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**WORKING CLASS IN TURKEY DURING THE WORLD WAR II PERIOD:
BETWEEN SOCIAL POLICIES AND EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES**

by

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“Working Class in Turkey During the World War II Period: Between Social Policies and Everyday Experiences,” a thesis prepared by Can Nacar in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History.

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Even though Turkey did not become a part of the conflict in the World War II, the economic and social life of the country was heavily affected by the war conditions. The wartime scarcities, high levels of inflation, and government regulations as regards to economy and work life enabled various actors, such as manufacturers, importers, and large and middle landowners to accumulate a substantial amount of capital. The capital accumulation that occurred during the war years was one of the important factors, which made the private enterprises' active role in the economic life in the post-war era possible. On the other hand, large segments of the society were hard hit by the war conditions. Amongst them, this thesis focuses on the everyday experiences of the working class in the urban areas. Although in most cases working people worked long hours in unhealthy environments, they faced great difficulties in meeting their basic needs. However, they did not remain mere objects of the social circumstances. Resorting to various means, they attempted to challenge the social relation imposed on them and improve their conditions. The activities and demands that were brought on to the agenda for the fulfillment of these goals became a critical factor in the formation of a welfare regime that had at its center the labor.

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**Başlık: İkinci Dünya Savaşı Döneminde Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı: Sosyal
Politikalar ve Gündelik Deneyimler**

Türkiye İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda çatışmanın tarafı olmasa da, ülkedeki sosyal ve ekonomik yaşam savaşın yarattığı koşullardan fazlasıyla etkilenmiştir. Savaş dönemi kısıtları, yüksek düzeylerde seyreden enflasyon ve hükümetin ekonomi ile çalışma hayatına ilişkin yaptığı yasal düzenlemeler büyük ve orta ölçekli toprak sahiplerinin, ithalatçıların ve sanayicilerin önemli ölçüde sermaye birikimi yapmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Söz konusu sermaye birikimi savaş sonrası dönemde özel girişimin ekonomide aldığı etkin rolü olanaklı kılan önemli faktörlerden biridir. Diğer taraftan, toplumun önemli bir kesimi ise savaş dönemindeki mevcut koşullardan oldukça olumsuz etkilenmiştir. Bu tez, söz konusu kesimlerden biri olan işçi sınıfının kentsel alanlardaki gündelik yaşam deneyimleri üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Emekçi özneler sağlıksız koşullarda uzun saatler boyunca çalışmalarına rağmen temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılamakta bile önemli güçlüklerle karşılaşmışlardır. Buna karşın, mevcut sosyal koşulların nesnesi olarak kalmamış, çeşitli yollara başvurarak, kendilerine dayatılan sosyal ilişkilere karşı mücadele vermiş ve yaşam koşullarını geliştirmeye çalışmışlardır. Emekçi öznelerin bu amaçları gerçekleştirebilmek için gündeme taşıdığı eylem ve talepler savaş sonrası dönemde emek merkezli bir refah rejiminin oluşumunda kritik bir rol oynamıştır.

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PREFACE

This study is composed of three parts. First, it focuses on the impact of the war on the economy and on opportunities created by the war for the accumulation of capital and legal regulations supplementing those opportunities. The second and third parts focus on the working class people, who were among the sacrificed strata of society to the capital accumulation in the war years. The second part analyzes workers in the small and large scale private enterprises, artisans and day laborers. First, the hard work and living conditions of those people, most of who were excluded from government assistance programs, will be analyzed. Second, the limited legal and institutional opportunities offered to those people to improve their conditions will be discussed. Third, the agent roles of those people will be examined. Despite the fact that they were hard pressed by wartime conditions and constrained by legal regulations, working class people resorted to various platforms and in some cases engaged in legally banned activities to improve their conditions. Finally, attention is directed to the social networks, an important element of the welfare regime in Turkey, which enabled the poor to meet, at least partially, their essential needs despite the hard conditions of the period.

The third part examines the targets of a governmental project: the workers in the public enterprises, who are seen by some labor historians as having been members of a labor aristocracy. First, the facilities offered by those enterprises will be described. The goal behind this policy was the creation of a new subject who came to the factory regularly, worked hard and in a disciplined manner, and had a high productivity level. This goal was continuously underlined by politicians, intellectuals, and in the reports prepared for the government institutions responsible

for the execution of the industrialization program. However, an analysis of those facilities reveals important clues about the difficult working and living conditions endured by the workers in those enterprises. Second, in the light of disciplinary practices in those enterprises and wartime legal regulations, working conditions in the public enterprises are subjected to close scrutiny. These practices and regulations represent the other face of the governmental project, whose aim was to control and dominate the lives of people. Finally, the reactions and aspirations of the workers within those enterprises will be discussed. This framework in the current text gives only a partial glimpse of the picture because labor in the rural areas is mostly absent in the text.

Trying to focus on the agencies of working class people within and outside their worksites, and their resistance against the uneven relations within the society, this study hopes to contribute to the discussions about Turkish historiography and society. For the fulfillment of these purposes, it draws on various sources including newspapers and magazines published in Istanbul and Anatolian cities, memoirs and interviews, literary sources, legal texts, proceedings of parliamentary sessions, and archives of the public enterprises.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The era of the World War II is an important field of study for economic, political and social historians. The Wealth Tax Law (*Varlık Vergisi*), exclusionary state policies targeting religious minorities, the diplomatic efforts of the state elites to keep Turkey out of the War, and the role of World War period on the rise of the multi-party system have been widely studied.¹ These issues have also been treated as the subjects of novels, films, and television programs.²

Placing the state elites, intellectuals and bourgeois groups at the center of history is a common feature of these studies, while large segments of the population, who shouldered the burden of the War, are either excluded or treated as broad social

¹ Some of the publications focusing on these topics, are listed below: Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi Ve Türkleştirme Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000); Rıdvan Akar, *Aşkale Yolcuları, Varlık Vergisi Ve Çalışma Kampları* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2000); Rıfat Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü (1946-1949)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003); Selim Deringil, *Denge Oyunu, İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2003). Those issues are also discussed in history journals. See *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 121 (January 2004); *Popüler Tarih Dergisi*, no. 40 (December 2003),

² Yılmaz Karakoyunlu, *Salkım Hanımın Taneleri* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2004); and Ayşe Kulin, *Nefes Nefese* (İstanbul: Remzi, 2002), are two popular novels dealing with the Second World War era. While the first one focuses on the Wealth Tax Law, the latter one focuses on a love story and the heroic efforts of Turkish diplomats rescuing Jewish people from the Nazi genocide. After *Salkım Hanımın Taneleri*, as a movie, was shown in the cinema, Wealth Tax Law has been discussed on popular television programs, including *Siyaset Meydanı* and *Ceviz Kabuğu*, with the participation of academics, politicians and artists.

abstractions, which take part in statistics as the groups whose real incomes were negatively affected by the War time conditions. In either case, their everyday experiences are mostly overlooked. In fact, this attitude is shared even by studies claiming to focus their attention on these people. Studies within the field of labor history take their part in this trend. As Donald Quataert has argued, "labor historians have overly stressed outside agencies in examining labor's past and actually, despite their declared focus, have given insufficient attention to labor itself."³ This approach has its repercussions for the World War II period. For instance, some of the studies dealing with industrialization programs and work relations in the 1930s and 1940s place the state elites at the center of history as the initiators of economic and social programs. In those narratives, labor is mostly denied a place in the center and instead is seen as the objects of concerned policies.⁴

In addition, the era of World War II is mostly taken into parentheses as a period of transition and repression by the labor historians dealing with the early Republican era.⁵ For instance, Erdal Yavuz, in an article about labor movements between 1923 and 1940, refers to the World War II as a period in which "repression

³ Donald Quataert, "Introduction," in *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert and Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B Tauris Publishers, 1995), pp. 11-18.

⁴ For instance see Ahmet Makal, "Türkiye'nin Sanayileşme Sürecinde İşgücü Sorunu, Sosyal Politika ve İktisadi Devlet Teşekkülleri: 1930'lu ve 1940'lı Yıllar," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 92 (Spring 2002), pp. 34-70; and Burak Peri, "Building the 'Modern' Environment in Early Republican Turkey: Sümerbank Kayseri and Nazilli Factory Settlements" (Master Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2002).

⁵ However, it is important to emphasize that there are important exceptions. For instance Erol Kahveci, in his study about the miners in Zonguldak, has studied the forced labor regime and its impact on the lives of miners in the War years. See Erol Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," in *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey*, ed. Nadir Sugur and Theo Nichols Erol Kahveci (London: Mansell, 1996). Şehmus Güzel has studied the conditions of industrial workers within the large enterprises in the concerned era. See Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, "Capital and Labor During World War II," in *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert and Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1995), pp. 127-145.

came to dominate scene.”⁶ Kemal Sülker, in his study about the history of trade unions in Turkey, briefly refers to the legal regulations about forced labor regime and extra work hours during the World War II and then skips to the regulations and developments in the post-War era.⁷ In contrast, this study focuses on the everyday experiences of working people within and outside the work places during the period under examination.

In his memoirs, Nejat Eczacıbaşı, who began his business career during the war years, argued that in the post-War period, private enterprises came to dominate the economic life. One of the factors lying behind this development, according to Eczacıbaşı, was the capital accumulation of the war years.⁸ This capital accumulation, “after all depends on recognizing that some areas will always be sacrificed for the development of others.”⁹ By studying the everyday experiences of working people, this study focuses on the sacrificed parts within a society. This attempt was inspired by a certain historiographic concern: “an emphasis made on politics aiming to overcome social inequalities requires us to forge our historical studies around the axis of social inequalities, remembering the everyday experiences

⁶ Erdal Yavuz, “The State of Industrial Workforce, 1923-40,” in *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert and Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B Tauris Publishers, 1995), pp. 95-125.

⁷ Kemal Sülker, *Türkiye Sendikacılık Tarihi* (İstanbul: Tüstav, 2004).

⁸ Nejat Eczacıbaşı, *Kuşaktan Kuşağa* (İstanbul: Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı Vakfı, 1982), p. 62.

⁹ Harry Harootunian, “All the Names of History,” in *Overcome by Modernity* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. ix-xxxii.

of the masses with regard to such inequalities and searching for clues to overcome the inequalities.”¹⁰

This study also tries, in the terms of Arif Dirlik, “to decenter the historians’ discourse in order to make room at the center of history for its subjects whose ‘experiences’ take precedence over the historian’s discourse,”¹¹ and intends to challenge the uneven relation between the subjects of history and the historian. Using abstractions as a substitute for lived experience is the key point of this uneven relationship. In fact, labor history is not immune from such a hegemonic relationship between the historian and subjects of history. For instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his study on Bengal jute workers, puts at the center a dominant pre-bourgeois culture “that made up everyday life that was hierarchical and inegalitarian, subordinating the individual to imagined communities of a distinctly precapitalist character.”¹² He proposes a notion of culture which is “not subject to any rules originating ‘outside’ itself and constituting, as it were, such an outside.”¹³ However, this stand makes culture a timeless attribute by abstracting it from social, political and economic actuality, and therefore sacrifices the social present of the workers.

¹⁰ Nadir Özbek, "Alternatif Tarih Tahayyülleri: Siyaset, İdeoloji ve Osmanlı-Türkiye Tarihi," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 98 (Fall 2003), pp. 234-254. “toplumsal eşitsizliklerin aşılması çabasını temel alan bir siyasete yaptığımız vurgu, tarih çalışmalarımızı, sosyal eşitsizliklerin, geniş kitlelerin bu eşitsizliklere ilişkin gündelik deneyimlerinin hatırlanması ve eşitsizliklerin aşılması imkanlarına ilişkin ipuçlarının aranması ekseninde şekillendirmemizi gerektirmektedir.”

¹¹ Arif Dirlik, "Culturalism as Hegemonic Ideology and Liberating Practice," in *The Postcolonial Aura, Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 23-51.

¹² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working Class History Bengal 1890-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 229.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.6

On the other hand, some other labor historians, focusing on Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries, assert the political and cultural backwardness of the working class people by also resorting to abstractions. Class consciousness is the key term in their analyses and abstractions. For example, in an article dealing with the labor scarcity problem and social policies in the state-run factories in the 1930s and 1940s Ahmet Makal argues that temporariness of workers with rural background impeded the development of the class consciousness. He concludes that the workers had no impact on the social policies initiated by the government because they had no organization able to affect government policies.¹⁴ Similarly, Şehmus Güzel argues that it was hard for the workers, who worked in factories on a temporary basis and then returned to their villages, to develop class consciousness.¹⁵ On the other hand, Joel Benin, influenced by subaltern studies in his study about workers and peasants in Middle East Benin, sees the workers and peasants of the region as subalterns who “are not primarily composed of politically conscious resistance to domination.”¹⁶

Rather than condemning the subjects of history by using abstractions, which are stripped of social and economic context, this study is inspired by the approach of Thompson, who argues that the aspirations of these people are valid in terms of their own experience. The importance of experience and “now-time” are exposed by E. P. Thompson in an article about the food riots in eighteenth century England: “Paternalists and the poor continued to complain at the extension of market practices

¹⁴ Makal, “Türkiye'nin Sanayileşme Sürecinde İşgücü Sorunu, Sosyal Politika ve İktisadi Devlet Teşekkülleri: 1930'lu ve 1940'lı Yıllar,” p.44.

¹⁵ Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketleri 1908-1984* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996), pp. 136-137.

¹⁶ Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.100.

which we, looking back, tend to assume as inevitable and 'natural'. But what may now appear as inevitable was not, in eighteenth century, necessarily a matter for approval."¹⁷ His approach approves the coevalness of the rioters and rescues them from the claims of cultural and political backwardness. This study, taking Thompson's approach as its point of departure, directs its attention to now-time of the 1940s and tries to analyze the aspirations, reactions and struggles of those people in terms of their experiences, which were in direct relation to existing social, economic and political conditions.

An attempt to focus on the social inequalities and to make room for the working class at the center of history requires the historian to approach these people not as a unified mass because, as Raymond William writes, "masses are other people... there are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses... What we see, neutrally, is other people, many others, people unknown to us. In practice, we mass them, and interpret them, according to some convenient formula. Within its terms, the formula will hold."¹⁸ Studies focusing on the working class people sometimes resort to such formulations and categorize them as a unified whole. Workers in the public enterprises sometimes become the victims of these formulations. Ahmet İnel, for instance, refers to social facilities such as nursery and sport complexes, and the high(est) wages offered by state enterprises, and proposes that workers employed in these enterprises, even the ones who belonged to the lowest category in the work hierarchy, were seen as privileged government

¹⁷ E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Essential E. P. Thompson* (New York: The New Press, 2001), pp.316-377.

¹⁸ Quoted from Dirlik, "Culturalism as Hegemonic Ideology and Liberating Practice," p.31.

personnel by the other people in their district.¹⁹ There exist similar comments which portray the workers in the public enterprises as the members of a labor aristocracy.²⁰ However, when the diversities among those workers are taken into consideration and subjected to close scrutiny, the emergence of a different story seems highly possible. The facilities which are overemphasized were reserved mostly for high level officials and skilled workers. The poor conditions of unskilled and semi-skilled workers raise serious questions about their so-called privileged position.²¹

Taking those discussions into consideration, this study approaches the labor force as a heterogenous entity composed of regional, sectoral, gender, ethnic and skill-based divisions.²² As a direct result of this concern, it not only focuses on skilled male workers in the large scale enterprises, but also on temporary workers in the large and small scale enterprises, artisans, day laborers, female industrial workers and artisans, and migrants in the big cities, especially in Istanbul.

¹⁹ Ahmet İnel, *Düzen ve Kalkınma Kıskaçında Türkiye, Kalkınma Sürecinde Devletin Rolü* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 1996), pp.228-229.

²⁰ For a discussion of labor aristocracy in state run factories see Makal, "Türkiye'nin Sanayileşme Sürecinde İşgücü Sorunu, Sosyal Politika ve İktisadi Devlet Teşekkülleri: 1930'lu ve 1940'lı Yıllar," pp.62-66.

²¹ For instance, miners in Zonguldak who had to eat beans which were for animals, recounts that donkeys within the coalfield were more valuable than the workers. In the third chapter, these hard conditions are discussed in detail.

²² Yiğit Akın has underlined the importance of such divisions and relying on archival resources has designated the importance of such divisions in shaping the attitudes of workers. See. Yiğit Akın, "New Sources, New Approaches: Contribution to the Early Republican Labor History," unpublished (2004), In fact, as Eley has discussed, recognizing such diversities is important for developing policies to mobilize the maximum solidarity among working class people. See. Geoff Eley, "Edward Thompson, Social History and Political Culture: The Making of a Working-Class Public, 1780-1850," in *E. P. Thompson, Critical Perspectives*, ed. Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 12-49.

The last, but probably the most important motive for this study is, “to search for clues in order to overcome the –existing- social inequalities.”²³ This motive is inspired by Benjamin’s conception of historical practice: “The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome incarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago, it is a tiger leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one, which is how Marx understood revolution.”²⁴ As the capitalist expansion continues to produce new unevenness in our now-time and as this expansion results in new sacrifices, a search in the past for “the recognition of forgotten possibility the past always offered”²⁵ and “incorporating those forgotten possibilities for the mobilization of a political purpose in the present,”²⁶ in other words in the time of danger for the sacrificed parts of the society, seems an essential task in the search of alternative policies and conceptions of society.

In addition to analyzing the repressive measures with regard to the working people and governmental projects targeting them, in other words, the projects of the

²³ Özbek, "Alternatif Tarih Tahayyülleri: Siyaset, İdeoloji ve Osmanlı-Türkiye Tarihi," p.251.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Tarih Kavramı Üzerine," in *Son Bakışta Aşk Walter Benjamin'den Seçme Yazılar*, ed. Nurdan Gürbilek (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001), pp. 77-110. “Fransız Devrimi kendisini eski Roma’nın tekrarı olarak görmüştü. Tıpkı modanın eski giysilere başvurması gibi o da eski Roma’ya başvurmuştu. Moda hep geçmişin ormanlarında avlanıp güncel olanı yakalar, bir kaplan sıçrayışıyla. Ne var ki geçmişe doğru bu sıçrayış, kuralları hakim sınıfın koyduğu bir arenada gerçekleşir. Aynı hamle, tarihin geniş ufkunda diyalektik bir nitelik kazanır. İşte Marks devrimden bunu anlıyordu.”

²⁵ Harry Harootunian, "The Benjamin Effect: Modernism, Repetition, and the Path to Different Cultural Imaginaries," in *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History*, ed. Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.80.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.79.

ruling elites, this study also focuses on these people's "activity of freedom," a term I borrow from Peter Linebaugh.²⁷ As Linebaugh argues, that activity is a counter-tendency to a historical trend "exemplified by Michel Foucault, who stresses incarceration in the 'great confinement' and who makes the rulers of government and society seem all-powerful."²⁸ In the activities of freedom, this study, seeks clues about the forgotten possibilities the past has offered. The attention given to glass factory workers and tobacco workers who clashed with the police and their bosses in a city where martial law was in progress, in order to defend their rights, or to figures like Zehra Kosova, Adnan Binyazar, and Şuayip Özenç are direct result of these concerns.

²⁷ Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.3.

²⁸Ibid., p. 3.

CHAPTER II

THE WINNERS OF THE WAR

While discussing the impact of war on the economic life on various countries Hobsbawm notes that the Soviet Union, twenty-five percent of the pre-war capital assets of which were destroyed and whose agriculture lay in ruins, and the US, the rate of growth of which in both of the world wars was extraordinary, “represent two extremes of wars’ economic effects, the rest of the world is situated somewhere between these extremes; but on the whole closer to the Russian than to the American end of the curve.”²⁹ In the World War II, Turkey was probably among those, which were closer to the Soviet Union.

Although Turkey did not enter the World War II, it was negatively affected by the economic conditions created by the conflict. The volume of imports decreased almost one hundred percent between 1939 and 1945.³⁰ The conscription of almost one million males led to severe decreases in domestic agricultural and

²⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes the Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), pp. 48-49.

³⁰ Yahya Tezel, *Cumhuriyet Döneminin İktisadi Tarihi (1923-1950)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000), p. 179. The annual average of total import was 736 million TL between 1937 and 1939. However, the average decreased to 348 million TL between 1940 and 1945.

industrial production. In the period between 1940 and 1945, agricultural production fell by forty percent.³¹ On the other hand, the level of industrial production in 1945 was only twenty percent higher than the 1932 levels.³²

The decrease in agricultural and industrial production, the shrinkage in foreign trade, and increasing public spending, which was mostly triggered by defense costs, led to an increase in inflation. According to the wholesale price index prepared by the Ministry of Economy, the rise in the prices was five hundred percent between 1938 and 1943.³³ However, if consumer prices are taken into consideration it could be claimed that the price increases in the concerned period were much sharper than these levels.

During the war, the government, using the National Protection Law (*Milli Korunma Kanunu*) as its legal base, made regulations in different fields to cope with the wartime scarcities and inflation, and to meet the expanding needs of the army and cities. Taxing agricultural products, putting price limits, centralizing the purchase, and sale of certain products, and using a forced labor regime to increase, or at least sustain, industrial and agricultural production levels were among these regulations.

Despite the existence of these regulations, inequalities in the distribution of income widened during the war years. Manufacturers who were able to continue their activities despite the scarcity of raw materials and capital goods; importers,

³¹ Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye'de Devlet Ve Sınıflar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990), p. 154.

³² Ibid.

³³ Tezel, *Cumhuriyet Döneminin İktisadi Tarihi (1923-1950)*, p. 258.

who were able to buy foreign reserves cheaply;³⁴ large and middle-sized farmers, who were able to escape from the financial and in kind obligations;³⁵ and government officials, who took advantage of the above-mentioned regulations, were beneficiaries of the war years. In the first part of this section, the “success” stories of manufacturers and importers will be studied. In the second part, the point of attention will be agriculture. The regulations made in the field of agriculture, and the impact of these regulations on different producer groups will be examined.

Manufacturers: If It Can't be Imported, We Will Manufacture It at Home

In the war period, a considerable number of manufacturers enjoyed high profit rates and accumulated substantial amounts of capital. There were several factors lying behind these developments. First, a decrease in the volume of imports and the domestic production provided advantageous market conditions for manufacturers who were able to continue their business activities during the war years. According to statistical data provided by Boratav, while industrial production decreased twenty-two percent in the period between 1939 and 1945 prices of industrial goods increased 357 percent.³⁶

In some sectors, scarcities prompted by the decrease in the volume of import inspired manufacturers to make innovations and thereby take advantage of market

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Roger Owen and Şevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 1998), p. 25.

³⁶ Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908-1985* (İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi, 1995), p. 69.

conditions. Pharmaceuticals and machine building witnessed such innovations. When medicine and vitamin imports were reduced, or even stopped, small and medium scale laboratories began to manufacture these products themselves. One of these small laboratories was run by Nejat Eczacıbaşı. Eczacıbaşı first engaged in the production of fish oil:

In the 1930s, it was believed that drinking fish oil was the symbol of a healthy life... Fish oil was imported from Norway. Like other goods the import of fish oil became impossible with the war. Using the knowledge from my biochemistry education, I planned to produce a similar product... I mixed refined oil with crystallized Vitamin A and Vitamin D that I had brought with me from England and poured the prepared mixture in small bottles. These "Concentrated Fish Oils," which were prepared in the kitchen of the building, were delivered to the pharmacies at night. The name of the medicine was D-Vital. Its price was 105 piasters.³⁷

Eczacıbaşı's second work was also directly related to the wartime scarcities. He and one of his friends, Dr. Kemal Baran, began to produce baby food. The young entrepreneurs did not need initial financial capital for their venture: they bought starch on credit from the starch factory in Çubuklu and made the formula in a basement owned by Dr. Baran's mother.³⁸

In fact, the business career of Eczacıbaşı in the war years was not limited to the pharmaceutical sector. When the import of coffee cups was also severely restricted,

³⁷ Nejat Eczacıbaşı, *Kuşaktan Kuşağa* (İstanbul: Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı Vakfı, 1982), pp. 78-79. "İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan önceki 1930'lu yıllarda balık yağı içmek sağlıklı yaşamın bir simgesi sayılırdı. Balık yağı Türkiye'ye fiçular içinde Norveç'ten getirilirdi. Savaş yılları her ithal malında olduğu gibi balık yağının da Türkiye'ye getirilmesini olanaksız duruma sokmuştu. Biyokimya eğitiminden gelen bilgimle o sıralarda balık yağının bir benzerini yapmayı düşünmüştüm... Türkiye'de rafine yağ fazlasıyla bulunduğuna göre, küçük paketçikler içinde İngiltere'den getirttiğim kristalize Vitamin D ve Vitamin A'yı rafine yağın içerisine ölçülü miktarlarda karıştırarak hazırlanan sıvıyı, onar gramlık şişelere dolduruyordum. Akşamları apartman mutfağında hazırlanan bu "Konsantre Balık Yağları" beşer onar adetlik paketler halinde eczanelere dağıtılırdı. Müstahzarın adı D-Vital'di. Fiyatı 105 kuruştı."

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 79-80.

Eczacıbaşı and a businessperson experienced in the sector, Pastellas, engaged in the production of coffee cups in Kartal, Istanbul.³⁹ While Eczacıbaşı was busy with the technical aspect of the work, Pastellas was responsible for marketing.⁴⁰ After the war, Eczacıbaşı developed these small scale businesses activities: the small laboratories were replaced by a big medicine factory with the help of credit received from the Bank for the Development of Industry (*Sınai Kalkınma Bankası*) and the Kartal factory was transformed into a ceramics factory.

The İbrahim Ethem Laboratory also made improvements during the war years. The small laboratory, run by the Ulagay brothers who had completed their educations in medicine and pharmacy, firstly engaged in the production of liver medicine. The right to manufacture this medicine belonged to Professor Süreyya Aygün. However, when Aygün's product caused complaints in the market, Suat Ulagay took the initiative. With the help of biology professors, he began to manufacture the medicine in 1943. The name of the new medicine was *Ekstrepat*.⁴¹ The number of medicines prepared and manufactured by the laboratory increased in the following years: from nineteen in 1944, to twenty-nine in 1945, and forty-one in 1946.⁴² As a report of the Ministry of Health reveals, the small laboratory in

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 81-82.

⁴⁰ Celal Ertuğ, *Sivil Toplum Lideri Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1998), pp. 69-70.

⁴¹ Mehmet Altun, *İ.E. Ulagay İlaç Sanayi Türk A.Ş. 100 Yaşında Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Hayallerin Gerçekleştiği 100 Yıl* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 2003), p. 157.

⁴² Ibid., p. 162.

Çemberlitaş became insufficient because of the increase in the volume of work. The report recommended its enlargement.⁴³

Şeref Diler was another entrepreneur in the pharmaceuticals sector. After working with his brother in a pharmacy in Taksim, he established a small laboratory with limited capital in 1942. The war was a turning point for him:

Due to the fact that medicines could not be imported in the war years, we enlarged our organization. In 1947, we moved to this building. Initially we were producing five types of medicine. Today this number has reached twenty-six.⁴⁴

The restriction in the flow of imports offered opportunities also in the machine-building sector. Nuri Öz was an entrepreneur who began his career in the sector in the war years: “When the machines used by carpenters could not be imported during the war years, we began to produce these machines by ourselves in simple ways.”⁴⁵ The accumulation of capital during the war years enabled Öz to enlarge his production and establish a new factory. By 1953, the Özler Carpenter and Machine Factory was producing fifteen types of carpentry machines. Moreover, a motor and tractor factory was in the establishment stage.⁴⁶

Mihran Yarmayan and his father Harutyun Yarmayan had an important position in the machine-building sector. The Yarmayans began their manufacturing

⁴³ Ibid., p. 163.

⁴⁴ *Yirminci Asır* 3, no.57 (10 September 1953). “*Harp dolayısıyla memleketimize müstahzar ilaç gelmediğinden teşkilatımızı genişlettik. 1947 senesinde bu binaya geçtik. İlk zamanlar beş çeşit müstahzar yaparken, bugün yirmi altı çeşit müstahzar yapıyoruz.*”

⁴⁵ *Yirminci Asır* 3, no.60 (1 October 1953). “*İkinci Cihan Harbinde memleketin ihtiyacı olan ve harp dolayısıyla hariçten gelmeyen marangozluğa ait makineleri kendi bünyemize göre basit bir şekilde imal etmeğe başladık.*”

⁴⁶ Ibid.

venture in 1924 by establishing a small workshop in Perşembepazarı. They initially manufactured iron goods, such as nails, horseshoes, stoves and axes. Towards the end of the 1930s, they began to manufacture sterilizers and projectors. Between 1939 and 1942, the army became the most important customer for those machines. However, this relationship with the army led to a catastrophe for the family. When the army opened bids for sterilizers in 1942, Faik Ökte, who was the Head of the Financial Department (*Defterdar*) in Istanbul, warned Mihran Yarmayan to not to participate in the bid because one of his close friends would be participating. Yarmayan responded negatively, but the cost of this negative answer was high. After a short period, the Wealth Tax was promulgated. The tax due demanded from the Yarmayans was one million TL. Unable to pay this amount, they were sent to Aşkale. The bright career of the Yarmayan family thus ended.⁴⁷

There were similar stories in the other sectors. Ali Hüsni Türkoğlu, who retired from the army in 1926, first worked in the foreign firms operating in Turkey as a translator. After analyzing domestic production and import levels in the button industry, he established a button factory. When the flow of raw materials used by the button factories ceased with the beginning of the war, after making several trials Türkoğlu began to use an alternative raw material, boxwood. Even though buttons could not be imported during the war, Türkoğlu's factory and another button factory managed to supply buttons for the domestic market by using boxwood as their raw

⁴⁷ Gülay Dinçel, "Üç Kuşak Sanayici Bir Ermeni Ailesi," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no.69 (September 1999), pp.22-33. According to the Wealth Tax Law, promulgated on 12 November 1942, taxpayers who could not pay their debts within one month would be sent to Aşkale for hard labor. The first group, which was composed of thirty-two minorities, was sent to Aşkale on 27 January 1943. For more information, see Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi Ve Türkleştirme Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000).

material. This enabled Türkoğlu to overcome foreign competitors even after the war. In the mid-1950s, Türkoğlu and other domestic factories supplied millions of buttons for the Railway Company, sugar factories, the gendarme, and the domestic market.⁴⁸

On the other hand, in some sectors raw materials, which were accessible in the domestic market, enabled already established factories and workshops to take advantage of wartime scarcities. Cotton, which was used in various sectors, was one of these raw materials. For instance, in 1943, market conditions were very favorable for cotton oil producers. Although the government set a fixed price for refined cotton oil, which was 125 piasters per kilogram, prices on the black market had already reached to 6-7 TL.⁴⁹

The cotton oil and soap factory run by Salamon Rafael Glido, who was a migrant from Russia, enjoyed its golden age in the war years. The factory had been set up in 1927 and was known as “the factory of the Russian” in the Adana region. Employing one hundred forty-eight workers, it produced approximately two million kilograms of cotton oil and one hundred forty-three thousand kilograms of soap in the 1940s. In the war years, the value of the factory’s annual production was estimated as between eight and ten million TL.⁵⁰

The prospects of high profits encouraged four entrepreneurs to invest in the cotton oil industry. The establishment of the Turkish Vegetable Oils Factory (*Türk Nebati Yağlar Fabrikası*) was the fruit of this investment. The founders of the

⁴⁸ "Hayatta Muvaffak Olmuş İşadamlarımız 1950'lerden Sanayici Portreleri," in *75 Yılda Çarkları Döndürenler*, ed. Gülay Dinçel and Oya Baydar (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999).

⁴⁹ Muammer Tuksavul, *Doğudan Batıya ve Sonrası* (İstanbul: 1981),p. 399.

⁵⁰ Sadun Tanju, *Hacı Ömer* (İstanbul: Apa Ofset Basımevi, 1985), pp. 74-75.

factory, Ömer Sabancı, Nuh Naci Yazgan, Mustafa Özgür, and Nuri Has, were originally from Kayseri, but they had become rich in the Adana region from the cotton trade in the 1920s and 1930s. When they failed to convince Glido to sell his factory, they established a new oil factory.⁵¹ The machines to be used in the factory were imported from Germany before the war. In the fall of 1942, the founders made an agreement with Muammer Tuksavul to assemble the machines and operate the factory. Tuksavul, who had played important roles in the construction of the Eskişehir and Alpullu sugar factories in the 1930s, managed to finish the assemblage in the fall of 1943. Moreover, he transferred experienced workers and foremen whom he had known to the new factory.⁵²

Cotton was also a source profit in the textile industry. An important customer of cotton in the Çukurova region was the National Textiles Factory (*Milli Mensucat Fabrikası*). The factory, set up in 1906 by Aristis Simyanoğlu and his partners, was nationalized in 1923. It was sold to Nuh Naci Yazgan, Nuri Has, Mustafa Özgür and Seyit Tekin on 27 September 1927. After repairing the old buildings and machines, the shareholders engaged in the production of yarn and cloth.⁵³ The position of the factory in the war years was described by Kadir Has, Nuri Has' son: "The National Textiles Factory was an industrial establishment which was a source of pride for Turkey in the 1940s. Çukurova cotton was processed in the factory. The owners of

⁵¹ Tanju, *Hacı Ömer*, p. 76.

⁵² Muammer Tuksavul, *Doğudan Batıya ve Sonrası* (İstanbul:1981), p.396.

⁵³ Kadir Has, *Vatan Borcu Ödüyorum*, ed. Hulusi Turgut (İstanbul: ABC, 2003), p.80.

the factory, Nuri Has, Nuh Naci Yazgan, Mustafa Özgür, and Seyit Çavuş (Tekin) were very pleased.”⁵⁴

In the textile industry, there were many similar stories. For instance, a migrant family, which was originally from Salonica, began to make considerable investments in the textile sector in 1930. During the 1930s, the family expanded with new workshops and small factories, and increased the variety and quantity of knit goods. In the war years, their venture operated very profitably despite heavy payments under the Wealth Tax.⁵⁵ At this point, it is important to emphasize that although the Wealth Tax affected the business career of many minority entrepreneurs negatively, high profit rates in the textile industry enabled a considerable number of textile manufacturers to recover from the burden of the Tax. For instance, a family, which paid 1.7 million, recovered the entire sum within two years. After conducting interviews with fourteen minority textile manufacturers employing more than 200 workers in 1968 about their business careers, Edward Clark concluded that, “a reason commonly given for such rapid recovery was the strength of the seller’s market during the World War II. Manufacturers who had been able to retain plant and equipment by contracting mortgages to pay Wealth Tax debts continued large sales and profits while imported goods remained scarce.”⁵⁶

In fact, not only the manufacturers, but also entrepreneurs dealing with the trade of raw materials benefited from the existing market conditions. Cotton was one

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.80.

⁵⁵ Edward Clark, "The Emergence of Textile Manufacturing Entrepreneurs in Turkey, 1804-1968" (Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton University, 1969), p.131.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp.166-167.

of the crucial raw materials in the war period. As Boratav has stated, the price of cotton raised 356 percent in the period between 1939 and 1945.⁵⁷ The margins of profit in the cotton trade can also be deduced from the memoirs of Ömer Sabancı. Thinking that the Wealth Tax he was going to pay would be approximately 400,000 TL, Sabancı began to buy up cotton on the Adana cotton market, which had been calm for one week. The cotton stocks on the market were cleared by him in a day. At the end of the day, Sabancı was happy because “the tax came almost for nothing.”⁵⁸

Nedim Kaleci was also busy in the cotton trade. During the World War II, he traveled Anatolia seeking opportunities for buying cotton and wool: “My intention was to purchase cotton and wool from rich raw material sources in Anatolia, and sell them to textile factories in Istanbul and different regions of Anatolia.” To fulfill this goal, Kaleci developed a widespread network system, which operated well, in Anatolia.⁵⁹

Scrap iron was another important raw material for industry during the war years. Şakir Kopuz was busy with trade of scrap iron in this period. He bought sunken ships from their owners and extracted soft iron sheets from them. Extracted soft shift iron was sold to state-run factories and in the domestic market.

The Karabük Iron and Steel Factory was one of his leading customers. For instance, after the beginning of the war, the factory administration and Kopuz made

⁵⁷ Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908-1985*, p. 69.

⁵⁸ Tanju, *Hacı Ömer*, p. 62. “Vergiyi bedavaya getirdik sayılır.”

⁵⁹ *Yirminci Asır* 3, no.78 (11 February 1954). “Niyetim Anadolu’nun zengin yapıtı ve pamuk kaynaklarından hammadde alıp İstanbul’da ve başka şehirlerdeki dokuma fabrikalarına satmaktı.”

an agreement on the sale of 5,000 tons of scrap iron.⁶⁰ Similarly in 1942, 300 tons of scrap iron were sold to the Ergani Copper Mines.⁶¹ However, in some cases, the conditions proposed by the state run factories were problematic. For instance, in November 1941, Sırrı Seyrek, the General Manager of Military Factories, sent a telegraph to Kopuz and demanded an agreement on the sale of scrap iron. After negotiations were made between the parties, Kopuz responded that the conditions proposed by the Military Factories were hard to fulfill and the prices offered per ton were low. The parties could not find a midway.⁶²

The war conditions were also stirring for the domestic market. During the war years, Kopuz and other tradesmen within the sector faced an unseen demand for scrap iron:

With the beginning of the World War, the sea and land routes were closed. As a consequence of the iron scarcity, the price of scrap iron suddenly rose. Anatolia and Thrace were heaping on orders. Big and small tradesmen, even village blacksmiths and farriers began to rush Istanbul and buy even the smallest iron pieces.⁶³

When the iron stocks were on the brink of exhaustion because of this unseen demand, Kopuz accelerated his activity of extraction: three sunken ships, *Homelitas*, *Roditi*, and *Anastasiya*, became his source of scrap iron.⁶⁴ Moreover, the availability

⁶⁰ Şakir Kopuz, *Rizeli Bir İşadamının Gerçek Yaşam Öyküsü 1892-1963* (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2003), p. 58.

⁶¹ Ibid. p.64.

⁶² Ibid., p. 64.

⁶³ Ibid., p 58. "Aynı zamanda umumi harbin ilanıyla deniz ve karayolları kapanmıştı. Bu yüzden eski demirlerimiz birdenbire, yeni demir fıkdanından dolayı yüksek fiyatlara çıktı. Bütün Anadolu'dan ve Trakya'dan siparişler yağmaktaydı. Büyük, küçük tüccarlar, hatta köy demirci ve nalbantları İstanbul'a tehcüm göstermeye, en küçük demir ve saç parçalarına varıncaya kadar toplamaya başladılar."

of raw materials enabled Kopuz to manufacture iron goods that could not be imported. A Hungarian blacksmith operating an iron shears in Galata manufactured all kinds of horseshoes in his name.⁶⁵

Besides the wartime scarcities and inflation, uneven and exploitative relationship between the manufacturers and their workers was an important factor lying behind the wartime high profit rates. In the war, while prices in the market were rapidly increasing, the real incomes of workers in the manufacturing sector were negatively affected. According to the estimates of United Nations, real wages in the manufacturing sector decreased forty percent in the period between 1939 and 1943.⁶⁶ On the other hand, according to Boratav, in the period between 1939 and 1945, real wages decreased fifty percent.⁶⁷ Moreover, an important portion of entrepreneurs refrained from making even the basic investments necessary for the workers' health. A group of deputies preparing a report about the working conditions in Istanbul two years after the war, wrote the followings after he made surveys in the workshops within Mahmutpaşa region: "What conditions human beings bear in order to earn a piece of bread."⁶⁸

In addition to these, legal regulations aiming to overcome the labor scarcity problem and prevent the decrease of production levels provided favorable conditions

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.60.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.60.

⁶⁶ Tezel, *Cumhuriyet Döneminin İktisadi Tarihi (1923-1950)*, p.259.

⁶⁷ Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi 1908-1985*, p.69.

⁶⁸ "Bazı Bölgelerdeki İşyerleri ve İşçilerin Genel Durumu Hakkında BMM Çalışma Komisyonundan Bir Grubun Hazırladıkları Rapor," (30 December 1947), 490..01/728.495,5. I would like to thank Yiğit Akın who shared with me this report.

for the manufacturers and strengthened the uneven relationship. For instance, regulations made in the National Protection Law with regard to work life proposed extra work hours, the abolition of weekend holidays and a compulsory work regime, banned the workers, technicians and engineers from leaving their posts without the notice of their employer or an admissible excuse.⁶⁹ Discussions of these regulations, which violated the basic rights of workers, in the parliament reflected the general attitude among the ruling elites towards the workers. Most of these regulations passed through parliament without any discussion. However, after officials read Article 19, proposing that in industrial and mining enterprises work hours could be extended three hours, female and child labor could be employed in night shifts, and weekend holidays could be abolished, İzmir deputy Sadettin Epikmen shouted from his seat: “Three hours of extra time, is that all?” On the other hand, Bingöl Deputy Feridun Fikri, presiding over the session, stated that, “workers could not be forced to make weekend holidays. They could renounce the weekend holidays.”⁷⁰

It is important to emphasize that not only the workers, but also rest of the people, as consumers, were sacrificed for the success of manufacturers. They had to pay high prices for the low quality goods. This was also a serious problem for Sümerbank. A report prepared by the prime ministry inspection committee in 1943 for Sümerbank referred to this fact:

The goods, which are manufactured with the supposition that in any case they will be bought by Sümerbank but could not be sold on the

⁶⁹ *Milli Korunma Kanunu*, Republic of Turkey Düstur 3. Tertip, vol 21, pp 433-442.

⁷⁰ T.B.M.M Zabıt Ceridesi, 6th Term, vol 8, 27th Session, 18 January 1940, pp 138-158.

market, are accumulating. These products are known as “goods that are not demanded in the market.” They are bothering Sümerbank.⁷¹

Similar points were emphasized by Hulki Alisbah, who was the General Manager of Sümerbank in the period under consideration: “Some opportunists emerged. They were decreasing quality and seeking ways to sell their products at higher prices. They were using politicians as intermediaries.”⁷²

Low quality products were brought onto the agenda of the national assembly during the budget talks in 1945 by Giresun Deputy İ. Sabuncu: “Moreover, woolen cloth is constantly spoilt. Quality, where is quality? As I have mentioned, the width of this cloth are also not compatible with the world standards... Even thirty years before their quality was better.”⁷³

Thirdly, government regulations also played a critical role in the success stories of manufacturers. During the War years, government monopolized the purchase and sale of some consumption goods by government institutions. For instance, according to a governmental decree, private manufacturers in the textile sector would be given weaving yarn by Sümerbank. In return, they had to sell their products to Sümerbank. However, there arose unevenness in the distribution process of raw materials. For instance, in a meeting between deputies and weaver’s representatives in Urfa, the representatives complained that out of 1,000 looms only

⁷¹ "Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," (Ankara: Başvekalet Umumi Murakabe Heyeti, 1944), p.36. “Böylece nasıl olsa Sümerbank alacak kanaatiyle imal edilen, fakat piyasaca kabul görmeyen nevilerin imali satılmayıp kalan bir kısım mamullerin birikmesine yol açmış oluyor ki << rağbet görmeyen mallar >> adı verilen bu mallar Bankayı önemli surette işgal etmektedir.”

⁷² Tanju, Hacı Ömer, p. 227. “Bu gibi hallerde olduğu gibi fırsatçılar çıktı. Kaliteyi düşürüyorlar, yüksek fiyatla satma yollarını arıyorlar. Araya politikacıları sokuyorlar.”

⁷³ T.B.M.M Zabıt Ceridesi, 7th Term, vol 17, 63rd Session, 26 May 1945, p 402.

120 of them could be run because of yarn scarcity. However, according to their claim, there was no such problem in Gaziantep, where 8,000 looms could be run.⁷⁴ The performance of the Gaziantep weavers partly verified their claims. Although mostly composed of small producers, with only one loom, the net income of the Weaver Cooperative (*Dokumacılar Kooperatifi*) in Gaziantep was 75,000 TL in 1943.⁷⁵

A similar problem was observed in Isparta. According to the report prepared by the Isparta MPs in 1942, weavers who had close relations with state officials entered the distribution list while many ordinary weavers remained out.⁷⁶ As underlined in this report, some weavers, who were included in the yarn distribution, did not use the yarn in weaving. Instead, they sold it in the black-market.⁷⁷ Similar acts were observed throughout the country. In September 1945, an official from Sümerbank complained that although the Bank sold one kilogram of cotton yarn at 18-20 TL., in the black market, the price of cotton yarn reached 40 TL.⁷⁸ Similarly, a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry claimed that an important portion of the loom owners had taken recourse to this illegal method to increase their profits.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ *Yenilik*, 17 April 1944.

⁷⁵ *Yeni Gaziantep*, 25 February 1944.

⁷⁶ Yiğit Akın, "New Sources, New Approaches: Contribution to the Early Republican Labor History," unpublished (2004),

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Tan*, 26 September 1945.

⁷⁹ Cevat Nizami, "İhtikardan Hepimiz Mesulüz," *Akşam*, 8 March 1945.

Those illegal activities reached such an extent that they became the subject of judicial and ministerial investigations in the last year of the war. For instance, in the summer of 1945 the Ministry of Economy ordered Sümerbank to cease distributing artificial silk yarns to twenty factory owners, who had been found selling the yarn in the black market.⁸⁰ Some firms in the textile sector were sent to the National Protection Court.⁸¹ For instance, Hakkı Bilginer and Hasan Akyüz, who bought cotton yarns from entitled Anatolian loom owners, were sentenced to prison and fined for selling the yarn to a trader secretly and making 12,000 TL profit.⁸²

Importers: In Pursuit of Import Licenses

The impact of government policies was also seen in foreign trade. When the scarcity of essential consumption and investment goods in the domestic market were combined with profitable exchange and tariff rate policies there appeared high profit opportunities for tradesmen who could obtain import licenses.

During the war years, the Turkish government continued to keep the value of the TL high in relation to foreign currencies. While prices were increasing rapidly in the market, tradesmen with import licenses enjoyed cheap foreign exchange.⁸³ According to custom declarations made according to TL, the prices of imported

⁸⁰ *Tan*, 26 September 1945.

⁸¹ Nizami, "İhtikardan Hepimiz Mesulüz."

⁸² *Tan*, 20 September 1945.

⁸³ Tezel, *Cumhuriyet Döneminin İktisadi Tarihi (1923-1950)*, pp. 180-181.

goods increased only 189 percent in the period between 1939 and 1944. On the other hand, in the same period, according to statistics prepared by the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the increase in wholesale prices was 380 percent.⁸⁴ This huge gap between the two ratios gives valuable clues about the impact of the government's exchange rate policy on importers' high profit rates. The exchange rate policy was accompanied by a tariff policy which was also advantageous for importers. In the period between 1938 and 1941, the tariff rates of specific goods were increased. The ratio of tax revenues obtained from import transactions to the total value of imported goods rose from 0.41 to 0.49. However, in the period between 1941 and 1945, specific tariff rates were not raised. As a consequence of this, the above-mentioned ratio decreased to 0.19 in 1945.⁸⁵

The high profits obtained from import deals can also be deduced from the memoirs of Vehbi Koç. As the agent of the Ford Company, Koç imported ninety trucks in the war years via Baghdad. The trucks, costing 3,000 TL each, were sold to the government with a commission of ninety percent on the retail value. In fact, most of the importers preferred to sell trucks in Baghdad because the same trucks could be sold for 15,000 TL in that city.⁸⁶ An illegal but promising way of increasing profit ranges was to hoard hard to find imports. In July 1944, Mrs. Georginna Maynard visited a shop that hoarded English chintz:

At one very swank shop, just by way of explaining what I wanted I asked if they had cretonne. The clerk said "no," but not very

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 258

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 180-181.

⁸⁶ Vehbi Koç, *Hayat Hikayem* (İstanbul: Vehbi Koç Vakfı, 1987), p. 58.

emphatically... Pretty soon, he brought a much rumpled sample from his pocket. It was an English chintz. I said I could not use that color. So with a shifty glance, he surreptitiously brought a sample of upholstery linen from the other pocket. Strictly a black market.⁸⁷

Importers seeking to take advantage of the increasing demand triggered by wartime scarcities were ambitious about taking import licenses. The provision of those licenses usually depended on the existence of external and internal political links. The story of Vehbi Koç was an example of this case. Koç was an importer of German goods during the war. As a direct result of this fact, the British government did not permit him to import British goods. However, the tragedy of the Jewish people and his political links offered him a chance to obtain the permission of the British government.

After the invasion of Romania by German troops, a ship carrying approximately 600 Jewish passengers came to Istanbul. The Mobil Oil Company's Romania agent and his family were among the passengers. Due to the fact that Turkey did not permit the passengers to disembark, the General Manager of the Mobil Oil Company in Turkey, Mr. Walker, asked Koç's help for the rescue of the Company's Romania agent and his family. To answer this demand, Koç used his political links. First of all, he went to the Police Chief (*Şube Müdürü*), İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, and told him about the case. Çağlayangil responded that there had been a lot of similar demands and advised him to appeal to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Faik Öztrak. Then, Koç asked the help of the minister. Öztrak responded positively: The agent and his family got out of the ship and within two days left

⁸⁷ Georgianna Mathew Maynard, *Letters from Turkey 1939-1946* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1994), p. 114.

Istanbul for Haifa. After this incident, Mr. Walker, who was an experienced businessperson used his strong political links in England and the U.S. to remove Koç from the black lists of these countries.⁸⁸

Government Regulations in the Field of Agriculture

Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, who was the head of the Industrial Inspection Committee (*Sanayi Tetkik Heyeti*) and was authorized for provisioning during the war,⁸⁹ recounted that the government did not make any preparation for coping with the war time scarcities. According to him, the most conspicuous problems at the beginning of the war were the insufficiency of depots used for storing agricultural products and of national stocks.⁹⁰ Even when there were sufficient stocks, they could not be used properly. For instance, although at the beginning of the war Prime Minister Refik Saydam declared that the country had sufficient cereal stocks, two years later the villagers were obliged to sell their cereal crops to the government

⁸⁸ Koc, *Hayat Hikayem*, pp. 64-65. The existence of political links was also necessary in the other sectors. For instance, when the costs began to increase with the beginning of the war, the contractors who won bids opened by government offices faced great problems in fulfilling their obligations. The contractors appealed to the Prime Minister for the revision of the prices set in the bids. The demand was accepted by the parliament and the contractors rescued themselves from suffering losses. For instance, Haydar Emre and Vehbi Koç undertook to construct the Elazığ-Palu railway line and in return, they were paid six million TL in the spring of 1939. However, with the beginning of the war, the price was revised and increased to eighteen million TL. Emre and Koç profited from this venture after this revision. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

⁸⁹ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam* (İstanbul. Remzi Kitabevi, 1974), p. 497.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 499. The problem of storing agricultural products persisted during the War years. For instance, on May 1944, *Yenilik*, a paper published in Şanlıurfa, reported that the Soil Products Office (*Toprak Mahsulleri Ofisi*) was looking for a building for storing the cereals it would buy.

because of the exhaustion of stocks.⁹¹ In November 1942, then Prime Minister Saraçoğlu stated that when the government obliged villagers to sell twenty-five percent of their cereal harvests to the government, the storage facilities were almost empty.⁹²

Mostly unprepared for the war time conditions, the government made regulations in different fields to cope with the scarcities and increasing prices. These regulations ranged from the mandatory sale of cereals to the government; the in-kind taxation of agricultural products; the monopolizing of the purchase and sale of some consumption goods by government institutions; the rationing of hard to find products, such as bread, clothes, coal and sugar; to applying a forced labor regime to increase, or at least sustain, industrial production. This section looks at the regulations dealing with agricultural production. The main point of attention will be the impact of these regulations on various agricultural groups.

At the beginning of war, the wheat stocks of Turkey amounted to 250,000 tons. The level of production in 1938-39 and 1940 remained at almost the same levels. In 1939 and 1940, Turkey was a net exporter of wheat. For instance, in 1940, Turkey exported 60,000 of wheat to Germany and Belgium. However, when stocks began to dwindle toward the end of the 1940s and agricultural production decreased rapidly in 1941, the government intervened in the situation. In February 1941, villagers were obliged to sell their annual cereal production to the Soil Products Office (*Toprak Mahsulleri Ofisi*) at prices set by the government. They could only reserve a limited

⁹¹ Şevket Pamuk, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Devlet, Tarımsal Yapılar ve Bölüşüm*, in *Türkiye'de Tarımsal Yapılar*, ed. Zafer Toprak and Şevket Pamuk, (Ankara: Yurt Yayınevi, 1988).

⁹² *Ayn Tarihi*, no.108 (November 1942).

amount for their own subsistence, and as seed and animal feed. On August 1942, this regulation was revised. According to the new regulation, villagers whose production did not exceed fifty tons had to sell twenty-five percent of their production to the Office at prices set by the government. When the production exceeded fifty tons, the percentages were increased: thirty-five percent for production levels ranging between fifty and hundred tons, and fifty percent for production levels exceeding hundred tons. Government intervention was not limited to these regulations. In June 1943, the Soil Products Tax (*Toprak Mahsulleri Ofisi Vergisi*) was promulgated. The law introduced an in kind-tax for certain agricultural products.⁹³ Despite those regulations, stocks did not reach the desired levels. For instance, while government officials were hoping that 1,500,000 tons of cereals would be stocked via the obligatory sales, the actual result was 600,000 tons in 1942.⁹⁴

The gap between these numbers can partly be explained by crop concealment by the villagers. Official declarations and local papers occasionally underlined this fact. For instance, a circular prepared by the Ministry of Trade in the summer of 1942 noted that bags of cereals submitted to the Soil Products Office had been found to contain an important amount of sand and dirt.⁹⁵ Six months later, the techniques of concealment used by landowners was discussed in *Açık Ses*, a paper published in Bursa. Before government officials arrived for inspections, cereals were concealed in bags, tins, and jugs. Due to the fact that the measurement of crops usually began

⁹³ Pamuk, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Devlet, Tarımsal Yapılar ve Bölüşüm*, pp. 101-107.

⁹⁴ *Aydın Tarihi*, no. 108 (November 1942).

⁹⁵ *Çankırı*, 24 August 1943.

in the afternoon and continued till night, concealment became easier.⁹⁶ In November 1942, *Yeni Zonguldak* advised villagers to sell twenty-five percent of their production to the Agricultural Bank (*Ziraat Bankası*) and not to listen to degenerates who tried to get them to conceal their crops.⁹⁷

Villagers concealing their crops from government officials had different motives. Small landowners,⁹⁸ who faced great troubles in reserving cereals for subsistence and as seeds after the promulgation of the obligatory twenty-five percent sales, used concealed cereals for their own subsistence. Pamuk calculates that families owning five hectares land produced approximately four tons of cereal in the war years. When they sold twenty-five percent of the cereals to the government and used half of the rest as seeds and animal feed, there remained only two tons of cereal for the family. Two tons only covered the yearly consumption of a family of five-six people. Families, whose lands were smaller than five hectares, had to reduce their cereal consumption.⁹⁹

Village monographs prepared by sociology students during the World War II reflected the plight of the small landowners. One of those monographs was prepared by Nedim Göknil in villages in the Bilecik region. Two villages, Kasımlar and

⁹⁶ *Açık Ses*, 19 February 1944.

⁹⁷ *Yeni Zonguldak*, 21 October 1942.

⁹⁸ Small landowners were the ones who did not have sufficient lands and tools for the reproduction of their families. On the other hand, middle scale landowners had the lands and tools that enabled them to produce for the market. They sometimes rented additional lands and used waged labor to increase their production. Families whose land possessions ranged from eight to ten hectares were usually categorized as middle scale land owners. See Nadir Özbek, "Kapitalist Rejim Ve Popülizmin Sınırları: Büyük Buhran ve Buğday Alım Politikaları, 1932,1937," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 96 (Spring 2003), pp. 219-240.

⁹⁹ Pamuk, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Devlet, Tarımsal Yapılar ve Bölüşüm*, p. 106.

Tuzaklı, were compared. Cereals were the main soil products in the villages. However, in Tuzaklı, there existed additional economic activities. In both of the villages, small landownership was dominant. For instance, families owning 1.8 hectares land in Kasımlar were categorized as big land owners by Göknil. Most of the villagers in those villages could not realize their needs through agriculture.

Alibey, who was from Kasımlar, was a typical example:

My family is composed of five people: my mother, my wife and, two brothers. Although all of us work, these efforts only provide three-fourths of our needs. I could not sell wheat because it is not enough for me... To balance income and expenses, I have to work as an instructor in another village.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, in Tuzaklı villagers were mostly unable to produce the cereals necessary for their subsistence. For instance, the family of İbrahim Ozyar, an average family in the village, could only produce three tons of wheat in 1942. However, the existence of an additional economic activity, silk cocoons, enabled the family to earn additional income. In 1942, the family earned 200 TL from cocoons.¹⁰¹

Small landowners who were unable to make the ends meet sometimes demanded the government abolish their obligations. For instance, in May 1944, Rıza Ünlü, a villager from Zonguldak, wrote *Tan* and described the hard conditions in his region. The soil was unfertile and the annual crops were consumed within six or

¹⁰⁰ Nedim Göknil, "Garbi Anadolu Köy Monografileri," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyoloji Dergisi*, no. 2 (1943), pp. 312-337. "Ailem bir ana, bir zevce, iki kardeş bir de ben olmak üzere beş nüfustur. Müstereken çalışırız. Buna rağmen bütün bu çalışmalar ihtiyacımızın dörtte üçünü temin edebilir... Varidatla masrafta aynı seviyede tutabilmek için başka bir köyde öğretmenlik yapmaya mecbur olurum."

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

seven months. Villagers depended on the market for the rest of the year. Underlying these facts, Ünlü demanded the abolition of Soil Products Tax in his region.¹⁰²

Departing from these facts it could be argued that small landowners, who faced great problems in making ends met, concealed cereals from government officials for their own subsistence. Most of them did not have any chance to sell cereals on the market, where the prices were much higher than the ones set by the government.

The obligatory sales were less hard pressing for middle and large land owners. Pamuk argues that the owners of mid-sized lands were obliged to sell cereals, which they had been able to sell in the market previously, to the government after the promulgation of the obligatory twenty-five percent sales. Concealment enabled them to sell at least some portion of their crops on the market. On the other hand, obligatory twenty-five percent sales enabled large land owners to sell an important portion of their crops on the market. As the cultivated lands increased, the amount reserved by the growers increased. Large land owners, after selling twenty-five percent of cereals to the government and reserving almost the same amount as seed, could sell the rest on the free market at high prices.¹⁰³ Concealment enabled them to sell more crops on the market.

There usually existed a great gap between prices set by the government and the prices on the market. For instance, according to the price list prepared by the cabinet in May 1943, the government would pay twenty piasters for one kilogram of wheat,

¹⁰² *Tan*, 15 April 1944.

¹⁰³ Pamuk, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Devlet, Tarımsal Yapılar ve Bölüşüm*, p.106.

sixteen piasters for one kilogram of corn, and sixteen piasters for one kilogram of oats.¹⁰⁴ However, between 15 April 1943 and 15 May 1943, the price of one kilogram wheat was eighty piasters, of one kilogram corn was fifty piasters, and of one kilogram oats was forty piasters in Istanbul.¹⁰⁵ Middle and large landowners tried to take advantage of these high prices by concealing their products. Among them were even deputies. In 1942, a wheat storage facility, being concealed from government officials, was discovered on Eskişehir deputy Emin Sazak's farm and the wheat was confiscated.¹⁰⁶

These government regulations favoring large landowners over small landowners also led to irregularities. Reşadiye and Malatya witnessed such incidents. In 1941-1942 officials at the Reşadiye Soil Products Office declared that seed would be distributed to villagers. The villagers, in order to receive more seeds, showed more cultivated lands than they had. However, when the harvest was bad due to poor weather conditions, the gap between the actual and estimated crop was great. Most of the villagers could not fulfill their obligations to the government. The officers at the Reşadiye Soil Products Office took advantage of this situation. Receiving bribe from villagers, they showed indebted villagers as if they had paid their debts. This created fictitious wheat stocks in the office's storage facilities. The problem was solved by juggling the accounts. In this way, the officials not only

¹⁰⁴ "1943 Mahsulü Hububat Ve Bakliyattan Alınacak Devlet Hisseleri," *İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Mecmuası* 59, no. 6 (June 1943).

¹⁰⁵ *İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Mecmuası* 59, no. 6 (June 1943). In the previous month prices were even higher. For instance, the price of one kilogram wheat reached 130 piaster between 15 March 1943 and 15 April 1943.

¹⁰⁶ Aydemir, *İkinci Adam (II. Cilt)*, (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1975), p. 202.

solved the problem of imagined stocks, but also obtained surplus wheat. The surplus wheat was sold on the free market at high prices. The officials, to cover the irregularities, burned the office building in Reşadiye. As a result of the fire, unlawfully prepared receipts and other official documents were destroyed.¹⁰⁷

These acts enabled the Soil Products Office's officials to improve their life conditions. However, when the Office's storage official, Kirameddin Gençler, bought new furniture and brought them to Reşadiye, his act attracted the attention of the public prosecutor, who confiscated the furniture, the value of which reached 3,000 TL. The prosecutor initiated an investigation during which he was accompanied by Naci Göniman, the Soil Products Office's Sivas agent. The prosecutor assessed the living conditions of the officials. Concluding the investigation, Göniman fired the chief officer and Mayor Ali Coşkun, accountant and cashier Şükrü Erol, storage official Kiramettin Gençler, and security guards Mustafa, Ali and Osman.¹⁰⁸

In the 1942 harvest season, high-ranking bureaucrats in Malatya got officials at the Soil Products Office to steal cereals, which had been brought to the Office by villagers as the government's share. The stolen cereals, which were replaced with dirt and sand, were sold on the market. Moreover, the seeds sent by the Ministry of Agriculture to the villagers were sold at higher prices in other cities.¹⁰⁹ Osman Çetinkaya, one of the witnesses heard in the court, accused the storage official,

¹⁰⁷ *Tan*, 7 June 1944.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Tan*, 21 July 1944.

Osman, of selling the Office's cereals, which were made heavier by water, in villages. According to his deposition, Osman told villagers that the state needed not cereals but money. Osman demanded forty-five piaster for one kilogram of corn and thirty piasters for seeds.¹¹⁰ Due to the fact that the cereals were replaced with dirt and sand, people in Malatya had had to eat bread which was like mud.

In June 1944, former Malatya governor Fahri Özen, former mayor and then Malatya deputy Cafer Özelçi, municipality accountant İsmail Kaya, member of municipality committee Sait, former manager of textiles factory Ethem Mihrabi, and Manager of Agricultural Bank in Malatya Rıfki Aral were brought before the National Protection Court for the above-mentioned abuses.¹¹¹ However, in the hearing held on 4 August 1944, Aral and Mihrabi were dismissed on the grounds that their abuses could not be judged according to the National Protection Law.¹¹²

Conclusion

Wartime scarcities, which were caused by the shrinkage in foreign trade, the decrease in agricultural and industrial production, and high rates of inflation being triggered by scarcities and increasing public spending offered important opportunities for capital accumulation. Manufacturers who were able to continue their activities despite the scarcity of raw materials, importers who were able to

¹¹⁰ *Tan*, 5 August 1944.

¹¹¹ *Tan*, 21 July 1944.

¹¹² *Tan*, 5 August 1944.

provide import licenses, large and middle-sized farmers who were able to escape financial and in-kind obligations were the beneficiaries of the existing market conditions. In some cases, resorting to illegal means such as hoarding and profiteering in order to take advantage of scarcities was inevitable for them. The extent of these illegal activities during the War years was recounted by Vehbi Koç in his memoirs:

I can swear on the honesty of my workers and myself in the period between 1926 and 1939. However, between 1939 and 1946 the morality of our firm deteriorated. There occurred a lot of events about which we heard and didn't hear. As a result of this we were tainted in front of our customers.¹¹³

The scarcities and inflation were accompanied by uneven and exploitative relationship between the beneficiaries and rest of the people. For instance, while manufacturers were enjoying the increasing prices in the black market, the real income of the workers employed by them decreased approximately fifty percent. Moreover, despite the high profit levels they refrained to make even the basic investments to ameliorate the hard working conditions.

Another important factor behind the wartime capital accumulation was government regulations. As mentioned in the above paragraphs, the government made regulations in different fields to cope with scarcities and increasing prices. In some cases, these regulations favored certain groups to the detriment of others openly. This was the case for the regulations made in the field of agriculture. While the obligatory sales in the war years enabled middle and large landowners to take

¹¹³ Koç, *Hayat Hikayem*, p. 66. "Firma sahibi olduğum 1926 yılından 1939 yılına kadar kendim ve çalışan arkadaşlarımın dürüstlüğü için her türlü yemini edebilirim. 1939'dan 1946'ya kadar ise kuruluş olarak ahlakımız bozuldu, duyduğumuz veya birçok olaylar geçti, tabii bilerek bilmeyerek müşteri karşısında biz de lekelenedik."

advantage of increasing prices in the black market, small landowners faced great challenges in the subsistence of their families. The ignorance of small landowners did not remain limited with obligatory sales. For instance, when the 40th article of the National Protection Law, proposing that a pair of ox would be excluded from confiscation for every four hectares of cultivated land, was criticized for ignoring the small landowners, Prime Minister Saydam responded that, this was not a social assistance issue. He continued that they would not allow oxen for villagers who cultivated for subsistence but for those who could feed the country.¹¹⁴ In some other cases, the irregularities that occurred during the application stage of regulations played a crucial role. For instance, while a considerable number of manufacturers in the textile sector were excluded from yarn distribution, the entitled ones took advantage of the high prices in the black market. As artisans in Isparta complained, links with politicians and government officials played an important role in the distribution process.

While the above-mentioned conditions and practices enabled the beneficiaries to increase their income levels and to accumulate capital an important portion of the population were hard hit by the wartime conditions. The following chapters will focus on the conditions of some of these people.

¹¹⁴ T.B.M.M Zabıt Ceridesi, 6th Term, vol. 8, 27th Session, 18 January 1940, pp 138-158.

CHAPTER III

I KNEW THE LACK OF BREAD, I SAW FAMINE:¹¹⁵ LABOR IN THE URBAN AREAS:

This section explores the working and living conditions of the labor in the urban areas.¹¹⁶ The chapter consists of three parts. In the first part, beginning with the promulgation of a social assistance program in the end of 1942, the attitudes of government officials with regard to working people will be examined. The second part looks at the working and living conditions of those people. Finally, the mechanisms that enabled them to continue their lives under the hard conditions of the war will be discussed.

A Social Assistance Program and the Attitudes of the Government Officials

Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu, in a speech made in parliament on 11 November 1942, evaluated the economic conditions of the country and outlined the

¹¹⁵ Quoted from an interview made with Mustafa from Çerkeş. See Granville Hardwick Sewell, "Squatter Settlements in Turkey: Analysis of a Social, Political and Economic Problems" (Phd. Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1964), p.280.

¹¹⁶ Workers in the public enterprises are excluded. They will be the subject of analysis in the next chapter.

limited capacity of the government mechanism to deal with the economic and social impacts of the war. The Prime Minister then announced an assistance program aiming to alleviate the suffering of the poor. The aid program proposed the distribution of basic foods, such as food and sugar, and materials, such as clothes and fuel, at lower prices. In the final section of the speech, he declared the target groups of the program:

In one part of the speech, I said that there was no problem for the rich people. Villagers and farmers are the sellers of these goods. Workers and tradesmen have adapted to the changing conditions already. Therefore, I continued to say that the state aid has to be directed to the fixed and low-income people. We have reached the conclusion that we have to alleviate the burden of fixed and low income people.¹¹⁷

It was easy to identify the fixed income people who were entitled to the aid program. They were government officials who received their wages from the general budget or private administration and their families, people who were retired from public institutions, and orphans and widows. The Prime Minister made clear that the number of these people was approximately 1,300,000. On the other hand, the identification of the low-income (*dar gelirli*) people was not an easy task. He underlined this point and described the method that would be applied by the government: "There remained 3-4 hundred thousand people who have no salary and wage. It is not possible to identify these people from the center. Therefore, we asked

¹¹⁷ "Başvekil Şükrü Saraçoğlu Büyük Millet Meclisinde İaşe Durumumuza Ve Alınan Tedbirlere Dair Bir Nutuk Söyledi," *Ayin Tarihi*, no. 108 (1942). "Aynı beyannamenin diğer bir yerinde de "zengin ve paralı adamlar için bir mesele mevcut değildir. Köylü ve çiftçi, bu malların satıcılarıdır. Amele ve esnaf yevmiyelerini ve işlerini yeni şartlara daha evvelden intibak ettirmişlerdir" diyerek, böylece, devlet yardımının dar ve sabit gelirli sahaya ve insanlara tevcih edilmesi lazım geldiğini anlatmışım. Bu defa da, halktan olsun, memurdan olsun, dar ve sabit gelirli aileleri pahalılık yükünden mümkün olduğu kadar kurtarmak lazımdır karar ve kanaatine bir kere daha vardık."

the governors of the districts and municipalities to identify and tell us the fixed and low income people who can not afford to buy bread and other foods.”¹¹⁸

There was no clearly set standard for the identification of low-income people. However, the practices of the local authorities during the selection of the poor and the allocation of the concerned materials give some clues about the process. For the most part, those people who were categorized as low-income were mostly unable to work and were already receiving assistance from philanthropic organizations, such as *Kızılay* (Red Crescent). *Açık Ses*, a paper published in Bursa, announced that the poor receiving assistance from the philanthropic organizations of the city would benefit from the declared assistance program.¹¹⁹ As well, an interview conducted by Said Kesler in the soup kitchen of Beşiktaş Kızılay confirmed this. İsmail, who was a twelve-year-old boy, had described the conditions of his family and the attitude of the local authorities

Our family consists of five people: my mother, my father and two brothers. My father is old and ill. Working as a porter, he tries to earn a living, but he can not. My mother is no better than my father. To tell the truth, she is worse. However, the local official responsible for our neighborhood refuses to give them a license for food. The official told my father that he had to work and earn his bread. He insisted that the food aid could only be given to me and my brothers.¹²⁰

Similar complaints were expressed by a young woman in the soup kitchen:

¹¹⁸ Ibid. “Geriye hiçbir maaş ve ücretle alakası olmayan 3-4 yüz bin kişi kalıyordu. Bunların , merkezden tespiti mümkün olmadığı için bir an evvel de tesbit edilmeleri icap ettiği için, kaymakamlardan ve belediye reislerinden, oturdukları şehirlerdeki dar ve sabit iratlı insanlardan, ekme ve gıda tedarikine kuvvetleri yetismeyen vatandaşların adetlerini tespit edilerek bildirmesini istedik.”

¹¹⁹ *Açık Ses*, 17 March 1943.

¹²⁰ Said Kesler, "Kızılay Ve Parti Yoksullara Nasıl Yardım Ediyor," *Tan*, 19 November 1943. “Biz beş kişiyiz. Annem, babam, ben ve iki kardeşim. Babam yaşlı ve hastalıktır. Hamallık yaparak ekme parasını kazanmaya çalışıyor ama kazanamıyor. Annemin de babamdan kalır yeri yok. O hatta daha beter. Fakat mahalle mümessili onlara yemek verdirmiyor. ‘Siz çalışın karnınızı doyurun, yalnız çocuklara veririm’ diyor.

My husband and my mother-in-law are waiting at home. My husband is physically disabled. He is blind. He tries to make baskets. I can not work because I have a baby. Due to this fact, the local official responsible for our neighborhood permits me to benefit from the food aid. When I asked help for my mother-in-law, he refused. He said that, like my husband, she had to work. However, she is poor and can not work.¹²¹

Obviously, not all the poor people who were unable to work could receive help. In some cases, people in desperate positions could not benefit from government assistance. For example, Adnan Binyazar, who was a member of a very poor family in Istanbul and nine years old in 1943, was not able to receive aid because he did not have an identity card. As a result, Binyazar and his younger brother had been forced to search for food in the dumps of the city.¹²²

Local authorities usually excluded people who were able to work, but whose limited incomes could not cope with the increasing costs of the life. Their strict attitude toward working people was exposed by an article published in the daily paper *Akşam* on 10 January 1943. Some companies had declared that their workers were also poor and demanded that the governorship of Istanbul include them in the social assistance program declared by the prime minister. The governor replied that subsistence of these workers was the responsibility of the companies employing them and refused this demand.¹²³ The complaints expressed in the daily papers also

¹²¹ Ibid. “*Evde kocam da, kaynanam da var. Kocam sakattır. Gözleri görmüyor. Evde el yordamı ile sepet örmeğe çalışıyor. Ben çocuğum olduğu için çalışamıyorum. Mahalle mümessili de bana onun için yemek veriyor. Kaynanam için ‘o da kocan gibi çalışsın diyor. Ama ihtiyar zavallı çalışamaz ki.*”

¹²² Adnan Binyazar, *Masalını Yitiren Dev* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2002), p. 82.

¹²³ *Akşam*, 10 January 1943.

illustrate the exclusionary attitude of the local authorities. One of these complaints was published in *Akşam*:

I am working in a company, which is excluded from the low-income framework. My wage is 45 TL. I have a mother, who is paralyzed, a wife, and two children. One of the children is two and the other is three years old. The rent of the house is 7 TL. You may easily calculate my other costs. I and my family have applied to the administrative head of the sub-district many times. They respond that they are seeking poorer families.¹²⁴

The memoirs of Zahra Kosova, who was a tobacco worker, indicate that during the war years, working people suffered not only from the exclusionary attitudes of the local authorities, but also from the ignorance of these authorities even in the case of basic social policies:

In those days, everything was allocated by cards. After I had sent my husband Mustafa to do his service in the army, I returned home and saw the bread card given by the headman (*muhtar*), Hasan. However, he ignored my daughter and gave only one card. There was no other chance we would share the bread.¹²⁵

Those exclusionary practices of the local authorities and the scarcity of available resources sometimes caused conflicts among the poor. Adnan Binyazar, in his memoirs, mentions a poor Jewish junkman. While the junkman was trying to get food from the Kızılay soup kitchen, he was severely beaten by the other people to the accompaniment of the “Dirty Jew!”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *Akşam*, 21 March 1943. “Ben sabit gelirliler çerçevesinde hariç kalmış bir müessesede 45 lira ücretle çalışmaktayım. Kötürüm bir annem, karım ve biri 2 diğeri 3 yaşında iki çocuğum var. 7 Lira ev kirası veriyorum. Üst tarafını siz hesaplayın. Nahiye müdürlüğüne kendim ve ailem pek çok sefer müracaat ettik. Biz daha fakirleri arıyoruz dediler.”

¹²⁵ Zehra Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim*, ed. Zihni Anadol (İstanbul: İletişim, 1996), p.122.

¹²⁶ Binyazar, *Masalını Yitiren Dev*, p. 82.

These stories are strengthened by statistical data. In his above-mentioned speech, the prime minister announced that only 300,000-400,000 people would be included in the category of low-income people. When the search to identify the lower income people by the local authorities had been concluded, the limits of the program became clearer. For instance, in Istanbul, almost 70,000 people¹²⁷ and in Bursa 9,000 people¹²⁸ qualified for the assistance program. However, in this period the population of Istanbul was close to one million,¹²⁹ while the population of Bursa was almost 80,000. This means almost ten percent of the population living in the cities qualified for the aid program. Neighborhoods, which were mostly inhabited by workers, were not immune from this restrictive policy. During the Republican Peoples Party's local congress held in Eyüp, one of these neighborhoods, in November 1944 it was announced that children who were in need of help, including food, clothes, and school supplies, amounted to 800 in this neighborhood. However, the party and other institutions could only provide help for 250 children in 1943 and 375 in 1944.

However, it is important to emphasize that in certain cases, this exclusionary attitude towards working people was softened. For instance, some were able to benefit from cash and in kind assistances allocated to soldiers' families. According to a legal regulation made on 11 August 1941, the parents, wife, sisters, and brothers of soldiers who were in the military service for more than forty-five days were

¹²⁷ *Akşam*, 3 February 1943.

¹²⁸ *Bursa*, 9 February 1943.

¹²⁹ Hüseyin Avni, "Şehre Niçin Koşuyorlar," *İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Mecmuası* 59, no. 8 (1943).

entitled to assistance. The amount of assistance had to be in conformity with the minimum subsistence level, which was set by the local officials. The law authorized local governments to impose and increase taxes in order to create sources for the assistance. When the resources did not suffice, local officials could ask the help of wealthy people in the region.¹³⁰

In the application stage, the amount of assistance was not usually sufficient for the subsistence of soldier families living in the cities. For instance, in March 1943, the mayor of Istanbul, Lütfi Kırdar stated that the monetary assistance allocated to soldier' relatives ranged from five to twelve liras.¹³¹ In Tarsus, a special tax was levied to aid the soldiers' families living in the city. The amount of aid was four liras in 1941.¹³² Georgianna Maynard, employing a servant whose brother was in the military service, witnessed the insufficiency of assistance and plight of those families in Tarsus. In a letter, written on 30 November 1944, she wrote the followings:

Cemile's youngest brother will finish his term in a few more months, a relief both to both of us, for I do hate to see her sending half her salary each month to a soldier who should have been paid a living wage. Of course, there are certain aids for soldiers' families and it is not fair to the government not to mention them. But a few kilograms of sugar and a little wheat at a reduced price do not go very far toward supporting a family.¹³³

¹³⁰ *Asker Ailelerinden Muhtaç Olanlara Yardım Hakkında Kanun*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip, vol 22, pp. 1518-1523.

¹³¹ *Aksam*, 23 March 1943.

¹³² Georgianna Mathew Maynard, *Letters from Turkey 1939-1946* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1994), p. 110.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

Departing from these points it could be argued that an important portion of the working people was not able to benefit from the social assistance program declared by the prime minister and activities undertaken by philanthropic organizations. When they were entitled to assistance in certain cases, the amount of help was mostly insufficient. In fact, this exclusionary stand probably stemmed from the Prime Minister's above mentioned claim: Workers have adapted to the changing conditions already. The following paragraphs focus on whether or not this statement was valid. First, the working conditions in different sectors and regions will be analyzed.

Working Conditions

Workers who were employed by industrial enterprises had to work long hours in unhealthy conditions. This was the case not only in the war years, but also had been in the pre-war years. For instance, the memoirs of Vehbi Koç provide valuable information about the unhealthy work conditions at railway construction sites. Several months before the war, he visited one such site between Elazığ and Palu, and saw the hard conditions of the railway workers.

I have many memories about the railway construction between Elazığ and Palu. After the construction began, one day I went to Elazığ by train with Mr. Haydar. We arrived there by midnight. They gave us two rooms. There were signboards above the rooms: "Depot for Construction Instruments"... I went and slept in this room. The next day we went to see the parts of the construction site. The road continued along the Murat River. During the dinners, we were first given quinine boxes. There were a lot of mosquitoes. All my life, I have never seen such big mosquitoes. When you see under which

conditions these railways were constructed by workers, officials and engineers with your own, eyes you understand the sacrifices better. ¹³⁴

There were similar stories in other sectors. In May 1937, Lütü Erişçi reported in *Yeni Adam* that men employed in the leather factories around Zeytinburnu worked in the midst of the unbearable smell of leather and sewage. ¹³⁵ In February 1936, *Orak Çekiç*, a paper published by the Turkish Communist Party, underlined the hard conditions of workers employed by the Zeytinburnu Cement Factory. Although the men had to work in the midst of dust and sand, there was no shower in the factory. They ate lunch and returned homes with dirty hands and faces. Moreover, due to the fact that they constantly swallowed dust they usually became ill. ¹³⁶

Four months later, the same paper, focused its attention on child workers employed by the cotton factories in Adana. It claimed that children who were 7-8 years old were widely employed in those factories. Working in stuffy and dusty factories, they were paid only ten piasters for twelve hours work. When the factory was inspected by the governor, they were hidden. ¹³⁷ The employment of child workers was a common practice in the other cities and sectors. When Lilo Linke

¹³⁴ Vehbi Koç, *Hayat Hikayem* (İstanbul: Vehbi Koç Vakfı, 1987), p.48. "Elazığ-Palu hattı inşaatından çok anılarım vardır. İnşaat başladıktan sonra Haydar Bey ile bir gün trenle Elazığ'a gitmiş, gece yarısı varmıştık. Bize birer oda vermişlerdi, odaların üstünde 'İnşaat Malzemesi Deposu' yazılı bir levha asılıydı... Odaya girdim, yattım. Ertesi gün kasımları gezmeye götürdüler. Yol Murat Çayı boyunca devam ediyordu. Akşamları yemek sofrasına oturduğumuz zaman ilk operatif olarak kinin kutuları gelirdi. Pek çok sivrisinek vardı. Hayatımda bu kadar iri kemikleşmiş sivrisineği bir daha bir yerde görmedim. Çalışan işçi, memur ve mühendislerin ne şartlar altında bu demiryollarını yaptıklarını insan kendi gözü ile görünce fedakarlıklarını daha iyi anlıyor."

¹³⁵ Lütü Erişçi, "İstanbul'da Amele Mahalleleri," *Yeni Adam*, no. 177 (20 May 1937). I would like to thank Sinem Özer who showed me this article.

¹³⁶ Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar-II (1925-1936)* (İstanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1992), p. 402.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p 423.

visited a cotton factory in Tarsus in the mid-1930s, she found the children working, “little creatures whom no one could believe to be twelve years or even older.”¹³⁸

Women workers usually suffered the same fate. For instance, in 1932, *Cumhuriyet* reported that women and children workers were widely employed by textile factories. They had to work ten to twelve hour days and were not even permitted weekend holidays.¹³⁹

In the War period legal regulations, which to some extent legalized these hard working conditions, were made. For instance, the Coordination Committee, taking the 19th Article of National Protection Law as its point of departure, incorporated some private companies into the three hours extra work practice. On 1 August 1942, the Committee promulgated a decree that stated that, in an oil factory in Izmir and a cotton oil factory in Istanbul, the three hours of extra work principle would be applied.¹⁴⁰ In some other cases, weekend holidays were abolished. For instance, on 14 May 1940, it was declared that, weekend holidays were abolished in all of the yarn and weaving factories.¹⁴¹ Moreover, the regulations of the Labor Code with regard to women and children workers' working hours were suspended temporarily. For example, although the 50th Article of Labor Code prohibited the employment of women and children workers in night shifts, on 18 February 1941, the Coordination

¹³⁸ Lilo Linke, *Allah Dethroned* (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1937), p. 268.

¹³⁹ Mesut Gülmez, *Türkiye'de Çalışma İlişkileri (1936 Öncesi)* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1983), p. 377.

¹⁴⁰ Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 23, pp. 1658-1659.

¹⁴¹ *Dokuma ve iplik fabrikaları ve Sümer Banka bağlı Devlet Fabrikalarında fazla mesai yapılması ve hafta tatilinden istisnası hakkında Koordinasyon Heyeti Kararının mer'iyete vaz'ma dair kararname*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 21, p. 826.

Committee passed an amendment that stated that women and child workers could be employed in night shifts and subjected to the extra work principle in the textile industry.¹⁴² It is important to emphasize that some private companies which were not incorporated in these regulations also made their workers to complete shifts of more than eight hours. *Şirketi Hayriye* was one of these companies. During the war years, the company dismissed nearly half of its workers to decrease costs and maximize profits. This policy increased the burden on the remaining workers: shifts amounted to sixteen hours a day.¹⁴³

However, wartime regulations were not limited to the National Protection Law. There were attempts to improve unhealthy working conditions. A regulation published on 5 February 1941 listed in detail the necessary conditions to prevent work accidents and keep workers healthy in enterprises subjected to the provisions of the Labor Code.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, in November 1940, industries in which workers could not be obliged to work more than eight hours due to health concerns were identified. Glass, copper, aluminum, rubber production, cement, iron and steel, and mercury industries were included on the list.¹⁴⁵ Although these regulations signified a transition to a labor-centered welfare regime, an important portion of workers continued to work in unhealthy and hard conditions in the war years. This stemmed

¹⁴² *Çocuklarla kadınların yapacakları işler ile çalışma zamanları hakkında 106 numaralı Koordinasyon Kararı*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 22, pp. 288-289.

¹⁴³ "Şirketi Hayriye'ye El Kondu," *Tan*, 5 July 1944.

¹⁴⁴ *İşçilerin Sağlığını Koruma ve İş Emniyeti Nizamnamesi*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol 22, pp. 200-245.

¹⁴⁵ *(Günde ancak sekiz saat veya daha az çalışılması icap eden işler hakkında nizamname) nin ikinci maddesinin IV numaralı bendinin tadili ile aynı maddeye yeni bir bend ilavesi hakkında Nizamname*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol.22, pp. 1414-1415.

partly from the fact that entrepreneurs developed new mechanisms to circumvent these regulations. For instance, according to a report prepared by a group of deputies in 1947, factories or workshops, which were normally subject to the Labor Code, were divided into several firms among shareholders or relatives of the owner in order to escape the regulations of the Labor Code. For instance, a chair factory in Istanbul was divided into five firms, one for cutting the wood, one for sharpening it, one for polishing, one for joining the pieces, and one for painting. A textile factory employing eighteen workers, in Yedikule was divided in to two firms: One belonging to Saime Bke and other one to İsmail Bke. Due to the fact that each firm employed nine workers, the factory avoided the Labor Code.¹⁴⁶

The same report also provides valuable information about the working conditions just after the war. In the report it was stated that private factories and workshops, which were scattered around Istanbul, mostly operated in inns and public baths' rooms that had been constructed in the Byzantine and Ottoman ages. One of these workshops belonged to founder Simon Papazođlu. There was a smoke hole, but it was not sufficient to allow for the exit of harmful gases. In the report, it was concluded that even if the small inn room was not being used for manufacturing, four people could not spend night there.¹⁴⁷ A glass factory in Galata offered similar conditions. *Va-Nu* in an article published in *Akşam* described this factory:

“ The Glass Factory” was here. I entered through a door, which was similar to a cellar door. It was a shop, which had been constructed by

¹⁴⁶ "Bazı Blgelerdeki Fabrika İřyerleri Ve İřçilerin Genel Durumu Hakkında BMM Çalıřma Komisyonundan Bir Grubun Hazırladıkları Rapor."

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

the Genoese and had an earth floor. It could not be called a shop, it was a hovel. No! It could not be called a hovel, it was a den. If Turkish had a better word to describe such an awful place, I would use it. The den was in a street which did not benefit from sunlight. Even if the street could see the sun, there was no window in this den which would transmit the sunlight. Under such conditions, young people, whose hair was brushed carefully, were working. I asked the work hours. They responded that they worked eight hours per day. The monthly rent of this shop was 7 TL.¹⁴⁸

Similar conditions could be observed in factories within different parts of the country. Mustafa from Çerkeş, a district near Çankırı, went to his military service in 1940. After his discharge, he found a job in a tile factory on the edge of the town.

The working conditions and level of income were far from satisfactory:

It (Factory) was in the open with an only shed to put the drying tiles in case it rains. My wife also came to the place where I worked all day in the mud, in the sun. Fifteen liras for a thousand tiles, and for that we spent days in the mud. I knew the lack of bread; I saw famine. I could not find peace. But, no, thank God, it was not so bad. There were people much worse off.¹⁴⁹

The unhealthy working conditions in Kartal Cement Factory were described by a party member in a meeting conducted with deputies in September 1945. The party member pointed out that although men worked between eight and ten hours in the midst of dust, they were not given even masks. The workers who were injured were simultaneously expelled by the factory administration. The inspectors who came to

¹⁴⁸ Va-Nu, "İnsanlar Böyle Yerlerde Her Gün 8 Saat Kalamaz," *Akşam*, 25 May 1943. " 'Cam Fabrikası' buradaymış. Bodrum kapısı gibi bir yerden girdim. Cenevizlilerden kalma, tavanı kemerli, toprak zeminli, bir dükkan. Dükkan değil izbe. İzbe değil in. Daha kötü bir tarif için Türkçe'de kelime olsa onu da kullanacağım. Bu sokağı hava almaz, güneş görmez yerde ve sokağı güneş görse dahi içinde bir damla sıhhat sızması için delik bulunmayan bu inde, saçları itina ile taranmış genç, dinç insanla çalışıyor. Sordum. Her gün sekiz saat burada çalışırlarmış. Patron dükkanı yedi liraya kiralamış."

¹⁴⁹ Granville Hardwick Sewell, "Squatter Settlements in Turkey: Analysis of a Social, Political and Economic Problems" (Phd. Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1964), p. 280.

factory drank raki with the manager of factory and overlooked the plight of the workers.¹⁵⁰

These hard conditions were not limited to the workers employed by industrial enterprises. Artisans and day laborers faced similar problems. Adnan Binyazar, who worked as a porter in the open markets during 1942 and 1943, vividly described the unhealthy work conditions of a day laborer:

When we began working in the Beşiktaş open market, I was eight years old and my little brother was six... When I turned back to the open market my happiness was darkened. I did not immediately go near my little brother. From a remote place, I watched him. He looked like a pigeon whose blood had frozen due to the cold weather. He took shelter in a corner. This behavior was against the rules. A porter should not stay in a fixed point constantly. However, in a non-existent life, how could we talk about rules?¹⁵¹

Orhan Tuna, during a study on the small-scale industrial enterprises and artisans in Istanbul witnessed the working conditions of artisans: “Apprentices, foremen and masters work ‘from sunrise to sun-set until they get tired.’ In other words, they worked at full capacity. According to our research, there are no apprentices, foremen, or masters who work less than twelve hours in a day. It is true that in some cases the work hours reach seventeen or eighteen hours.”¹⁵² Similarly,

¹⁵⁰ *Tan*, 24 September 1945.

¹⁵¹ Binyazar, *Masalımı Yitiren Dev*, p85 and 92. “Beşiktaş pazarına gittiğimizde, ben sekiz yaşındaydım. Kardeşim altının içindeydi... Pazar yerine dönünce avuntumun üstüne karanlık çöktü. Hemen kardeşimin yanına gitmedim. Bir süre uzaktan izledim onu. Soğuktan kanı donmuş bir yaz güvercini gibi bir köşede büzülüp kalmıştı. Hamallık kurallarına aykırıydı yaptığı. Hamal bir yere çakılıp kalmamalıydı. Olmayan hayatta hamallığın kuralı mı kalırdı?”

¹⁵² Orhan Tuna, *İstanbul Küçük Sanayii Ve Bugünkü Meseleleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Neşriyatı, 1950), p150. “Gerek çırak ve kalfalar, gerek ustalar ‘yoruluncaya kadar ve güneşin doğmasından batmasına kadar’, yani azami çalışma kabiliyetlerine varıncaya kadar çalışırlar. Filhakika yaptığımız tetkiklere göre, bugün yevmi on iki saten daha az çalışan hiçbir çırak, kalfa ve usta yoktur. Mesai müddetinin günde on yedi, on sekiz saate çıktığı da varittir.”

Neriman Araz, who was in her early childhood during the war years, recalls that her grandmother had a small workshop in Diyarbakır for spinning silk and worked there with her employees from sunrise to sun set. Her mother, in addition to taking care of her two children and doing the house work, spun silk at home.¹⁵³ Hüseyin Avni witnessed the intense use of child labor at Denizli looms two years before the war. He reported that in Denizli there were 6,469 looms, most of which were located in villages. Children had to work at these looms until early morning in order to help their families who were heavily exploited by yarn traders. In addition to these hard working conditions, the children were under the threat of serious health problems. Half of the looms were buried in little holes cut out of the earthen floor. The weavers had to work in these moist holes and swallow yarn pieces.¹⁵⁴

Income Levels

Despite the fact that working conditions were hard and hours were long, wages were usually far from being satisfactory. During the war years, the increase in the income level of working people was not compatible with the increases in prices. Work statistics (*iş istatistikleri*) gathered just before the war (1938) and during the war (1943) exposed one part of the story very clearly. Although the work statistics included companies, which were subject to the Labor Code (*İş Yasası*) and ignored the difference in the wage levels, it gives clues about the incompatibility between wages and prices. According to the Work Statistics of 1938 the number of

¹⁵³ Neriman Araz, Interview by Can Nacar, tape recording, İstanbul, July 2004.

¹⁵⁴ Hüseyin Avni, "Denizli Tezgahlarındaki Çocuklar," *Yeni Adam*, no. 183 (1 July 1937), p. 4.

companies subject to the Labor Code was 4,456 and the number of workers in these companies was 201,204.¹⁵⁵ The average daily wage was 136 piasters.¹⁵⁶ In 1943, the number of companies subject to the Labor Code was 3,205. The number of workers in these companies was 275,083. The statistics indicate that the average daily wage of a worker was 214 piasters. The increase in the average income between 1938 and 1943 was thus fifty-seven percent.¹⁵⁷ At this point, it should be emphasized that among these companies, there were factories run by the state. When it is taken into account that the wage levels in state run factories were usually higher than those in private enterprises,¹⁵⁸ it can be concluded that the average daily incomes in the private sector were probably lower than the above-mentioned average wages. The memoirs of Zehra Kosova partly confirm this. She states that while she was working in a tobacco factory in Tophane as a skilled worker in 1942, her daily wage was seventy piasters.¹⁵⁹

While the increase in daily wages was close to sixty percent, according to the statistics of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Istanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası*), the increase in the prices between 1938 and 1943 was almost three hundred percent. The statistics of the Chamber indicate that, in December 1943, a family consisting of five people needed 329 TL to meet its needs.

¹⁵⁵ Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye’de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946* (Ankara: İmge, 1999), p. 307.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. , p. 433.

¹⁵⁷ Orhan Tuna, "İş Yasası ve Ücretler," *Çalışma*, no. 5 (April 1946), pp.12-14.

¹⁵⁸For a comparison between public and private enterprises in the textile industry see Sabahaddin Zaim, *Istanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi Ve Ücretler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi, 1956).

¹⁵⁹ Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim*, p.120.

The memoirs of entrepreneurs also give clues about the insufficiency of the wages. For instance, while evaluating the increasing costs after the outbreak of the War, Vehbi Koç indirectly described the incompatibility between the increasing prices and wages:

The construction began in the spring of 1939. The war erupted in September 1939. Prices began to increase. When we began the construction, the price of one kilo wheat was ten piasters and the wage of a worker was one TL. Two years later, the price of the wheat became one TL and the wage of a worker became four TL.¹⁶⁰

The insufficiency of wages was more severely felt among temporary workers. For instance, during the trial of the Turkish Communist Party's members in 1944, Remzi Özşenel, a tobacco worker, underlined their problems: "I am a tobacco worker. Like my friends, I work four months a year for a daily wage of 150 piasters. I and my family are always hungry...When the tobacco is exported unprocessed, I remain unemployed for months."¹⁶¹ In times of crises, the hard conditions of temporary workers were even worse. For instance, when fig prices increased and, because of this, fig exports severely decreased in 1943, the workers who were employed by the fig depots in İzmir usually for a period of three months were hard hit. Workers who began to wait in front of the depots were usually turned away with empty hands during the processing season.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰Koç, *Hayat Hikayem*, pp. 47-48. "1939 yılının ilkbaharında işe başlandı. Eylül'de II. Dünya Savaşı ilan edildi. Fiyatlar yükselmeye başladı. Biz işe girdiğimiz zaman buğdayın kilosu 10 kuruş işçi gündeliği 1 liraydı. İki yıl sonra Buğdayın kilosu 1 lira işçinin gündeliği 4lira oldu."

¹⁶¹ 1944 TKP Davası, ed. Rasih Nuri İleri (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2003), pp.138-139. "Tütün işçisiyim. Arkadaşlarım gibi senenin dört ayında yüzeli kuruş yevmiye ile çalışırım. Daima acım, ailemde açtır."

In some sectors, the average-wage levels may have deviated from the Work statistics in favor of the workers. For instance, the textile industry in Istanbul offered higher average levels during the war years. In 1943, the average wage of a textile worker in Istanbul was 219 piasters. The increase in the average-wage between 1938 and 1943 was two hundred percent.¹⁶³ Although the average earnings in the textile industry were higher than the general average, they still were not sufficient as prices continued to rise at a faster rate.

The insufficiency of the wages was not limited to workers employed by enterprises subject to the Labor Code. It is highly probable that artisans and day laborers were also hard hit by the war time conditions. For instance, according to a report by Osman Şahinbaş, the Republican People's Party's inspector of Isparta region, although female workers, whose numbers were approximately 10,000, spent all of their time on their hand-loom, their wages were very modest.¹⁶⁴ This situation continued in the post-war years. Hilmi Uz, a master at the Isparta Weaving Factory, complained to Rebi Barkın about the miserable conditions of the women artisans in a letter written in 1948. Uz stated that 6,000 women, among whom 1000 were children, worked at looms weaving rugs within their homes. They could earn at most 120 piasters in a day.¹⁶⁵ In his above-mentioned study, Orhan Tuna concluded that the weekly wage of a journeyman fluctuated between five and eight TL and

¹⁶² *Yeni Piyasa*, 26 January 1943.

¹⁶³ Makal, *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946*, p. 436.

¹⁶⁴ Yiğit Akın, "New Sources, New Approaches: Contribution to the Early Republican Labor History," unpublished (2004).

¹⁶⁵ 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" (Master Thesis, Bogazici University, 2003).

apprentices usually did not receive any wage in Istanbul in the first years of the war.¹⁶⁶ Even in the initial years of the war, these income levels were not sufficient to meet the needs.

The problems of artisans were not limited to insufficient income levels. They were also negatively affected by the wartime scarcities. For instance, in a meeting held by the representatives of Urfa artisans and deputies in April 1944, the representatives stressed that although there were 1,000 looms in the city, only 120 of them could work due to weaving yarn scarcity.¹⁶⁷ These war time scarcities were not limited to loom owners. In the above-mentioned Communist Party trial, Ali Tokuç, a shoemaker, described the problems in his sector and accused the Prime Minister: “He sold our leather to Germany and bought English leather, whose one decimeter was 130 piasters. Instead of distributing this leather to the artisans, he gave them to the black-market. We were compelled to pay for English leather 460 piasters.”¹⁶⁸ To avoid the threats of raw material scarcity, the artisans in Istanbul participated in artisan cooperatives. During the war years, membership in these cooperatives increased dramatically. However, as Orhan Tuna has pointed out, when the trade of raw materials was released after the war, most of these cooperatives collapsed.¹⁶⁹

During the war, the income levels of white-collared workers were also negatively affected. Va-Nu, in an article published in *Akşam* in the last years of the

¹⁶⁶ Orhan Tuna, "Küçük Sanayide İş Şartları," *Çalışma*, no. 6 (May 1946), pp. 35-38.

¹⁶⁷ *Yenilik*, 17 April 1944.

¹⁶⁸ 1944 TKP Davası, p.186. “Derilerimiz Almanlara verdi. 130 kuruştan desimetresi İngilizlerden deri aldı. Bunları sanat erbabına dağıtacağına karaborsaya verdi. Bizler sonra 460 kuruşa İngilizlerden gelen derileri almak mecburiyetinde kaldık.”

¹⁶⁹ Tuna, *İstanbul Küçük Sanayii ve Bugünkü Meseleleri*, pp. 150-151.

War, focused on the problems of these people. He wrote about a letter sent to him by a notary clerk who, after describing the hard working conditions, stressed the insufficiency of his income:

Although the costs of living are increasing day by day and the income of notaries is constantly increasing, the wages of notary clerks have not increased. The insufficiency of the wages is ignored by the inspectors... I am also a notary clerk and I have no income other than my wages... I have a family consisting of five people. With my wages, I have to pay the rent and the education costs of the children and buy the food supply of the house. I have excluded clothing and other costs. How can a family of five people afford their needs with a wage which does not amount to 62 TL?¹⁷⁰

In addition to the lack of proportion between prices and wages, the tax policy of the government contributed to the difficult conditions of the wage earners. In 1944, the income tax law proposed a nine percent tax cut for those who earned a daily wage of less than 120 piasters. However, presupposing that a daily wage of 120 piasters was enough for meeting one's needs, the law imposed an eighteen percent income tax on daily wages exceeding 120 piasters. This tax policy caused contradictory situations. For instance, a worker whose daily wage was 120 piasters could earn 28.41 TL in a month after the tax cut. However, if his daily wage was increased to 130 piasters, his monthly income then decreased to 27.68 TL. Taking into account the rapidly changing prices and increasing costs of living, Cevat Nizami, in an article titled "*İşçiler ve Kazanç Vergisi*" (Workers and Income Tax)

¹⁷⁰ Va-Nu, "Serbest Mesleklerdeki Ücretlilere Dair Bir Misal," *Akşam*, 20 January 1945. "*Geçinme şartlarının günden güne ağırlaşmış olmasına, daire varidatlarının azalmayıp artmasına rağmen ücretlerine zam yapılmamıştır. Ücretlerin azlığı ve nispetsizliği mutat teftişlerde de nazarı dikkati çekmemiştir... Ben de bu zümreye dahil bir memurum. Ücretimden başka istinadım yok... Beş kişilik bir aile babasıyım. Aldığım ücretle işemizi temin edilecek, ev kiramız verilecek, çocuklarım da tahsile ettirilecek. Giyim vesair mübrem ihtiyaçları dahil etmedim. Beş kişilik bir aile 62 lirayı bulmayan bir ücretle nasıl geçinebilir?*"

proposed that the income tax rate be increased for daily wages exceeding three TL.¹⁷¹ The disproportional income tax policy caused troubles between workers and their employers. For instance, in 1945, 2,100 workers employed by a tobacco depot elected three of their friends as representatives in order to ask a price increase. The manager accepted the worker's demand and increased the daily wage from ninety piasters to hundred and ten piasters but warned them that when income tax and other taxes were taken into consideration their new wages would be less than 90 piasters. The representatives returned their friends without a solution.¹⁷²

Due to the fact that the income tax did not take into account the principle of increasing proportionality (*Artan Oranlılık*) and foresee immunities for minimum subsistence level (*Asgari Geçim Haddi*) and family burden (*Aile Yükü*),¹⁷³ the burden of the tax was not evenly distributed among the population. Wage earners in the private and public enterprises paid eighty percent of the income taxes in the war years. The tax burden was made heavier by extraordinary taxes, such as the Economic Depression Tax imposed after the crises in 1929 and the tax imposed for assistance to the Air Force. Moreover, the government increased the ratio of these taxes several times during the War in order to cope with increasing expenditures.¹⁷⁴

The income tax was discussed in budget talks held in the parliament on 22 May 1944. Celal Bayar demanded the abolition of the income tax for government officials. Minister of Economy Fuat Ağralı rejected this demand on the grounds that

¹⁷¹ Cevat Nizami, "İşçiler ve Kazanç Vergisi," *Akşam*, 28 December 1944.

¹⁷² Aziz Nesin, "İşçilerin Dertleri-2," *Tan*, 6 August 1945.

¹⁷³ Nevin Coşar, *Kriz, Savaş ve Bütçe (1926-1950)*, (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2004), p.144.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

abolition would affect the financial position of the state negatively and create inequalities among the different segments of the population.¹⁷⁵

Towards the end of the World War, drafts of a new Income Tax law began to be discussed. During this period, the government asked for the ideas of various organizations several times. For instance, the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and Industry prepared drafts for the new law. However, working class people who depended on their wages and carried most of the tax burden had no such organizations and therefore were not able to challenge the provisions unfavorable to them in the law. When they applied to state departments for the revision of the income tax policy, they were usually ignored.¹⁷⁶

Family economy, in which several or all members of the family worked for the reproduction of the family unit, was mostly necessary to cope with the insufficient income levels and the tax burden.¹⁷⁷ For example in 1945, İbrahim, who was eighteen years old and had migrated to Istanbul near his uncles, was working in a railway storehouse as a porter in order to help his family in Şebinkarahisar. His daily wage was 250 piasters. Due to the fact that the wage was insufficient for him and his family, he began to work, again as a porter, after working hours and on his free

¹⁷⁵ Ayn Tarihi, no.126 (May 1944).

¹⁷⁶ Nesin, "İşçilerin Dertleri-2."

¹⁷⁷ In fact, family economy was necessary for an important portion of families in the pre-War years. For instance, Kirkor Ceyhan, an Armenian author who spent his childhood in Zara, recounts that in the 1930s while his father was working as a seasonal worker in construction his mother wove rugs at home. See Kirkor Ceyhan, *Seferberlik Türküleriyle Büyüdüm* (İstanbul: Aras, 1998).

days.¹⁷⁸ The extra efforts did result in success: İbrahim regularly sent money to his family and managed to buy a new costume.

The roof tile and brick factories in Eskişehir, which offered seasonal employment, hosted workers who belonged to the same families. After making field studies between 1944 and 1946, Avni Güngörür wrote the following about the workers in these factories:

These factories offer seasonal employment. In order to earn the necessary money for their subsistence in the winter, the father works the night shifts and the mother and children work mornings during the summer. Under these hard working conditions, workers could not attend any social or cultural recreational activities, such as cinema.¹⁷⁹

This was also the case in tobacco depots. Remzi Özşenel wrote an open letter to the Minister of Labor describing their problems. After mentioning the insufficiency of their daily wages, Özşenel stated that they had to send their wives to the tobacco depots, leaving their children alone at home.¹⁸⁰ Tarsus American College employed three young girls from the same family in 1945. Cemile worked as a servant in the house of an American teacher and her sister as a cleaning woman in the College. Their cousin worked in the laundry full-time. Cemile also had two brothers, who worked outside the school, one as a foreman at a cotton factory and the other as a welder.¹⁸¹ Neriman Araz recollects that in the war years her maternal

¹⁷⁸ *Akşam*, 22 February 1945.

¹⁷⁹ Avni Güngörür, "Eskişehir'de Sosyal Monografi Çalışmaları," *Çalışma*, no. 21 (August 1947), pp. 68-70. "Bu fabrikalar mevsimlik olduğundan ve ekseriya bir ailenin yaz devresinde kışlık geçimini temin edecek parayı tedarik edebilmek için baba gececi, ana ve çocuklar gündüzcü olarak çalışırlar. Bu ağır çalışmaya tabi olan işçi topluluğu tabiatile sinema ve sair eğlencelerden faydalanamazlar."

¹⁸⁰ Aziz Nesin, "İşçilerin Dertleri-1," *Tan*, 4 August 1945.

grandmother spun silk in her workshop, her paternal grandmother worked in the public bath as head washer and her mother spun silk at home.¹⁸² Mediha Özçelik describes a similar scenario: “While my father was working as a cobbler my mother and elder sister worked in the tobacco depots. I took care of my younger sisters. Towards the end of the war I also began to work in the depots.”¹⁸³

Despite these efforts, working people faced serious challenges in meeting their basic needs. In the next part, these challenges will be explored.

Life Outside the Work Site

Accommodation in the big cities, especially İstanbul, was a serious problem for poor people even in the pre-war years. Interviews conducted by Suat Derviş in the spring and summer of 1935 give valuable clues about the accommodation conditions of lower class people. In June 1935, Derviş visited a shantytown near Şişli and talked with a little boy in front of an apartment:

- _ Who lives in this house?
- _ My mother and father
- _ Your father?
- _ He is an agricultural worker.
- _ Does the house belong to you?
- _ Yes.
- _ How many room does it have?
- _ 3 rooms.
- _ Do you live alone?
- _ No! We have two renters.

¹⁸¹ Maynard, *Letters from Turkey 1939-1946*, p. 258.

¹⁸² Neriman Araz, Interview by Can Nacar, tape recording, İstanbul, July 2004.

¹⁸³ Mediha Özçelik, interview by Esra Sarioğlu, Burak Gürel and Can Nacar, tape recording, İstanbul, July 2004.

- _What are their jobs?
- _The men work whenever they find available work.
- _How many people live in this house?
- _Many. I can't count.¹⁸⁴

During the war years, accommodation shortage escalated due to the scarcity of construction materials, such as cement and iron. In some cities, the scarcity of raw materials was complemented by the increase in population. For instance, according to official statistics, while the population of İstanbul was 991,227 in 1940, it rose to 1,074,091 in 1945.¹⁸⁵ As a result of these facts some cities, such as İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Mersin and Zonguldak, experienced a housing depression (*mesken buhranı*). It was difficult to find a house or even a room for rent. In February 1945, a government official whose monthly wage was 60 TL wrote a letter to *Akşam* and complained that despite all his efforts he was unable to find a house for his family in İstanbul.¹⁸⁶ Georgianna Maynard portrayed the situation in Tarsus, in a letter written to her parents on 26 March 1944:

Although Tarsus is not a war-boom town, the housing situation is terrible. After much searching, Raşit Bey finally found a little apartment without electricity or running water. We have heard a great deal about the disadvantages of the place and the dissatisfaction... When I begin complaining about the inconveniences of our house, I will think of Raşit Bey's and keep quiet.

¹⁸⁴Suat Derviş, "Belediye 'Meşrutiyet' Adını Takmış," *Cumhuriyet*, 6 June 1935. "Çocuğum kim oturuyor bu evde/Burada annem oturur babam oturur/Baban?/Babam rençper/ Ev sizin mi?/ Evet/Kaç odadır?/ Üç oda/ Yalnız mı oturuyorsunuz bu evde?/ Hayır iki kiracımız daha var/Ha! Onlar ne yapıyorlar?/ Efendileri iş olduğu zaman çalışıyor./ Kaç kişi oturursunuz bu evde?/Çok/ Ne kadar?/ Saymam.

¹⁸⁵ Zadi Ekmel, *İstanbul'da Mesken Meseleleri Ve Gecekondular* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat ve İktisadiyat Enstitüsü Neşriyatı No.9, 1950), p. 72.

¹⁸⁶ *Akşam*, 4 February 1945.

The housing shortage also was felt severely in Zonguldak. Semine Meral, who came to the city as a government official from Ankara in April 1942, could only find a place in the basement of a hotel. A friend in a coffeehouse told her that in Zonguldak cottages were treated as houses and houses as palaces, and as a result of this, the rents were very high. The friend continued that it was even not possible to find an empty room in the hotels and because of this, he had made reservation by telegraph before he came to the city.¹⁸⁷

Izmir Municipality was forced to put all construction projects in the city on the shelf because of the scarcity of construction materials.¹⁸⁸ The housing depression in İstanbul affected even lives of wealthy entrepreneurs. For instance, when the house of Şakir Kopuz burnt, the wealthy tradesman was faced with a housing problem. He wrote, “the housing depression in İstanbul and the fact that we were left homeless with our clothes and furniture was more troubling to me than the financial damages that I faced.”¹⁸⁹ Kopuz, who had enough capital and enough iron in reserve for the completion of a construction project, bought a piece of land in Salıpazarı and in eighteen months, a new apartment building was ready for his family.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Semine Meral, "Ev Buhranı," *Yeni Zonguldak* 15 April 1942.

¹⁸⁸ *Yeni Piyasa*, 24 February 1943.

¹⁸⁹ Şakir Kopuz, *Kopuzlar Rizeli Bir İş Adamanın Gerçek Yaşam Öyküsü (1892-1963)* (İstanbul: Kaknüs, 2003), p.102. “Uğradığım maddi zararlardan ziyade İstanbul’da hüküm süren mesken buhranı...üzerimizdeki eşya ve çamaşırlarımızla açıkta kalışımız canımı sıkıyor, beni düşündürüyordu.”

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 107-110.

However, for the poor, this was not an attainable alternative. Most of these people had to live in miserable conditions. For instance, there were reports that in Eyüp, a neighborhood inhabited mostly by textile workers, some people shared the same room and bed according to their work shifts.¹⁹¹ An important portion of migrant workers shared the same fate. For instance, two years before the war, Lütü Erişçi reported that among 1,000 tannery workers in İstanbul, there were 300-400 migrants from Çankırı and 150-200 Kurds. These migrant workers had to rent rundown rooms at inns in Kazlıçeşme or Zeytinburnu coast. In most cases, four or five of them slept in same room. Despite these miserable conditions, rents were high. They had to pay four to five TL for a room.¹⁹² These conditions persisted in the war years. When the Şimşek family, who were originally from Malazgirt, sent its first migrant to İstanbul in 1944 to support the family budget with his remittances, the migrant had to spend his İstanbul days in such a ruined inn room in Küçükpazar.¹⁹³ The miserable housing conditions of migrant workers were perceived as a serious threat to public health by city dwellers. In some cases, concerns with regard to public health were expressed in letters written to the daily papers:

After finishing their agricultural work migrants, from Kastamonu, Araç and Safranbolu, have begun to come İstanbul since 15 August. Most of them will work as confectioners, cooks, and bakers. Due to the fact that these people live here and there, they should be submitted to strict

¹⁹¹ Z. Fahri Fındıkoğlu, *Defterdar Fabrikası Hakkında Bir Tatbiki Sınai Sosyoloji Denemesi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Harsi ve İçtimai Araştırmalar Derneği, 1955), p. 32.

¹⁹² Erişçi, "İstanbul'da Amele Mahalleleri."

¹⁹³ *Radikal*, 9 July 2004. In 2004, his grandchildren, Gökhan Şimşek and Seçuk Şimşek, inhabit an inn room in Küçükpazar and work in textile workshops to send remittances to their families in Malazgirt.

louse control. While we are struggling against typhus, we have to consider this fact.¹⁹⁴

Local governors had similar concerns. For instance, during the spring of 1943, the Municipality of Istanbul sent inhabitants of inn rooms to the Kasımpasa baths in order to prevent a typhus epidemic.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, there were attempts to send unemployed migrants home.¹⁹⁶

Those who did not have a house or even a room had to find alternative places. For instance, some homeless factory workers spent nights in the “available” places in the factories. Adnan Binyazar, who worked in a glass factory in Kocamustafapaşa after his career as a porter, was among these people. According to his memoirs, he and his little brother were not the only child workers sleeping in the factory:

My father sleeps in the far rooms with his friends who are the high ranking (!) officials of the factory. On the other hand, we take our cushion, which looks like a dog mattress, and, like the other children, begin to sleep in any warm place that we can find.¹⁹⁷

Spending the night in the public baths was another alternative, which was used especially by day laborers. An interview made by a journalist in a public bath in May 1943 exposed this practice. According to the reporter, there were more than one hundred people spending the night in this place. He listened to some of these visitor’s stories. One of these was a porter named Osman:

¹⁹⁴ *Akşam*, 26 August 1943. “Memleketlerinde çift işlerini bitiren Kastamonu, Araç, Safranbolu erkeklerinden büyük bir kısmı şekerçilik, aççılık, ekmekçilik yapmak üzere 15 Ağustosun itibaren İstanbul’a gelmeğe başlamışlardır. Bunlara gelirken şurada burada kaldıklarından esashi bir bit muayenesine tabi tutulmalıdırlar. Tifüs mücadelesi yaparken buna ehemmiyet vermek lazımdır.”

¹⁹⁵ *Akşam*, 29 March 1943.

¹⁹⁶ *Akşam*, 26 June 1943.

¹⁹⁷ Binyazar, *Masalım Yitiren Dev*, p.103. “O, dip odalardan birinde, fabrikanın üst düzeyinden (!) arkadaşlarıyla yatıyor. Biz ise, geceleri, köpek şiltesine dönmüş minderlerimizi alıyor, öbür çocuklar gibi, bulabildiğimiz sıcak köşelere kıvrılıyoruz.”

My name is Osman. I earn a few piasters by working as a porter. If a person has no relatives, he falls to such places. I have been sleeping here for one year because I haven't been able to find a cheaper place to spend the night.¹⁹⁸

The story of Hamit was similar:

In a day I earn 1-1.5 TL. I have no relatives. After reserving 30 piasters for the night, I spend the rest of the money on eating and drinking. I am only 16 years old. If somebody helps and puts me to a trade, I will probably be rescued from this poverty and become a responsible member of society.¹⁹⁹

The same problem was faced by Adnan Binyazar. While he was working as a porter in the open markets with his little brother, he usually spent nights in the parks or public baths.²⁰⁰ Public baths were not the only alternative for poor people. Ruined buildings and public spaces, such as mosques and cinemas, were other places available for spending the night. Rifat Ilgaz, who was also a victim of poverty during the war years, departing from his direct observations, described the housing problem in a poem titled "*Kara Dayıya Mektup*" (Letter to Black Uncle). In the poem he told the stories of the poor people spending the night in the court of a mosque.

I drew near an old man
He accepted my greeting shyly
We exchanged a few words:
At the base of the tree, was a porter
In front of the customs house
Work is work but soon
He was cast aside to rot...
A child lay at the base
Of a wall, his head resting
On unsold papers,²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ *Akşam*, 12 May 1943.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Binyazar, *Masalım Yitiren Dev*, pp. 98-99

For newly arrived migrants, the streets and open areas were often the only viable places, at least for a period. Fatma, an old woman from Trabzon, was one of the guests of these open areas. She had come to Istanbul in September 1945 with her two grandchildren to work as a domestic servant. The grandchildren had begun to work as porters as soon as they came to the city.²⁰² Fatma and her grandchildren were not alone in this open land. There were migrant families from different parts of the country. One of these families was from Mesudiye. While the father, a blacksmith, was looking for work the mother and children kept an eye on the furniture they had brought with them. A young inhabitant in this place described their conditions vividly: "We were unable to be successful in our home towns...Therein; our trades are not valid any more. Among us there are blacksmiths and goldsmiths. We are artisans. We come here in order to work. We can not find any building in which to sleep. Hotels demand a great amount of money. We will leave here in several days."²⁰³

Hard hit by the housing depression, some poor people in Istanbul preferred to spend the long and cold winters in prison. Nermin Abadan Unat describes these people in her memoirs. While she was completing a law apprenticeship in 1946, she

²⁰¹Rıfat Ilgaz, *Sınıf Ve Dosyası* (İstanbul: Çınar Yayınları, 1989), pp. 63-67. Bir ihtiyara yanaştım/ çekinerek selamımı aldı/ iki laf ettik: /Çınar dibindeki, hamalmış gümrük önünde,/ işi işmiş ama önceden/ atılmış şimdi çürüklüğe.../ Satılmayan gazetelerini/ başının altına koymuş bir çocuk/ kıvrılmış duvar dibine. When Ilgaz was brought before the court in August 1944 he was accused for ignoring the social assistance program of the state targeting government officials and poor in this poem. See. Ilgaz, *Sınıf ve Dosyası*, pp. 17-18.

²⁰² Suat Sarman, "İstanbul Şehrinin Açık Hava Otelleri," *Tan*, 30 September 1945.

²⁰³Ibid. "Memleketimizde yapamadık. Para yok, pul yok. Sanatımız geçmez oldu. İçimizde demirci var. Kuyumcu var. Sanatkar insanlarız. Geldik. Çalışacağız. Yatacak yapı bulamadık. Otel dünya kadar para istiyor. Birkaç gün burada oturup gideceğiz."

saw people who had committed minor crimes in order to spend the cold winters in a warm shelter. According to Unat, in a country, which could not develop social insurance mechanisms such methods, were inevitable.²⁰⁴

The housing shortage did not end even after the war. Sarkis Çerkezyan, who was working as a master carpenter and earned a higher wage compared to the above-mentioned people, had difficulties finding a house for his family, who migrated to Istanbul at the beginning of 1947: I could not find an available house in Kumkapı. Rents were too high. I did find a room in Arnavutköy in the house of Mrs. Evlenbiya. The rent was 25 TL. I was working with a carpenter whose name was Kirkor. My weekly wage was 35 TL.²⁰⁵ İdris Erdinç, who came from Gölcük to İstanbul as a deserter one year after the War found his father and stepmother living in the cellars under Unkapanı. Later on, he settled in Sultanahmet cellars with his wife, Hatice, and their two children. In those days, while İdris was looking for a work, Hatice worked as a cleaning woman.²⁰⁶ The records of Craftsmen Hospital (*Esnaf Hastanesi*) in Istanbul give clues about the extent of the problem several years after the War. According to the reports, forty-five percent of the patients in the beds, all of whom were either craftsmen or artisans, did not have even a shelter to spend the night. Thirty-five of the patients slept in bakeries, ninety-four in coffeehouses, twelve in public baths, and thirty-seven in boathouses or fish stores,

²⁰⁴Nermin Abadan-Unat, *Kum Saatini İzlerken* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1998), pp. 156-159.

²⁰⁵ Sarkis Çerkezyan, *Dünya Hepimize Yeter*, ed. Yasemin Gedik (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2003),p.140. “*Kumkapı ’da uygun bir ev bulamadım, kiralar çok yüksekti. Ta Arnavutköy’de Beyazgül Caddesi’nde Madam Evlonbiya diye bir Rum kadının evinde bir oda buldum. 25 lira kiraya.*”

²⁰⁶ Hikmet Akgül, *Şoför İdris (Anılar)* (İstanbul: Yar Yayınları, 2004), pp. 126-128.

fifty in stores and workshops, and four in boats. Moreover, fifty-four of them had to spend nights in inn rooms.²⁰⁷

The public authorities were aware of the problem and sought solutions to it. For instance, in the winter of 1944, the homeless people of İstanbul were allowed to inhabit some of the old medreses which were under the supervision of the municipality.²⁰⁸ Similar policies had been undertaken in previous years. However, in practice they could not offer permanent solutions. The daily papers sometimes reported the stories of families who could not benefit from these projects. One such story was about the family of an old man who was trying to earn a living by selling water in the streets. They paid seven TL for the house in which they lived. After they were evicted from this house, for a short period they inhabited a room, which was under the supervision of the municipality. However, soon they were forced to leave the house and again became homeless.²⁰⁹

Increasing food costs were another serious problem for working people. In fact, the increase in the food prices was higher than the increase in general prices. For instance, according to statistics prepared by İstanbul Chamber of Commerce and Industry, while the general price increase was 290 percent between 1938 and 1943, in the same period food prices increased 432 percent. This increase in prices went together with rationing. As the war continued, essential consumption goods were subjected to rationing. For instance, in January 1942, bread was subjected to

²⁰⁷ Tuna, *İstanbul Küçük Sanayii ve Bugünkü Meseleleri*, p.112.

²⁰⁸ *Akşam*, 24 November 1944.

²⁰⁹ *Vatan*, 19 March 1943. I would like to thank Murat Metinsoy who showed me this news.

rationing in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. According to this regulation, children up to seven years old were entitled to 187.5 grams of bread and adults were entitled to 375 grams. Heavy workers (*ađır işçi*) working in industrial enterprises, mines, road building projects and transport work without any interruption, and consumed great energy were given 750 grams of bread.²¹⁰ In the following months and years, these ratios were changed various times.

The social assistance program announced by the Prime Minister enabled the government officials and low-income people selected by local authorities to buy some essential goods such as sugar and bread at lower prices. Although there were problems in the distribution process, these people were in an advantageous position compared to those excluded from the assistance program. On the other hand, a limited number of workers employed by private enterprises received a portion of their wages in kind as food assistance. For instance, in a road building project undertaken by the British government between Mersin and the Cilician Gates, bread was a part of the workers' payment. Workers had the chance to obtain bread made from Australian white flour.²¹¹ Similarly, a few textile factories in İstanbul, all of which employed more than ten workers, began to give food assistance to their workers. The form and extent of assistance varied in each factory. For instance, while workers were given free lunches in one of the factories, in another one they were only given a piece of bread and a cup of milk.²¹² Tobacco companies in Izmir

²¹⁰ Eser Tutel, "Tek Tip Ekmek Günleri," *Popüler Tarih Dergisi*, no. 40 (December 2003).

²¹¹ Maynard, *Letters from Turkey 1939-1946*, pp.154-155.

²¹² Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi Ve Ücretler*, p. 259.

provided monetary help to Kızılay in order to supply free meals to their workers.²¹³ In some cases, day laborers were offered similar opportunities. İdris Erdinç recounts that while his wife was working as a cleaner, in addition to her daily wage she was often supplied with a bottle of soup.²¹⁴ It could be argued that despite its limited extent, the social assistance of businessmen aimed to take under control the social risk that increased during the war years.

However, an important portion of the working people could not even benefit from such limited assistance. For instance, Mediha Özçelik recounts that, while she was working in the tobacco depots she had to get by on a small piece of bread a day.²¹⁵ To secure even basic foods, these people developed alternative survival mechanisms.

The development of a barter economy was one of these mechanisms. It was mostly used by poor women whose husbands were serving in the army. Zehra Kosova described this mechanism in her memoirs. Kosova, with some other women, went to the villages in Bandırma several times. In these villages, the women tried to obtain food that could not be easily found in the cities by trading the furniture of their houses:

We were giving villagers tea glasses and plates, and in exchange for these they gave us two kilograms flour, chickpeas or beans. Similarly, by giving socks which were sold in Istanbul, we received foods such as flour, bulgur, and lentils. These were the goods which we could not usually buy.... On our way to home, the gendarmes tried to take them

²¹³ *Akşam*, 1 February 1943.

²¹⁴ Akgül, *Şoför İdris (Anılar)*, p. 128.

²¹⁵ Mediha Özçelik, interview by Esra Sarioğlu, Burak Gürel and Can Nacar, tape recording, İstanbul, July 2004.

from us but when we said that we were soldiers' wives, they did nothing to us.²¹⁶

Searching for spoiled foods in the open markets and garbage dumps was another method. For example, in 1942, Adnan Binyazar and his little brother tried to feed themselves, their youngest brother, and stepmother with spoiled fruit and vegetables which were given to them by the sellers in the open market.²¹⁷ For the poor who did not possess such ties and lacked a sufficient income, searching for food in the garbage dumps was not an extraordinary case. For instance, in a meeting held at the Beyoğlu People's House in October 1943 Cevat, who was from Kasımpasa, underlined that before a daycare was established, children whose mothers had had to work, had looked for foods in the garbage dumps.²¹⁸ İdris Erdinç's father shared a similar fate with these children. When İdris came to Istanbul one year after the war, he found his father in Aksaray near a garbage dump. The old man was putting pieces of bread, which he found in the dump, in his bag.²¹⁹

Another widely used mechanism was the development of alternative foods. Ayşe Zaimoğlu, who was a worker at the Sumerbank Bakırköy Factory, referred to this mechanism: "The field near Zeytinburnu railway station. I wish it had a tongue and speak. Therein women were gathering grasses. Soup and meals were cooked with these grasses... There was no coffee. After grinding rye and pea in coffee mills,

²¹⁶ Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim*, p.123.

²¹⁷ Binyazar, *Masalını Yitiren Dev*, p. 93.

²¹⁸ *Tan*, 14 October 1943.

²¹⁹ Akgül, *Şoför İdris (Anılar)*, pp. 128-129.

they were drinking them as coffee. Rye coffee, pea coffee.”²²⁰ Zaven Biberyan, in his novel *Babam Aşkaleye Gitmedi* (My Father Didn't Go to Aşkale), described the substitute for sugar: “Unfortunately, in this house sugar was not used. They were drinking tea with raisins. A habit inherited from the war years continued its existence.”²²¹

In the case of health problems, the high food prices became more troubling because working people were usually unable to pay for foods necessary for their health, such as meat and milk. In these cases, hospitals served these people as shelters. A story about four poor people suffering from tuberculosis illustrates this fact:

We are suffering from tuberculosis. While we were in the sanatorium we were given 450 grams of bread and enough food. This prevented the advance of our illness to the final stage.²²²

Similar points were described by Rıfat Ilgaz. He stated that during the war bread was given to sick people without ration cards at the Heybeliada Sanatorium.²²³ However, when these people left the hospitals, they faced serious problems in meeting their needs. This was the case for the above-mentioned four men:

²²⁰ Ayşe Zaimoğlu, interview by Esra Sarioğlu and Can Nacar, tape recording, İstanbul, July 2004. “Bizim oradaki tren yolunun orası. İşte oranın dili olsa da söylese size. Kadınlar oradan otlar falan toplar yemek yaparlardı. Sağdan soldan ot toplamı yenirdi. Çorbasını yapıyorsun, yemeğini yapıyorsun...Kahve yok. Çavdarı nohudu değirmende öğütüp kahve gibi içiyorlardı onu. Çavdar kahvesi ,nohut kahvesi.”

²²¹ Zaven Biberyan, *Babam Aşkale'ye Gitmedi* (İstanbul: Aras Yayınları, 2000), p. 243. “Bu evde şeker kullanılmıyordu, ne yazık ki. Çayı kuru üzümle içiyorlardı; savaştan kalma alışkanlık devam ediyordu.”

²²² Akşam, 10 May 1943. “Bizler tüberkülozuz. Sanatoryumda tedavi altında bulunduğumuz sırada günde 450 gram ekmeğe yiyor ve aldığımız iyi gıda sayesinde hastalığımızın son haddi bulmasını önleyebiliyorduk.”

²²³ Rıfat Ilgaz, *Yokuş Yukarı* (İstanbul: Çınar Yayınları, 1994), p.127.

When the time was over, we had to leave the sanatorium. When we were faced with the necessity of feeding ourselves, we hid our illness. Here and there, we worked. Although a person suffering from tuberculosis can not bear the burden of the hard working conditions, we ignored these conditions in order to live. However, because we were given 300 grams of bread, undernourishment affected our health negatively.²²⁴

However, some poor people could not even spend a limited period in sanatoriums or hospitals. The stepfather of Fatma was among these people. Fatma, whose husband was in the military service, lived in a one-roomed house with her two children in Cağaloğlu. In September 1945, she was visited by her stepfather, who was from Çanakkale. When his temperature rose, the old man was taken to Gureba Hospital. However, he was expelled from hospital within 24 hours. When the headman (*muhtar*) phoned the hospital and asked doctor the reason for his discharge, he could receive no answer. Even though the old man was not given any report, a servant in the hospital stated that he had tuberculosis.²²⁵

The health problems were not limited to the acquisition of food. Temporary or constant health problems put unbearable burdens on limited family budgets. Zehra Kosova was among these people. As mentioned above, in 1942 she was working in a factory for a daily wage of seventy piasters. This low level of income led to undernourishment and health problems:

Due to the fact my income is so low, we began to face great problems...My daughter became ill. The doctor told me that her bones

²²⁴ *Akşam*, 10 May 1943. "Sanatoryumda yatma müddetimiz doldu ve çıktık. Dışarıda iş bulup karnımızı doyurmak mecburiyetiyle karşılaşınca hastalığımızı gizledik. Şurada burada birer amelelik bulmaya başladık. Bir tüberkülozlu ağır işte çalışmasa da, maişet kaygısıyla bu tarafa ehemmiyet vermiyoruz. Fakat günde 300 gram ekmeğe alabildiğimiz için gıdasızlık bizi son derece düşürmektedir."

²²⁵ *Tan*, 2 October 1945.

were weak and recommended an injection....The price of the injection was 8 TL, but I had no money to buy it.²²⁶

Bekir Bozkurt was in a similar position. In the above-mentioned interview conducted in the public bath, he said:

While I was working in Ortaköy with Mr. Sotiri as a gardener, I fell from a tree and injured my leg. The doctors told me that it had become gangrenous and I would not be able to use the injured leg any more. I come here because I have no place to sleep. In any case, I will consent to the amputation of my leg in order to rescue myself from here and sleep in the hospital.²²⁷

The burden sometimes led to traumatic events. In one such case, Mahir, a leather factory worker, killed the gatekeeper of the same factory with a monkey wrench in order to take his forty TL in January 1944. Mahir was initially sentenced to death. However, taking into consideration that his wife was pregnant and he was struggling to pay for the costs of the family, which were increasing due to the pregnancy, the court lessened the penalty and sentenced him to thirty years.²²⁸

Hard-pressed to pay for housing, food and health costs, working class families were compelled to pull their children out of school. In the autumn of 1944, a count was made by the teachers and local authorities in Istanbul with the goal of compiling information about children who were unable to continue their primary education. Their methods were not without problems. For instance, they relied on information given by the head of the family or the owner of the factories employing child

²²⁶ Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim*, p.121.

²²⁷ *Akşam*, 12 May 1943. "Ortaköy'de müsyü Sotirinin bahçesinde çalışıyordum. Ağaçtan düşerek bacağımdan yaralandım. Doktorlar kankıran olduğumu, bu bacadan hayır kalmadığını söylüyorlar. Yatacak yerim olmadığı için buraya geliyorum. sen olursa olsun buradan kurtulmak ve hastanede yatmak için bacağımin kesilmesine razı olacağım."

²²⁸ *Akşam*, 23 November 1944.

workers. Despite these deficiencies, the count indicated that an important proportion of the primary school age Istanbul population was unable to continue education. According to the count, in Istanbul, 129,140 children were between the age of seven and sixteen. 25,932 of them could not continue their education. The count organizers tried to find out why these children couldn't continue their education and categorized their findings. In the table below, the reasons and the number of children who could not continue their education due to these reasons are given:

Table 1. The number of children who were unable to continue their education.

Reason	Number
Being Orphan	2,075
Poverty	9,184
Being an Adopted Child	1,477
Illness	1,422
Physical Disability	596
Having Psychological Problems	467
Obligation to Take Care of Little Sisters and Brothers	1,484
Lack of Primary School	1,588
Obligation to Work	7,639
Total	25,932

Source: Akşam, 4 October 1944.

According to the table, towards the end of the war, at least 16,823 children were unable to continue their primary educations for purely financial reasons. In fact, these numbers were higher in most of the Anatolian cities. For instance, when a similar count was made in Urfa in September 1944, the result was that only eight percent of primary school age children were able to continue school.²²⁹ On the other hand, many poor children who were lucky enough to attend school also had to work.

²²⁹ *Yenilik*, 12 November 1943.

Rıfat Ilgaz, who, according to Oktay Akbal, eternalized poor people living in Istanbul during the War years,²³⁰ referred to his students who had to work in order to help their parents in one of his poems:

In the attendance records I learned of you,
my lazy children!
The student who attend the least,
I recognized you on my return from a movie,
unsold papers on your chair,
meeting evening in my own way,
the laziest of you offered me a peppermints
Offered to carry in his box
the bunch of spinach in my hand
your most distracted in class!²³¹

Sometimes, these hard conditions of students were compounded by the strict attitudes of the teachers. It is important to emphasize that such attitudes were not limited to the war years. For instance, when Hesabali Turan began his secondary school education in Artvin in September 1933, he was warned by his teacher to replace his sandals (*çarık*) with shoes. When he responded that he didn't have any money, the teacher got angry: "This is an optional school. Those who have money can come here. You can't continue this school with sandals. Off with you! Go home."²³² Similarly, in September 1944 a man, whose monthly wage was thirty TL, complained that although he was sending his three children to the school, the teacher refused to admit them, arguing that the children did not have school uniforms. The

²³⁰Rıfat Ilgaz, *Yarenlik* (İstanbul: Çınar Yayınları, 1997), p. 67.

²³¹İlgaz, *Sınıf ve Dosyası*, p.35. Yoklama defterinden öğrendim sizi,/ benim haylaz çocuklarım!/
Sınıfın en devamsızını/ Bir sinema dönüşü tanıdım,/ koltuğunda satılmamış gazeteler.../
Dumanlı bir salonda/ kendime göre karşılarken akşamı/ nane şekeri uzattı en tembeliniz.../
Götürmek istedi küfesinde/ elimdeki ıspanak demetini/ en dalgını sınıfın!

²³²Hesabali Turan, *Bir Eğitimcinin Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), p. 29. "Burası ihtiyari okuldur. Parası olan okur. Çarıkla bu okula devam edemezsin. Defol evine git."

Director of Education, Halil Vedat Fıratlı, agreed with the man and sent a circular to all the schools in Istanbul declaring that students could not be forced to wear uniforms in school.²³³

War time conditions negatively affected the performance of students at school. This fact was recognized by the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The board of directors, in a meeting held on 6 November 1942, argued that in the exams held in 1942, the success rate of the students who were given scholarship by the Chamber had been low because of the hard living conditions. Departing from this point, the Board demanded the continuation of scholarship for students who had passed their classes with mid-level grades. This demand was accepted by the council.²³⁴

In conclusion, although the prime minister claimed that workers, being excluded from the assistance program declared in November 1942, had adapted their incomes to the war conditions, it is clear that most of them could not. As mentioned above, they faced great difficulties in meeting their basic needs. However, it is important to emphasize that legal regulations, public institutions, and the existing social networks did offer opportunities for those people to counter their troubles and improve their conditions. In the next part, these mechanisms will be explored.

²³³ *Akşam*, 26 September 1944.

²³⁴ "Oda Meclisi İctimaları," *İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Mecmuası* 59, no. 4 (April 1943), p. 100.

Legal Regulations and the RPP

The insufficiency of the wage levels and unemployment were two important problems faced by working class people during the war years. Legal regulations and the Republican Peoples Party did offer them opportunities to challenge these problems and improve their conditions. However, similar to the social assistance programs, only a few people were able to take advantage of these opportunities.

The Labor Code, enacted in 1936, prohibited trade unions and strikes. Instead, in the case of a conflict between the workers and employers the Code anticipated the functioning of a conciliation mechanism. Article 78 proposed that when a dispute came into existence between a group of workers or an individual worker and employer, the parties were to make attempts to solve the dispute between themselves with the mediation of workers' representative. When the parties could not reach an agreement in the case of a conflict between group of workers and employer, according to Article 81, a government official was to be sent to the workplace to solve the problem. If this mechanism also failed, Article 82 proposed the establishment of Provincial Conciliation Committees (*İl Hakem Kurulu*), whose members were overwhelmingly government officials: the highest ranking government official responsible for the execution of the Labor Code, governor or his assistant, and administrator of legal issues (*Hukuk İşleri Müdürü*). A party who was dissatisfied with the decision of that committee could apply to governor within twelve days and carry the case to the High Conciliation Committee (*Yüksek Hakem Kurulu*) in Ankara, which was composed of high-ranking bureaucrats from the

Ministries of the Economy, the Interior, and Justice, and a professor from the Faculty of Law. The decision of this committee, depending on the majority of votes, was absolute. After it was proclaimed to the parties, it became valid on the next working day. The decision of the committee could be challenged after twenty-six weeks. Article 86 proposed that the cabinet, taking in to consideration social and economic benefits, had the authority to apply the final decision in enterprises which were not subject to such a conflict, but had similar working conditions.²³⁵

In the period between 1939 and 1945, this mechanism enabled some workers to improve their conditions. Probably an important portion of disputes was settled in the first step. For instance, in 1945, the owner of a tobacco factory in Fındıklı, Mr. Nazım, accepted the demands of the workers: they were supplied with soap and work clothes.²³⁶ Similarly, when the workers employed in the Sümerbank Defterdar Factory applied to the administration for a wage increase in the war years, the factory administration increased the wages between ten and sixty percent.²³⁷

On the other hand, a limited number of cases were brought before regional and high conciliation committees. For instance, between 1941 and 1945, only two cases were brought before the Provincial Conciliation Committee in Istanbul: one in 1941 and one in 1943.²³⁸ Only four cases were brought before the High Conciliation Committee. All four revolved around wage issues. The workers were complaining

²³⁵ *İş Kanunu*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol 17, pp 1146-1205.

²³⁶ Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim*, p.126.

²³⁷ Fındıkoğlu, *Defterdar Fabrikası Hakkında Bir Tatbiki Sınai Sosyoloji Denemesi*, p. 26.

²³⁸ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi Ve Ücretler*, p. 332.

about the insufficiency of the wage levels and wage increases.²³⁹ For example, in the only case that was brought before the High Committee in 1942, the applicants were workers from three flour factories in Izmir. They demanded an increase in wages and half pay on holidays. The employers countered that the factories could not make profits and rejected the demand. Taking into consideration the increasing cost of living since the beginning of the war and the fact that the previously made wage increases, which had totaled around twenty percent since the beginning of the war, in these factories were insufficient, the Conciliation Committee decided a ten percent increase in the wages.²⁴⁰ In the other three cases, the decisions were also in favor of the workers.

Although the decisions were mostly in favor of workers, workers usually refrained from applying this mechanism. As Sabahaddin Zaim has underlined, in a period during which real wages were very low such an attitude did not stem from the fact that there was no need to apply to the conciliation mechanism, but because workers were deprived of this mechanism.²⁴¹ The lengthiness of the process, the main points of which were underlined above, was probably an important deterrent for workers. The delicate position of workers representatives was probably another deterrent. Although workers' representatives, whose number varied according to the total number of workers employed in an enterprise, were obliged to protect his/her friends' rights, they were not protected by the Labor Code against the abuses of the

²³⁹Makal, *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946*, p.444.

²⁴⁰*Resmi Gazete*, 10 September 1942.

²⁴¹ Zaim, *İstanbul Mensucat Sanayiinin Bünyesi Ve Ücretler*, p. 333.

employer. Although Orhan Tuna's study about the right of strike focuses mainly on the post-war period, it gives clues about the delicate positions of workers' representatives. Depending on the files submitted to Istanbul Provincial Committee, Tuna states that in some cases workers' representatives, trying to include their friends in the conflict, were expelled by their enterprises.²⁴² For instance, when a case was brought before the Istanbul Provincial Committee in September 1950, the workers' representative was expelled from his job without any reason.²⁴³ Departing from these facts it can be assumed that in the war years, it would not have been an easy task for the workers' representatives, who no doubt faced great difficulties in meeting their needs, to apply a mechanism which offered limited gains.

The Labor Code also declared that finding jobs was the task of the State and proposed the establishment of an institution for the fulfillment of that task. However, during the war, the proposed institution was not established.²⁴⁴ Its task was partly fulfilled by the Party bureaus established in the big cities. For instance, in Istanbul, unemployed people and companies in the need of workers applied to the party bureau in Nuruosmaniye. In addition to finding work and workers, for a short period it provided rooms for homeless people who applied for work.²⁴⁵ In Bursa, a more primitive mechanism was introduced by the Public House. The names of the factories in need of workers, especially those run by the state, were written on a

²⁴² Orhan Tuna, *Grev Hakka İş Mücadelelerinde Yeri ve Ehemmiyeti* (İstanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1951), p.65.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²⁴⁴ Makal, *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946*, p. 399.

²⁴⁵ *Akşam*, 30 June 1944; and *Akşam*, 23 August 1944.

signboard which was displayed in front of the Public House.²⁴⁶ These institutions could find employment for only a limited number of people because they were not organized extensively and their staffs were limited.

In addition to this service, the party offered various platforms that enabled working people to express their complaints and demands. Meetings held with deputies in the peoples' houses were one of these platforms. For instance, in a meeting held in Urfa in April 1944, representatives of loom owners complained the deputies about the scarcity of weaving yarn and its negative impact on the loom owners.²⁴⁷ The complaints of Isparta weavers about the uneven weaving yarn distribution mechanism appeared in a report prepared by Isparta deputies in 1942.²⁴⁸ Similarly, during the meetings conducted in the various districts of Istanbul in the fall of 1945, workers from different sectors and party representatives complained to the deputies about the hard and unhealthy working conditions, the abuses of employers, and demanded the alleviation of these conditions.²⁴⁹

However, it is important to emphasize that the bounds of the workers' agency were not determined by above-mentioned mechanisms. To improve their wage levels or working conditions, some of the workers did not refrain from taking actions which were forbidden by the law.²⁵⁰ In the last months of 1942, Adnan Binyazar witnessed one of these actions:

²⁴⁶ *Açık Ses*, 12 October 1943.

²⁴⁷ *Yenilik*, 17 April 1944.

²⁴⁸ Akın, "New Sources, New Approaches: Contribution to the Early Republican Labor History."

²⁴⁹ For instance, see *Tan*, 24 September 1945; and *Tan*, 28 September 1945.

When I woke up, I saw that none of the workers had started to work. The workers who had awakened had left the factory... Those days, there were no banners or slogans. The workers who relied on their body power led the strike. Our leader was Nuri Usta, who was known as "Crow," due to the shape of his nose. Although in the factory there was no person of authority, he was shouting: "If you don't pay our money today, we will not work!"²⁵¹

The workers, who had not been paid for months, resorted to violence when the responsible manager, Mr. Müştak, arrived at the factory. The manager and other responsible people barely managed to escape. At the end of the strike, the workers were unable to achieve their goals because the factory owner, facing financial problems, did not return and the factory was closed.²⁵²

Two years later, porters employed by the State Maritime Lines Administration (*Devlet Deniz Yolları İdaresi*) were on the scene. In fact, dock workers were probably one of the best organized working class group in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. As Quataert has stated, in the last decades of the empire they struggled against foreign enterprises operating in the port of Istanbul in order to continue work under their own control. Quataert has concluded that their guilds preserved their power during the First World War. According to foreign reports,

²⁵⁰ In addition to the legal regulations made in the pre-war years in November 1940 Martial Law was decreed in Istanbul, Edirne, Kırklareli, Tekirdağ, Çanakkale and Kocaeli. The law, which was valid until 1947, authorized the military administration, responsible for its execution, to forbid meetings in open and closed places. Moreover, the administration had the authority to open letters and telegraphs, and make searches in building, belonging to clubs or associations, and workplaces.

²⁵¹ Binyazar, *Masalını Yitiren Dev*, p.103. "Bir sabah uyandıgımda kimsenin işe başlamadığını görüyorum. Yerinden kalkan dışarı fırlıyor... O zamanlar pankart falan yok. Topluca slogan atma da yok. Bileğine güvenen işçiler, ortaya çıkıp sözde ve eylemde öncülük ediyorlar. Öncümüz bizi tekme tokat uyandıran, burnunun sivriliğinden dolayı 'Karga' diye adlandırılan Nuri Usta. Kir pas içindeki işçilerin dışında, fabrikayla ilgili hiç kimsenin bulunmadığı alanın boşluğuna bağırıyor: 'Paramızı bugün ödemezseniz çalışmayacağız.'"

²⁵² Ibid., pp.104-105.

which were prepared in 1921, the guilds of the bargemen and porters were the most powerful ones in Istanbul.²⁵³ Sedat Toydemir, focusing on strikes in the early Republican period, has concluded that actions analogous to strikes were mostly seen among port workers.²⁵⁴ In 1944, one such actions came to pass. The Maritime Administration forbade the use of hooks, which the porters needed to carry loads, on the grounds that they pierced the bags. In response to this regulation, which made working conditions harder, workers refused to work for twenty-four hours. Finally, the administration retreated and the porters again began to use hooks.²⁵⁵

In 1945, on the eve of Şeker Bayram, there arose a conflict in the Austro Turk Tobacco Company between workers and the factory manager. When Mümin Kökrek, a worker at the company, complained to the manager about the quality and insufficiency of meals, the manager slapped him. The workers protested this behavior loudly. In response, the manager, claiming that there was a riot, called the police. A serious clash ensued between the police and the workers. Women workers met police with by bale sticks. The clash was only brought to an end by the arrival of supplementary forces. Fifteen workers were taken to the police station and after, the Bayram, before the court as inciters of the riot. Finally, these workers were evacuated.²⁵⁶ It is important to emphasize that the leading figures of this action were mostly members of the Turkish Communist Party (TKP). Although it was an

²⁵³ Donald Quataert, "Liman İşçileri Loncaları Ve Dersaadet Rihtım Şirketi," in *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı Ve Direniş (1881-1908)* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1987), pp. 86-102.

²⁵⁴ Sedat Toydemir, *Türkiyede İş İhtilaflarının Tarihçesi ve Bugünkü Durumu, İktisat ve İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü Konferansları Dördüncü Kitaptan Ayrı Bası* (İstanbul: 1951), p14.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.14.

²⁵⁶ Mustafa Özçelik, *1930-1950 Arasında Tütüncülerin Tarihi* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2003), pp. 21-22.

underground organization, the TCP managed to draw important number of working - class people, especially tobacco workers, to its side. When the members of the Turkish Communist Party were brought before the Court in 1944, there were many workers among the accused.

Social Networks

Apart from the limited opportunities offered by the legal regulations and the RPP, another mechanism for working class existed: social solidarity networks. As underlined in recent academic discussions, social solidarity networks based on family, neighborhood and citizenship (*hemşerilik*) have been at the center of the welfare regime in Turkey.²⁵⁷ Similar to the contemporary period, in which social groups resorted to actual solidarity and resistance forms against the unevenness produced by global capitalism in the local realm,²⁵⁸ in the World War II, social solidarity networks were resorted to against the hardships produced by war time economic conditions.

Networks of family, friendship, and neighborhood helped working people counter the problems faced during the war years. These networks could be resorted in the different courses of life. Finding work for the unemployed was one of these. Zehra Kosova wrote that, in times of economic depression, to find work in the

²⁵⁷ Ayşe Buğra, "Ekonomik Kriz Karşısında Türkiye'nin Geleneksel Refah Rejimi," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 89 (Summer 2001), pp. 22-30.

²⁵⁸ Nadir Özbek, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Sosyal Devlet," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 92 (Spring 2002), pp. 7-33.

tobacco factories was very hard. In those days, foremen gave licenses to workers who had been known by them before the work began. Kosova, who had not been aware of such relations, had been looking for work in vain. Later on, she began to obtain these licenses with the help of her brother, who worked in the tobacco factories.²⁵⁹ Networks were not only necessary for finding work, but also for continuing the work life. Ayşe Zaimoğlu recounts that in their neighborhood, Osmaniye, women workers whose husbands were in the military service, left their small children with old neighbor women. In return, they paid several piasters.²⁶⁰

Such networks also contributed to the solution of other problems, such as accommodation. The neighborhood networks enabled Adnan Binyazar to rescue himself from spending nights on the streets:

The poverty reached unbearable points. People in the neighborhood were trying to help us. However, all the doors were closed....When nobody helped me, I returned to the ruined house...Then Police Officer Recep, who was a father to the poor living in Kocamustafapaşa, sent me to a cook. I was partly an adopted child and partly an apprentice of the cook.²⁶¹

Until the end of the war, Binyazar worked with the cook and lived in his house. Zehra Kosova had a similar story. When the costs of living became unbearable, friendship and political networks enabled her to solve, at least partly, her housing problem. One of her friends, Rasime, suggested they share a house until their

²⁵⁹ Kosova, p. 64.

²⁶⁰ Ayşe Zaimoğlu, interview by Esra Sarioğlu and Can Nacar, tape recording, İstanbul, July 2004.

²⁶¹ Binyazar, *Masalını Yitiren Dev*, p.111. “*Sefil yaşamımız dayanılmayacak noktalara geldi. Mahalleli bir şeyler yapmaya çalışıyor. Ne ki, bütün kapılar kapalı... Kimseden yüz bulamayınca dönüp yıkıntıma geldim...Kocamustafapaşa yoksullarının babası Recep, beni de kardeşim gibi, bir aşçıya yarı çırak, yarı evlatlık verdi.*”

husbands returned from the military service. For one year, the friends shared the house and its costs without any problems. Kosova later on learned that Rasime had received instructions from the Turkish Communist Party when she offered sharing a house.²⁶² There existed similar stories in Anatolian cities. For instance, the Sivas American College was a shelter for the poor Armenians who had migrated to Sivas from nearby villages. The college was in the northern part of the city and composed of three big buildings. When the Americans evacuated the school after the Treaty of Lausanne, they appointed an old lawyer, Mr. Tevfik, as deputy. Mr. Tevfik entrusted the school to a reliable man, Garabed Agha. Garabed Agha provided one or two rooms for the newly arrived migrants for a temporary period without any material expectation. Due to the population increase within the college it was sometimes necessary to ask the older migrants to evacuate part of the place they occupied.²⁶³

Although such networks enabled people to counter the hard conditions of the life, they were not without their costs. For instance, it was not easy for Binyazar to pay “his debt” to his “savior.” On a normal day, he had to work in the restaurant of the cook almost twelve hours without any payment. Regular beating was his promotion. In the house, he was treated as a second-class person. His room was almost bare: the only furniture was an old bed made of grass. Finally, when the conditions became unbearable, he found a chance and ran away. He returned to his mother in Elazığ.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Kosova, p. 124.

²⁶³ Kirkor Ceyhan, *Atım Nalladı Felek Düştü Peşimize* (İstanbul: Aras Yayınları, 2000), pp. 41-66.

²⁶⁴ Binyazar, *Masalım Yitiren Dev*, pp. 116-178.

Conclusion

The World War II negatively affected the working and living conditions of the working people. An important portion of these people had to work under unhealthy conditions for long hours. Many firms refrained from making even basic investments to improve the working conditions. In the factories and small workshops scattered around the cities workers were not even given masks to protect themselves from dust or harmful gases. A deputy preparing a report about the working conditions in Istanbul two years after the war, wrote the followings after he made surveys in the workshops in the district of Mahmutpaşa: “What conditions human beings bear in order to earn a piece of bread.”²⁶⁵ Moreover, wage levels were left behind the rapidly increasing prices. These exploitative policies imposed on the labor force were decisive in minimizing costs and making high profits.

In addition to serving the purpose of minimizing costs, low wage levels were used to restrain the workers' freedom of action. When Lilo Linke visited a cotton factory in Tarsus several years before the War, her guide complained about the attitudes of workers: “The moment they saved a few pounds- and because of their incredibly low standard of life – they stayed at home idleness. Of course, after a while they always had to come back if they did not want to starve.”²⁶⁶ Similar complaints persisted during the war years. For instance, weavers in Gaziantep

²⁶⁵“Bazı Bölgelerdeki Fabrika İşyerleri Ve İşçilerin Genel Durumu Hakkında BMM Çalışma Komisyonundan Bir Grubun Hazırladıkları Rapor.”

²⁶⁶Linke, *Allah Dethroned*, pp. 268-269.

complained that workers who worked for a week did not come to the workshops the following week.²⁶⁷ In response to these attitudes, wages were kept low. This mentality was openly expressed by the guide in the cotton factory: “So what was the good of giving them better wages? It would only increase their laziness and spoil them altogether.”²⁶⁸

Hard hit by working conditions and low wage levels, working people faced great difficulties meeting their needs. Meeting accommodation, food, health and education costs was not an easy task. A considerable number of people had to spend nights on the streets, in public baths, or their worksites; search for spoiled foods in open markets and garbage dumps; develop substitutes for scarcely found foods, and gather grasses. To contribute to the family budget, thousands of school age children worked in different sectors as artisans, factory workers or day laborers.

However hard living conditions within and outside the worksite did not mean that these people remained completely passive as the victims of fate. They resorted to various platforms to express their complaints and demands. In this way, their everyday problems such as the unevenness in the distribution of raw materials or the abuses of employers were brought onto the agenda. Moreover, some working class groups, which were well organized, took actions that were forbidden by the law. In a city where Martial Law was applied, they refused to work, clashed with police forces or even attempted to beat their employers in order to improve their working and living conditions or make the employer treat them properly. These actions,

²⁶⁷ *Yeni Gaziantep*, 13 June 1944.

²⁶⁸ Linke, *Allah Dethroned*, p. 269.

which were valuable examples for the activity of freedom, no doubt had an impact on the post-war developments with regard to the welfare system. As Nadir Özbek has underlined, in the post-war period, social security and welfare systems, centered on the labor market and work relations came to dominate the scene.²⁶⁹ This development is usually explained with the quantitative increase of industrial workers and attempts to integrate into a new world order based on democracy. However, the emergence of the new welfare system was also a response to the increasing social risk and working class people's egalitarian demands, which were expressed in various platforms in various means.

²⁶⁹ Özbek, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Sosyal Devlet," pp. 7-33.

CHAPTER IV

OUR LIFE WAS NOT AS VALUABLE AS A CARPET:²⁷⁰ WORKERS IN THE PUBLIC ENTERPRISES

This section explores the conditions of the workers employed in the public enterprises during the World War II. Although the main points of attention are Sümerbank and Etibank, references will also be made to other state run companies, such as the Monopoly and Tram Administrations. In the first part, the social assistance programs of these companies as part of a governmental project will be analyzed. Due to the fact that these companies had launched social assistance programs for their workers even before the war, reference will also be made to the 1930s. The second part will focus on the reasons for the government's intervention into the social space through the public enterprises, and the disciplinary policies and practices, which were resorted to in order to realize these goals. The basic concerns in this chapter are to put emphasis on the hard work and living conditions of the workers in these enterprises, and their reactions against these conditions.

²⁷⁰ İrfan Yalçın, *Ölümün Ağzı* (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları,1979), p.6.

Social Assistance Programs in the State Run Companies

As mentioned in the previous chapter, after the speech made by prime minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu on 11 November 1942, some public and private companies applied to the local authorities and demanded the inclusion of their workers in the proclaimed assistance program. However, the answer was negative. For example, the governor of Istanbul responded that because these companies had commercial goals, the promotion of worker's conditions was their own responsibility.²⁷¹ In this case, the workers in the public enterprises seemed more fortunate because these enterprises had had social assistance programs for them even before the War. Actually, the social assistance programs were partly a compensation for insufficient wage levels. Therefore, before analyzing the social assistance programs, a brief look at the wage levels is necessary.

The public enterprises applied strict wage policies even in the pre-war years. For instance, the payment of daily wages was a quarrelsome issue in the 1930s. For instance, in June 1935, *Cumhuriyet* reported that contrary to the provisions in the law, some public and private enterprises did not pay their workers for Saturdays. The Monopoly Administration and Mint were among these.²⁷² However, these policies met with the workers' resistance. For instance, when the workers demanded

²⁷¹ *Akşam*, 10 January 1943.

²⁷² *Cumhuriyet*, 16 June 1935.

payment for Saturdays in June 1935, the quarrel was prevented only with police intervention.²⁷³

The wage levels in various sectors and cities during the war years can be deduced from the archives of the public enterprises, announcements made by these enterprises, and the newspapers. For instance, on 8 October 1943, the Sümerbank Merinos Factory announced that it needed workers. The weekly wage offered for apprentices was five liras and for skilled workers, nine liras.²⁷⁴ It seems that in the sugar industry the daily wages were higher. For instance, in October 1943, the Public House in Bursa announced that the Uşak Sugar Factory was in need of workers and offering a daily wage of 310 piasters.²⁷⁵ After a visit to the Cibali Tobacco Factory in July 1944, İmre Servet reported that the wages paid for an hour of work ranged from ten piasters to sixty piasters.²⁷⁶ Wage levels in the Sumerbank Bakırköy Factory were also on these levels. For instance, Şükriye Demirci, who began to work in this factory as a weaver in 1938 was paid ten piasters for an hour of work in her first year. Two years later her wage was increased to twelve piasters. At the end of war, she was working in the revision department for an hourly wage of eighteen piasters.²⁷⁷ Hatice Yiğit, who worked in the factory between 1942 and 1963, shared a similar fate. In 1943 and 1944, she was paid fifteen piasters for an hour of work. In 1945, her wage was increased to eighteen piasters.²⁷⁸ Kazım Gören,

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ *Bursa*, 8 October 1943.

²⁷⁵ *Açık Ses*, 12 October 1943.

²⁷⁶ *Tan*, 10 July 1944.

²⁷⁷ File of Şükriye Demirci in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 4706.

who was employed in the sizing department during the war years, was paid 27.50 piasters in 1943 for an hour of work. In February 1944, his hourly wage was increased to thirty piasters.²⁷⁹

Skilled workers were generally offered higher wages. For instance, in June 1943, the Ereğli Textile Factory announced that it needed three welders and offered wages of 120 liras per month.²⁸⁰ In July 1943, the Sivas Cement Factory, in need of electricians and fitters, offered eighty piasters an hour.²⁸¹ Yahya Tezcan, who was an assistant foreman in the Bakırköy Sümerbank Factory, was paid forty piasters an hour in 1944.²⁸² In 1941, the monthly wage of Neşet Şen, who was a graduate of the Aydın Art School and worked in the weaving department of the Bakırköy Factory as an assistant master, ranged between eighty and one hundred liras before any tax cut.²⁸³

These wage levels could not cope with the price increases during the World War II. With a daily wage, ranging from eighty piasters to five liras it was very difficult to satisfy even the basic needs under the war time inflation. The insufficiency of wages was a source of complaint among the workers. These complaints were sometimes expressed through petitions submitted to factory administrations. One of these petitions was written in March 1944 by Resmiye Şen,

²⁷⁸ File of Hatice Yiğit in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5047.

²⁷⁹ File of Kazım Gören in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 977.

²⁸⁰ *Akşam*, 21 June 1943.

²⁸¹ *Akşam*, 17 July 1943.

²⁸² File of Yahya Tezcan in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 1481.

²⁸³ File of Neşet Şenkal in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 1411.

who was a widow working in the Bakırköy Sümerbank Factory for an hourly wage of fifteen piasters. Şen complained that she could only provide a piece of bread for her five children, whose ages ranged between five and thirteen, and could not send them to school. She proposed various alternatives to the administration: “You may either increase my wage or send my children to school. If none of these can be accomplished, I demand my exemption from tax cuts.”²⁸⁴ In some public enterprises, workers began to leave their works due to insufficient wage levels. In the second half of 1944, the Üsküdar-Kadıköy Tram Company faced the loss of their workers and became unable to operate the vehicles according to the schedule.²⁸⁵ The insufficiency of wage levels was expressed in the reports prepared for the state run factories. For instance, in 1943, a prime ministry’s inspection committee reported that in the Sümerbank factories some workers spent their limited wages completely and were unable to save money. For these workers, staying at the factory was not worthwhile and many left it.²⁸⁶

The low wage levels were sometimes accompanied by abuses from the administrations. For instance, in the Zonguldak coal basin, workers had to wait one week for the payment of their wages. Muzaffer Demirbaş, a retired miner, recalls: “Payment of wages was made by Kõr Hafız. Payment continued for one week...

²⁸⁴ File of Resmiye Şen in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5418. The administration increased her wage to 18 piaster.

²⁸⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 16 October 1944; and *Akşam*, 4 December 1944. In response to this development, a social assistance program was launched: the company decided to set up an aid box for its officials and workers who were ill and in need of money. It was also declared that the collected funds would be used to help the close relatives of workers who died. See *Akşam*, 25 August 1944

²⁸⁶ “Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu,” (Ankara: Başvekalet Umumi Murakabe Heyeti, 1944), p. 49.

Workers waited in line for the payment. Is it an easy task to make payments for 7-8 thousand workers? The task that had to be accomplished by several people was carried only by K r Hafız.”²⁸⁷ On the other hand, Fatma Erginer; who was known as *İzmirli Fatma*, wrote a petition to the Bakırk y S merbank Factory Administration in September 1943 complaining that since the workers who came from İzmir with her had escaped from the factory, the expenditures made for them had been cut from her wages.²⁸⁸

While the wage policies applied by public enterprises were usually far from satisfactory, they applied comprehensive social assistance programs. These programs included housing and nutrition facilities, healthcare and social insurance systems, and recreational facilities. In the below paragraphs, they will be analyzed in detail.

Housing Facilities

The public enterprises most active in construction activities were S merbank and Etibank. The location of the factories and the large number of the workers employed in these factories were the two important factors lying behind the extensive building programs. Some state run factories were set up in underdeveloped regions. The Karab k Iron and Steel Factory is a good example of this. The

²⁸⁷ Kadir Tuncer, *Tarihten G n mize Zonguldak'ta İŐçi Sınıfının Durumu*, ed. YaŐar Sel uk (İstanbul: G cebe Yayınları, 1998), pp. 74-75. “Tediye yapan K r Hafız vardı. Bir hafta s rerdi tediye... Adamlar para alayım diye bir hafta kıyrukta beklerdi. Ellerini koynuna sokarlardı. 7-8 bin kiŐiye bir tek adam tediye yaparsa kolay mı olur?”

²⁸⁸ File of Fatma Erginer in the S merbank Bakırk y Factory. Registration Number: 4946.

development in Karabük was described by Dr. Rebi Barkın, former Zonguldak deputy, in 1946:

Several years ago, Karabük was a small village composed of 15-20 households. Today the population of the city amounts to 11,000. This rapid development is faster than the development of local trade, which have been unable to satisfy the various demands of the population. This gave rise to scarcities, which upset the workers, foremen, engineers and officials.²⁸⁹

Some other factories were far from city centers. For instance, the distance between the city and the Sivas Cement Factory was 8.5 kilometers. As well, the number of workers employed in the factories and mines affected the construction policies. The Ereğli Coal Company (*Ereğli Kömür İşletmesi*), which employed more than 26,000 workers in 1943,²⁹⁰ had to create housing for workers because Zonguldak was undergoing a housing depression (*mesken buhranı*).²⁹¹

In some cases, the construction policies led to the establishment of new cities. Karabük is a good example of this as well. In 1943, the company completed the construction of eighty housing units.²⁹² Construction continued in 1944 with the completion of one hundred worker's house, seventy wooden worker barracks and showers.²⁹³ Plans were made for the completion of a new worker neighborhood,

²⁸⁹Rebi Barkın, "Karabük'de Sevindirici Gelişmeler," *Doğu*, no. 44-45 (July-August 1946), pp. 35-39. "Bugünkü Karabük şehrinin yerinde daha birkaç sene evvel 15-20 haneli bir köy vardı. Bugün şehrin nüfusu 11,000'e varmıştır. Bu hızlı gelişme şehirde yaşayan halkın türlü ihtiyaçlarını gerektirdiği gibi karşılayacak mahalli ticaretin inkişafından daha çabuk olmuş ve Karabük'de çalışan işçilerin, ustabaşlarının, mühendislerin ve memurların hayli üzüntüsünü mucib olan bir takım darlıklara ve mahrumiyetlere sebebiyet vermişti."

²⁹⁰Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946* (Ankara: Imge Kitabevi, 1999), p.267.

²⁹¹*Yeni Zonguldak*, 15 April 1942; and *Yeni Zonguldak*, 1 July 1942.

²⁹²"Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p.Ek 2.

composed of more than 160 houses in the following year.²⁹⁴ In 1946, there were 835 houses single and married workers.²⁹⁵ These construction activities were accompanied by the development of a transportation system. A railway between Karabük and the Factories began to operate in September 1944.²⁹⁶ However, as a result of the building boom, the factory faced labor scarcity. The point was underlined by Thornburg, an American expert who visited Turkey in 1947: "The chief difficulty during the war was that in such trades as machinist, carpenter, electrician and plumber the men left when they were only half trained to work at building construction in the cities, on account of a building boom."²⁹⁷

Construction activities were not limited to the Karabük Iron and Steel Factory. Reports prepared by the Prime Ministry' inspection committee in 1943 and 1944 indicate that Sümerbank constructed worker's houses for both single and married workers in İzmit, Hereke, Kayseri, Sivas, Nazilli, Gemlik, Ereğli (Konya), and Bünyan. Etibank also engaged in similar activities. However, the outcome was not sufficient. An important portion of the workers continued to live in unhealthy conditions.

The Ereğli Coal Company was an important example of this case. In addition to dormitories with 20,549 beds, there were showers, which enabled the workers to

²⁹³ "Sümerbank 1944 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," (İstanbul: Başvekalet Umumi Murakabe Heyeti, 1945), p. 37.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p.27.

²⁹⁵ B.S, "Karabük Demir-Çelik Fabrikaları," *Doğu*, no. 44-45 (July-August 1946), pp. 40-43.

²⁹⁶ "Sümerbank 1944 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p 27.

²⁹⁷ Max Weston Thornburg, *Turkey an Economic Appraisal* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1949), p. 129.

clean themselves.²⁹⁸ However, the number of beds in the dormitories was insufficient. The situation worsened after the promulgation of the Compulsory Wage Work (*Ücretli İş Mükellefiyeti*). In 1942, the Zonguldak coal basin drew upon 58,000 forced laborers.²⁹⁹ Although most of these workers were rotational, the company was unable to accommodate them comfortably. Yahya Gebes, who had started to work in the Zonguldak mines in 1934, recalls that until 1945, when he reports proper dormitories were built, they slept in cramped conditions on a wooden floor, with blocks of wood for pillows. Unable to bathe, they were plagued by fleas.³⁰⁰

Gebes' claims are supported by a report prepared by the company in March 1944. In this report, almost every district appeared to be without adequate worker facilities, such as beds, showers and running water in the dormitories. In some dormitories, workers took turns sleeping in the same bed, according to their shift hours.³⁰¹ Similar observations were made by Hulusi and Sabiha Dosdoğru, who worked in the coal basin as doctors during the compulsory work era. The doctors stated that workers who could not find an available place in the dormitories had to spend nights in dirty barracks or remnants of lamp house. Among the latter ones serious psychological problems were widely seen.³⁰²

²⁹⁸Makal, *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946*, p.267.

²⁹⁹Erol Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," in *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey*, ed. Nadir Sugur Theo Nichols and Erol Kahveci (London: Mansell, 1996), p.184.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.186.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.186.

The hard living and working conditions in the Zonguldak coal basin during the World War II became the subject of a novel by İrfan Yalçın titled *Mouth of Death* (*Ölümün Ağzı*). The story of dormitories told by him was similar to the memories of Gebes and the others' observations:

The wooden barrack, which remained from the French, was full of workers, who come from villages and wait for their shifts. The windows are boarded in order to prevent the penetration of wind. Pieces of cotton are put in the places that remain open. However, a cold wind penetrates through small holes like a pistol.³⁰³

Moreover, it is important to emphasize that, an important portion of the workers rejected spending nights at the dormitories in reaction to the strict discipline. Hüseyin Aydın, a retired miner, recollects: "The dormitories were constructed and an official was appointed to take care of it. Clothes were given by the company. We were not permitted to wear different clothes. You had to go to the bathroom... Beds had to be kept clean. Every three or four days you had to go to ironing. If you did not have a paper given by the ironer, you were not permitted to sleep in the beds. Under this torture, we went to the mountains and slept in tents. However, the guards caught us and brought us back to dormitories. Later on we got used to it."³⁰⁴ When asked about the reasons of Zonguldak villagers' reaction to the

³⁰² Sabire Dosdoğru and Hulusi Dosdoğru, *Sağlık Açısından Maden İşçilerimizin Dünü, Bugünü* (İstanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1990),p.14 and 55.

³⁰³ İrfan Yalçın, *Ölümün Ağzı* (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1979), pp. 18-19. "Fransızlardan kalma tahta barınağın içi, köylerinden yeni gelen, vardiya saatlerini bekleyen işçilerle dolmuştu. Barınağın pencerelerine, rüzgar girmesin diye koca koca tahtalar çakılmış, açık kalan yerlere de bezler sıkıştırılmıştı. Ama yine de buz gibi soğuk bulduğu küçük deliklerden mermi gibi işliyor."

³⁰⁴ Tuncer, *Tarihten Günümüze Zonguldak'ta İşçi Sınıfının Durumu*, p.78. "Pavyonu yaptılar. Başına da koydular bir pavyoncu. İşletme elbise veriyor. Başka bir şey giymeyeceksin. Hamamdan çıkacaksın...Yatağı kirletmeyeceksin. 3-4 günde bir ütüye gideceksin. Ütüden kağıdın yoksa yatağa girip yatamayacaksın. Bu işkence altındayken, gittik dağlara sayvan yaptık. Bizi oralarda bekçiler yakaladılar. Tekrar pavyonlara soktular. Sonra sonra alıştık."

dormitories, Cemil Akyüz, who was also a retired miner, recounted a similar story: “Were there any other clothes to wear? Did they have soap? You were not allowed into the dormitories in your existing condition... There were white blankets... You were told to wash yourself. Do you see the torture? For these reasons, they rejected sleeping at the dormitories.”³⁰⁵

The Sümerbank Factory in Nazilli had a similar story. The Prime Ministry inspection committee’s report, which was prepared in 1944, underlined that the Sümerbank Nazilli Factory had managed to overcome the labor scarcity problem by drying the swamps and accommodating emigrants from the Greek islands in its barracks.³⁰⁶ However, Rebi Barkın, after a visit to Nazilli in 1949, found out that most of the workers were living in miserable conditions. In 1949, the factory was employing approximately 3,000 workers. There were apartments for the officials, skilled workers, and foremen, and a dormitory which could accommodate 300-350 workers. However, these facilities were not sufficient. Almost 2,500 workers had to find their own way and in Nazilli, where rents were high and houses were uncomfortable, it was not an easy task. One of the houses visited by Barkın had three rooms, each of which was inhabited by a working -class family. The toilet, surrounded by bushes, was in a small courtyard infested by mosquitoes. Another house had only one room. The kitchen was in a small garden and the oven was composed of two bricks. When these conditions were combined with water scarcity, health problems became inevitable. One-woman worker, who had to live in a small

³⁰⁵ Ibid., pp.73-74.“Başka giyecek elbise mi var? Yıkanacak sabunu mu var?Adam seni o halinle pavyona koymuyor ki.Beyaz çarşaf var...Yıkan da gel diyo. Eziyeti görüyor musun?Bunun için girmediler pavyonlara.”

³⁰⁶ "Sümerbank 1944 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p. 8.

room, had lost her two children within two weeks due to the unhealthy living conditions. The children were nine and eleven years old. She was trying to protect her three-month-old baby from mosquitoes with a mosquito net.³⁰⁷

Similar problems were also observed in Hereke. The accommodation facilities were reserved mostly for the officials, supervisors, and skilled workers. Mjgan Pekgirek, who began to work in factory's accounting department in 1945, recollects the accommodation facilities offered by the factory in the 1940s: "There were three important places in Hereke. One of them was the house in which we slept and accommodated. These were apartments, which were mostly assigned for the officials, technical staff, and chief groups."³⁰⁸ In Hereke, the lack of sufficient accommodation facilities was accompanied by an underdeveloped transportation system. These made the conditions even worse for the workers. Nafiz stndaĒ, who resided in Hereke in the 1940s, describes how the workers went to the factory: "In the older times they were coming, in groups, from upper Hereke and erkesli in order to work. The distance was almost 5 kilometers. However, everybody came and went on foot."³⁰⁹ Ahmet Yumuk, who was a teacher in the 1940s, underlined similar points:

³⁰⁷ Mustafa Grkem DoĒan, "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" (Ma., BoĒazici University, 2003), p. Appendix 2.

³⁰⁸ Esra stndaĒ-SelamoĒlu, "Bir Szl Tarih alışması Hereke'de DeĒişim," *Toplumsal Tarih Dergisi* 45 (September 1997), pp.28-36. "Şimdi Hereke'de ç tane nemli yer vardı. Bir tanesi yattığımız ikamet ettiğimiz ev ,lojman. Bu ekseriya Hereke Fabrikası'ndaki memurin, teknik, şef gruplarına tahsis edilen binalardı."

³⁰⁹ Ibid. "Eskiden Yukarı Hereke'den erkesli'den takriben beş kilometrelik yollardan Hereke'ye alışmaya geliyorlardı ama herkes yayan gelip yayan gidiyordu. Kafiler halinde."

Commercial, economic life...There was only Sümerbank...Çerkesli, Tavşancıl, Upper Hereke were all working for Sümerbank. At nights without taking into account rain, snow, and winter, they returned their villages on foot with the help of a lighthouse. There was no other vehicle.³¹⁰

The practice of uneven distribution of limited accommodation facilities among the staff was also observed at the Kayseri and Nazilli Sümerbank factories. As Burak Peri has commented, the “dominance of a hierarchical approach” can be observed in both of these factories.³¹¹ For instance, according to site plan in Kayseri “the best places in the district were to be reserved for the foremen. The rest was arranged according to classes. The workers from the neighborhood and the workers with no specialization would be settled in the pavilions, which were located in the far, secluded and quiet places of the district.”³¹²

While in some factories and mines, the accommodation facilities were insufficient, in some others there were no such facilities. This was the case at the Bakırköy, Beykoz, Bursa, and Isparta Sümerbank factories. This situation led to problems both for the workers and for the factory administrations. For instance, in Bursa, where there were competing industries, the factory administration faced with labor scarcity problem. This point was underlined by the prime ministry inspection committee report in 1944:

³¹⁰ Ibid. “Ticari,ekonomik hayat... Sümerbank vardı, başka yoktu ki... Bu Çerkesli, Tavşancıl, Yukarı Hereke hep Sümerbank'a çalışırdı. Akşam da fenerle yağmur, kar, kış demeden köylerine yaya olarak dönerlerdi, başka vasıta yoktu.”

³¹¹ Burak Peri, "Building the 'Modern' Environment in Early Republican Turkey: Sümerbank Kayseri and Nazilli Factory Settlements" (Ma, Middle East Technical University, 2002), p.87.

³¹² Ibid., p.87.

The problem of labor scarcity stems from the existence of competing industries, the non-existence of houses to accommodate workers, the distance between worker's neighborhoods and the factory, and lack of transportation vehicles and system. Therefore, the construction of worker housings near the Bursa Merinos Factory is included in our program. First, it is engaged in the solution of the building land problem.³¹³

Istanbul underwent a housing depression during the war years. Workers living in Istanbul no doubt had serious problems finding housing and the situation was probably worse for woman workers. There were many women workers at the Bakırköy Textile Factory and the Cibali Tobacco Factory. In 1943, approximately 700 women were employed in the Bakırköy factory. The Cibali Tobacco Factory had 2,500 workers by 1944, 1,925 of whom were women.³¹⁴ An interview conducted with Bakırköy Textile Factory workers before the war indicated that an important portion of the women workers worked to maintain their families. One of the woman workers said the following: "I am a widow. My husband died two years ago. I have a son and a daughter. My son goes to school. My daughter graduated from primary school...My wage is 24 TL. We keep the pot boiling."³¹⁵ The conditions of a child worker, Seher, were no better: "I am thirteen years old and an apprentice. I am paid four piasters an hour. My father was a driver. Now he is unemployed. I am

³¹³"Sümerbank 1944 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p.10. "İşçi tedarikindeki zorluklar, Bursa'da rakip sanayinin bulunuşu, Fabrikanın işçileri barındırarak işçi evleri olmayışı, işçiyi barındıran mahallerin Fabrikaya uzak oluşu, taşıma aracı ve teşkilatı olmayışı ile izah edilebilir. Bu yüzden Merinos Fabrikamızın yanında genişçe bir işçi sitesi kurulması programımızda önemle yer almış ve ilk olarak arsa konusunun çözümlmesine girişilmiştir."

³¹⁴ *Tan*, 10 July 1944.

³¹⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 27 June 1935. "Dulum. Kocam iki sene evvel öldü. Bir kızım bir oğlum var. Oğlum mektebe gidiyor. Kızım beşinciden şahadetname aldı... Ben buradan 24 lira alırım. Geçinip gidiyoruz."

maintaining the family.”³¹⁶ Zehra, who had been working in the same factory for two years by 1935, was supporting her brother’s family because he was in the military service: “My wage amounts to thirty-five liras. However, after the tax-cut my net income becomes twenty-eight or twenty-nine liras. I give eighteen liras to my family and reserve ten liras for myself.”³¹⁷ The importance of female labor for family economies persisted and even increased in the war years. For instance, Cemile Gül, who began to work in the Bakırköy Sümerbank Factory in 1943, had to maintain her two small children and disabled husband with her limited wage.³¹⁸ Şerife Ateşli, who began to work in the same factory in 1937, shared a similar fate. A petition written by her district officer (*muhtar*) to the factory administration in 1944 explained that her husband was visually disabled and Şerife had to maintain her two small children, who were three and nine, and disabled husband without any external support.³¹⁹

The story of Feriha offers clues about the housing conditions of the woman workers who were trying to maintain their families on limited incomes. Just before the war years, she was working at the Cibali Tobacco Factory. Her husband was a peddler. They were living in a room in a big house in Kasımpaşa. Kemal Demirel, who was then a little boy, was a witness to their hard life conditions:

³¹⁶ Ibid. “*On üç yaşındayım, çırağım. Saati dört kuruşa çalışıyorum. Babam arabacı idi, işsizdir. Şimdi eve ben bakıyorum.*”

³¹⁷ Ibid. “*(Kazancım) Ayda 35 lira kadar tutuyor. Fakat vergi kesilince elime 28-29 lira geçiyor. 18 lirasını eve veriyorum. 10 lira bana kalıyor.*”

³¹⁸ File of Cemile Gül in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5648.

³¹⁹ File of Şerife Ateşli in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 998.

In a house, which was the epitome of poverty, we lived at least seven years together with people, most of whom were uneducated and primitive. While you and Feriha Abla were living in your world composed of one room, I also lived with you...Your brazier made of sheet iron, two cushions that were the products of Feriha Abla's beautiful white hands, the gas lamp that was always hanging on the wall.³²⁰

During the war, many working class families lived in similar conditions. Moreover, in Istanbul some workers had no choice but to live on the streets. For instance, although the Tram Company denied it, there were claims that some tram workers had to sleep under the bridges.³²¹ On the other hand, the municipality of Istanbul, unlike Sümerbank and other public enterprises, provided housing for its workers. Needing workers to clean the streets at night, it announced that the workers could sleep at the worker's palace (*amele sarayı*) in Edirnekapı.³²²

The housing depression in the city was accompanied by transportation problems. Workers who lived in far neighborhoods usually had to go to the factories and return on foot. Ayşe Zaimoğlu, recalls the journey between Osmaniye and Bakırköy:

We were working both the morning and night shifts. When we worked the morning shifts, the work was over at 7 o'clock. It was very hard for women to go to the factory and return home at night. Old men from the neighborhood were leading us when we went and returned. When the old men did not come with us we, the women workers in the neighborhood, gathered and went to factory as a group. We did not talk

³²⁰ Kemal Demirel, *Piano Piano Bacaksız Evimizin İnsanları* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2002), pp. 62-63. "Yoksulluğun simgesi olan bir evde, çoğu eğitimsiz, ilkel insanlar arasında, en az yedi yıl birlikte yaşadık. Sen ve Feriha Abla, bir tek odadan oluşmuş dünyanızda yaşarken, ben de, o yedi yılı sizlerle birlikte yaşadım...Kapaklı sac mangalınız, Feriha Ablanın o bembeyaz güzel ellerinin emeği yer minderleri..., duvara asılı gaz lambası."

³²¹ *Akşam*, 19 December 1944.

³²² *Tan*, 23 May 1944.

when we walked. It was very hard. There were no lamps. Planes were flying above us.³²³

Nutrition Facilities

During the war period, coping with the increasing food prices and providing the scarce basic foods, such as bread and sugar, were big problems for wage earners. However, the public enterprises had mechanisms which eased the conditions of their workers: free meals and cooperatives. Most of the state run factories provided lunches for their workers. This practice did not start with the war, but before the war, a small amount of money had been demanded from the workers to cover lunch costs. The Bakırköy Textile Factory's doctor described the nutrition facilities offered to the workers in the 1930s:

We opened a restaurant to provide the workers with the necessary calories. Over the calories decided by the doctor, we give two dishes. One of them is meat or vegetables with meat, and the other one is macaroni or rice. Desserts are given once a week. The daily price of the menu is fifteen piasters.³²⁴

At Sümerbank, starting from 1941, free meals were given to the workers whose daily wages did not exceed 160 piasters. The wage level was increased in the following years, to 200 in 1942 and 300 piasters in 1943.³²⁵ Etibank and other state

³²³ Ayşe Zaimoğlu, interview by Esra Sarıoğlu and Can Nacar, tape recording, İstanbul, July 2004. "Hem gece hem gündüz vardiyalarında çalışıyorduk. Sabah gidiyorduk akşam yedide çıkıyorduk. Kadınların gidip gelmesi çok zor oluyordu. Mahalledeki ihtiyarlar getirip götürüyordu bizi. İhtiyarlar olmayınca mahalledeki kadın işçiler toplaşıp gidiyorduk. Gidip gelirken yolda konuşmak yoktu. Çok zor oluyordu. Her yerde karanlık lambalar yanmıyor. Uçaklar geçiyor."

³²⁴ Cumhuriyet, 27 June 1935. "Amelenin sarf ettiği enerji yerine kalori alması için burada bir lokanta açtık. Doktorun tespit ettiği kalori üzerinden günde on beş kuruşa iki kap yemek, birisi etli sebze veya et, diğeri pilav veya makarna, bir de haftada bir tatlısı olan tabldotumuz var."

run companies provided similar facilities. In the Keçiborlu mines, workers whose wages did not exceed 400 piasters were given 600 grams of bread and two dishes free.³²⁶ Ali Nadi Ünler, after a visit to a winery run by the Monopoly Administration (*İnhisarlar İdaresi*) in Gaziantep in October 1944 reported that the workers were given one dish everyday without charge.³²⁷ The railway workers in Eskişehir were also given free meals every day,³²⁸ as were those at the municipality of Istanbul. The Municipality, seeking workers to clean the streets, announced that in addition to the monthly wage of forty liras, workers would be given soup in the mornings and free dinners.³²⁹ The Tram administration also gave one dish and half a loaf of bread to its tram-drivers and conductors.³³⁰

Although free meals and bread were very important in the context of the war, the quality of the foods was questionable. Hulusi Dosdoğru recounts:

On one bayram day I visited the refectory of the EKI harbour workers. I saw one of the prepared foods, which was ready to be served to the workers. It was a broad bean dish but it seemed rather strange, it looked like tar. I became suspicious and tasted it. It was bitter and tasted horrible. Some of the workers asked me to bite the broad bean as well and I did. It was too hard to bite. I was about to break my tooth. I took a sample, went to see the social service manager of the company, and explained the situation. He did not seem surprised at all and admitted that they bought the wrong broad beans, the one for the animals. They could not waste it and had to use it up.³³¹

³²⁵ Makal, *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946*, p. 269.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.269.

³²⁷ *Yeni Gaziantep*, 3 October 1944.

³²⁸ Avni Güngörür, "Eskişehir'de Sosyal Monografi Çalışmaları," *Çalışma*, no. 21 (August 1947), pp. 68-70.

³²⁹ *Tan*, 23 May 1944.

³³⁰ *Akşam*, 25 October 1944.

In fact, many workers employed in the coal basin had to bring their food from their villages. Hüseyin Aydın, a former worker in the coal basin, recalls their conditions in the War years:

Yes, we always ate dried bread. However when we came from the village we brought with us bulgur, flour, cups and plates. We were boiling beans in the barracks. We cooked *malay* with flour. Do you know *malay*? You boil water in the cup and then mix it with flour. This is *malay*. We ate it. In the coal basin during the scarcity times, we were distributed *malay*.³³²

Tram workers in Istanbul were also not happy with the quality of the meals. There were reports that food was thrown into the garbage. The workers demanded that the administration improve the quality.³³³ The administration responded that free meals were given to 3,000 workers and were controlled strictly. Under the present conditions, a change in the quality did not seem possible.³³⁴

The quality of the food was not the only problem. The size of the portions was another source of complaint among the workers. Cemil Akyüz, who began to work in the coal basin at the age of eighteen in September 1945, stated that they were given by the company only a quarter of bread and one plate of soap.³³⁵ Getting used to new nutrition patterns was also not easy for the workers. This fact was underlined

³³¹ Dosdoğru, *Sağlık Açısından Maden İşçilerimizin Dünü, Bugünü*, p. 28. English translation is quoted from Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," pp. 186-187.

³³² Tuncer, *Tarihten Günümüze Zonguldak'ta İşçi Sınıfının Durumu*, p.79 "Hep kuru ekmek yerdik. Yalnız köyden gelirken sırtımıza doldurur, bulgur gibi, un gibi şeyler getirirdik. Yanına da bir tencere veya çanak alırdık. Kuru fasulye gibi yemekler pişirirdik barakalarda. Un götürüp malay yapardık. Malay biliyor musun? Tencerede suyu kaynatırsın. Unu da dökersin içine. Ona da derler malay. Onu yerdik. Ocaklarda da verdiler onu katık zamanı.."

³³³ *Tan*, 15 June 1944.

³³⁴ *Tan*, 30 June 1944.

³³⁵ Tuncer, *Tarihten Günümüze Zonguldak'ta İşçi Sınıfının Durumu*, p 72.

by the factories' administrators. For instance, in 1943, they reported that workers demanded bulgur instead of rice.³³⁶

Cooperatives (*ekonoma*) set up by most of the public enterprises in order to provide consumer goods under the market prices had an important function during the war years. Karabük and Ereğli had the leadership role in this field. At the Ereğli Coal Company, there were eleven such cooperatives and, by 1943, the sale prices were 5.6 percent over the cost prices.³³⁷ It seems that the workers took advantage of the low prices: "I am from Hacı Musa village in Devrek. My name is Ramazan Kurt and my work number is 106. We buy our needs from the grocery. Debts are cut from our wages. Here we can find whatever we want."³³⁸

In Karabük, provisioning the basic needs of the workers was the task of the company because the existing commercial structure within the city did not have capacity to cope with the rapidly increasing population. Rebi Barkın summarized the situation in Karabük: "Vegetables, fruits and meat were brought by the company and in this way speculation was prevented. I witnessed how this development relieved the members of the company."³³⁹ The other public enterprises also set up such cooperatives. Müjgan Pekgirçek recollects the situation in Hereke: "The factory had a sales shop. "Ekonoma"... We shopped in the cooperative. Whether or not you had

³³⁶ "Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p. 50.

³³⁷ Makal, *Türkiye 'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946*, p. 272.

³³⁸ Galib Fuad, "1200 Metre Yerin Altında Yürüdükten Sonra Kömür Amelesi Taramacı Devrekli Mehmet Küçükaya ile Konuştum," *Kara İnci*, no. 3 (June 1941), pp.10-11. "*Devreğin Hacı Musa köyündenim. İş numaram 106, adım Ramazan Kurt. Biz bakkaldan istediğimizi alırsız, yevmiyelerimizden keserler. Canım ne isterse hepsi de bulunur.*"

³³⁹ Barkın, "Karabük'de Sevindirici Gelişmeler," pp. 35-39. "*İşletme vesaitiyle sebze, meyve, et vesaire gibi gıda maddeleri getirilmiş ve ihtikarın önüne geçilmiştir. Bunun işletme mensupları arasında ne kadar ferahlık sağladığımı kendi gözümle gördüm.*"

money was not a problem. At the end of year, the profit made by the cooperative was distributed to us. We had a box for both the workers and officials. When we were pressed for money we took one or two monthly wages from the box and paid it back in one or two years.”³⁴⁰

Healthcare Services

In most of the public enterprises, there were healthcare institutions. Their capacity depended on the number of workers employed by the companies. The cement factory in Sivas had an infirmary composed of six beds and a pharmacy for its 153 workers in 1943.³⁴¹ The winery run by the Monopoly Administration in Gaziantep had only a small clinic.³⁴² The Ereğli Coal Company, employing thousands of workers, had a more comprehensive health care system. In the center, the company had a hospital with 150 beds. Near the hospital, a clinic was constructed. There were dispensaries in Kilimli, Gelik, Üzülmez and Kozlu. In some villages, dispensaries were set up in order to take care of the workers who returned to their villages. In addition to these, there were nursing homes in Ereğli and Asma.³⁴³

³⁴⁰Üstündağ-Selamoğlu, "Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması Hereke'de Değişim." "*Fabrikanın satış yeri vardı. 'Ekonoma'... kooperatiften alışveriş yaptık, paran varmış yokmuş önemli değildi ve sene sonunda kooperatiften karlar da bize dağıtılırdı. Sandığımız vardı, hem işçi ve hem memurun. Sıkışınca birer ikişer maaş sandıktan alırdık, bir iki senede öderdik.*"

³⁴¹"Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p.33.

³⁴² *Yeni Gaziantep*, 3 October 1944.

³⁴³ *Yeni Zonguldak*, 29 April 1942.

The health care system was accompanied by a social insurance mechanism. The public enterprises continued to pay –at least some portion of - the wages of ill and injured workers at least for a while. At the Cibali Tobacco factory, ill workers were paid half of their wages in the first three weeks of their illness. In the following three weeks, they were paid quarter of their wages. Injured workers were received payments without any cut. Pregnant women were given a leave of absence for a period of twelve weeks.³⁴⁴ Musa Ataş, after a visit to İpekiş Factory, reported that ill workers were paid their full wages and provided free lunches and bread.³⁴⁵

The Bakırköy Sümerbank Factory applied a similar policy. For instance, when Osman Koral, a worker employed in weaving department, had a work accident and injured his right hand, he was given nine days leave. After calculating his average monthly wage and dividing it by thirty, the factory found his daily wage and paid him 30.15 TL for nine days.³⁴⁶ Mediha Ultamur, who was employed in the yarn department, was given twenty-five days leave after having influenza. Although the administration calculated her daily wage in the same method, she was paid quarter of her daily wage.³⁴⁷ Ali Göral, a worker employed in the painting department, broke his right hand after a work accident and could not work for seventy-seven days in 1943. Calculating his daily wage as 120 piasters, the factory paid him 92.40 TL for these days. Moreover, he was sent to Cerrahpaşa Hospital during his medical treatment process.

³⁴⁴ *Tan*, 10 July 1944.

³⁴⁵ *Bursa*, 6 April 1943.

³⁴⁶ File of Osman Koral in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5631.

³⁴⁷ File of Mediha Ultamur in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 450.

The workers' files in this factory also indicate that the administration sent workers with serious health problems to hospitals and paid their expenses. For instance, when Muharrem Ergül, a worker employed in weaving department, was sent to Cerrahpaşa Hospital in 1945 for an operation, the factory administration wrote a petition to the hospital and asked them to look after the worker's health. In the petition, there were also two warnings: the worker could not stay at the hospital more than two months and he could only be given a bed in the second post.³⁴⁸ Müzeyyen Dağbaşı, who was employed in the laboratory, was sent to Şişli Şifa Yurdu for an appendicitis operation in April 1943. One week after the operation, the hospital sent a petition to the factory administration and explained that Dağbaşı had been discharged from hospital but she had to stay at home one more week, and demanded the payment of her expenses, which amounted to ninety-three liras.³⁴⁹ A similar petition was written by the Haseki Hospital for the payment of expenditures made for Ali Erdiñç, who stayed there three days.³⁵⁰

The insurance mechanism was not limited to the monetary help. In some public enterprises, ill workers were also given the foods necessary for their recovery. This was the case for a foreman working at the İpekiş Factory who suffered from tuberculosis. He was provided a thirty grams cutlet, one egg, 500 grams of milk, 300

³⁴⁸ File of Muharrem Ergül in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5524.

³⁴⁹ File of Müzeyyen Dağbaşı in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 3697.

³⁵⁰ File of Ali Erdiñç in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5439. It is important to emphasize that although we did not come across a registration, it is probable that these expenditures, at least part of them, were later on cut from workers' wages.

grams of rice, and 250 grams of butter every day. Moreover, his wife and daughter were given jobs in the factory.³⁵¹

Despite the existence of a healthcare system, outside the Sümerbank factories there were rumors that those who began to work in factories became ill. The inspection committee reported that these rumors were an important deterrent to potential workers.³⁵² At least in some factory districts the rumor was not without support. For instance, the Karabük Iron and Steel Factory workers endured malaria. The disease was so widespread that the factory lost thousands of work hours in 1944.³⁵³ In some cases, the quality of the health care staff was also questionable. For instance, seven women workers in the Cibali factory were poisoned when the nurse gave them the wrong medicine.³⁵⁴

The social insurance mechanism accompanying the health care system did not function well, especially for injured workers. Niyazi Akıncıoğlu witnessed a worker in the Alpullu Sugar Factory injure an arm. The arm was amputated. When asked about the attitude of the factory by Rifat Ilgaz, Akıncıoğlu replied: "It prepared a report...They said the accident had occurred due to the negligence of the worker and that it was a work accident. They dismissed the worker!"³⁵⁵ Similar attitudes were also observed at the İzmit Cellulose Factory. The disregard of injured workers by the

³⁵¹ *Bursa*, 6 August 1943.

³⁵² "Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p. 49.

³⁵³ Barkın, "Karabük'de Sevindirici Gelişmeler," pp. 35-39.

³⁵⁴ *Tan*, 26 May 1944.

³⁵⁵ Rifat Ilgaz, *Yokuş Yukarı* (İstanbul: Çınar Yayınları, 1994), pp.10-11. "Bir rapor düzenledi... Kendi ihmaldinden oldu, bir iş kazası, dediler. Yol verdiler işçiye."

factory was made the focus of propaganda by the newly established trade union in

1946. İdris Erçetin, who was then a worker in the factory recollects:

The work was in order. I found a friend whose name was Salih. On the weekend, we went to the villages to find former workers of the factory who had been injured. Their arms or legs had been amputated. They had been dismissed without any compensation. Salih took their photographs immediately...We published the declaration of the trade union immediately: "Gather under the workers' trade unions. Otherwise your fate will be like this."³⁵⁶

Recreational Facilities

Some of the public enterprises, especially those run by Sümerbank, had social establishments and educational institutions near the factory. Social establishments, including sport fields, sport clubs, cinemas, and clubrooms had an important place in the recreational activities of the workers and the officials. One Sümerbank official in Hereke recollects that the clubroom was one of the essential places in her life.³⁵⁷ The importance given to these establishments was noted by visiting foreign experts.

Thornburg wrote the followings about the Ereğli Company:

Some efforts had been devoted to cleaning up the underground workings, and a little progress has been made in providing modern hoisting equipment and other badly needed facilities on the surface. Unfortunately, however, most of the money had been spent on elaborate buildings for administration, employees' recreation parks, shops, garages and other accessories, which had no direct relation to the elementary necessities of mining.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Hikmet Akgül, *Şoför İdris (Anılar)* (İstanbul: Yar Yayınları, 2004), p.121. "İşler yolunda Salih isminde bir arkadaşı buluyorum. Hafta sonu, o fabrikada çalışıp da, sakat kalmış insanları gidip köylerinde buluyoruz. Kolu kopmuş, ayağı kopmuş. Karşılıksız dışarı atılmış. Hemen Salih resimlerini çekiyor onların... Hemen beyannameleri basıyoruz. 'İşçi sendikalarının altında toplanın. Yoksa akıbette bunun gibi olursunuz.' "

³⁵⁷ Üstündağ-Selamoğlu, "Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması Hereke'de Değişim."

The houses constructed for the workers and officials, the social establishments, and the educational institutions constituted complexes meant to satisfy the needs of the workers and officials within the factory district. While analyzing the Kayseri Textile Factory, Burak Asiliskender underlined this fact and claimed that this complex was an implementation of the housing development (*toplu konut*) model.³⁵⁹ A similar comment was made by Burak Peri: "The places to answer the needs of workers such as housing and social gathering spaces, are inseparable parts of revolutionary change within the labor process. Together with factory buildings for production, they form the 'factory system'."³⁶⁰

In the construction of these complexes, the Soviet Union was an important model for Turkey. In fact, as Peri has noted, experts from the Soviet Union played an influential role in the construction of some of the factories during the industrialization programs in the 1930s. For instance, the projects of the Nazilli factory were prepared by the Soviets under the leadership Prof. Orlof, who came to Anatolia in 1932 to study the prospective industrialization program.³⁶¹ The memories of Mustafa Özçelik reflected the similarities between the factory systems in the two countries. Özçelik, who had begun to work in an oil factory in the Soviet Union in 1937, inhabited such a complex. The factory, employing 7,000 workers, offered a variety of facilities for its workers. Özçelik recollects:

³⁵⁸ Thornburg, *Turkey an Economic Appraisal*, pp.96-97.

³⁵⁹ Burak Asiliskender, "1930'ların 'Modern' Yapıtının Günümüzdeki Yalnızlığı," *TOL Mimarlık Kültürü Dergisi*, no. 2 (January 2003), pp 46-51.

³⁶⁰ Peri, "Building the 'Modern' Environment in Early Republican Turkey: Sümerbank Kayseri and Nazilli Factory Settlements", p.90.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.60.

We were given a house. The workers' houses, which were villa shaped, were very comfortable. We were given furniture. The floor's rent could be paid with the 0.1 percent of my wage. This was also the case for electricity... The factory had a cinema, a club, a library, and grocery stores. Like the city, prices were appropriate. The club had a theater and music group.³⁶²

These social facilities offered by public enterprises were widely mentioned by politicians, government officials, and intellectuals. While mentioning these, they also made open the goals lying behind this social policy. In the next section, these goals will be analyzed.

The Goal: Formation of a New Subject

In the first years of the industrialization program, the focus of government officials and intellectuals was on villagers rather than on workers. The social and economic benefits that would be provided by the new factories for villagers received frequent mention. For instance in November 1934 Prime Minister İsmet İnönü declared that the textile factory in Ereğli would be a new customer for the cotton growers.³⁶³ Sümerbank officials made similar comments. A bulletin prepared by Sümerbank to evaluate the performance of the company in 1934 claimed that the increase in Sümerbank's production was a source of income for villagers who were

³⁶² Mustafa Özçelik, *1930-1950 Arasında Tütüncülerin Tarihi* (İstanbul: TÜSTAV, 2003), p. 38. "Bize güzel tek katlı bir bina verdiler. Villa biçimi bütün işçilerin evleri tam konforluymuştu. Bize de eşyalar verdiler. Bu dairelerin kirası aldığım maaşın binde biriyle ödenebiliyordu. Elektrik bedeli keza...Fabrikanın sineması, kulübü, kütüphanesi, gıda satış mağazaları, şehirdeki gibi, alışverişe,keseye uygun fiyatlar. Kulübün tiyatro Kuruluşu (grubu), müzik grubu da var."

³⁶³ *Cumhuriyet*, 21 November 1934.

the growers of the raw materials.³⁶⁴ The daily papers were of the same opinion. For example, in November 1934, *Cumhuriyet* reported that in Ereğli the growers of potatoes, who had been unable to sell their goods, would be relieved by the new factory.³⁶⁵ Similarly, Yunus Nadi argued that the sugar factories, by transforming agricultural production methods completely, would create a new revolution in the social field.³⁶⁶ This discourse was even embedded in some novels of the era. Refik Ahmet Sevengil's novel *Açlık* described the activities of idealist officials in a sugar factory who aimed to improve social and economic conditions of the nearby villages. These young officials were so dedicated that they were ready to make every sacrifice for this purpose.³⁶⁷

However, as the construction of new factories progressed problems with regard to labor force began to emerge. For instance, Muammer Tuksavul, the first manager of the Turhal Sugar Factory, said that when the construction began in 1934 high turnover rates among the workers was a very serious problem. According to Tuksavul every week approximately 500 workers left the factory and replaced by the new ones. Dialogues between the manager and the workers give valuable clues about the labor problem and extent of poverty in Anatolia. One day while he was going to Tokat by car, he saw a group composed of fifteen people and began to talk with them:

_ Hello. Are you going to Turhal?

³⁶⁴ *Cumhuriyet*, 6 July 1935.

³⁶⁵ *Cumhuriyet*, 24 November 1934.

³⁶⁶ *Cumhuriyet*, 12 December 1934.

³⁶⁷ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Açlık* (İstanbul: Vakit Matbaası, 1937).

- _ Yes, there is a factory there. We are going to work in that factory.
_ Good. Where are you coming from? Which village are you from?
_ From Gars.
_ Where is Gars? Is it close?
_ Not very close... We have been on the road for four weeks.³⁶⁸

Another day he came across a group of villager, who were returning from factory, in Amasya:

- _ Hello friends. Are you coming from the factory?
_ Yes.
_ How many days did you work there?
_ About fifteen days.
_ Is it not better to work fifteen more days and to earn five or ten more piasters?
_ Our children are waiting for us. Our foods are scarce. We bring provisions and salt from Turhal.
_ Did you say salt?
_ Yes, there is no salt. Since last year, most of us have been unable to buy salt.³⁶⁹

Serious problems with regard to labor were also observed in the construction of the Kayseri Sümerbank Factory. When she visited the construction site, Lilo Linke was told these problems:

Check-clocks had just been installed and each worker was given his number. But the men were helpless confronted with the clocks, chiefly because they could never remember their numbers and got all mixed up with the cards... At the last young engineer had the bright idea of sewing the numbers to the men's jacket, and the overseers themselves carried out the clocking-off. In the spring there had not been a single day without a riot. The workers, infuriated by the endless and, to them,

³⁶⁸ Muammer Tuksavul, *Doğudan Batıya ve Sonrası* (İstanbul:1981), p. 359. "Merhaba arkadaşlar. Turhal'a mı gidiyorsunuz?/Evet bey bir palika (fabrika) varmış, orada çalışacağız./Çok iyi. Nereden geliyorsunuz bakayım? Hangi köydensiniz?/ Gars'tan Bey!/ Bu Gars yakın mı? Ne tarafa düşer?/ Pek yakın değil...Biz dört haftadır yoldayız beyim.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p.359. "Merhaba arkadaşlar. Fabrikadan mı geliyorsunuz?/ Evet./Ne kadar çalıştınız orada?/ 15 gün kadar, beyim. Allah bin bereket versin.../Bir 15 gün daha çalışsanız, beş on kuruş daha kazansanız iyi olmaz mı idi?/ Beyim evdekiler, çoluk çocuk bizi beklerler. Yiyeceğimiz kıt. Turhal'dan öte beri götürüyoruz, bir de duz yetiştireceğiz köye./Anlamadım. Tuz mu dedin?/ Evet Beyim. Duz yok! Çoğumuzun bildirdan beri (geçen yıldan beri) duz bile alacak gücü yoktu.

incomprehensible delay at the gates, attacked the overseers, strangely enough mainly those who had been kindest to them.³⁷⁰

The comments of the above-mentioned young engineer were remarkable: "what efforts it has cost to get them used to discipline. In the beginning they were like a herd of stampeding animals."³⁷¹

As these problems with regard to labor force emerged, the emphasis of government officials and intellectuals shifted to the workers. The social facilities and the value given to the workers were widely mentioned themes in their speeches and articles. For instance, after a visit to the Hereke Factory, Va-Nu described the facilities offered by the factory and concluded that for state industry, the welfare of the workers had priority. He hoped that this mentality would be appropriated by the private enterprises.³⁷² Similar points were made by local papers and magazines. In the Bursa papers, Musa Ataş constantly mentioned the facilities offered by the Merinos and Ipekiş factories in order to indicate how the welfare and security of the workers had been improved in the Republican era.³⁷³ In a Zonguldak magazine, Ahmed Naim Çıladır argued that workers had been treated as mere tools in the past. However, in the present time they were regarded as human beings.³⁷⁴ In the same magazine, Akın Karauğuz asserted that nationalization was the turning point for the miners in Zonguldak. Until then, the workers had been the tools of capital. However,

³⁷⁰ Lilo Linke, *Allah Dethroned* (London: Constable & Co Ltd, 1937), p. 305.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.304.

³⁷² *Akşam*, 31 August 1943.

³⁷³ *Bursa*, 6 April 1943; and *Bursa*, 6 August 1943.

³⁷⁴ Ahmet Naim Çıladır, "Devlet Kömür İşletmesi Muvaffak Olmuştur," *Doğu*, no. 72-75 (November-December 1948/ January- February 1949), pp. 49-51.

after the nationalization the workers had become the country's children whose welfare had become a matter of concern to the state.³⁷⁵

It was hoped that the facilities offered by public enterprises would keep the workers at the factory and improve their productivity. For example, the report prepared by the prime ministry's inspection committee in 1944 stated that social services were provided in order to solve the labor scarcity problem.³⁷⁶ Similarly, the book published for the tenth anniversary of Sümerbank stated that keeping the workers at the factory was the most important motive lying behind the construction activities of Sümerbank. Another reason was to increase productivity.³⁷⁷ These hopes were also expressed by newspapers and magazines. *Yeni Zonguldak* addressed the miners in August 1942. After listing the facilities offered to the workers, it concluded that the duties of the miners were to work properly and to take care of the tools and machinery.³⁷⁸ Va-Nu, in his above-mentioned article about Hereke, described the mentality of the social services: if the conditions were improved, experts and skilled workers would like to live in Hereke.³⁷⁹ Rebi Barkın, in an article about Karabük, made similar points. After mentioning the discipline within the factory and the increase in productivity, he concluded that these stemmed from the

³⁷⁵ Akın Karauğuz, "Zonguldak Kömür Havzası İşçisi-4," *Doğu*, no.53 (April 1947), pp. 31-34.

³⁷⁶ "Sümerbank 1944 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p. 6.

³⁷⁷ *Sümerbank, X. Yıl (11.7.1933-11.7.1943)*, (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1943), pp. 237-238.

³⁷⁸ *Yeni Zonguldak*, 12 August 1942.

³⁷⁹ *Akşam*, 31 August 1943.

facilities offered by the factory. The workers, who benefited from these facilities, voluntarily worked in discipline.³⁸⁰

Attitudes that did not comply with these goals were criticized harshly. Arif Durupınar, a journalist in Bursa, witnessed a dialogue between two workers of the Merinos factory. One of the workers had been warned by the officials when he was late for work. The worker complained that the warning was unnecessary because he had been only fifteen minutes late and in such a short period, the proper functioning of the factory could not have been ruined. After quoting the dialogue, Durupınar stated that the workers were regarded like soldiers or doctors: any negligence would lead to the death of the company.³⁸¹ Such criticisms were not limited with the workers in the state industry. Employers in the Gaziantep textile industry complained that the workers who worked for a week did not come to workshops in the following week. *Yeni Gaziantep* argued that this attitude was stemming from a wrong mentality and preventing the education of skilled workers.³⁸²

A similar discourse with regard to workers existed in Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s. For instance Wafd, the party demanding immediate Egyptian independence, insisted that the workers submit to an orderly bourgeois regime. The statements of Abd al-Rahman Fahmi, a member of Wafd, were not very different from those of Arif Durupınar.

We want the worker in his factory to be like a soldier on the field of battle. There is a time for work and a time for leisure. At work there

³⁸⁰ Barkın, "Karabük'de Sevindirici Gelişmeler," pp. 35-39.

³⁸¹ *Açık Ses*, 12 January 1944.

³⁸² *Yeni Gaziantep*, 13 June 1944.

should be devotion, diligence, and sacrifice, at leisure freedom and renewal. We want him properly behaved, moderate in his habits, sincere in his desires and relationships, pious in all situations, pure and clean in his actions. He should respect law and order and preserve peace and public security, meritorious in the eyes of men and rewarded by God.³⁸³

Departing from this discourse it could be argued here that the main goal of the social assistance programs in the public enterprises was to form a new subject: a subject, who came to the factory regularly, worked hard and in a disciplined manner, and had a high productivity level. As Rebi Barkın noted in his article about Karabük, it was expected that the workers would voluntarily fulfill these criteria. In other word words, in Foucauldian terms, it would be a process of self-formation,³⁸⁴ in which the person was active and engaged in a process of self-understanding. However, the attempts of government in order to achieve this goal were not limited to the above-mentioned practices, which represented the positive sense of power. Beside these, there were applications recalling the discipline and social control dimensions of social policies.

Social Discipline and Control in the Public Enterprises

Workers employed in public enterprises were subjected to strict control and discipline. The workers' files in the Bakırköy Sümerbank Factory provide valuable

³⁸³ Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 89.

³⁸⁴ Paul Rabinow, "Introduction," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp 3-29.

information about these dimensions of social policy. The control and discipline processes were put into progress when prospective workers applied to the factory. Workers had to bring references from the police station and local government officials in their neighborhood. For instance, when Musa Ünsal applied to the factory in 1939 he submitted to the administration a petition taken from the headman in his village. In the petition, it was underlined that Ünsal was an honest person and did not engage in any illegal activities.³⁸⁵ Similarly, when Güzin Göknaç applied to the factory in 1942 she submitted a similar petition taken from the police station.³⁸⁶

After workers began their career in the factory their performance were subjected to close scrutiny. When it has been recognized that, their performance was not well enough they were warned by the administration. For instance in 1944 Müzeyyen Dağbaşı received a petition warning her: “In the recent days it is recognized that your indifference to your own responsibilities and inobedience to factory discipline and regulations continue. We would like to warn you one last time. If you continue these attitudes, your contract with the factory will be abrogated.”³⁸⁷ Osman Kural received a similar warning in 1949: “While you are performing your responsibilities it is understood that rather than being a profitable worker you are causing material damage. We would like to warn you one last time.”³⁸⁸ Moreover, the workers who did not perform well were usually fined by their supervisors. For instance, when Kazım Gören made an error in wrapping the

³⁸⁵ File of Musa Ünsal in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 2719.

³⁸⁶ File of Güzin Göknaç in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5307.

³⁸⁷ File of Müzeyyen Dağbaşı in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5659.

³⁸⁸ File of Osman Kural in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5631.

cloth in March 1945 he was fined to 250 piasters.³⁸⁹ Gülsüm Yavaşoğlu was fined to 100 piasters in 1943 when she left her work during work hours in order to take money.³⁹⁰ Hasan Özel, who was employed as a weaver, was fined to 200 piasters because he did not keep his loom clean.³⁹¹ Workers' discontinuity was also punished with fines. Mualla Palabıyık, was sentenced to 200 piasters when she did not come work.³⁹² Şerife Ateşli, faced the same fate in September 1943. When she did not go to factory on 16 September 1943, she was fined 100 piasters.³⁹³ However, it is important to emphasize that, as a result of this close scrutiny, workers were not only warned or fined but also given bonuses by the administration. For instance, the hourly wage of Yahya Tezcan, who was employed in the warp department, was increased from thirty-five piasters to forty piasters in June 1944 because he took good care of the machines.³⁹⁴

When compared with the workers' wage levels, these fines were catastrophic. For instance, Kazım Gören, who was fined to 250 piasters, was only paid thirty piasters for an hour of work. The catastrophic effect of the fines on the limited workers' budgets was described by Ayşe Zaimoğlu: "One day I dropped a bobbin

³⁸⁹ File of Kazım Gören in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 977.

³⁹⁰ File of Gülsüm Yavaşoğlu in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 763.

³⁹¹ File of Hasan Özel in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5625.

³⁹² File of Mualla Palabıyık in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 4716.

³⁹³ File of Şerife Ateşli in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 998.

³⁹⁴ File of Yahya Tezcan in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 1481.

and the overseer, Mehmet Usta, immediately fined me seventy-five piasters. Those days, people worked for 75 piasters all day in gardens.”³⁹⁵

To maintain control and discipline in the factories or mines authorities did not refrain from resorting to violence. For instance, Hasan, who was a worker in the Cibali Tobacco Factory, was beaten by the factory guard with a stick in August 1945 due to the fact that a cigarette was found in his pocket during a search made after work hours.³⁹⁶ Similar practices were also observed in the Ereğli coal basin. The dialogue between Saffet Can and Cemil Akyüz was impressive:

- _ Beating, blow...
- _ Who did these? Chiefs?
- _ All the people, including the chiefs. The foreman near you also did.
- _ Is not the foreman from your village?
- _ He was also beaten... The guards of the company and the barracks beat...³⁹⁷

Control over the labor force was also extended outside the work site through recreational facilities offered in the factory complexes. It was feared that uncontrolled workers could be a threat to public health or engage in illegal activities. For instance, in Zonguldak region it was complained that brothels were very close to the workers' barracks.³⁹⁸ It was hoped that recreational facilities would keep workers away from those activities. For instance, in the Bursa papers, it was frequently mentioned that the social activities in the Merinos Factory's big cinema saloon

³⁹⁵ Ayşe Zaimoğlu, interview by Sarıoğlu and Nacar. “*Bir gün işte iken bobini düşürdüm yere. Usta hemen ceza yazdı: 75 kuruş. O paraya bütün gün bahçede çalışırdı.*”

³⁹⁶ *Tan*, 24 August 1945.

³⁹⁷ Tuncer, *Tarihten Günümüze Zonguldak'ta İşçi Sınıfının Durumu*, p.72. *Dayak nasıl...Tepik tokat/Kim yapıyor bunu? Şefler mi?/Şefe kadar kim varsa. Senin yanındaki usta da yapıyordu./Sizin ustanız bu köyden değil mi?/ Onu da tepikliyorlar...Pavyonların, EKİ'nin bekçileri vuruyordu.*

³⁹⁸ Dosdoğru, *Sağlık Açısından Maden İşçilerimizin Dünyü, Bugünü*, p.16.

attracted the workers and enabled the factory administration to control their spare time activities.

In the wartime, these practices and institutions aiming to maintain discipline and control over the labor force were supplemented with further legal regulations. In order to avoid labor scarcity problem, those regulations banned workers employed in industrial enterprises and mines from leaving their companies without permission, proposed extra working hours, and even a compulsory work regime in designated industries. In the below paragraphs those regulations will be analyzed in detail.

Wartime Regulations

Article 10 of the National Protection Law banned workers, engineers, and technicians employed in industrial enterprises and mines from leaving their companies without giving notice to their employers or submitting an appropriate excuse. This regulation enabled employers to extend the above-mentioned control mechanisms. However, as will be discussed in the below paragraphs in detail, this clause could not prevent the high turnover rates and discontinuities in industrial enterprises. Workers offering illness or harvest season as excuses continued to leave their companies. The public enterprises did not have a mechanism to control the truth of these excuses. For instance, a report prepared by prime ministry inspection committee in 1944 for Sümerbank factories underlined this fact and complained that truthness of workers' statements could not be checked.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁹ "Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p. 49.

The regulations of the National Protection Law dealing with work life were not limited to this clause. There were further regulations about work hours, employment of woman and children workers in night shifts, and compulsory work regime.

Three Hours of Extra Work and the Employment of Female and Child Workers

Article 19 of the National Protection Law included clauses regulating working hours. The first clause gave the government the authority to extend the length of the working day at most three hours. In the second clause it was underlined that 50th article of Labor Code, banning the employment of woman workers and children younger than sixteen years old on night shifts,⁴⁰⁰ could be suspended. In the same clause, it was also stated that weekend holidays could be abolished in cases covered by this law.⁴⁰¹ In compliance with these regulations, the Coordination Committee, set up in February 1940 in order to ensure the proper functioning of the economy, extended the working day to eleven hours in designated enterprises. Public enterprises were not exempted from this application. For instance, on 5 March 1940, workers employed at the Railway Administration and Port Administration were subjected to three hours of extra work.⁴⁰² On 11 March 1940, the three hours of extra work principle began to be applied in the Monopoly Administration.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ *İş Kanunu*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol 17, pp.1146-1205.

⁴⁰¹ *Milli Korunma Kanunu*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol 21, pp. 433-442.

⁴⁰² *Devlet Demiryolları ve Limanları İdaresindeki iş yerlerinde fazla mesai yapılmasına dair Koordinasyon Heyetinde ittihaz olunan kararın mer'iyete vaz'ı hakkında kararname*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 21, p.615.

Approximately two months later, on 14 May 1940, it was promulgated that this principle would be applied in the print house of mint. Weekend holidays in the printing house were also abolished. On the same day, it was also announced that factories, which were run by the Sümerbank would also be subjected to these two regulations, three hours of extra work and the abolition of weekend holidays.⁴⁰⁴ In the following months, the Sea Lines Administration, sugar factories, tram administration in Istanbul, Electricity Company in Ankara, and print houses of the Ministry of Education were subjected to these regulations.

The Coordination Committee did not only deal with extra work hours but also with the children and female workers. In February 1941, it was promulgated that men who were older than sixteen could be employed in the mines. The same regulation also covered the women and children employed in textile industry: children who were older than twelve and women could be employed in the textile industry on day and night shifts.⁴⁰⁵ In October 1942, with a change made in the National Protection Law, the scope of this regulation was extended to other industrial sectors.⁴⁰⁶ In some cases, these regulations were made according to seasonal changes in labor need. For instance on 21 August 1941, it was announced

⁴⁰³ *İnhisarlar İdaresine aid iş yerlerinde fazla mesai yapılmasına dair Koordinasyon Heyeti kararının mer'iyete konulması hakkında kararname*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 21, p.619.

⁴⁰⁴ *Dokuma ve iplik fabrikaları ve Sümer Banka bağlı Devlet Fabrikalarında fazla mesai yapılması ve hafta tatilinden istisnası hakkında Koordinasyon Heyeti Kararının mer'iyete vaz'ına dair kararname*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 21, p.826.

⁴⁰⁵ *Çocuklarla kadınların yapacakları işler ile çalışma zamanları hakkında 106 numaralı Koordinasyon Kararı*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 22, pp 288-289.

⁴⁰⁶ *Milli Korunma Kanununun bazı maddelerinin değiştirilmesine ve bu kanuna bazı maddeler eklenmesine dair kanun*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 23, pp 232-244.

that in sugar factories 50th article of Labor Code would be suspended during the work season.⁴⁰⁷

Working eleven hours was not easy. Long hours were usually combined with the daily problems created by the war. S. Ağralı, who was a child worker during this period, recalls:

In most work places, such as printing house of the state mints and railways, and the printing house of the Education Ministry where I worked, whenever it was necessary, we worked overtime. Since the cities were routinely blacked out at night, we had extreme difficulty in returning at dark. Those who worked during these tough periods will recall them very vividly. We were paid an additional 25 percent for overtime.⁴⁰⁸

Although extra hours made working conditions harder, it was also an important source of income. The importance of this additional income became clearer after the War. Orhan Tuna argued that the gradual abolition of extra working hours after the war deprived workers of additional income. This had led to radical declines in the monthly earnings and serious subsistence problems.⁴⁰⁹ However, it is important to emphasize that some workers did not receive any additional income despite the fact that they worked more than eleven hours. For instance, the printing house of Bursa

⁴⁰⁷ *Şeker Fabrikalarında fazla mesai yapılmasına dair 242 numaralı Koordinasyon Kararı*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 23, p.123.

⁴⁰⁸ Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, "Capital and Labor During World War II," in *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, 1839-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert and Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B Tauris Publishers, 1995), p.135.

⁴⁰⁹ Orhan Tuna, *Grev Hakkı İş Mücadelelerinde Yeri ve Ehemmiyeti* (İstanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1951), p. 62.

Ant, which was the party's official paper in Bursa, made its employees work fifteen hours and did not pay for overtime.⁴¹⁰

The practices justified by Article 19 continued in some public enterprises long after the War. In 1951, Tuna reported that in one of the public enterprises employing 20,000 workers, the employees had been working seven days a week for a long time. Another public enterprise did not comply with the officially set working hours.⁴¹¹

However, such practices were sometimes met by worker's resistance. The party's printing house in Bursa witnessed such resistance in August 1946. Firstly, the workers conveyed their demands to the Work Bureau. However, because the paper was the official organ of the RPP, their demands were ignored. In response to this, Halil Dolunay, one of the workers, suggested her friends arrange a strike. The suggestion was accepted by the fourteen other workers. They pleaded illness and did not work for four days. Finally, the workers and owner of the printing house, Deputy Abdurrahman Konuk reached an agreement: the length of working day would be eight hours and workers would be paid an additional ten liras. Moreover, the Manager, Musa Ataş, who had behaved improperly towards the workers, was expelled.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., p.48.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., p.55.

⁴¹² Ibid., p.48.

Compulsory Wage Work

Article 9 of the National Protection Law underlined that the government had the authority to impose compulsory wage work in manufacturing and mining industries to fulfill the necessary needs.⁴¹³ The law was more strictly implemented in the mining sector. For instance, the Ereğli coal basin workers were subjected to the practice of compulsory wage work in 1940. In February 1940, it was promulgated that males over the age of sixteen who had miners in their families and the unemployed should be miners. Although it would be applied in Zonguldak region it was stated workers from other regions could also be employed. It was planned that workers who worked two months would rest one month.⁴¹⁴ However, in the application stage duration of the work differed among the workers. While most of them worked on a rotational basis (forty-five days in the mines, followed by forty-five days off), the rest had only occasional days off.⁴¹⁵ On 24 October 1941, the lignite mines in Soma, Değirmisaz and Tavşanlı were also subjected to compulsory wage work. It would be applied to the people who were living in Kütahya, Balıkesir and Manisa. It was underlined that duration of work would be decided by the Ministry of Economy according to workers' needs and agricultural conditions.⁴¹⁶ The compulsory wage work remained in force until 1 September 1947.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹³ *Milli Korunma Kanunu*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 21, pp. 433-442.

⁴¹⁴ *Ereğli Kömür Havzasındaki istihsalatın artırılması, tanzimi ve icab eden mütedavil sermayenin verilmesi hakkında Koordinasyon Heyetininin 2,3,4 ve 5 numaralı kararları*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 21, pp.606-614.

⁴¹⁵ Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," p.184.

There were penalties for workers who left the mines without permission. First, the wages of those who tried to escape were cut.⁴¹⁸ The costs of catching them were also cut from their wages. Workers who ran away several times were sent to road works in eastern Turkey. As part of this policy, an armed body was formed to collect villagers to work in the mines and to capture those who escaped.⁴¹⁹

In the application stage, fulfilling the above-mentioned procedures was not an easy task. For instance, in Zonguldak region, three lists, each of which was composed of 20,000 workers, were prepared. It was planned that while two groups were working in the mines the third one would be on rest. However, Kadri Yersel, who was the head of Compulsory Wage Work Administration, has stated that because of errors emanating from deaths and wrongly written names, parents' names and birthdays lists were full of mistakes. Moreover, because people from the same village were sent to different work sites, it was very hard to pursue deserters.⁴²⁰

The press and government officials were sensitive about the nature of compulsory wage-work and workers' productivity. There were remarks that the application was not a forced labor regime, but a substitute for military service. In 1945, during the budget talks the economy minister, Fuat Sirmen, insistently underlined this point: "In the initial years of the War depending on the clauses in the

⁴¹⁶ *Etibank tarafından işletilmekte olan Soma, Değirmisaz ve Tavşanlı Linyit Havzalarında Ücretli İş Mükellefiyeti Tesisine dair 220 numaralı Koordinasyon Kararı*, Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol 23, pp. 22-25.

⁴¹⁷ Güzel, "Capital and Labor During World War II," p.130.

⁴¹⁸ *Yeni Zonguldak*, 8 July 1942.

⁴¹⁹ Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," p.184.

⁴²⁰ Kadri Yersel, *Madencilikte Bir Ömür* (İstanbul: Yurt Madenciliğini Geliştirme Vakfı Maden Mühendisleri Odası Ortak Yayını, 1989), p. 20.

National Protection Law, compulsory work was resorted to in the Ereğli Coal Company... However later on it was understood that this was not a right method and therefore it was abolished... Today people, who are subjected to this practice, are treated as soldiers serving in the army. However, due to the fact they work in the mines it was thought that it was not proper to keep their wages equal with the ordinary soldiers... It was decided that their wages had to be close to normal workers' wages."⁴²¹

However, in practice, as underlined in legal texts,⁴²² compulsory wage work was not a substitute for military service, but a cause for the postponement of this service.⁴²³ Kadri Yersel mentioned this fact: "In the lists there were people who wanted to benefit from the postponement of military service." However, as he has stated "as the threat of war evaded postponement of military lost its attraction and the deserters turned in to the victims of compulsory work."⁴²⁴ Hikmet Bayur, stated

⁴²¹ T.B.M.M Zabıt Ceridesi, 7th Term, vol.17, 63rd Session, 26 May 1945, pp. 404-405. "Nitekim bundan çok senler evvel harbin başlamasını takip eden birinci ve ikinci sene zarfında bu yola gidilerek Ereğli işletmelerine amele temin ve tedarik edilmiştir... Havzaya ve linyit işletmelerine bu yoldan amele temin ve tedariki doğru olmadığı neticesine varılmış ve ondan sonra o usul terk edilmiştir... Bu muameleye tabi tutulan vatandaşlar askerlik vazifesi gören vatandaşlar gibi muameleye tabidir. Ancak kendileri Devletin, ehemmiyetini şimdi arz ettiğim, maden işlerinde çalıştırıldıkları için bunlara yalnız nefer tahsisatı verilmesi doğru olmadığı düşünülmüş ve mümasil amele ücretlerine yakın bir ücret verilmesi... kararlaştırılmıştır." A similar policy was applied in France during the First World War. The enlisted skilled workers were then placed in war factories. Such workers were not discharged; they remained mobilized, under the supervision of the civilian authority of Ministry of Armaments. See. Thierry Bonzon, "The Labour Market and Industrial Mobilization, 1915-1917," in *Capital Cities at War Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919*, ed. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴²² For instance see *Ereğli Kömür Havzasındaki istihsalatın arttırılması, tanzimi ve icab eden mütedavil sermayenin verilmesi hakkında Koordinasyon Heyetinin 2,3,4 ve 5 numaralı kararları* Republic of Turkey Düstur, 3. Tertip vol. 21, pp 606-614.

⁴²³ As Erol Çatma has underlined, only after a regulation made in 1947 workers employed in the coal mines began to complete their military service in the mines after a six months length military education . See. Erol Çatma, *Asker İşçiler* (İstanbul: Ceylan, 1998), p.137.

in the same parliamentary session these workers would serve or had already served in the army.⁴²⁵

Especially after the end of the War, miners' performance began to be discussed intensively. In fact, such discussions were not limited with Turkey. In countries, which applied forced labor regimes, the productivity of labor was a frequently discussed issue. For instance, Kenneth Vickery, while discussing the forced labor regimes in the northern and southern Rhodesia writes that "many objected to compulsory labor not only, or not even, because of its immorality but because of its inefficiency."⁴²⁶ Some government officials and experts in Turkey had a similar attitude. For instance, in January 1946, Rebi Barkın argued that some of the compulsory workers were so unproductive that they did not even deserve their wages and meals.⁴²⁷ An observer of the Twentieth Century Fund, who visited the Zonguldak coal basin, also had a critical stand. After watching several gangs, he remarked that the workers did not mine the coal, but farmed it.⁴²⁸

However, from the perspective of the workers, the compulsory wage work was a different story. The workers' problems began on their way to the mines. For instance Hikmet Bayur, in his above-mentioned speech, stated that workers in the

⁴²⁴ Yersel, *Madencilikte Bir Ömür*, pp.20-21. "Tecilden yararlanarak askerlikten kurtulmak isteyenler... bu listelere yazılmışlardı. Sonraları savaş korkusu azaldıkça, askerlik tecilinin çekiciliği de kayboluyordu. Bir zamanlar işçi olmadıkları halde kendilerini listelere yazdıranlar, asker kaçaklığından 'mükellefiyet mağduru' haline dönüştüler."

⁴²⁵ T.B.M.M Zabıt Ceridesi, 7th Term, vol 17, 63rd Session, 26 May 1945, p. 400.

⁴²⁶ Kenneth P. Vickery, "The Second World War Revival of Forced Labor in the Rhodesias," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22, no. 3 (1989), pp. 423-437.

⁴²⁷ Rebi Barkın, "Zonguldak Kömür Havzasında Kalifiye İşçi Davası," *Çalışma Dergisi*, no. 3 (January 1946), pp. 15-20.

⁴²⁸ Thornburg, *Turkey an Economic Appraisal*, p. 128.

Soma Mining Enterprises were virtually abducted from their homes without any prior notice. This phenomenon was admitted by the Minister of Economy. However, the minister claimed that it was not his responsibility and had to be asked to the ministry of defense.⁴²⁹

The working conditions in the mines were difficult. There were official reports that stated that in some of the mines within Ereğli coal basin workers were obliged to work 18 hours.⁴³⁰ Even after the War, there were reports that ninety percent of the workers had to work more than twelve-hour shifts in the basin.⁴³¹ Some workers had to work barefooted. Hüseyin Aydın, a retired miner, stated that although they had sandals (*çarık*) they did not bring them to the work site. Sandals were only used in the journeys between the villages and the coal basin.⁴³² The wage levels were not satisfying. In September 1945, Hulusi Dosdoğru has argued that although average daily wage level in the Ereğli coal basin was 200 piasters, the workers employed in the underground were paid 80-120 piasters. The highest daily wages, which were paid to sewer men, did not exceed 300 piasters.⁴³³ Accidents, resulting mostly from the low quality of equipment and underdeveloped infrastructure, were also common in the mines.⁴³⁴ Cave-ins and firedamp explosions were widely observed in the coal basin. For instance due to the fact that uneducated workers did not know how to use

⁴²⁹ T.B.M.M Zabıt Ceridesi, 7th Term, vol.17, 63rd Session, 26 May 1945.

⁴³⁰ Çatma, *Asker İşçiler*, p.126.

⁴³¹ Çıladır, "Devlet Kömür İşletmesi Muvaffak Olmuştur," p.49.

⁴³² Tuncer, *Tarihten Günümüze Zonguldak'ta İşçi Sınıfının Durumu*, p.79.

⁴³³ Dosdoğru, *Sağlık Açısından Maden İşçilerimizin Dünü, Bugünü*, p.31.

⁴³⁴ Güzel, "Capital and Labor During World War II," p.138.

Davy lamps, used for measuring gas ratios in mines, a firedamp explosion occurred in amlı in 1944. Sixty workers lost their lives in that explosion. Yersel, who was on a rescue team formed after the accident, identified two factors as the cause of the disaster. One of them was the pressure of company on the workers to increase the production levels. The second one was the use of unsafe electric rigging.⁴³⁵ Cave-ins also led to similar disasters. After a cave-in in the Gelik region, one worker who was squeezed under the cave in was left to die despite his cries and groaning because the ground was wet and the company did not have necessary materials to rescue him.⁴³⁶ A considerable number of miners were injured and lost their lives in such work accidents during the compulsory work era. For instance, in 1943, 2,701 miners were injured and seventy-five miners died in the work accidents. In the following year, 3,315 miners were injured and eighty-two miners died.⁴³⁷

In addition to these, the facilities outside the mines were not satisfactory. As mentioned in the above paragraphs, the accommodation, nutrition, and healthcare facilities offered to them were insufficient. Under these hard working and living conditions, epidemics were inevitable. The observations of Dosdođrus exposed the dimensions of epidemics in the Eređli coal basin. Between January 1943 and March 1944, 212 miners with typhus were treated in the central company hospital and thirty of them died. There were 121 miners with tuberculosis in 1938; this number steadily rose to 960 in 1944. 2,079 workers were tested randomly and 1,603 of them were

⁴³⁵ Yersel, *Madencilikte Bir mür*, p.25.

⁴³⁶ Dosdođru, *Sađlık Aısından Maden İřçilerimizin Dünü, Bugünü*, pp. 49-51.

⁴³⁷ atma, *Asker İřçiler*, pp 154-155.

found to have intestinal bacteria.⁴³⁸ A doctor serving in Kozlu complained that fifteen to twenty percent of the population there suffered from tuberculosis.⁴³⁹

The hard conditions in the mines were embedded in the memories of the workers. A miner, who was employed in the Ereğli coal basin in the 1940s, recalls:

Think about an animal loaded up with things, if it doesn't want to move the owner hits it. But the owner wouldn't like his animal to get injured, disabled or dead so he hits it carefully.... During the forced labor years our life was not as valuable as an animal or a carpet. A lost pick axe or a pony with a broken leg would upset the managers more than a worker's death. There were limited pickaxes and pit ponies but we were too many like ants.⁴⁴⁰

At the Western Lignite Company, compulsory workers expressed the hard conditions via a ballad. Even in the late 1990s the ballad was remembered by these workers:

The *mükellef*'s rope,
His blanket is sweaty,
The one who is saved of compulsory work
Immolates two times⁴⁴¹

The miners, who were hard pressed during this period, showed their reactions to the compulsory wage work both during the heyday of its application and after its

⁴³⁸Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," p.186.

⁴³⁹ *Yeni Zonguldak*, 24 June 1942. Paper reported that the population of Kozlu was 9,000.

⁴⁴⁰ Yalçın, *Ölümün Ağzı*, p.6. Translation is quoted from Kahveci, p.187. "Yük taşıyan bir hayvan huysuzlanıp gitmezse, sahibi döver onu. Ama ne kadar döverse dövsün, hayvanını yaralamak, sakat bırakmak, öldürmek gelmez içinden...Böyle sakınmalardan bile uzaktık mükellefiyette işte biz. Bir hayvan, bir eşya kadar bile değerimiz yoktu nedense. Ayağı kırılan bir ocak katırı, yiten bir kazma, bizlerin ölümünden daha çok üzerdi başımızdakileri. Çünkü ocakta çalışan katır az bulumuyordu.Kazma, kürek belli sayıdaydı. Ama bize gelince, karıncalar kadar çoktuk biz."

⁴⁴¹Makal, *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946*, p.416. "Mükellefin urganı, terli olur yorganı/ Mükelleften kurtulan çifte kessin kurbanı"

abolition in 1947. In fact, during the war years, conditions in mines were a source of grievance in different parts of the world. Especially in the colonial regimes, strikes and popular unrests broke out among the miners. For instance, miners in Congo, who were hard pressed by the war conditions and were not happy with the colonial officer's attitudes, together with the peasants and soldiers, engaged in a fight against the Belgian colonial government in 1944.⁴⁴² On the other hand, in the Turkish case, a common reaction among the workers was to flee the mines. In fact, the price of this action was very high. Yusuf Tatar, who was known among the workers as *Küpelî Yusuf*, mentioned the strict attitude taken against deserters:

Being miner was like a debt of honor. Deserters were caught and brought by the gendarme. In Kilimli we had a water pool. To warn other workers we pulled the deserters to this pool and beat them heavily. Mining needed discipline and fear. Otherwise, we could not keep the workers in the mines.⁴⁴³

Hüseyin Aydın referred to similar points: "When miner ran away from the mines, the gendarme immediately found him. They arrived in his village even before the deserter... They took the deserter from his village and brought him to the police station in Beycuma. You were beaten very heavily there."⁴⁴⁴ In some cases, these abuses were brought before the National Protection Court. For instance, when Halit Çolak, a miner employed during the compulsory work regime, was arrested after his

⁴⁴² John Higginson, "Steam without a Piston Box: Strikes and Popular Unrest in Katanga, 1943-1945," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 21, no. 1 (1988), pp.97-117.

⁴⁴³ Tuncer, *Tarihten Günümüze Zonguldak'ta İşçi Sınıfının Durumu*, p.83. "Madenkeşlik namus borcu gibiydi. Kaçakları jandarma yakalar getirir, biz de Kilimli'de bir sulu havuz vardı, başkalarına kötü örnek olmasınlar ve ibret olsun diye havuza atar, tabii çokça döverdük. Madenkeşlik disiplin ve korku isterdi, yoksa ameleyi ocakta bir türlü tutamazdık."

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p.79 "Adam kaçtı geldi köye değil mi? Hemen jandarma kapının dibinde biter. Ondan önce yetişirdi...Buradan alırlar Beycuma karakoluna teslim ederlerdi. Karakolda yersin bir araba sopa."

desertion he was beaten heavily by two gendarmes. Moreover, the gendarmes seized his four liras. The case was brought before the Zonguldak National Protection Court and one of the gendarmes, Cevat Engin, was sentenced to prison. However, later on, the Court of Appeals rejected this decision.⁴⁴⁵

The families of deserters also became the victims of these violent acts. As Kadir Tuncer remarks, “deserters’ houses were pillaged and wives were held as hostage. A merciless violence was applied. Their honor and property were infringed.”⁴⁴⁶ İzzet Çatma, who was employed in the coal basin during the compulsory work era, said that wives or daughters of deserters were raped by gendarmes.⁴⁴⁷ İrfan Yalçın, has emphasized similar points: “If a liable worker ran away from the mines, gendarmes came to village and inserted his family members inhumane pressures.”⁴⁴⁸

However, despite these harsh policies, workers continued to flee. As Kadri Yersel recalled, “it was not sufficient to follow, catch and bring deserters back to the work site. They ran away again. A normal gendarme force was not capable. They were supplemented, but the result was same. Deserters were taken into the military service. A worker battalion was constituted.”⁴⁴⁹ Erol Kahveci’s research in the Ereğli Coal Company’s special archive exposes stories of some of the workers who

⁴⁴⁵ *Adalet Dergisi*, no. 8 (August 1945), pp.114-116.

⁴⁴⁶ Tuncer, *Tarihten Günümüze Zonguldak'ta İşçi Sınıfının Durumu*, p.67.

⁴⁴⁷ Çatma, *Asker İşçiler*, p.132.

⁴⁴⁸ İrfan Yalçın, interview by Esra Sarıoğlu and Can Nacar, July 2004.

⁴⁴⁹ Yersel, *Madencilikte Bir Ömür*, p. 21. “Kaçanları kovalamak, yakalamak ve iş yerine teslim etmek yeterli olmuyordu. Yine kaçıyorlardı. Normal jandarma gücü yetmez oldu. Takviye edildi, yine yetmedi. Kaçanlar, askere alınıp işçi taburu oluşturuldu.”

responded to the government's confining activities by the activity of freedom. The story of Suayp Özenç exemplifies this tendency. He was from Bartın and working as a locomotive driver in the region of Kilimli. Özenç ran away and was captured by gendarmes, then brought back to work on 1 September 1943. He admitted that he did not want to work and said that he would run away again. Later on, he regretted this and apologized. However, three days later, he escaped again. He was captured while working in Karabük on 16 October 1943. The officials in the coal basin advised Bartın army headquarters to send him to work on the road works. However, during transportation from Karabük, he jumped out of the train near the Catalagzi station and escaped again. Nine months later, the labor agency was informed that Ozenc was working at the State Railways' Cankırı depot.⁴⁵⁰

Workers' reaction to the compulsory work was not limited to desertion. Expressing their complaints and demands to deputies and national assembly through petitions was a common practice. For instance, Hikmet Bayur, in his above-mentioned speech, underlined that he had received hundreds of petitions from Soma region workers complaining about their abduction from their homes without any prior notice.⁴⁵¹ There were similar reactions in the Ereğli coal basin. In the midst of 1944, people from Vakfikebir applied to the national assembly and arguing that they were bodily weak, they could not resist against the hard working conditions in the underground mines, and victims of tuberculosis were mostly seen among them

⁴⁵⁰ Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," p.185.

⁴⁵¹ T.B.M.M Zabıt Ceridesi, 7th Term, vol17, 63rd Session, 26 May 1945.

demanded exemption from the compulsory work regime.⁴⁵² These petitions had their repercussions. For instance, the complaints of Soma region workers were expressed in the assembly during the budget talks and the Minister of Economy had to confess the existence of such abuses.⁴⁵³ On the other hand, in the case of Vakfikebir, the national assembly ordered the hospital in Zonguldak to make an inspection of the health conditions of the workers from this region.⁴⁵⁴

The workers from the eastern regions of the Black Sea also deserved special attention. These workers, who were known as Laz, called the workers from Zonguldak region curly (*kıvrıcık*), which meant that they were like sheep. İrfan Yalçın remarks that different from the curlies, they expressed their complaints and demands openly and bravely to administrators in order not to be intimidated by the unfair policies at the worksite.⁴⁵⁵ In the *Mouth of Death*, this brave and rebellious Laz figure was represented by Nizam. When his wage was not paid on time, Nizam protested to the manager and demanded the payment of his wages immediately. Although he was beaten heavily by the guards outside the worksite, he did not give up. When he returned with a bloody face, his demand did not change: “I want my money.”⁴⁵⁶

After the abolition of compulsory work, the miners were unwilling to return to the mines. As a result of this, the mining companies run by Etibank faced a serious

⁴⁵² Dosdoğru, *Sağlık Açısından Maden İşçilerimizin Dünü, Bugünü*, p.18.

⁴⁵³ T.B.M.M Zabıt Ceridesi, 7th Term, vol.17, 63th Session, 26 May 1945.

⁴⁵⁴ Dosdoğru, *Sağlık Açısından Maden İşçilerimizin Dünü, Bugünü*, p.18.

⁴⁵⁵ İrfan Yalçın, interview by Esra Sarıoğlu and Can Nacar, July 2004.

⁴⁵⁶ Yalçın, *Ölümün Ağzı*, pp. 54-56.

labor scarcity problem. An inspection committee survey prepared for the Western Lignite Company in 1946 reported that the workers had been offended by the official's ignorance during the compulsory wage work. The committee hoped that the administration would get these workers to return to the mines.⁴⁵⁷ Similar problems were observed in the Ereğli coal basin, where the miners were unwilling to return to the mines for quite some time. Decreases in coal stocks and the number of workers became the order of day in Istanbul during November 1947.⁴⁵⁸ The hard working conditions and abuses during the compulsory work regime also affected party politics. In Ereğli coal basin, several days before the 1950 elections, thousands of temporary workers whose term would end on May 15 left the mines even before they were paid their wages in order to vote. The advice and orders of their supervisors could not prevent their action. Moreover, the workers who would begin their works on 15 May 1950 preferred to stay in their villages for the election.⁴⁵⁹

In the above paragraphs, effort was made to uncover the agency of the workers employed in the public enterprises against the hard working conditions and abuses of administrators. Such an attempt also requires us to focus on the high turnover rates and absenteeism in these enterprises because, as Donald Filtzer recognized in the Soviet context, these behaviors were important forms of worker self-expression.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁷ "Etibank Garp Linyitleri İşletmesi Müessesesi 1946 Yılı Raporu," (Başvekalet Umumi Murakabe Heyeti, 1946), p.19.

⁴⁵⁸ Güzel, "Capital and Labor During World War II," p.133.

⁴⁵⁹ Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye'de 1946-1960 Dönemindeki Grev Tartışmaları İle Grevler Üzerine Bir Çözümleme Denemesi, Tartışma Metinleri* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 2004), p.25.

High Turnover Rates and Absenteeism in the Public Enterprises

Making clear estimates about workers' turnover rates and absenteeism was not an easy task. In some periods, factories did not keep records about the attendance level of their workers. For instance, when the Bakırköy Sümerbank Factory administration tried to calculate the attendance record of Refik Altınay, a weaver, it found out that there were no records for the period between 1939 and 1942. The attendance level was estimated with the help Altınay's wage records.⁴⁶¹ However, despite this fact statistical data gives clues about the extent of the problem. The textile factory in Kayseri employed 19,761 workers between 1935 and 1940. This meant that the staff was renewed seven times within the five years. At the Ergani Copper Company, the turnover rate was approximately 250% between 1940 and 1950. The turnover rate in the sugar factories amounted to 300% in 1940.⁴⁶² In some of the public enterprises, high turnover rates were combined with the labor scarcity and absenteeism. For instance, the Iron and Steel Factory had 1,200 vacancies in 1942.⁴⁶³

There several important reasons lying behind these trends. Continuing tie of the workers to the land was one of these reasons. The workers' files in the Bakırköy

⁴⁶⁰ Stephen Kotkin, "Coercion and Identity: Workers' Lives in Stalin's Showcase City," in *Making Workers Soviet Power, Class and Identity*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.278.

⁴⁶¹ File of Refik Altınay in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5818.

⁴⁶² Makal, *Türkiye'de Tek Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946*, p.296.

⁴⁶³ Ibid. See also. "Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p.50.

Sümerbank Factory give valuable clues about this issue. A considerable number of workers left the factory during the harvest season in their hometowns. For instance, Osman Kural applied to the factory administration on 25 June 1943 and stated that he had to go his village during harvest season and demanded his dismissal.⁴⁶⁴ One month later, a similar demand came from Nazife Korkmaz: "Because my parents are dead I have to go to my village and harvest the crop in our small land. I demand 15 days leave."⁴⁶⁵ This fact was also underlined by the prime ministry's inspection committee. In 1943, the inspection committee reported that workers left the factory during the harvest seasons at any cost.⁴⁶⁶ This pattern is also reflected in Orhan Kemal's novel *Over the Fertile Lands* (Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde). The novel accounts agricultural workers' tragedy in Çukurova between 1946 and 1950. One of these workers, Yusuf, had previously worked in the Sivas Cement Factory as a porter for two months and returned home after a short period.⁴⁶⁷

The factories' administrators were aware of the problem and discussed possible solutions. While some of them argued that the workers had to be given permission at harvest time, others insisted that they had to be given higher wages in this period.⁴⁶⁸

The health problems of close relatives and other family problems were also important factors behind the high turn over rates and absenteeism, especially among

⁴⁶⁴ File of Osman Kural in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5631.

⁴⁶⁵ File of Nazife Korkmaz in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5423.

⁴⁶⁶ "Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," p 50.

⁴⁶⁷ Orhan Kemal, *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 2003), p 5.

⁴⁶⁸ "Sümerbank 1943 Yılı Umumi Murakabe Heyeti Raporu," pp. 50-51.

female workers.⁴⁶⁹ Şükriye Demirci, applied to the factory administration on 29 June 1944 and stated that because her mother was ill she had to go her village. On 29 March 1944, Gülsüm Yavaşoğlu applied the administration with a similar demand: “Due to the fact that I have to go my village to sell our lands and take care of my sick child, I request a one month leave.”⁴⁷⁰ In the same month, Vesile Gezer also applied to the administration: “My daughter is sick. Because there was not any hope in the hospital, I have to take care of her at home. She has no close relatives other than me. I ask for a one month leave.”⁴⁷¹ On 15 September 1944, Suhure Ölmez requested twenty days permission because she had to go Black Sea region and bring her daughter living in Güre to Istanbul.⁴⁷²

The high turn over rates and absenteeism were also reactions of workers to insufficiency of wage levels and facilities in the public enterprises. To compensate insufficient wage levels, workers often found extra work. Özekeken underlined that, in state-run factories, workers did not go to the factories several days a week or in some cases several months, in order to work on farms and road works or as peddlers.⁴⁷³ Similarly, a survey conducted in Eskişehir between 1944 and 1946 indicated that some of the workers who were employed in the railway factory were

⁴⁶⁹ On the other hand, military service was an important reason for the discontinuity of male workers. For instance an important portion of male workers in the Bakırköy Factory, whose files were analyzed, had to spend several years in the military service in the concerned period.

⁴⁷⁰ File of Gülsüm Yavaşoğlu in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 763.

⁴⁷¹ File of Vesile Gezer in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 1375.

⁴⁷² File of Suhure Ölmez in the Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory. Registration Number: 5364.

⁴⁷³ Ahmet Ali Özekeken, *Türkiye’de Sanayi İşçileri* (İstanbul: İktisadiyat ve İçtimaiyat Enstitüsü Neşriyatı No.9, 1950), p. 61.

trying to earn additional incomes by working on farms or selling goods.⁴⁷⁴ The insufficiency of social facilities was also pressing for the workers. Although the public enterprises engaged in construction activities, most of the houses were reserved for the officials, foremen and skilled workers. Some of the workers, especially the unskilled ones, had to live in unhealthy barracks or went to the factory and returned home on foot. Most of these workers did not have the chance to bring their families with them. The healthcare system was also a problem. The persistence of epidemics and lack of a sufficient insurance system for injured workers probably frightened them. Moreover, although the officials and press constantly emphasized the value given to the workers, applications contrary to this claim, such as giving broad beans fit for livestock to the workers, or beatings, deterred the workers. Giresun deputy İ. Sabuncu brought these issues to the agenda of national assembly during the budget talks in May 1945:

Why workers can't be kept at the factories? The authorities tell us that they are performing social duties. They are spending thousands of liras. However, again there are no workers. These two are contrasting claims. I will say okay, if the workers can be kept at the factory. I will say the expenditures serve their goals. But, no. Workers flee the factories.⁴⁷⁵

In the case of high turnover rates and absenteeism, similar trends were observed in the Soviet Union. For instance, overall industrial turn over average was 152.4 percent in 1930, 136.8 percent in 1931, and 135.3 percent in 1932. In some sectors, turnover rates were very above these average levels. In the coal mining

⁴⁷⁴ Güngörür, "Eskişehir'de Sosyal Monografi Çalışmaları," pp.68-70.

⁴⁷⁵ T.B.M.M Zabıt Ceridesi, 7th Term, vol17, 63rd Session, 26 May 1945. "Amele niçin tutulamıyor, sosyal vazife yapıyoruz diyorlar ve bunlar için yüz binlerce lira sarf ediliyor, fakat yine amele yoktur. Bunlar ikisi birbirini tutmayan iddialardır. Sosyal vazifemi yaptım dediğim zaman bu amele dursa pekala derim. Yapılan masrafta hedefine vasil oldu derim. Bu yoktur. Amele kaçıyor."

industry, it was 205.2 percent in 1931, and 187.9 percent in 1932. Kuromiya writes that “according to a Soviet study, in 1932 ‘permanent’ workers accounted for under one third of the Donbass miners, the remainder changing their jobs five times a year.”⁴⁷⁶ The factors lying behind these trends were similar to those in Turkey. One of them was the ties of workers, especially miners, to the countryside.⁴⁷⁷ The hard working and living conditions of Soviet workers also had a direct impact on such behaviors. When the difficulties of everyday survival increased, as in 1932, unauthorized absences also increased because “some workers had to stand in long queues, try to barter things, catch their own fish out of the polluted city rivers.”⁴⁷⁸ Besides these, as Kotkin has noted, absenteeism, turnover, and slowdowns were also a reaction to oppressive terms of work.⁴⁷⁹

Conclusion

The social policies applied by public enterprises have been the subject of various academic studies in the recent years. An almost common practice in these studies is to emphasize the positive aspects of these policies and put at the center of narrative the ruling elites. The statements of Burak Peri, in the final section of his

⁴⁷⁶ Hiroaki Kuromiya, "The Commander and the Rank and File Managing the Soviet Coal-Mining Industry, 1928-33," in *Social Dimensions of Soviet Industrialization*, ed. William G. Rosenberg and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993), p.148.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.148.

⁴⁷⁸ Vladimir Andrele, *A Social History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p 179.

⁴⁷⁹ Kotkin, "Coercion and Identity: Workers' Lives in Stalin's Showcase City," p.307.

master thesis, reflect these tendencies: “When the Nazilli and Kayseri factory settlements are analyzed in this way, they can be evaluated as the built form of the early Republican attempts to modernize society through the experience of people in these places... By providing social interaction, those factories acted as schools and not only in the literal sense by educating the technical staff. They were also the active centers of social education that exemplified the new life of citizens in a modern country to the workers.”⁴⁸⁰

In this study too, these social policies were taken as a point of departure. In the first part, the facilities offered by the public enterprises to their workers were examined. Although there were insufficiencies and unevenness in the application stage, the goal of these facilities was to form a new subject who came to the factory regularly, worked in a disciplined manner, and had a high productivity level. However, fulfillment of this goal depended not only to the facilities aiming to improve the welfare of individuals, but also to the control and discipline processes, both in and outside the workplace. For instance, as mentioned above, the performance of workers was scrutinized carefully and those who did not fulfill specific criteria were warned, fined, and even beaten. Probably, as K peli Yusuf has stated, those practices were not only punishment for the failing worker but also a warning for the others. Moreover, recreational facilities were used for controlling workers’ spare time activities. These practices, which made the working conditions hard for the workers, were supplemented by wartime legal regulations proposing extra work hours and a compulsory work regime in designated enterprises, and

⁴⁸⁰ Peri, "Building the 'Modern' Environment in Early Republican Turkey: S merbank Kayseri and Nazilli Factory Settlements", pp.107-108

banning the workers to leave their enterprises without permission. Departing from these points, it could be argued besides being a project of forming new subjects-citizens social policies in the public enterprises were also a mechanism to dominate the lives of people.

What was the attitude of workers against the social policies in the public enterprises? While claiming that workers did not have an impact on the social policies of public enterprises, is Ahmet Makal right? These two questions were important inspirations for this study. It was argued that rather than being the mere objects of the governmental projects the workers, as the agents of history, had a central role in the process. For instance, in the case of compulsory work regime they did not refrain from fleeing work sites despite the existence of violent threats. As Yersel has mentioned, despite the fact these violent threats were constantly supplemented by the new ones, they could not deter the workers. In some other cases, they managed to carry their problems to the agenda of the National Assembly through hundreds of petitions or as in the case of Bursa Ant print house forced the manager who behaved them improperly to resign.

High turnover rates and absenteeism were other means for worker self-expression. They were directly related with workers' everyday problems, such as low wage levels, insufficient social facilities, and the abuses of administrators. In response to these, rather than continuing their work in the state run factories or mines, an important portion of the workers worked in different sectors, such as in road building or agricultural work, several days of week or several months. This was both a means of earning additional incomes and challenging the hard working

conditions of their workplaces. Therefore, rather than condemning the temporary nature of workers as an obstacle to the formation of class consciousness⁴⁸¹ it would be better to analyze such attitudes in close relation to the actual experiences of working class people.

⁴⁸¹ See. Ahmet Makal, "Türkiye'nin Sanayileşme Sürecinde İşgücü Sorunu, Sosyal Politika ve İktisadi Devlet Teşekkülleri: 1930'lu Ve 1940'lı Yıllar," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 92 (Spring 2002), pp.34-70; and Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketleri 1908-1984* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In Turkey, the post-war period became a turning point for the emergence of social security and welfare systems, centering on the labor market and work relations.⁴⁸² Upon its establishment in June 1945, the Ministry of Labor launched studies to collect data about working people and to begin introducing legal regulations with regard to work life. For instance, in September 1945, Mübaccel Kıray, who was then employed at the ministry, began to make preparations to conduct an inquiry among workers employed in the public enterprises about their living conditions.⁴⁸³ The ministry sought out the consultation of foreign experts. In January 1946, two English experts, Henry Stevens and Charles Hector Lefebure, came to Ankara to visit worksites in the different regions of the country and prepare

⁴⁸² Nadir Özbek, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Sosyal Devlet," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 92 (Spring 2002), pp. 7-33.

⁴⁸³ Fulya Atacan, Fuat Ercan, Hatice Kurtuluş, Mehmet Türkay, "*Hayatımda Hiç Arkaya Bakmadım*" Mübaccel B. Kıray'la Söyleşi (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2002), p.80. Although it was planned that Kıray and ten students from Ankara University would visit Zonguldak, İstanbul and İzmir, the Minister, Sadi İrmak, fearing that the researchers would make communist propaganda among the workers, canceled the program.

a report. Stevens and Lefebure played an active role in the preparation of legal texts about social insurance and trade unions.⁴⁸⁴

In January 1946, the Employment Office (*İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu*) was founded. It is important to emphasize that the office did not restrict its services to the workers who were under the supervision of the Labor Code. People employed in agriculture and in companies, with less than ten workers could also benefit from the services of the Office.⁴⁸⁵ In addition, in June 1946, the ban on setting up class-based organizations was abolished.

Beside these institutional and legal developments, the everyday problems and basic rights of working people began to be discussed intensively on different platforms. For instance, in the official publication organ of the Ministry of Labor, *Çalışma Dergisi* (Labor Journal), the articles were mainly about legal regulations with regard to work life, working conditions in different sectors and regions, and projects proposed for improving the productivity and living conditions of working people. Similar topics were brought on to the agenda in conferences held by the Economics and Sociology Institute (*İktisat ve İctimaiyat Enstitüsü*) and other public institutions. For instance, the Workers Insurance Institution (*İşçi Sigortaları Kurumu*) began to hold annual meetings among the representatives of workers and employers. During these meetings, representatives discussed the insufficiencies of

⁴⁸⁴ Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, "Çalışma Bakanlığı'nın Kuruluşu: Çalışma Hayatında İngiliz Etkisi," *Tarih ve Toplum* 9, no. 50 (February 1988), pp. 52-56.

⁴⁸⁵ Ahmet Makal, *Türkiye'de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1946-1963* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2002), p. 212.

the new social policies and proposed projects for the proper functioning of the insurance system and improvement of workers' conditions.⁴⁸⁶

A number of factors played important roles in the initiation of social policies centering on the labor market and work relations. The quantitative increase in the labor force as a consequence of the industrialization programs initiated during the single-party rule and attempts to integrate a new world order based on democracy were two of these factors.⁴⁸⁷ In addition to these, the new social policies were a response to working people's aspirations and reactions, which had been expressed through various means during the war years. In this sense, these policies were a precaution against the increasing social risk. For instance, initiating policies to restrain the high turnover rates and absenteeism, which were forms of worker self-expression, in the industrial enterprises were among the basic goals of the Ministry of Labor. In an interview conducted in June 1945, Sadi Irmak stated that they aspired to strengthen the ties between industrial workers and their companies by providing them with free lands, and to provide satisfying conditions for the workers who transferred from agriculture to industry.⁴⁸⁸

The necessity of developing new social policies to answer the demands of working people and to bring the increasing social risk under control was also a

⁴⁸⁶ For instance, during the meeting held in 1948, workers' representatives complained about the insufficiencies of the insurance mechanism with regard to illnesses emanating from working conditions and demanded the inclusion of all types of illnesses in this mechanism. See "İşçi Sigortaları Toplantısından İntibalar," *Doğu* 13, no. 72-75 (November-December 1948/January-February 1949), pp. 46-48.

⁴⁸⁷ Özbek, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Sosyal Devlet"; and Güzel, "Çalışma Bakanlığı'nın Kuruluşu: Çalışma Hayatında İngiliz Etkisi."

⁴⁸⁸ Güzel, "Çalışma Bakanlığı'nın Kuruluşu: Çalışma Hayatında İngiliz Etkisi."

frequently mentioned theme in the reports prepared by the politicians and government officials in the post-war years. For instance, in a report prepared for the Sümerbank Nazilli Factory in 1949, Rebi Barkın stated that in the factory he faced the severe criticisms of the workers, who were hard-pressed under the unhealthy living conditions. At the end of the report, he wrote that in order to prevent the workers' opposition to the government the party and factory administrations in Nazilli had to hold regular meetings with the workers, prevent the epidemics, and find solutions to the accommodation and water problems of the workers.⁴⁸⁹ Similarly, an inspection committee survey prepared for the Western Lignite Company in 1946 recommended that the administration develop policies in order to get the workers who had been offended by the official's ignorance during the compulsory wage work to return to the mines.⁴⁹⁰

The influential role of the working people with regard to post-war developments was also expressed by these people themselves. For instance, Mediha Özçelik, who began to work in tobacco depots towards the end of the war, said the followings with regard to the social policies in the post-war years: "The social insurance system in Turkey was the product of workers' struggles during and after the war years."⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ 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" (Master Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2003).

⁴⁹⁰ "Etibank Garp Linyitleri İşletmesi Müessesesi 1946 Yılı Raporu," (Başvekalet Umumi Murakabe Heyeti, 1946), p.19.

⁴⁹¹ Mediha Özçelik, interview by Esra Sarıoğlu, Burak Gürel and Can Nacar. "*Türkiye'deki sosyal sigorta sistemi işçilerin savaş döneminde ve savaş sonrasında verdiği mücadelelerin bir ürünüdür.*"

When analyzed from this perspective, working people emerged as central actor, with a critical role in the post-war developments. In fact, one can observe the agent role of these people in the War years as well. For example, as discussed in the third chapter, during the war years, the attitudes, activities, and demands of the workers employed in the public enterprises were important factors, in shaping the decisions of the factories and mines' administrations with regard to social policies. Recognizing this critical role of working people in the early Republican period, this study has sought to open a place for these people at the center of historical narrative.

The hard working and living conditions, which were widely discussed in this study, are not strange phenomena today. Similar to the war years, thousands of children work as day laborers or in factories and workshops for long hours in order to contribute to their family budgets.⁴⁹² In order to decrease production costs, miners in different regions continue to be forced to work in unsafe and unhealthy conditions. As a result of these, tens of workers continue to lose their lives in the accidents on the job.⁴⁹³ Interviews conducted by journalist in soup kitchens established in different regions of the country recall the plight of people who told their stories to Said Kesler in the soup kitchen of Beşiktaş Kızılay in 1943.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² For instance, according to a survey conducted by Erol Kahveci, Theo Nichols and Nadir Sugur, among the shoe-shine boys of İzmir, who are aged fourteen and under, provide on average, thirty-eight percent of total household incomes. See Erol; Nichols Kahveci, Theo; Sugur, Nadir, "The Shoe-Shine Boys of İzmir," in *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey*, ed. Nadir Sugur and Theo Nichols Erol Kahveci (London: Mansell, 1996), pp. 38-71.

⁴⁹³ For instance, as a result of a firedamp explosion that occurred in a coal mine in Ermenek, ten workers died in November 2003. See Nuray Mert, "Vahşi Kapitalizmin Terörü," *Radikal* 28 November 2003.

⁴⁹⁴ Arif Toprak, "Açlık Yayılıyor Kuyruk Uzuyor," *Evrensel*, 25 November 2003.

Although the modes of production and capital accumulation have changed in time, the unevenness inherent to capitalism continues to be reproduced. Recalling the agent role of the lower class people in history may offer us clues to overcoming the unevenness produced by the capitalist expansion and keep our hopes alive for the future.



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