Many voices of a Turkish state factory: working at Bakirköy Cloth Factory, 1932-50
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Chapter 3

Tracing the Subjective Levels of Transformation in the Bakırköy Labour Force: An Analysis of Workers’ Responses

On 18 November 1945, there was a crowded ceremony at the Bakırköy Factory attended by members of the cabinet and other high-rank bureaucrats.\textsuperscript{425} The occasion was the opening of the hospital and the dining hall built for the workers and their families. The guests first gathered at the sports club for which the workers were supposed to pay 4 per cent of their earnings. The ceremony commenced at 4pm with the singing of the national anthem by the workers’ chorus and continued with the speech of the factory manager on Sümerbank’s efforts to improve the social conditions of state workers. After a second speech by the general manager of Sümerbank, the Minister of Economy cut the ribbon and expressed his hopes for more pleasing and satisfying improvements to follow this example. The program continued with a tour of the new buildings.

With twenty beds, two departments of internal and external diseases, a maternity ward, a polyclinics of dentistry and gynaecology, several x-ray machines, a laboratory and an affluent pharmacy, the hospital was said to easily meet the needs of the 1600 workers at the factory. The dining hall, which was also to be used for other purposes, could accommodate 800 people for eating and 1200 for watching movies and shows. For the clerks, another hall that could seat 80 people was built. The dining hall had a modern kitchen, a cold storage depot and other facilities. On the second floor, other rooms for social facilities were located. Among them were a studio, a storage room for the cinema equipment, two guest rooms and a sleeping room for the service staff. The reporter was particularly amazed with the studio among all these new facilities, which he thought of as a “big novelty.” Indeed, the planned uses of the studio were impressive. Besides broadcasting the daily factory news, including the production level of the previous day, the most productive worker of the day, the amount he produced and the corresponding wage he earned, the radio would also announce the orders and instructions by the factory management.

This eventful day at the factory concluded with a tea party and a show including different performances by the workers. According to the reporter “Workers showed great success in eastern and western music styles, village songs and folkloric dances,” and they

\textsuperscript{425} “Bakırköy Fabrikasında”, \textit{Cumhuriyet} (19 Nov. 1945).

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received a great deal of applause from the audience. The ceremony must have attracted much attention since another article was published about it on the same day in the same newspaper. This time, however, the reporter contextualised the particular event in a broader historical and social setting. On the one hand, he compared the old times of the factory with the improvements after Sümerbank took over. On the other, he contextualised the novelties at Bakirköy within the wider context of the goals and functions of the state social policies. After explaining why the new buildings were needed and how they can be of benefit not only to the workers but also to their families, he concluded that their establishment “was an act of ‘charity’.” He continued,

The state, in its own factories, thinks about the health and well-being of its workers and clerks, [it] thinks about their food, [it] thinks about their social civility, [it] thinks about their recreation. In one word, [it] provides them with the necessities of a civilised life. As such, the state also precludes the class war which turned the western world upside down because instead of the idea of exploiting the workers and the clerks, the mentality of providing a more prosperous life for them reigns. The worker finds a heaven at the factory, not hell, and commits to it.426

It is impossible to know whether Mümin was among those attending the ceremony. Perhaps attendance was compulsory just as contributing to the sports club, Sümerspor, was. But the reporter was not interested in workers’ reaction to these developments. One thing is for sure: Even if Mümin was there, he did not share the enthusiasm of the article. A careful study of his personnel file shows that what he found at the factory was far from a heaven. He described his situation in July 1946 with the following words427:

To the office of management at Bakırköy Cloth Factory,
The following is my wish.
[Your] servant Mümin Kılıç, nine years in the yarn department and nine months in the maintenance department as assistant foreman has been working at the factory for nine years and nine months. Although I have been working for such a [long] time, I have received only

426 Ibid.
427 I choose to leave the grammatical and lexical language mistakes in the petitions since they could be regarded as indications of literacy among the workers, although I would imagine that, in many cases, someone else had written them since many workers had little or no literacy at the time of their employment. Unfortunately, I do not have more information to further speculate on this matter.
428 The exact word is “bendeleri”, which is originally a Persian word with strong religious connotations. It could mean “the subject of” or “the servant of” depending on the context.
five piastres increase. I am a member of a family of four, since the money I am receiving does not allow making do my ... [unreadable, GA ] family agonise in exigency. My counterparts, as well as the apprentices that I teach, receive fifty piastres. Because of the high cost of living, I respectfully ask from your high office to be given wages like my friends, taking into consideration that I have been working for this many years without intervals to receive a raise in order not to be excessively aggrieved.

This petition is one of the eighteen written by the Bakırköy workers in my sample to plea for a wage increase between 1942 and 1951. Several petitions were also written for other sorts of economic gains such as child support and indemnities for different reasons. While the newspapers were celebrating the improvements in the conditions of the state workers, the Bakırköy workers were writing more and more petitions to explain their hardening conditions.

The current chapter analyses these petitions through studying their five aspects: timing, frequency, addressee, content and vocabulary. My objective here is two-fold. First, through a close reading of the workers’ petitions and the commentaries of the management on these petitions, I would like to portray the dynamics of the worker-management relations at the Bakırköy factory. Second, by means of discerning the changes in these petitions over time, I aim to show that the workers’ self-perceptions and the representations of that self-perception underwent a dramatic change during the early Republican period. The stories of Bakırköy workers demonstrate that, while they tried to cope with the hardening working and living conditions, they also devised strategies to resist the management’s attempts to increase control both inside and outside the factory. Contrary to the prevailing arguments in the literature on workers of the period, class consciousness was growing and resistance was building up, slowly but firmly, in the post-War years.

This chapter also deals with the question of the changing character of state-society relations throughout the 1940s. In a way, Bakırköy workers’ petitions could be read as written correspondence between the state and its subject. Working at a state factory meant encountering the state on a daily basis in an employee-employer relationship. To what extent the Bakırköy workers perceived these encounters in this way, we will never know. But the factory management’s dealing with the petitions clearly reflected the workings of state bureaucracy. Moreover, the fact that some workers turned to the Sümerbank General Directorate and the Prime Ministry when their petitions to the factory management did not succeed suggests that they saw the latter as part of the state apparatus at least to some extent.
As such, my analysis of the petitions sheds some light on the changes in the way an ordinary working citizen positioned himself vis-à-vis the early republican Turkish state.

The Worker as the “Destitute”

Of the eighteen petitions analysed here, the earliest dates from January 1943:

-To the Higher Office of General Directorate of Sümerbank,
  My esteemed sir,
  The destitute had been working at the Bakırköy Cloth Factory for seven years and I have dared to take refuge in your Higher Office as a worker who had always gained the countenance of his superiors all the time during this period. The situation is that many of my friends benefited from the increases in every aspect. The destitute, however, is deprived. I am in extreme poverty. Especially the latest high cost of living suffocated me. I kindly ask you with my eternal respect to give your order and permission to those concerned for an increase in my wage in the suitable amount also to the destitute in order not to cause my damnification.

Mehmet began working in the dyeing department in 1936. He was an extraordinary worker, in that he worked uninterruptedly from 1936 to February 1941, the year he was enlisted in the army. Immediately after his demobilization in January 1942, he returned to the factory. As explained in the previous chapter, if the state workers returned to their workplaces within a certain time period after their demobilization, the time of their military duty was added to their seniority. For Mehmet, however, this was not the case as we learn from his petition dated 29.01.1942:

  The following is my wish.
  [Your] servant is one of your workers who worked for five years. Eleven months ago, I went to the military to carry out my national duty and have been demobilised. I beg with respect for the sake of humanity that your servant with wife and children is re-employed so that I am not aggrieved on this winter day and saved from extreme poverty.

From a short note below Mehmet’s petition, we learn that there was no position available at the time and thus he had to wait. In Chapter 2, we saw that the high labour turnover rate

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429 Mehmet Karagözli.
constituted a problem for state factories. That an experienced worker such as Mehmet had difficulty in returning to the factory under such conditions requires further elaboration on the structure of the labour market during the period. The next section addresses this need by contextualizing Mehmet’s and other workers’ petitions within the wider framework of political economy of the 1940s.

The Paradoxical Labour Market

The labour market of the early Republican period displays a paradoxical character in that, while workers such as Mehmet had to beg for work, factories and workshops were continuously looking for new workers. For example, in the same year as when Mehmet wrote the above petition, Bakırköy Factory was publishing job advertisements. In one of these advertisements, the factory claims that a hardworking weaver could earn up to 700 piastres a day with the additional benefits of one meal, and a loaf of bread free of charge, and food and other products at their production cost. Those who regularly come to work, it adds, would receive an additional 10 per cent every month.430 Another newspaper reports that the extensions in the Bakırköy factory required the recruitment of new workers, especially weavers, but despite the increase in the wages and benefits, it was still very hard to find experienced workers.431 It is hard to believe that a few months earlier, the same newspaper published ads by weavers, claiming to be experienced and skilled, looking for employment at factories432 or that the Employment and Salvation Hall of one of the Republican People’s Party People’s Houses in Istanbul was receiving applications from people with secondary and even high school diplomas seeking employment as a worker at a state factory.433 The explanation of this paradoxical situation is two-fold. First, the lack of co-ordination in the national labour market gave way to the contradictory co-existence of labourers moving around the country in search of employment, on the one hand, and factories in search of labour, on the other. Second, the ensuing problems of high labour turnover rates, and the lack of vocational training, created a labour market in which experienced and skilled workers were scarce while unskilled workers were in abundance.

Within this context of incongruence between supply of and demand for labour, Mehmet had to beg to return to the factory at a wage level of 15 piastres an hour in 1942. This

432 “İş ve İşçi Arayanlar”, Haber Aksam Postası (29 Mar. 1943); Haber Aksam Postası (12 Apr. 1943).
figure is considerably lower than the one Makal gives as the average daily wage of a textile
worker at a state factory in Istanbul in 1942.\textsuperscript{434} Although he received an increase of 3 piastres
in November 1942, Mehmet’s situation in January 1943 was still grave as the wording of his
first petition I quoted above illustrates. In fact, the striking similarity of the descriptions in the
two petitions suggests that one year of employment did not change much for Mehmet and his
family.

Mehmet gives three reasons as to why he is entitled to a wage increase in 1943. First, he
mentions that he had been working at the factory for seven years by then. He was aware
that this was an exceptionally long time of employment. In fact, in 1945, the technician of his
department stated that he was a “very old” and “hardworking” worker. Thus, it is safe to
assume that Mehmet was a relatively experienced and skilled worker. Second, immediately
after the implication of seniority comes a reference to the appraisal of the supervisors.
Together, these two factors encouraged Mehmet “to take refuge in Your Higher Office.” A
certain practice should be noted here concerning the regulation of wage levels at Bakırköy. As
far as the files indicate, wage increases at Bakırköy were supposed to be given every six
months, only if the appraisal of the supervisors was secured. By referring to his seniority and
the approval of his superiors, Mehmet makes it clear that he knew the rules of the game. He
was aware of his qualities as a worker and emphasised them in order to convince the
management. Third, while many of his friends had received a wage increase, Mehmet
continued, he was left behind. He does not specify whether these friends were from the same
department as him, but we can use two other workers’ data to assess the validity of Mehmet’s
claims. The first worker had also been working in the dyeing department since 1935 – barely
a year earlier than Mehmet had started at the factory – and earned 30 piastres in August 1943
as an assistant foreman.\textsuperscript{435} The second worker, a weaver who had already worked at the
factory since 1928, earned 25 piastres an hour in March 1943 but his wage was increased to
30 piastres after he petitioned.\textsuperscript{436} Mehmet’s hourly wage in January 1943, however, was only
18 piastres an hour. Thus, Mehmet’s situation supports the argument I made in the previous
chapter concerning the considerable wage differences between workers in the same
department on the one hand, and workers in different departments of the factory, on the other.
As the experience and seniority levels of these three workers illustrate, the wage differences
were determined rather randomly.

\textsuperscript{434} Ahmet Makal, \textit{Ameleden İşçiye: Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Emek Tarihi Çalışmaları}, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007), p. 132. For a discussion of the wage figures Makal gives, see Chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{435} Osman Yatış.
\textsuperscript{436} Cemal Öndağ.
Mehmet describes his poverty using powerful terms such as “deprivation”, “damnification” and “suffocation”. He cites the latest increase in the cost of living as the final blow. Indeed, the dramatic increase, especially in the price of food in early 1942, was a common topic covered by the newspapers with references to discussions on the necessity of state distribution of food supplies. Under these conditions, as the weaver I cited in the above paragraph claimed not to be able to make a living on 25 piastres an hour, Mehmet’s financial situation must have indeed been extremely difficult.

On the Language and the Addressee of Mehmet’s Petition

We have seen the word “destitute” in other petitions discussed in Chapter 2. The Turkish word “acizleri” carries the meaning of an impotent and powerless person. It is also used to refer to oneself as a sign of modesty. Within the context of Mehmet’s petition, references to the first definition are obvious with direct relevance to material deprivation: “The destitute, however, is deprived. I am in extreme poverty.” In the opening sentence of the petition, we can say that there is a reference to the second meaning since he chose to refer to himself not immediately in the first person singular pronoun but as “the destitute” and thus makes his agency less pronounced. He switches to “I”, however, in the second half of the sentence where he tries to legitimise his act of petitioning, which he describes as “daring to take refuge in.”

Mehmet did not write this petition to the Bakırköy Factory management but to the General Directorate of Sümerbank. Whether he had made other attempts, written or verbal, at the level of factory management before writing to Sümerbank is unknown to us. Perhaps thinking that the management was being unfair by not giving him the same increase that others received, he decided that it would be more efficient to appeal to a higher authority. It was noted on his previous petition dated 29 January 1942 that he made an oral application and that he was told to wait until there was a position available. However, it was only after his petition that he was recruited again. Could it be the case that he thought of writing to the higher offices as a strategically better option? Why did he skip the factory management before appealing to the busy headquarters of Sümerbank in Ankara to get an increase from his factory in Istanbul?

From the official reply of Bakırköy Factory to the Directorate of Sümerbank Yarn and Weaving Factories Enterprise, we understand that there was official correspondence between the factory and the General Directorate of Sümerbank about Mehmet’s petition.
Unfortunately, Mehmet’s file does not include the petition written by Sümerbank. But we know that more than a month after Mehmet wrote the petition, the factory management wrote to the General Directorate to explain that it was not possible to increase his wage because it had not been six months since he had received the last one. This did not prevent Mehmet from writing a second petition, this time directly to the factory management, asking for a wage increase, and again referring to the argument that he could not live on the wage he earned. The petition was dated 20 March 1943, and he received an increase of 2 piastres eleven days later, exactly six months after his last increase. The whole story suggests that the factory management was very much immune to such petitions written in a pleading tone and that it followed the rules of wage increases strictly. But how did it respond to petitions asking either for an increase or the termination of employment?

**The Disposable Worker**

When Süleyman started in the dyeing department in December 1943, his hourly wage was 18 piastres an hour. Only three months later, he wrote a petition to the chief of the department asking for the termination of his employment due to increasing financial difficulty caused by the rising cost of living. He was a new worker and was probably not skilled, as we will see later. When he started at Bakırköy, he had a one-year old daughter, but this did not stop him risking unemployment. The note by the foreman of the dyeing department under his petition made it clear that Süleyman was one of these disposable workers: “There is no inconvenience about his immediate leave.” Thus, Süleyman left the factory. Judging from his return to Bakırköy three years later to work as a construction worker for an hourly wage which was less than what he had earned in 1943, one can only assume that it was not easy for him to find stable employment elsewhere. Lacking any institutionalised social protection or assistance from any sort of workers’ organization, Süleyman was left alone in a highly instable labour market. Five months after his second recruitment, he left the factory again, this time claiming that he had to go to his village for the harvest.

Was it the case that his ensuing rural ties constituted a defence mechanism against the harsh conditions of factory work? If we follow him further, we see that he returned to the factory three years later again in 1949. Obviously, he must have done other jobs than only the harvest during these three years. The point is that he did not want to return to Bakırköy

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437 Süleyman Yapıcı. Note that, although he was a new worker, Süleyman earned the same wage as Mehmet in 1943, which suggests that the factory management did not follow the rules of wage increases and promotions strictly. I will return to this topic in the following pages.
Factory where, according to the reporter I referred to above, the workers had found a heaven. But in the early 1950s, Süleyman was a man in his forties and his rural ties were probably weakening and his chances of finding employment elsewhere fading. He stayed on at Bakırköy until his retirement in 1969.

Above, I have shown that the demand for weavers was high at textile factories. The question here is whether this brought a change in the management’s attitude towards weavers’ complaints. Cemil, who had worked at Bakırköy as an apprentice weaver for very short periods of time in 1941 and in 1945, was recruited in the yarn department in March 1947. In 1941, his employment was terminated because of absenteeism only three months after he was recruited. In 1945, after five months of employment, he resigned saying that he had to go to his hometown. In Chapter 2 we saw that he actually worked at a private factory in Istanbul for almost six months in 1946 and 1947. In March 1947, he returned but was not recruited as a weaver this time, which meant that his wage was lower than before. After four months, he wrote that he was “obliged to resign since I cannot make a living for my family with the wage that I am earning”. The note of the foreman was brief and concise: “Since a replacement has been found’ he may leave today.” We do not know what Cemil did between July 1947 and September 1948 when he returned once more to work as an apprentice weaver again, for 25 piastres an hour. He was thirty years old, married with no children, which probably made it easier for him to leave his job so often. He was now living in a gecekondu in Zeytinburnu, close to the factory where he remained until his retirement in 1972.

**Contextualizing the Petitions: Changes in State-Labour Relations after WWII**

Between Süleyman’s petition in 1944 and Cemil’s petition in 1947, substantial changes occurred regarding the regulative and legislative character of the state. Especially in 1946, various initiatives regarding the labour question were made. Until then, the Republican People’s Party had exemplified Therborn’s definition of repression as a form of mediation of the exploitation and domination of the ruling class over other classes. Prohibition of opposition was exemplified by the proscription of unions, while restriction of intra-systemic opposition came in the form of the limitations on the right to strike, harassment and terror, and surveillance. Until 10 June 1946, the establishment of organizations based on the

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principle of class was illegal.⁴³⁹ The 1936 Labour Law had already outlawed strikes. Leftists were subjected to increasing harassment, terror and surveillance. Fearing that the students and the cadets in the armed forces would follow left-wing ideas, the state dealt harshly with left-wing intellectuals such as Kerim Sadi, Hikmet Kırılcımlı, and Nazım Hikmet by means of giving them long prison sentences or sending them to exile.⁴⁴⁰

Within the international context of the post-War era, however, containing and controlling the labour force through mere repression was no longer possible. As part of its efforts to become a member of the post-war international community, the Turkish state needed to handle the labour question in more democratic terms. The increasing state intervention into labour relations during this period should be understood in this context. The establishments of the Ministry of Labour in 1945 and the “Employment and Employee Bureau” in 1946, and the enactment of social insurance laws for industrial workers increased the state’s capacity in regulating the labour market and the social conditions of work. The 1936 Labour Law was also amended in this period. On 14 January 1946, the Minister of Labour was referring to the International Labour Conference in Philadelphia in 1944 as one of the motivations for this amendment.⁴⁴¹ Of the four main principles that made the Declaration of Philadelphia, the Minister was referring only to the first one, which states that labour cannot be regarded as a commodity. He omitted the second, as well as the third and the fourth principles, which defined freedom of expression and association as essential to sustained progress.⁴⁴² On other occasions, he mentioned the similarities between the social policy measures in Turkey and the Beveridge Plan in England. All these references to the Western World signaled a shift in the way state-society relations were organised.

There were substantial changes in the arena of national politics as well. The RPP also had to deal with the increasing opposition to its authoritarian rule. The success of the recently founded Democrat Party in the 1946 general elections revealed the discontent with the single-party regime, which manifested itself in the form of an alliance between different classes voting for the opposition. As Beverly Silver argues in her analysis of the world-scale evolution of labour-capital conflict, the period between 1870, the time of the crisis of the

⁴³⁹ Kurthan Fişek notes that, through the changes in the penal code eight days after this date, it was ensured that the right to organise was a stillborn. *Türkiye'de Kapitalizmin Gelişmesi ve İşçi Sınıfı*, (Ankara: Doğan Yayınevi, 1969), p. 82.


⁴⁴¹ “Çalışma Bakanlığı’nın Hazırladığı Kanunlar”, *Cumhuriyet* (15 Jan 1946).

British hegemony, and 1945 was characterised by, among others, the growing politicization of that conflict.\textsuperscript{443} This trend was clearly visible in labour politics of the immediate post-War era in Turkey. For example, the rights to organise trade unions and to strike were increasingly pronounced in political debates. In the words of a prominent sociologist of the day, who also worked as a consultant for the Ministry of Labour, the enactment of social insurance schemas was a necessity brought about by the changes in the political atmosphere:

\[\text{The worker of our time does not want a favor, he wants his right. Without giving him a chance to ask for this right through mediation (or in a peaceful manner) or by means of strikes, we should provide it intrepidly [...] That is why the idea of social insurance [...] set the Turkish lawmaker into action.}\textsuperscript{444}\]

This statement supports my argument that the Turkish state’s post-War labour policies should be understood as a means to control the increasingly politicised working classes. As such, state actions during this period were an extension of the strategy of bureaucratic reformism, the primary purpose of which was to reform the state in order to better cope with internal conflict and external pressure.\textsuperscript{445} Keyder’s analysis of the bourgeois-bureaucracy alliance during this period exemplifies one of the six bourgeois formats of representation Therborn defined. In the format of etatism, “\textit{In relation to the ruled classes, the state functions as does a supernotable to his clientele, holding it in check by means of petty favors, ideological isolation and physical intimidation.}”\textsuperscript{446}

The changes in the legislative and regulative functions of the Turkish state in the post-war context, I argue, was necessitated by the increasing difficulty of basing the control of the labouring classes on the last two mechanisms defined here. Together with other strategies of the state’s mediation of the exploitation and domination of the working-class, the petty favors, mostly in the form of social insurance schemes, became a tool to contain and control the working class politics in the hands of the state. The question to ask at this point is whether this atmosphere of “democratization” had any effect on the (self-)perceptions of the workers and the way they formulated their demands.

\textsuperscript{444} “Bizde Mecburi Sosyal Sigorta Fikri ve İlk Tatbiki”, \textit{Cumhuriyet} (1 July 1946).
\textsuperscript{446} Therborn, \textit{What Does the Ruling Class Do}, p. 198.
Changes in the Discourse: From Begging to Expecting

My analysis of Mehmet’s petitions and the management’s replies have suggested that the rules of promotion and pay rates were strictly followed at the factory. A careful look at petitions by other workers, however, reveals that this was not the case. One of these workers was a weaver also named Mehmet who had started working at the factory in 1938 and worked without any interruptions until his military service in 1942. Upon his return, he immediately came back to the factory but, after just a few days, he was laid off due to a reduction in the workforce. If it were not for the fact that someone in his department left the factory and that his superiors had favourable opinions of him, Mehmet would have been one of the thousands of Istanbul’s unemployed. But he was lucky enough to be hired with an hourly wage of 25 piastres.

However, things had changed after the war. The factory was working with shifts of eight hours now, which shortened the working day at least by three hours and thus made a considerable difference in terms of the daily wages of the workers. Moreover, years of military service cost Mehmet his right to seniority. In fact, if a worker immediately returned to the factory after completing his military service, his seniority would be calculated starting from his first arrival at the factory. However, mainly due to mistakes made in bookkeeping, many a worker had to fight for previous working days to be included in their seniority benefits. Mehmet did the same when he was laid off in order to increase the number of days on which he was given two hours of paid leave to look for another job. His claim to seniority was accepted, but his demand became redundant as the factory recruited him in the end. The point here is that Mehmet was well aware of his rights and he did not hesitate to pursue them by means of petitioning.

“… before I am obliged to sell the bed I sleep on”

The post-war years witnessed an increasing discrepancy between consumer prices and wage levels. In July 1946, a newspaper reported that prices had increased 300 per cent since the beginning of the war, while wages increased by only 25 per cent. In contradiction, Makal argues that the real wage index reached the 1938 level in 1946 by means of dramatic increases in both monetary and non-monetary wages. If we were to test these claims on the basis of

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447 Mehmet Gerçeker.
449 Makal, Ameleden İşçiye, p. 132.

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changes in Mehmet’s income, we see a dramatic deterioration. The following petition is from April 1947:

Substance: wage increase
The following is my wish.
Although I have been a bobbin master for ten years at your factory, I have worked at the electricity department for an insignificant wage upon my return from the military and five months ago I went back to my old personnel cadre. At the present time I receive a daily wage of 2 liras [i.e. 200 piastres] which would not suffice to get by for an individual let alone a family. In the last round of wage distributions the cleaner got 35 liras whereas I got 25 liras. In 1942 I used to earn 140 liras on average a month whereas now I only earn 52 liras. I have been tolerating this situation and had constancy in my job at the expense of selling some of my furniture. I expect from your high conscience to increase my wage in accordance with my expertise and to save me from this terrible financial situation before I am obliged to sell the bed I sleep on.

Weft bobbin foreman assistant Mehmet

The comparison of the petitions of the two Mehmets reveals two striking similarities. First, is the emphasis on being a “good worker”. While Mehmet the dyer was referring to gaining the favourable opinion of his superiors, Mehmet the weaver refers to being continuous at work and having certain expertise. The latter also cites his immediate return to the factory after military service and his acceptance of the lower pay as his positive qualities. Second, both workers compare themselves with their fellow workers while formulating their demands for an increase in the face of the very harsh financial conditions in which they were forced to live.

The resemblance between the two petitions stops at this point by giving way to a striking difference in language. In contrast to Mehmet the dyer, Mehmet the weaver is no longer begging, neither is he referring to himself as “the destitute” or “the servant.” Instead, he is raising his expertise, which, he claims, should be taken into consideration while his wage level is determined. Well aware that his level of experience and skills are not given the corresponding rewards, he wrote (or had someone write for him) with a tone of exasperation. Finally, in the last sentence of his petition, where he clearly formulated his demand, Mehmet presents himself as a worker who “expects” rather than “dares to take refuge in.”

There are four notes under this petition. The first one, probably from Mehmet’s foreman, confirms that Mehmet is indeed hardworking and supports his demand for a five piastres increase. The second, by another administrator, repeats this confirmation and support.
The third one, probably penned by the chief of the personnel department, provides information on the dates of his arrival and departure, and his wage over time. When he wrote the petition, Mehmet’s wage scale was 60 piastres; the last increase to his wage was made in December 1946. The fourth note was the shortest: “notifying [him] that he should wait since he did not complete his time”. The required time was completed in June but Mehmet did not get an increase then either. Finally in September 1947, he wrote another petition:

Substance: settling my account.

The following is my wish.

I have been working at the bobbin department as an assistant foreman for ten years. My hourly wage is 30 piastres. Although on 10th of June, 1947 both the production unit and the management ordered an increase I could not get any results. Since it is impossible for me to support my family of four with 52 liras a month I kindly request your permission to close my account.

To understand what Mehmet meant with “impossible to support my family with 52 liras a month”, it would suffice to note that in 1946, a family buying two loaves of bread a day would spend 34.6 per cent of Mehmet’s monthly income.540 Five months had passed after Mehmet wrote that he was about to sell his bed and although he was entitled to an increase three months before he wrote the last petition, his wage had not increased. Once more, it was noted under his petition that he was a hardworking worker without absenteeism and thus requested a 5 piastres increase in his hourly wage. Although the note had the same date with Mehmet’s petition, the increase came almost a month later. What is most striking in this part of Mehmet’s story is the fact that in his personnel file, the increase was attributed to him being a hard worker. Mehmet’s struggle to receive what he thought he deserved was thereby lost in the official records since it would be this note which the inspectors would hear about at their visits or when they asked about information on the workings of the factory. As such, his story constitutes an example on how instances of resistance are silenced in the archives.

So far, I have given examples of petitions that asked for an increase on the grounds of extremely harsh financial conditions. What is common to these petitions is their humble tone in order to convince the management that the petitioner both needs and deserves a wage increase. On the one hand, by means of describing their dire situation with details from their private and family lives, these workers appealed to the management as their protector against

the hardening living conditions. The wording of the petitions suggests that a strictly hierarchical structure of labour-management relations prevailed at the factory. Using words such as “benevolence” and “despair,” the workers mostly stayed away from the discourse of rights and obligations. On the other hand, the emphasis they put on the category of deserving an increase could be read as a sign that they were aware of the difficulty of finding experienced and skilled workers in the context of an ever-changing labour force at the factory. Likewise, by making comparisons with their fellow workers, they revealed that they had a vision of a fair management policy, which would reward the entire workforce in the same manner. At times, they used the threat of leaving the factory, which worked in some cases and did not work in others. Overall, the petitioners refrained from using a discourse of workers’ rights and any sort of implication of a collective action.

I will now introduce the stories of two workers who used far more contentious discourses in their appeal to the factory management. The timing, the vocabulary, and the addressees of their written demands and complaints illustrate the wide array of strategies used by the Bakırköy workers in their efforts to demand justice.

**One Worker, Multiple Petitions: Mustafa vs. the Management**

Mustafa’s first arrival at the factory was in 1944. After an undefined period of time, his record was erased due to absenteeism, as we learn from later-dated correspondence. When he was recruited in January 1945, a rather strange note was written in his file: recruited under the condition that he would be fired if he was seen to be undisciplined again. The note is strange because Mustafa was not a weaver. He was employed in the yarn department but was soon transferred to the dyeing department. That he was still recruited despite the situation of the labour market at the time suggests that he was a skilled worker. The next dated set of documents in his file is a series of correspondence between the factory and the Workers’ Insurance Administration on a job accident he had in September 1946. While oiling the cogwheel of a sizing machine, his hand got caught in the machine. He lost a small piece of his index finger and the last nodal of his middle finger on his right hand.

Mustafa was ‘lucky’ with the timing of the accident because the social insurance law had just been approved by the parliament on 1 January 1946 and the insurance schemes had started on 1 July. The scheme consisted of insurance against occupational diseases, accidents

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451 Mustafa Arap.
and deaths as well as maternal insurance. Having lost 15 per cent of his general bodily strength in the accident, Mustafa was entitled to forty days of rest and thirty-four days of partial payment (since there were six Sundays in these forty days). He was supposed to start working again on 29 October, but as the correspondence between the factory and Worker’s Insurance Institution shows, he asked the doctor to start a day earlier due to his bad finances. The doctor’s report noted that his wound was not yet healed, but he could work if he continued to come for medical dressings for five days. Mustafa returned to work on the 28th but when the insurance agency asked him about this, he firmly denied it.

The amount of money Mustafa was supposed to receive from the insurance was 20.41 Turkish liras for 34 days. Disregarding the differences in daily pay for the days he spent at the hospital and the days he rested at home, the daily sick pay for him was 0.60 liras, i.e. 60 piastres a day. When he was recruited in 1945, Mustafa was earning 20 piastres an hour. Thus, the sick pay he received was 37.5 per cent of his daily wage. In light of these figures, two points can be made about Mustafa’s playing a double game about the date of his return to work. First, it shows the extent of his desperation. Not only did he come to work with an unhealed wound, he also had to lie to the insurance company to get 60 piastres more. In fact, his file contains an earlier dated document demonstrating the extent of his financial desperation. Seventeen days before the accident, he had spent his seven off days working. Thus, when he had the accident, he had been working non-stop at least for one full year. Second, the whole correspondence shows that Mustafa knew the rules of the game. He seems to be completely aware of the workings of the bureaucracy and, although it was only two and a half months after the insurance payments started, he had enough knowledge to play tricks on the system.

Another incident happened in April 1947, which supports the idea that Mustafa was very quick in reacting to the changing conditions of work and pay at the factory. In February 1947, Sümerbank had decided to increase the production of woollen and cotton textiles since imports were not enough to meet the difference between national production and consumption levels. The newspaper article reporting this decision noted that the Bakirköy Factory had already started running 24 hours a day with three shifts. Mustafa was not happy with the change:

452 “İşçi Sigortaları”, Cumhuriyet (4 Jan 1946); “İş Kazaları ve Analık Sigortasının Tatbiki”, Cumhuriyet (1 July 1946); “İşçi Sigortaları”, Cumhuriyet (2 July 1946).
While I was working for 11 hours three months ago, I am employed on average for eight hours now and I am in terrible situation. Being promised an increase, I have been waiting so far and thus my deprivation has been caused. I declare and kindly request with utmost respect that my hourly wage would be increased in the light of my present situation.

The notes under the petition stated that Mustafa’s hourly wage was increased to 30 piastres more than seven months ago and that his wage scale was 40 piastres an hour. Approximately three weeks after this petition, his wage was 35 piastres. However, circumstances continued to deteriorate for Mustafa. In July 1947, he was fined 200 piastres, in other words his wage for 5.7 hours of work, for having stopped working 20 minutes before the meal break during the night shift. On top of this, by August 1948, he had not received any wage increase for sixteen months. Having made numerous attempts to ask for a wage increase at different levels of management, on 20 August, he wrote a petition addressed directly to the factory manager:

I have been working as a [worker who oils the machines] in different parts of the factory for the last four years. During this period I have not abstained from doing all the work of different departments with my conscience and efforts as well as not falling behind in my job. It is for this reason that it’s because [sic] of the care I have given to the duty lately I have lost my future by getting caught in the cogwheel. Nevertheless I still work at the same job in the weavery. I have been deceived with promises of increase for the last two or three months by my foreman, my superintendent and the chief of management [and] at my last attempt showing the way out in a threatening way, they told me it would be given when the time comes. From Ankara to the management, from the management to its chief, they said that Mr. Manager did not give it. I have been waiting for you. I have been waiting amidst all these doubts hoping that [the increase] would come at any time. I have become obliged to write this petition upon Your Worship’s return from leave.

I present and make a formal demand that an increase would be made by way of assigning and ordering the required offices.

The most telling point of this petition is the way Mustafa turns to different levels of management both verbally and written. The way he addresses the manager here shows that he is completely unsatisfied with what was going on at the level of the shop floor. Although he was told that he would receive an increase in due time, Mustafa thinks that he is being deceived and put off with, what he calls, promises. Like many others, he first asserts what a good worker he is, of course without mentioning all the problems he had had with the
management before. We can conclude from the opening sentences of his petition that he truly believes good work should not be left unrewarded. Besides, by way of citing the fact that he had not abstained from doing all the work he was given in different departments, Mustafa implies there are other workers who were doing otherwise. Above, we read such an example from Mehmet’s file. The assignment of a new task could escalate to an argument between the worker and the foreman causing the former to be fired. Mustafa is careful to make it known that even if he was assigned different tasks, he always carried them out. Later, however, we shall see that job demarcation became a problem for him as well.

**Losing a Finger or a Future?**

In contrast to the other petitioners I analysed earlier, Mustafa has one other asset to use while making a demand. He was a man with less than ten fingers still doing the same job that he had been doing before the accident. Probably thinking that it was time to take advantage of this circumstance, Mustafa attributed his accident to the utmost care he had given to his duty. From the use of the conjunction “nevertheless,” we can conclude that he finds it worth mentioning that he still works in the same job. Mustafa’s petition, in a way, has two main covert threads: First, the detailed description of his sense of duty, which he still has, although it was the reason for the accident, evokes the notion of “sacrificing for duty”, although he does not use the word “sacrifice” openly. Second, his narrative depicts the factory manager as the ruler who is actually unaware of what was going on between the lower level of management and the workers. Mustafa believes that if the manager knew what was going on he would “assign and order the required offices”. Whether Mustafa was naïve enough to think that this was actually the situation or that he was just playing along with the game, we cannot say. But the fact remains that Mustafa was not refraining from any effort to convince the manager that he was a man with no future, as we shall see below.

Although nothing is written beneath Mustafa’s petition, we understand, from another petition from the department of mechanical engineering in September 1948, that Mustafa’s petition was not successful. Apparently Mustafa created a scene in the factory that day which was described in the following manner:

*To the Factory Management,*

*An increase was not given to Mustafa Arap, a worker at the maintenance department, because of his not working and being indifferent to his job. This time on 11th of September 1948 he*
came to the machine engineering department and demanded an increase and was told that he should first work, he could get an increase after he is appreciated by his foreman and engineers, it was now required that he go back to his work. Without returning to his work, he uttered threats by saying “tell me who is not giving me the increase.” Although he was again advised in a calm way to go back to his work, he was seen to be waiting in the corridor even two hours after and although he had been warned that it would be necessary to cut his daily wage because, although he punched his card, he had not been at work from the morning to noon, he started threatening by saying: “cut two daily wages if you wish, I am not leaving.” We declare that this worker who is not working, not obeying the orders, and who dares to threaten even the engineers cannot work at our department and we present the situation to your higher thoughts.

The first thing we understand from this petition is that, although Mustafa’s petition to the factory manager was unsuccessful, it did not stop him because of his strong belief that he deserved an increase. Under the petition from the engineering department, a note ordered that Mustafa would be given a warning and informed that, if he were to repeat this behaviour, he would be fired. The warning must have been given on the same day as Mustafa wrote another petition immediately, this time addressed to the factory management. The only difference was that his demand was not limited to an increase only.

A Wage Increase and Humane Treatment

Mustafa described the incident, which we learnt about from the petition of the mechanical engineering department, in the following words:

13.09.1948
To the Management of Sümerbank Cloth Factory,
The following is my request.
I have been working at the factory for the last four years. Due to my superiors’ gratification I have received an increase in the amount of five piastres three times. Thank you but this time I again applied to ask for an increase. Unfortunately our chief put me off by threatening me multiple times and finally today he is reducing me to a bad position by way of making

454 We could speculate that Mustafa is writing the petitions himself judging from the fact that he does not lose any time in answering the petitions from the management. Also, various language mistakes, both grammatical and verbal, and confusions, suggest that they were probably not written by a professional. When he was recruited in 1945, Mustafa wrote in his application petition that he was literate, a very rare statement in the whole sample.
Understandably, the two testimonies differ considerably in terms of pointing at the party responsible for the escalation of the situation. While in the petition from the engineering department, Mustafa is depicted as an aggressive worker who would not obey the orders of his superiors, while in Mustafa’s petition the chief of the department is accused of making threats and shouting insults. If we consider it to be credible for a moment, the engineering department’s petition signifies two very important things. First, it shows how the management dealt with the workers according to the rules and regulations of the factory. The petitioner claims that the reasons Mustafa did not receive a raise were explained clearly, as well as what he should do to get one in the future. At a later stage, when Mustafa, allegedly, started threatening the engineers in order to find out who did not give him the raise, they threatened him with a wage deduction for not attending to his work.

The second point we can infer from this petition concerns Mustafa’s response to this threat: “cut two daily wages if you wish, I am not leaving.” Remembering that Mustafa was financially so desperate that he returned to work one day before his days of sick pay had actually ended, this response is very striking in that the situation made Mustafa indifferent to the danger of losing a part of his wage. When considered together with Mustafa’s urge to find out “the responsible person” for not giving him the raise, his decision to risk his two days’ wage might signify that the situation had become highly personal for Mustafa. Indeed, his previous petition addressed to the factory manager directly implied that he did not trust the foreman, the superintendent and the chief of management. That was why he turned to the manager, the fair but uninformed overseer as Mustafa implied prior.

“… the order and the discipline of the workplace …”

In line with the above interpretations, Mustafa’s petition about the incident with the engineering department assumes a distinction between the “good” and the “bad” part of the factory management. After acknowledging and thanking the department for the three wage increases he received in four years, Mustafa singles out the superintendent as the unjust superior. In his claim, his demand for a raise was met with threats on numerous occasions. On top of this, Mustafa complained that he was insulted and was not given the raise. The final sentence of the petition has a curious tone in that Mustafa asks for his right to be defended but
does not specify how. Is he simply asking for an increase? Or is he asking for punishment of the superintendent who “is reducing me to a bad position by way of making indictments against me that do not pertain to humanity”?

Unfortunately, the management believed the engineering department’s version and wrote the following harshly formulated warning letter to Mustafa:

Mustafa Arap  
Maintenance Department, Oiler

According to the labour contract between us, while it is required that you attend to your job at all times, it was ascertained that you left your duty with the excuse of following your petition personally and behaved against the order and discipline of the workplace as a response to your superintendent’s calling you to go back to work. In accordance with the 16th article of the internal factory regulations it is forbidden to follow your affair personally. I give you a warning about the necessity of ameliorating your situation which upsets the order and regularity of our workplace and continues despite the admonitions and warnings also made by our department: [I] notify you that in the case of reiteration of your behaviours against the factory discipline and regulations your employment will be terminated.

Management  
14.09.1948

The aforementioned article of the internal regulations document reads:

“It is forbidden that the workers follow their business personally. For their objections and complaints they appeal to the superintendent of their department through their supervisors. Decisions on these objections and complaints disclosed by the factory management through the mediation of the appointed clerks are absolute.”

Once more, basing the whole argument and the discourse of the warning petition on the objective rules and regulations of the factory, the management effectively closed the means of further discussion on the matter of both the wage increase and the alleged claims of mistreatment in this case. However, Mustafa was still bitter about the incident as we can conclude from the escalation of his disobedience.

455 “Sümerbank Bakırköy Sanayi Müessesinde Uygulanacak İç Yönetmelik”, Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 404, IISH.
In June 1949, Mustafa was fined the amount of his daily wage for disobedience to his foreman. Although there are other cases of fining the workers for disobeying their foreman as we saw in Chapter 2, Mustafa’s case is again unusual in that he did not agree to sign the wage deduction note. This could be read in two ways: Either Mustafa did not recognise the authority of the management in punishing him for disobeying his foreman, who was probably the same foreman Mustafa was complaining about in his petitions a few months before, or Mustafa thought that by not signing the bill he could avoid the legal sanctions. He resorted to this strategy once more, at a later stage, when he was in serious trouble with the factory management.

What Makes a Good Worker?

Article twenty-nine of the internal regulations of Bakırköy Factory states that every worker is obliged to punch his control card at the beginning and the end of the working day. In January 1948, Mustafa’s card was confiscated due to absenteeism. Having been imprisoned for fifteen days, Mustafa had not been able to come to work. Upon his return he wrote the following petition:

To the factory management,

I have been working as an oiler for the last three years. I have not been absent even for one day. This time I became drunk in Istanbul, served in prison for fifteen days. [I have heard that] they confiscated my card because I was absent. Since it is impossible that such a case will happen again I kindly ask for my card to be returned.

The internal regulations were clear stating that, in the case of three days of absenteeism in a row, the worker could be fired. This was what happened to Mustafa. Upon his release, he immediately returned to the factory where, as he had claimed before, he had been working under conditions of deprivation. Once again, he made it clear that he was a good worker who came to work regularly. The first note at the bottom of his petition concluded that in case there is no legal objection, he could be employed in his old position. A second note asked for an investigation to determine whether he was indeed a hardworking, continuous and obedient worker. The result of the investigation did not support Mustafa’s claims to be a “good” worker: “It is accepted by his foreman and fellow workers that the aforementioned worker has a nature which is apt to disorderliness. Although he works fine, he was observed to be
“undisciplined.” Despite this negative evaluation, Mustafa was recruited again a few days later under the precondition that he would be fired in case of further undisciplined behaviour.

As is clear from these statements, state factories tried to ensure that the morality of the workers was decent. An example of such practices was the evaluation of claims to marriage allowance in cases of a second marriage. Before granting the marriage allowance, the factory made a court inquiry about whether the worker was at “fault” in the collapse of the previous marriage. Another example is the requirement of a certificate of good conduct as part of the job application procedure. Once at the factory, judgments on the morals of the workers had a considerable effect at times of crisis. Consider the following example. When, in 1944, Mehmet the dyer was in trouble with the foreman of the dyeing department, because he did not do the task he was given, he was fired but he managed to return in twelve days. When, in 1950, the incident became an issue because of Mehmet’s seniority claims, the head of the personnel department opened the case again by writing that Mehmet was “not that brusque and defiant” and that “he did not think of anything else but his job.” Thanks to his proper morals, Mehmet’s status of dismissal in 1944 had been changed to temporary leave, meaning his eight years of service between 1936 and 1944 were counted in his seniority benefits.

Mehmet’s file also contains an example of the control of the factory over the workers outside the factory. In 1942, he wrote to the management the following petition:

To the management,

The following is my request.

My wife 2642 Kesire who works at the control department of your factory has run away after robbing my house, she also left the factory. I have heard that she is coming back to the factory. I kindly request from you that this woman who would infuse immorality to the humankind would not be recruited.

This petition is significant for three reasons. First, it shows how the personal lives of the workers affected their career decisions. Similar to other women at Bakırköy Factory, Kesire’s family life is an important factor in shaping her decisions about staying at the factory. She left the factory in October 1940, probably after the incident with her husband. Second, the petition illustrates how the discourse of (im)morality was strongly present in the factory. Mehmet’s request was rejected on the grounds that his wife had not done any wrong and that she had submitted a certificate of good conduct. Regardless of its result, this petition is significant in

456 Mehmet Karagözü.
that it establishes the image of the factory as the regulator of the lives of the workers in the eyes of the workers themselves. More interesting is the fact that the workers themselves also accepted the involvement of the factory in their private lives.

**Workers’ Representative as a Mediating Agency**

As I have shown above, Mustafa had an incident with the factory management in 1948 and had been warned about his behaviour over and over again. He managed to remain at the factory, however, until the final incident between himself and the management in 1950. The correspondence regarding this incident started with the following petition:

> To the worker representation agency,
> I have been penalised with 27 days of imprisonment because of a minor incident I caused on 6.3.1950 outside [the factory]. I kindly request that the required procedure is undertaken to avoid the termination of my affiliation with the factory.

The peculiarity of this petition among all others in the sample is that it is the first case in which the institution of worker’s representatives is mentioned. The institution was introduced in 1939 with the promulgation of the “Charter of Reconciliation and Arbitration of Work Disagreements” based on the 1936 Labour Law. In the absence of legal rights for workers’ self-organization to undertake collective action, the charter defined the mechanism of conflict solving between labour and capital. According to the first article of the charter, workers’ participation in the process had been ensured by the presence of workers’ representatives who were supposed to be elected every two years in their workplaces.

In practice, the mechanism did not work properly for a number of reasons. As could be expected, employers interfered in the election process. They also tried to have control over the freely elected representatives. In December 1948, for example, a worker representative sent a letter to a newspaper complaining about the employers firing the representatives they could not control. The newspaper’s response tried to ensure the representative that the new changes in the Labour Law would include solutions to that problem. Four months later, the same newspaper again tried to convince the workers that it was their right and duty to freely vote in the elections by referring to the article of the aforementioned charter which forbid

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457 “İşçi Mümessilleri İçin Yeni Hükümler ve Sigorta İşi!”, İlkadam-Gece Postası (25 Dec. 1948), Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 148, IISH.
manipulation of voting and counting processes in the representative elections. The institution of workers representatives also continued after the emergence of the trade unions since the trade unions were not allowed to take part in the negotiation process until 31 January 1950. With the change in the seventy-eighth article of the Labour Law, trade unions were recognised as an agency in collective work agreements and the workers representatives were protected against lay off. After this date, there was a dramatic increase in the collective work agreements, which were increasingly initiated by trade unions.

With this background information in mind, let us now return to Mustafa’s story. As mentioned above, his petition is the only document in the sample that mentions the worker representative at Bakırköy Factory. In fact, Mustafa resorted to the same institution a second time. But different from the previous one, this time he addressed the factory management through the mediation of the worker’s representative:

Through the agency of worker representation,

To the higher office of Bakırköy Sümérbank Cloth Factory

My request.

While working in the weavery department of the factory as an oiler I have been sent to court for drunkenness and sentenced to a 150 lira fine and one month in prison. I notified the personnel [department] with a petition through the factory representatives. And now, although I applied to start my job after having finished my sentence they do not take me telling me “leave today and come back tomorrow”. I am working for three liras a day as an amele in the garden. Since it is extremely difficult to live on the money I get now, I request that this petition is accepted and the required formality is done in order for me to be taken back to my previous position. 15.04.1950.

As we saw earlier, Mustafa is a very alert and audacious worker in terms of learning the changes in the legal structure and fighting for his rights, both by means of personal conversations and petitioning. As the case of the accident in 1946 and the ensuing correspondence illustrate, he tried to take advantage of the then recently issued insurance scheme by playing a double game with the management and the insurance agency. In the later petitions, unlike many others who wrote for similar reasons before, he did not refrain from

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458 “Mümessil Seçiminde Dikkat Edilecek Noktalar”, İdam-Gece Postasi (2 Apr 1949), Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 148, IISH.
459 Melih Göktan, “Türkiye’de İş İhtilafları ve İşgücü ile Münasebetleri”. Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 347, IISH.
460 The definition of the word is given below.
using the discourse of “rights.” Thus, the reader might ask why he did not turn to the trade unions in this case and still petitioned through the representative. The fact was that even if Mustafa had wanted to use the trade union to appeal to the factory management in order to get his job back, he could not because the trade unions could only intervene in cases of collective disagreements, which, by definition, required the participation of at least one fifth of the workforce at a factory. Thus, we can read Mustafa’s case as an example of how the workers’ struggles were individualised and isolated. Despite the recognition of work disagreements in the 1936 Labour Law, in practice, workers’ possibility of claiming their rights had already been crippled from the start.

A Reversed Order: From İşçi to Amele

Returning to the content of Mustafa’s petition, we see that his employment was terminated exactly three days after what he called “a minor incident” in accordance with the thirty-fourth article of the charter of internal regulations. If we assume that he came out of prison around 3 April, he was unemployed for more than ten days when he wrote the second petition complaining about him not being recruited. Mustafa uses the word “amele” while describing the work he is doing in the garden. The Turkish Language Institution Dictionary defines amele as a worker who works for a daily wage but the term in daily usage denotes an unskilled labourer who works for low or subsistence wages. The political importance of the term within Turkish labour history stems from the pejorative meaning it acquired over time and the demands of the workers to be called “işçi”, the literal translation of worker. What Mustafa meant with amele remains a mystery. If, by garden, he meant the courtyard of the factory, perhaps he was doing some sort of portage or construction work. If he meant agricultural land, however, he might have done some agricultural work on a daily basis. Regardless of the content of the work he was doing in the garden, it is obvious that Mustafa preferred industrial work, specifically his previous work, as we shall see below.

Two weeks after this petition, Mustafa was back at the factory. In his application document, in response to “the kind of work he asks for” is specified “rib carrier.” Indeed, he was employed as a rib carrier. However, this is a curious point since Mustafa was missing

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461 The article reads as follows: “Those workers who do not show up at work without a rightful excuse may lose one day’s wage the first time this happens, and two day’s wage in the second time. The affiliation of those who do not show up for three days in a row is terminated” (“Sümerbank Bakırköy Sanayi Müessesinde Uygulanacak İç Yönetmelik”. Kemal Süker Collection, Folder No. 404, IISH).

parts of two of his fingers on his right hand due to the accident in 1946. Thus, it is strange for him to be employed as a carrier instead of an oiler. The situation must also have been unpleasant for him, as we learn from a letter written by the chief of the production department complaining of Mustafa’s disobedience:

11.05.1950
To the factory management,
The account of 8040 Mustafa Arap, who started working at our enterprise on 2/1/1945 as an oiler at the weavery, was settled up on 09.03.1950 due to his ten days long absence. Although he reapplied and asked for his old job having not been able to find employment somewhere else, since his position could not be left empty for a long time, he was promised to be employed as a rib carrier for the time being and to be transferred to an open position of oiler in any department later on. It has been seen that Mustafa Arap, whose entrance was made on 28.4.1950 as a rib carrier, has punched his card but did not do the task he was assigned to and had been walking around in other departments. I kindly request he is notified that if this situation continues, his employment will be terminated.
Chief of production department

Four points arise from this petition. First, it claims that the length of Mustafa’s absence was longer than he accepted. According to the petition of the management, he had been absent for ten days when his account was closed on 9 March. But, as I showed earlier in the petition addressed to the worker representative, Mustafa claimed that the incident that resulted in his imprisonment took place on 6 March. It should also be noted that this petition was not dated and since it was not addressed to the management directly but to the representative, it could have been written after the termination of employment. By now, we have enough reason to think that Mustafa was able to arrange a forgery.

The second point concerns the statement that Mustafa had not been able to find employment elsewhere, which is in tune with the news on the crisis of the textile industry in 1949 and 1950. The drought in 1949 triggered a wave of migration from Anatolia to Istanbul, which further intensified the problem of unemployment. According to a newspaper article, the number of unemployed job seekers rose from twenty thousand to twenty-five thousand in a month following the drought. In order to avoid further reductions in labour force, the Ministry of Labour took the measure of shortening the working day, among other

463 “İstanbul’da İşsizler Çoğalıyor”, Cumhuriyet (17 Sep. 1949).
The severity of the pressure on the workers could be understood from the following incident reported on 7 March, 1950: A foreman in the Bakırköy Factory was fired after being reported to the management for carrying a knife and beating up a young female worker at the factory. The following day, he came to the factory with his wife and begged to be taken back, but he was told that the termination of his employment was in accordance with the charter of internal regulations, which specifically stated that disturbing the female workers constituted a reason for being fired. After two hours of waiting for the manager in the garden, the foreman had another chance to talk to him but again received a negative answer. Finally, he stabbed the manager multiple times causing minor injuries.

A Hidden Form of Resistance: Task and Time Bargaining

The third point arising from the petition concerns the manner in which the application forms are filled out. Although Mustafa’s application form states that he had asked to be a rib carrier, Mustafa turned down the position refusing to do that job and, later, he openly complained of being employed in that position. Indeed, in another application form, Mustafa’s position was first specified as an oiler, which was then crossed out and changed to a rib carrier. It might have been the case that the factory management employed Mustafa as a carrier, hoping that he would not get the job or maybe leave it after a while. Although the charter of internal regulations clearly stated that getting drunk constituted a reason for getting fired, it did not specify whether workers were not allowed to get drunk in or outside the factory. Mustafa was clever enough to specify in his first petition to the worker representative that “the minor accident” happened outside the factory.

The last point we can infer from this petition concerns the short note written beneath the original text, advising that the management should always address Mustafa with a written document. This note is unique in the sample of personnel files. Above, I cited another incident when Mustafa did not sign the wage deduction note in June 1949 and suggested two possible explanations for this behaviour: Either Mustafa did not recognise the management’s authority or he thought that by not signing he could avoid the legal sanctions. The second explanation

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466 Section C of the 37th article reads as follows: “The affiliation of those workers who disturb the women workers in their conduct, who gamble and get drunk, could be immediately terminated” (“Sümerbank Bakırköy Sanayi Müessesinde Uygulanacak İç Yönetmelik”). Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 404, IISH.
becomes more plausible in light of the note by the management as cited above. However, as we shall see later on, this strategy did not help Mustafa a great deal.

Apparently, the petition by the chief of the production department had worked as Mustafa was warned about his rejection of working as a rib carrier. In his taxonomy of worker responses, Robin Cohen defines task and time bargaining as a hidden worker response directed to the managerial control of the labour process. Among the forms of resistance against the attempts of the management to have more control over the labour process, Cohen includes the worker’s efforts to “reduce his exploitation by adhering overstrictly to job specifications and rules detailing his work.” Mustafa’s petition exemplifies what Cohen calls a “work to rule and job demarcation dispute”, which is “often triggered off by the managerial redefinition.” In Mustafa’s case, the managerial redefinition comes after a contentious decision of termination of his employment. When he was taken back, he was given a completely different task, possibly as a disincentive. How Mustafa resisted this change constitutes the subject of the next section, which introduces us to a whole new chapter of workers’ responses to managerial control at Bakırköy Factory.

Mustafa Strikes Back

Dated 7 July 1950, Mustafa’s next petition starts with a statement indicating that he had clearly understood what he had been accused of:

I have been notified about the orders of the concerned enterprise dated 1.6.950 regarding my laying off on 15.6.1950 according to the related article of the labour law arguing that I have not been attending my job for one reason or another while I am supposed to be taking care of my assignment at all times during working hours and that I have never tried to correct my condition although I had been given both oral and written notice. I kindly ask your permission to present and declare below that there has not been any warning received by myself concerning the indictment of carelessness towards duty ascribed to myself and that no warning concerning an invitation to my job by the chief of any service [department] has been received by myself:

468 Ibid., p. 101.
469 Ibid., p. 101.
This petition is striking, first of all, for the dramatic change in its language compared to the previous ones. The wording of the earlier petitions gave the impression that they were written in an impulsive and hasty manner. Using simple but clear statements and highly official language, this time, Mustafa shows how serious he took the matter in his choice of formal aspects of his appeal. Perhaps the seriousness of the situation made Mustafa pay more attention to the wording of this petition since his previous, somewhat sloppy but very sincere short petitions did not help him much in his struggle. Underlined with a much more official tone, this petition starts by reiterating the accusations directed towards Mustafa and then introduces his main arguments in an analytical manner.

i) Besides not engaging in any activity against direction(s) in this enterprise where I have been working for eight years, I have never been warned or chided by the chiefs of services. If I was exposed to subsequent warnings and chidings in this way as it was proven [probably he means “claimed”] in this considerably long period of service, according to the directions of the enterprise in effect it would have been necessary to enforce procedures about myself one or subsequent times and this enforcement should have been established in records.

With this assertion, my earlier argument finds support: Mustafa did know that the warnings became official when they were signed by the two parties involved. If Mustafa’s case was handled as a single-headed work disagreement in which the worker representative(s) would call a meeting between the two parties, both the worker(s) and the employer(s) would have to sign the decision indicating an agreement or disagreement. This was a requirement brought by the Charter of Reconciliation and Arbitration of Work Disagreements of 1939. In the charter of internal regulations of the factory, however, there was no clause indicating that the worker should be notified officially in the case of warnings. Rather, the latter charter was worded in such a way that the management did not have to do much before firing a worker for various reasons.

Although Mustafa’s petition does not mention any involvement of a worker representative in his correspondence with the management at this stage, it is plausible that he was referring to this institution when he claimed that he did not receive any warnings. In any case, my previous point about Mustafa being well-aware of his rights and using the right strategy at the right time is solidified with the reasoning he presented here: If he was warned, where was the proof? If he disobeyed the rules, why was no punishment enforced on him? As much as the analytical character and the convincing mode of presentation of his argument, the
underlying tone of self-confidence is also striking. It is without any doubt that Mustafa had made considerable progress compared to the workers of the early 1940s who referred to themselves as “your servant” or “the destitute.” But Mustafa’s petition has much more to offer in order for us to trace the changes in worker’s (self-)perceptions.

From the Logic of Escape to the Logic of Control

The second argument that Mustafa presents in his petition reads as follows:

ii) Recently, I have had the ill fortune to be sentenced to one month in prison because of a strife I had with somebody, outside the enterprise and the service [probably meaning outside the working hours]. When I joined the enterprise upon finishing the time [in prison] I officially wrote a petition objecting my employment for the service of carrying, which I am totally unfamiliar with [and which is] different from my real job, i.e. oiling, in form and content, without any reason and requested to given back my old service, oiling. It has been stated that it was considered to be a crime and a behaviour against the labour law that a worker, who has dedicated eight years of his life to service in the enterprise and who has had the ill fortune to lose the fingers on his hand, requested to be given back his actual duty of oiling in the face of being sent to the duty of rib carrying which he completely does not know...[unreadable] it is obvious that this could not be reconciled with any form of conscience and justice, [and] this consideration [unreadable] ... directly constitutes a situation that causes my deprivation.

My analysis of this part of Mustafa’s petition is based on a comparison between Mustafa’s reaction and reactions by other workers who found themselves in similar situations. Thus, I put aside Mustafa’s story and visit four examples of problems Bakırköy workers had with factory management. The earliest example concerns a similar incident to what Mustafa had. In 1941, Ali Akgül was working at Bakırköy Factory as a “weaver candidate”, as his foreman called him, together with his elder brother who was a weaver. When the foreman ordered Ali to clean his loom, Ali’s brother got involved saying that Ali would not clean and take the roll on the loom to the department of control. Frustrated with the behaviour of the two brothers, the foreman immediately wrote a petition to the chief of the weavery asking for their punishment since they violated the authority of the foreman and the discipline of the factory. This was necessary, he continued, in order not to set a bad example for the other workers. Management responded quickly by fining Ali in the amount of a weekly wage, which was outrageous for 470Ali Akgül.
such kind of disobedience. The disproportion between the act of disobedience and the severity of the punishment suggests that Ali’s case could have been used to strengthen the control the management attempted to effect in the factory. No further correspondence is recorded in Ali’s file except for a note indicating that his employment was terminated because of absenteeism. After more than a year of working without any fines and leaves, Ali’s affiliation with the factory was cut twenty days after the foreman’s petition. The next document in his file is dated September 1948 and is an entry form.

The other three examples come from 1944, 1945 and 1947, respectively. As we saw above, Süleyman asked for the termination of his employment only three months after he started working at the factory because he could not make ends meet with the wage he received. However, he returned three years after to work for even less than he had made before. And yet again, only after five months of working, he left the factory after submitting a petition saying that he had to go for the harvest. The pattern ensued with his third time entrance in 1951. Our second example, Cemil, wrote that he had to go to his hometown only after five months of employment in 1945. When he returned in March 1947, he had brought a letter indicating that he had worked at a private factory. His second employment period was also short: four months. This time he was “obliged to resign since I cannot make a living for my family with the wage I am earning.” He was back at the factory a year after this. The last example of Mehmet, the weaver, is different from the other two in the sense that he did not actually have to leave the factory because after his petition in September 1947, asking for permission to leave because “it is impossible for me to support my family of four”, he received a wage increase and stayed at the factory.

Two concepts could help us understand the changes in the workers’ responses in these examples. The first concept encompasses exit and voice, which Albert O. Hirschman coined in his study that explores alternative ways of responding to deterioration in the performance of a certain institution. In this context, exit denotes the choice to quit the organization, in other words, it is voluntary separation from the job based on the belief that an improvement to the situation is unlikely. The concept of voice, on the other hand, is essentially a political

471 Süleyman Yapıcı.
472 Cemil Kotman.
473 Mehmet Gerçeker.
475 Ibid., p. 21.
response, which is defined as “any attempt at all to change rather than to escape from an objectionable state of affairs.”

The second concept comes from the field of labour historiography and is an application of Hirschman’s logic to labour studies. Cohen and Henderson argue that the struggles of newly proletarianised workers have a dual logic:

*On the one hand they express the logic of escape – escape from the work situation and, on the other, the logic of control – the struggle to stem their diminishing control over the labour process.*

Let us now reconsider the above examples in light of these two sets of concepts. In the cases of Süleyman and Cemil, a pattern of commonality arises. They both left and returned to the factory multiple times. I have presented ample evidence in Chapter Two to show that this was indeed a widespread practice among workers. Important to note in these two examples are the extremely short periods of employment. It was only after three and five months that they started that these two workers either openly stated that they cannot continue working for the wages they earned or gave other reasons which turn out to be cover-up excuses for the wage argument. The same goes for Mehmet’s case, since he also asked for permission to leave. In other words, all three workers risked unemployment to overcome the situation of being working poor. As such, their responses exemplify what Hirschman calls a disbelief in the possibility of a positive change in their situation at the factory.

As for Ali’s case, which is rather similar to Mustafa’s in that they both dispute job demarcation, his file is absolutely silent on what happened after he was fired. We know that he returned in September 1948, but what he did during the seven years between 1941 and 1948 is unknown. With two more intervals in 1949 and 1950, he continued working at the factory until 1957. Compared to how Mustafa responded to managerial control, which was much milder than that exerted on Ali, Ali’s complete silence suggests that he did not have the means to resist the management in 1941. Above all, as the third point he made in the petition demonstrates, Mustafa knew his legal rights very well.

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476 Ibid., p. 30.
477 Robin Cohen and Jeff Henderson, “Work, Culture and the Dialectics of Proletarian Habituation”, in Contested Domains 33-34.
Despite the unreadable parts and multiple grammatical and lexical mistakes, one thing stands out in this part of the petition: Mustafa perceived it as his right to be employed under the same conditions after he returned from prison. His knowledge of the legal and institutional structure gave him the confidence, which previous petitions lacked.

**Deriving Conclusions from a Tale of Woe**

As a whole, Mustafa’s petition demonstrates three significant changes in workers’ self-perception and relationship with the management. First, Mustafa’s petition is fundamentally different in language compared to the petitions containing a begging tone that I analysed earlier. Although Mustafa also uses phrases such as “my deprivation,” there is an agency in his language behind that deprivation: the management. Thus, the demand is not formulated in phrases such as “I respectfully ask ... in order not to be excessively aggrieved” or “I kindly ask you ... for an increase ... to the destitute in order not to cause my damnification” used in the petitions with a pleading tone. Instead, although the language he uses is polite, Mustafa's choice of vocabulary is much more assertive.

Second, the content of the demand is very different from the previous petitions in that Mustafa’s main concern is no longer his wage. Instead, he is raising the issue of task assignment. This is a unique example in the sample of Bakirköy workers. What the application forms indicate is that workers did not have a say in determining the kind of work they were employed for. In many cases, their answer to the question “what kind of job does the worker want?” was “any kind.” Also, the changes made to the forms, usually by crossing out certain words, shows that the decisions were subject to change according to the needs of the factory. Although there is a case of a dispute over job demarcation, as we saw in the foreman’s petition about Ali and his brother, no other worker contested the type of work he was assigned in the manner and to the extent that Mustafa did. If we remember that after the first incidence of imprisonment and the ensuing termination of employment, he had written a very desperate petition to be taken back to the factory since he could not live on his “amele”
wage, his insistence on changing his position from a carrier to an oiler becomes even more striking. What we see here is very different from the earlier petitions in which the petitioners were grateful for the small wage increases they received.

Third, Mustafa formulated his demand so assertively that the petition, despite the careful wording of the last sentence, has almost a rebellious tone. Explaining the injustices he had been subjected to by the management, Mustafa did two things at the same time: While trying to convince the readers that he has been treated unjustly, he also threatens them implicitly with taking legal action if he is not given what he demands. Hence, the last part in which he states “I cannot be convinced” signifies a very different mentality from the previous examples. Mustafa exemplifies an early Republican period state worker whose relationship to the factory is not that of servitude or appreciation for the allegedly high level of social benefits as argued by many labour historians. He is a worker who requires and explanation, who has his own ideas about the workings of the factory discipline, who learns and adapts quickly and who is not a passive recipient of decisions concerning his life inside and outside of the factory.

**Mustafa’s Fate or the Verdict of History?**

Just as many petitions with a begging tone did not help their writers in the past, Mustafa’s petition also did not help him. Similar in style to the point-by-point explanations that Mustafa provided, the management wrote an official petition explaining his bad conduct at the factory one by one with the corresponding ramifications and the warnings issued to him. As we have already learned about all the fines Mustafa was given and all the problems he had (or “caused”, according to the management), I will leave out that part of the text that repeats these problems and only quote the last part:

*Other than these clear and certain proofs, although the employer has the right to terminate the work contract of those who are imprisoned for more than 3 days and whose punishment is not reprieved such as 15 days of imprisonment you were sentenced to due to a misdemeanour in 1948 and 30 days of imprisonment because of an incident you caused outside [the factory] this year, according to the law number 3008 [Labour Law], our management has tried to protect you, thinking you would be on the street without any means and thus carried out its duty of conscience. It was obliged to give the final decision about you in the face of your intolerable situation.*
This is the final document in Mustafa’s file. His five years of employment came to an end on 16 June 1950, despite all his efforts he to continue it. Although he lost his struggle in the end, his file as a whole signifies a very important transformation in the self-perception of the workers at Bakırköy Factory. Above, we saw how certain changes in language were already visible in workers’ petitions after the Second World War. Instead of a vocabulary containing phrases such as “the destitute”, “your servant”, “I am begging you”, we have seen that Mehmet the weaver referred to himself in the first singular pronoun and as a bobbin master; he “expected”, not “begged.” Moreover, upon learning that he would not be given a raise, he did not refrain from asking to close his account. In other words, when he saw that his voice was unlikely to change the conditions at the factory, he chose to exit the job instead of showing loyalty to the institution.478

In Mustafa’s case, further changes in language and content occurred. First, Mustafa not only petitioned for wage increases but also for other reasons including the way he was treated by the management, for example. He had certain ideas about how labour-management conduct should be and expressed them openly. Furthermore, he insisted that his appeals should be answered. In more than one case, he tracked them personally, though he was warned that this was forbidden by the Charter of Internal Regulations. He resorted to different strategies, ranging from physically intimidating the management personnel or refusing to sign the official documents notifying him about the warnings and fines he received, in order to claim his rights. Unfortunately, despite his assertiveness and insistence, Mustafa’s struggle was bound to fail since, as I explained earlier, workers’ struggles were highly individualised and isolated in the political context of the early Republican period.

Below, I introduce the story of another worker, Mümin, whose petition was the first to be quoted in the current chapter. We left him in July 1946 when he begged the management for a raise of five piastres. He continued petitioning in the following years and finally addressed an unprecedented addressee. His story demonstrates not only the limits of tolerance by the management towards workers’ complaints but also the effects of the change in politics on workers’ struggles.

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478 Loyalty is the third category Hirschman defines as a response to dissatisfaction with the organization. Choosing neither exit nor voice, some members stick with the institution for a period of time. They “suffer in silence, confident that things will soon get better” (Hirschman, Exit, Voice and Loyalty, p. 38).
Learning the Rules of the Game: Mümin vs. the Management

Mümin was 28 years old when he started working at Bakırköy in 1938. His application form states that he already had experience as an oiler and thus he was employed as such in the maintenance department. Except for a one and a half months leave in 1940, which was between late July and early September and which, therefore, possibly suggests absenteeism due to the harvest season, he was a continuous worker for a considerably long time. According to his file, Mümin was never fined during his employment; he received many non-monetary provisions between 1945 and 1952 and 15 days of paid leave in 1945, 1946 and 1947. One of his periods of leave, probably in 1949 and for 5 hours in the afternoon, was given to him because he had “worked too much.” The earliest information about his wage dates from 1941. At the time he earned 18 piastres an hour. He had to wait for more than a year to receive an increase at the amount of 2 piastres an hour. After working at this wage level for more than a year, his hourly wage was raised to 25 piastres in January 1944 and to 30 piastres in November 1945. By then, the war was over, leaving behind a 300% increase in consumer prices, but in July 1946, Mümin was still working for 30 piastres an hour according to the note of the supervisor beneath his petition. Moreover, he was probably earning less since the factories slowed down after the war and Bakırköy started three shifts of eight hours a day, which meant a reduction in the daily wages of the workers.

Under these conditions, Mümin wrote a petition to ask for an increase in July 1946. His complaint was that other workers similar to him in terms of levels of skill and experience, and the apprentices he himself had trained were earning 50 piastres an hour. During the nine years and nine months he had worked at the factory, he wrote, he had worked without any intervals. A favourable comment was added to the petition: “He has been receiving 30 piastres an hour since 1.11.1945. He can get an increase.” This commentary, however, is in contradiction with other documents in Mümin’s file, which indicate that Mümin had been receiving 35 piastres an hour since February 1946. A possible explanation might be that, although workers fulfilled the required conditions for a wage increase – that is, working six months at the same wage level and gaining the approval of the supervisors – many of them still did not receive an increase. It was the case that Mümin’s file was updated without him actually receiving an increase. His next increase came six months after he wrote this petition.

\[\text{I have noted above that this information might not be trustworthy since we have enough reason to believe that the forms were filled out by the clerks according to the labour needs of the departments in the factory at a given time.}\]

and his hourly wage was increased to 35 piastres. His file suggests that the success of this petition, albeit the delay in the increase, was seized upon by him in the following years. After eight years of no written correspondence, Mümin started to effectively use petitioning to pursue his demands. In September 1947, he wrote another petition complaining that his wage was not enough for his subsistence. Surprisingly, this petition had the desired effect; eight months after his last increase, Mümin’s wage was raised to 40 piastres an hour.

By August 1948, Mümin either had a high level of self-confidence because of the success of the previous petitions, or he was in a difficult situation financially. Although he had received another increase in May 1948, i.e. seven months after the last one which was highly unusual, he wrote yet another petition complaining about the high cost of living, which made it very difficult for him to get by with his large family. This time, however, the comment written underneath was not favourable at all: “His counterparts have not received an increase in one and half-two years. He should wait for a fair treatment.” How long did he have to wait? Who were these counterparts? Why did they not receive an increase? What were the rules of the management about wage levels?

**Petitioning amidst Uncertainty**

Mümin had to wait thirteen months for the next increase, which made his hourly wage to 50 piastres. A month later, however, he received another increase of 5 piastres. His status did not change; he was still an assistant foreman in the maintenance department. His file does not include any petitions demanding an increase around this date. The information on wage increases we gather from his file suggests that there were no clearly defined rules or procedures concerning this matter. Not only was each state factory autonomous in determining workers’ wages, but clerks at different levels of management appear to have had their own opinion on matters of wage increase. In Mümin’s case, for example, during the period starting in 1942 until 1949, he always received increases in the amount of 5 piastres. In 1947 and 1949, increases followed one another within a relatively short period of time. In October 1950, however, Mümin received only a 3 piastres increase, which came more than a year after the previous one. In March of the following year, the increase was 9 piastres an hour.

All this information on wage levels is repeated in a petition written as a reply to the General Directorate of Sümerbank in April 1951. The records, the factory management claimed, showed that Mümin was given increases regularly in proportion to his seniority. It
also noted that, with the last increase, the hourly wage was 67 piastres but it actually amounted to 80 piastres an hour with the addition of the dearness allowance and it was determined on the basis of seniority and skill level. Mümin’s file does not contain any other petition written by him around this date. But from other documents in the file, we understand that he wrote a petition to a rather curious addressee: the Prime Ministry. Unprecedented in the sample, this petition apparently became an enormous issue at the factory. The following transcript, entitled “the transcript of the investigation of the petition”, illustrates the multiple facets of the worker-management relations at Bakırköy Factory. Not only does it display the workings of power relations at the factory, but it also provides us with a glimpse of a worker’s mentality and strategies he could devise in the face of changing attitudes of the factory management. Hence, the transcript is quoted here in full length.

The Interrogation

Fuat Ader [chief of auxiliary operations, F.A. from now on]: There is a petition that you have written to the Prime Ministry. Let’s talk about it with you and now I am reading in the presence of Mr. Aziz and Mr. Şükrü and Mr. Hayri. You are not an assistant foreman of 14 years at the maintenance department as you wrote in your petition.

Mümin Kılıç [M.K., from now on]: No, I am not.

F.A.: Who is your apprentice getting a bigger wage than you?

M.K.: No, I meant friend. And they are those operators who are my counterparts.

F.A.: Shall we also transfer you to the operations department?

M.K.: I do not want it.

F.A.: You spoke of a mistake in your petition. What is it?

M.K.: There is no mistake. What I intended to mean here was a comparison with my friends in the operations department.

F.A.: I do not know any apprentice with an hourly wage of 80 piastres in the entire operations department in the factory, tell me if there is any.

M.K.: I did not say apprentice, it was written wrong.

F.A.: Is the signature on the stamp yours?

M.K.: Yes, it is mine

F.A.: Are there any apprentices with an hourly wage of 71 piastres among your attendants?

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482 In Turkish, this line is not in the question form. The literal translation would be: “Let’s give you to the operations department then.” I chose to translate it to English in the question form since I read it as an attempt by the chief to pressure Mümin using his own line of reasoning.
M.K.: No, there are not any.

F.A.: Do you think 67 piastres an hour is a low wage?

M.K.: I am entitled to 10 more piastres.

F.A.: You are an assistant foreman, aren’t you?

M.K.: Yes.

F.A.: You know all the things that an assistant foreman does. How do you measure an area?

M.K.: I don’t know how to take measurements.

F.A.: Can you use the measuring stick—the calliper?

M.K.: No.

F.A.: Describe a joint. Can you ...[unreadable, G.A.]? (holding a sample in his hand)

M.K.: [no answer]

F.A.: How is a screw defined?

M.K.: We measure it.

He was given a calliper.

M.K.: I do not know the calliper and I cannot measure.

F.A.: How many...[unreadable] screws [are there]?

M.K.: One is finger [-sized] and the other one is millimetric.

F.A.: What is the finger?

M.K.: I don’t know.

F.A.: What type is the head of the screw in your hand?

M.K.: It is bone.

F.A.: Şükrü, you define the screw in his hand.

Şükrü Yalçın [assistant foreman at the maintenance department, S.Y. from now on]: 5/16, round headed screw.

F.A.: You tell me now, do you deserve this wage?

M.K.: I have not gone to school, sir.

F.A.: You said you have been working here for 14 years, how come you do not know this?

M.K.: Sir, I have been working for 14 years but I do not know this one.

F.A.: Do you deserve this money?

M.K.: I am also illiterate, I leave it to your conscience.

F.A.: Does this friend deserve more money? What is your opinion Şükrü?

S.Y.: You know it better.


Aziz Öç [assistant foreman at the maintenance department]: He cannot work independently but he can work in the employ of a foreman.

Has been read and jointly signed.
Depicting the direct encounter of a worker with the management, this document raises a number of invaluable points about the conduct between the two parties as well as about the mentality of a state worker. But before going into these, we should attempt to reconstruct, as much as possible, the content of Mümin’s petition to the Prime Ministry using the references to this petition in the transcript to the petition.

Mümin began working at Bakırköy in February 1938 as an oiler in the maintenance department. The first question directed to him in the investigation concerns his claim of fourteen years of seniority as an assistant foreman as of 1951. Mümin’s reply to this is straightforward: No, he was not a foreman assistant with fourteen years of experience. Why, then, did he claim so in his petition?

**The Implementation of Scale of Salaries**

The documents concerning Mümin’s wage increases and status changes in his file indicate that he was promoted to foremanship in February 1946. Different from the previous wage increases, this increase is explained as “promotion.” His job description changed from “maintenance oiler” to “maintenance assistant foreman” on this date. However, if we return to the petition that Mümin wrote in July 1946, we see that he had claimed to have worked as an assistant foreman for the last nine months, which means he got promoted in November 1945. Indeed, Mümin had received an increase on 1 November, 1945. However, his payroll document indicates that he was still employed as an oiler in the maintenance department at the time. Earlier, I noted that the information on the changes in the employment status, and sometimes including the wage levels, is in contradiction with the testimony of the workers and/or other documents including such information in the files. A possible explanation for this incongruence might be found in the inspection reports, which cite “the scale of salaries” as
one of the sources of confusion on wage levels.\textsuperscript{483} Osman Okyar explains the implementation of the scale of salaries and evaluates its effects on the state economic enterprises as follows:

\begin{quote}
Decentralization and freedom of initiative were dealt another very damaging blow when in 1940 the scale of salaries in the state economic enterprises was fixed by law and connected to the scale of salaries in the central government administration, with the aim of establishing parallelism between the two types of government employees. In the early times of \textit{Étatism} salaries in state economic enterprises had been determined independently and freely with the result that certain high salaries had attracted attention and drawn criticism, and in 1940 the Government yielded to this criticism. This proved to be a crippling handicap in the operation of state economic enterprises. Especially when inflation developed, rate of remuneration increased in the private sector, while the salaries of government employees remained well behind. This led to the loss of the best and most dynamic personnel in the state enterprises.\textsuperscript{484}
\end{quote}

Okyar approaches the issue from the perspective of changes in the decision-making process in individual enterprises in this period, while the inspection reports mention the problems related to the application of the scales. To Okyar, the fixing of the scales in 1940 limited the freedom of initiative of the state economic enterprises. However, the aforementioned inspection report indicates extreme difference among state-owned textile factories as late as 1945. According to this, while Bakırköy Factory had fifteen different scales of salaries, Defterdar Factory had thirty-two. Consequently, the difference between the highest and the lowest pay in these two factories was considerably high: 70 and 10 piastres an hour in Bakırköy and 110 and 9 piastres an hour in Defterdar.\textsuperscript{485} The difference was even more striking when factories in small towns were compared with those in Istanbul. The report criticises these differences claiming that they functioned as a pull factor for workers and caused them to change their location of work.

Besides these practical problems, scattered information from the personnel files suggests that there was a division among workers in Bakırköy concerning the implementation of scale of salaries. While some files explicitly mention the changes in the scale of salary of a certain worker, others give the impression that the pay rate was independent of a


\textsuperscript{485} Sümerbank İşletmelerinde İşletmede İnsan ve İşçi Meseleleri 1945 Yılı Umumi Murakebe Heyeti Raporu, p. 41.
predetermined system. Furthermore, in some cases, although the worker received a promotion, his wage was not increased until a position became available in the higher paid salary scale. If we consider that, in July 1946, Mümin claimed that he had been an assistant foreman since November 1945, and that the management did not contest this petition, then we can assume that his case exemplified this problem. The incongruence between the dates of Mümin’s wage increase and his promotion might stem from the fact that he had been promoted before the wage scales were adjusted. In other words, he might have been given more responsibility without due pay. The situation caused a second disadvantage for him: the records specified his hourly wage as 35 piastres, whereas he actually worked at 30 piastres an hour.

The interrogation continues with the question on the apprentices who, as Mümin supposedly had claimed, were receiving higher wages than him. In fact, we are already familiar with this claim from Mümin’s earlier petitions. In his first petition, he had written: “My counterparts, as well as the apprentices that I teach, receive fifty piastres.” Five years after this first petition, he still believes that the wage levels of workers of different skill and experience levels were not determined in a just manner. Although he gives up this claim later in the investigation, it must have been an important argument in his petition since the investigator repeats it later on. Unfortunately, these two points are the only direct references to the content of Mümin’s petition in the transcript. Had he made other comparisons or given examples of the unfair treatment of workers by the management? We cannot find the answer in the transcript. However, it provides us with a lot more understanding of what Mümin had in mind.

**Investigating the Investigation**

Moving from the efforts to reconstruct the content of Mümin’s petition, we are faced with two questions. First, who are those present at the investigation? Second, what sort of ideas can we gather from the transcript in terms of worker-management relations at the factory? In addition to the three main production departments, Bakırköy Factory had a repair shop and other auxiliary departments such as the canteen. From the very beginning, Mümin had been employed in the maintenance department, which was responsible for taking care of the machines and other equipment in the production units. He was still working at this department as an oiler when he retired in 1970. The investigator was the chief of the auxiliary departments, i.e. the manager of the repair shop as well as other units such as the canteen. In
the hierarchical structure of the factory management, he was probably located under the factory director and the vice-director. The signature of the chief of the workshop, most likely the repair shop in this context, is also on the transcript, although he did not talk during the investigation according to the transcript. Also present at the investigation were two assistant foremen from Mümin's department. It seems that they were there as representatives of the counterparts that Mümin had referred to more than once in his petitions. Mümin was interrogated in the presence of four other employees, including the secretary, about a petition that he had written sometime between 11 April, the date of the first reply to the Prime Ministry by the factory management, and 30 June 1951, the date of the second reply with references to the aforementioned investigation.

Addressed by the informal, second-person singular pronoun “sen,” Mümin is first informed about the reason of the gathering: “There is a petition that you have written to the Prime Ministry. Let’s talk about it.” Although the chief first says that he would read the petition, either he does not do so or the secretary does not write it down. According to the transcript, he immediately starts off by refuting Mümin’s claim of seniority: “You are not an assistant foreman of 14 years at the maintenance department as you wrote in your petition.” Mümin’s reply is short and direct: “No, I am not.” Why, then did he write so in the petition? We could consider at least two plausible answers: either Mümin deliberately lied in his petition about his seniority to strengthen his demand of a higher wage or he really made a mistake. Later in the transcript we learn that Mümin did not write the petition himself. But let us go line by line and focus on the second attempt by the chief to corner Mümin with his own words. This time, without directly refuting Mümin’s claim, the chief makes a cunning move and asks Mümin to name the apprentices who received higher wages than him. As such, he recognises the plausibility of the allegation but he demands proof to substantiate it. Probably, as he expected, Mümin retreats once more and claims he actually meant “friends”, not apprentices. This time, Mümin was most likely twisting the truth. Let me explain why.

In July 1946, four months after his last wage increase, Mümin wrote a petition to the factory management to complain about his wage. He first expressed his dissatisfaction with the amount of the increase: “Although I have been working for such a [long] time, I have received only five piastres increase.” He knew that the increases were given according to seniority and he used it to strengthen his case. After explaining the severity of his financial situation, he moved onto his second complaint: “My counterparts, as well as the apprentices
that I teach, receive fifty piastres.” Specifying the apprentices in such manner, Mümin formulated his demand also with a reference to these “friends”: “…I respectfully ask from your high office to be given wages like my friends.”

The first two questions of the interrogator went quite badly for Mümin. He had already admitted two mistakes, or better said, he had admitted one mistake and lied about another, and more was coming from the chief who gives the impression that he was completely motivated to find the gaps and contradictions between Mümin’s petition and his oral testimony. As such, he did not miss the opportunity to set a new trap for Mümin using the answer he had given to the question about the apprentices. The friends of whom Mümin was speaking were the “operators.” Most probably, Mümin meant those working in the three main production departments in the factory. The word “counterparts” must be referring to those with similar levels of seniority. The subsequent two lines give the reader the impression that the chief is putting Mümin to a test by playing the good cop: “Shall we also transfer you to the operations department?” Mümin’s answer was a clear no. Although he was very insistent on getting the raise he claimed to deserve, he was completely against the idea of changing his department. As we noted earlier, Mümin was an oiler as was Mustafa who had also protested when he was employed in another job. Why, then, was it such a big problem to change one’s department within the factory?

Factories within a Factory

Two archival documents could shed light on this matter. The first one is an anonymous handwritten document on the writer’s observations at Bakırköy Factory. Although not dated, we can assume that it was written not many years after Mümin’s petition since it specifies the hourly wage at the factory as between 66 and 231 piastres. These incomplete notes give precise information about working conditions in different parts of the factory. The weaving department, for example, is reported to be extremely noisy: “It was as if cats were screeching while fighting. Here also, a worker was responsible for attending 24 looms. When we went into the dyeing department, the roaring in our ears was still continuing.” And the main problem at the dyeing department was its levels of dampness. In the midst of such terrible conditions, a head foreman provides (us? a visitor?) information on how the factory management took care of the workers: “The workers of this department are given utmost

486 The word he uses is “işletmeciler”.
487 Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 402, IISH.
488 The document starts on p. 14 and goes until p. 21, with p. 20 missing.
care. We give them boots for protection against the dampness, half a litre of milk everyday and 3 sets of work clothes every year. Their contributions [probably referring to the social security premiums, G.A.] are also differently paid from the other workers.” Apart from displaying the head foreman’s complete identification with the factory management (“We give them...”), these words reveal the dangerously difficult and damaging working conditions in the dyeing department most clearly. A similar testimony is also found in the second archival material depicting working conditions at textile factories. This is a letter written by a textile worker, who was also a trade unionist, explaining why arthritis, tuberculosis, eye and kidney problems should be listed among occupational diseases caused by working conditions especially in the yarn departments. If we return to the analysis of the transcript in light of these first-hand testimonies, after eleven years of work at the factory, it is not surprising that Mümin refuses to be relocated even though it might involve a wage increase.

The transcript is somewhat repetitive after this point. The chief asks Mümin to clarify a mistake he mentioned in his petition. Once more the topic is the comparison with the other workers. Mümin gives in again: “There is no mistake,” the comparison is between himself and those in the operations department. But the unconvinced chief insistently refers to the apprentices suggesting that they were openly mentioned in Mümin’s petition. This time he specifies the alleged wages they received according to Mümin. There is not a single apprentice in the whole operations department earning 80 piastres an hour; Mümin should give names if there is any. Mümin backs down yet another time but this time he gives us an important clue about the content of his petition.

On the Question of Authorship

Above, while analyzing Mustafa’s petitions, I mentioned the possibility of workers getting somebody to write their petitions for them. The stylistic and discursive differences between Mustafa’s earlier petitions and the last petition he submitted just before he was fired suggested that when things got more serious, in other words, when the issue was not a wage increase or a disagreement with the management but the danger of losing the job, Mustafa turned to somebody else for help. The result was a much more analytical and well-formulated text than the previous ones, which were full of simple grammatical and lexical mistakes. This could also have been the case with Mümin who obviously got somebody else to write his petition to the Prime Ministry. In the first employment document he filled out in 1938,

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489 Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 384, IISH.
Mümin stated that he was literate. The three petitions he wrote in 1946, 1947 and 1948 are clear texts with well-formulated demands unlike Mustafa’s earlier petitions. Since the petition to the Prime Ministry is missing in the file, we cannot compare it with the earlier ones. Thus, we do not have enough information even to speculate on the actual writer of these petitions. However, Mümin’s reply to the chief’s question regarding the mistake he allegedly made strongly implies that this last one was not written by him: “I did not say apprentice, it was written wrong.” With this correction, or better put, ‘confession’, Mümin must have planted seeds of doubt in the chief’s mind. Was he actually denying that the petition belonged to him? No, he was not. Even if somebody else penned it, Mümin had signed the petition himself. Whether he actually got somebody to write it for him or he gave that impression in order to save himself from getting further into trouble, we will never know for sure.

The chief returns to the topic of the allegedly better paid apprentices. It seems like for him this is really the issue, at least at the beginning of the investigation. He made so much effort to prove that Mümin was wrong and he wanted to prove this both to Mümin and to others who were present. Hence, as if it was the first time that he spoke about the subject, he formulated the following question: “Are there any apprentices with an hourly wage of 71 piastres among your attendants?” The answer is both predictable and clear: “No, there are not any.” The chief must have got what he wished for with this answer because he immediately drops the topic and moves on to a completely different one from which we learn that at the time of the investigation Mümin’s wage was 67 piastres an hour. The wording of the question “Do you think 67 piastres an hour is a low wage?” already hints at what would follow. Pretending to leave the judgment to Mümin, the chief actually paves the way for putting him to a test in front of others. But before moving on to that part, we should analyse Mümin’s very interesting reply to this tricky question.

At least since 1946, Mümin had been complaining about his wage level according to his personnel file. The main message of his petitions had been that with his family of four persons, it was impossible for him to get by. That he received the raise in his first two attempts suggests that the management saw this as a valid reason for a wage increase. Thus, one would expect him to answer positively when asked if his wage was indeed low. But Mümin refrains from giving a direct answer and says he is entitled to 10 more piastres (an hour). I take this phrase as an example of what I argued in the case of Mustafa above: different from the helpless tone of the begging petitions, we see a new language here. Speaking in a more assertive tone, Mümin expresses his ideas about how things should be in
the factory. The fact that the management did not share these ideas did not prevent Mümin from communicating them. Alas, he could not foresee that this attitude of defiance would cost him another verbal attack from the chief.

**On the Question of Audience**

The interrogator continues with a rhetorical question: “*You are an assistant foreman, aren’t you?*” Most likely because the secretary recorded the whole conversation, the chief stated the obvious. We can also speculate that he used these rhetorical questions to construct his whole case in the most convincing manner. Moreover, this transcript might have been planned to be submitted to the General Directorate of Sümerbank or the Prime Ministry. If so, we can argue that the investigator had three types of audience. First was the immediate audience, which was composed of Mümin and the other assistant employees. Perhaps above all, the chief wanted to convince Mümin of the invalidity of his claims. Second, the investigation was probably to be read by the higher ranked officers within the management. Thus, the chief also had to make it as clear and convincing as possible for them. Third, if the transcript were to be sent to the office of the General Directorate of Sümerbank or the Prime Ministry, the investigation must appear to be as just and official as possible. It is in this complex context that we should think of the functions of the rhetorical questions.

Having secured Mümin’s confirmation of his assistant foremanship, the chief makes his next rhetorical move: Logically, if he was an assistant foreman he should have known all the things that an assistant foreman does. As such, Mümin was slowly pushed in the direction of a procedural examination, the first question of which was on measuring a surface. Did he know how to do it? No. What about using the equipment then? He could not do that either. Could he describe a screw? No answer. Mümin's silence gives the impression of a man losing his self-confidence. Imagine a worker who spent thirteen years of his life working at the same factory and who claimed multiple times before that he “deserved” a wage increase because he is a “good” worker finding himself in a position of complete ignorance before his fellow workers. The picture that could come to mind is of a publicly humiliated worker who bows his head with embarrassment. But this does not stop the chief who goes on to corner him like a predator does its prey. He formulates the same question in a more theoretical way: “*How is a screw defined?*” This time, Mümin has an answer but apparently it does not help him much for the chief moves on to a practical challenge and gives him a caliper to measure. Mümin does not even attempt to do it, he admits that he cannot use the caliper and thus he cannot take
measure. The next question is not entirely readable but most probably the chief is asking about the number of types of screws. It seems like Mümin had superficial knowledge on this matter but when he was asked to define them he could not answer. At this point, the sample that the chief had a few minutes ago is in the hands of Mümin as we understand from the next question. When the chief asks him to define the head of the screw, Mümin’s answer does not satisfy him either.

From Labour vs. Management to Labour vs. Labour

The two assistant foremen who had remained silent until then suddenly became functional at that point. Mümin had been speaking of the counterparts all along. And now he was being tested before them about the skills and knowledge that he was supposed to have. When he failed, the chief directed the same question first to Şükrü who gave a technical answer. This was most probably what the chief had been planning all along since the final blow came immediately after this: “You tell me now, do you deserve this wage?” Once more, the chief is using the question form pretending to leave the judgment to Mümin. However, his answer to this rhetorical question was possibly not what the investigator expected: “I have not gone to school, sir.” Was he comparing himself with the other two foremen by saying this? We cannot know since their files were not available in the archives. But we know that Mümin was literate, at least he claimed so in 1938 in his application form, but he did not mention any formal schooling. In fact, very few workers in the sample had formal education and if they had, it was only at the level of elementary school. Thus, Mümin was the rule rather than the exception on this matter. Why then did he give this unexpected answer, apparently also unexpected by the chief, to this rhetorical question?

If we divide the transcript into three parts, in the first part, the content of Mümin’s petition was revealed and contested. The focus here was on the claims that he made about the unfairness of the wage differences between himself and his counterparts, and in particular the apprentices. The winner of this first part was clearly the chief since Mümin accepted his mistakes. Then, in the second part, the chief steered the conversation in the direction of testing Mümin’s skills as an assistant foreman since these formed the basis of his claims for a wage raise. Without any doubt, Mümin lost this part as well. But this time he took the initiative and very intelligently steered the conversation away from the mode of examination by answering a very direct question in an unexpected way. Thus, the final phase of the conversation began, which, above all, is characterised by emotional exploitation.
The chief’s reaction to Mümin’s unexpected reply is right on target since it addresses his claim of seniority which he had used before to ask for a higher wage. If he was at the factory for such a long time, he should have known the answers to the previous questions: “How come you do not know this?” Mümin must have been feeling really intimidated by now as he addressed the chief as “Sir” for the first time. The chief repeats his central question: “Do you deserve this money?” Once again, Mümin takes refuge in his ignorance. The chief is not interested in this topic, though. At this point, all he wants is to establish the fact that Mümin does not have the required skills to work as an assistant foreman. Instead of stating it himself, however, he makes another tactical move by asking the other assistant foremen whether Mümin deserved the wage he had been receiving. The first one abstains from answering by playing the docile worker: of course the chief knows it better. Perhaps he refrained from saying something that would harm his co-worker. His answer probably did not please the chief who directed the same question to the second assistant foreman. Aziz, speaking for the first and the last time, carries the issue to a completely different level by arguing that Mümin is not qualified enough to work independently. This last sentence must have been enough for the verdict to be given since the transcript finishes abruptly right after it. The parties sign the transcript, thereby making it official in order to include it in the following reply of the Bakırköy Factory to the General Directorate of Sümerbank:

To the Higher Office of General Directorate of Sümerbank, 30.06.951

Mümin Kılıç’s petition has been examined. The aforementioned, who still serves at the yarn maintenance department as an assistant, is a worker of 13 years who did not have any occupations when he was employed [and] attained the level of assistant foremanship thanks to his continuous working.

The untrue statement of this worker who had applied to the higher office of Prime Ministry about his demand for a wage increase has been found groundless.

Subjected to a trial, the conviction has been that the complainant, who has not experienced any problems with promotion and has been promoted regularly to higher levels, is not equipped with the knowledge that a maintenance worker must have [and] can only achieve the given task when working with an assistant foreman.

We present it to your higher information that the 67 piastres hourly wage given to such a worker, who cannot do grading/fitting, does not know how to take measurements, has no understanding of using a calliper and who cannot place a cogwheel with instructions, has been determined according to seniority and skill level, and that contrary to his petition there is no apprentice working with him with an hourly wage of 71 piastres before the increase
By Way of Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I formulated my objective as analyzing the petitions written by Bakırköy workers in terms of their timing, frequency, addressee, content and vocabulary. Through examining the personnel files of fifty-four workers, I have found out that the petitions start in 1943 and their frequency increases with time. With the exception of Mümin’s petition to the Prime Ministry and Mehmet’s letter to the General Directorate of Sümerbank, the petitions are generally addressed directly to the factory management. They are similar to one another in terms of the opening lines. Although there are workers who only wrote one petition, or whose file contains only one petition, there are also a number of those who wrote more than one. Some workers, such as Mustafa and Mümin, effectively used petitioning after the success of their first attempt. In terms of content, the petitions are predominantly about wage increases with exceptions of those asking for child or transportation allowance. One significant exception was Mustafa’s petitions complaining about the treatment he received from the management and later about the change in the task he was assigned to. In my analysis of Mustafa’s petitions, I have argued that his case illustrates how the workers’ struggles were individualised and isolated during the early Republican period. I argue that Mümin’s case further substantiates this argument by means of showing how the management crushed a legitimate demand by a state worker through an intimidating investigation at the factory site. Insulted and isolated, Mümin had to retreat in his struggle against the factory management.

After establishing the general characteristics of the petitions by Bakırköy workers, I now would like to contextualise these petitions in terms of the wider political economic changes that took place during the last years of the early Republican period. Especially with the emergence of the trade unions in 1946, the Turkish labour scene has changed dramatically in terms of labour’s self-perception and organization. The findings presented in the current chapter substantiate this argument. One striking point in my archival findings concerns the complete silence about the trade unions in the personnel files as late as 1951. The fact that the workers’ trade union affiliations were visible in later years ruled out the possibility that the personnel files would never mention anything about them.
In the following chapter, I will portray the emergence and expansion of trade unions towards the end of the early Republican period with an emphasis on the developments in the textile sector. The questions I pose at this point are the following: What were the functions of the trade unions in this period? To what extent did they manage to reach the workers in general, and state workers in particular? How did the state workers view them and react to them? Who were those affiliated with the unions and what kind of political trajectories did they follow? The petitions I have analysed in the current chapter presented a close-up picture of state-subject interactions in the Bakırköy Factory. My next goal is to zoom out and locate these interactions within the general framework of state-labour relations.