

The Strike of the Izmir Port Workers: The Domino Effect of a Labour Movement in the Second Constitutional Era*

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Received: January-2011, Accepted: May-2011

Abstract

From the beginning of the 1900s, the port of Izmir was the biggest port of exportation of not only the Ottoman State but also the East Mediterranean. Every year, hundreds of ships that would come alongside of ports from all over the world were unloading at this port with a modern dock. This fact inevitably led to the existence of extremely active labor market at the port of Izmir.

In this article, the strike of the Izmir port workers in the spring of 1913 against the shipping agencies who were their employers will be examined through the news in old Turkish and sources in both Turkish and Greek. The history of the Izmir port workers' struggle, whether they had a class consciousness or not and how they got organized constitute the theoretical dimension of the subject of this study.

Keywords: *Izmir, Port, Worker, Strike*

JEL Codes: *N94, N34*

1. Introduction

Izmir, inhabiting more than 200.000 people (Salname-i Vilayet-i Aydın, 1890/1891), was not only the biggest port of the Ottoman State but also the biggest port of the Eastern Mediterranean at the beginning of the 20th century.¹ The commercial significance of the city could be seen by the fact that 19% of all the imports from the West to the Ottoman State and 55% of all the exports were being made from the port of Izmir (Frangakis-Syrett, 2001). The rise of Izmir, which was already defined by an English newspaper as “the jewel of Asia” (Kasaba, 1994). In the middle of the 19th century, was closely related with Europe's need for the Ottoman raw materials and goods, as well as with its search for markets.

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In that period, Izmir was part of a province called Aydın.ⁱⁱ The plains of Aydın Province -“the most prosperous, wealthy and crowded side of all the Ottoman provinces” (Safvet, 1913/14) which were watered by the Menderes (Büyük and Küçük), Gediz and Bakırçay rivers, were so fertile that all kinds of products like grain, legume, vegetables, fruits like grapes and figs, cotton and industrial crops like tobacco, olive, sesame, madder and hashish were harvested. Gallnut, licorice, scammony, emery, tinsel lead, mercury, manganese, chrome, lignite and antimony were the basic elements of above/underground treasures of the mountains of that region. This list can be complemented by adding raw materials like wool, angora, leather, wax, sponge and produced materials like carpet, rug, cotton fabric, flour, olive oil, halva and soap (Salname-yi Vilayet-i Aydın, 1873).

It was quite natural for these exportable products to attract the attention of the Western merchants. Neither natural nor human-made incidentsⁱⁱⁱ were strong enough to end this attention, which converted Izmir’s subsistence agriculture to an extensive one before the end of the 17th century.^{iv} Britain and France, which had lifted their protective customs in agriculture in the first half of the 19th Century, had to ensure the constant flow of cheap materials (mainly grain) they needed and find territories for investing the excess capital resulted from their expanding industries’ over-production.^v In the second half of the 19th Century, the Western merchants and industrialists’ investments,^{vi} which entered the Ottoman State as credits or foreign direct investments, should be analyzed in that sense.

As the “İzmir-Aydın” railway, whose concession was given to a British company and “İzmir-Kasaba”^{vii} railway began service in 1865 many products coming by the valleys of the Aegean rivers accumulated in Izmir.^{viii} This necessitated the construction of a modern docking bay, in which large ships could easily and quickly (un)load. The Ottoman officials gave a concession to the “İzmir Port Company”, whose partners were British, for the construction and management of a port in between Kışla and Tuzlaburnu^{ix} in 1867. The French Dussaud Brothers who bought that concession in 1869 completed the construction in 1880 (Kütükoğlu, 1979).

The strike of the port workers, which is the main subject of this article, was against the shipping agencies working on the streets, First and Second Kordon parallel to that docking bay (Serçe, 2000) was a 3.285 meters long. The academic studies dealing with workers hardly mentioned about the strike, which

started and ended in September of 1913.^x In fact, the workers and their movements in Izmir have not been studied or analyzed, apart from the strike on the railway of Izmir-Aydın in 1923 (Serçe, 1995). We believe that our writings on the port workers' strike based on the news from the Turkish newspapers *Ahenk* and *Anadolu* (Arıkan, 1985) could only be a small contribution to this field, which needs to be studied more and analyzed in more detail.

2. Commissioner Employers: The Shipping Agencies

The shipping agencies were earning their wages from the commissions they agreed with the shipping companies. The most important of these earnings were from the ticket sales from the passengers and the fees they charged per ton in the exchange of loading/unloading commodities by the workers (*Ahenk*, 8 September 1913). We have not come up with a source describing the shipping agencies working in the Port of Izmir by 1913. Therefore, we are going to use the data from two Greek sources whose dates are close to the time we are dealing with. First one is published by Mihail İ. Mihailidis in Izmir called "World Trade Guidebook of 1908". Second one is prepared by G. N. Mihail and published in Athens in 1919 called "Greece Guide 1920".

As can be seen, the first five lines of companies are identical in each side and they should have been working in 1913, as well.^{xi} In accordance with a newspaper article, we should add the sixth company Austrian Lloyd (*Ahenk*, 11 September 1913) in to those five (Köylü, 10 December 1913). Yet, (*İdare-i*) *Mahsusa*, seen in the left side, was not managing any ferry lines in Izmir by the year of 1913 (*Ahenk*, 20 April 1914).

It is unlikely to determine how many of the other companies^{xii} in the table were in service by 1913. However, it is obvious that almost all of the mentioned companies were owned by the people with a nationality of what the Ottoman State called as "Great States" and some of the owners of agencies were mostly non-Muslim Ottoman subjects (some of them were also shipowners).^{xiii}

**Table 1. Steamship Companies and Agencies Carrying Cargo and
Passengers to Izmir**

1908		1919	
Company Name	Agency Name	Company Name	Agency Na. & Add.
P. Pantaleon	?	P. Pandeleon and Sons	İoannis Papadimitrios
H. Davut Ferkuh	Pr. Anatis, A. Kiriazis and Destunis Yannulatos	H. Davut Ferkuh	N. Missir, Onisser Passage
Russian Ships	G. Begleris	Russian Ships	G. Begleris
Hidiviye	?	Hidiviye	Efraim Kohen, Port
Messagerie Maritime	?	Messagerie Maritime	Lui Turte
Lloyd Autrichien	?	Various Companies	İoannis Alevras and Partners
P. M. Kurcis and Partners	D. İ. Alevras	T. Bouer and Partners	D. Rees, Port
Karnezi	N. Pappas	Various Companies	Olivie and Partner, Port
İperokeanos Elliniki	D. İ. Alevras	?	D. İ. Alevras (The Owner of the Company), Port
Panellinos	P. Tarlazis	Various Companies	S. İliadis, Paralel to Mithat Paşa Passage
Paquet and Partners	?	Lloyd Triestino	Piyer Dorsumet, Port
Florio Rubattino	?	Soçiete İtaliana di Serviçi Maritimi and Soçiete di Navigaçione Pulia	Edoardo D'Andria, Port
Fraissinet and Partners	?	Various Companies	Saluf ve Vuçinas, Port
Deutsch Linie	?	Di Smirna Maritim Bur Limited	Zoli ve Alevras (The Owner of the Company), Port
Leyland	?	Cooks Shipping Agency	O. H. Hansen, Port
Adria	?	Various Companies	Bari Kardeşler, Central Square
Cunard Steamship	Adam Brod	Various Companies	K. Whittall and Partners, Frenk Street
Stamatiadu Riginio	İliadis ve Mukas	Various Companies	V. F. Van-der-Zee, Port
Anchor Line	?	Various Companies (İtalia)	Anri Sperko, Port
Cyorien Fabre and Partners	?	Maritimi İtaliana	Leopoldos Missi, Port
Hamidiye	?	Yannulatos'un İoniki Gemisi	İ. Zumbulakis, Port
Mahsusa	?	Various Companies (Greek)	Andreas Arnavutoğlu
Orient Line	?	?	İliadis Th. Brothers, Port
Papaglanni and Partners	?	?	Barf G. P. and Partners Lmt. Coya Han, No. 23
-	-	?	D. ve A. Varvetian, Bakıcıyan Street

Source: For 1908: *İzmir 1876 ve 1908 (Yunanca Rehberlere Göre Meşrutiyette İzmir)*, Translated by Engin Berber, İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayını, 2008, pp. 87-89 and for 1919, the source in the Table 2, p. 53.

3. A Discussion on Terminology and the Izmir Port Workers

One must use the concept of “worker” delicately when using it for a dependent laborer of a hundred years ago (Makal, 1997). Marxism generally defined the (proletarian) worker as a historical category, which is a product of the industrial revolution, as a person who had been alienated from the tools of production with the dissolution of the craftsmanship and the introduction of mechanized production, forced to sell his/her labor in return for a wage (Öngen, 2010). Into what extent this definition covers the dependent laborers is a question Marxist thinkers could not agree unilaterally. Ethem Nejat indicated that question in the first issue (Istanbul/September 1919) of Kurtuluş magazine

There is no equivalent of the term proletariat in Turkish. Some translate this word as public, common, ahead-ı nas (have-nots) or poor people but neither of them corresponds to the correct translation... Proletarian is the class, who works throughout his/her life; cannot get the compensation for his/her labor; cannot make ends meet. Proletariat is not comprised of only factory workers; more generally proletariat is the collection of nineteenth century's working clusters... Proletariat is best explained concisely by an old Turkish idiom: “yevmin cedit, rizkün cedit” (a new day, a new daily bread). That is, the description of the masses destined to live one day at a time waiting their daily breads for the next day. Proletariat has such a broad meaning that 95% of the population is counted as proletarian (Ahmad, 2007).

Such meticulousness should also be applied when using the concept of “working class”. As the Marxist thinkers do not have a consensus even on the conceptualization of the working classes. Some of them perceive the working class as the mere producers of added value while on the extreme side all the property less wage laborers are considered to be part of the working class (Öngen, 2010).

There are other problems, particularly for the Ottoman case, regardless of the internal discussions in the Marxist theory. First of all, as Ethem Nejat mentioned for the term proletariat, the concepts dealing with the labor do not have Turkish equivalents. Although the word “işçi” (worker) was existent in a ferman (1729) describing the tasks and duties of the miners and in the Polic Regulations of 1845 (Article 12), the Ottoman dependent workers were often called as “amele” (laborer). That word, which was derived from the word “amel” meaning “job” and “intent” in Arabic, was being used in the sectors of construction agriculture and mining until the second half of the 19th century; in the later periods for the unqualified workers/laborers working in toil.^{xiv}

The term “port workers” is often seen in the works about the working life in the Second Constitutional Period.^{xv} Karakışla, in his article about workers’ organizations, their actions and relationships with the state, defined them as “Izmir port workers” without describing the work they do, while mentioning about a strike in Izmir in the beginning of this period (Karakışla, 2007).

The people who made this strike were the porters, bargemen and boatmen who were selling their labors in the Izmir port.^{xvi} In the newspapers, they were called as “amele”, workers or “liman ameleleri” (port laborers); when intention is to stress the characteristic of their work, they were called as “vapur ameleleri” (ship laborers-porters), “bargemen” and “boatmen”. The author’s preference to use “worker” instead of “amele” is not because others did as such but because the intellectuals of that period accepted worker and amele synonymously:

One of the words which began to be heard and used after the declaration of constitutionalism in our country is strike. Strike is obviously a weapon used out of necessity by the workers, who has a work to do and are called as ‘amele’, in the sense of ‘jobs’ recess against the establishments and its owners to whom they belong (Ahenk, 8 September 1913).

There are other reasons for describing the porters, bargemen and boatmen in the Izmir port as “workers”. Today, worker is a category which is dependent on an employer, their jobs are mostly show continuity; even if they have other incomes except wages, their main source of living is their wages (Makal, 1997).. As it is stated in the rest of that article: “it is already too much for workers to show such silence and tolerance over shipping agencies’ unjustness and disdain against permanent workers” (Ahenk, 8 September 1913) definitely indicates that the Izmir Port workers were not one of those seasonal workers (villager-worker) who return to their home villages and therefore led their lives mostly on wages.^{xvii} Besides if what makes “amele” and “worker” different is former uses the muscle power and the latter also uses a talent, (Ahmad, 2007) then maybe not the porters but the bargemen and boatmen should be counted as workers.

The Izmir port workers’ numbers, who were from various religions in contrast with the port of Thessaloniki (Ahenk, 14 September 1913), should have increased considerably since a newspaper states that “their number has increased very much in these days...” (Ahenk, 12 September 1913).^{xviii}

4. The Background of the Workers' Struggle

The struggle of the Izmir port workers for economic interests began almost four hundred years ago. The porters working in the Izmir Port declared a strike against the Venetian merchants at the end of the first quarter of the 17th Century and possibly acquired the raise they demanded. In those days, merchants used to tip the janissaries called as "yasakçı" for protecting their commodities. In 1620, the porters became involved in the clash between Venetian merchants and janissaries for the amount of the tips, which began in 1605.

...they not only demanded the triple of their usual salary, but also united for preventing Venetians from hiring cheaper (or desperate) porters. In other words, they ceased to work and resisted against strikebreakers. The porters who imitated the more privileged janissaries and protested realized their ability to paralyze Venetian commerce... The foreigners did nothing but to send a weak protest to Istanbul for repressing the revolt (Goffman, 1995).

Although the lonca connection of this activity, which could not be done without the consent of the janissaries, is unclear, it is possible to learn a lot about porters and their 'lonca's from an economic report prepared by Scherzer in the beginnings of 1870s, who was the Austrian General Council in Izmir:

It is necessary to mention about the porters who still exist in Izmir and in the other Turkish cities and perform a significant job of transportation. Porters carry all kinds of cargo in all weights with an extraordinary strength, capability and endurance when it is worthless to use camels or where carries could not enter the narrow streets. The porters, who come from the interior lands and are usually nomads, are either Armenian or Turkish. Porters with a strong body has a very enduring bone structure and eats cheese with bread, fruits, drink water; at the same time could carry the cargo of up to 100 kilos into the distant places or upstairs. Even some porters could carry 200 kilos of cargo and race with the camels in this respect. Since the porters are very trustworthy and honest people, they sleep in the warehouses and even get paid for this. Their earnings are not bad; they gain 15-20 kuruş a day; because their spending is less, they return to their families in a few years. The porters form a guild and there is a head-porter in the lead, who is responsible for distributing jobs to his subordinate porters, for renting storage and organizing the transportation of commodities kept in there. The money, which is gained for the completed jobs, is gathered in the

head-porter and he distributes it equally. Head-porter gains more money than the others in return for those duties (Scherzer, 2001).

Between 1879 and 1896, the real wages decreased (Pamuk, 1984) in the Ottoman lands while prices increased. A study using the sources of Şeriye sicil, reveals how the prices of food and goods had increased from the 1880s to the end of the century. That is, while an unqualified worker could buy lamb of 35-40 okka (1 okka equals 1,280 kg) with his/her wage between 1853 and 1856; s/he could only buy 20-25 okka between 1893 and 1894 (Martal, 1999). This equals to a loss of 37,5% loss of the real income got worse in the following years. The increasing prices in 1903 caused revolts in Erzurum, strikes in Istanbul and Izmir in 1906 (Karakışla, 1998). Erişçi, in a very old dated study, is completely right to point out that “It is undeniable that the working class is among the causes of the collapse of palace autocracy (Erişçi, 1951).”^{xix}

At this conjuncture, it is easy to understand why the Izmir port workers did not go on strike (Güzel, 1985) in the previous decades before the declaration of the Second Constitution from a commercial report prepared by the British Consulate:

1908 was an interesting year due to the declaration of the constitution. The first reactions to the change were the workers’ strikes. That word was not familiar in Turkey beforehand. Yet, it does not mean that the working classes used to be satisfied with their wages... However, in the old regime (autocracy), thing like demonstrations, claiming rights or demanding raises in wages were even unimagined. With the declaration of the constitution, working classes began to claim their rights for a better living (İngiliz Konsolosluk Raporlarına Göre İzmir Ticareti (1864–1914), 1998).

The wave of activities described in the literature as “1908 Strikes”,^{xx} began in the early August. The Izmir port workers (Ahladi, 2008) joined the tens of thousands workers (Sencer, 1969) who were demanding raises and improvement in working conditions on 11 August and demanded over 100% increase in their wages per hour (Karakışla, 2007). While the shipping agencies except the Russian ships Panhelenik (Panellinos), Pantaleon and Hacı Davud (Ferkuh) accepted the demands of the workers, (Onur, 1977) on 14 August 1908, it appears they had to give more than that. Namely, the workers, who had 0.88 dollars for a 12 hour workday, were getting 1.22 dollars for a 8 hour workday (Karakışla, 1998). In other words, their duration of work was

shortened by 1/3 and their incomes increased by 40%. If it is correct that their wages increased between 10 to 25% in the 1908 Because of the strikes, (İngiliz Konsolosluk Raporlarına Göre İzmir Ticareti (1864–1914), 1998) then the Izmir port workers had a remarkable success. Yet, the rise of inflation to 30% following the Declaration (Karakışla, 2007) casted a cloud on this success.

The Union and Progress, which took the side of the capital in the 1908 Strikes, were shaken by the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovia by Austria-Hungary on October 5th and by Bulgaria's declaration of independence on October 6th. The Union and Progress, having perceived these declarations as the attempts to overthrow the infant constitutional regime, turned various spontaneous activities and protests into boycotts, which were essentially tools of economic sanction. The main element of this social movement that is shaped by the press and associations were the port workers, who did not allow the passage of the goods belonging to the target states.

It is highly unlikely that the call of Tanin (Istanbul newspaper) on October 10th said that "let's not give even a small trunk from now on to the Austrian companies, which get rich and prosper by working in the Ottoman ports" is unheard in Izmir. Thus the tradesmen did not want to take in any good from the ship called "Orana" owned by the Austrian Lloyd company (Lloyd Autrichien). The following day, a ship called "Galiçya" of the same company had to go to another port since the boatmen did not operate; while the ship called Bukoniva used her own boats to put ashore passengers on 22 October.

Like all the workers in the other ports, the Izmir port workers protested the circular by Sadrazam Kamil Pasha dated 28 November requesting that the entrance did not obstruct of the goods coming from Austria-Hungary to the ports in anyway. The workers claiming they were not the civil servants, so the government could not intervene with them, stated that they carried goods for "some money" and "could not be blamed for not gaining this couple of money". The workers, who did not unload the ship "Hungaria" owned by Lloyd on 7th of December, swore to berth no Austrian ship then onwards since they had united in the thought of Ottomanism. For declaring their decision, they were led by Kahveci Aziz Agha walked from the Hunters' Club to the French Quarter and gathered in front of the government house. Throughout the walk, they shouted "Hurray for This Boycott", "Hurray for the Ottomans" and returned to their coffee places across the customs without any incidents. The Greek Consulate in Izmir, met with the Rum port workers and told them to join the boycott by

avoiding confrontation with their Turkish co-workers but since confronting with any Great State is not beneficial to the interest of the Greek Nation advised them not to expose their feelings.

The Ottoman State, thinking of having compensated the loss it had, lifted the boycott towards Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria in March of 1909. However, a few months later, this time Greece was exposed to a boycott due to the declaration of a union (enosis) with Crete. The boycott, which began with the boatmen refused to unload Greek ships on August 9, 1909, ended in the November of 1911. Interestingly, the Izmir Boycott Society, which apparently reactivated on August 16, included the Rum port workers acting with the Muslim workers in the boycott towards Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria.

All the Greek companies suffered a great loss due to the boycott, especially the Panteon Company, almost all of whose ships were operating in the Ottoman ports. The Greek Consulate of Izmir requested from his ministry of foreign affairs to compensate of the Pantaleon's for losses but since it was not the only company, which was affected by the boycott, the government refused the request. The next step of the Consulate was to form "a committee to support the (Rum) porters who were the most affected social group" of the boycott. The intervention of the foreign consulates sometimes caused the port workers to loosen the boycott. In May of 1911, A Greek ship called "Dimitrios" was able to unload her nutgalls with the intervention of the German Consulate but the workers did not want to unload the commodities of the "Pontos" owned by a British-Greek company, although the buyer was not Greek or Rum.

5. Workers Go on Strike Again

The first news that announces the strike of the Izmir Port workers was on 2 September 1913. According to Ahenk, the head-porters applied to the shipping agencies for an increase in daily wages due to the rise in the prices of all types of food and house rents but since nobody paid attention; they decided to go on strike (Ahenk, 2 Eylül 1913). Anadolu gives the news without hiding its own position and in much more detail:

The bargemen declared a strike on the shipping agencies. The news was delivered by the committee of representatives composed of four strikers. We met, settled with and listened to them. As a result, we absolutely made up our mind that the strikers had all the rights in the world. These people who does the toughest, the most relentless, and the deadliest job in the world and waste their lives for five or ten kuruş a day are the most

miserable ones in the world. Yet, it seems that this group of laborers' misery is peculiar to this port of the country. They work hard. Every day, some of them got injured in the head, shoulder, knee or arms and their earnings of daily wages are not more than 20 kuruş. Supposedly, in accordance with a contract made with the agencies, their daily wage is five francs. Whereas, things like boat costs, money exchange commissions are deducted from that money and they cannot get more than one mecidiyye.^{xxi} Although their job is much easier and more conventional compared to our bargemen, the other countries' bargemen's daily wages are always 20-25 francs. Even the laborers in the Piraeus^{xxii} ... Here is the reason for the strike: Hunger! And it's an obligation to revere this cause and take the side of the strikers for the conscientious and wise people. We act in this manner. And going even further, we wish the strikers to have endurance and decisiveness and call the agencies to have a deal with the strikers, for the sake of their own interest. According to the guarantees given by the committee of representatives who visited our printing office, this strike will be silent and idyllic. Neither uproar nor clamor! Actually, the problem is not one of the public. It is against the agencies. The strikers, for now, only demand their daily wages to be increased to at least eight francs a day. This demand is justified. Therefore, those who see the right and duty in themselves to intervene in the matter should believe in the necessity of the implementation of this demand. It is an old saying that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Especially in this century when the rights are not given but taken, it is an obligation for us to acclaim the venture of the bargemen and shipping laborers with wishes of success (Anadolu, 1913).

The comparison between the purchasing power of a port worker with his/her wage of 20 kuruş in 1913 and of a worker in the same sector today might help us to determine the living conditions. Another effect of the new competitive environment is a general trend (OSHA, 2002b) for increase of small enterprises (SE's), where accident risk is higher (Dorman, 2000; Clifton, 2005). Job prospects in SE's are significantly lower, just like the survival prospects of the whole enterprise. Resources for safety are also less. Moreover, since the benefits (and the respective economic returns) of investment in OHS are in long term, it is unlike that an SE with uncertain future will ever undertake it, especially when this small invested capital is needed for more elementary investments that are crucial for its survival.

While the daily wage of a port worker multiplied about 250 times (24.900 %) in 96 years (from 1913 to 2009); the total price of the some consumer products in the Table 2 multiplied 38.25 times (3725%) in the same period. In terms of products, a port worker is able to buy more sugar, cheese, bean, olive

oil and rice compared to 1913. A worker had to work for 25 days to buy a dress (with the assumption that he does not spend money for anything else); today he can buy it with the wage of three days of work. In summary, what a worker was able to buy with the wage from 30 days of work, now he could do within 4.5 days in 2009.

In this sense, a married worker in 1913 had more economical problems than a counterpart today, because in those days the householder of the family had to look after more than four people in a traditional type of family. Any increase in the number of the people to look after must have been quite a burden when almost all the money was spent on food and clothing and the rent. It could be argued that today's workers have to spend on things like entertainment and communication on which a port worker in 1913 did not have to spend, so the increase in his wage is not that much. Yet, the consumer products bought by the workers in 1913 were all currently produced in Turkey, (rice, sugar and fabric) so the prices were considerably reduced.^{xxiii} Besides, back then the dependent laborers had no option like buying cheap products of China.^{xxiv}

Table 2. The comparison of a Worker's Salary's Purchasing Power
(1913&2009)

Some Consumer Goods (Food Clothing)	Prices (in okka)		How many (in okka) could be bought with a daily wage (1913 = 20 kuruş)	How many (in okka) could be bought with a daily wage (2009 = 50 lira) ^{xxv}
	1913 (kuruş)	2009 (lira)		
Sugar	3	3.5	6.6	14.3 (+ 7.7)
Cheese	12	10	1.6	5 (+ 3.4)
Bean	4	4.5	5	11.1 (+ 6.1)
Olive Oil	8	12	2.5	4.2 (+ 1.7)
Rice	3	6.5	6.6	7.7 (+1.1)
Potato	1	3	20	16.7 (- 3.3)
Clothing	500	150		
Shoes (A pair)	70	40		
Total	601	22.950 krş.	-	-

Source: Sabri Sürgevil, "İzmir'de Fiyat Hareketleri ve Narh (1914-1918)", *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, III, İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayını, 1987, p. 84 and Sabri Sürgevil, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin İzmir Politikası", Ege Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, (Doctoral Dissertation), İzmir, 1984, pp. 253-254.

A worker's words clearly indicate how the workers were being exploited:

Just today a Russian ship came from the Syrian line. There were 7.000 sacks of grain and 1.100 empty sacks. This load, which weighted almost 2.100 tones, were to be moved to Izmir. For that the agency sent twelve workers to the ship. The daily wage of each one was ten sekizlik (Spanish coin). Yet, the agency was taking two francs for each tone as previously decided. On this account, while they took 4.200 francs, which equals to 210 Napolyon, for unloading 2.100 tons of commodity from the Russian ship; do you know how much they gave to a worker who worked for hours, risked his life in many instances like being crushed by a crane and used his all strength for this job? Ten sekizlik to each, which is 120 sekizlik in total. What a justice! Gain 210 liras at the expense of a worker and gave these poor ones only 120 sekizlik. Where is the justice, humanity in this? This little example is enough to explain the unjust treatment towards the port workers (Ahenk, 8 September 1913).

The editor-in-chief of Ahenk, summarized the legal amendments done by the government during and after the 1908 strikes and shows that the shipping agencies wanted to end the strike with the help of the police by claiming that the workers violated the law and order:

Our city's workers who went on strike against to agencies did nothing against either the law or public order by this movement; on the contrary, they used their legally, conscientiously and economically legitimate rights. Even, as it is seen, these poor fellows showed great patience and endurance. Despite the fact that, all the prices rise rapidly in our city, especially rents increase unprecedentedly and they are in so much poverty since their wages are not increased, they still had not acted against their agencies. However, recently, they were in such a desperate situation that they were forced to act in that way and they have all the rights to do so... The companies, which profit thousands and billions of lira at the expense of the workers, should not only deal with their own plots or interests but also look after the rights of the workers, pay attention to their obligations in this matter and come to reason; hereby should provide a legitimate balance between the workers and the employers. Hence we consciously feel an obligation to deem the port workers' strike as justified (Ahenk, 8 September 1913).

Anadolu, while drawing attention to the fact that the shipping agencies were stalling the workers with the promises which they thought, they could back down from instead of seeking reconciliation, did not change its perspective:

According to the news, the processes defined in the first and third articles were passed and the fourth one was about to begin:

...the commission established by the order of the provincial administration, headed by the commodore and composed of the commander of gendarme, police forces, the directors of the foreign affairs and the harbor master, gathering for the employment of the port workers, bargemen and boatmen in legal grounds and for the improvement of their living conditions...(Ahenk, 12 September 1913).

Later, the General Director of the Customs, Agah Bey was included in this committee called by the newspapers as either “the special commission” or “the conciliation committee” and Anadolu spoke highly of his efforts and services in the committee (Anadolu, 14 September 1913). Although all the civil servants constituted the political power's side, there were 6 of them as against the number determined by the law (Art. 4). We could not determine the names of the representatives of the workers and agencies but they gathered for the first time in the police headquarters on September 9 and dismissed to gather again on September 10 at 4pm. According to Anadolu, much had been accomplished on the matter of wages at that meeting and a solution they hoped would be reached in the next one (Anadolu, 11 September 1913). Ahenk depicts a more pessimistic picture and begins by stating that the expected result was not achieved in the first meeting:

According to our solid source, in this meeting, the agencies insisted on their assessments and claimed that since the workers began to strike within the 48 hours after stating their demands; the strike is not valid and if the workers began to work in the next day, they would consider negotiating their demands on wage rise. That means the agencies do not want to attribute significance to the matter by approaching the strike non-seriously and they condition the workers to start to work before the negotiations on the daily wages ends in order to break their determination and pride and to show that they are unable to change anything...(Ahenk, 11 September 1913)

Since the workers made no faults on legal grounds, the council did not take the agencies' allegations into consideration.

5. The Spread of the Strike and its End

Somehow, the newspapers do not give any information about the meeting held on September 10 but we derive from these words “the mediation and negotiations, which were being done by the special commission regarding the port workers' strike, are about to be finalized...” (Ahenk, 12 September 1913). that the meeting was successful. Thus, the strike ended on the same day, on September 12 (Ahenk, 14 September 1913) and the workers went back to work

in the following day (Anadolu, 14 September 1913). Since the agencies had not been willing to reconcile, it would not have reached this conclusion; the reason why they changed their policies must have been searched for. Otherwise, it is unlikely to explain why the strike ended when it was fully expanded.

At first, we would like to mention the unloading of shipping companies' vessels by their own crew. Probably, this practice, which began when the council did its first meeting (September 9), disturbed the agencies for being unable to have the commission for each tone they take and the workers for strikebreaking.^{xxvi} It was quite natural for the agencies to talk about this practice, which prevented them from getting their important source of income, in the office of the Messagerie Agency in the afternoon of the same day (Ahenk, 11 September 1913). Apparently, the first ship to load by its own crew was Esteria belonging to the Austrian Lloyd Autrichien Company that left the port on September 10 (Ahenk, 11 September 1913). The crews were after having to carry all the cargo when they had expected to have fun in Izmir^{xxvii} this was shown by the fact that the crew from a cargo ship from Belgium whose crew went on strike the same day (Anadolu, 11 September 1913). This most likely pleased the port workers but later the news left their joy incomplete:

One of the crew from a Belgian cargo ship in order not to break the port workers' strike convinced the other crewmen to stop working but later with the captains' intervention, they were forced to load the cargo (Ahenk, 11 September 1913).

Secondly, we must stress on the spread of the strike. Anadolu was late in warning the authorities: "we hope that this dispute does not spread. Because if it continues more than a few days, it comes to mind that it would spread to the other worker who had not gone on strike." (Anadolu, 11 September 1913). The coal workers, who worked for 4 kuruş each tone, declared they would strike with the demand of 5 kuruş for each tone. The number of the coal workers, who petitioned their demand on September 10 to the Var-der-Zee, Whittal ve Vezir (Hidiviye?) companies was about 170 people (Ahenk, 11 September 1913). According to a Greek newspaper, Amalthia published in Izmir the porters of Izmir-Kasaba line were about to go on strike. The strike attempt of the porters of Yeşim Bazaar with the same motives was prevented (Ahenk, 11 September 1913). The workers of the Izmir-Aydın line declared strike but since the 48 hours did not end, they continued working (Anadolu, 11 September 1913). The first stone to start the domino effect was obviously planted by the workers, who were selling their labor in the port. However, the support of the coal workers

and others should be evaluated not on the basis of class consciousness but on the basis of vocational solidarity.

Lastly, it is better to look at the negative impact of the strike on commerce. Anadolu was right to say on September 11 that “the spread of the strike, at these times, will cause a lot of damage and loss for to commercial community”. Because of the strike, the export was to stopping point when it was the period of harvesting the grapes and fig in Izmir. According to Amalthia:

...since the buyers withdrawn from the market... the prices of the grape and fig fell considerably. Thereupon, man merchants appeal to the Director of the Police Force Cemal Bey for intervention. Yet, Cemal Bey said that since his main duty is for sustaining security, he is unable to do anything regarding the strike. Apart form the merchants, the director of the Public Debts Administration and even an influential from the Public Debts Administration in Izmir, Adosyidi(s) Efendi visited the Director of the Police Force due to the strike and requested the termination of the matter because of a considerable fall in the revenues of the Public Debts Administration (Ahenk, 11 September 1913).

The political power could not stand indifferent in a matter when the public opinion expected its intervention.^{xxviii} Although we do not know what the sides said in the committee, there are good signs that the representatives of the government acted in favor of the workers when they performed their duty of arbitration. We evaluate the release of nine workers after the second meeting, (Anadolu, 11 September 1913) who had been arrested by the police for unknown reasons. A day before, Anadolu had written that the workers had given a petition to the police force explaining their demands; that Cemal Bey tried to reconcile the worker with the agencies; and that the Directorship of the Police Force will make initiatives to found an aid fund for the workers after the end of the strike (Anadolu, 9 September 1913).

6. Conclusions

According to Ahenk, the main conditions of the strike that lasted ten days were as follows:

1. Henceforth, the port workers were not to be recruited as is but called directly from the workers' clubs.
2. The working hours are decided to be changed and they are reduced to 9 hours a day. Henceforth, if a worker stays more than nine hours, he will be paid extra wage for every hour.

3. The agencies accepted the foundation of a fund and the deposit of a half or full franc for each worker to that fund (Ahenk, 14 September 1913).

As it is seen, the workers could not get the rise in wages, which was the cause of the strike. That is why Ahenk begins its report as follows: "...the conditions and solid demands of the workers are more or less changed". In the same article, the workers are reported to have continue with their jobs and had commented on be disatisfied with the end-result: "but some of them, especially non-Muslim ones insisted on opposing to these decisions and since they attempted to contain the other workers, they were arrested by the police." (Ahenk, 14 September 1913).

Even though, their gains should not be underestimated. That is, working hours are one of the most important issues of working conditions after the wages. We do not know how many hours they were working before this settlement but if we think that even in 1921, child workers between the ages of 10 and 13 were made to work for 10 hours a day (İzmir'deki Bazı Sosyal Koşullar Hakkında Bir Araştırma, 1921); then it is clear that they were working for more than 11 hours. The problem in here is that the wage for extra hours was not determined in the text. The decision was left to the nonexistent pity of the employers.

Together with the settlement of the working hours, the installment of a specific amount of money to the aid fund by the agencies for the workers is the most concrete gain. The establishment of an aid fund, which was proposed by the government should have observed by the agencies as appealing. Therefore, each month they gave 0.5-1 franc to the workers, instead of the demanded amount of 3 francs. Although it might appear as a loss, there is a consolatory side of this situation. Even though it is not a trade union, for the first time, the port workers had an organization similar to a union, which is a significant progress towards proletarianization.

Lastly, we would like to point out a fact that could explain the agencies' policy towards the workers. Due to the growing expansion of the trade between the Europe and the Ottoman State, accumulating commodities in the Ottoman ports rendered the competition among the shipping companies meaningless. As a result, in the last quarter of the 19th century,

*...foreign ships came to an agreement on carrying passengers and goods.
For instance, the agreement of the foreign ships in Izmir was carrying the*

export commodities in more expensive prices... The carriage of commodities to the European ports by the foreign ships in higher prices was disadvantageous to the villagers. For example, an opium to be exported from Izmir to Europe had to be equal to the world values. For that, the opium had to be bought in lower prices from the villagers. The profit gained by the shipping companies were being paid by the producers (Şanda, 1962).

The villagers, who were dispossessed due to the integration of the Ottoman State with the European economy, accumulated in the port cities with the hope of having a job. Therefore, there is no doubt that the shipping agencies had a similar agreement to the one shipping companies had. The difference is being that first one robbed the villagers, the second one robbed the workers. The foreign capital was robbing the ones who sold their labor in their own countries. In the second half of the 19th century, in Manchester and London, “the disease and the death were full in poor areas. That was not only the cost of amassing in the cities, but also the cost of a perception, which saw the workers as commodities and directed the relationship between the employer and the worker based on the supply and demand law” (Sédillot, 1983).”

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank my doctoral student Gökser Gökçay for translating the article; Prof. Dr. Ertuğrul Deliktaş for helping me in the assessment of the Table 4 and customs commissioner Sabih Aygün and the Director of the Alsancak Station of TCDD Seyfi Yardımcı for answering my questions regarding the shipping agencies of the Izmir Port.

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ⁱ For a comparative study, see: Kütükoğlu, “Osmanlı Dış Ticaretinin Gelişmesinde İzmir Limanı ve Gümrüklerinin Rolü”, İzmir Tarihinden Kesitler, pp. 285-312.

ⁱⁱ For an administrative organization of İzmir (12.426 km²) since the 16th Century, see: Engin Berber, Yeni Onbinlerin Gölgesinde Bir Sancak: İzmir (30 Ekim 1918–15 Mayıs 1919), İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999, pp. 5-7

ⁱⁱⁱ For concise information on all these disasters, see: Tuncer Baykara, İzmir Şehri ve Tarihi, İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Arkeoloji Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974, pp. 82-87.

^{iv} The most concrete example of this agricultural transformation, as explained in Goffman pp. 66-67, was the plantation of cotton and tobacco, instead of grain and vegetables. The prohibitions on planting and using tobacco were useless despite the harsh prosecutions.

^v For detailed information on the transformation from mercantilism to free trade, which we tried to explain in one sentence, see: Gerhard Köhnen, Dünya Ekonomi Tarihi Başlangıcından Bugüne, Translated by Dr. Tunay Akoğlu, İstanbul: Varlık Yayınevi, 1965 and René Sédillot, Dünya Ticaret Tarihi Değiştokuştan Süpermarkete, Translated by Esat Nermi Erendor, İstanbul: Cep Kitapları, 1983.

^{vi} For detailed information, see: Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Küreselleşme, İktisat Politikaları ve Büyüme*, Translated by. Gökhan Aksay, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, Kasım 2008, pp. 83-90.

^{vii} First railway was heading from Büyük and Küçük Menderes valleys in two columns branching off towards Tire, Ödemiş, Söke, Denizli and Çivril. Second one was going by the Gediz valley towards Manisa and branching off into two; to Afyon and to Soma, which also leads to Bandırma.

^{viii} According to Donald Quataert, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu 1700–1922*, Translated by Ayşe Berktaş, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002, p. 184, in the Ottoman Asia, transportation was mainly done by the camels. “Because their carrying capacity comparatively was limited, caravans almost always carried high-cost, low-bulk goods such as textiles and other manufactured goods, as well as relatively expensive raw materials such as spices. Caravan shipments of foodstuffs, on the other hand, were rare because the transport costs usually exceeded their selling price.”

^{ix} *Tuzlaburnu* is the place where the current port resides and *Kışla* (barracks) building, which was demolished in 1950, is now known as *Konak Square*.

^x For the only exception, see: *Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı Mücedeleleri Tarihi*, Ankara: Tüm İktisatçılar Birliği Yayınları, 1976, p. 55.

^{xi} *Commerce in İzmir according to the Reports of the British Consulate. The Pantaleon Shipping Company, which had the biggest steamship filo in İzmir went bankrupt due to the embargo towards Greece.*

^{xii} According to *Commerce in İzmir according to the Reports of the British Consulate*, a British company was ferrying between the Anatolia and the United States. That company may be the company called “Orient Line” included in the table.

^{xiii} The disturbance created by this condition was reflected in a newspaper article on 27 January 1914. Accordingly, passengers prepared for a trip had to wait in the inns and hotels since they failed to take a proper reply from agencies or each agency only informed them about their own time of departure. Considering the circumstances, Çulluzade Mehmet Arif Efendi and his partners opened a shop called “General Agency for Passengers” in the Great Inn in Kemeraltı.

^{xiv} “Amele”, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 1, İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Vakfının Ortak Yayınıdır, 1996, p. 38.

^{xv} See. Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu, Bir Toplumsal Hareketin Analizi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004; Mehmet Emin Elmacı, “1908 Avusturya Boykotunda Liman İşçileri”, *Kebikeç*, 5, 1997, s.s. 155-162 ve Hakkı (Onur, 1977) , s.s. 277-295.

^{xvi} According to Anadolu, 2 September 1913, there was a serious cut from the wage paid to the bargemen and boatmen as “boat Money” and “sarrafıye” (usage price) that indicates they were also porters.

^{xvii} From A. Şahabettin Ege, *Eski İzmir'den Anılar*, Yay. Prepared by Erkan Serçe, İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayını, 2002, pp. 32-34, we understand that “*Import-export business in Izmir was gathered around the three foreign company. These companies had big closed hangars for processing fig and grape in İkinci Kordon. Turkish workmen used to work in such facilities. Workers used to work during the season; when the job finishes; they rested and spent the money they gained abstinely until the next season. My relative Sami Efendi was that kind of chest master. He worked in the season and when it's done, he migrated (literally) to the coffee shop for drinking coffee and spent the winter there*” which makes us think that those who cannot work permanently in a job in Izmir's industrial sector were also separated from the rural areas.

^{xviii} A Study made by the teachers of International American College In İzmir-Paradiso (currently named Şirinyer) and completed in Spring 1921, *İzmir'deki Bazı Sosyal Koşullar Hakkında Bir Araştırma, İzmir 1921 (A Survey of Some Social Conditions in Asia Minor'dan)*, Translated by Aykan Candemir, İzmir: İzmir Yayıncılık, 2000. In p. 18, the number of workers mentioned as 500 which was probably the number of workers in 1913

^{xix} For Donald Quataert's study, which moderately bases a ground for this statement, see “The 1908 Young Turk Revolution: Old and New Approaches”, *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 13/1, 1979, pp. 22-29 and “The Economic Climate of the ‘Young Turk Revolution’ in 1908”, *The Journal of Modern History*, On Demand Publication, 51/3, September 1979, pp. D 1147-1161.

^{xx} 1908 Grevlerinin listesi için See. Onur, pp. 277-295.

^{xxi} It was the name of the gold and silver coined moneys in the sixth anniversary of the Sultan Abdülmecid's accession (1844). Generally used for the silver one valued 20 *kuruş*. Later it was devalued to 19 *kuruş*.

^{xxii} The demand to have an equal payroll with the workers of the foreign ports was not welcomed by the capital. In Sencer (pp. 211-212) quoting from *İkdam* dated 6 April 1909, the company manager told the representative of the port workers of İstanbul who went on strike in the spring of

1909 that “*if you adduce the French laborers, they are the (decent) men*”. There was no reason for the employers in Izmir to thin

^{xxiii} In those days, rice and clothing were imported.

^{xxiv} If we have added Chinese made suit (75 lira) and shoes (10 lira) to the Table 4, the workers’ purchasing power would have increased considerably.

^{xxv} Today, all the workers are enrolled in a trade union and they get 1.500 liras each month.

^{xxvi} Strikebreaking are illegal acts of whether the employer or of someone who helps him for reducing or eliminating the effects of the strike altogether. Since there was not any clause regarding the strikebreaking in the Strike Law, the shipping companies are not called as 'strikebreakers' in this article.

^{xxvii} Most of the crewmen spend their time in pubs, coffeehouses, bakeries or Turkish baths and bordellos in Izmir. These places were the most visited places by the crewmen in the other ports, as well. The names and the addresses of these places in Izmir, see: *Izmir 1876 and 1908*, p. 99 and *Izmir 1920, Yunanistan Rehberinden İşgal Altındaki Bir Kentin Öyküsü*, pp. 63-64 and 68.

^{xxviii} Şinasi said in *Ahenk* on September 8, 1913 that: “*But especially since the strike's coincidence with this period will affect the life and commerce of Izmir in a great extent, we think that the government cannot stay indifferent to such a problem which will damage the economy more or less. In addition, if at one side the government at the other influential intervene as charitable, advisers and arbitrators for the reconciliation of the dispute between the agencies and the worker on the wage problem; they would obviously serve in great respect to country's economy...*”