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+ + + + THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT IN TURKEY + + + + +

With a courage and spirit of sacrifice worthy of admiration the Turkish people have torn up the odious Sevres treaty (41) and recovered their independence. They have defeated the plotting of imperialism and overthrown the throne of the Sultans. They have turned their exhausted, torn and trampled nation into a united and strong republic. They have had their revolution. But like all bourgeois revolutions, the Turkish revolution is profitable only to one class: the moneyed class.

The Turkish proletariat, which greatly contributed to the struggle for national independence, is now obliged to embark on another struggle: the class struggle.

In this struggle, the Turkish working class is facing many obstacles. In Turkey, there are no trade unions such as those existing in the West. There are only corporations or friendly societies grouping workers of the same trade living in the same town. Workers of different trades living in different towns have no connection between them. This prevents any effective common action.

Notwithstanding this state of affairs, the year that has just ended was disturbed many times by a ferment of the workers. Several strikes were launched in Constantinople, at the Golden Horn, at [Aydın?] etc. Aidine Printers, railwaymen, coastal vessel workers and workmen in petroleum storehouses and breweries waged struggles. Ten thousand workers participated in the movement. Following these experiences, the Turkish workers have realized that organization and discipline are necessary in order to triumph.

(41) Sevres'den Lomane'a gecti istone bir not, s. 166-167.

The Constantinople Congress founds the Birlik

Recently, a Workers' Congress was convened in Constantinople. Two hundred and fifty delegates were present. They represented 19,000 Constantinople workers, 15,000 Zongouldak coal miners and 10,000 workers from the lead mines at Balyakaraidin.

It was decided to unite the 34 existing dernek into a birlik, or federation. This bold decision frightened the Government, which refused to recognize the birlik. It is to be noted that the Government's attitude toward workers has changed a great deal since the end of the war. The Government was always in favour of the workers when it was a question of driving out foreigners, but when it was a matter of organizing workers, it shows itself to be as reactionary as all other capitalist governments. Its opposition therefore surprises nobody. Besides, everybody knows that, since the Lausanne event, Turkish capitalism is flirting with foreign capital, which, after having caused the deaths of thousands of poor Greeks and Turks without succeeding in colonizing Turkey, is now penetrating peacefully into the Land of the Crescent. The refusal of the Government to recognize the birlik is tantamount to a gracious smile directed to the foreign capital in the country, three fifths of which is French.

But the Turkish proletariat has made its first step. It will go on.

"... İst. Anete Bölgesi, Türkiye ölüsünde bir tezekkül haline getirilmek istendi. Zonguldak ve Balya-Karaaydın Anete Birliklerinin birleştirilmesiyle Türkiye Anete Bölgesi meydana getirildi. Ancak bu tezekkül, suların ıslayamaz hale geldi. (1924)."

Kemal Sütker, Türkyede Sendikacılık (İst. 1955), s. 27