



**Newspapers Published by the Employees Against Their Employers in Turkey:  
*Haber and Basın***

*Türkiye'de Çalışanların İşverenlerine Karşı Yayınladığı Gazeteler:  
Haber ve Basın*

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*Abstract*

Takvim-i Vekayi started to be published in 1831 and was the first Turkish newspaper published in the Ottoman Empire period. The number of newspapers published in the Ottoman Empire started to increase after 1860. As a result of the increase in the number of newspapers, conflicts between newspaper owners and employees increased. In such cases, newspaper employees often went on strike to protect their interests and ensure that their demands were accepted. However, due to the lack of legal regulations to protect their rights, newspaper employees sometimes adopted different methods of struggle. One of these methods was to publish newspapers against newspaper owners in order to fight against them with the same medium. In the history of the Turkish press, newspaper workers were able to publish their newspapers against their newspaper owners twice, in 1923 and 1961. In 1923, the typesetters published a newspaper named *Haber* (News). In 1961, the journalists published a newspaper called *Basın*. As journalists gained relative legal security in 1961, they did not take such an action again in Turkey.

**Keywords:** Turkish Press History, Haber newspaper, Basın newspaper, Turkey, Journalists

*Öz*

1831 yılında yayınlanan Takvim-i Vekayi, Osmanlı Devleti'nde yayımlanan ilk Türkçe gazetedir. 1860 yılından sonra ise Osmanlı Devleti'nde yayınlanan gazete sayısı artmaya başlamıştır. Gazete sayısının artması sonucu gazete sahipleriyle çalışanlar arasında anlaşmazlıklar da artmıştır. Bu gibi durumlarda gazete çalışanları çıkarlarını korumak ve taleplerinin kabul edilmesini sağlamak için sık sık greve gitmişlerdir. Ancak haklarını koruyacak yasal düzenlemelerin olmamasından dolayı gazete çalışanları bazen farklı mücadele yöntemleri de benimsemişlerdir. Bunlar biri patronlarına karşı aynı silahla mücadele edebilmek için onlara karşı gazete çıkarmak olmuştur. Türk Basın Tarihi'nde gazete çalışanları bunu 1923 ve 1961'de olmak üzere iki kez başarabilmiştir. 1923 yılındaki gazeteyi *Haber* adıyla beden işçileri olan mürettepler çıkarmıştır. 1961 yılındaki gazeteyi *Basın* adıyla fikir işçileri olan gazeteciler çıkarmıştır. 1961 Anayasasıyla başlayan süreçte gazeteciler nispeten yasal güvenceye kavuştukları için Türkiye'de bir daha böyle bir eylemde bulunmamışlardır.

**Keywords:** Türkiye Basın Tarihi, Haber gazetesi, Basın gazetesi, Türkiye, Gazeteciler



## Introduction

Turkish Press History began with the publication of *Takvim-i Vekayi* in 1831. Later, in 1840, a semi-official newspaper *Ceride-i Havadis* was published. After *Ceride-i Havadis*, no new paper could be printed until after 1860. Upon the publication of the first civilian newspaper, *Tercüman-ı Ahval*, in 1860, many others started to be issued in succession during the period of Ottoman rule. Particularly, in 1862, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, in 1867, *Muhbir*, and 1870, *İbret* were published. There was almost an "outburst of press" in the Ottoman Empire, especially during the Second Constitutional Era, and 310 newspapers were granted publishing privileges within a year after the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy.<sup>1</sup>

Newspapers during the Ottoman Empire were generally published by journalists who were the proprietors and owners at the same time. There were mostly no articles other than an editorial by the owner in these papers, and they covered domestic as well as foreign news. For this reason, the newspapers were usually dubbed with the names of the proprietors' journalists. To illustrate, *İkdam* was associated with Ahmet Cevdet, *Servet-i Fünun* with Ahmet İhsan, *Sabah* with Mihran Efendi, and *Tanin* with Hüseyin Cahit.

The journalist/owner tradition that started in the Ottoman Empire continued in the Republican period as well. The first non-journalist owner of a paper was Safa Kılıçlıoğlu, a yarn merchant who bought *Yeni Sabah* in 1948.<sup>2</sup> Since the owners of the newspapers were acting journalists and other journalists employed in the newspapers were able to get organized rather late<sup>3</sup>, the problems originating between owners and employers in the early days mostly stemmed from blue-collar staff. An exception took place in 1900 when the journalists working in *İkdam* and *Sabah* newspapers demanded a raise in their salaries. Still, the owner of *İkdam*, Ahmet Cevdet Bey, and the owner of *Sabah*, Mihran Efendi did not give in to this demand. Consequently, the journalists from both papers quit and published *Saadet* newspaper. Nonetheless, these journalists could not sustain the publication of this paper.<sup>4</sup> After the resignation of the journalists, Ahmet Cevdet Bey had to print *İkdam* all by himself for months.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from this incident at *İkdam* and *Sabah*, problems culminating in newspapers involved blue-collar workers. In this respect, typesetters of the papers were the ones who took the lead. As far as is known, the typesetters working for *Saadet* in Istanbul were the first to take strike action in 1901 as they were having issues with the newspaper owner. On 17 August 1908, the typesetters of *İstanbul* and *Levant Herald* went on strike. Additionally, the newspaper *Türk Dünyası* could not be published due to the typesetters' strike in 1919.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ahmet Ali Gazel-Şaban Ortak, "İkinci Meşrutiyet'ten 1927 Yılına Kadar Yayın İmtiyazı Alan Gazete ve Mecmualar (1908-1927)", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 7 (1), 2006, 226.

<sup>2</sup> Gezgin, S., Polat, V., Arcan, H. E., *Türkiye Sözlü Basın Tarihi I*, İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 2006, 147

<sup>3</sup> In 1908, The Union of Matbuat-ı Osmaniye, which was established to organize writers and reporters working in the Ottoman press, was only able to gain official status in the midst of World War I. Due to political conflicts, the board of directors of the Union could only be formed on 11 June 1914. In 1917, when the German Press Union wanted to invite some of the editors of Turkish newspapers to Germany, the Union was reorganized under the chairmanship of Mahmut Sadık Bey.

<sup>4</sup> Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları*, (Yayına Hazırlayan: R. Mutluay), İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 1975, 111-113.

<sup>5</sup> *Haber*, 8 Eylül 1923.

<sup>6</sup> Ahmet Ali Gazel, *1923 Mürettepler Grevi*, İstanbul: İdeal Kültür Yayıncılık, 2016, 53-56.

As indicated above, white-collar and blue-collar workers of newspapers had issues with the owners at times, and they often stopped working by going on strike in order to overcome these problems, as in many examples such as the Chicago Newspaper Strike of 1912<sup>7</sup>, the 1936 Seattle Newspaper Strike<sup>8</sup>, and the 1965 American Newspaper Guild's strike against *The New York Times*.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, as it happened at *Saadet* newspaper, they quit their current positions and became the newspaper owners themselves. Unlike these incidents, newspaper employees also temporarily published newspapers against their employers to give them a dose of their own medicine until the disagreement was resolved. In Turkish Press History, the employees were able to achieve this twice, in 1923 and 1961. In 1923, a newspaper named *Haber* was published by the blue-collar worker typesetters, and in 1961 *Basın* was printed by white-collar worker journalists.

It is clear that the employees working in Turkish newspapers during the Ottoman period learned the idea of printing a newspaper against their employers, especially from the employees of the newspapers published in Greek, as those working in Greek-language newspapers were more knowledgeable about journalism and workers' rights due to their close contact with Europe. During the Ottoman period, the typesetters working in the Greek-language newspapers published two papers, in 1909 and 1919, against their employers who did not accept their demands. The typesetters of the Greek-language newspapers in Izmir went on strike in 1909, demanding a raise in their salaries. In order to break the strike, the owners of the newspapers, *Amaltheia* in particular, and those of *Armonia*, *Nea Smyrni*, and *Imerisia*, printed a single newspaper bearing the symbols of the four newspapers. The typesetters also published a newspaper called *Ameroliptos* with a counter-action. When the strike ended, the typesetters stopped printing *Ameroliptos*.<sup>10</sup>

In 1919, when the owners of the newspapers published in the Greek language in Istanbul raised their prices by 40%, the typesetters working for these newspapers also demanded an equal wage increase. When the newspaper owners did not accept this demand, the typesetters went on strike on 24 February, 1919.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the newspaper owners decided not to publish their newspapers. In response to this action, the typesetters published a newspaper called *Farus* against their employers. There were publications in the newspaper regarding the demands of the typesetters. The strike, which started on 24 February, 1919, ended on 8 March, 1919 and the Greek-language newspapers began to be published again as of 9 March, 1919. *Farus* newspaper, printed by the typesetters, ceased publication (Cumhuriyet, 19 May 2019).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> P. Taft, "The Limits of Labor Unity: The Chicago Newspaper Strike of 1912", *Labor History*, 19 (1) 1978, 100-129.

<sup>8</sup> C. Elmore, "Terry Pettus and the 1936 Seattle Newspaper Strike: Pivotal Success for the. Early American Newspaper Guild", *American Journalism*, 36 (3) 2019, 300-321.

<sup>9</sup> J. Tracy, "The News About the Newswriters: Press Coverage of the 1965 American Newspaper Guild Strike Against the New York Times", *Journalism Studies*, 5 (4) 2004, 451-467.

<sup>10</sup> Efdal Sevincli, dokuzeylul.com/Izmir-basin-tarihinde-ilk-grev

<sup>11</sup> In the same year, on October 1, 1919, the typesetters working at the newspapers in New York also went on strike because of working hours and wages, and after the agreement was reached, the newspapers could be published again on November 24, 1919. Glenn Fleishman, glennf.medium.com/the-typewriter-is-not-a-typesetter.

<sup>12</sup> In the Ottoman period, there were cases where the newspaper employees did not print a paper against their employers, although the employers united and published a joint newspaper in the face of the typesetters' strike. For example, when the typesetters went on strike in Thessaloniki in 1911, the newspapers *Progres de Salonique* and *Journal de Salonique* were merged and published under the name *Independant*. When the typesetters working in the Greek and French newspapers in Istanbul went on strike due to the disagreement on the wages at the beginning of April 1920, the newspaper *Prodous*, which was published in the mornings, and *Horonos*, *Tahidoromos* and *Patris*, which were published in the evenings, could not be published on April 9-10, 1920. In response to the typesetters'

## Haber Newspaper

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, typesetters who were mainly dissatisfied with their wages and working conditions at Ottoman newspapers resorted to taking strike action in an unorganized and individual manner without the initiatives of a union. However, having established the Ottoman Typesetters Union in 1908, they initiated a more organized lawsuit to seek their rights. The Union changed its statutes in 1922 and adopted a new name, The Turkish Typesetters' Union (Türk Mürettepler Cemiyeti).<sup>13</sup>

The Turkish Typesetters' Union carried out its most notable strike in 1923. On 2 September, 1923, the Union, displeased with the wages and working hours of the typesetters, met with the newspaper owners to reorganize the working hours. They had two prominent demands. The first was that the typesetters' shift would begin at three and finish at eight. Secondly, they would be paid an extra typesetting fee for the news and telegrams that arrived after the specified hours and were asked to be published in the newspaper.<sup>14</sup>

The owners of the newspapers declared on 6 September 1923 that they would not accept the demands of the Union. Upon this response, the typesetters in Istanbul working at the newspapers published in Turkish language decided to go on strike on Thursday, 6 September 1923 and stopped working at four o'clock. In response to this action, the owners of eight newspapers in Istanbul agreed to publish a joint newspaper. Consequently, they issued a new paper called *The Müşterek Newspaper* on 7 September 1923. The newspaper owners also signed a contract indicating they would continue their collaboration for six months, as they could not foresee how long the typesetter strike would last.<sup>15</sup>

The newspapers that published *The Müşterek Newspaper* were *İkdam*, *Akşam*, *İleri*, *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, *Tevhid-i Efkâr*, *Tanin*, *Vatan*, and *Vakit*. The owner of *Vatan*, Ahmet Emin Yalman, wrote years later the following statements about the preparation of the newspaper in his memoirs: "Velid Bey, who was able to perform the task of typesetting, took the lead. We were all somehow working in the typesetting office. There had never been such close and harmonious cooperation in the Turkish press".<sup>16</sup>

*The Müşterek Newspaper* published two issues a day, in the morning and the evening. While the newspapers *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* and *Akşam* printed the evening issue, the morning issue was published by *İkdam*, *İleri*, *Tevhid-i Efkâr*, *Tanin*, *Vatan* and *Vakit*. In *The Müşterek Newspaper*, there were columns individually assigned to each publishing newspaper. The editorials were also written sequentially. The strike of the typesetters lasted 15 days and eventually an agreement was reached on 20 September 1923 ending the strike. During the course of the strike, 27 issues were printed and the final issue of *The Müşterek Newspaper* was printed on 21 September. The eight newspapers mentioned above continued their publications as of 22 September 1923.

strike, the newspaper owners printed a joint newspaper named *Le Jour Nous*. However, this time, the newspaper employees did not publish a paper against their employees as they did before, and as a result of the compromise reached, the newspapers printed in Greek and French started to be published again as of April 21, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmet Ali Gazel, "Osmanlı Mürettepler Cemiyeti", *Bilig*, (85), 2018, 86.

<sup>14</sup> *El-Adl*, 8 Eylül 1923.

<sup>15</sup> *Müşterek Gazete*, 12 Eylül 1923.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim 1922-1971*, II (Yayına Hazırlayan: E. Ş. Erdinç), İstanbul 1997, 882-883.

In the first issue of *The Müşterek Newspaper*, the justification for the publication of the newspaper was elaborated. The reason for the disagreement, as it is stated in the newspaper, was that the typesetters demanded to do their job from three to eight o'clock for the morning papers and from nine to two for the evening papers. According to the newspaper owners, it was not possible to give in this demand as it would prevent the newspapers from bringing news to their readers until the last minute. In addition, the acceptance of these demands would put the newspapers, which had been experiencing financial issues, into a more difficult condition, and even create a situation that could prevent the continuation of publication.<sup>17</sup>

After the newspaper owners came together and showed solidarity against the typesetters, the Turkish Typesetters' Union took action to defend the rights of the typesetters. The Union decided to publish a counter newspaper named *Haber*, which became their news outlet as of 8 September 1923. The paper was printed twice a day, in the morning and evening, during the strike. In fact, *Haber* continued to be issued for some time even after the strike.

Osman Refik İşçen, one of the members of the typesetters who participated in the 1923 strike, described the publication of *Haber* as follows:

“We consulted with Haydar Bey, the governor of the time, for permission to publish a newspaper called *Haber*. As blue-collar workers, we started to issue the paper at Teşebbüs Printing House. We were typesetting by hand until the morning and selling the newspapers ourselves at the bridgehead and in Bab-ı Âli in the morning. We, blue-collar workers, published *Haber* for 16 days”.<sup>18</sup>

The first issue of *Haber* was printed on 8 September 1923, one day after *The Müşterek Newspaper*. In the first issue, it was announced that as of 9 September, the volume of the newspaper would be increased and it would be published twice a day, in the evening the morning (*Haber*, 8 September 1939). Indeed, this was the case during the strike. Similar to *The Müşterek Newspaper* and other papers of the period, *Haber* sold for 100 para (i.e a subdivision of Turkish lira).

In *Haber*, several people stood out as writers, besides Hayrullah Hayri Bey, the Chairman of the Turkish Typesetters' Union. Among these, names such as Hayri Muhtar, Mümtaz Cezmi, Edhem Ruhi, Mümtaz Hayri, Mahmut Feyzi came to the forefront. Although there has been no clear information about the identity of these people, it can be argued that they were typesetters. The articles of *Haber* in which harsh expressions were used against the newspaper owners were written either anonymously or under an alias. It is highly likely that those who wrote these articles did not want to use their real names to avoid getting into trouble after the strike was over.

The typesetters stated that they first published *Haber* rather *hastily as a strike newspaper* because they anticipated that the conflict would not last long. However, when they saw that the conflict would *prolong due to the stubbornness of the newspaper owners*, they decided, as of 12 September, to publish the newspaper as a regular paper, not as a strike paper.<sup>19</sup> On 17 September, 1923, they announced that *Haber* would be printed permanently.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Müşterek Gazete*, 7 Eylül 1923.

<sup>18</sup> *Bayram Gazetesi*, 24 Ocak 1966.

<sup>19</sup> *Haber*, 12 Eylül 1923.

<sup>20</sup> *Haber*, 17 Eylül 1923.

During the strike, the fact that the newspaper owners and typesetters were reciprocally publishing newspapers also revealed an intriguing situation. While the owners of the newspapers publishing *The Müşterek Newspaper* were looking for typesetters, the typesetters that issued *Haber* started to look for reporters. However, it is understood that both parties tried to prevent each other from finding typesetters and reporters. *Haber* indicated that some journalists attempted to prevent them from recruiting reporters in Ankara, but they were able to find some.<sup>21</sup> The journalists also claimed that those typesetters who were eager to work in *The Müşterek Newspaper* were threatened by the striking typesetters.<sup>22</sup>

There were intense and fierce debates during the course of the strike between *Haber*, the paper of the typesetters, and *The Müşterek Newspaper*, which was jointly published by the newspaper owners. The typesetters and newspaper owners debated on several issues to prove their legitimacy in the eyes of the public by using their newspapers. The most important of these debates was on the wages and working hours of the typesetters, which were the two reasons for the typesetters to take strike action.

It was argued in the typesetters' paper, *Haber* that the conflict arose out of working hours and that the failure to grant the rights of the typesetters was the cause for the strike. By referring to their heavy workload, the typesetters reported that all they demanded was to be given their rights in return for the grueling work they had been performing.<sup>23</sup>

The typesetters also claimed that their wages were insufficient. Nevertheless, the newspaper owners noted this was not true as the typesetters' wages had increased 39 times in the last 14 years. The owners argued that the current conditions were not conducive to a pay raise. They compared the wages of some civil servants to that of the typesetters and asserted that the typesetters received very high wages compared to their training. The newspaper owners also disputed that the typesetters were trying to terminate journalism by asking for more wages, which would metaphorically mean that they were sawing the branch they were sitting on.<sup>24</sup>

*Haber* responded to this argument stating that comparing their wages to those of other employees was untrue and even ignorant as their working conditions were quite heavy and abrasive compared to other employees:

“They wouldn't know that the workers called typesetters would work on their feet for eight hours straining their eyes on the dusty lead letters as if digging a well with a needle and that they would impair their eyes, legs and nerves at a young age. Among all the arts, few are as heavy and exploiting as typesetting. This art is nothing like tram ticketing or other errands.”<sup>25</sup>

The typesetters also highlighted that the newspapers previously supported employees in the disputes between employers and employees. However, when the typesetters, who were part of the community of employees, stood up for their rights, the newspapers clouded the issue. It was stated in *Haber* that “with all due respect, we will ask: How can those who cannot care about the food for their own household bother with that of outsiders?”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Haber*, 8 Eylül 1923.

<sup>22</sup> *Müşterek Gazete*, 8 Eylül 1923.

<sup>23</sup> *Haber*, 9 Eylül 1923.

<sup>24</sup> *Müşterek Gazete*, 9 Eylül 1923.

<sup>25</sup> *Haber*, 17 Eylül 1923.

<sup>26</sup> *Haber*, 9 Eylül 1923.

In another piece on *Haber*, it was alleged that the newspaper owners did not do justice to not only the typesetters but also the other employees. The newspaper claimed that in addition to the typesetters whose efforts were belittled because they were uneducated, more educated journalists and reporters were also not given their due and that they did not have job security. *Haber* suggested that the journalists who did not stand up for their rights were responsible for this situation.<sup>27</sup> It is not known whether the publications of *Haber* had an effect, but shortly after the start of the strike, the journalists working for Istanbul newspapers that were published in Turkish decided to hold meetings at Türk Ocağı on 15 September 1923 to evaluate the situation.<sup>28</sup> Despite the meetings, the journalists, who were the white-collar workers of the period, did not support the struggle of the typesetters.

Another disputable issue arose when the newspaper owners claimed Bolshevik involvement in the strike. They argued in *The Müşterek Newspaper* that the typesetters were provoked by some communists: “The voice that makes itself heard by mediating the typesetters is not their voice. It is the voice of communism at its most vicious and destructive”.<sup>29</sup>

In the face of this claim, *Haber* complained that the typesetters were immediately branded as *Bolsheviks* and *communists* as they were seeking their rights against the newspaper owners. The following is an excerpt from the newspaper elaborating the issue:

“We have repeatedly stated that the Typesetters’ Union is a labor union, not a communist party. Its duty and purpose is to defend the economic interests of the members and their right to live with the strength given by the union. Members of the union are people who are independent and have proven themselves. They are completely free to hold the political and social opinions they want”.<sup>30</sup>

While there were discussions between the two newspapers over the allegations of communism, the owners of the newspapers sent a telegram to Ankara claiming that there were manifestations of communism in the strike.<sup>31</sup> Another issue to which journalists drew the attention of the government was the fact that the typesetters had established a community (the union). A reference was made to the Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Law, which stated that the employees of establishments dealing with general services were prohibited from forming unions. However, it was suggested that the typesetters indeed formed a union and it should be abolished due to its illegal status. It was also added that the Typesetters’ Union had been constantly functioning based on fear and threat.<sup>32</sup>

During the strike, heavy criticisms and accusations were made against the newspaper owners in *Haber*. Several articles were written to argue that the strike had been taken due to the stubbornness of the greedy newspaper owners, who did not miss any opportunity to oppress the workers they employed. It was even claimed that the country would lose nothing if the newspaper owners were exiled to one of the *Hayırsız Islands*, a group of islands located in the South of the Marmara Sea.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Haber*, 12 Eylül 1923.

<sup>28</sup> *Yeni Gün*, 12 Eylül 1923.

<sup>29</sup> *Müşterek Gazete*, 11 Eylül 1923.

<sup>30</sup> *Haber*, 10 Eylül 1923.

<sup>31</sup> *Gazel*, 1923 *Mürettepler Grevi*, 191.

<sup>32</sup> *Müşterek Gazete*, 9 Eylül 1923.

<sup>33</sup> *Haber*, 10 Eylül 1923.

Conversely, in *The Müşterek Newspaper* the employers strongly objected to these accusations in *Haber*, particularly those portraying the typesetters as the oppressed and the newspaper owners as the villain, depriving their employees of their basic rights. It was reported that the newspaper owners were the ones who had to work under challenging conditions and bear the financial burden of operating a business with scarce resources:

“The shift starts early in the morning for a newspaper owner, whom they call the boss. He works hard to become aware of the world news by following large amounts of newspapers and magazines every day. And based on this information, he writes his daily articles. In the afternoon, he would not hold back from activities such as translation and reporting. Meanwhile, he strives to show physical and mental activity so that the newspaper does not lag behind and does its job. He also has to assume the financial responsibility of an establishment operating with increasingly large costs and diminishing revenues.”<sup>34</sup>

These allegations went so far as to claim that the dispute and struggle between the typesetters and the newspaper owners turned into a de facto attack. It was reported in *The Müşterek Newspaper* that the evening issue dated 9 September could not be published as a result of the attack by the typesetters.<sup>35</sup>

The fierce dispute between both parties eventually came to an end after reaching an agreement in the meeting held on 20 September, 1923. Osman Refik İşçen, one of the typesetters participating in the strike, expressed that the proposal for negotiations came from the newspaper owners. He identified this settlement as the first collective bargaining agreement in Turkey.<sup>36</sup> According to this agreement, the eight newspapers would start to be published in their regular schedule as of 22 September.<sup>37</sup> There would be no change in the working hours as desired by the typesetters. They would begin their shift at four and end at nine, as before. Not being able to make a change in the working hours, the typesetters were able to improve some of their personal rights. More specifically, those who did the night shifts would be given an extra daily wage of 150 kuruş on condition that they wrote two columns from nine to one o'clock. The night shifters would also be allowed to take a short rest. It was also agreed that the typesetters who were on sick leave would be given half a wage during their illness. In the event that the financial situation of the newspapers improved, all employees would be given a raise. The typesetters also included in the agreement the condition that each newspaper would employ the same editorial board to prevent the dismissal of the typesetters who went on strike. In short, the typesetters were not able to impose a change in their work schedule, which was their basic demand; however, they could gain some improvements in their personal rights.<sup>38</sup> As a consequence of the compromise made by the newspaper owners, the price of the newspapers was raised from 100 para to 3 kuruş (Para was the subdivision of kuruş with 40 para being the equivalent of 1 kuruş).

*Haber*, which was published to make the voices of the typesetters heard during the strike, decided to continue printing after the end of the strike. In the statement made on 17 September, 1923, it was announced that the newspaper would be constantly published. In another statement made on 21 September, 1923 after the strike, *Haber* was announced to be published in the morning

<sup>34</sup> *Müşterek Gazete*, 11 Eylül 1923.

<sup>35</sup> *Müşterek Gazete*, 12 Eylül 1923.

<sup>36</sup> *Bayram Gazetesi*, 24 Ocak 1966.

<sup>37</sup> *Müşterek Gazete*, 21 Eylül 1923.

<sup>38</sup> Gazel, *1923 Mürettipler Grevi*, 259.



only to defend the rights of all workers.<sup>39</sup> As a matter of fact, next to the headline cliché of the newspaper, the phrase "It is the defense law of all our fellow workers" was included in large print. However, the newspaper was only published for a week after the strike because, as far as can be identified, the last issue that could be recorded was dated 29 September 1923. Overall, the typesetters were able to print a total of 32 copies of *Haber*.

### **Basın Newspaper**

38 military officers, who called themselves the National Unity Committee (MBK), seized power in Turkey on behalf of the Turkish armed forces on 27 May 1960. After the seizure of power, the MBK made legal arrangements in several areas. One of those was the press sector which aimed to get the support of journalists as white-collar workers. As a result, they first repealed the laws on *some crimes committed through radio broadcasts or newspaper articles*.<sup>40</sup> With Law No. 144 published in the Official Gazette on 5 December 1960, the right to prove an allegation was introduced.<sup>41</sup>

While these changes were welcomed in the media world, a crisis between newspaper owners and their employees was induced due to the two laws that the MBK urgently enacted before transferring its powers to the House of Representatives, which would make the constitution. One of the mentioned laws was Law No. 212, which amended Law No. 5933, also known as the Law on White-collar Workers, and the other was Law No. 195, which envisaged the establishment of the Press Advertising Agency.

Law No. 5953 had regulated the relations between newspaper owners and journalists they employed and also nitegrated journalists within the scope of social security. It was enacted on 13 June 1952 with the title *Regulation of Relationships between Employees and Employers in the Press Profession*. Since the law became insufficient over time, some of its articles were amended and some new ones were added on 4 January 1961. Its amended version, Law No. 212, was published in the Official Gazette on 10 January 1961 and entered into force.

Law No. 195 on the Press Advertising Agency was enacted on 2 January 1961 and published in the Official Gazette on 9 January 1961. Having been established for the first time, this agency aimed to avoid injustice in the distribution of state advertisements and to prevent the state from monitoring some newspapers through state advertisements. The Press Advertising Agency would be in charge of the distribution of state advertisements. Private advertisements would be distributed by private advertisement offices. However, the newly established agency would receive a commission of 15% from state advertisements and 10% from private advertisements to use these revenues for the development of the press.<sup>42</sup>

Law No. 212 provided essential rights to journalists. This law regulated the beginning of seniority as the first date of entry into the profession. However, in the older version, the date when a journalist started working for his/her current newspaper was the reference point. Other important innovations brought by this new law included death benefit, payment to journalists in case of closure of newspapers, severance pay to resigned journalists, payment of salaries in advance, a salary bonus to be given to journalists every year by profit-making newspapers, submission of

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<sup>39</sup> *Haber*, 21 Eylül 1923.

<sup>40</sup> *Resmi Gazete*, 12 Ekim 1960.

<sup>41</sup> *Resmi Gazete*, 5 Aralık 1960.

<sup>42</sup> Hıfzı Topuz, *100 Soruda Basın Tarihi*, İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınları, 1973, 211-212.

labor disputes to labor courts and not to commercial courts and the introduction of 5% interest liability for each day in case of delay in payments.<sup>43</sup>

The owners of nine newspapers published in Istanbul reacted to Law No. 212 on white-collar workers and the law on the establishment of the Press Advertising Agency, enacted by the MBK. Nadir Nadi from *Cumhuriyet* criticized the law on the Press Advertising Agency by stating: “This law establishes a very convenient mechanism for any government to put pressure on the press when desired; it gives the government the opportunity to keep a large part of private announcements and advertisements under its control.”<sup>44</sup>

The newspaper owners claimed that Law No. 212 put the Turkish press under “heavy and even intolerable financial and social burden” and that it dealt a major blow to freedom of thought and freedom of the press.<sup>45</sup> Ahmet Emin Yalman from *Vatan* newspaper argued that Law No. 212 was inspired by communist ideas and brought financial burdens. He further asserted that by creating a conflict between employees and employers, *masked communists* desired to cause a class struggle in the media world through this law.<sup>46</sup> Falih Rıfki Atay also stated in his article on 15 January 1963, “They all put on their red masks in these three days. They embellished the front pages of the newspapers with the clichés of Moscow's proletariat literature. I thought I was in 1927 Moscow” and presented similar arguments to those of Yalman. Safa Kılıçoğlu from *Yeni Sabah* also maintained that these laws targeted the newspaper owners.<sup>47</sup>

In an attempt to react to the laws and force the MBK take a step back, the owners of nine newspapers printed in Istanbul agreed not to publish their newspapers for three days as of 11 January, 1961, before Law No. 212 on white-collar workers was issued in the Official Gazette. These newspapers included *Akşam*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Dünya*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Tercüman*, *Vatan*, *Yeni İstanbul*, *Yeni Sabah*. They published a statement on 10 January, 1961, announcing that they would not be printed for three days starting from 11 January. In their joint statement, they claimed the laws enacted by the MBK concerning the press had a nature that would put the press in an unprecedented danger, as well as curtailing their fundamental rights and freedoms. In the rest of the statement, it was expressed that “We believe the free press can fulfill its public function by staying out of all kinds of control and tutelage of the state” and further added that the law was enacted hastily without leaving any room for discussion.<sup>48</sup>

Colonel Ahmet Yıldız, who was a member of the MBK and played a critical role in the preparation of the laws, reacted sharply to the decision of the newspaper owners for the reversal of the two laws:

“If you take back this law and remove the measures, things will get better! This is an impossible and unwarranted proposition. It was the strange proposal of those who did not know the opinion of the committee and the decisive position of the members. Let me tell you the commitment of the revolution: “In the revolution stopping is a disease, skidding is a sign of the danger of death. Reversal is suicide. No one would be willing to get intentionally sick. Precautions are taken against

<sup>43</sup> Topuz, *100 Soruda Basın Tarihi*, 209-210.

<sup>44</sup> *10 Ocak ve Ötesi*, İstanbul: İstanbul Gazeteciler Sendikası, 1963, 35.

<sup>45</sup> *10 Ocak ve Ötesi*, 81.

<sup>46</sup> *Ulus*, 15 Ocak 1961; *10 Ocak ve Ötesi*, 76-77.

<sup>47</sup> *Dünya*, 14 Ocak 1961.

<sup>48</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 10 Ocak 1961.

the danger of death. Everyone should know that we are not so deprived of common sense to attempt suicide".<sup>49</sup>

When the owners of nine newspapers agreed not to publish their newspapers, they were summoned to the Martial Law Command on 11 January 1961. They were released after their statements were taken.<sup>50</sup>

The Istanbul Journalists' Union also reacted strongly to the decision of the nine newspaper owners not to publish their newspapers in response to the enacted laws. In the statement published by the union on 10 January 1961, it was noted that the white-collar workers, who constituted the majority of the Turkish press, did not approve of the decision to close nine newspapers, and that this decision was taken and implemented directly by the newspaper owners.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, under the leadership of The Istanbul Journalists' Union, approximately 200 journalists marched silently from the union building in Cağaloğlu to the front of the Istanbul Governor's Office at 11:00, with banners in their hands. Some of the banners carried by journalists were as follows: "Simidimiz ve hürriyetimiz için! (Literal Translation: For our bagel and our freedom), "Çalışan gazeteciye cop, patrona hep hazır lop" (Literal Translation: A baton for the working journalist, boneless meat for the boss), Babıali ağalığına son" (Literal Translation: End to the Babıali squirarchy), "Patronlar paralarını biz çalışanlar hayatımızı koyduk" (Literal Translation: Employers put their money, we employees put our lives), "Gazeteciye ezenler bu kanunla eziliverdi" (Literal Translation: Those who oppressed the journalist were crushed by this law, "Patron sen hiç cop yedin mi" (Literal Translation: Boss, have you ever been beaten with a baton), "Gazete çıkarmak çorap fabrikası işletmeye benzemez" (Literal Translation: Publishing a newspaper is not like running a sock factory).<sup>52</sup>

Journalists in other cities also supported their counterparts in Istanbul. The journalists in Ankara took a silent march walking to Kızılay Square with banners in their hands. They left their banners in front of the Güven Monument. The following statements were noted on these banners: "Kalem patronların değil halkın hizmetindedir" (Literal Translation: The pen is in the service of the people, not the bosses), "Milli Birliğe saygı ve güven" (Literal Translation: Respect and trust in the National Unity), "Kalem ile süngü el ele" (Literal Translation: Pen and bayonet hand in hand), "Menderes'e boyun eğenler, hürriyete başkaldırıyor" (Literal Translation: Those who bow to Menderes are rebelling against freedom), "Seksenlik Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın cezaevine girerken boykotu düşünen olmadı" (Literal Translation: When eighty-year-old Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın entered the prison, no one thought about the boycott) (Ulus, 12 January 1961). The members of the Izmir Journalists' Union also protested the incident with a silent march in front of the Governor's Office.<sup>53</sup>

During "Olaylar ve Yankıları" program of Turkish radios on 10 January, it was argued that the laws regarding the press were not made in haste as the newspaper owners claimed and that they were enacted as a result of the efforts of the members of the Turkish press. More specifically, the newspaper owners were criticized with the statement that "The haste is not the lawmaker's

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<sup>49</sup> *Basın*, 13 Ocak 1961.

<sup>50</sup> *Vakit*, 12 Ocak 1961.

<sup>51</sup> Hasan Üstün, "Babıali'de Dokuz Patron Olayı", Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 2000, 72.

<sup>52</sup> Üstün, "Babıali'de Dokuz Patron Olayı", 74.

<sup>53</sup> *Ulus*, 13 Ocak 1961.

behavior, but the behavior of nine newspapers that issued declarations against the fair-minded legislator".<sup>54</sup>

The declaration of a three-day boycott by nine newspapers with significant circulation in Turkey inspired the journalists, making a silent march under the leadership of the Istanbul Journalists' Union, to publish their own newspaper not only to make their voices heard concerning their problems but also to fill the news gap that would arise. As a matter of fact, the nine boycotting newspapers represented a circulation of 1 million 700 thousand in Turkey and constituted 86 percent of the total circulation of the Turkish press.<sup>55</sup>

Journalist Erdoğan Kırıl explained the reasons for publishing a newspaper as follows:

“A newspaper must be published despite the nine newspaper owners closing their doors in our faces and shutting down their columns in your faces. So much so that a newspaper that presents to the whole public that we, white-collar workers, have no interest in the current situation, which is the work of newspaper owners, and that we will not be a part of such dark attempts in the happy days following a revolution...”<sup>56</sup>

Ümid Deniz also accounted for the publication of the newspaper by highlighting that “It was necessary to make our voices heard throughout the country and to inform our citizens about what happened. For this, the only solution was to publish a paper and retaliate using the same weapon they devised”.<sup>57</sup>

Nonetheless, the white-collar workers had no preparations to issue a newspaper and the Istanbul Governor of the time, Refik Tulga, came to the rescue of the journalists. The governor immediately gave the necessary permissions to print a newspaper called *Basın* and helped in the supply of paper. Moreover, the governor allocated some time on the radio for the journalists so that they could make their voices heard.<sup>58</sup> The journalists also dealt with the money issue by seeking the assistance of a previously established cooperative established.<sup>59</sup>

After the acquisition of permission for *Basın*, the journalists began working by having a division of labor. Yet, they faced various problems from the very first moment. To begin with, the organizations for advertisements expressed that they would not place any adverts due to the pressure from the boycotting newspaper owners. Second, the printing houses also did not want to publish the newspaper, referring to the large amount of continuing work in their hands. Eventually, the newspaper *Son Havadis*, which did not agree with the decision to stop printing for three days, came to the rescue of the journalists who were in a difficult situation. The administration building of this newspaper was used to publish *Basın*. The journalists, after long efforts, had their articles typeset in various printing houses. Even a printing machine was obtained. Yet, another problem arose. Press technicians, who would stack the pages of the newspaper and arrange them technically, did not assist the journalists. They were not willing to support the journalists as Law No. 212 did not cover them.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Basın*, 11 Ocak 1961.

<sup>55</sup> *10 Ocak ve Ötesi*, 76-77.

<sup>56</sup> *Basın*, 11 Ocak 1961.

<sup>57</sup> *Basın*, 13 Ocak 1961.

<sup>58</sup> *Basın*, 13 Ocak 1961.

<sup>59</sup> Semra Atılğan, *Gazetecilerin Korunması*, İstanbul: Gazeteciler Cemiyeti Yayınları, 1991, 129.

<sup>60</sup> Atılğan, *Gazetecilerin Korunması*, 129.

Due to this predicament, the journalists expressed their frustration for the fellow blue-collar worker press technicians by reporting in the first issue of *Basın*, "The unsung heroes of the press, our technician friends has left us alone on a day when we needed them the most".<sup>61</sup> Even though the journalists had some talks with the Press Technicians Union, they could not get a result. Thereupon, with the support of a few technicians, the journalists personally carried out the technical work under the management of Murat Kayahanlı. This process was described in *Basın* newspaper as follows:

"In the typesetting section of the printing house where we were guests, a bunch of young people were diligently working like ants and were rubbing nonstop as if they were in pain. Because on the first night of the Turkish Press Revolution, the first independent newspaper of the independent white-collar workers in the one-hundred-year-or-so history of the Turkish Press was on its way to explain the truth to the public and it would be born here.

Just as those taking part in the generation of the ideas founding the newspaper named *Basın* were competent and masters of their jobs, those working on the stacking of the newspaper were incompetent and inexperienced in this task. Indeed, press technicians, as much as the intellectual work undertaken by the white-collar worker journalists were an important factor in the vitality of the newspaper. Here, a handful of the white-collar workers, who were shining the light of their beliefs on their inexperience by making a mess in the typesetting section, were trying to get your newspaper registered in the honorable pages of Turkish Press History with a superhuman effort in order to announce the truth to the public. A handful of unnamed heroes, who were reporters, editors, columnist, typesetters, secretaries, operators, united for the first time around a cause they believed in without feeling the need for any invitation, embarked on a holy jihad for the independence of the Turkish white-collar workers, ignoring all material interests".<sup>62</sup>

During the course of the boycott, an agreement was reached with the Press Technicians Union. Salih Özkarabey, the President of the Istanbul Press Technicians Union, sent a telegram to the Istanbul Journalists' Union, expressing that they were protesting the attitude of the newspaper owners and that they were rooting for the journalists (*Basın*, 12 January 1961).

Despite all the challenges, on the first day of the newspaper owners' boycott, *Basın* newspaper of white-collar workers was issued on 11 January 1961. Erdoğan Kırıl stated that the journalists achieved a great success: "An incident that has not been seen in the Turkish Press for a century: White-collar workers prepared *Basın* newspaper from a to z" (*Basın*, 11 January 1961).

Selçuk Çandarlı, a member of the Istanbul Journalists' Union, was named as the owner of *Basın*. Abdi İpekçi was the Director of General Publications and the Editor-in-Chief was Semih Tuğrul, both of whom were members of the Istanbul Journalists' Union. Also, Murat Kayahanlı was named as the technical advisor. Although *Basın Newspaper* was printed in Tan Matbaacılık, its layout and typesetting were done in different printing houses. The typesetting and layout arrangement of the newspaper dated 11 January was undertaken by Güneş Matbaacılık, the one dated 12 January by Gediz Gazetecilik ve Matbaacılık İşletmesi, and the last one dated 13 January by Halk Gazetecilik ve Matbaacılık. The price of the newspaper was announced to be 25 kuruş, similar to the other daily newspapers of the time. While there was no phrase under the logo in the first issue, the phrase *Voice of White-Collar Workers* appeared in the last issue of 13 January. The first and third issues of *Basın* were published 6 pages and the second issue 8 pages. Journalists

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<sup>61</sup> *Basın*, 11 Ocak 1961.

<sup>62</sup> *Basın*, 13 Ocak 1961.

such as Aziz Nesin, Yaşar Kemal, Ümid Deniz, Erdoğan Kırıl, Emil Galip Sandalcı, Cevat Fehmi Başkut, İhsan Ada, Çetin Altan, Ümid Deniz, Ömer Sami Çoşar wrote columns in the newspaper.

It was reported in *Basın* that the newspaper was met with great interest in the society. It was even noted that there were those who applied to work in the newspaper for free, as well as those who wanted to provide financial and moral assistance.<sup>63</sup> The most important indicator of the public interest for *Basın* was the number of circulations reaching up to one hundred thousand.<sup>64</sup> As a matter of fact, the Istanbul Journalists' Union made a profit of 20,222 liras from the three-day publication of the newspaper. The profit made from the sales was transferred to the Journalists' Union of Turkey as income. *Basın* made money not only from sales but also from advertisements. The journalists, who suffered from the shortage of advertisements, published the advertisements of some organizations free of charge for the sake of filling the newspaper. The organizations whose advertisements were published in the paper then contacted the journalists to say that they wanted to make a payment.<sup>65</sup>

*Basın* was also welcomed by the MBK. When the first issue was published, the Committee Chairman Gen. Cemal Gürsel phoned the journalists and encouraged them by saying "Keep going, boys!".<sup>66</sup> Moreover, some military officers assisted in the delivery of the newspaper.<sup>67</sup>

Although it is noted that *Basın* was published to fill the news gap due to the boycott of nine newspapers, the first few pages and headlines of the newspaper were generally about the crisis experienced with the newspaper owners. To illustrate, the headline of the 11 January issue was "We are always at the service of the people, White-collar Workers Gathered for a Silent Protest March After Nine Newspaper Owners Shut Down Their Newspapers". The headline of the 12 January issue was "Journalists in Ankara Walked Quietly". Similarly, the last issue dated 13 January had an headline indicating "White-collar Workers Will Protect Their Rights".

In the first issue of *Basın*, the joint statement made by nine newspaper owners on 10 January was answered. In that statement the newspaper owners stated the reasons for their protest as follow: "The laws introduced by the MBK regarding the press have put the sector in an unprecedented danger. This incident was of a nature that could directly impair our fundamental rights and freedoms." In the answer of the journalists published in *Basın*, it was argued that "The amended new version of the White-collar Workers Law neither put the press in an unprecedented danger, nor did it curtail our fundamental rights and freedoms. Therefore, it could never have caused the owners of 9 newspapers to close their newspapers for three days." It was also noted in *Basın* that the MBK, whose purpose was nothing but the realization of social justice, gave the final shape to the law by listening to mutual criticism and opinions.

Regarding the Law on the Press Advertising Agency, the journalists acknowledged in *Basın* that it was possible to turn this law into a means of economic pressure on the newspapers and this drawback should be carefully addressed in the future. Nevertheless, it was argued that this situation could never justify "the heavy protest movement such as closing the newspapers for three days". In the same issue, it was also stated that the actions of newspaper owners would never occupy an honorable place in history of Turkish press. The following interesting analogy was made in the

<sup>63</sup> *Basın*, 12 Ocak 1961.

<sup>64</sup> Üstün, "Babıali'de Dokuz Patron Olayı", 79.

<sup>65</sup> Atılğan, *Gazetecilerin Korunması*, 139.

<sup>66</sup> Atılğan, *Gazetecilerin Korunması*, 129.

<sup>67</sup> Üstün, "Babıali'de Dokuz Patron Olayı", 124.

newspaper with reference to one of the owners of a newspaper possessing a sock factory: “Publishing a newspaper is not like running a sock factory. The press is not a hundred percent commercial enterprise. It is a public service”.<sup>68</sup>

After the reply to the newspaper owners, the journalists published articles and news for three days, evaluating the current situation and trying to express their rightfulness. For instance, in the issue of *Basın* dated 12 January, an article headed “The Clouds May Break. But ...” appeared and it stated that the closing of the newspapers for three days by the nine newspaper owners with a carelessly written declaration was an incident that would always be recalled with grief in the century-old history of Turkish Press and that it is much more painful to see the newspaper owners were against a law that would guarantee the social security of the white-collar workers employed in the newspapers. It was also expressed that the situation immensely upset the journalists, but that it caused them to stick together, and this was their only consolation.<sup>69</sup>

The article titled “Açık Mektup (Open Invitation)” written by Ömer Sami Çoşar in *Basın* indicated that the journalists had been on the side of the newspaper owners under all circumstances by making sacrifices for years and that it was their turn to make sacrifices in the current situation as the journalists would definitely not back down from the cause for which they were right.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, Safa Kılıçlıoğlu, the owner of boycotting *Yeni Sabah*, had his newspaper shut down in the early hours of the morning of 12 January and did not let his employees in. *Basın* called attention to the behavior of Kılıçlıoğlu as a proof of their rightfulness by stating that “In this way, Safa Kılıçlıoğlu, one of the owners of boycotting newspapers, showed a concise example of what mentality the white-collar workers had been struggling with.”<sup>71</sup>

After three intense days, the readers were bid farewell with an article in *Basın* titled "Goodbye for Now" on 13 January. This farewell article summarized the whole process noting that the journalists would never sacrifice their rights under the protection of the law and that they would defend their rights again through the means of *Basın* in case "the conditions creating *Basın*" arose:

“What did we say when we first published *Basın*: “We will not deprive you of a newspaper for three days” and in fact, we didn’t. We exerted superhuman strength to keep this promise. We burned the candle at both ends... “What did we do?”, you may wonder. First, we wrote our articles, prepared our news, then we did the typesetting, then we printed the newspaper, packaged and carried them on our back and we delivered *Basın* to you...

Our struggle is not against our employers, but against those opposing the law that guarantees our rights. We execrably return the gossip of those who try to portray this noble movement as a class struggle despite our cause. For now, we say "Farewell" to you.

From this day forward, each of us will return to our homes, our newspapers. We will continue to serve you by sitting at the tables that we are accustomed to, loved, found closer than our home. Nonetheless, if the atmosphere that gave rise to this struggle does not disperse and we see that the mentality against the rights we have gained continues to prevail, of course, we will know how to fight with all our strength. If the conditions that created *Basın* three days ago appear again, or if we can no longer breathe, speak, or call out to you in our own newspapers, we will shout out to you

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<sup>68</sup> *Basın*, 11 Ocak 1961.

<sup>69</sup> *Basın*, 12 Ocak 1961.

<sup>70</sup> *Basın*, 13 Ocak 1961.

<sup>71</sup> *Basın*, 13 Ocak 1961.

again with *Basın* in the morning. We will never sacrifice our rights under the law. Goodbye for now".<sup>72</sup>

After the three-day boycott, nine newspapers resumed their publications on 14 January, 1961, and the journalists returned to their newspapers to continue their work from where they had left off. The owner of *Vatan Newspaper*, Ahmet Emin Yalman, who also experienced the typesetters' strike of 1923, wrote an article lowering the temperature: "To forget what is going on under various influences in an exciting period, to overcome all kinds of extremist feelings, and to be a watcher for the existence of newspapers and the independence and freedom of the press".<sup>73</sup> However, the writings of Bedii Faik in *Dünya Newspaper* showed that relations would not improve immediately, at least for a while: "What was there three days ago: A tired head, a foggy and painful head! What is there today! A broken heart in pieces! I have a doctor for my head, but who will fix my broken heart?".<sup>74</sup>

On the other hand, the owners of the newspapers, except *Milliyet*, released a joint statement on the day the newspapers were published. In their statement issued under different headings, the owners stated that "Let us immediately point out that the sadness we felt when we made the decision to leave readers without a newspaper for three days is no less than anyone else's. However, the sanctions we have faced with the latest laws have forced us to take this decision" and then they added that some people who misled them, not the members of the MBK, were responsible for the newly enacted laws.

The newspaper owners claimed that during the period when their newspapers were closed, they were unilaterally subjected to "ugly and potentially unlawful" accusations and that they would respond to these accusations and criticisms. According to them, with the law on the Press Advertising Agency, "it would be possible, depending on the intention and attitude of the future political powers, to turn the press into a complete slave and to liquidate those who did not consent to this situation". Additionally, the newspaper owners criticized Law No. 212 and noted that the majority of journalists were paid above the minimum wage. They referred to the lowest wages that could be paid to journalists according to the law and argued that these wages were "superior to the wages of military officers and civil servants in the government sectors, who were paid in accordance with their ages and level of education". They came up with this argument as the majority of the employees in the newspapers were high school graduates and their age were less than 30. Highlighting Article 6 of the Law, which determined the seniority of white-collar workers as the first date of entry to the profession, the newspaper owners commented that "such a retroactive law and such a burden placed on press institutions does not exist either in Turkey or anywhere else in the world".<sup>75</sup>

The decision of nine newspaper owners to cease publication for three days not only caused the journalists to come together and publish *Basın*, but also turned into a day of celebration for the journalists. 10 January, the day when the newspaper owners announced their decision to stop printing, was celebrated as the Journalists' Day by the Istanbul Journalists' Union starting from 1962. Since 1971, this day has been observed as Working Journalists Day and is still celebrated in this way today.

<sup>72</sup> *Basın*, 13 Ocak 1961.

<sup>73</sup> Üstün, "Babıali'de Dokuz Patron Olayı", 106.

<sup>74</sup> *Dünya*, 14 Ocak 1961.

<sup>75</sup> *Hürriyet*, 14 Ocak 1961.



## Conclusion

The publication of *Takvim-i Vekayi* in 1831 marked the beginning of Turkish Press History. After the process that started with *Tercüman-ı Ahval* in 1860, the number of newspapers recorded a great increase and especially after the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, there appeared an "outburst of press". Due to the relative freedom that came along with this period, several newspaper proprietorships were acquired, even though many were not printed or only one issue could be published. With the increase in the number of newspapers and employees in Turkey, divergencies and conflicts of interest began to increase in employer-employee relations. Thanks to the organization of newspaper employees under one roof through unions, disagreements and disputes became more visible with strikes and similar actions.

From the beginning of the 20th century, the disagreements in the Turkish press were mostly experienced by the blue-collar workers employed in the newspaper. It was the typesetters who came to the fore among all blue-collar workers. As a matter of fact, they were the first group of blue-collar workers who started to get organized. In 1908, journalists also attempted to establish a community; however, they could not put this community into action for a long time due to the political conflicts among them. As journalists were not organized, when they experienced a problem in a newspaper, they either switched to another or published their own newspaper instead of fighting back.

The typesetters working in newspapers, on the other hand, did not act like the journalists. They were organized by establishing a community right after the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy and got into a more organized struggle for their rights. From the last period of the Ottoman Empire to the first years of the Republic, several typesetter strikes took place. After these strikes, the typesetters made significant gains both for themselves and for other press workers. For instance, in the Ottoman period, it was the typesetters who ensured that newspapers were not published during the holidays and that newspaper employees were entitled to take a leave at least on religious and national holidays.

The newspaper employees often went on strike and quit their jobs when they had a disagreement with their employers. Additionally, the employees also attempted to publish newspapers temporarily against their employers in order to "give them a dose of their own medicine" until the disagreement between them was resolved. In the Turkish Press History, newspaper workers were able to achieve this twice, in 1923 and 1961. In 1923, a newspaper named *Haber* was published by the typesetters, and in 1961 another was published under the name *Basın* by the journalists who were white-collar workers.

When the newspaper owners and the typesetters had a dispute due to wages and working hours in 1923, the typesetters quit on 6 September, 1923. Thereupon, the owners of eight newspapers released in Istanbul came together and published a newspaper called *The Müşterek Newspaper*. Upon this action of the newspaper owners, the typesetters issued their own newspaper called *Haber* and tried to explain to the public the reasons for their disagreement. During the 15-day strike, there was a fierce debate between the newspaper proprietors and the typesetters. Eventually, on 20 September, 1923, an agreement was reached and the eight newspapers continued their publications.

Laws No. 212 and 195 enacted by the MBK, which took over the legislative authority after the military coup of 27 May 1960 in Turkey, were met with reaction by the nine newspaper owners

and in order to force the MBK to withdraw the laws they decided not to publish their newspapers for three days as of 11 January, 1961. Upon this action, the journalists, under the leadership of their unions, issued a newspaper named *Basın* for three days in order to fill the news gap that would arise and to tell the public about their problems. In *Basın*, there was no reciprocal squabble with the newspaper owners, as was the case with *Haber*. As of 14 January, 1961, the boycotting nine newspapers resumed publication and the journalists returned to their newspapers continuing their work from where they left off.

The most significant reason why both white-collar and blue-collar workers had to print newspapers against their employers in 1923 and 1961 was the lack of legal rights or the inadequacy of their rights. There existed neither a labor law nor a press law in 1923. The first labor law in Turkey was enacted in 1936. However, this law did not give workers the right to organize and prohibited strikes and lockouts. In addition, this law did not include journalists within the scope of the law. The first Press Law regulating the working conditions of journalists was only enacted in 1952, but it did not grant journalists the right to strike.

A closer look at both incidents in 1923 and 1961 reveals some similarities. To illustrate, having realized the importance of public opinion, the newspaper employees published a newspaper to make their voices heard and to fight with the same weapon against their employers. They personally did all the work for these newspapers, from administration to typesetting. Apart from these two incidents, the newspaper employees could not carry out such an action again. The newspaper employees also discovered that in order to defend their rights, they had to have a press outlet, not only in times of conflict but also at other times. In fact, although the typesetters desired to continue their newspaper after the strike in 1923, they could not succeed in that.

A remarkable situation in the two incidents was the attitude of the governments of the period. In 1923, the government of the time sided with the newspaper owners, and Adnan (Adivar) Bey, the Istanbul representative of the Ankara Government, wanted the government to intervene in the strike. Similarly, in 1961 the MBK, which held all the power of the state, gave open support to the journalists against the newspaper owners and provided all kinds of convenience for them to publish their newspaper, including the help provided in the distribution of the newspaper by the military officers. In fact, it would not have been possible for the journalists to print and deliver the newspapers if it had not been for the support of the MBK.

Another striking issue was that the blue-collar workers and white-collar workers could not achieve unity in their struggle for their rights. On the one hand, the journalists in 1923 did not show any support for the blue-collar worker typesetters in their struggle against the newspaper owners. On the other hand, in 1961, press technicians who were also blue-collar workers, acted timidly to support the struggle of blue-collar worker journalists.

It should be noted is that although they were less educated than the white-collar-worker journalists, the typesetters became more successful in seeking their rights. This certainly highlights the importance of organizing and acting together. While the typesetters began to obtain their rights in 1908 by getting organized and acting in solidarity, the journalists could not achieve this for a long time due to the disagreements among themselves and the competitive nature of their work. Additionally, journalists viewed unionism negatively and tried to gain their rights through professional organizations. They did not become as successful as other press workers in their struggle for rights due to their noncommittal attitude towards the unions and their individual actions. On the other hand, during the Ottoman and early republican periods, the typesetters

worked cooperatively under the leadership of a chief. They quit their jobs as a team, further consolidating their power against the employers.

Considering the attitude of the newspaper owners in both incidents, one can also see that they gave very similar reactions. First, they accused their employees of being "communists". Secondly, they claimed that they were also journalists themselves, therefore, they did not have an employer-employee relationship in the newspapers and that they had been experiencing the same problems as with their employees. Third, they argued that the employees of the newspapers had low levels of education, yet they were getting paid quite high salaries. What can be considered more striking is that the newspaper owners attempted to prevent their employees from publishing the newspapers. Not only did they try to inhibit these newspapers from receiving advertisements, but also they attempted to stop their distribution and delivery. They also put pressure on those who would take part in printing the employees' newspapers.

One of the notable issues for the newspaper owners was that even though they were struggling with each other, they were able to cooperate as a single unit when their interests conflicted. Ahmet Emin Yalman, who was a newspaper owner during both incidents in 1923 and 1961, wrote in his memoirs years later that "such a close and harmonious" cooperation was not seen in the Turkish press regarding the attitude of the newspaper owners during the 1923 typesetters' strike. They ensured this unity in 1961 as well. However, there was a slight difference between the first one and the latter. While the newspaper owners agreed to publish a newspaper and worked in the typesetting house in order not to leave the public without news, they preferred to shut down their newspapers for three days in 1961.

The incidents of 1923 and 1961 also offered some benefits for both the employees and the newspaper owners. In particular, the typesetters' strike of 1923 helped both parties to understand each other relatively better. In addition to their role as workers, the typesetters had the opportunity to see the financial and moral difficulties of publishing a newspaper by taking on the role of an employer, just as the employers took the opportunity to see the conditions under which their employees had been working by assuming their role as workers. Likewise, in 1961, the journalists also experienced the conditions of being a newspaper owner.

Consequently, the incidents in 1923 and 1961 showed that the newspaper owners who had fought each other fiercely, could come together when necessary, and that the newspaper employees could better protect their rights if they were organized and stood in solidarity. The strikes also helped both parties look at each other with empathy, which has been a substantial gain for future employer-employee relations and the general press sector. More importantly, *Haber* and *Basın Newspapers* published by the employees bequeathed some important records in Turkish Press History. Thanks to these newspapers, we were able to gain a great deal of essential information ranging from the conditions under which newspapers were published to that the financial and moral situations of the employees at the time.

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