidents were suppressed, democratic rights and freedoms were restricted, workers' and tradesmen's organisations, protests and strikes were banned (Tanör, 1985: 25). Thirty-eight strikes were organised between 1909 and 1913. These strikes had similar reasons to the strikes of 1908 and included demands such as the recognition of the new trade union or association by the employer, the prohibition of the employment of women and children in industry, and the introduction of social security measures against work accidents. In this period, workers also attempted to organise themselves through

trade unions. Workers' organisations succeeded in organising demonstrations, marches, rallies, and meetings with predominantly political characteristics (Güzel, 1985: 817-823).

2. Labour Movements during the Armistice Period

After the First World War, strike movements, which had come to a halt, began to rekindle (Yaşar, 2014: 85). During the Armistice Period and the years of the National Struggle, twenty strikes were organized, with 1920 seeing the largest increase in the number of strikes (Güzel, 1985: 824). The first strike of 1919 is credited to the “*Şirket-i Hayriye*” ferries workers currently. On January 14, when the workers went on strike over the notification that they would no longer be receiving bread. The action came to an end after the corporation promised to keep providing food to the workers. On January 27, 1922, employees of the Dersaadet Telephone Company went on strike. Women participated in this walkout as well. The strike ended in two days after the workers' demands for wages and raises were mostly met (Yaşar, 2014: 94).

Apart from these, the workers at the Reji Factory in Cibali on 18 February 1919, the typesetters of Greek newspapers in March 1919, the workers of the “*Şirket-i Hayriye*” on 30 April 1919, the Istanbul Tramway workers on 10 May 1919, the workers of the Bank Memurin ve Müstahdemini Club on 27 June 1919, the ferry stokers of the “*Şirket-i Hayriye*” on 29 June, In July 1919, the cleaning workers of the Istanbul Municipality went on strike, the tunnel workers went on strike for 45 minutes in July, the porters of the Hisar Pier went on strike on 13 July, the workers of the “*Tersane-i Amire*” (Kasımpaşa) went on strike in October 1919, and the porters of the Haliç Dock went on strike on 30 October 1919. As can be seen, almost every month of 1919 saw one or more strikes. The common point in all these strikes organised by different labour groups was the demand for wage increases. Apart from this, the regulation of working hours and timely payment of wages were among the other demands of the workers (Güzel, 1985: 824; Yaşar, 2014: 93-102).

In 1920, strikes by Istanbul primary school teachers, Istanbul Municipality cleaning workers, French and Greek newspaper typesetters, Tramway Company workers, Kasımpaşa Shipyard workers, Tunnel workers and Tramway Depot workers, Kazlıçeşme Debbaghane workers, Coal porters and Eastern Railways Company workers were added to the strikes. The reason for all these strikes was the failure to raise the wages of the workers in the face of the difficult living conditions. In the following years, strikes for wage increases continued to be organised. In 1921, the strike of Mekteb-i Sultani teachers, who had not received their wages for a long time, stands out. Afterwards, the workers of the Haliç Dersaadet Ferry Company went on strike and demanded that their wages be doubled and that workers be given bonuses every year. After that, almost all the strikes by the workers of Silahtarğa Electricity Factory and Eastern Railways, Tramway Company workers and printing press workers were again caused by the scarcity of wages and working conditions. Similarly, in 1922, tram company workers and municipal cleaning workers continued to strike with similar demands (Yaşar, 2014: 109-120).

In addition to their economic and social characteristics, the political character of the strikes between 1919 and 1922 became clearer. In the strikes, the struggle against foreign capital took on a political front and more than half of the strikes were organised in companies owned by foreign capital (Güzel, 1985: 825). The strikes between these years were a period in which divisions were triggered by extraordinary conditions and wars, and this became evident during the occupation years of Istanbul (Yaşar, 2014: 129).

3. Republican Period Labour Movements

Before the proclamation of the Republic, labour groups also participated in the Turkish Economic Congress convened in Izmir in February 1923. Workers raised many issues such as working conditions, working hours, wages, unionisation, week holidays and annual leave (Ökçün, 1981: 95-100). There was no demand for strikes at the Congress, but between July and November, many labour strikes took place in cities such as Istanbul, Edirne, Aydın, İzmir and Zonguldak (Tekerek, 2020: 183).

In July 1923, Zonguldak-Ereğli workers went on strike for job security and in August, Bomonti brewery workers went on strike for the reinstatement of their dismissed colleagues. The strikes were resolved with the intervention of the Istanbul Umum Union of Workers (IUAB), founded in 1922, and the Ministry of Economy. Also in August, there were uprisings by Izmir textile workers led by Belgians and Aydın railway workers. In September, strikes were organised by the Istanbul crewmen, and in October by the Istanbul textile workers and the workers of the Eastern Railways. The Eastern Railways strike caused debates in the Parliament and Mahmut Esat Bey, the Minister of Economy, who was criticised for being tolerant, was forced to resign (Yavuz, 1988: 169).

Workers began organizing themselves to secure a position for themselves following the Republic's declaration, during a time when the state was going through a renewal in practically every sector (Tekerek, 2020: 180). Strikes and organizing efforts persisted in 1924. After a series of dramatic events on May 1, 1924, the gendarmerie put an end to the protests. Conflicts broke out in July between the security services and the Tramway Company employees who were protesting the unfair termination of one of their colleagues. In addition to these, postmen staged work stoppages to demand a wage increase, women workers in Ortaköy tobacco warehouses staged work stoppages due to their working conditions, and Istanbul Municipality workers staged work stoppages to demand first paid week holidays and then the right to this right for all workers. In 1925, workers from various sectors continued to strike. Although many sources state that strike movements came to a standstill due to the declaration of the “*Takrir-i Sükûn*” Law on 4 March 1925, telegraph officers also attempted a strike in July 1925.

4. July 1925 Telegraphers' Strike

The 1925 walkout by telegraph officers in several provinces was one of the strikes called during the Republican era. The Sheikh Sait Rebellion, the Republic of Turkey's first uprising, occurred in February 1925. The fact that this attempted insurrection, which originated in the East, quickly gained support and expanded, forced the government to intervene. In this context, the scope of the “*Hıyanet-i Vataniye*” was expanded, the Progressive Republican Party was shut down on the grounds that it was linked to the rebellion, and it was decided to establish two Independence Courts, one in Ankara and the other in the East, with the “*Takrir-i Sükûn*” Law in order to suppress the rebellion (Aybars, 2018: 378; Tunçay, 1989: 128-142; Zürcher, 2017: 254). On 4 March 1925, the “*Takrir-i Sükûn*” (Peace and Order) Law imposed restrictions on labour organisations and movements. The first article of the law authorised the government to ban all kinds of “associations”, “attempts”, “incitement” and “publications” that would disrupt peace, security, public tranquility, and social order (Yavuz, 1988: 163).

In such an environment, on 2 June 1925, two telegraph officers in Adana sent a telegram to the “*Ankara Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye*” (Directorate General) asking for their transfer to Ankara. The reasons for this request, which was rare in Ankara due to the high prices, were being investigated when a telegram was received from the Adana Chief Directorate. In the telegram dated 10 June 1925, it was reported that due to the low salaries and health conditions, officers started to resign one by one and two telegraph officers in Adana and Mersin resigned. While they were busy appointing new officers to replace these two officers in order to prevent the interruption of communication, another telegram was received with their own signatures stating that five officers in Adana had

resigned. One day later, on 2 July 1925, another telegram was received from the Trabzon “Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye” stating that some of the Trabzon telegraph officers did not report for duty citing their illnesses and that the telegraph officers were invited to duty in the presence of the police, but they did not respond to the invitation. Also at this time, a telegram was sent to the “Telegraph Directorate General” with the signature of Samsun telegraph officers. The telegram read as follows:

“Telegram

Address: Telegraph Directorate General

Origin: Samsun Mahreç No: 2199

Date 7/7 Time Minute 17.50

Signature: Faruk

The number of civil servants was reduced from twenty-five to eighteen. He works every other day, that is, twenty-four hours without sleep. We kill twenty-four hours with sleep. We are all sick and miserable. It is expensive here, the air is malarial, the water is dysentery, a few of our friends are sick every day. We are not satisfied with promises. We have no strength to wait for the beginning of the year and no intention to die. The officer who will do the work wants bread to feed us. If it is impossible, let us take care of ourselves (TBMM Archive, T3, K_20, D_69-1, G_001_0010).

Samsun Telegraph Officers”

Accordingly, the telegraphists stated that if their salaries were not to be increased, they would take care of themselves which they did not have the strength to wait for the beginning of the year and that they needed bread to fill their bellies.

Upon the resignations of the telegraphists, the Ministry of Interior took measures and stated that the services of the telegraph officers were also appreciated by the government, but that their requests would be evaluated at the beginning of the year since the issue of salary increase was a matter of the budget and the Grand National Assembly, and that the telegraphists should continue their duties in the best way possible and notified the governorships to notify the telegraphists. However, the continued discontent of the telegraph officers, the cessation of telegraph communications, and the fact that the telegrams sent to the authorities with the signature of Samsun Telegraph officers were written with a violent expression were considered within the scope of the “Takrir-i Sükun” Law on the grounds that it would violate the internal order of the country. For this reason, a decree was issued on 9 July 1925, decreeing that all telegraph officers in Trabzon, Samsun and Adana, from the oldest to the youngest, who resigned and left their posts or not, would be sent to the Ankara Independence Court. According to this decree: “These actions of telegraph communication officers who resigned from their duties on the grounds of some unreasonable reasons and showed reluctance in the performance of their duties, while their applications for the satisfaction of their needs were being taken into consideration and a form of settlement was being considered, and they were communicating with their localities by their departments, led to the postponement and cancellation of telegraph communications and, as a result, to the suspension and cancellation of telegraph communications and, as a result, to the suspension of the order of the country. Since it was deemed to be a violation of the peaceful assembly, it was approved and accepted at the meeting of the Executive Board of Deputies dated 9 July 341 upon the proposal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the memorandum dated 9 July 341 and numbered 49, upon the proposal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the memorandum dated 9 July 341 and numbered 49, that the telegraph officers in Trabzon and Adana who abandoned their service by resignation and all telegraph officers in

Samsun who did or did not abandon their duties be handed over to the Ankara Independence Court in accordance with the provisions of the Takrir-i Sükun Law.”

Gazi Mustafa Kemal, President of the Republic of Türkiye” (IM_T3_K020_D069-1_G019_0002)

After the decree, İsmet Pasha wrote a letter to the Ankara Independence Court and informed that the Executive Board of Deputies had issued a decree at its meeting dated 9 July 1925 on the transfer of Trabzon, Adana and Samsun telegraph communication officers who resigned from their duties to the Independence Court and asked for the necessary action to be taken on this matter (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G019_0001). Thus, the telegraph workers' strike was transferred to the Ankara Independence Court and the telegraph officers arrested in accordance with the decree were sent to the court.

The indictment issued by the Ankara Independence Court on the telegraphists' strike reads as follows: *“The Board of Deputies deemed the actions of the telegraphists, who sent a threatening telegram threatening that many people performing telegraph duties in the state institution would resign and resign, to be contrary to the Takrir-i Sükun Law and submitted them to the Board of Deputies. They had endured all kinds of deprivations during the most violent and fiery periods of the revolution and remained devoted to their duties more than anyone else. However, there is no doubt that they were not grateful for all these services and that the central government was not grateful to them out of goodwill. However, they took a stance against the government by claiming that their salaries were low. The issue of salary increase is a matter concerning the budget. Everyone knows that since the Grand National Assembly will approve the budget and a law will be enacted, the central government cannot raise anyone's salary by ten money when there is no parliament. Having known this fact, they paralysed the telegraph communication which is the life of the country.”* (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G003_0001). The Ankara Independence Court interpreted this strike as a rebellion against the state and started the trial of the telegraphists of Samsun, Trabzon and Adana.

Ankara Independence Court convened on 13 July 1925 under the presidency of Necip Ali Bey. Ali Rıza Efendi, son of Mustafa, one of the telegraphists of Samsun, was tried first. Ali Rıza Efendi stated that he had worked as a civil servant from 1317 to 1321 and that he had been appointed as a telegraph officer in Samsun after working in various deputy offices. He stated that his salary was last increased in 1923 and that he received a salary of 1500 kurus because he was in a higher class, but that his friends in lower classes received salaries between 1000 and 1200 kurus (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0004). Ali Rıza Efendi also signed the telegram written on behalf of Samsun telegraphists. Ali Rıza Efendi explained his purpose in sending this telegram as follows: *“Sir, my intention is that as the number of civil servants decreases, their duties are imposed on us and we are asked to perform the same duties. If it is not done, we are liable. I said that if such a thing is written, at least the resignation of officers will be prevented.”* He said that the director of Samsun had also written many letters to the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the salary issue, but they could not get a reply and they were forced to send a telegram (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0005). Ali Rıza Efendi stated that Halim Bey, their superior, was also aware of the telegram to the authorities and that they did it in line with his request, and that Halim Bey had spoken to Trabzon Telegraph Director just before they sent the telegram and after this conversation he asked Ali Rıza Efendi to write a telegram (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0007). According to Ali Rıza Efendi's statements, Mehmet Efendi and Rıza Tevfik Bey, who oversaw the Samsun Telegraph Office, also dictated a telegram. Finally, when the telegram

written by Rıza Tevfik Bey was liked, all the employees working in the Samsun telegraph office, except Kemal Efendi, signed this telegram and sent a copy of the telegram to both the “Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye” and the Ministry of Interior (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0009).

The Ankara Independence Court insisted on the procedural propriety of such an application to the authorities. The irregularity of this situation aroused suspicion (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0010). However, Ali Rıza Efendi also stated that they were very tired which they were wandering around like a fool, which the work was too heavy, that they had to do this, which he could not have foreseen that this would happen, and that their aim was not to threaten the office. In the light of Ali Rıza Efendi's statements, the court learnt that the director of Samsun and the director of Trabzon were in communication and decided to include the director of Trabzon in the case along with the director of Samsun (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0014). After Ali Rıza Efendi, the testimony of Nazmi, son of Hüsnü from Eğrişar was taken. Nazmi Efendi stated that he had been a civil servant for twenty-one years and that he had first started his civil service in Rumelia and had been in Samsun for four years. He said that he was not aware of the composition of this telegram and that he had seen and signed it after it was written. Upon this, the court asked Nazmi Bey whether their aim was to revolt (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0015). He also added that the state had a security system and that there could not be such an application procedure and that it would be rebellion. Nazmi Bey stated that they would not even think of going against the state that their salaries were not enough and that the working conditions were very tiring, and that the chief officer Ziya Efendi and Merzifonlu Mehmet Efendi encouraged them (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0016).

Following Nazmi Efendi, Ahmet son Kemal from Rizeli was deposed (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0017). Kemal Bey stated that he had been working in Samsun for four years which he did not sign the telegram sent to the Ministry of Interior because he did not want to get involved in such things, and that most of his friends were working for an increase in their salaries and that the ones who worked the hardest for this were Merzifonlu Mehmet Efendi and Rıza Tevfik Bey (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0018,0019). Since his signature was not on the telegram, the court decided to continue the trial of Kemal Efendi without arrest.

Following Kemal's trial, Bahattin son Nuri from Sivas was put on trial. Nuri Efendi stated that he had been in Ladik before where he had arrived in Samsun eight months ago, and that his signature was on the telegram sent to the Ministry of Interior (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0019). Another telegrapher whose statement was taken was Ali Avni, son of Mehmet Arif. Ali Avni stated that he had come to Samsun seven years ago, which his signature was on the draft of the telegram, but that he had no knowledge of its composition, with which he thought the telegram was addressed to the “Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye” and not to the Ministry of Interior, and that they had no intention of rebellion (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0021, 0022). Immediately after Ali Avni, Mustafa son Hüseyin was called to the hearing. Hüseyin stated that he had been a civil servant for seven or eight years and that he had signed the telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the hope of an increase in his salary which he had not read the telegram at first because it was signed in a hurry, and that he had read it after signing. Upon this, Necip Ali Bey asked Ali Avni to answer by saying, “What do you think about this telegram after reading it, have you seen such a thing used in all these telegrams sent to so many authorities?”. Ali Avni claimed that if he had read it, perhaps he would not have signed it, but he did not read it. The other person on trial was Muzafer, son of Mehmet. Muzafer stated that he had been working in Samsun for ten years and that he was not aware of the telegram and that an officer named Kaşif Efendi had brought it to him and made him sign it without reading it (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0026). Suadiyeli Mehmet, who was among those on trial, said that he had signed the

telegram because they were working two shifts which they were sick almost every day due to the weather in Samsun, which two shifts were too much and that they could not make a living due to lack of money. He added that they wrote the telegram to increase their salaries (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0027). When Kılıç Ali Bey asked whether Mehmet thought it was appropriate to write such a telegram, Mehmet claimed that they would work again and that their aim was to increase their salaries. Another person was Faik son Ömer (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0028). Ömer Efendi: *"I entered the watch at nine in the morning of 7 July 341. Since Samsun officers had been doing separate watches for a long time, they had been applying for three watches for a long time. The chief officer showed me a direction. I was busy with that, and my friends were busy making manuscripts. One of my friends, whom I could not remember, came in. Mehmet Effendi and Faruk Effendi were the ones doing the drafting. At that time, I was busy again. A friend, whom I could not recognise or remember, sent the telegram. We signed it. Faruk Efendi collected the money to send the telegram."* He explained how the telegram was sent. Emin Efendi, son of Vehbi, whose statement was taken after this, said that he had been a civil servant in Samsun for five years and that when his colleagues signed, he also signed. Emin Efendi stated that he worked under Rıza Efendi and said: *"I was working that day, but the manager was talking to Trabzon. He called the chief officer. Chief officer Rıza Efendi wrote a manuscript. They did not like it (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0030). The Müstedayat Officer wrote a manuscript again. The manager spoke to the Trabzon manager and at that time Ankara and Trabzon were working. The director cut Ankara and spoke to Trabzon. In other words, Trabzon was agreed upon first, and the telegram was written afterwards. Our director is from Thessaloniki, he has been in Samsun for a year."* In this way, he explained what happened on the day the telegram was written and stated that Rıza and Mehmet Efendis were responsible for writing the telegram (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0031). After Emin Efendi, Hamdi Bey from Amasya stated in his testimony that he was in the organisation of the ser officer Rıza Efendi and they were forced to make an application due to lack of administration since they could not manage with the money they received (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0032). Rıfat, son of Vehbi from Amasya, described what happened that day as follows: *"One hour after I went on guard duty in the morning, the manager came to the engine room. He said, Call the Trabzon centre manager to the machine room and let's talk. Rıza Efendi called him and the manager talked a lot with Trabzon. The chief officer told Rıza Efendi to write something. He wrote something and took it to the director. The press officer Rıza Tevfik Efendi also wrote a telegram. Faruk Efendi drew it up. Mehmet Efendi had also written something before. But I don't know whether he gave it or not and I don't know what the director discussed with Trabzon."* With these words, he mentioned that the writing of the telegram was agreed between the directors of Trabzon and Samsun and that their aim was salary (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0033).

After these statements, the statements of Ahmet, son of Celal, Necati, son of Idris, Hasan, Mustafa, Akif, son of Mustafa were taken from Samsun telegraphists. All of them stated that the telegram was first organised by Mehmet and Faruk Efendis under the watch of Kaşif and Ali Rıza Efendis (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0038) and later expanded by Rıza Tevfik (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0034), (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0035) which they had written this telegram with no malicious intent (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G001_0036).

After the trial of Samsun telegraphists, it was the turn of Adana telegraphists. Firstly, the testimony of Mustafa son Arif was taken from the Adana telegraphists. (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0003) Arif said that he had been a telegraph clerk for four years and had been in Adana for two months, and that he had resigned from telegraph work one and a half months ago because he could not make a living. After Arif, the testimony of Ali son Nazım began. Nazım stated that he had been in the Fifth Caucasian Brigade during the National Movement and had

learnt communications there, and that he had then started working as a telegraph clerk at the telegraph directorate in Adana. He stated that he had resigned a month ago because he could not make a living in Adana and that he was preparing to go to Tokat, his hometown, and that this was his purpose in resigning (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0004). Afterwards, Seyfi, son of Mehmet Ali, was put on trial. Seyfi stated that he was not aware of the telegram sent by the Samsun telegraphists which he did not know anyone in Adana who resigned before or after him, and that he was forced to resign in order to ensure the administration of his children.

After these statements, the court decided to postpone the hearings to 18 July 1925 until the other suspects came to court (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0005).

When the court reconvened on 18 July, Ali Rıza son Hasan, Abdülkadir son Rauf, Salih son Şinasi, Nuri son Nihat, Abdullah Şükrü son Hilmi were put on trial. Almost all of them stated that their salaries were not enough that they could no longer tolerate the night shifts and that they had resigned in the hope of finding another job. Among them, only Asaf, son of Niyazi, stated that he did not resign and that he was on leave because his family was ill. The court terminated the trial of Asaf since he had a document stating that he was on leave and had nothing to do with this work (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0006).

After the trial of Adana telegraphists, the trial of Trabzon telegraphists began. The trial of Abdi, son of Ahmet, started first. Abdi stated that he had been in Trabzon for a year and a half, which he had not resigned, which he had taken a medical report due to his illness, and that he had even gone to the office on the orders of the director Rüştü Bey and the chief director Edip Bey before the report expired (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0010). After Abdi, İsmail Habip, son of Hasan, was put on trial. İsmail Habip stated that he had been suspended because he had gone on duty half an hour late due to the holiday, and that he had been sick for a week but had continued to work in this way. After these statements, Necip Ali Bey found it noteworthy that both the previous and İsmail Habip said that they had not resigned and decided to ask the manager Rüştü Bey and Edip Bey about this situation (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0011). After İsmail Habip, the testimony of Sadi, son of Zühtü, began. Sadi said that he had not resigned which he had taken a medical report on the second day of the feast because he was sick, which the “Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye” had rejected the report as unfit which he had come to work sick and that as a result he found himself in court. He said that this situation was caused by the chief director's mismanagement and asked for this matter to be clarified as soon as possible. In the light of these statements, the court committee stated that the reason for the work in Trabzon was shown as Edip Bey and requested that he be detained and brought to the Ankara Independence Court (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0012). Then Sadi and his friends said that although they had not taken reports, they had made it look like a strike and thus delayed the proceedings. Reşit Galip Bey said to Sadi, “*You took the reports and then sat in the café and the police called you and you did not come.*” Sadi did not accept this situation and told Reşit Galip Bey, “*No, sir, I could not come one day. No one called me from the café. However, he told me that my report was not in order or I would be suspended. So I got scared. I came to my duty sick.*” He defended himself by saying. After Sadi, Mustafa's son Cevdet testified. Cevdet said, “*I couldn't get a report because it was Eid, so I wrote a memorandum. One day later I gave my report. I had taken a one-week report. The “Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye” revealed it. I received the report from Dr Sabri and Mr Lütfü. My ear ached and I couldn't hear. The report and prescriptions are at the directorate. They told me to come back in two days and sent me here the next day. Under no circumstances have I left my job for eight years.*” (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0013). The fact that these three people did not come to work on the first day of Eid after receiving a medical report was deemed noteworthy by the court and the testimony of other people was started. After this,

Ragıp, son of Mehmet, stated that he was going for treatment in Istanbul because his eyes hurt and therefore, he resigned on the second day of Eid and that he was not aware of the resignation of other colleagues (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0014). After Ragıp, the trial of Yusuf, son of Osman, started. Yusuf said that he had applied to the “Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye” for leave of absence the day before the Eid and that he had been referred to the hospital in accordance with his petition and that the hospital had given him a one-week report and that he had come to work on Eid even though he was on medical leave. The court asked whether there was an alliance between them since everyone's report coincided with the feast day. Yusuf stated that there was never an alliance which even in the most depressed times of the country, they worked with bread in one hand and maniple in the other, which the machines were never empty on the day of the Eid and that although they had no grudge, it was understood that this was done for a purpose (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0015).

In the light of the testimonies given, the court first announced the verdict against the Adana telegraphists. According to the verdict announced by the prosecutor on 19 July 1925: *“The case of the Adana telegraphists has been finalised. It is understood that the Adana telegraphists resigned individually due to necessity. Since it is understood that the Adana telegraphists were aware of the homeland issue and resigned for the sake of sustenance and not for any specific purpose, it has been decided that their trials shall be held in a non-residential manner until the arrival of their documents and that the detention order against them shall be revoked.”* (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0015,16,17). Thus, the Adana telegraphists were to be tried without arrest until the end of the trial.

After the testimonies of the telegraph officers, it was time to put the directors on trial. The court convened on 22 July 1925. Since Necip Ali Bey, the president of the court, was excused, Ali Bey, the deputy of Rize, presided the court in his place. Trabzon director Rüştü Bey was put on trial first. The court committee explained the inclusion of Rüştü Bey, the Trabzon director, in the trial as follows: *“Trabzon telegraph director Rüştü Bey's inclusion in the trial was deemed necessary by our authorities for the following reasons. He said that the telegraphers, and especially a chief officer in his testimony, had applied to the authorities in obedience to the order they had not received from the Samsun telegraph directorate. Since the director of Samsun and the director of Trabzon said that they were in telegraphic communication, it was deemed necessary to include them in the case.”* After reading the reason for Rüştü Bey's inclusion in the case, Ali Bey said, *“An illegal situation has occurred in Samsun. A telegram was sent to the authorities with the signature of Samsun Telegraph officers. The text of the telegram was written with an aggressive and unruly expression, and the authorities claimed that the director of Samsun corresponded with you and then this telegram was sent.”* After stating why the case was filed, he asked Mr Rüştü Bey to explain how the incident took place. Trabzon Director Rüştü Bey said that he and Samsun Director Halim Bey had a small talk before Eid and that he did not know anything about the telegram sent to the authorities (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0018). He also stated that on the second day of the feast, some of the officers did not come on duty and that he applied to the “Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye” and that some of the officers had taken a report beforehand and then the others sent a report and three officers stated that they were sick and did not come on duty. He said that he suspended two officers and started an investigation about the others. He even said that when there were no officers left, he himself worked day and night for five days. Rüştü Bey, to the question asked by the court about Edip Bey, the chief manager, said: *“The family of Edip Bey, the chief manager, is in Batum. I do not know how he is related there. Edip Bey is a bit unmanageable. It would not have been necessary to reduce the shifts to two. The duty could still be fulfilled by taking other measures. In other words, if we had been given one or two masters from the teller and accounting officers, this situation would not have occurred. Currently we have thirteen*

officers and among them there are two masters whose name is Asaf. There is no correspondence. The other is a man named Sirri Bey who cannot communicate. These are former officers. They used to work in the pen. I would like them to be employed only in the pen. In this way, the staff will expand. He said that nothing will be prevented. But Edip Bey was not interested in this new operation.” With these words, he stated that Edip Bey indeed failed to fulfil his responsibilities regarding the administration (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0019).

Following Rüştü Bey, the trial of Halim Bey, Samsun Director, commenced (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0020). Halim Bey stated that he was from Thessaloniki and had been appointed to Samsun a year ago. He stated that they were subordinated to Trabzon Chief Directorate in all kinds of transactions (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0024). Regarding the telegram, he said that the officers wrote it without his knowledge, signed it and sent it, and that he was only aware of it when an officer showed it to him on the day it was sent. Upon this, he said, *“This telegram is violent. You have called telegraphists here. This is a generalisation. Call them telegraph officers.”* Halim Bey's behaviour as if he was unaware of anything and his saying the words *“Telegraph officers”* to the court committee drew reaction. Upon this, Ali Bey, the president of the court, said, *“What does it mean to write 'telegraph officers'? Is that term an individuality? Is it a society? Or is it a committee? You claim to have been an officer for the last twenty years. Is there such a procedure of application? Is there a procedure of enquiry?”* he asked. Halim Bey replied with the words *“Why not, sir, it is not just once, but many times they write, request, complain.”* (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0025) and insisted that the word *“telegraph officers”* would be correct. In addition, the court committee said to Halim Bey: *“According to the continuous testimony of Ali Rıza Efendi and your other manager and officer, you first communicated with the Trabzon manager about this matter via relay, and 15/20 minutes later you ordered them to apply by printing this telegram and gave this order to Ali Rıza Efendi.”* Halim Bey said that he would never accept this situation, but the court committee said that Halim Bey was trying to mislead the court committee and summarised the statements given by other people as follows: *“Firstly, a manuscript is written by Ali Rıza Efendi. On the other hand, another manuscript is written by the preparatory officer. Then something is written by Rıza Tevfik Efendi. Finally, with some modifications, the telegram is fixed and signed by Rıza Tevfik, Raşit and Mehmet masters to the officers on duty and the money is taken. This is the statement they gave.”* (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0026) After saying this, Ali Bey read the telegram, but despite all the questioning, Halim Bey said that he was not aware of this telegram and that these officers had always applied.

Following Mr Halim's statement, the court took the statement of Inspector Sadi Bey. Inspector Sadi Bey stated that his duty was to take care of the electrification of the lines and that he had nothing to do with the matter since he had nothing to do with the officers. Upon this, the court decided to release Mr. Sadi on the grounds that he had nothing to do with this matter (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0029).

On 22 July 1925, the second session of the trial began. In this session, the testimonies of Ali Rıza Efendi, Merzifonlu Mehmet Efendi, Rıza Tevfik, Faruk and Kaşif, who were alleged to have prepared the telegram drafts, were taken.

Firstly, Ali Rıza Efendi stated that the telegraph director asked him to write the telegram drafts. In his testimony, he said: *“The director called me in. He told me to write a telegram. I wrote it and he did not like it. So I wrote it again, and then my friends wrote it. Faruk Efendi drew up the telegram. They all signed it. Mehmet Efendi of Merzifon was the one who took the lead in this. He talked to the principal. They organised it together. They met with the director of Trabzon.”* Upon this, President Ali Bey turned to Halim Bey, the Samsun Director, and asked

him to answer. Halim Bey said that he had not met with the Trabzon manager for this matter, and that he had asked him to send the batteries some eye stone because they had run out of eye stone (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0031). Halim Bey stated that they had hired two new officers in Trabzon and when their own officers heard about them, they asked them to hire them in Samsun as well. Halim Bey said, *"I was fed up and wrote to the chief directorate and signed it. I said, 'Whatever you do, do it.' Then they drafted a telegram. They brought it to me. I said this would not do. I said, 'Write to the Directorate General, I have nothing else to do. I did not have time to read the written telegram.'"* He continued his words as follows. In response to Halim Bey's statement, Ali Rıza Efendi said, *"I don't know, sir. I don't know whether it was shown to the director or not, since it was written inside. Some of the masters say it was shown before it was withdrawn. Some say it was shown after it was withdrawn. I couldn't look at them because I was too busy, I didn't attach any importance to them. I did not think about it."* (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0032). After this comparison, the court committee stated that the part of the matter between the director and the chief officer was understood, and that the director had said that he had never spoken to the chief officer and that he had met with the Trabzon telegraph director, but that he had confessed and admitted all of this during the confrontation, and that the matter should now proceed to the other stages, and they started the trial of Merzifonlu Mehmet Efendi.

When asked by the court whether you wrote the copy of the telegram to the authorities, Mehmet Efendi of Merzifonlu replied: *"I was on guard duty. There were some rumours. Here he is meeting with Trabzon. At that time, Rifat Efendi, one of my friends, said to Faruk Efendi that Trabzon had three watches, whereas we had two watches and I was working on the fourth machine and he was working on the sixth machine. That's what he told me. I also looked at Rıza Efendi, the chief officer, and he was writing a telegram. You were against such things until now. I said, 'Why are you writing this?'"* He said he was only making a request. Then I looked and saw that Faruk Efendi was also writing on. Faruk Efendi had heard the Director's communication. When he saw that the chief officer was writing, he started to write a manuscript. *Sir, I have been applying to the director for eight months so that I could be given a house like my peers. Except for a few bachelors, they all have houses. I have applied to the province many times. I have applied to the official and unofficial directorate. I have been going back and forth for eight months and nothing has happened. Merchants also live in this house. The telegram sent here was written and dated by Rıza Tevfik Efendi. We wrote something like this, and they told me to sign it, and I did."* In the rest of his testimony, Merzifonlu Mehmet Efendi stated that he had been insulted by his landlord that morning because he could not pay the rent of his house and that he had written a manuscript to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to ask for a house, but that Rıza Tevfik Efendi had made him write it again because he did not like it (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0033, 0034). Merzifonlu Mehmet Efendi's testimony was met with reaction by the court committee and Ali Bey said, *"I understand that there is nothing in the name of order and order among your officers. Now the telegram is mentioned. You say in the presence of the panel of judges that you were going to apply to the Ministry of Interior for a house. Is such talk acceptable? How can this telegram be a matter of asking for a house?"* After saying these words, he addressed Samsun Telegraph Director Halim Bey and asked him what they had discussed with Trabzon Director before the telegram to the authorities. Halim Bey said that the batteries had run out of eyeglasses and that was why they had talked (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0035). About the writing of the telegram: *"The chief officers were constantly contacting us, saying that we were short of officers, make two shifts, how long will it continue like this, make us get paid for our overtime work. On that day, the Trabzon Telegraph Manager was present, the officers were hearing the conversation and they repeated it again that day. The duty of*

the manager is to manage. I said, "If you want, you can make another application in a certain way and write to the "Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye and stop the whining." He said, "Then let me make a manuscript." I said, "Make a manuscript. I told him to do it, and he brought me a manuscript. At that time, a friend named Yusuf Bey came. He wanted to change two thousand liras. I was thinking that it would be easier to send it to the "Müdüriyet-i Umumiyye". My desk was full of money. I told him to leave the manuscript and I'd look at it. He did. As I was putting the rest of the money in, he said that the science inspector wanted you. I looked and saw Yusuf Bey and Muhtar Ziya Şakir sitting in the science inspector's room. The reporter of Cumhuriyet and the science inspector were talking. There was a discussion about photography. At this time, Rıza Efendi, the preparations officer, came in and read the paper. I said, You should write 'telegraph officers' and had the manuscript drawn. The Müstedayat room and Rıza Tevfik Efendi's room are next to each other. We asked them if they had written this signed telegram. They said they had written it, but I said that the result would not be good, and I did not find it appropriate because it was not written to the authority to which it belonged. The next day the governor came to the telegraph office and spoke to the head of the machine and the Ministry of Interior."(IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0036)

Rıza Tevfik, who allegedly wrote the draft of the telegram, said that he wrote the draft of the telegram, Merzifonlu Mehmet, chief officer Rıza Bey, Faruk Efendi were at the desk of the chief officer, *"Friends, this is our last application (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0037). If there is no solution to our problem, we will leave"* and that they all read and signed the manuscript. He stated that the final draft was never shown to the director and that it was also expanded and filmed by Faruk Efendi. Another person, Faruk Efendi, stated, *"Firstly, our chief officer Ali Rıza Efendi was writing on his desk. Mehmet Efendi and other friends went to him and we saw that he was writing a telegram. He wrote a draft for three watches. He took it to the manager. The manager told Ali Rıza Efendi to leave it and we would write it. Yusuf Bey, the former postmaster, was there, and after a few minutes Rıza Tevfik Efendi said I would write it. He went to the manager's office. He brought a telegram manuscript. They gave it to me, I drew it up and put my signature on it. Then this paper was passed from hand to hand in the communication room and all the people there signed it. And I sent the telegram."* He stated that he sent the telegram himself. Kaşif Efendi, who allegedly had his friends sign the telegram, stated that he was a teller which he did not know about the telegram until he came to the counter, which the telegram was brought to the counter by Faruk Efendi, which the telegram was written by Ali Rıza Efendi and Rıza Tevfik which the director had met with the director of Trabzon and that they wanted to send the telegram (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0039). He did not accept the allegations that he had signed the telegram. He only said that the chief officer Muzaffer Bey saw the telegram at the counter and signed it without offering it (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G002_0040).

After the end of the trials, the Ankara Independence Court asked Ali Rıza, Mehmet, Faruk, Rıza Tevfik and Trabzonlu Yusuf if they had anything to say before announcing the verdict. Ali Rıza admitted that he had not written the telegram but had signed it out of obligation (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G003_0002), Mehmet of Merzifonlu admitted that he had not written it and had signed it without reading it due to a duty issue, Faruk admitted that he had fulfilled the request of all his friends, and Rıza Tevfik admitted that he had prepared a manuscript with the approval of ten people. Yusuf from Trabzon made a long speech and said, *"In my eleven years of civil service, I have honourable services to my beloved nation and sacred homeland."* and explained his services to his country during the war years (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G003_0003).

"On July 13, 1925, the Ankara Court of Independence decided to close the case against the telegraph operators as there were no further events to be investigated. According to the verdict announced regarding the

defendants, the Adana Province telegraph clerks Mahmut Mahir, Nazım, Asaf, Hilmi, Şinasi, Seyfettin, Nihat, Tevfik, Vehbi and the Samsun Province telegraph clerks Ali Rıza, Nazmi, Fikri, Muzaffer, Mehmet, Faruk, Celal, Galip, Ömer, Nuri, Kemal, Rıza, Tevfik, Hüseyin, Ali Avni, Hüseyin Hüsnü, Emin, Necati, Kaşif, Akif, Rifat and the Telegraph Manager Halim and Technical Inspector Sadi and the Trabzon Telegraph Clerks Yusuf, Abdi, Cevdet, Ragıp, Sadi, Habip and the Branch Manager Rüştü were tried by the Ankara Court of Independence on charges of resigning from their positions, failing to come to work, intentionally violating telegraph communications and opposing the Law on the Declaration of Calm.

In the trials, it was determined that Samsun Telegraph Manager Halim and Communications Clerks Ali Rıza, Supply Clerk Mehmet, Communications Clerk Faruk, and again Communications Clerk Rıza Tevfik acted with a specific purpose and neglected their duties. "...due to the fact that their actions occurred at a crucial time coinciding with the mobilization period declared for the suppression of the rebellious movements in the east, their actions are in accordance with the '102nd Article' of the Kanun-ı Ceza-yı Umumi (General Penal Code), according to its second paragraph." Samsun Telegraph Manager Halim was sentenced to three years in prison, Senior Duty Officer Ali Rıza was sentenced to two years in prison, and Supply Clerk Mehmet, Communications Clerk Faruk, and Communications Clerk Rıza Tevfik were each sentenced to one year in prison. The remaining telegraph clerks were all acquitted."

After being sent to prison to serve his sentence, Samsun Telegraph Director Halim Efendi sent a letter to Mustafa Kemal Pasha on 24 October 1925, asking for his pardon. The letter read: "Honourable and Dear President,

"While I was working as a telegraph director in Samsun, which was attributed to the title of Thessaloniki refugee, and while I was engaged in honouring those who had given me that title, I was transferred to the Ankara Independence Court with a speed that was unreasonable, on the grounds that I was one of the rancid men of the palace based on the laws established fourteen hundred years ago, or one of the ingrates of the immense blessings that you had obtained and given to us with your great genius. The court did not find any of these things in me, even without asking me.

He put me in prison, saying that I was only the product of an untimely complaining spirit. I request the honourable president of the republic to pardon this part of the unpardonable suspicion and conviction. I am not miserable in realising that the accounts of my twenty-two years of life as a civil servant have been liquidated in this way under the eyes of so many things and so impartial. What is miserable for us is not to understand under any of your orders - which we love as much as we love ourselves. We are not the only ones who cannot bear to stay away from this honour. Those who were pardoned and those who were about to be pardoned all cried for you as we did. In our eyes, you and the country are two equal and holy heavenly parts. There is no reason to show this to you. Forgive us, our honourable president." (IM_T3_K20_D069-1_G005_0001). In the reply given to this letter by Mahmut Esat Bey, the Deputy Minister of Justice, Halim, son of Ali, stated that "although he asked for his pardon, he could not be pardoned as there was no remarkable evidence to warrant his pardon".

Conclusion and Discussion

With the Industrial Revolution, workers used organised actions to ensure the formation of an organised society and to explain that they were not machines or slaves. The biggest tool of their organised actions against their employers was strikes. They tried to get their social and economic rights through strikes.

In Türkiye, the process that started with machine breaking actions due to the fear of unemployment turned into strikes in the following years. Although strikes consisted of demands such as leave rights, job security and increased social rights, they were mostly caused by the employer's failure to pay the worker's salary or underpayment. In the strikes that took place from the last period of the Ottoman Empire to the Republic, the state first tried to prevent strikes with law enforcement forces, and those who participated in strikes were arrested and interrogated. Laws were enacted to prevent strikes.

One of the strikes that took place during the Republican period was the “*Telegraphists Case*”, which was heard by the Ankara Independence Court. In 1925, in a turbulent period in Türkiye, when the courts of independence were dealing with extremely serious offences, the “*Telegraphists Case*” came to the agenda as a case involving economic demands. The court evaluated the telegraphists' case separately from other cases, and its verdict against the telegraphists was a warning. In its judgement, the court specifically stated that the telegraphists' demands were justified, but that such a demand should have been duly requested. The telegraph officers were not penalised in the case, but they had to wait for the budget negotiations in the parliament in order to receive their salary increase demands.

The directors and the telegraphists who drove the telegraphists to such actions and who were in opposition to the “*Takrir-i Sükûn*” Law were sentenced to some penalties by the court. Considering that even today civil servants do not have the right to strike or that workers must make many efforts to obtain their rights, this initiative of the telegraph officers in 1925, when the country was going through the most sensitive times, was a great courage. The court, considering the work and benefits of the telegraph officers during the National Struggle period, released the workers, but the managers were sentenced. The reasons for the release of the officers can be considered as the difficulty of training new officers during this critical period and the lack of suitable personnel who could work if the officers were arrested. This strike attempt occupies an important place in the history of the labour and civil servant movements in Türkiye and is considered as one of the important turning points in the struggle for workers' and civil servants' rights.

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APPENDICES

1. Copy of Telegram

تغیر افتادہ

۱۹۲۸

موجودہ صبرہ و مریضی

طریقہ :

آوردہ شد :

موجودہ تھوڑا سا بیمار ہے

نوعی	نوعی نوموسی	کلروسی و فوری	آئینہ بقی عمل	آئینہ بقی عمل	ساعت	اصطلاح
۱۹۹۹	۶۶	۶۶	۱۹۹۹	۱۹۹۹	۶۶	۶۶
۱۹۹۹	۶۶	۶۶	۱۹۹۹	۱۹۹۹	۶۶	۶۶

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موجودہ تھوڑا سا بیمار ہے

