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"Our Lives Were Not as Valuable as an Animal"[1]: Workers in State-Run Industries in World-War-II Turkey*

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Summary: This article explores the lives of Sümerbank and Etibank workers inside and outside their workplaces during World War II. First, it examines their social origins and the process of recruiting those workers. Secondly, it draws attention to the unhealthy conditions in which they worked, the sundry forms of violence they were subjected to, and the insufficient wages they received. It goes on to analyze social services – nutrition, accommodation, and healthcare facilities – provided by those two enterprises. Drawing on official reports, petitions, and workers' personal accounts, it highlights the inadequacies of those facilities, and the hierarchical and exclusionary practices inherent in them. Following this framework, it responds to the studies which portray workers in state-run enterprises as privileged government officials and those enterprises as centers of social education. Finally, it focuses on workers' reactions to their social conditions in the form of high turnover rates. The discussions of politicians, government officials, and journalists revolving around high turnover rates suggest that this reactive form of labor activism played an important role in the formulation and enactment of social policies concerning labor.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, numerous state-run industrial enterprises in Turkey were either privatized or ceased to operate altogether. Those that remained decreased their volume of production and reduced the number of workers they employed. With the advent of neo-liberal modes of capital accumulation, those state-run enterprises seemed increasingly obsolete. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, state-run enterprises, specifically Sümerbank and Etibank (founded in 1933 and 1935 respectively), were emblems of the Turkish government's efforts at industrialization. This

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1. İrfan Yalçın, *Ölümün ağzı* (Istanbul, 1979), p. 6.

article aims to contribute to labor studies in Turkey by looking at those two state-run enterprises. Rather than focusing solely on institutional aspects and state policies, it examines the social conditions and experiences of workers who earned a living in those enterprises during World War II. Such an approach brings the perspective of labor into the analysis of government policies and practices in early republican Turkey.

In 1934, the Turkish government embarked on its first five-year industrial plan, and gave responsibility for implementing most of the projects designated in the plan to Sümerbank. Those projects included the renovation of an old cotton factory in Bakırköy, Istanbul, and the construction of cotton factories in Kayseri, Nazilli, Malatya, and Konya Ereğli; a wool factory in Bursa; an artificial silk factory in Gemlik, Bursa; a paper mill in Izmit; a cement factory in Sivas; and iron and steel works in Karabük. In the mining industry, the bank constructed a brimstone factory in Keçiborlu, Isparta, in 1935. However, in the following year the administration of this enterprise was transferred to the newly founded Etibank. Etibank constructed a copper factory in Ergani, Diyarbakır, in 1939.[2] In addition to those industrial-plan projects, Etibank nationalized various coal, lignite, and copper mines located in different regions of the country.

New factories and mines contributed to industrial growth in Turkey in the second half of the 1930s. Between 1933 and 1939, the annual average industrial growth rate in the country was 10.2 per cent.[3] However, with the outbreak of World War II those statistics were reversed. The industrial production index decreased 22 per cent between 1938–1939 and 1944–1945. That, combined with marked declines in agricultural production and foreign trade, caused the wholesale price index to rise 449 per cent in the same period.[4] Under those hard economic conditions, thousands of people earned a living in Sümerbank and Etibank enterprises. In 1943 Sümerbank factories employed 23,023 workers.[5] The number of rotational and permanent workers in the Etibank Ereğli Coal Company located in Zonguldak was approximately 60,000 in 1944.[6] Sümerbank and Etibank workers comprised

2. İlhan Tekeli *et al.*, *Uygulamaya geçerken Türkiye'de devletçiliğin oluşumu* (Ankara, 1982), pp. 175–201; Yahya S. Tezel, *Cumhuriyet döneminin iktisadi tarihi (1923–1950)* (Istanbul, 2000), pp. 293–304; Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye'de tek partili dönemde çalışma ilişkileri: 1920–1946* (Ankara, 1999), p. 241.

3. Korkut Boratav, "Kemalist Economic Policies and Etatism", in Ali Kazancıgil and Ergun Özbudun (eds), *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State* (London, 1981), pp. 165–190, 179.

4. Korkut Boratav, "Savaş yıllarının bölüşüm göstergeleri ve 'rantlar' sorunu", *Yapıt*, 8 (1984–85), pp. 44–51, 45.

5. Başvekalet Umumi Murakabe Heyeti, *Sümerbank 1943 yılı umumi murakabe heyeti raporu* (Ankara, 1944), p. 20.

6. Ahmet Ali Özeken, "Türkiye'de sanayi işçileri", *İçtimai siyaset konferansları, Kitap 1* (Istanbul, 1948), pp. 56–81, 71–72.

a significant proportion of Turkey's industrial labor force. For instance, labor statistics put the number of workers in enterprises with 5 or more employees at 275,083 in 1943.[7] Workers in Sümerbank factories alone constituted 8 per cent of that workforce.

In what follows, this article examines Sümerbank and Etibank workers' social origins, their working and living conditions, and the struggles to improve those conditions. It focuses mainly on Sümerbank's textile factories and Etibank's coal mines, but refers also to workers employed in other factories and mines operated by those two enterprises. Moreover, in discussing the issue of social services it considers also working conditions in other public enterprises. Following this agenda, it responds to studies whose analyses of workers in state-run enterprises place state elites at the center of the historical narrative while ignoring the social conditions and agency of workers.

THEY ARE LUCKY, BUT WITHOUT AGENCY AND IDENTITY

In the war years, journalists often visited state-run factories and mines and wrote articles about workers' social conditions, mostly for propaganda purposes. In their articles they referred to the social facilities in those enterprises and underlined how those facilities had helped improve the welfare of workers. For instance, after a visit to Sümerbank's carpet and wool factory in Hereke in August 1943, Vala Nurettin,[8] a journalist writing for the daily paper *Akşam*, wrote an article describing accommodation, nutrition, and recreational facilities at the factory complex. Drawing on his observations in Hereke and other state-run factories, Nurettin concluded that the main concern of state-run enterprises was not machines but workers.[9] Similarly, journalists writing for local Zonguldak magazines widely discussed how miners' lives in the basin had changed after nationalization of the Ereğli coal mines in 1940. In one of these articles, Akın Karauğuz wrote that until nationalization miners had been just the tools of capital. Now, he continued, they were the country's real children, because their welfare was a matter of concern to the state.[10]

Some recent studies analyzing workers' social conditions in state-run industries in the 1930s and 1940s have reproduced the approach of the journalists mentioned above. For instance, in his study of the architecture

7. Makal, *Türkiye'de tek partili dönemde*, p. 307.
8. In 1933 the government gave Sümerbank the management of a wool factory in Defterdar, Istanbul, a carpet and wool factory in Hereke, and a shoe factory in Beykoz, Istanbul; all had been established by the Ottoman state in the nineteenth century.
9. *Akşam*, 31 August 1943.
10. Akın Karauğuz, "Zonguldak kömür havzası işçisi–4", *Doğu*, 9 (1947), pp. 31–34.

of Sümerbank's Kayseri and Nazilli factory complexes Burak Peri argues that with their accommodation, recreation, and training facilities those settlements served as active centers of social education. They "exemplified the new life of citizens in a modern country to the workers".[11] Ahmet İnsel also emphasizes the social services in state-run enterprises and argues that local people regarded employees in those enterprises, even those at the lowest level in the labor hierarchy, as privileged government officials.[12] Similarly, Şehmus Güzel writes that workers in state-run enterprises did not question their relationship with their employer, the state. While the sole motive of private enterprises was profit, state-run enterprises had social concerns and their workers benefited from various social facilities. Drawing on this argument, Güzel concludes that whereas workers viewed the state as being on their side, they regarded private enterprises as exploiting them.[13]

Although Peri, İnsel, and Güzel mention social services in the state-run enterprises, they do not analyze how workers experienced those services. Moreover, Peri and İnsel do not problematize the working conditions and experiences of those "privileged government officials". Instead, they put state elites at the center of their respective historical narratives as the initiators of social policies and political alliances concerning labor. Workers in those narratives were socially and politically dependent on ruling elites. They had no agency in the formulation of social policies in the factory and mine complexes. For instance, İnsel argues that ruling elites offered social services and high wage incentives to workers in state-run enterprises, and created a working-class group totally dependent on them.[14] Yıldırım Koç follows this line of argument and portrays white and blue collar workers in state-run enterprises as members of a labor aristocracy who benefited from facilities and privileges provided by the ruling elites.[15] Although Ahmet Makal is critical of the labor aristocracy

11. Burak Peri, "Building the 'Modern' Environment in Early Republican Turkey: Sümerbank Kayseri and Nazilli Factory Settlements" (M.A. dissertation, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, 2002), pp. 107–108.

12. Ahmet İnsel, *Düzen ve kalkınma kıskacında Türkiye: Kalkınma sürecinde devletin rolü* (Istanbul, 1996), p. 228.

13. Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, "Capital and Labor During World War II", in Donald Quataert and Erik J. Zürcher (eds), *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839–1950* (London, 1995), pp. 127–145, 144–145.

14. İnsel, *Düzen ve kalkınma kıskacında Türkiye*, pp. 227–229.

15. Yıldırım Koç, "Türkiye'de 1923–1950 döneminde daimi işçi sıkıntısı", *Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi*, 18 (2002), pp. 39–41. For a summary and critique of the literature portraying workers in state-run enterprises as members of a labor aristocracy, see Ahmet Makal, "Türkiye'nin sanayileşme sürecinde işgücü sorunu, sosyal politika ve iktisadi devlet teşekkülleri: 1930'lu ve 1940'lı yıllar", *Toplum ve Bilim*, 92 (1994), pp. 34–70, and Yiğit Akın, "Erken cumhuriyet dönemi emek tarihçiliğine katkı: yeni yaklaşımlar, yeni kaynaklar", *Tarih ve Toplum-Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, 2 (2005), pp. 73–111.

approach, he also ignores workers' agency, arguing that workers had no impact on the formulation and implementation of social policies in state-run enterprises because they did not have the right to organize strikes and form unions.[16]

A topic closely related to workers' lack of agency was their lack of modern worker identity. For instance, Makal discusses high turnover rates and absenteeism in state-run enterprises and underlines the temporary nature of the workforce. He concludes that it was hard for those temporary workers to develop a mode of behavior typical of modern workers.[17] Likewise, in her recent study on statist industrialization in Turkey Selin Dingiloğlu makes a division between "class conscious proletarians" and "peasants-in-the factories". She argues that the challenge on the part of peasant-workers to their working and living conditions was not born of their working-class identity. Those people aspired to return to their villages and protect themselves from a hostile industrial society. Therefore, she concludes, their reactions were motivated by a desire to avoid becoming a worker rather than from any interest in protecting workers' rights.[18] However, that approach does not touch upon the question of how "peasants-in-the factories" suddenly turned into "class conscious proletarians" and became members of unions founded by socialist parties once the ban on class-based organizations was lifted in 1946.

This article does not rely on a-historical ideal types, such as modern worker identity. Instead, it aspires to situate social conditions and experiences of working-class people at the center of its historical analysis and questions the above propositions about the social conditions, prestige, and lack of agency of workers.

WHO WERE THE WORKERS IN THE STATE-RUN ENTERPRISES?

Sümerbank and Etibank enterprises drew their labor supply from various sources, depending on the demographic, social, and economic conditions of their localities. The workers in those enterprises included stable and experienced laborers, villagers commuting between industrial enterprises and their villages, compulsory workers, and prisoners. Factories and mines active since the nineteenth century had a relatively stable and experienced labor force. For instance, according to a survey conducted at Sümerbank's wool factory in Defterdar a considerable number of workers

16. Makal, "Türkiye'nin sanayileşme sürecinde işgücü sorunu", p. 66.
17. *Ibid*, p. 44.
18. Selin Dingiloğlu, "The Statist Industrialization and the Formation of Industrial Working Class in the Early Republic" (M.A. dissertation, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2006), p. 68.

in that factory had come to Istanbul for military service. At the end of their military service they settled in the city and began to work in the Defterdar factory. Soon after, they brought their families to Istanbul. The survey concludes that those workers did not have any agricultural income in their home towns.[19] In Hereke, a reporter from the daily paper *Tan* wrote in August 1944 that most workers at Sümerbank's carpet and wool factory had been working there since childhood.[20] Although the coal basin in Zonguldak, active since the early nineteenth century, drew for its labor supply mostly on temporary workers from nearby villages, it also attracted a significant number of experienced workers. In 1942, there were 5,000 workers who had been working in the basin for more than two years.[21]

In the newly constructed factories, Sümerbank officials sometimes took the initiative to train and sustain a stable and skilled labor force. In Nazilli, migrants from the Greek islands served this purpose. As the town's textile factory, which employed approximately 2,900 workers, was constructed near a swamp, there was widespread malaria, resulting in a scarcity of labor. In 1944 the factory administration drained the swamp, constructed workers' barracks near the factory, and settled in them migrants from the Greek islands. A report prepared in 1944 noted that with the employment of those migrants, in Nazilli the number of looms idle during the night shift decreased from 400 to 100. The same report also underlined how seriously the administrators of the Kayseri Textile Factory, which employed approximately 3,400 workers, approached the problem of labor scarcity. They managed to decrease the number of looms idle on night shifts from 580 to 150.[22] It is highly probable that the new workers operating those looms included students and graduates of the factory's newly founded apprentice school. The training activities of Sümerbank were not limited to the Kayseri Textile Factory. Another apprentice school was located at the Karabük Iron and Steel Works. The other Sümerbank factories also opened occupational courses for their workers. In the period between 1940 and 1942 4,000 workers graduated from those courses. Moreover, the bank sent students to universities and trade schools. No less than 174 of those students continued their education in the engineering faculties of various universities in 1944. There were also 52 students in the trade schools around the country.[23]

19. Z. Fahri Fındıkoğlu, *Defterdar fabrikası hakkında bir tatbiki sınai sosyoloji denemesi* (Istanbul, 1955), pp. 14–15.
20. *Tan*, 10 August 1944.
21. Özeken, "Türkiye'de sanayi işçileri", p. 72.
22. *Sümerbank 1944 senesi faaliyet ve hesap devresine ait idare meclisi raporu, bilanço, kar ve zarar hesabı* (Istanbul, 1945), pp. 8–9.
23. Makal, *Türkiye'de tek partili dönemde*, pp. 274–275.

Villagers who lived dual lives between industrial enterprises and their villages were another important labor source. The duration of their stay in factories and mines depended on various factors, such as the means of subsistence in their villages, the wages and social services offered by the industrial enterprises, and the government's labor policies. A combination of those factors created different migration patterns. For instance, workers who had continuing ties to agricultural lands often commuted between factories and their villages. Especially during harvest time, it was difficult to keep them in the factories. This was the case even for some workers who settled in the cities. To give just one example, Nazife Korkmaz, who worked at the Sümerbank Bakırköy Textile Factory between 1943 and 1958, applied to the factory administration and demanded fifteen days leave in July 1943: "since my parents are dead. I have to go to my village and harvest the crop on our small plot of land".[24] For some of the other villagers, work in industrial enterprises was important for providing their urgent daily necessities. As soon as their goals were met, they returned to their villages.

During the construction of a sugar factory in Turhal in 1934 factory administrators encountered just such a mobile labor force. Every week, approximately 500 workers left the construction zone. A dialogue between the director of the factory and a group of workers returning to their villages gives some clues about the motives and migration patterns of workers:

> Hello! Are you coming from the factory?
> Yes.
> How many days did you work there?
> About fifteen.
> Isn't it better to work fifteen more days? You could earn more money.
> Our children are waiting for us. Food is scarce. We are bringing provisions and salt with us from Turhal.
> Did you say salt?
> Yes! Since last year, most of us have been unable to buy salt.[25]

On the other hand, Paul Stirling, who conducted a survey in Sakaltutan, a village in Kayseri, between 1949 and 1950, identified a different migration pattern. He noted that seventy-seven people from the village migrated to cities for skilled and unskilled work. The duration of their stay depended on whether they had alternative sources of income in the village. Among those

24. The Bakırköy Textile Factory [hereafter, BTF], Nazife Korkmaz File, Registration Number [hereafter, RN]: 5423. I briefly researched the archives of the Bakırköy Textile Factory in June 2004. Soon after my research, the factory was closed. Yiğit Akın writes that the archives of privatized state-run enterprises have been transferred to the Prime Ministry State Archives. However, those archives have not yet been catalogued. See Akın, "Erken cumhuriyet dönemi emek tarihçiliğine katkı", pp. 80–81. In this article, when I refer to workers' files from the Bakırköy Textile Factory, I give the name and registration number of the workers.

25. Muammer Tuksavul, *Doğudan batıya ve sonrası* (Istanbul, 1981), p. 359.

migrant workers there were five who regularly worked in the Kayseri Textile Factory. They returned to the village only on Saturdays and left again on Sunday evenings or Monday mornings.[26] The cases of Turhal and Sakaltutan show how working-class history in Turkey is related to the rural and agricultural histories of the 1930s and 1940s.

Men who lived in villages and towns around coal and lignite basins in the war years did not have the freedom to choose between mining and other work because the government resorted to compulsory labor in those regions. In February 1940 the government passed a decree promulgating compulsory wage work for men over the age of 16 in the Ereğli coal basin in order to meet the increasing demand for coal. In the following year, the practice was extended to the lignite mines in Soma, Değirmisaz, and Tavşanlı.[27] By the end of 1944 the number of compulsory workers from the Zonguldak region had reached 40,000. Those people worked on a rotational basis, 45 days in the mines followed by 45 days off. In the coal basin there were also 12,000 compulsory workers from the villages and towns of Giresun, Rize, and Trabzon.[28] For those people, the wartime labor regulations did not end in 1945. In Zonguldak, compulsory wage work continued until September 1947.

Besides employing compulsory workers, state-run enterprises also used prisoners in order to cover the shortage of labor. In 1944, more than 2,400 prisoners were incarcerated in 7 labor-based prisons around the country. Those prisoners were predominantly employed in Etibank's mines. They labored in coal mines in Zonguldak, lignite mines in Değirmisaz, Soma, and Tunçbilek, brimstone mines in Keçiborlu, and copper mines in Ergani.[29] There were also prison laborers in Sümerbank factories. By 1943, 577 prisoners labored in the Karabük Iron and Steel Works, 250 in the Malatya Textile Factory, 132 in the Kayseri Textile Factory, and 42 in the Nazilli Textile Factory.[30]

Finally, wartime conditions affected the gender and age composition of the labor force. In the war years, approximately 1,000,000 men were conscripted for military service.[31] To address the growing problem of labor scarcity, the government passed a decree enabling the employment of women and children over the age of 12 on night shifts in the textile industry, and men over the age of 16 in mines. As an outcome of these

26. Paul Stirling, *Turkish Village* (New York, 1966), p. 67.

27. Ahmet Makal, "65. yılında milli korunma kanunu, çalışma ilişkileri ve iş mükellefiyeti üzerine bir inceleme", in *Ameleden işçiye: Erken cumhuriyet dönemi emek tarihi çalışmaları* (Istanbul, 2007), pp. 163–212, 168–169.

28. Özeken, "Türkiye'de sanayi işçileri", p. 72.

29. Ali Sipahi, "The Labor-Based Prisons in Turkey, 1933–1953" (M.A. dissertation, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2006), p. 42.

30. Murakabe Heyeti, *Sümerbank 1943 yılı umumi murakabe heyeti raporu*, p. 20.

31. Güzel, "Capital and Labor During World War II", p. 136.

developments, the number of female and child workers increased considerably. According to labor statistics, which covered enterprises employing 5 or more workers, the number of female workers increased from 50,131 to 56,937 between 1937 and 1943. Moreover, whereas 23,347 workers were between the ages of 12 and 18 in 1937, by 1943 that number had increased to 51,871. In the same period, the percentage of female and child workers in the workforce rose from 27 to 39.5.[32]

PROCESS OF WORKER RECRUITMENT

Prospective workers learned of job opportunities in factories and mines through various channels, such as labor agents, relatives and friends, public houses (*Halkevleri*) and newspapers. Labor agents spread news about job opportunities not only to nearby villages and towns, but also remote regions. For instance, in the summer of 1942 the administrators of the Bakırköy Textile Factory sent an official to the Izmir region to find new workers and transport them to Istanbul. The administration initially covered their transportation costs. However, as workers began to earn a wage, administrators deducted those costs from their wages.[33] Family members and friends who had work experience in industrial enterprises also served as intermediaries for prospective workers. According to the Defterdar factory survey mentioned earlier, some workers applied to the factory with the encouragement of relatives and friends who had previously worked or were still working there.[34] Another important information source for workers was public houses run by the Republican People's Party (RPP). Public houses sometimes announced posts available in industrial enterprises. To give one example, in October 1943 the public house in Bursa announced that the sugar factory in Uşak was recruiting workers and offering 310 piasters a day.[35]

People who learned of job opportunities through these various channels applied to the administrative departments of the factories. To support their applications, they usually had to bring references from police stations or their village headmen. For example, when Musa Ünsal applied to the Bakırköy Textile Factory in 1939 he submitted an official document from his village headman. The headman wrote that Musa was an honest man and had not committed any misbehavior while living in the village.[36] Typically, the department chiefs and foremen had the authority to assess the applications, recruit workers, and set their wages. During the process

32. Ahmet Makal, "Çocuktum, ufacıktım: Türkiye'de 1920–1960 döneminde çocuk işçiliği", in *Ameleden işçiye* (Istanbul, 2007), pp. 319–372, 335–346.
33. BTF, Fatma Erginer File, RN: 4946.
34. Fındıkoğlu, *Defterdar fabrikası*, p. 15.
35. *Açık Ses*, 12 October 1943.
36. BTF, Musa Ünsal File, RN: 2719.

to recruit skilled workers, administrators sometimes set examinations in order to determine the best candidate. For instance, in June 1943 Sümerbank announced that the textile factory in Ereğli was recruiting three welders. Applicants successful in the examination would be paid up to 120 liras per month.[37] Finally, factory doctors subjected the applicants who passed this stage to a medical examination. The thoroughness of the medical examination depended on the doctor conducting it and the department in which the applicant would work. For example, Mehmet Sarıkaya, head doctor of the Nazilli Textile Factory, subjected prospective workers in the factory's weaving and yarn departments to a very close examination because of the hot and dusty nature of the work. However, he paid little attention to other applicants.[38] Workers could begin their careers at the factories only after they had received the approval of the doctors.

LIFE ON THE SHOPFLOOR

The duration of the workday in state-run factories and mines was determined by wartime legal regulations. Article 19 of the National Protection Law (*Milli Korunma Kanunu*), promulgated in January 1940, gave the government authority to extend the length of the workday by as much as three hours and to abolish weekend rest days. In the same year, the government passed a decree imposing three hours of extra work and abolishing weekend rest days in Sümerbank factories.[39] Likewise, an internal regulation promulgated by the Etibank Ereğli Coal Company in April 1940 proposed to allow the eight-hour workday to be extended by three hours.[40] However, in certain departments and mines within the basin the workday was actually longer than eleven hours. According to an official report dated June 1941, some workers at the Ereğli Coal Company's Asma mine were obliged to work eighteen hours a day.[41]

During the long hours on the shopfloor, workers endured difficult and unhealthy working conditions. For instance, in the yarn and weaving departments of cotton factories doors and windows were closed and humidity kept at high levels to prevent the yarn from dehydrating.[42]

37. *Akşam*, 21 June 1943.
38. *Sendika Yolu*, 11 May 1949.
39. Can Nacar, "Working Class in Turkey During the World War II Period: Between Social Policies and Everyday Experiences" (M.A. dissertation, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2004), pp. 131–132.
40. Ahmet Makal, "Erken cumhuriyet dönemi emek tarihi ve tarihçiliği üzerine bir deneme", in *Ameleden işçiye*, pp. 15–76, 59.
41. Erol Çatma, *Asker işçiler* (Istanbul, 1998), p. 126.
42. Şükrü Laçin, *Bir Kürt işçinin siyasal anıları Dersim İsyanından Diyarbakır'a* (Istanbul, 1993), p. 62; Şerif Korkut, *Kayseri ve Kayseri'deki devlet fabrikaları sıhhi tetkikleri münasebetile ile ilgili rapor* (Ankara, 1948), pp. 32–33.

Şükrü Laçin, who worked in the Malatya Textile Factory between 1947 and 1950, recalled that tuberculosis was a major threat for workers in the factory. Lack of fresh air, a high work load, and cotton pieces from looms were the primary culprits.[43] Tevfik Erden, a master weaver at the Nazilli Textile Factory, touched upon similar problems. He underlined how high humidity, the lack of fresh air, and eleven-hour workdays led to serious health problems among workers.[44]

Coalminers too had to deal with hard working conditions. Hüseyin Aydın, a retired miner from Zonguldak, remembered miners working barefooted. After a while, Aydın said, despite the existence of stones and rocks hurting their feet they felt no pain.[45] Providing for even basic human necessities was not an easy task underground. Because of the scarcity of toilets and fresh drinking water, miners used coal galleries as toilets and drank water from untested sources.[46] Moreover, they were at risk of devastating work accidents. Working conditions became especially dangerous when administrators put pressure on workers to increase production levels. In 1943, sixty-three miners from the Ereğli coal basin lost their lives in a firedamp explosion. Kadri Yersel, who was on a rescue team formed after the accident, stated that increased pressure on workers combined with unsafe electrical rigging were the primary causes of the accident.[47] Workers' lack of awareness about safety regulations also increased the risk of work accidents.[48] A considerable number of people were injured and lost their lives in those accidents. In 1943, 2,701 miners were injured and 75 miners lost their lives in work accidents in the Ereğli coal basin. In the following year the corresponding figures were 3,315 and 82 respectively.[49]

While workers labored under difficult conditions, they were also subjected to close scrutiny by foremen and department chiefs, who often warned and fined them for disobedience, poor performance, and absenteeism. Müzeyyen Dağbaşlı, who worked in the laboratory of the Bakırköy Textile Factory, received a warning letter from the administration in January 1944: "Your continued indifference to your own responsibilities and your disregard of factory regulations has not gone unrecognized. This is your last warning. If your poor behavior continues, your contract will be terminated."[50] In March 1945, the factory administration fined Kazım

43. Laçin, *Bir Kürt işçinin siyasal anıları*, p. 62.
44. *Sendika Yolu*, 8 September 1948.
45. Kadir Tuncer, *Tarihten günümüze Zonguldak'ta işçi sınıfının durumu* (Istanbul, 1998), p. 79.
46. Sabire Dosdoğru *et al*., *Sağlık açısından maden işçilerimizin dünü, bugünü* (Istanbul, 1990), p. 20.
47. Kadri Yersel, *Madencilikte bir ömür* (Istanbul, 1989), pp. 25–26.
48. Dosdoğru *et al*., *Sağlık açısından maden işçilerimizin dünü*, pp. 49–51.
49. Çatma, *Asker işçiler*, pp. 154–155.
50. BTF, Müzeyyen Dağbaşlı File, RN: 3697.

Gören 250 piasters when he made an error in wrapping cloth.[51] When Şerife Ateşli, another worker in the Bakırköy Textile Factory, failed to turn up for work one day in September 1943, she was fined 100 piasters.[52] Fines often amounted to a significant proportion of a worker's daily wage. In June 1944, Nazife Korkmaz was fined 300 piasters for weaving 37 meters of cloth incorrectly. However, her average daily income in May, June, and August 1944 was just 245 piasters. Likewise, Kazım Gören, who was fined 250 piasters, earned only 30 piasters per hour.[53]

Workers were also subjected to physical violence. The goal of the agents of that violence was to ensure a stable labor force and instill discipline on the shop floor. In the Ereğli coal basin there were penalties for workers who left the mines without permission. The wages of first-time offenders were cut.[54] Workers who ran away several times were sent to work on roads in eastern Turkey.[55] Moreover, if an escaped worker had the misfortune to be captured by a gendarme, gendarmes or labor chiefs would often beat him. Yusuf Tatar, a labor chief in the coal basin during the compulsory work era, described the punishment meted out to deserters:

> Being a miner was like a debt of honor. The gendarmerie caught and brought us deserters. In Kilimli, we had a water pool. In order to prevent them from being models for other workers, we would drag deserters to this pool and severely beat them. Mining requires discipline and fear. Otherwise we couldn't keep workers in the mines.[56]

The families of deserters also became victims of violence. İzzet Çatma, a retired miner, claimed that gendarmes raped the wives and daughters of deserters.[57] "If a compulsory worker ran away from the mines", novelist İrfan Yalçın stated, "gendarmes would come to the village and subject his family to inhumane treatment".[58] Violence on the shopfloor was not limited to the Ereğli coal basin. *Sendika Yolu*, a journal published by the labor union in the Nazilli Textile Factory, touched upon this issue in October 1948 and discussed how some workers would slap and curse child workers.[59] Although the article refers to the postwar period, it is highly probable that there were similar cases during the war years.

51. BTF, Kazım Gören File, RN: 977.
52. BTF, Şerife Ateşli File, RN: 998.
53. Nazife Korkmaz and Kazım Gören files.
54. *Yeni Zonguldak*, 8 July 1942.
55. Erol Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak", in Erol Kahveci, Nadir Sugur, and Theo Nichols (eds), *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey* (London, 1996), pp. 172–207, 184.
56. Tuncer, *Tarihten günümüze Zonguldak'ta işçi sınıfının durumu*, p. 83.
57. Çatma, *Asker işçiler*, p. 132.
58. Interview with İrfan Yalçın in July 2004.
59. *Sendika Yolu*, 6 October 1948.

After a month or a week of laboring in these conditions, workers would line up in front of the cashiers and wait for their wages to be paid. Officials first deducted taxes and fines from what the workers were owed, and then paid them what they had earned for their labor.

IN FRONT OF THE ACCOUNTANT: WAGES IN FACTORIES AND MINES

The price paid for labor varied in each sector and city. Piecemeal evidence exists for most factories. For instance, on 8 October 1943 a local paper in Bursa announced that the Sümerbank Merinos Factory would be recruiting new apprentices and skilled workers. The weekly wage offered apprentices was 5 liras, with up to 9 liras for skilled workers.[60] In July 1943, the Sivas Cement Factory announced that it would be recruiting nine master electricians and five first-class fitters, offering an hourly wage of up to 80 piasters.[61] More detailed information exists about wage levels in the Ereğli coal basin and textile factories in Istanbul. Wages in those mines and factories could not keep pace with wartime inflation. In the coal basin average real wages decreased approximately 48 per cent between 1939 and 1945.[62] Hulusi Dosdoğru, who worked as a doctor at the Ereğli Coal Company between 1942 and 1945, examined wage levels in the coal basin in the war years and concluded that massive exploitation of miners continued in the period following the nationalization of the coal mines.[63] Real wages in the Defterdar and Bakırköy factories decreased almost 40 per cent between 1939 and 1943. Although there was a 48 per cent increase in real wages in those two factories between 1943 and 1945, real wages were still 10 per cent lower than in 1939.[64] Official reports suggest that the situation in other Sümerbank factories was similar. In 1943 the Prime Ministry Inspection Committee wrote that workers in Sümerbank factories spent all their limited wages and were unable to save money. For those workers, the committee continued, it was not worthwhile staying at the factory, and many did indeed leave.[65]

It is highly probable that the average wages of female workers were lower than the general average. A sample group consisting of seven female workers from the Bakırköy Textile Factory gives some idea about wage

60. *Bursa*, 8 October 1943.
61. *Akşam*, 17 July 1943.
62. Makal, "65. yılında milli korunma kanunu", p. 190.
63. Dosdoğru *et al*., *Sağlık açısından maden işçilerimizin dünü*, p. 31.
64. For average daily wages, wages in kind, and real wages in Bakırköy and Defterdar factories, see Makal, *Türkiye'de tek partili dönemde*, p. 437.
65. Murakabe Heyeti, *Sümerbank 1943 yılı umumi murakabe heyeti raporu*, p. 49.

Table 1. *Hourly wages of seven women working in the Bakırköy Textile Factory (in piasters)*

Name	Joined	Department	1942	1943	1944	1945
Fatma Enginer	1942	Yarn	12	15	18	18
Güzin Göknaz	1942	Yarn	12	12	15–18	–
Hatice Yiğit	1942	Revision	10–12	15	15	18
Resmiye Şen	1942	Weaving	12	15	15–18	18
Şükriye Demirci	1942	Revision	12	15	15	18
Vesile Gezer	1938	Revision	12	15	18–20	20
Müzeyyen Dağbaşlı	1943	Laboratory	–	18–20	25	30

Sources: The Bakırköy Textile Factory, files on Fatma Enginer (RN: 4946), Güzin Göknaz (RN: 5307), Hatice Yiğit (RN: 5047), Resmiye Şen (RN: 5418), Şükriye Demirci (RN: 4706), Vesile Gezer (RN: 1375), and Müzeyyen Dağbaşlı (RN: 3697).

levels for women in the factory. As Table 1 shows, Vesile Gezer had been in the revision department of the factory since 1938, while the other workers joined the factory in 1942 or 1943. In 1942, six of them worked in the revision, weaving, and yarn departments, earning an hourly wage of 12 piasters. In 1943, all except one received a wage rise of 3 piasters an hour. In the same year, Müzeyyen Dağbaşlı began work in the factory's laboratory. Her initial hourly wage was 18 piasters. In 1944, while Dağbaşlı earned 25 piasters an hour, the wages of the other 6 women ranged between 15 and 20 piasters. In 1945, Dağbaşlı received another raise and began to earn 30 piasters. The wages of the other women ranged between 18 and 20 piasters, a figure below the overall average in Bakırköy and Defterdar. Assuming Müzeyyen Dağbaşlı worked 11 hours a day, her daily wage would have been 220 piasters in 1943, 275 piasters in 1944, and 330 piasters in 1945, before tax. However, in those years average daily wages at the Bakırköy and Defterdar factories were 222, 292, and 332 piasters respectively.

Maintaining their families on decreasing real wages was a very hard task for workers. This was especially the case for those women who were the primary wage earners in their families. Headmen in workers' districts produced documents testifying to the hard living conditions of those families. For instance, the headmen of the Sakızağacı district in Bakırköy wrote a petition to the Bakırköy Textile Factory in October 1944 mentioning that Şükriye Demirci had to maintain her two children and physically disabled husband without any external support.[66] Suffering under these conditions, workers sometimes submitted petitions complaining about the insufficiency of their wages. In March 1944, Resmiye

66. BTF, Şükriye Demirci File, RN: 4706.

Şen, a widow with five children, wrote to the Bakırköy Textile Factory Administration complaining that she could provide no more than a piece of bread for her children, and that she could not send them to school. She proposed various solutions: "You may either increase my wage or send my children to school. If neither is possible, I demand exemption from my taxes." In response, the administration increased her hourly wage from 15 to 18 piasters.[67] In addition to submitting private petitions, in several cases workers combined to jointly demand wage increases. When workers at the Defterdar factory presented such a demand in 1942, the administration increased their wages by between 10 and 60 per cent.[68]

Statistical data, official reports, the personal accounts of government officials, and workers' petitions about inadequate wage levels offer a perspective different from those studies emphasizing the high wage incentives and privileges in state-run industries, and highlight how workers' labor was exploited there. To compensate for those inadequate wage levels, state-run enterprises provided nutrition, housing, and healthcare services to their workers. The following sections analyze those social services, which constituted a form of wages in kind.

NUTRITION FACILITIES

Beginning in the 1930s, state-run factories and mines provided meals to their workers in order to supply them with necessary calories. For instance, after a visit to the Bakırköy Textile Factory in June 1935 a reporter from the daily paper *Cumhuriyet* wrote that the factory cafeteria gave workers two meals for 15 piasters.[69] However, after the outbreak of the war, meals were offered to most workers free of charge. Starting in 1941, Sümerbank began to provide free meals to workers earning less than 160 piasters a day. The minimum wage limit for free meals was increased to 200 piasters in 1942 and to 300 piasters in 1943. As of 1943, workers in Etibank's Keçiborlu mines earning less than 400 piasters received 600 grams of bread and two meals free. Etibank also gave two free meals to its workers in the Ereğli coal basin. The wage limit for free meals in the basin was 250 piasters in 1943.[70] The Monopoly Administration, Railway Administration, and municipalities also provided free meals to their workers.[71]

The accounts of former workers and officials, inspection reports, and workers' petitions provide some information about the quality of food.

67. BTF, Resmiye Şen File, RN: 5418.
68. Fındıkoğlu, *Defterdar fabrikası*, p. 26.
69. *Cumhuriyet*, 27 June 1935.
70. Makal, *Türkiye'de tek partili dönemde çalışma ilişkileri*, p. 269.
71. *Yeni Gaziantep*, 3 October 1944, and *Tan*, 23 May 1944.

Hulusi Dosdoğru writes that meals served by the Ereğli Coal Company did not come close to meeting the miners' caloric needs.[72] Workers' accounts support his arguments. Cemil Akyüz, who began work in the coal basin in September 1945, stated that the company gave workers only one-quarter of a loaf of bread and one plate of soup.[73] Moreover, the food was sometimes inedible. When Dosdoğru visited the refectory of the harbor workers, he noticed that the broad bean dish being served to workers appeared strange. When he tasted it, he found it bitter and hard to chew. He explained the situation to the company's social service manager. The manager responded that "they bought the wrong broad beans, the one for the animals. They could not waste them and had to use them up."[74] Similar problems were observed in other enterprises. In Istanbul there were reports that food given by the Tram Administration was generally thrown away due to its poor quality. Workers demanded that the administration employ people to solve this problem. The administration responded that they gave free meals to 3,000 workers and controlled the quality strictly. However, under wartime conditions it was not possible to effect any improvement.[75]

HOUSING FACILITIES

Because the cities and towns hosting state-run factories and mines did not have the housing infrastructure to accommodate newly recruited workers, Sümerbank and Etibank initiated extensive building programs. In the war years, Sümerbank constructed apartments, houses, and pavilions for officials and workers employed in the Sivas Cement Factory, the Karabük Iron and Steel Works, the Izmit Cellulose Factory, and the textile factories in Hereke, Kayseri, Nazilli, Gemlik, and Ereğli.[76] Likewise, in 1943 the Ereğli Coal Company had dormitories with a total of 20,549 beds. In Keçiborlu there were dormitories with 250 beds. Workers' houses at the Soma lignite mines had one bathroom, a kitchen, and two rooms.[77] As a result of these efforts, new working-class neighborhoods and even entire communities emerged. For instance, before the construction of the iron and steel works Karabük was a tiny village of between 15 and 20 households.[78]

72. Dosdoğru *et al.*, *Sağlık açısından maden işçilerimizin dünü*, pp. 28 and 47.
73. Tuncer, *Tarihten günümüze Zonguldak'ta işçi sınıfının durumu*, p. 72.
74. Dosdoğru *et al.*, *Sağlık açısından maden işçilerimizin dünü*, p. 28. The English translation is taken from Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak", pp. 186–187.
75. For the workers' demands see *Tan*, 15 June 1944, and for the response of the administration see *Tan*, 30 June 1944.
76. Murakabe Heyeti, *Sümerbank 1943 yılı umumi murakabe heyeti raporu*, app. 2, and *Sümerbank 1944 senesi faaliyet ve hesap devresine ait idare meclisi raporu*, pp. 37–38.
77. Makal, *Türkiye'de tek partili dönemde çalışma ilişkileri*, pp. 267–268.
78. Rebi Barkın, "Karabük'de sevindirici gelişmeler", *Doğu*, 8 (1946), pp. 35–39, 36.

However, in 1946 the factory administration completed the construction of 835 houses for the town's single and married workers.[79]

When settling the workers into the newly constructed buildings, administrators followed a strict hierarchy. For that reason, a significant proportion of workers had to live in dormitories or find their own accommodation. In Kayseri,

> […] the best places in the district were to be reserved for the foremen. The rest were arranged according to classes such as technical workers, first class, second class and third class workers. The workers from the neighborhood and the workers with no specialization would be settled at the pavilions which were located at far, secluded and quiet places of the district.[80]

After a visit to the Nazilli Textile Factory in 1949, Rebi Barkın, the Zonguldak deputy in parliament, highlighted similar points. The factory's apartments in the town were for officials, technical staff, foremen, and other skilled workers. There was also a dormitory accommodating 300–350 single workers. However, these facilities covered only 20 per cent of the workers, and excluded workers had to find their own housing. They paid high rents for unhealthy places and lived in miserable conditions.[81] Likewise, most of the apartments in Hereke were reserved for officials and technical staff.

Workers unable to find a place in those settlements came to the factory and returned to their villages on foot.[82] As Sümerbank's factories in Bursa and Istanbul did not provide accommodation, some workers in those factories also had to walk long distances between their neighborhoods and their place of work. In wartime conditions, that was not an easy task, especially for women. Ayşe Zaimoğlu, who worked in the Bakırköy Textile Factory in the war years, recollects: "It was very hard for women to go to the factory and return home at night. Old men from the neighborhood would walk in front of us. If they did not come with us, women in the neighborhood would join together and go to factory as a group."[83]

The living conditions of workers who were entitled to a bed in pavilions were also often far from being satisfactory. A report prepared by the Ereğli Coal Company in March 1944 showed that every district appeared to be without adequate facilities such as beds, showers, and running water

79. B.S, "Karabük demir-çelik fabrikaları", *Doğu*, 7 (1946), pp. 40–43.
80. Peri, "Building the 'Modern' Environment in Early Republican Turkey", p. 87.
81. Mustafa Görkem Doğan, "Governmental Involvement in the Establishment and Performance of the Trade Unions during the Transition to Multi Party Politics: The Case of the Worker's Bureau of the Republican People's Party" (M.A. dissertation, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, 2003), appendix 2.
82. Esra Üstündağ-Selamoğlu, "Bir sözlü tarih çalışması Hereke'de değişim", *Toplumsal Tarih*, 8 (1997), pp. 28–36.
83. Interview with Ayşe Zaimoğlu, July 2004.

in the pavilions. In some pavilions workers took turns sleeping in the same bed.[84] Moreover, miners sleeping in the pavilions had to follow certain rules. Before going to bed, they had to take a shower and wear the special clothes provided by the company.[85] However, it was not easy for workers to adhere to these regulations. The company gave them only 75 grams of soap for 30 days. After mining coal 8 hours a day, they were unable to clean themselves properly with such a limited amount. Moreover, in certain periods the company did not distribute special pavilion clothes to workers.[86] In reaction to these conditions, some workers rejected spending nights at dormitories and instead slept in forests. Cemil Akyüz recounts why Zonguldak villagers were reluctant to use the dormitories: "They did not have soap to clean themselves. However, officials did not let unclean miners into the pavilions. […]. They told the miners to take a shower. Do you see the torture? For those reasons, they rejected sleeping in the pavilions."[87]

HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Working and living in unhealthy conditions, workers were vulnerable to diseases, such as malaria, typhus, and tuberculosis. In his report on state-run factories in Kayseri, Dr Şerif Korkut discussed how swamps and other contaminated water sources around the Kayseri Textile Factory caused widespread malaria among workers. The number of workers with malaria was 1,743 in 1942 and 1,813 in 1943. Once healthcare staff in the factory began to initiate measures to combat the disease, malaria cases decreased. In 1945 there were 753 cases of malaria among workers. However, that meant that even after measures began to be taken approximately 22 per cent of workers still suffered from malaria.[88] In Karabük, malaria was so widespread that in 1944 it led to the loss of thousands of work hours at the iron and steel works.[89] Similarly, in the Ereğli coal basin malaria epidemics were disastrous in certain seasons. Unable to clean themselves properly, miners were also vulnerable to typhus. In the Ereğli Coal Company's hospital, there were 212 workers suffering from typhus between January 1943 and March 1945, and 30 of them eventually lost their lives.[90] Besides malaria and typhus, tuberculosis was a major threat to workers. During the Congress of the Worker's Insurance Institution (*İşçi Sigortaları Kurumu*) held in 1948 a worker

84. Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak", p. 186.
85. Tuncer, *Tarihten günümüze Zonguldak'ta işçi sınıfının durumu*, p. 78.
86. Dosdoğru, *Sağlık açısından maden işçilerimizin dünü*, pp. 29–30.
87. Tuncer, *Tarihten günümüze Zonguldak'ta işçi sınıfının durumu*, pp. 73–74.
88. Korkut, *Kayseri ve Kayseri'deki devlet fabrikaları*, pp. 7–8.
89. Barkın, "Karabük'de sevindirici gelişmeler", p. 39.
90. Dosdoğru, *Sağlık açısından maden işçilerimizin dünü*, pp. 13–16.

representative from Adana stated that malaria, pneumonia, and tuberculosis were widespread in the textile industry. The latter ones, the representative continued, were directly related to working conditions in factories.[91] Miners laboring in clouds of friable coal dust were also vulnerable to tuberculosis. Hulusi Dosdoğru writes that the number of tubercular workers increased considerably during the war years.[92]

Directors of factories and mines established hospitals, dispensaries, infirmaries, and clinics in order to combat those diseases and take care of workers who were injured in work-related accidents. Bed capacity at those institutions depended on the number of workers employed. For instance, in 1943 the Sivas Cement Factory had an infirmary with 6 beds, and a pharmacy for its approximately 500 workers.[93] The healthcare institutions operated by the Ereğli Coal Company were more comprehensive. In the city center, the company had a hospital with 150 beds and a health clinic. There were dispensaries in some villages and in major mining districts such as Kilimli, Gelik, Üzülmez, and Kozlu. Moreover, the company had nursing homes in Ereğli and Asma.[94] However, the total bed capacity of all those healthcare institutions in the basin did not exceed 250, and in the central hospital two patients usually had to share one bed. Moreover, administrators and healthcare staff did not conduct the medical examinations necessary for diagnosing occupational diseases. Even random statistics from the basin showed that miners were vulnerable to lung diseases. For instance, according to radiography reports from the company's central hospital the number of miners suffering from silicosis was eighty-seven between 1938 and 1944. Despite this, miners were not subjected to regular medical examination. It therefore became almost impossible to identify lung diseases before their last stages, and the company often sent workers who were in the final stages of a disease back to their villages.[95]

Besides providing healthcare services to injured and sick workers, state-run enterprises continued to pay their wages for a certain period. After a visit to the Tobacco Monopoly Administration's factory in Cibali, Istanbul, in 1944, a reporter from the daily paper *Tan* wrote that the factory administration continued to pay injured workers a full wage.[96] The Bakırköy Textile Factory applied a similar policy. When Osman Koral, a weaver in the factory, injured his right hand in a work accident in

91. Z. Fahri Fındıkoğlu, "İşçi sigortaları toplantısından intibalar", *Doğu*, 13 (1948), pp. 46–48, 47.
92. Dosdoğru, *Sağlık açısından maden işçilerimizin dünü*, pp. 13–16.
93. Başvekalet Umumi Murakabe Heyeti, *Sümerbank çimento sanayi müessesesi 1943 umumi murakabe heyeti raporu* (Ankara, 1944), pp. 19 and 33.
94. *Yeni Zonguldak*, 29 April 1942.
95. Dosdoğru, *Sağlık açısından maden işçilerimizin dünü*, pp. 36–37.
96. *Tan*, 10 July 1944.

October 1945, officials gave him nine days' leave. After calculating his average daily wage, they also paid him 30.15 liras for those nine days.[97] On the other hand, administrators applied stricter policies for sick workers. In the Cibali Tobacco Factory, workers were paid half of their wages in the first three weeks of illness, and in the following three weeks they were paid only one-quarter of their wages.[98] The case of Mediha Ultamur suggests that the Bakırköy Textile Factory followed a similar policy. When Ultamur, a worker in that factory, had influenza, the administration gave her twenty-five days' leave and paid only one-quarter of her wage.[99]

The situation was probably worse for workers unable to work for a long time or who became permanently disabled after work-related accidents. When İdris Erdinç, a worker at the Izmit Paper Mill, visited injured workers from that factory in their villages in 1946, he discovered that those people who had lost their arms or legs in work-related accidents had been dismissed without any compensation. Erdinç and one of his friends took photographs of those people and drew up a declaration for the newly founded union in the factory: "Gather around the workers' trade unions, otherwise your fate will be like this."[100]

HIGH TURNOVER RATES IN STATE-RUN FACTORIES AND MINES

It is highly unlikely that workers who labored in unhealthy conditions, faced accidents and sundry forms of violence at work, and received insufficient wages viewed the state as being on their side. Nor would they have seen state-run enterprises as modern educational centers. These conditions were embedded in workers' memories. While recollecting the era of compulsory wage work, a retired miner from Zonguldak stated that workers' lives were less valuable than an animal or a carpet.[101] Miners employed in the Etibank Western Lignite Mines Company in the 1990s could still recall a saying from the compulsory work period: "The one who is saved from compulsory work/Sacrifices two sheep."[102]

As workers did not legally have the freedom to organize strikes and establish unions in the war years, they resorted to different strategies to express their reactions to these conditions. Leaving factories and mines for other viable sources of income was one of those strategies. The

97. BTF, Osman Koral File, RN: 5631.
98. *Tan*, 10 July 1944.
99. BTF, Mediha Ultamur File, RN: 450.
100. Hikmet Akgül, *Şoför İdris* (Istanbul, 2004), p. 121.
101. Yalçın, *Ölümün ağzı*, p. 6.
102. Makal, *Türkiye'de tek partili dönemde çalışma ilişkileri*, p. 416.

available statistics provide clues about the mobility of the labor force. In 1943 turnover rates in the Bakırköy and Defterdar factories were 96 and 101 per cent respectively.[103] In the following year, 23,578 Sümerbank workers left either temporarily or permanently. They constituted approximately 94 per cent of Sümerbank's workforce. At the Etibank Ergani Copper Company, the turnover rate was 250 per cent between 1940 and 1950.[104]

The personal stories of three workers from the Bakırköy Textile Factory, the Kayseri Textile Factory, and the Ereğli Coal Company give some idea of the different reasons for leaving the factories and mines. Osman Koral began to work in the Bakırköy Textile Factory in 1937. In February 1939 he left the factory to do military service. In February 1943 he again applied to the factory for work and stayed there for four months before returning to his village to farm his land. Four months later he was back again and this time he remained at the factory for five years. In February 1949 he left the factory due to his father's illness. He returned in June 1949 and carried on working there until 1973.[105] Rüştü Önelke began work in the Kayseri Textile Factory as an apprentice before his military service. At the end of his military service in 1943, he returned to the factory. However, after a short period he migrated to Adana and began to work in a textile factory there. In 1945 he went back to Kayseri and found a job in a sewing workshop. When the workshop closed down, Önelke returned to the Kayseri Textile Factory. He was still at the factory when reporters from *Gayret*, a journal published by the labor union in the Kayseri Textile Factory, interviewed him in September 1953.[106] Şuayip Özenç was a locomotive driver in the Ereğli coal basin. He disregarded the compulsory wage work and did not go to work on 1 September 1943. He told the gendarmes that he did not want to work and that he would run away even if they captured him. Although gendarmes brought him back to work, he escaped three days later and began to work in Karabük. In October 1943, gendarmes again captured him. However, while he was being transported to the road works, where he had been set to work as a punishment, he jumped off the train and escaped once again. In July 1944 officials in the basin learned that he was working at the Railway Administration's Çankırı depot.[107]

In his study on industrial workers in Turkey, Ali Özeken also refers to the mobility of the labor force in the 1940s. Workers, Özeken argues, sometimes failed to turn up at the factories or mines for several days a week, or in some cases for periods of several months. Instead they worked

103. Dingiloğlu, "The Statist Industrialization and the Formation of Industrial Working Class in the Early Republic", p. 25.
104. Makal, *Türkiye'de tek partili dönemde çalışma ilişkileri*, p. 296.
105. BTF, Osman Koral File, RN: 5631.
106. *Gayret*, 26 September 1953.
107. Çatma, *Asker işçiler*, pp. 134–135.

on road construction, on farmed lands, and in moving goods at railway depots and harbors.[108] Drawing on the observations of Özeken and the reminiscences of Koral, Önelke, and Özenç it is not possible to make any generalization about the workforce in Sümerbank and Etibank factories. However, their stories do at least show that when workers left an industrial enterprise they did not necessarily and immediately return to their villages. Work in other factories, workshops, or railway depots offering higher wages was a viable alternative for those laborers. Laboring in different industrial enterprises, those people were able to acquire various occupational skills and accumulate experiences about urban life. It is highly probable that among the laborers who followed that path there were those who had agricultural lands, because in the war years villages too were characterized by social and economic tensions. In this period, small landholders in Anatolia suffered under the burden of in-kind taxes and could barely produce food enough for their own consumption.[109] Therefore, contrary to those studies that focus exclusively on the migration of workers between villages and factories, the above cases suggest that there were in fact multiple forms of labor mobility.

The mobility of the labor force was a major issue for factory administrators, government officials, politicians, and journalists. In 1943 the Prime Ministry Inspection Committee reported that labor instability was the basic social problem in Sümerbank factories. The committee proposed that in addition to providing the existing social facilities administrators should initiate new policies that would maintain a stable labor force in the factories.[110] On the other hand, some administrators, journalists, and politicians hoped that existing social facilities would be sufficient to keep workers at the factories. In a book published to mark the tenth anniversary of Sümerbank, the company stressed that accommodation services kept workers at factories and increased their productivity.[111] Likewise, in his article about Hereke Vala Nurettin wrote that if the social conditions of workers were improved, skilled workers would want to live in Hereke.[112] Journalists sometimes also addressed workers directly. In August 1942 a local newspaper in Zonguldak listed facilities offered to miners and concluded that in return for those services miners had a duty to work properly and to take care of their tools and machinery.[113]

108. Özeken, "Türkiye'de sanayi işçileri", p. 61.
109. Şevket Pamuk, "War, State Economic Policies and Resistance by Agricultural Producers in Turkey, 1939–1945", in Farhad Kazemi and John Waterbury (eds), *Peasants and Politics in the Modern Middle East* (Gainesville, FL, 1991), pp. 125–142.
110. Murakabe Heyeti, *Sümerbank 1943 yılı umumi murakabe heyeti raporu*, pp. 49–50.
111. *Sümerbank, X. Yıl –11.7.1933–11.7.1943–* (Istanbul, 1943), pp. 237–239.
112. *Akşam*, 31 August 1943.
113. *Yeni Zonguldak*, 12 August 1942.

However, towards the end of the war the instability of the labor force was still an issue. In May 1945, İsmail Sabuncu, deputy for Giresun, brought it to the attention of the national assembly:

> Why can't workers be kept at factories? The authorities tell us that they are providing them with social services and spending thousands of liras. However, the problem is still there. These two are contrasting points. If the workers can be kept at factories, I will say the expenditures serve their goals. But, no! Workers flee the factories.[114]

Following the foundation of the Ministry of Labor in June 1945 Sadi Irmak, the first minister of labor, also touched upon the issue. While listing the major goals of the new ministry, Irmak stated that they aspired to strengthen workers' ties to industrial enterprises by providing them with agricultural land.[115] The 1947 Program of the RPP proposed a similar policy. The program specified the construction of houses with gardens in order to bind workers to their work and continue their relationship with agriculture.[116] All those discussions suggest that although workers did not have a right to organize in the war years, their response to social conditions in factories and mines played an important role in the formulation of social policies concerning labor.

CONCLUSION

The World-War-II period does not seem to offer fertile ground for students of radical labor in early republican Turkey. In that period, Sümerbank and Etibank workers neither organized massive strikes nor had strong labor unions and political parties. However, an analysis of those workers' lives inside and outside the workplace during this "silent" period reveals social and economic inequalities in Turkey. In his memoirs, a prominent businessman who began his career during World War II underlined the process of capital accumulation that took place during this period.[117] The stories of Sümerbank and Etibank workers who labored eleven hours a day in unhealthy conditions, regularly suffered work-related accidents, had little or no social security, and whose real incomes were in decline highlight how this process inscribed itself on the lives of laboring people.

The present article also shows how the social conditions and experiences of workers offer perspectives different from the historical narratives

114. T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 7th Term, vol. 17, 63rd Session, 26 May 1945.
115. Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, "Çalışma Bakanlığı'nın kuruluşu: çalışma hayatında İngiliz etkisi", *Tarih ve Toplum*, 9 (1988), pp. 52–56, 53.
116. Doğan, "Governmental Involvement in the Establishment and Performance of the Trade Unions", p. 103.
117. Nejat Eczacıbaşı, *Kuşaktan kuşağa* (Istanbul, 1982), p. 62.

based upon elite discourses. For instance, while some historians see high turnover rates in factories and mines as symptoms of a lack of modern worker identity, for workers such as Şuayip Özenç and Rüştü Önelke it was a means of improving their income, of challenging oppressive labor regulations, and of accumulating experiences in different cities and industrial enterprises. It was those worker activities that forced factory administrators and politicians to discuss, formulate, and enact social policies relating to labor.