

A SKETCH OF 1st MAY LABOUR DAY HISTORIOGRAPHY IN TURKISH HISTORY: PRUDENTIAL SOCIAL EVENT

Mert Yusuf ÖZLÜK^a, Bahire ÖZAD^b

ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors try to review the perception of 1st may labour day in Turkish history from past to present. Mostly, studies on 1st may labour day has been limited by regionally focused or city-based case studies in national journals, and poorly constructed methodological approaches, inconsistent definitions, and comparative research are still lacking. This review discusses the emerging research on day labor, paying particular attention to the practice of day labor in Turkish literature. Thus, it aimed to shed light on future studies. To our knowledge, this is the first study to emphasize the nature of contributions to the topic in Turkish history in a universal language. In this study, 1st May, assuming an international value and a direct relationship with reproduction processes was taken into consideration with the culturally diverse background of Anatolia in order to provide valuable social insights. For this reason, this review assessed for conceptual dualities appearing with respect to the significance of 1st May celebrations in culture and traditions together with their ideological structure. This review was also written to draw attention to emphasize that 1st May, has an iterated, prudent social history by summarizing important milestones accompanied by a flow chart. Following this assessment, findings with regards to the roles of labour struggles and geopolitical determinants on lay inhabitants will be reported. Areas for future research are suggested.

Keywords: 1st May, International Labour Day, Althusser, Ideology

1. Introduction

The series of events that unfolded into the emergence of 1st May International Workers' Day (i.e. Labour Day) are multifaceted, progressive, and dominated by an enduring reality of 'labour' struggle. The struggle between the bourgeois and working class is similar in a variety of countries with different backgrounds, assuming a structure highlighted with grounded social stratification. The bourgeois, identified with consumerism, have been promoted further via the development of modern industry, and this resulted in class struggles developing into contemporary discourses (Çetinkaya and Alkan, 2015).

Labour Day, where such struggles and ascent of global awareness seem evident, was first celebrated in 1856 at Melbourne, Australia. The naming of the day as *Labour Day* happened in May 1st1886, however, following a strike in Chicago, United States of America (USA). The aim of the strike was to promote the importance and necessity of an eight-hour working shift; where, even though

the related Act was approved much earlier (1867), it was still not implemented to that day. There was also a song written for supporting the move, named as "Eight-Hour Day." Common slogans included "*Eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, eight hours for the rest!*" and "*Decreasing working hours, increasing payments!*" A shift in working hours from 12-14 hours a day to eight hours a day was thought to address the problem of unemployment, partially aid in the situation with low payments, and was emphasized to aid in the humanitarian needs of children forced to work (Çetinkaya and Alkan, 2015).

Differences between countries of distinct origins and cultures with varying backgrounds may lead us into the perception of Labour Day assuming different characteristics in different regions of the world. However, a historical perspective informs us of otherwise, and guides our attention to certain incidents leading to mass movements. Thus, it becomes informative to study incidents as well as struggles leading to global effects, appearing as a spark leading to fires affecting nations. Thus, we reviewed the literature to present the perception of 1st May Labour Day in Turkish history from past to present.

^aFaculty of Communication and Media Studies, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, mertozluk@hotmail.com

^bFaculty of Communication and Media Studies, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Ottoman, early and late Republican Turkish labour history has been addressed in literature (Irish derginin yayınları) however, only a few studies has been written on Labour Day in Turkish History (Türkçe yayın). In Turkey itself, scholars are publishing a variety of monographs in Turkish, as well as articles in Turkish journals. A few articles about 1st May and missing of critical look at discourses and/or research projects that take social dialogues about 1st May as their focal point may be related with some limitations and a fact that 1st May had been a prudential event for a long time in Turkey. How did the workers interpret their Labour Day experience at various stages of the history scene? How did they create their identity with reference to privileged classes and various other social layers? What cultural, political and ideological dynamics were critical to make their voices heard and create a collective identity during the Labour Day? These key questions central to the Labour Day history of Turkish worker class still needs to be answered spectacularly. In what follows, this review aim to answer these questions about Labour Day by contributing the ongoing discussion on the identities and experiences of workers in Ottoman/republican Turkish labor historiography. Based on this perspective, we performed a literature survey using "Labors day, Worker day, 1st May, Ottoman Empire, Turkish History..." in order to define important targets for this review. This review provides a brief overview on the perspective 1st day in Turkish History, historical change and flashes the different effects reflected in the coming years. In addit the literature framework on this subject is also drawn, was also presented in this review. Considering 1st may labour day, we brought up four major points for discussion: the formation of 1st may of labour day in Ottoman Empire; International Labour Day in Ottoman Empire, International Labour Day in Early Republican Turkish, Bloody Labour Day and 1st May in the Late Republican Turkish until today, ideological portfolio of Labour Day in Turkish History.

2. Historical Survey of 1st May in Turkish History

2.1. International Labour Day in Ottoman Empire

Advances in industry starting from the latter half of the 18th century transformed into a full revolution throughout 19th century European nations; and, doubtless, resulted in various effects of major significance for humanity in regions located much broader around Europe. Innovative ideas, novel relationships between concepts and incidents demanding attention like never-before

were dominating the globe. Focusing on the effects of industrial revolution on eastern countries reveals the progressive destruction of pre-industrial civilizations. This progression was especially apparent in agricultural nations such as China, India and the Ottoman Empire, and resulted in catastrophic effects (Bilgin, 2007).

Labour Day was apparent with labour strikes and rallies, and even though its effects were dimly observable during 1860s, resulting public demonstrations could only be observed on 1908 during the Second Constitutionalist Period. This was a period when worker unions and socialist ideologies were advancing, as union strikes were observed very frequently (Alkan, 2011).

It should be noted that it must be more than a mere coincidence for these strikes, resulting mainly from financial reasons, to appear in a period when relationships with western nations were deepening. The Ottoman Empire was a nation dependent on agriculture, and thus became very vulnerable to capitalist modifications with the progression of industrial advances. This was a milestone for the nation that struggled to consolidate political stability with the manorial system, and western liberal economic ideologies further affected individuals being governed under such a political atmosphere.

The manorial system was a very effective political strategy in organizing agricultural and financial activities of the empire. However, the system also required manual workers to obey demands of landlords in exchange for a right to work their land, and these demands might very well relate to the establishment of social stratification in the Ottoman society. As Faroghi (2005) highlighted, most of the lands utilized for agricultural use belonged to the emperor (i.e. *sultan*) himself, and commoners were considered to be constant tenants of such lands. The manorial system used by the empire was distinctively different to the feudal regimes incorporated by western civilizations, yet still demonstrated few points where similarities were also apparent; and Ottoman commoners, having a semi-nomadic lifestyle being dependent on the land they worked, found themselves in need of a revolt. Monetary economy could only reach a limited number of villages, and this was another important contribution to the growing pile of problems in the empire. In addition to inequalities in revenues of commoners, the absence of cavalrymen overlooking the manorial system (i.e. *timariots*) during the harvest season (mainly caused by wartime assignments or casualties) was another significant issue. The latter was due to the

corruption undertaken by officers ordered by *timariots* to collect taxes from commoners. Commoners were malcontent with *timariots* as well as flag officers (i.e. *sancakbeyleri*) and feudal lords especially during the latter half of the 16th century. Following this period, however, cavalymen assuming a substantial degree of power were limited in their capabilities, and the manorial system as well as feudal structure of landlords had led to economic and social consequences that led to novel effects on the society. During the period of progressive and novel advances in industrialization, manual workers, above all, had to learn how to react appropriately to their supervisors and assume a united strength with their co-workers.

It is important to discuss industrial unions that laid the ground for working class solidarity against the class-based bourgeois system. These unions, also termed as *trade unions*, were first observed on 1717 in England and on 1870 in Italy. We also know that labour movement were progressing under cover until the legislation of Trade Unions Act on 1884. The Ottoman Empire experienced several important events, as well. On 1871, Workers' Association was established only to be dismissed one year later, and on 1899 Ottoman Worker Association was established and enjoyed members from Tophane region who underwent progress under disguise. Further examination revealed that this association worked in close proximity to tenets of the communist manifesto, was a revolutionary and Marxist organization. Therefore, we can say that the effects of First International (aka. International Workingmen's Association) were apparent in the changes documented throughout the Ottoman Empire following 1870s (Türkdoğan, 2015).

May 1st, which is the day of unity, solidarity and struggle, started to be celebrated by the Armenians in the period of the Ottoman Empire from the 1860s onwards, and by 1886, it became more massive and was gradually socialized by increasing participation in the Armenian villages of Bütania, Cilicia and Western Armenia (zafer toprak). However, the beginning of the May 1 celebrations in Turkey dates back to the early 1900s (Zafer toprak). In 1908, after the Young Turk revolution, "general strike" was appeared in nearly all over the homeland and this represented an important stage in Turkish history (zafer toprak). The year 1908 marks a milestone in the history of Ottoman Empire as together with the introduction of the Secondary Constitutionalist Movement (İkinci Meşrutiyet), societal and political upheavals marked social changes. The collapse of the traditional ways of rulership had led to a state

of political indeterminacy and perceived freedom, and thus a vast number of journals and books were published, and many associations were established during this period. The emergence of labour movements and left-wing struggles during 1908 is, hence, not a coincidence (Tunçay, 1991). 1909, 1910, 1911 and 1912 were the years began to reach broad masses of May 1 in Anatolia. Labour Day was first celebrated in Skopje on May 1, 1909, it began to be celebrated in other Rumeli cities in 1910. In Istanbul, the first of May was celebrated in 1912. However, Labour Day was out of the agenda until the 1920s due to the authoritarianism of Committee of union and progress (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) in 1913 followed by Balkan Wars and the First World War (Zafer Toprak). Since 1919, Anatolia is entering a new era of Labour Day history. The social struggles of the working masses were integrated with national independence (Zafer Toprak). In the first years of 1920s, May 1st gradually gained an insurrection against the occupation forces and the day of international unity and solidarity of the working class was integrated with the country's concrete conditions (Zafer Toprak).

Considering the year 1908 with respect to the bourgeois revolutions reveals that modern left-wing political moves emerged following the 1789 revolution in western countries, while their organized development had to wait 120 years and proceed during the years between 1908 and 1925 (Tunçay, 1991).

2.2 International Labour Day in Early Republican Turkish

After the national struggle that started in Anatolia in 1919, the efforts of the working class on the social platform started to change. Working class of Turkey was taking place in the ranks of the National Struggle in Anatolia, producing all kinds of weapons and supplies, and reinforcing the resistance power of the people through strikes and other similar workers movements. On May 1, 1920, the working people decided to celebrate the Labor day, but considering the extraordinary situation of occupied Istanbul, the Labour day could only be celebrated abroad. The İkdâm newspaper dated May 1, 1920 also mentioned this subject and "Considering the extraordinary situation of country, the labor class will not leave the job" was written in İkdâm newspaper. In 1921, the first mass demonstration for 1st May was held by the working class of Turkey. First May was essentially a revolt against the invaders with strikes that paralyzed all of Istanbul. Being aware of this fact, the occupation

forces tried to prevent 1st May demonstrations and even issued a declaration for this purpose. However, despite all the obstacles, on 1st May 1921, celebrations were carried by Turkey Socialist Party in some institutions such as Hayriye Company, Tram troupe, Halic Administration. As a May 1922 approached, once again, the occupation forces would repeat the scenario one year ago. Declarations would be published in the newspapers and any kind of political demonstration would be described as military rape. But the working class of Turkey, tried to overcome all kinds of obstacles of occupying forces. Working class of Turkey created some political organizations such as Turkey Workers 'and Farmers' Socialist Party, Turkey Workers Association, Beynelmillel Workers Union, and they also involved in the National Struggle simultaneously. These political organizations came together to form the 1st May Commission and prepared the festive shows in detail. That year, 1st May was celebrated with mass demonstrations in Izmir and Ankara as well as in Istanbul. By May 1923, imperialism was now blown down in Anatolian lands. The reign came to the end, and a new state emerged from nation domination. The newly formed state also required social transformations. May 1, 1923 was a day when this longing for change became a demand in the working class.

Turkey laborers had two key demands from the government on May 1, 1923:

1. The political and economic anarchy created by the foreign and domestic capital circles, "the removal of the concept of national welfare and humanitarian revolution."
2. The "Working Law" would be enacted and all business legislation would be secured.

May 1, 1923 demonstrations were organized by Umum Amele Union and Mürettibin Society. On 1st May morning, the workers of the Umum Amele Union departed from Aksaray, Şişli, Pangaltı, Topkapı, Kalafat, Galata Wharf, Boğazkesen, Beşiktaş, Arap Mosque, and Tophane and they gathered in Sultanahmet. İkdam newspaper also mentioned the subject of the 1 May demonstrations. On the other hand, Turkey Workers Group prepared some the principles in Izmir Economy Congress for presenting to the General Assembly. The main principles of the Workers' Group at the Izmir Economic Congress were shown in Table 1. The principles were read and put to vote and accepted by the representatives of the association. On the same day, the demands of the workers determined in Izmir Economic Congress and "Shift Law" were sent

to the Grand National Assembly. There is a legitimate question as to how unskilled labourers gained a common identity, in the process becoming "workers" with a political purpose – or, to use the Turkish terms, how "*amele*" (unskilled individual toilers) became "*işçi*" (the labouring collective masses).²⁰ From the point of view of the state, such a collective identity constituted a threat to efforts to inculcate popular loyalty to the new nation-state. This tension was particularly evident at the Izmir Economic Conference of 1923, where Mustafa Kemal sought to coopt workers for the formation of the nationstate and to deny the existence of a common working-class consciousness (Gavind Brockett. Ottoman and Republican Turkish Labour History: An Introduction IRSH 54 (2009), Supplement, pp. 1–17 doi:10.1017/S002085900990216). May 1, 1923 was also celebrated in Ankara, Izmir and Adapazarı at the same time. On the other hand, those who were dissatisfied with the Labour Day celebrations, had begun to mess up the business just before 1st May, and when a May was approaching, the police had launched a "Bolshevik assassination" in Istanbul. Nearly twenty workers were arrested on charges of driving and provoking the worker to a struggle for a communist government. On May 26, 1923 day, fifty delegates who represented nineteen thousand workers from seventy-five unions of Istanbul, fifteen thousand workers from Zonguldak coal basin and ten thousand workers from Balya-Karaaydın Lead Mine founded Turkey Workers' Union. This union had undertaken the organization of May 1, 1924. May 1, 1924 was celebrated in most of the cities, especially in Ankara. However, the first Labour Day after the proclamation of the Republican Turkish again encountered obstacles and the celebration of Labour Day in 1924 was tried to be prevented indirectly. "Çelik Kol" newspaper, which was issued due to May 1, was collected and the Aydınlık Magazin administrative office was searched by law enforcement officers. Some pro-government people effort to infiltrate Turkey Workers' Union and this was negatively welcomed by the workers'. For this reason, the Union, which had nineteen thousand members in December 1923, lost its twelve thousand members within four or five months. In September 1924, some worker institutions such as " Mürettibin Society, Istanbul General Marine and Mineral Coal Analysis and Evacuation Workers Society, Cibali Tobacco Factory Import Committee, Sark Şömendöferleri Müstahdemin Teavün Society, Anatolian Baghdad Şömendöferciler Society, Istanbul Tram Worker Society, Haliç Company Worker Society, came

together to establish the "Amele Teali Society". 1925 May Labor Day was organized by the Amele Teali Society. The Society applied to the Province on April 21 and asked for permission to celebrate 1st May. Petition of Amele Teali Society was transferred from the Province to the Police Headquarters. Due to Takrir-i Sükûn Law, also known as "Law of the Maintenance of Order" which was formed after Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925, it was reported that workers would not be able to take part in a mass demonstration on 1st May, and could not do any speeches and read poems. However, the government only allowed the Society to officially accept and visit the governor. Thus, the government allowed the workers to celebrate this holiday, albeit limited, and also the Amele Teali Society was officially recognized by government. On the same day, a booklet titled "What is May 1?" from the Amele Teali publications was distributed to the workers. Following the distribution of the brochure which described also the demands of the working class of Turkey, total of thirty-eight people including some intelligentsia and executives of Amele Teali Society were sent to Ankara and were arrested by Istiklal Courts. At the end of the trial, they were convicted for "communist organizations and propaganda" from seven to fifteen years.

The draft of general law on labor, which began to be studied in 1921, was completed by the end of 1924 and presented to the Grand National Assembly. The draft of "Work Law", consisting of 120 articles, was trimmed down to 99 articles after it was examined in the Trade Council and its name changed to "Work ottoman code of civil law". The draft, which gives workers the right to strike, determines the duration of work as ten hours a day, and determines the age at which children are hired as twelve, was found unnecessary by the General Assembly of the Grand National Assembly and a new draft was proposed. The draft was reduced to 27 articles in 1926 and came back to the Parliament. The government did not approve the new draft, but also decided to close the Amele Teali Society, which was the only union organization of the workers.

Foreign workers were subject to the same regulations and were also affected by a 1932 law that limited to Turkish citizens the right to engage in certain professions such as medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, and law, with special permission being required to hire foreign experts in these fields. The first comprehensive Turkish labour code was enacted only in 1936. Its coverage was very limited, extending only to establishments employing ten workers or more and excluding all agricultural and government workers. Stressing the

need for balance between capital and labour, it prohibited strikes and lockouts, authorized "worker delegates" to represent dissatisfied workers, and in the event of disputes required all sides to negotiate and if necessary, to accept arbitration. Much of the law attempted to establish a kind of worker welfare that would make strikes unnecessary. The basic workweek was set at 48 hours for the first time, normally 8 hours daily, for 6 days, with official weekend holiday from Saturday afternoon to Monday morning (Stanford J. Shaw, Ezel Kural Shaw. History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 2, Reform Revolution and Republic. Cambridge University Press 1977). The Turkish Law of February 22, 1947, marks a further development in the new Turkish labour policy inaugurated by the creation of a labour Ministry in 1945. Labor unions are legal in Turkey, and have been present since 1947. The previous policy of the Turkish Republic, under the direction of Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü and their People's Party, was to discourage any social grouping not connected with this party. The basic labour code of republic (Law No.3008, of June 8, 1936) provided for the representation of labour in the settlement of labour disputes ; however only labour delegates for individual establishments not labour unions were authorized to exercise this function.

Turkish society underwent profound social, economic, and political transformations constituted a critical period in the historical formation of the working class in Turkey. During that period, Turkey experienced a number of structural transformations. It also saw the elaboration of a new discourse on the working class by labor representatives, organizations, and by workers themselves (Yiğit Akın, The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics in Early Republican Turkey: Language, Identity, and Experience *IRSH* 54 (2009), Supplement, pp. 167–188 doi:10.1017/S0020859009990289.) With the end of World War II, governments launched a more liberal, market-oriented development strategy.⁵ Along with the mechanization and consequent increase in agricultural production, Turkey's industrial sector expanded and increased its contribution to national income. This period, in fact, corresponds to a remarkable growth of the working class. As the number and size of state and private enterprises increased, rural-to-urban migration accelerated its pace from the early 1950s onward, and the industrial workforce population expanded significantly and huddled around large urban centers. During this period, Turkey also witnessed major changes in the regime's approach towards

the labor question. Through a number of newly established institutions, laws, regulations, and, finally, a new hegemonic discourse, the state attempted to regulate the domain of labor relations with more and more rigor. To that end, the Ministry of Labor was founded in 1946, followed by the establishment of the Labor Placement Bureau [*İşve İşçi Bulma Kurumu*], with the aim of coordinating the movement of Labour Day was only celebrated by hundreds of workers in 1920 in Istanbul, whereas in 1976, it was celebrating by the millions of working people in all across of Turkey (Yiğit Akın). As well known, the transition from single-party rule to a multi-party regime in Turkey spawned a new vocabulary of political discourse.¹⁴ Especially during the election campaigns of 1946 and 1950 (as well as the years in between), workers and their representatives became increasingly acquainted with the concepts of citizenship rights, equality, freedom, justice, oppression, despotism, and tyranny which the Democrat Party deployed to attract both urban and rural voters to its side. In 1940s and 1950s Turkey, the political and cultural atmosphere was extremely unfavorable towards any socialist or communist activity.¹⁶ During the Cold War, Turkey became one of the strongholds of the liberal/capitalist world against the ideological and cultural expansion of communism. A newly joined member of NATO, Turkey was actively involved in the Korean War, an incident which dramatically strengthened anti-communist sentiment throughout the country.¹⁷ At the hands of the consecutive CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – Republican People's Party) and DP (*Demokrat Parti* – Democrat Party) governments, anticommunism served as a powerful tool to suppress left-wing political parties and trade unions and persecute their members. *İşçi Dünyası* [Worker's World] adopted a critical stance against the official definition of "worker" in the Labor Law of 1936.

Although Turkey's industrial sector, political and cultural atmosphere has changed during these years, from 1926 until 1975, there was no obvious celebration on 1st May in Republican Turkish (*Çelik Aziz, Aydın Zafer*). Between these years, arrests were made among laborers and intellectuals to prevent celebrations every year May 1. The only exception was the year 1927. In 1927, the workers gathered and feasted at the headquarters of the Amele Tea Association and celebrated a May with a meeting held in Kağıthane. However, although the celebration was on leave, arrests and layoffs took place after the celebration May 1, 1927 (*Çelik Aziz, Aydın Zafer*). Although the celebration of May 1 as a "Labour Day" was demanded at the Izmir

Economic Congress in 1923, May 1, has been accepted as "Spring Festival" due to the Law on National Holidays and General Holidays in 1935 (18 *çelik aziz, aydın zafer*). However, on this public holiday, as on other public holidays, employees would not be paid. With a law enacted in 1951, workers received a half-day wage on May 1 and in 1956, full-time wages were accepted for workers. During the prohibition period, between 1926 to 1975, there was any 1st May Day celebration aggregately and also the arrest of leftists or trade unionists became an ordinary practice. Half a century later, the first legal May Day celebration was held in a wedding hall in Istanbul Tepebaşı in 1975. The first celebration of 1st May as a great and glorious meeting was occurred in 1976. This 1st May meeting organized by DISK (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, Revolutionary Workers Union Confederation) started with a walk from Beşiktaş and continued with a meeting in Taksim Square. Tens of thousands of workers attended to 1st May, 1976.

2.3 Bloody Labour Day and 1st May in the Late Republican Turkish until today

1977 May 1st, was more crowded than 1976, it was a more glorious show. For the 1977 meeting held in Taksim Square, the participants marched from both sides, Beşiktaş and Sarıcahan. DISK also organized the 1st May 1977 meeting again. Intellectuals, social opposition organizations were also in the meeting field with the workers and hundreds of thousands of people were attended to this meeting. Unfortunately the fire opened by unidentified people during the speech of DISK President Kemal Türkler and as a result, the meeting got bloody by the killing of 37 people in Taksim Square (Figure2). Some DISK managers and lots of the workers were detained and arrested. Despite this distance of time

the perpetrators of the incident have still not found, there was no effective effort to find real criminals. This massacre in 1977, could not prevent the celebrations of May 1, 1978. Once again, workers were organized by DISK with the same crowd and power as in the previous year. They met at Taksim Square and the most important of aim and demand of 1978 meeting was to find the perpetrators of 1st May 1977. May 1st, 1979 and 1980 met with obstacles such as disallowed celebrations in Istanbul. Curfew was declared. Despite the curfew, those who want to celebrate 1st May, were arrested. May 1st, 1977 massacre caused 1st May in Turkey to be used as the day of "fear" and "May 1st Alarms" were announced. May 1st

celebrations in Taksim Square were not allowed. After 12th September 1980 coup d'etat, May 1st was completely blocked in Turkey and 12th September regime rescinded May 1st as a public holiday. The first legal May Day demonstration attempt after September 12th was held in 1988. Türk-İş member Kristal İş, Petrol-İş, Tümtis, Deri-İş unions as well as independent Banks and Automotive-İş unions organized a committee and applied to the Governorship of Istanbul to legalize May 1st celebrations. However, the Governorship did not let it to be celebrated. Despite this prohibition, on 1st May, unionists who wanted to go to Taksim met with the attack of the police and 81 workers, representatives and unionists were detained and some of them were arrested. In 1989, legal celebration attempt was tried once again. The demand of Türk-İş member Kristal-İş, Petrol-İş, Tümtis, Deri-İş, Basın-İş and independent Automobile-İş, Banks and Laspetkim-İş unions to celebrate May 1, was banned despite there were no obstacles to the celebration. Workers and unionists who wanted to do celebrations in Mecidiyeköy and Çağlayan were arrested and a group who wanted to walk to Taksim Square encountered. Moreover, a 17-year-old worker named Akif Dalcı died during the fire opened by the police. Despite the ban on celebrating May 1st, in 1990, May 1st was celebrated by reading notices, folk dance and singing by hundreds of thousands workers in factories and working places. On the other hand, a young girl was paralyzed as a result fire into the crowd who wanted to celebrate May 1st in Taksim. The most interesting development for May 1st, 1990 is that it was the first time of Hak-İş to celebrate May 1st. May 1st was also celebrated in factories again in 1991. Starting from 1989, the attitude of Türk-İş related to May 1st also changed and it celebrated May 1st with indoor hall meetings in headquarters and various provincial representatives. On May 1st, 1992, Türk-İş, Hak-İş and DİSK held a common hall meeting in Ankara. The common statement of these three confederations was read at various workplaces. Also, the first May Day meeting in Istanbul after September 12th 1980 coup d'etat was arranged by the Socialist Party in Gaziosmanpaşa Square. Starting in the 1990s in our country, the idea that May 1st is a day of solidarity, international unity, and struggle has been well adopted.

2.4 Ideological Portfolio of Labour Day in Turkish History

The fall of feudalism resulted in changing dynamics of production and this dramatically

affected the part of society labelled as “workers” where social stratification became ever more pronounced. The polarization between bourgeois and working class, then, necessitated trade union interventions. Regardless of the geographical location, this outline applies to all labour struggles around the globe. Every society has its own unique history of labour struggles and related political-ideological reactions. These reactions are specific and contain an inherent transformative power. A similar nature was also observed in the perspectives on Labour Day throughout Asia Minor. The strict precautions held by the state as well as masses on demonstrations, for instance, helped the perspective of the celebration of a spring holiday thrive following the bloody incidents of 1st May 1977. However, it appears to be harder than anticipated to erase terrible memories for an international day of significance that is periodically cancelled or transformed into a holiday, devoid of its past of labour struggle.

Marxist perspectives and practices within Asia Minor struggled to propagate, and this is an important factor that needs to be taken into account. The relationships between socialist leftists and working class under Ottoman regime can be traced back to the final period of 19th century where first labour unions were established, and first labour strikes as well as public demonstrations were held. Inhabitants of Asia Minor had been under the influence of Islamic culture for centuries, and it will thus be naive to expect a rapid thrive of socialist ideologies in this geography. Even though socialist postulations could be expressed in a common perspective, their modes of expression would nonetheless represent two very contrasting camps. This is the underlying reason behind the failure to properly unite Turkish working class ideologically, even though masses do still celebrate the day.

We can also state that working class in Asia Minor could succeed in earning some of their demands, just as was the case with numerous other labour struggles around the globe. This success was heavily influenced by the centuries of ideological background inherent in the Labour Day, and thus 1st May represents more than just a day dominated by union strikes and protests: Labour Day is a symbolic warning to attract attention to necessary compromises between two contrasting viewpoints where solidarity and mutual understanding is the central tenet.

Labour Day celebrations were in minor scales during the years of independence wars where the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish

Republic was dominant in society. However, even in this period there was an ideological progress for establishing foundations of socialist thought in the region. As Tunçay reported (1978: 330-331), Şefik Hüsnü, having had been a paramedic in numerous battles of primary importance, translated the *Communist Manifesto* into Turkish in early 1923 and published his translation in the journal *Aydınlık* with a purpose to unite all the revolutionists of Anatolia. He discussed it in an article during the same year, addressing Labour Day that year, on how to adapt left-wing politics to the foundations of socialism and communism in Turkey. According to Hüsnü, modern political ideologies were grouped under two main camps: the camp of bourgeois and the camp of the proletariat. Ideologies belonging to the proletariat were further divided into three categories: anarchism, socialism, and communism. Hüsnü disregarded discourses on anarchism due to apparent instability dominant over the political atmosphere of the newly established Turkish state. However, he insisted that socialist and communist ideas need to be understood through a historical perspective. The inability to consolidate these ideas properly within a suitable framework, though, had led to ideological incomprehensibility and resulted in a failure to celebrate Labour Day on 1919.

Newly founded Turkish Republic enforced strict regulations for Labour Day celebrations. Turkish Workers' Union, for instance, organized Labour Day celebrations on 1924, but the government at that time reacted harshly, details of which are succinctly summarized in a public mandate published at that time: "An establishment with the name of a workers' union was not acknowledged by any means in the government. Labour Day celebrations should not be allowed." Numerous labourers joining the celebrations, however, were arrested and a newspaper named *ÇelikKol* was terminated due to its aim at promoting Labour Day. In the following year of 1925, during the government of Mr. İnönü, a new law was enforced with the name *Takrir-iSükûn* (i.e. Law of the Maintenance of Order) and it became even harder to celebrate the Labour Day. During that year, directors of a journal that printed out Labour Day brochures with the slogan of "*Workers Around the Globe, Unite*" were arrested alongside with the heads of *AmeleTealiCemiyeti* (a political party established for defending workers' rights). Individuals sent to prison via the prosecuting bodies of Independence Courts were released only after 18 months due to celebrations of Turkish independence. Atatürk ordered celebrations of Labour Day under the name "Spring Holiday", and this was further evolved into

a public "Spring and Flower Holiday" on 1935. During the period of single-party rule, it was forbidden to celebrate Labour Day with that name; and again on 1935 numerous arrests were made due to alleged promotions of Labour Day on brochures and following this incident, however, celebrations were cancelled altogether under that rule (Zengin, 2015).

During the transition period to multi-party system, Turkey has seen a shift in its rural structure that dominated specifications of economic policy measures. Industrialisation policies in the former half of the 20th century could not lead to changes in the rural structure of Asia Minor, and measures that took effect from 1950 onwards were apparent in the rate and proportion of urbanisation, and newly formed urban areas within cities. 1970s were distinctively identified by significant advances in industrialisation as the rate and proportion of urbanisation showed a dramatic increase while social stratification also began to be apparent as the working class in cities were becoming more distinct. 1970s were a period in Turkish history when trade union movements and workers' rights were actually pronounced and could attract significant attention (Bilgin, 2007). Socialist leftists and working class could forge strong relationships during this period, and the resulting effects on union movements were most pronounced. According to the data of Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the number of workers joining union strikes and days of absence due to strikes during 1974-1980 showed a dramatic increase in comparison to earlier years. Strikes became collective, and assumed a political character (Şafak, 2013). Starting from 1980, Turkey was engaged in radical changes in its economic policies to integrate with the global economy, and started to pursue neoliberal policies (Taner Akpınar).

We know that there are a number of theories addressing such mass movements and working-class progression. These theories are, in fact, stemming out from a common root with contrasting branches and constitute overt expressions concerning analytical properties of the concept of mass movements. Contemporary theories, however, appear to be better suited to identify individual concepts and define related outcomes. Indeed, mass movements –mainly protests, coalitions, sects and pressure groups, voluntary acts, acts that showed a dramatic change since Le Bon and Marx, etc.- assumed a sophisticated and a rapidly growing nature in both quantity and quality since 1960s; so much so that new mass movements followed working class as

well as student union and traditional nationalist movements and were most pronounced in universal human rights act, movements for freedom of sexuality and awareness on environmental as well as ethnic concerns, and the struggle for anti-globalisation (Işık, 2011).

Highlights of Turkish history on working class struggles appeared during this period of escalating leftist socialist movements and public awareness on that matter. Studies done during 1960s and 70s focused primarily on labour movement as well as trade unions formed by such. Studies that were conducted earlier than this period tend to be rather pilot in their nature, examining publications of amateur journalists and unions. However, those studies are still of primary importance as they documented first struggles for the working class to be organised, and key political as well as public figures that made their impact on this period (Çetinkaya and Alkan, 2015).

The stance of socialists is significant in the historical studies of working class. Socialist Turkologists Rozaliyev, Şnurov and Şişmanov, for instance, conducted seminal works that were translated into Turkish during 1970s and promoted the idea that the history of working class is a necessary stage for historical progress in societies. These works can be considered as Turkish versions of the Soviet historical studies and international literature on working class struggles. Furthermore, existing Turkish literature at that time excluded lower classes and working class struggles altogether, and the significance of these works involved their pointing at the perspective that was missing elsewhere (Çetinkaya and Alkan, 2015).

International perspectives on Labour Day reveal another important incident that took place on 1886 at the infamous Haymarket demonstration, Chicago. This is an event of significance as escalating aggression was prevalent following gunfire on the picket line and the resulting death of several workers. A counter-demonstration and the progressive dissipation of a 200-people crowd saw police intervention, and a bomb that exploded during the events resulted in deaths of seven police officers and four workers. Leaders of the demonstrations were arrested, and four of them were penalised by capital punishment. Following this date, on 1889, an American trade union leader conveyed what had happened in Chicago few years earlier during the gathering of Second International in Paris; and Labour Day celebrations on 1890 saw international attention and many demonstrations were held in various regions. A similar incident of Labour Day aggression was also prevalent much

later, on 1977 in Turkey where the Labour Day was later memorised with the word 'massacre' and was very significant in for the Turkish political history. Even though the two events that are nearly a century apart have many similarities, the massacre on 1977 could still not be fully unravelled. We can state that aggression on Labour Day celebrations were predominantly caused by the attitude of marginal groups, ideological policies of numerous trade unions, or security forces relying on a disproportionate use of force. Incidents brought forth by marginal groups do not represent working class attitudes, and field studies reveal that workers themselves are also unhappy about their existence (Zengin, 2015).

The bloody 1977 Labour Day demonstrations in Turkey and other demonstrations that assumed a character of aggression elsewhere failed because there were contrasting motivations leading the events to chaotic ends. Even contemporary measures to promote democracy can fail as Labour Day demonstrations, being a significant platform for the expression of working-class struggles, are periodically cancelled. The longest of these periods in Turkish history, since Ottoman times, lasted 50 years where cancellations, approval for demonstrations only in minor scales or for demonstrations not organised around centres of public or historical significance took place, resulting in the failure to consolidate continuity of Labour Day awareness in Asia Minor.

The transformation in a societal level from 1980s onwards cast its effects on the labour struggles as well as trade union dynamics. Significant structural as well as intertwined changes happened since September 1980 in mass production, the profile of working class, specifications of trade union internal organisations and political aims. Union movements had to leave behind its collective momentum from 1970s and enter a period of decline following the 1983 reforms on trade unions. The destruction of Berlin Wall in November 1989 symbolized the fall of developed socialism, was soon followed by a rapid marginalisation of socialist left-wing ideologies and saw an ironic (and dramatic) exclusion of union struggles alongside this marginalisation. Trade unions nowadays suffer their most significant decline in recent history (Şafak, 2013).

The first initiative in Turkey to establish a social dialogue was the Social Agreement made between the government then in office and the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (TÜRK-İŞ), in 1978. the real purpose is to prevent the movement of working people for higher wages from

intervening in the overall functioning of the economy. Besides the aim of stopping the movement of organised workers in the public sector for higher wages, the Social Agreement also

includes a very important detail that can be considered as 'against labour'. By provisions intended to bar workers' participation to decision-making processes in their workplaces, the Agreement tends to keep this section of workers under control to the extent that is possible. This agreement remained in effect for only 14 months. After that, the Social Agreement was thrown into the garbage, and efforts to establish social dialogue were abandoned. With the implementation of neoliberal economic policies starting from 1980, the search for dialogue with working people was abandoned, and the strategy of 'imposition' became the dominant mode. Early in this period, working people were kept under strict control on the basis of the military regime, and their right to associate was largely restricted. Capital does not take a step back from the strategy it has been pursuing for 30 years, with the state on its side. After a long period of time, social dialogue was again included in the agenda upon the establishment of the Economic and Social Council in 1995. In 2001, Law no. 4641 on the Establishment and Working Principles of the Economic and Social Council was passed. While developments experienced up until the enactment of this legislation were associated with internal dynamics, the processes that took place afterwards are associated with the process of negotiation with the EU and the EU's requests of Turkey (Taner Akpınar).

Conclusion

For over 100 years in many parts of the world, May 1 is celebrated as international workers' day, labor holiday, whereas May 1st remained the day of tension, oppression, nightmare and violence in Turkey due to the authoritarian for a long time. In fact, historical adventure of Turkish May 1st adventure, is a miniature of democracy adventure. May 1, which is a day when workers show their power to the state and the governors in all over the world, was a day in our country that political powers proved their power. Because May 1st was seen as a "civil insurrection" or "defiance to government". An accusatorial ideological struggle against May 1 has continued for many years in Turkish history. The most obvious slander used in this accusatorial ideological struggle was that May 1 was the "communist holiday". Hereby, May 1st remained a prudent event in Turkish history for a long time.

In this review, a showcase of Turkish Labour Day history tried to presented to readers and to let the contributions engage with current debates in Global Labour History. In connecting with published or ongoing studies based on Labour Day in both Turkish literature and the international field, this study reviewed the history of Turkish Labour Day to revisit topic which knowledge seemed deceptively final. In order to achieve such dialogue with international literature, this article tried to introduce Turkish Labour Day History as comprehensible as possible for all potential readers, including those unfamiliar with Turkish. Clearly, there is more work to be done, and many more sources to be uncovered. More importantly there is a need for scholars of Ottoman and Turkish labour history to actively engage the larger field of global labour history on a consistent basis. We hope that this review in Turkish labour history can serve as both suggestion and inspiration for readers in other parts of the world, helping to further enable a multilateral dialogue in Global Labour History. Comparative researches with other countries that experience similar historical processes may be the subject of future research project. Such a multilateral dialogue is necessary in order to achieve both a truly global perspective in historical labour studies and, at the same time, to avoid the pitfalls of a closed paradigm under which labour historians in all parts of the world are supposed to follow one single trail.

DISCLOSURE

The authors declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

Not applicable.

The authors declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None

References

- [1] Akın Yiğit, The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics in Early Republican Turkey: Language, Identity, and Experience *IRSH* 54 (2009), Supplement, pp. 167–188 doi:10.1017/S0020859009990289.
- [2] Akşin, Sina. *Türkiye'de Düşünce Tarihinin Baskın Siyasal Özelliği*. İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 2005.
- [3] Akpınar Taner, Akçay İlker İnan. From labour–capital conflict to social dialogue? A critical

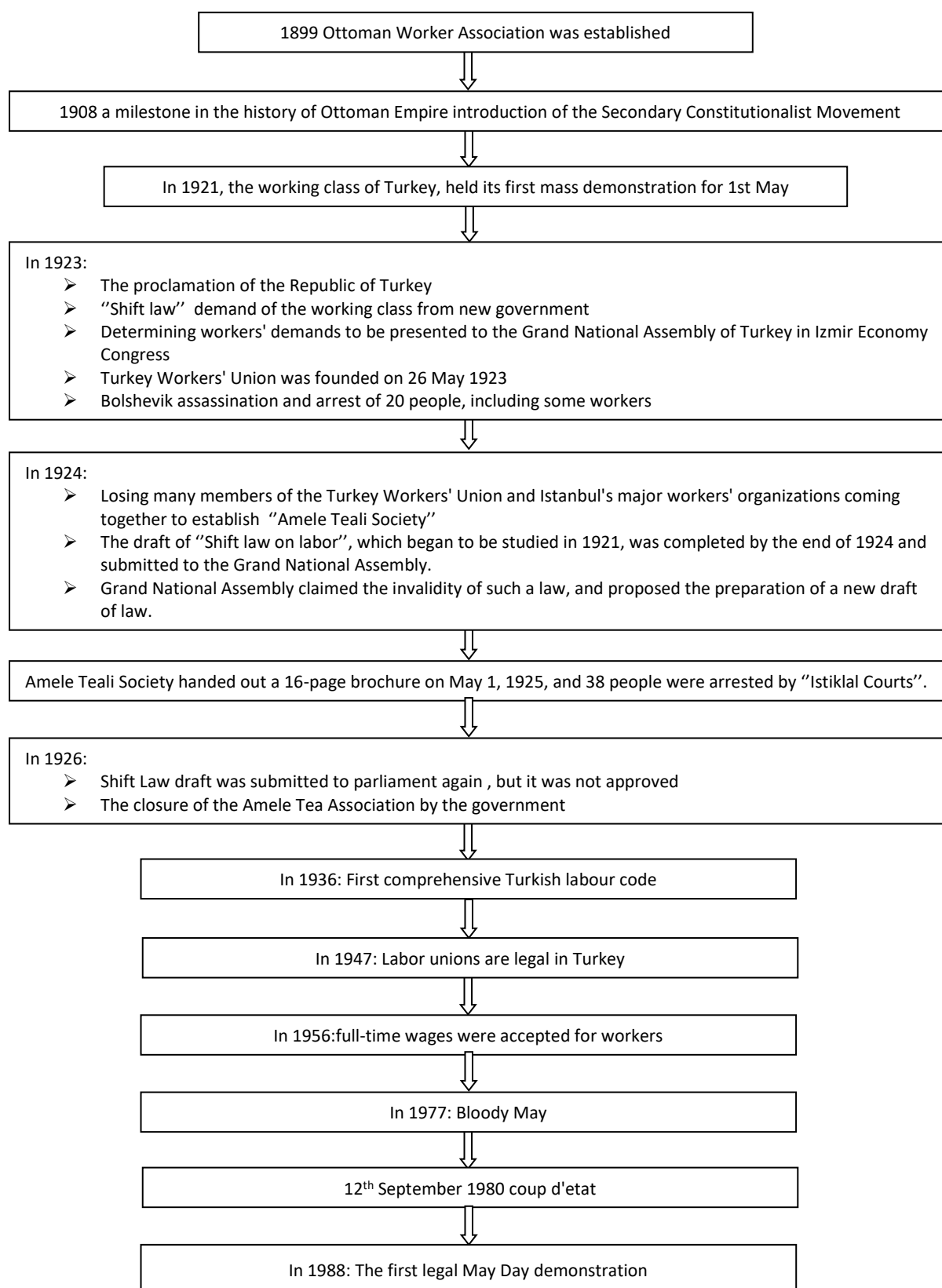
- review of social-dialogue discourse in Turkey. *Capital & Class* 2015, Vol. 39(3) 435–451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816815606823>.
- [4] Alkan, M. Öznur. “Chicago’dan İstanbul’a, Haymarket’ten Taksim’e 1 Mayıs Tarihinin İzinde”. *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi* 209 (Mayıs 2011): 18-27.
- [5] Althusser, Louis. *İdeoloji ve Devletin İdeolojik Aygıtları*. (Çev. Alp Tümtürtekin) İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2010.
- [6] Atiker, Erhan. *Modernizm ve Kitle Toplumu*. Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 1998.
- [7] Berman, M. (2013). *Katı Olan Her şey Buharlaşıyor*. Çev: Ümit Altuğ, Bülent Peker. İletişim Yayınları: İstanbul.
- [8] Bilgin, Vedat. *Türkiye’de Değişimin Dinamikleri, Köylülükten Çıkış Yolları*. Ankara: Lotus Yayınevi, 2007.
- [9] Brockett, Gavind. Ottoman and Republican Turkish Labour History: An Introduction *IRSH* 54 (2009), Supplement, pp. 1–17 [doi:10.1017/S0020859009990216](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859009990216)
- [10] Çetin, H. (Aralık 2001). Devlet, İdeoloji ve Eğitim. *C.Ü. Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*. Cilt: 25 No: 2, pp. 201-211.
- [11] Çetinkaya, Y. Doğan ve Alkan, M. Öznur. *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı Tarihi 1839-2014*. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015.
- [12] Faroqhi, Suraiya. “İktisat Tarihi (1500-1600)”. *Osmanlı Devleti 1300-1600*. Cilt 2. (Yayın Yönetmeni: Sina Akşin) İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 2005.
- [13] Fox, Len. “Early Australian May Days, Bulletin of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History” (Mayıs 1962) 18 Mart 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27550876> (Erişim Tarihi: 11.06.2017)
- [14] Güngör, S. (Y.2001). Althusser’de İdeoloji Kavramı. Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, C.6, S.2 s.221-231.
- [15] Işık, Gülcen. *Toplumsal Hareketler: Politikadan Edebiyata, Sanattan Sinemaya, Medyadan Toplumsal Algıya Teorik ve Pratik Analizler ve Yansımalar*, Ankara: Nobel Yayınevi, 2011.
- [16] Newman, D. M. (2013). *Sosyoloji, Günlük Yaşamın Mimarisini Keşfetmek*. Nobel Yayınevi: Ankara.
- [17] Şafak, Can. “12 Mart’tan 12 Eylül’e Türkiye’de Sendikalar”. *Toplum ve Bilim Dergisi*. (Temmuz 2013): 121-143.
- [18] Tunçay, Mete. *Türkiye’de Sol Akımlar (1908-1925)*. İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1978.
- [19] Türkdoğan, Orhan. *Sosyal Hareketlerin Sosyolojisi*, Konya: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2015.
- [20] Zengin, Tarkan. “Dünya’da ve Türkiye’de 1 Mayıslar: Çalışanların 1 Mayıs’a Bakışları”. *Stratejik Düşünce Enstitüsü Raporu*, (Nisan, 2015), Ankara.

Tables

Table 1. The main principles of the Workers' Group at the Izmir Economic Congress

1. Associations - namely, the recognition of the right of unions. The Law on Vacation I examination and arrangement to recognize the right of workers again
2. Acceptance of working time as eight hours.
3. Children who do not fulfill the age of twelve should not be employed.
4. Determination of the minimum amount of the internal diaries in relation to the hometown mausoleum.
5. Giving the rest period to workers once a week.
6. Workers who are at work for one year are given one month of leave per year.
7. Safeguarding the lives of public workers who are injured at work by capitalists and institutions.
8. Eight weeks off before and after childbirth Giving.
9. Acceptance of a six-hour shift at the mines and the absence of women under the age of eighteen.
10. Nationalization of privileged foreign institutions.
11. adoption of the law as the feast day of May Day workers Turkey.

Figures

Figure 1. Historical flow chart of 1st May: Important historical events that impressed in Turkish history