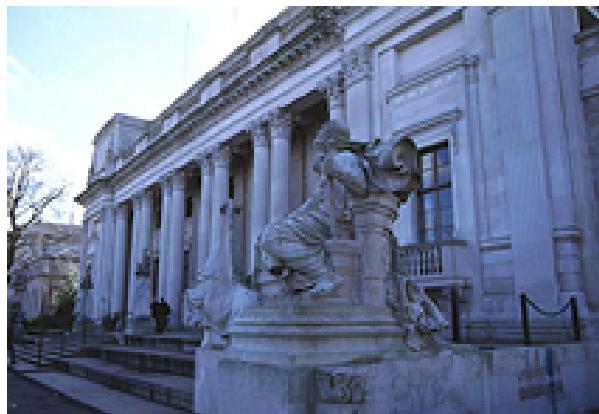


Working Paper Series

Paper 15



Immigrant Labour in the Turkish Textile Industry: The Case of Muhacir Bulgarians

September, 2001

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with Muhacir Bulgarians in Turkey - the term used in Turkey for immigrants from the Balkans, particularly from Bulgaria. We are interested in them as a distinct sociological presence in the formal manufacturing sector of the Turkish labour force. The research upon which this paper is based was not intended as an investigation of Muhacir Bulgarians. Our interest in them arose in the process of conducting a wider project when we began to note how often managers spoke highly of such workers - and how often other workers were critical of them. It is in this context and given the lack of any developed social science literature on this aspect of these immigrants' lives that the present paper has been produced. Thousands upon thousands of Muhacir Bulgarians made the journey from Bulgaria to Turkey in 1989. We begin with the story of this journey and later settlement by Mustafa, one of these who ultimately became a textile worker in Bursa. Following an account of the 1989 exodus from Bulgaria the paper then proceeds to put forward a more general sociological characterisation of other workers like him – of their employment and material support, their position in the labour market, and their relation to management, trade unions and other workers. Possible future developments are considered. The paper focuses mainly on those employed in the Bursa textile industry but includes reference to other workers employed in the Izmit triangle and its environs who work in the metal goods sector. Where possible comparison is made with Turks of non Bulgarian origin.

MUSTAFA'S STORY

I was born in Bulgaria in 1966. I completed all my education in Bulgaria. After finishing technical school at the age of 18, I began working in a textile company producing blankets. Life was so different there. In Bulgaria you didn't lose your job. You would be given a house to live in and a job. The pay wasn't very high but you would manage to survive. Until 1988, to be a worker was a privilege in Bulgaria. We were really kings there. Nothing in Turkey compares to that. We used to have very good and friendly relationship with the people above us. We wouldn't call them 'Amirim' (My Master) and 'Şefim' (My Chief). We used to call each other 'Comrade'. You had free education, free health services, it was easy to get sick leave from work. There was 100 per cent job security. I actually never thought that there was such a thing as losing your job till we came to Turkey. I was old enough to remember that most of us thought that we were much better off than people in Turkey were. I don't

mean that it was Heaven. I am not a communist. I am actually against it. But these things were true.

Of course there were difficulties. For example, you had to save a lot of money to buy a car. It would take years to buy a car. You had no chance to see a foreign country. It was impossible to do so for two reasons. First, the authorities didn't let you go where you wanted. Second, you didn't have enough money to see a foreign country anyway. It wasn't an open society. That is what I don't understand about communism. You couldn't freely criticise things there. If you did, you would be prosecuted immediately. You would be regarded as a traitor. They were especially sensitive to criticism made by Turks. They just didn't like Turks, I suppose. I don't know why.

We were later given a very bad time by the Bulgarian authorities especially in the late 1980s. Turks were not allowed to speak freely and were ordered by the authorities to change their names. Even in factories like the one I was working for, Turks weren't treated fairly by the management anymore. They began to discriminate against Turks. They started to give us donkeywork in the factory. They began to shout at us and bully us. It didn't happen in a week or a month. It took some 10 or so years to make life miserable for Turks, but they succeeded. When the trouble got worse, some of the Turks in our area began to leave Bulgaria and immigrated to Turkey. At first, you had to have a Turkish visa from the Turkish Embassy to go Turkey. The Bulgarian authorities wrote down the names of those who applied for Turkish visas. They made a black list. When more people got Turkish visas, the Bulgarian authorities got more angry because Turkish people who used to work in agriculture and the factories would try to go Turkey without considering what the consequences were for the Bulgarian economy.

We were still undecided about going to Turkey. Then one day I remember a Bulgarian engineer in my department approached me and asked 'Are you leaving too?' At first I said 'No'. Then I said 'I don't know'. I saw his face getting whiter and whiter ... so then I said 'May be'. He taught me a very good lesson, which I have never forgotten. 'Who leaves a sinking ship first?' he asked. 'Rats' I told him. Then he said 'This is what all Turks are'. I was upset but I didn't respond to this. Then he asked me a second question which was the biggest lesson of my life. 'Do you know what the worst news is for the rats who leave the sinking ship first?' 'I don't know' I said. He answered his own question: 'The worst news for those rats is that the ship

won't sink, thanks to those who didn't leave. For the rats, the worse is still to come, comrade. There is no shore to swim to. Good luck comrade, good luck'.

In those years, of course, we all used to listen to an official Turkish Radio station called 'Turkish Voice'. The Turkish radio made an official announcement that Turks in Bulgaria no longer needed a Turkish visa to go Turkey. It added that all of those who would like to Turkey would be warmly welcomed by the Turkish State and given permanent residence immediately. That same night we decided to go to Turkey. I didn't go to work and saw that all our relatives and other Turks were getting ready to set out for Turkey. Three days later, we had left every single thing behind us except for some of our clothes and valuable items. On the way to Turkey, it was unbelievable; thousands of people were going to the Turkish border. Bulgarians on the road were looking at us very angrily, making gestures at us and shouting abuse. Anyway, as soon as we got to the border, there were camps provided for us by the Turkish Government. I kissed the ground and thanked Allah for that.

We were put in camps near the city of Edirne, which was close to the border. But when more and more people fled to Turkey, the camps were no longer big enough. Most people slept on ground. We lived in terrible conditions there. There weren't enough toilets, food, water, and so on. At the start we had been told that the Turkish Government would make a proper settlement for us immediately. But we stayed in the camp for some three weeks and nothing was provided. We saw that the Turkish State just couldn't cope with the problem. The situation just overwhelmed it. Some of us already had some relatives who had gone to Turkey sometime before. These people came to pick them up. We had some relatives but we didn't know where they were because they had immigrated to Turkey 30 years ago. My father had lost contact with his relatives a long time ago. We didn't know where to go. My mother suggested that it would be better if we went back to Bulgaria. We didn't want to do that. Many people actually did go back to Bulgaria after a few weeks in the camp. Then, a very good friend of ours in Bulgaria who was also in the camp with his family told us that his relatives would come to pick them up and take them to Bursa. He told us to join them to go to Bursa. We said OK. Their relatives came and we talked with them and they told us that there were many Turkish immigrants in Bursa. So we could stay in their houses for a bit and then we could start a new life there.

We had no choice and went to Bursa with them. My mother and father stayed in one of the Bulgarian immigrant's houses and my younger brother and I stayed in someone else's house. We were looking for a flat to rent and a job urgently. I can't

put into words how desperate we were then. After 10 days or so, I found a job in a small garment company offering only the minimum wage. At first I was working like a slave. It was incredible that the owner of the workshop kept telling other workers that how good I was and blaming them for not working as hard as I did. On the second day I wanted an advance against my pay and the employer gave it to me without hesitating. We needed money to rent a flat. We found one and the owner of the flat told us that we didn't need to worry about the rent for three months. You wouldn't get his kind of understanding in Bulgaria.

We moved into the flat immediately. Then my younger brother found a job in an industrial estate as a car mechanic. Next month my father got a job in construction. My mother stayed at home. I will never forget the first three months. We were working like animals to make a living. I counted each lira we earned and tried to save some money for the family. After six months, the small garment shop went bust. I found another job in a textile company again on the minimum wage. I had no choice but to work. There were lots of Bulgarian immigrants in our neighbourhood working for the company and they asked me to apply there. This is a very good company to work for. It has the best pay you can ever get in the textile industry. I applied there. After two weeks, they called me for interview and I got the job. I began earning twice as much as I could earn in other textile companies. Plus, in a year, I get three bonuses, one of which is equivalent to one month's salary. In addition to that, you get bus services to and from work. You can also be a union member.

As to my biggest lesson, I began to realise that working in the textile industry in Bursa you really have to work very hard. I can tell you that every shift I do three times more work than I used to do in Bulgaria. But the managers are still not impressed. Turkish managers seem mentally incapable of admiring workers. They were born to shout at people. There is no way you can satisfy them. Whatever you do is not enough. In Bulgaria we used to be kings inside the factory but we were prisoners outside. In Turkey, we are prisoners inside and free outside. But this freedom doesn't feed your stomach. You are free to starve if you don't earn enough. In Bulgaria, we were not free but we never starved. I just ask myself sometimes whether there isn't a system where you can be free and have enough money to live on. From what I have learnt from life, the Bulgarian manager was half-right. He was wrong in one way because I did get to the shore; but he was right that 'the ship didn't sink'. If you asked me what I would chose if I had known that change was coming in Bulgaria, I would

have preferred staying there to change things till it was no longer possible. They changed over the years, didn't they? But it was too little and too late for us.

We have now settled down in Bursa. I like working in this company. We bought a gecekondu two years ago. We demolished it and have been building three floors of apartments for my parents, my brother and myself. We have completed two floors. I got married two years ago to a girl from the company and I moved into the second floor. She still works there. We are now building the third floor. After that everybody can go his own way. I mean we won't need each other as much as we have so far. I will continue to support my parents. My father is a bit old now and can't carry on working in construction anymore. My brother is still working in the industrial estate and we expect him to get married soon.

The Izmit triangle is a key centre for manufacturing employment in Turkey. In the formal sector of this – which is the focus here - pay and conditions for manual workers are usually better than obtain elsewhere and trade unionism is more common. What interests us is the distinctive position that Muhacir Bulgarians like Mustafa have come to occupy within the Izmit triangle in relation to both management and other workers and the possibility of this position changing.

About two thirds of the Muhacir Bulgarians referred to in this paper work in Bursa, about nine out of ten of them work in textiles and the rest in the metal goods industry (cars) The other third work outside Bursa in the metal goods industry (cars and white goods), either in Trakya (Thrace) or between Istanbul and Izmit. The largest number of them came from Kirdjali in southern Bulgaria about 50 km west of Edirne in Turkey or from Varna on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. Altogether 53 Bulgarians were interviewed between 1999 and 2001 for a period of about an hour, but sometimes for considerably longer than this, as part of the larger enquiry which included over 350 such interviews with workers in the Turkish car, white goods and textiles industries. Approximately 50 workers were interviewed in each of seven companies. In addition to informal contact with workers outside work, several interviews were conducted with industry and trade associations and, in each firm, with managers and where they were present trade unionists. The research also included a survey of over 350 managers.

MUHACIR BULGARIANS AND BURSA

Under the Ottoman Empire Turks were to be found in a number of places in the Balkans including among others Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, these Turks often found themselves under pressure from the new authorities. Turkish Muslims from Bulgaria emigrated to Turkey after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 put an end to the Ottoman domination of the Balkansⁱ and also in several waves over the course of the last century – in 1921-28, 1950-51 and 1989. In Turkey they are often called ‘Muhacir’ or ‘Göçmen’ (immigrants) . In 1989 Turkey received an influx of around 370,000 migrants from Bulgaria, it being reported that the line of cars and trucks loaded with refrigerators, stoves and domestic animals sometimes stretched over 20 km back across the borderⁱⁱ. The exodus was in response to a policy of forced assimilation carried out by the government of Todor Zhivkov, whose regime was to fall later that year (hence Mustafa’s reflection on what he might have done if he had known that change was coming to Bulgaria).

Even by the mid 1970s the teaching of Turkish in Bulgarian schools had ceased and the Communist government had long regarded the Islamic faith as a key factor inhibiting loyalty to the state, with various Islamic customs being seen to be in conflict with the precepts of modernisation. In 1984 the Bulgarian authorities had initiated a country wide campaign to forcibly change the names of all ethnic Turks to those of Bulgarian or Slavic origin. Villages with predominantly Turkish inhabitants were surrounded by police and troops with dogs and tanks, often in the early hours of the morning. Officials with new identity cards, or in other cases with a list of ‘official’ names to choose from, visited every household. The inhabitants were forced, in some cases at gunpoint, to accept the new cards and to sign ‘ voluntary’ forms requesting their new names. In other instances the inhabitants of ethnic Turkish villages were assembled in the main square of the village where they were then obliged to accept the new identity cards. Sometimes name-changing and the issuing of new identity cards was carried out at the workplace and in some cases ethnic Turks were given a period of days to accept the new cards or lose their jobs. There were reports of violence and rape by the security forces; of mosques being forcibly closed or destroyed or of them being turned into museums (usually with the sign ‘Museum of Bulgarian Mussulmen’) on the locked doors; of pressure to use only Bulgarian in religious services; and of young people facing harassment and possible arrest if they attempted to attend services.

The authorities attacked the practice of fasting during Ramadan and attempted to stop the traditional Bayram days and practices such as the slaughter of sheep at the Muslim Eid festival. The Islamic custom of washing the body of the deceased prior to burial was also forbidden, as was the practice of circumcising male infants and separate Muslim cemeteries were abolished. In addition to the specific offensive on Turkish identity that was mounted through the name-changing campaign, Turkish music was banned, women wearing shalvari (traditional Turkish trousers) were harassed in the street and faced fines and there was a ban on the speaking of Turkish in public places. In a final twist to the attack on Turkish identity the Bulgarian government claimed that all ethnic Turks were actually descended from Slavic Bulgarians (Pomaks) who had been forcibly Islamicized by the Ottoman authoritiesⁱⁱⁱ.

The 1989 exodus, which was sparked by heightened protest against such treatment and the Bulgarian state's repressive reaction to this, was also facilitated by the actions of the Turkish government. In the midst of a 'tremendous upsurge in nationalist fervour'^{iv} the government passed a decree to permit the refugees to be accepted as Turkish citizens without having to undergo a waiting period. It also announced that it would allow the Bulgarian leva to be exchanged for lira at Turkish banks. Many of the ethnic Turks from Bulgaria were initially placed in two large tent cities in Edirne and Kırklareli in the European part of Turkey^v. Some were so repelled by the conditions that they found in the camps or found such difficulties in Turkey that within a year almost 155,000 had returned to Bulgaria^{vi}. But many followed a similar path to those who had emigrated in earlier waves and a significant presence was established in the Marmara region in the west of Turkey which, according to the major compendium of ethnic groups in Turkey, had been home to approaching half the immigrants from Bulgaria as early as 1950-55^{vii}. Within the Marmara region there has always been a relatively high concentration in Bursa, which is the first major city beyond Istanbul on the route from Bulgaria through Trakya and into Anatolia. The job opportunities have generally been better in Bursa than in many other cities in Turkey. The city has always been a relatively prosperous place to live. The climate is also similar to that of Bulgaria.

Bursa has a population of two million. Of these 55 per cent register their birthplace as outside the city, and of these in turn 30 per cent are immigrants from the Balkans and the other 70 per cent from other parts of Turkey. Among immigrants from the Balkans Bulgarians, at 65 per cent, are a clear majority^{viii} is an ancient city that was

once the capital of the Ottoman Empire, and is one of the leading industrial cities in Turkey along with Istanbul and Izmit. Bursa is known for its hot springs and Turkish baths, alongside which the towel industry flourished, with towels, textiles and knives having been famous products for many centuries until the growth of large scale production^{ix}. Today Bursa is the centre of two main industries, textiles and automotive. The city was an important link on the old silk route and the origin of the textile industry goes back to the early period of the Ottoman Empire. Silkworm production started in 1587 and paved the way for the growth of the textile industry for which Bursa is now a commercial and production centre accounting for about 15 per cent of all Turkey's textile exports. About 25 per cent of Bursa's total value added comes from the textile industry with over 60,000 people being employed in over 8,000 firms. Three car plants in Bursa employ over 11,000 people and produce 80 per cent of country's passenger cars. The expansion of industrial employment has been aided by the development of three organised industrial districts where over 350 medium and large size of firms operate employing over 50,000 people^x.

It was to Hürriyet in Bursa (Hürriyet means 'Freedom') that earlier Bulgarian migrants had been assigned by the state on arrival in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of the 1989 Bulgarian immigrants to Bursa also came to Hürriyet which is quite close to two organised large industrial districts, where hundreds of small, medium and large size industrial firms are located. Most roads in Hürriyet are muddy in the winter and dusty in the summer and there are a few gecekondu houses (that is squatted houses – literally 'built overnight' without official permission). However, apartment blocks make up the majority of the housing and are usually much better than gecekondu houses. They usually consist of two or three floors with quite small flats. Many of the 1989 newcomers also settled in the poorer parts of some mixed districts – especially Kestel but also Ovakça, Yeni Bağlar and Kazım Karabekir.

The fact that Hürriyet has a majority of immigrants makes the district quite distinct from the rest of the city. For although the Muhacir Bulgarians had been harassed by the Bulgarian authorities for their Muslim identity most of these immigrants are relatively more secular than the local people^{xi}. They are also better educated and have a more modern life style. Most women don't wear headscarves when they are outside. There are fewer mosques compared to other parts of the city which again suggests a more secular worldview. There are other small signs of cultural difference; older men can be seen riding bicycles – a sight rarely to be seen in other areas of the city or elsewhere in Turkey. The Bulgarian Turks are also relatively

more tolerant to outsiders. For example, university students who in other poorer areas are often thought to pose a threat to wives and daughters can find it somewhat easier to obtain rooms among them.

Kestel is a 'second wave' version of Hürriyet. Adjacent to an organised industrial district and within reach of many small and medium textile firms, its population of over 30,000 mostly lives in four or five floor apartment buildings. Its Muhacir Bulgarian inhabitants again tend to favour a modern life style. Settlement in such areas had been helped by state provision of land, infrastructure for housing projects and state assisted loans.

EMPLOYMENT AND MATERIAL SUPPORT

In 1989 many of these immigrants sought work where they could find it, often in the informal economy. Some of them, then or subsequently, found jobs in the formal sector, including in that part of it represented by the textiles and metal working firms which employ the workers considered in this paper. Wages here are generally appreciably better than jobs in the informal economy. Wages in the metal working firms are three times the minimum wage. Wages differ in the two textile firms which employ the Bursa textile workers in our sample: one pays about twice the minimum wage irrespective of gender; the other pays one and half times the minimum wage for men but only the minimum wage for women who are concentrated in jobs that the management (conveniently) claims to be either less skilled or less physically demanding^{xii}.

The arrival of these immigrants in the factories had been met with hostility by some Turkish workers. More than ten years later they were still regarded with some suspicion. Workers in several factories regarded them as untrustworthy, as management spies and not as one of them. In some cases workers warned the interviewer to be careful what they said in the presence of the Bulgarians. In addition, the Muhacir were stereotyped as being only concerned with money and closed together against the outside world.

Several of the criticisms made of the Muhacir Bulgarians were voiced by one of the workers in a metal goods firm at Çayırova:

I haven't seen any group of people that has such solidarity. They all support one another. This solidarity isn't to do with ideology; they just stick together and make a fortune for themselves. For example, there are Muhacir Bulgarians living in mass housing in Şekerpınar that was provided by the state when they came to Turkey 10 years ago. The mayor of Şekerpınar is also a Muhacir-Bulgarian. You see, they look after themselves

Ninety per cent of the floor sweepers (sic) are Muhacir Bulgarians. Although the pay is very low, the wage level isn't important for them. Their family structure is different from our traditional Turkish Anatolian family. In traditional Turkish families, women do not work outside. But all their women and other family members work outside and then they pool their income and are able to survive like that.

In the same factory referred to above the trade union worked hand in glove with the management^{xiii}. To be part of the union's official structure was to be close to the management and was itself seen as a further site of advantage for the Bulgarians, who made up three of the factory's five shop stewards – a situation that fuelled further criticism.

Some of the views expressed above are of a kind directed at immigrants in many other places in the world – that they stick together; that they only look after themselves; that they care only about money, and by implication that they take jobs that are needed by indigenous workers. In the case of the Muhacir Bulgarians, three well rehearsed themes are that they can live cheaply because they pool their income; that they got their jobs through personal connection; and that management recruits them because of their compliance and hard work. Our view, which is developed in what follows, is that to the extent these views reflect certain aspects of reality they also distort others and to the extent they were once plausible they are becoming less so.

Sticking Together and the Pooling of Resources

There is good evidence for the view that the household structure of the Muhacir Bulgarians differs from that of other Turks in our sample. The mean household size for Muhacir Bulgarians was 4.7 whereas that for all other Turks was 3.9. Thirty per cent of the Bulgarians lived in households of 6 or more compared to only 11 per cent of other Turks. This difference has come about as a consequence of the way the Bulgarians arrived at Bursa. When they first came to the city, they usually lived

together in extended households of two or three generations. Most family members worked outside the household including the women and where present, parents. This allowed a certain amount of money to be pooled which usually went toward buying a gecekondu, a plot of small land or a gecekondu type apartment with one or two floors. It is as a consequence of this that so many Muhacir Bulgarians in our sample claimed to own rather than rent their accommodation, over 80 per cent claimed such (often part-) ownership compared to just over half of non Bulgarian Turks. Home ownership stands in marked contrast to the state provided housing to which many Muhacir Bulgarians had been accustomed. It has been facilitated by cheap credit and other help from the state. In some cases help in dealing with banks and officials has come through a balkan voluntary association, the Balkan Göçmenleri Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği. This organisation claims a membership of 25,000 in Bursa and has branches in some other cities. It also provides assistance with finding jobs, the pursuit of retirement rights in Bulgaria and amongst other things it runs a cramming school for Muhacir Bulgarian students who are preparing for the university entrance examinations.

Some Muhacir Bulgarians built their own apartment blocks to replace their gecekondu houses. When the first floor was completed the older brothers would move in, the rest following as the building work progressed. Typically the whole household would begin with a common budget with contributions being made by all members of the household until the building was done. The historical traces of this pattern can be seen in Table 1. The household in which there was no one else working except for the worker we interviewed was an exception for the Muhacir Bulgarians. Gradually, though, the practice of pooling income is changing. In some cases the father still controls the money earned by his sons in a common budget. But in other cases -especially after marriage - the sons have begun to have their own budget separate from the larger household. In such cases, the sons continue to help their elderly parents financially but the structure of Bulgarian immigrant families has transformed from large to small separated households, like those of non Bulgarian Turks. In this context an important feature of Table 1 is that it reveals that relatively few Muhacir Bulgarians - or other Turks - belong to households in which more than two other people work. To focus exclusively on the general differences that obtained in total size of household between Bulgarians and Turks in the past can therefore be misleading. It is also likely to obscure a difference that continues to distinguish the two groups and which makes an important contribution to the proportions of workers

who have only one other earner in their household. The key issue here is that of wives who work.

In just under half of the households of Turkish workers who have one other earner the person concerned is a spouse. In the case of the Muhacir Bulgarians this rises to over two thirds^{xiv}. There are, then, still some traces left of the large households that were part of the Muhacir Bulgarians' initial survival strategy but a more pronounced difference may now be the labour market participation of women and especially married women. Women make a significant contribution to household economy. 56 per cent of the 50 married women workers in the two Bursa textile firms earned as much as their husbands or more (53 per cent of the married Muhacir-Bulgarian women did so). This is broadly in line with Ecevit's finding in her study of women textile workers in Bursa^{xv}

Ecevit reports that in the past young girls who worked in Bursa's factories were called 'company girls', which implied they were promiscuous and that for a husband to permit his wife to work could still represent a loss of respect.^{xvi} We found Turkish women to be more likely than Muhacir-Bulgarian women to experience opposition from family and neighbours when starting to work and that non Muhacir Bulgarian Turkish women were also more likely to regard being a housewife as their normal function, with paid work being something they do for a certain period of their life. In addition, it seems possible that Muhacir Bulgarian husbands and wives have a somewhat less unequal relationship in the home^{xvii}. There is reason to suppose that in future there will be more non Muhacir Bulgarian Turkish wives who go out to work. In one of the textile companies we studied, in which the labour force was half Muhacir-Bulgarian and half not, not only did 100 per cent of the Bulgarians think women should work but so did 75 per cent of the Turks. Moreover, the size of the Bulgarian household is likely to continue to fall, in which case, in this respect too, these essentially urbanised groups will tend to become more similar^{xviii}.

Informal Connection and Job Entry

The idea that the Muhacir Bulgarians got their jobs through personal connection is widespread among non Bulgarian Turks. It has some foundation in reality. Only 32 per cent of them claimed to have got their jobs through formal application. A few spoke explicitly of having got them through 'torpil' (by using inside influence). Well over half cited the help of family and friends. One Bulgarian woman worker recounted that 'My elder sister retired from here and I got the job through her

recommendation'. Another told how 'My mother-in-law retired from here and I replaced her'. 'My neighbour was working here and I got the job on her recommendation' said another. Yet another told us 'A relative of mine retired from here and I got the job through them'. There are many other accounts involving other relatives – sisters-in-law who worked in the factory, fathers who were cooks in the factory, aunts who worked in the factory nursery. The point is not that the list is a long one however. It is that a very similar list can be constructed for the non Bulgarian Turks (Table 2).

A non Muhacir Bulgarian Turk at Çerkezköy in Trakya explained:

It isn't possible to enter these kinds of factories, especially the big ones by your own efforts. You have to have a man [a patron] to help you. This man can either work in the factory or be outside, for example, someone who knows a director or a chief in the factory. Governors and kaymakam [the primary local government representative in the town] can help too.

Possibly the Muhacir Bulgarians relied more on family connections than non Bulgarians did, the latter presumably knowing more people outside their families. But the large fact is that the majority of both Bulgarians and other workers did not get their jobs by straight formal application. Competition for such jobs is stiff. In all the factories informal relations continue to be important and it is still common for recruitment to operate through networks of family and friends. There are all kinds of connections that figure in workers' accounts of how they got in- and which figure yet more so in their accounts of how others did so. The variety of possible connections seems endless. At some firms the tradition has been that a father can ask for his son to replace him when he retires. Everywhere there are brothers and fathers who already work in the factory and put in a word, and who tell future applicants about jobs that are coming up. There are mothers who look after the children of managers, uncles who are trade union officials, fathers who are tailors and make suits for an important manager, cousins who are secretaries to managing directors, managers who one way or another can be got to by intermediaries who will put in a good word. In short, linking everything together is a dense web of friends, family, friends of friends and acquaintances, the web through which the ordinary citizen hopes to touch and be rewarded by the powerful.

To have such contacts does not guarantee a job, nor are interviews regularly dispensed with and sometimes performance (aptitude) tests are used. But, in all the factories it is company policy that jobs be advertised internally. This is partly in order to restrict the very large number of applications that would otherwise result if jobs were advertised publicly. At the big car factory in Bursa for example when jobs had been advertised publicly the company was besieged by hopeful applicants descending on it in buses, lorries and tractors. This also means however that an important part is played in recruitment by relatives and friends who transmit news about vacancies to potential applicants, both Turks and Muhacir Bulgarians relying on this process. In fact, even those workers who did get their jobs by formal application also required a reference from someone on the inside, preferably a manager, a foreman or a tried and trusted worker. This further underlines the role of connection in securing jobs in the factories – again for Turks as well as Muhacir Bulgarians. Both subscribe to what has been nicely termed the ‘national culture of networking’^{xix}.

Compliance and Discipline at Work

In 1989 larger firms had been specifically asked by the Government to employ Bulgarian immigrants but some managers have since been motivated by further considerations. The Muhacir Bulgarians were frequently described to us by managers as better qualified, and as possessing higher levels of education, especially mathematics. Systematic data collected from our fieldwork is consistent with this. Muhacir Bulgarians were less likely to have only primary school education and more likely to have reached senior secondary level or above (Table 3). The pattern is pronounced for both men and women (as can be seen from Table 4 which reports the case for women only).

Among the workers interviewed as part of our larger project the view was widespread that managements preferred Muhacir Bulgarians to Turks because they were more compliant. Interviews with managers in the Bursa textiles industry where the Bulgarians are disproportionately concentrated go some way to confirm this impression. A senior manager at one of the Bursa textile firms commented:

Ironically, they come from a workers’ state but they are not used to trade unions and they are more disciplined than Turkish workers. When they first came we heard certain things. For example, Bulgarians were telling Turks that they shouldn’t be

going for a smoke [the factory has separate smoking areas] without asking the supervisor for permission first.

Managers in Bursa textiles are generally agreed:

There are some differences between Turkish workers and the Bulgarians. Bulgarian workers work very hard. Let me give you an example, when I am on the shop floor and ask a Turkish worker to get something for me from somewhere, he walks there and takes his time. If I ask a Bulgarian worker the same thing, he runs there immediately. I am not saying that all Bulgarian workers are like this. But the majority of them work very hard indeed.

'I can tell you that Bulgarian immigrants are much better and more productive than Turkish workers are' said another. But he also explained, things have changed since the days the Bulgarians first came to the factory:

The number of Bulgarian immigrants has declined in my department in recent months. We used to have a lot of immigrant workers here. They are better educated than local labour. We now recruit more and more local workers. The Muhacir are very well disciplined and they are very thrifty. As a result, relative to local people, their living conditions get better in a short time. They build their houses, buy cars, marry their children, etc. But after that they begin to relax a bit and don't work very hard.

Other managers say much the same thing. Asked how he compared the Muhacir Bulgarians to local workers another replied:

Initially, immigrant workers were working very hard. Day by day, they have come to resemble our local workers. I don't see any difference between them now.

Managers tend to qualify this view of Bulgarian workers with respect to Bulgarian women. Muhacir Bulgarian women are particularly valued. One manager saw them as 'more willing to work outside [the home], doing overtime, accepting shift work'. In particular he drew a contrasting picture of the place of women in Muhacir Bulgarian and Turkish families. 'For Turkish families', he told us, 'women should be at home very early in the evening. People would not be very happy to see women coming home at midnight'.

Muhacir Bulgarian women, then, are better educated, generally considered more compliant, more readily disposed to work unsocial hours, and even, on the following account – an additional bonus – taller:

Bulgarian immigrants ...are taller than Turkish women are and some of our machines require tall workers. However, in the dyeing unit, I have had a policy for the last 4 or 5 years not to accept any [male] immigrants. I am not happy about their performance. Their wives are brilliant. But because their wives are working, the husbands become a bit relaxed and slack at work, they take things easy, don't push themselves hard, etc. Immigrant women are very talented workers. They really work very hard and do whatever you tell them. They are very productive and quick at work.

However, there are signs that Bulgarian women are not always accepting of their lot. Even though most managers rate them hard workers, some also complain that these women will quickly switch to other jobs if the rates are higher. One of the Production Managers at a Bursa textile firm (the one that paid women only the minimum wage) claimed that the main streets of Bursa were plastered with A4 sheets advertising jobs with small textile contractors who did not provide social benefits and that Bulgarian women were attracted to these because of the only slightly higher pay. Only a few months earlier over 40 Bulgarian women had clocked off the Saturday shift in this manager's department and not reappeared on the Monday.

CONCLUSION

The Muhacir Bulgarians had been extremely vulnerable in Bulgaria. In 1989 their plight had brought forth a nationalist fervour in their support in Turkey. Yet since arriving in Turkey they often still felt outsiders (they were, said one of our interviewees, 'like fish out of water'). To some degree it is also true that they 'kept themselves to themselves', tending to eat together at work and to marry other Muhacir Bulgarians.

These workers attempted to protect themselves – initially in ways that pleased managers as much as they displeased other workers. Compliance with management and working exceptionally hard had been an important way of doing this (the other side of the coin being that initially they were frightened not to comply). Getting into positions in the (pro-management) trade union had been another route to the same end. The 'sticking together' and the complicity with management both served to undermine solidarity with non- Muhacir Bulgarian workers. However, as the trend to smaller households continues and the family support structure is weakened, the Muhacir Bulgarians may in due course become more like their local fellow workers. A union official from DISK (Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu), which

organised one of the factories, put forward the view that such a weakening of family support might stimulate the Muhacir Bulgarians' interest in the union.

Further research is clearly in order into the Muhacir-Bulgarian work relations which have been the focus here and also of course into non-work aspects. For example, there is scope to investigate to what extent the Muhacir Bulgarians have now opened up other paths to advancement through some of them occupying positions of authority. Not least there is need for further detailed comparison of the position of Muhacir-Bulgarian and other Turkish women in the household and indeed in work. Already, though, it seems that several work-related changes are underway. Managers complain that Bulgarian men are beginning to relax a bit at work; and Bulgarian women workers – praised by many managers for their hard work and acceptance of managerial authority – are now criticised by some of them for playing the labour market.

TABLES

Table 1

Earners in Turkish and Muhacir Bulgarian Households

Percentage	Turks N=303	Muhacir Bulgarians N=53
No other earners other than worker interviewed	66	11
One other earner	29	74
Two or more earners	5	15

Table 2

How Got Present Job: Turks and Muhacir Bulgarians

Percentage	Turks N=303	Muhacir Bulgarians N=53
Formal application	44	32
Through relatives	24	43
Through friends	20	13
Through torpil	7	9
Other	5	4

Table 3

Education of Turks and Muhacir Bulgarians

Percentage	Turks N=293	Muhacir Bulgarians N=53
Primary	26	4
Junior Secondary	13	13
Senior Secondary and above	61	83

Table 4

Education of Turks and Muhacir Bulgarians – Women Only

Percentage	Turks N=51	Muhacir Bulgarians N=30
Primary	45	7
Junior Secondary	16	20
Senior Secondary and above	39	73

NOTES

Authors' Note: This paper arises from the ESRC financed project R000237766 'Change in Management Strategy and Employee Relations in Turkish Manufacturing'.

ⁱ J. Vasileva, "Bulgarian Turkish Emigration and Return" *International Migration Review*: (1992): 26, 2.

ⁱⁱ Ibid., 347.

ⁱⁱⁱ H. Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict*, (London: Minority Rights Group, 1993), 124,130-137.

^{iv} E. J. Zurcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, (London: IB Tauris, 1997), 333.

^v K. Kirisci, "Post Second World War Immigration from Balkan Countries to Turkey" *New Perspectives on Turkey*, (Spring 1995),12, 67.

^{vi} J. Vasileva, 'Bulgarian Turkish Emigration and Return'., 348-349

^{vii} P.A. Andrews, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey* (Gottingen: Hubert and Company, 1989), 94.

^{viii} Z. Parlak, "Restructuring in the Turkish Car Industry: Technology, Work and Employment", Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, Department of Sociology (1996), 129.

^{ix} M. Cinar, G. Evcimen and M. Kaytaz, "The Present Day Status of Small Scale Industries (Sanatkar) in Bursa, Turkey", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 20. (1988), 287-301, p.291

^x A. Ipekyun, (1997) *Bursa: Ekonomik Açıdan Bir Değerlendirme*, (Bursa: Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Yayınları, 1997), 78, 81, 94, 147.

^{xi} Survey evidence from the 1970s cited by Poulton, *The Balkans.*,125, indicates ethnic Turks in Bulgaria were more religious than Bulgarians, but it also showed that nearly 40 per cent of them were 'uncertain', 'passive atheists' or 'active atheists'. Such figures for non-believers might have been inflated by a prudent regard to Bulgarian official policy on religion – but anything approaching this figure would be totally surprising if produced by a survey of Turks in Turkey.

^{xii} As Ecevit has also reported the spinning areas are a female domain, whereas the dyeing sections are a male domain (apart from female cleaners). Y. Ecevit, "Shop-Floor Control: The Ideological Construction of Turkish Women Factory Workers" in *Working Women: International Perspectives on Labour and Gender Ideology*, eds. N. Redclift and T. Sinclair (London: Routledge, 1991), 62, 56-78.

^{xiii} T. Nichols, N. Sugur, and E. Demir, (2001) *The Production and Reproduction of Trade Union Autocracy in the Turkish Metalworking Industry*, (Cardiff: Cardiff University Working Paper 10, 2001), 1-23.

^{xiv} Just over half of the Muhacir Bulgarians in our sample were women workers, but the wives of Muhacir Bulgarian male workers were also more likely to work. 42 per cent of Bulgarian men had wives who worked compared to only 10 per cent of other Turks.

^{xv} Y. Ecevit 'Shop Floor Control'., 60, found that 51 per cent of the wives in her study earned as much or more as their husbands.

^{xvi} Ibid. p. 59.

^{xvii} In the two textile firms we asked married women workers (N=50) how decisions were made about their wages. Over 9 out of 10 of the Muhacir Bulgarian women claimed to make decisions jointly with their husbands compared to 2 out of 3 Turkish women.

^{xviii} Although workers with rural links sometimes received food in the form of vegetables, fruit, pickles, eggs, butter, börek etc these were not important in relation to their main source of income and there were very few cases indeed in which either the Muhacir Bulgarians or the Turkish workers had any significant income from rent or agricultural activities.

^{xix} P. Stirling, ed. *Culture and Economy: Change in Turkish Villages*, (Huntingdon: The Eothen Press, 1994), 12. On the political aspect of this see A. Güneş-Ayata, 'Class and Clientelism in the Republican People's Party' in A. Finkel and N. Sirman eds. *Turkish State: Turkish Society*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 159-183.