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THE CULT OF THE PEASANT: IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICE, TURKEY 1930-1946

DISSertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, B.S, M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University
1999

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Carter V. Findley, Adviser
Associate Professor Jane Hathaway
Professor Kenneth Andrien

Approved by

Carter V. Findley
Adviser
Department of History
ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the cult of the peasant, advocated by the Turkish ruling elite as the most important constituent element of Kemalist populism from the early 1930s through the end of World War II. Embodied in the so-called peasantist [köyceğ] ideology and practices, the advocates in Turkey of the cult of the peasant, among other things, denied class-based ideologies; aspired to a static, undifferentiated society; attempted to find a mass base for nationalism in a predominantly agrarian country while preempting grass-roots movements; feared and vilified socialist revolution; recognized the need to respond to the demands of the agrarian population in the troubled times of the Great Depression; aimed to consolidate the conservatism of the regime by relying on the supposedly conservative fabric of the Turkish peasants; and inspired a nationalist myth-making process that sought the "real" Turk in villages. In light of the intellectual history of the peasantist ideology, this study examines the People's Houses, the Village Institutes, land reform, and the literature of early Republican era; and by so doing, challenges conventional historiographical assessments about these issues. The peasantist activities of the People's Houses ended in a fiasco because of its inherent bureaucratic and elitist nature. The Village Institutes, although started with conservative concerns, turned out to
challenge the limits of governing elite's populist tolerance, and perhaps because of this reason they were closed. Likewise, the land reform attempts of the single-party regime, contrary to what have been argued about them, were attempts to attach the peasants to their villages, broaden the size of the propertied peasant class, limit mobility in the countryside and immigration to the cities, and prevent the spread of leftist and radical movements by winning the support of small peasants. The overall conclusion from these different, but related intellectual pursuits and practices points to the fact that such peasantist practices of the single-party regime should be perceived as a "conservative" rather than a "progressive" modernization. The dissertation also discusses the peasantist ideologies of Germany and Bulgaria of the inter-war era in order to shed light into the peculiarities of the Turkish case.
Anne ve Babama
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VITA

December 15, 1966........................Born - Ankara, Turkey

1989...........................................B.S. Electronic Engineering,
Boğaziçi University

1991 - 1993................................Research Associate
Boğaziçi University

1992..........................................M.A. History,
Boğaziçi University

1993 - 1997.................................Graduate Teaching and Research
Associate, The Ohio State University

1998 - present.............................Presidential Fellow

PUBLICATIONS

1. "The People's Houses and the Cult of the Peasant in Turkey." Middle

2. "The People’s Houses and the Cult of the Peasant in Turkey." in Turkey

2. "The Village Institute Experience in Turkey." British Journal of Middle

3. "Köy Enstitüleri Üzerine Düşünceler (Thoughts on the Village Institutes)."

4. "Bir Tepeden Reform Denemesi: Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu'nun
Hikayesi (Reform from Above: The Story of Land Reform)." Birikim, 107 (March 1998):
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

"Orda,
bir köy var uzakta,
gitmesek de,
görmesek de,
o köy bizim köyümüzdür."

When I was having my primary and secondary school education in Turkey in the 1970s, one of the songs that we learnt and repeatedly sang in class started with the above saying: "There, far away, is a village; even if we do not go there, even if we do not see it; it still is our village." As students of Kemalist training, we rarely questioned the meaning of this song. We perhaps believed that there was nothing wrong in claiming those villages as ours, even if we could ignore them. Later on I realized that the mentality inherent in songs like these in fact represented the populist attitude of Kemalism: too much talk about "the people," but so few achievements for them. The curiosity to understand this contradictory situation provided an incentive for me to pursue a critical study of Turkish populism, especially as it related to the peasants, who constituted the majority of the populace until the 1980s.

Populism has been one of the most important constituent pillars of the single-party ideology in Turkey. Indeed, as a concept populism existed in the Republican People's Party program, was accepted as one of the six main principles of the new regime.
and was written into the constitution in 1937.¹ Despite its unquestionable importance and widespread use, Turkish populism remains one of the least studied topics both in Turkey and elsewhere. Except for a few articles in Turkish,² there are almost no comprehensive studies available about Turkish populism, especially in Western languages. But, populism has been examined in theoretical and comparative studies, to a great extent in the cases of Russian and Latin American histories. These studies have enabled historians to question many conventional historiographical views and gain new insights into the histories of these countries. In Turkey, however, although populism is extremely important for understanding modern Turkish history in general, and the nature of the Turkish single-party regime in particular, it still awaits in-depth analyses and research, and this study, in part, aims to fulfill such a task.

But, what did populism mean in Turkey? Is it an ideology created by the people? In a country with a large peasant majority, is it an ideology of the peasants? The idea that populism is a way for the elites to talk about the populace, rather than for the populace to talk about itself, will not be immediately obvious to readers who have not done a lot of research on this topic.

From the outset it has to be pointed out that populism was not a social and political mass movement in Turkey. It rather embraced a state-sponsored ideology and practices from above to manipulate and control potential social movements; to broaden the mass base of the regime, to camouflage class differences in the name of a "classless" society, and to mask the elitism of the ruling circles of the Kemalist regime. But none of these and other statements on Turkish populism can be understood without looking at the
Kemalist perceptions of and policies toward the peasants, who in the early years of the Turkish Republic made up almost 80 percent of the population. More importantly, the so-called peasantist [köycü] ideology and practices, which gained wide currency among the Turkish intelligentsia during the single-party era, offer invaluable opportunities to reevaluate the place of populism in Turkish history. For this reason, any study like this aiming to shed light on Turkish populism during the early Republican era should take the peasantist ideology and practices as a point of departure in understanding Kemalist populism.

Moreover, the role of the peasantist ideology, the perceptions and practices inspired by it, are essential to enhance our knowledge of the peasantry-related issues, and of the intellectual history of the early Republican era. In a nutshell, peasantist ideologies stressed the importance of the values of rural life in an age of urbanization and industrialization. In Turkey, the peasantist ideology, among other things, denied class-based ideologies; aspired to a static, undifferentiated society; attempted to find a mass base for nationalism in a predominantly agrarian country; feared and vilified socialist revolution; recognized the need to respond to the demands of the agrarian population in the troubled times of the Great Depression; created a vulgar anti-intellectualism, though ironically it was produced by intellectuals; and inspired a nationalist myth-making process that sought the "real" Turk in villages.

This study argues that the role of the peasantist ideology (Köycüliğ) in Turkish intellectual history has been underestimated in most historical studies on modern Turkey, although contemporaries were well aware of its significance, not only for Turkey, but
also for the rest of the world, as similar concerns emerged everywhere. The eminent
historian of the single-party regime, Ömer Lütfi Barkan, made the following observations
in 1935 that clearly depict the situation:

Today even the most leading industrialized countries take all kinds of precautions
by jealously preserving peasant life against the proletariat, which shows
internationalist and revolutionary trends, and against the political currents, which
desire to pull the peasants into the cities, and evacuate the countryside. In order to
do so, they consider villages and village life the abundant and clear resource of
national life and the means for social stability. They have been forced to engage
in this endeavor also because of the recent world affairs. Today everywhere there
emerges an agrarian politics because of the gradual closing of the open markets
for exchanging men and commodities. Due to political and social security
concerns, regimes attempt to attach people... to the land in order to guarantee the
production of foodstuffs in case of war. Even in Western countries, which once
enjoyed the profits coming from the colonies thanks to their industrial power, the
idea of returning to the "mother land" and relying on it; cultivating the majority of
the arable lands as much as possible; locating the unemployed in these lands, and
easing the tariff policy in favor of the farmers in order to protect and mobilize
them have become very important. In this way, the ideologies of the middle and
rural classes have found an appropriate ground, and have begun occupying a
central place in the internal politics of the states.³

Barkan wrote these sentences not simply to present his observations about the
changing socio-political climate in the world. He and many contemporaries observed
similar tendencies in Turkey of the 1930s and 1940s as well. They were not content,
however, just with a description of the situation of the time, but also drew lessons from
this experience, and moreover, intellectually contributed to what they thought could be a
proper social and economic policy for Turkey as well.

Little attention has been devoted to the role and place of the peasantist ideology in
Turkish history. Except for a few articles in Turkish that elaborate on the peasantist
ideology, it is difficult to find a comprehensive study on the issue.⁴ However, during the
single-party era the peasantist ideology was extensively advocated by the ruling elite of
the Kemalist regime. A variety of fears became effective in formulating the peasantist ideology: the dissolution of the traditional rural structure; potential grass roots peasant movements that could lead to social revolution because of the growing number of landless peasants (a phenomenon that swept eastern Europe and the Balkans in the aftermath of World War I); the transformation of the peasants into the proletariat; immigration to the cities; liberal, socialist and radical ideologies; and the like, each of which could threaten the Kemalist regime, or, at least, could pave the way for increasing demands for expanding political participation that could challenge the power monopoly of the ruling Kemalist elite. Each of these points will be examined in detail throughout this dissertation, but suffice it to say that viewed in this way, what was expected from the peasantist ideology—the most significant aspect of Kemalist populism—in fact, ironically and paradoxically, was to serve to legitimize the elitism of the Kemalist regime.

The underestimation of the peasantist ideology has also created distorted views on many of the extremely important historical topics of the single-party era, especially because these topics have been used as the cornerstones of the official Kemalist historiography. Most scholarly works on the early Republican era failed to relate some of the most controversial historical practices to the peasantist ideology. The Village Institutes experience of the 1930s and 1940s is a good case in point. This experience has been presented as one of the most important populist achievements of the single-party era. The village Institutes project was presumably a progressive modernist project that aimed at the total transformation of the Turkish countryside. As such this experience was exalted as a progressive reform. But a closer look at this experience in light of the
peasantist ideology, which we shall attempt in chapter four of this dissertation, will enable us to question the official interpretations, and help us take into account a variety of factors at work in understanding the real nature of the Institutes. Similarly, the discussions revolving around the land reform attempts of the single-party era can be interpreted quite differently if the impact of the peasantist ideology is taken into account. By so doing, it is possible to consider the idea and practice of land reform as part of a conservative peasantist project, contrary to the mainstream interpretations of land reform that have praised it for its inherently progressive and radical character. In short, our emphasis in this dissertation on the role and significance of the peasantist ideology offers new insights in understanding many controversial issues relevant to populism and the peasant question in the first decades of the Turkish Republic.

Hence, to highlight the importance of the peasantist ideology from the late 1920s onwards is crucial. It enables us to shatter many Turkish intellectuals' perception of Kemalism as a program of progressive modernization. Niyazi Berkes's classic work *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* and Doğan Avcıoğlu's influential *Türkiye'nin Düzeni* are renowned examples of such a perspective. In fact, as this study will discuss, cherishing the Kemalist regime of the single-party era simply as a progressive regime is a one-sided way of looking at the history of the early Republican Period. This one-sidedness stems from the underestimation of the conservative dimensions of the Kemalist ideology. In this respect, too, the peasantist ideology is quite important, for it exemplifies and embodies many conservative aspirations.
In a country like Turkey, whose population until recently lived in the countryside, it is odd that the peasantist dimensions of the ruling Kemalist ideology were underestimated. As historian Eric Hobsbawm recently wrote, Turkey was the only "peasant stronghold" that "remained in or around the neighborhood of Europe and the Middle East" where "the peasantry declined, but in the mid-1980s, still remained an absolute majority." But is it only the structural reasons such as economic backwardness, the role of imperialist penetration and the like that contributed to the predominance until recently of the peasantry in Turkey? Did not subjective factors such as ideas and culture have a role in shaping and reproducing this phenomenon? In fact they did. We know that the role and impact of ideas are essential, for they are the factors which affect the specific ways of historical development, especially when they inspire political movements or become institutionalized as part of a state policy. In this regard, the peasantist ideology of the early formative years of Republican period should be investigated carefully to determine whether it contributed to the predominance of the peasantry in Turkey. Such an attempt to examine the role of the peasantist ideology in Turkey's prolonged rural preeminence even has current implications, since the consequences of being an overwhelmingly peasant country have had great impact on the social and intellectual life of twentieth-century Turkey. This is all the more important, since not many intellectuals have been interested in taking into account the fact that Turkey had been a "peasant country" in their analyses of the relatively retarded development in Turkey of urban and civic values, and therefore of democracy; of the slow pace of industrialization that was largely state-controlled anyway; of the cultural downgrading of intellectual pursuits; of
the immense potential of conservative and religious ideologies; of the remarkably low level of agricultural production and of many other issues.

********

This dissertation consists of eight chapters including the introduction and the conclusion. In the second chapter, I take a look at the Ottoman background to understand populism and peasantism in Turkey. As known, there has been a very dominant tendency in Turkish historiography, especially strong during the early years of the Republic, to attribute the principles of populism and peasantism exclusively to the Republican era. This is perhaps an inclination on the part of many historians to exalt the new Republic at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. But in fact, peasantist and populist ideologies emerged already in the late Ottoman Empire. Therefore, in this chapter, I discuss and document the growing concern among the Ottoman intelligentsia about populism and the peasantry. In particular, I emphasize the role of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution which, historiographically, still awaits the attention it deserves. In this way, I try to show that there emerged in the late Ottoman Empire a populist outlook, which was never exclusively a Republican invention.

Moreover, chapter two sheds light on the Ottoman background as a means of understanding the origins of Turkish populism and its contradictory and changing nature. In the midst of Revolution, competing nationalisms, World War I and the struggle for independence, the content and expectations of populism continuously changed. I assess this changing attitude towards populism and towards the concept of the "people" in its historical and intellectual context. Also taken into account is the impact of several
nineteenth-century ideological and political influences on the Ottoman ruling elite, especially that of Russian Populism.

In chapter two, special emphasis goes to the role of populism and peasantism in the making of nationalism. As far as the Ottoman intelligentsia was concerned, two nationalist viewpoints emerged after the 1908 Revolution. One of them was a kind of Muslim nationalism supported by most of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) leaders (the ruling Young Turk political elite), who formulated and used an Ottomanism blended with Islamism. Although a large literature claims that the CUP, in practice, adopted Turkish nationalism as early as 1908, I maintain that as long as the Empire existed, an imperial ideology was needed, and the ruling elite found it in Muslim Ottomanism, excluding the Christian communities, most of whom were seeking separatism anyway. On the other hand, some intellectuals, especially those coming from Russia, advocated a Turkish nationalism close to that of the early Republican period. I trace the way in which the supporters of these ideologies tried to incorporate populism and peasantism into their political and ideological goals.

In the third chapter, I focus on the peasantist ideology during the 1930s. In order to do so, I look specifically at the People's Houses, the propaganda organs of the single-party regime, which mobilized the most prominent intellectuals loyal to the regime. After a brief discussion of the historical context and events that paved the way for the establishment of the People's Houses together with the rise of the peasantist ideology, I present and discuss the peasantist activities of the time. The discussion then continues with the intellectual characteristics of the peasantist ideology including anti-urbanism,
anti-industrialism, and the glorification of villages and village people. I then address the peasantist ideology's relation to Turkish nationalism, westernization and education. Also considered will be the major controversies revolving around the peasantist ideology in the mid-1930s. This period marked a turning point in that while the intellectuals' emphasis of the peasantist movement slowed down, the government itself attempted to achieve significant peasantist goals as embodied in the Village Institutes and land reform, which constitute the themes of the later chapters. I conclude this chapter with an evaluation of the peasantist activities of the People's Houses and of the possible implications of the peasantist ideology.

While the second and third chapters of the dissertation emphasize the intellectual aspects of populism and peasantism, the fourth chapter examines an extremely important ideological state apparatus, the Village Institutes, which were schools designed to raise the level of education in rural areas while transforming the Turkish countryside. Elaborating on such an institution is crucial, for ideologies are materialized in institutions, especially if they belong to the state. These institutions are impossible to appreciate without taking into account the peasantist ideology. Even today this Village Institute experiment remains an issue of controversy. Modern interpreters, I argue, fail to understand the real nature of the Kemalist elite's growing interest in rural issues beginning in the 1930s, and underestimate the ideology of peasantism. I therefore first analyze the historical and intellectual context of the period, and present the development of the idea of the Institutes. The chapter addresses the financial necessities that could be compensated by the Institutes, the role of "learning by doing" as an educational
perspective, and the implications of this educational philosophy including the expectations of "educating the peasants by the peasants." I also examine the extent to which the Institutes used forced labor, their role in the consolidation of Turkish nationalism, and whether they aimed to challenge the power relations in the countryside. Having discussed the significant characteristics of the Institutes, the chapter goes on to take into account different interpretations in regard to the closing of the Institutes by the very same people who founded them. I devote a significant part of the chapter to offering a new theoretical interpretation of the Institutes, including a critique of the widespread explanations that have so long dominated the theoretical literature on the issue. As the main argument of the chapter, I propose that the Institutes evolved in such a way that their consequences contradicted the original expectations about them. This contradiction, however, outraged most segments of the ruling elite, and politicized the issue incredibly for decades to come.

Like the Village Institutes, the attempts at and discussions on land reform have aroused major controversies in Turkish history. Because land reform has been considered one of the most important topics that reveals the significance of the peasantist ideology, I focus on this topic in chapter five. Why the Turkish ruling elite wanted to accomplish a land reform has still not been adequately understood, for there have been a number of controversial, and often contradictory, historiographical interpretations of the issue. Therefore, elaborating specifically on the elite perceptions of land reform is essential, since they are as important as the actual state policies if we want to understand the motives behind the land reform. The thesis of this chapter is that, despite the mainstream
approaches relevant to land reform in Turkish historiography, the land reform attempts of
the single-party era embodied a conservative endeavor to attach the peasantry to the land
because of the elite's deeply rooted fear of a Turkish society, which could be socially
diverse, urbanized and industrialized. Such a perspective, as I will show, resonated with
the main premises of the peasantist ideology. I argue that the drawbacks of the previous
interpretations stem from looking only at the short-term, contemporary events
surrounding the issue. In other words, these interpretations, for the most part, have
disregarded the historical background of the idea itself from the 1930s onwards, as well
as the ideology of peasantism, which, in fact, had much to do with the issue. This
chapter, in this respect, takes into consideration the ideological background of the ruling
elite in order to elucidate the actual motives behind land reform. In addition to all these, I
address the question of consolidating Turkish nationalism in rural Turkey, especially in
the mainly Kurdish-speaking region, so as to understand the real nature of land reform.
In short, in this chapter I aim to challenge the mainstream interpretations relating to the
Turkish land reform attempts, and offer a different one by connecting the long- and short-
term causes of land reform.

In chapter six, the focus continues to be on elite perceptions of the peasantry, this
time on the literary works of three distinguished figures from the early Republican era:
Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Sabahattin Ali, and Memduh Şevket Esendal, none of
whom was a peasant. I argue that one can see the traces of a peasantist framework in the
way in which these writers constructed the image of the peasant in their significant
works. I scrutinize these literary works for signs of the main characteristics of
peasantism—such as a "backward-looking," static, undifferentiated vision of social formation, anti-intellectualism, and the glorification of the rural world.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I attempt to locate the peasantist ideology in a comparative perspective. This is because throughout the interwar years it is possible to observe similar ideologies in many parts of the world, even in the strongholds of urbanization and industrialization such as the USA. In this chapter, for comparative purposes, I elaborate on two countries which, I believe, are quite exemplary: Germany and Bulgaria. The Germany of the interwar years under the National Socialist regime witnessed an extensive use of a peasantist rhetoric exalting rural values and economy while discrediting urban life and industrialization. Likewise, Bulgaria under Stamboliski's peasantist movement underwent an interesting experience, which has been considered one of the most important peasantist regimes after World War I. These two experiences also had some impact on or similarities with the peasantist thinking in Turkey. The necessity of putting the subject matter in a comparative perspective revolves around two considerations: on the one hand, a comparative perspective enables us to be more aware of both the singularities and the similarities of the Turkish case in relation to other historical examples. On the other hand, the Turkish case will make it possible for us to challenge and, in so doing, to contribute to the analysis of ideologies of the 1930s in general.

In the conclusion of this dissertation, I discuss some of the broader historiographical views as they relate to the ways in which the peasant question was presented and discussed in early Republican Turkey. I would like to question to what
extent the peasantist ideas and practices could challenge the widespread interpretations of
the nature of the Kemalist regime. In particular, I want to address whether it is correct to
characterize Kemalism as a progressive modernization project or not. Likewise, I will
emphasize the reasons why peasantism and populism should be related to the attempts at
preempting mass mobilizations rather than to genuine democratic undertakings.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1 Other official principles of the Kemalist regime were etatism, republicanism, secularism, reformism and nationalism.


7 Two recent studies have successfully challenged the widely-believed dogmas about the 1908 Revolution: Hasan Kayali's *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), and Aykut Kansu's *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997).

CHAPTER 2
HOW DID THE OTTOMAN INTELLIGENTSIA DISCOVER "THE PEOPLE"?

Before presenting and discussing the peasantist ideology and its impact on some of the most important practices in regard to the peasantry during the Republican era, it is necessary that we take into account the Ottoman origins of this ideology. At the outset, it should be noted that there was no clear-cut, well-defined, systematic ideology of peasantism in the late Ottoman Empire. Rather, we have the emergence of a populist outlook, in which themes concerning the peasantry and rural life can be discerned. For this reason, in this chapter, instead of restricting ourselves only to peasantism, we shall consider a broader domain, that is, populism. However important it is to broaden our domain of investigation, there are problems stemming from the terribly confusing nature of the concept of populism. It is difficult to stick to a particular, broadly-accepted, and operationally functional definition of populism. The reason for this, as Angus Stewart points out, is that "a certain shapelessness in ideas and organizations is inherent in populism." One well-known definition suggested by Vladimir Lenin and Andrzej Walicki perceives populism as "a protest against capitalism from the point of view of the small immediate producers who, being ruined by capitalist development, saw in it only a retrogression but, at the same time, demanded the abolition of the older, feudal forms of exploitation." This definition sees populism "as a particular variant of an ideological
pattern, which emerges in different backward societies in periods of transition, and reflects the characteristic class position of the peasantry" (Italics mine). But this is a "backward-looking," peasant-oriented, and class-reductionist definition. It conceives populism as the ideological reflection of a particular social class. Instead, I suggest that the emergence of a particular kind of intelligentsia and its needs to consolidate itself be the constituent element in the definition of populism. Such a populism embraces the discovery of the notion of the people, among them the peasants, by and for the intelligentsia in the absence of grass roots peasant movements. Because of this, most populist attempts, especially that of the late Ottoman era, were at best ideas and practices about the people and the peasants, not by them. Therefore, the story we are telling here is the story of the intelligentsia and its intellectual evolution towards a populist outlook.

For the formation of such a populist outlook and its change over time during the late Ottoman Empire, we need to take a look at several factors that contributed to this process. First of all, there was the impact of the world-wide intellectual and political movements of the late nineteenth century. Secondly, the necessities of policy-making before and after the 1908 Revolution played an essential role in this regard. Thirdly, the emergence of a new kind of intelligentsia is a factor that should be taken into account in understanding the development of populist ideas. Fourthly, and probably the most important of all, the rise of the nationalist ideology and movement among the Ottoman Muslims had a great impact on the rise of populism. And finally, the troubled times of continuing wars from 1911 through 1922 helped create a historical context for
discovering the peasants, and thereby a populist ideology. We shall start with the global impact.

2.1. The Intellectual Impact of the Late Nineteenth Century

The world as a "global village" emerged in the nineteenth century. The century witnessed the emergence of competing ideologies, new and different political activities, mass politics, the rise and decline of several empires, and above all, global interactions between nations, regions, intellectuals, political groups and the like. The Ottoman Empire certainly did not constitute an exception. For this reason, in order to shed light on the discovery of the peasants and the rise of populist ideas and attitudes in the Ottoman Empire, we need to take into consideration the impact of the global changes on the late nineteenth-century Ottoman elite, especially as they relate to the dissemination of ideologies.

It is necessary to examine the influence of especially two movements that helped shape the formation of populist ideology in the Ottoman Empire: Russian Populism and the "Internal Organization" of the Macedonian Bulgars. The Young Turks, who were a group of intellectuals and militants consisting not only of Turks but also Jews, Albanians, Arabs, Kurds, etc., were influenced by these movements in their struggle against the Ottoman autocracy. Stressing these influences in no way means that the Young Turks simply copied their ideologies or shared identical views and organizational activities. Certainly their own conditions and historical experiences, in the final analysis,
determined the characteristics of Young Turk political ideas and activities. Yet, it is equally important to stress that the Young Turks also drew influences from the cosmopolitan intellectual milieu of the Ottoman Empire. Stressing this is all the more important given the persistent dominance of Turkish historiographical attitudes claiming the uniqueness of anything Turkish.

The influence of Russian Populism came through two channels, the Armenians and the Tatars. Most of the Armenian revolutionary movements, in and outside of the Ottoman Empire, had been enormously influenced by Russian Populism. The founders of the famous Hunchakian Revolutionary Party, for instance, were "strongly influenced by the Russian Narodniki [Populism]." All of the founding members of the Party "were either born in Russia or educated there, and all were well acquainted with Russian revolutionary populism." Even the name "Hunchak" was the counterpart of Kolokol, "the bell," which was the name of the renowned Russian populist Alexander Herzen's famous journal. According to the Hunchaks, winning the active support of the peasants and workers was absolutely essential for their revolutionary goals. The populist notions of "going to the people" and educating them for revolution, signified two important aspects of Hunchak propaganda.

One should not be surprised to see the circulation of similar ideas among the Ottoman/Muslim elite because of the collaboration between the Armenian revolutionary movements and the Young Turks. The evidence for their collaboration is ample. Both the Hunchaks and the Dashnaks, a federation of Armenian revolutionary movements, actively supported the Young Turks against their common enemy, Sultan Abdülhamid's
autocratic rule.⁹ For instance, we know that "the first congress of Ottoman liberals, attended by Turkish, Arab, Greek, Kurdish, Armenian, Albanian, Circassian, and Jewish representatives, convened in Paris" as early as 1902.¹⁰ The cooperation culminated in a secret agreement in 1907 between the Dashnaks and the Young Turks' Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) at the initiative of the former.¹¹ According to Tekeli and İlkin, these two movements, the Armenian and Young Turk movements, affected each other while developing within their own specific dynamics.¹² Therefore, given their close cooperation with the Armenian movements, which were deeply influenced by Russian Populism, the populist connection in the Ottoman Empire was already well-established.

Another indirect influence of Russian Populism came with the eminent Tatar Turks such as İsmail Gasprinsky, Yusuf Akçura and Hüseyinzade Ali. Almost all of their biographies illustrate the deep impact of the Russian intellectual milieu, particularly of Populism, in their intellectual formation. The impact of these emigré Turks, although they had nothing to do with the endorsement of a revolutionary social movement such as the Russian populists, was quite important in formulating Turkish nationalism. In the way they envisioned and formulated nationalism, we can discern the impact of Russian Populism. They were the ones who equated "the people" with the lower classes, the peasantry foremost among them. Unlike the mainstream Ottoman intellectuals, such as Ziya Gökalp, who simply perceived "the people" as the whole nation, they underlined the significance of gaining the hearts and minds of the Turkish peasantry, alongside the nationalist bourgeoisie, as a prerequisite for the emergence of nationalism.
Finally, the impact of the "Internal Organization" should be taken into account as far as the Young Turks' encounter with populist ideas and their discovery of the peasantry are concerned. The "Internal Organization" advocated the autonomy of Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire, and the emancipation of the peasants through social revolution.\textsuperscript{13} Its emphasis on the mobilization of the peasants and on social revolution clearly shows its populist orientation.\textsuperscript{14} The Organization took part in the preparation and conduct of the 1903 peasant rebellion in the Manastir region, in which the peasants burnt and destroyed the manors of landowners.\textsuperscript{15} The rebellion erupted with widespread peasant participation.

The Young Turks encountered the "Internal Organization"\textsuperscript{16} in Macedonia, where cosmopolitanism dominated all aspects of social life.\textsuperscript{17} One can easily notice the influence of this movement on the Young Turks as exemplified in an interview with Enver Pasha. As Enver Pasha told an acute contemporary observer of the Ottoman Empire, H. R. Buxton, "We have studied other revolutions. I myself had studied very closely the Internal Organisation of the Macedonian Bulgars. I admired it, and it gave us many hints."\textsuperscript{18}

The Young Turks were therefore influenced to a considerable degree by the Populist ideologies of the late nineteenth century, especially by Russian Populism, which represented the important populist movement in the world at the time. However, in their journey to the discovery of the peasants, practical political necessities played an essential role, especially the events before and after the 1908 Revolution. Therefore, we should now move on to the role of the revolution in this regard.
2.2. The Peasants for the Revolution

With the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, there emerged in the Ottoman Empire a modern way of making politics, aiming, probably for the first time in Ottoman history, to mobilize the people in general, and the peasants in particular. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire, under the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid, faced a series of internal and external crises that paved the way for the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. These crises not only provided the objective basis of the revolution, but also stimulated the creation of new social forces of opposition. Political repression, the economic distress of the majority of the Ottomans, the destructive impact of European imperialist penetration, the humiliating effects of the persistent loss of territories, and intense inter-imperialist rivalry, all spurred the Ottoman intelligentsia to create a mass mobilization in their struggle against Sultan Abdülhamid's autocracy.

The economic discontent of the Ottoman people played a crucial role in promoting this new politics. Not only the domestic economic situation, but also international economic interventions contributed to the people's discontent. Many people in the Ottoman Empire suffered from foreign economic penetration, though a minority benefited from it. Specific foreign-controlled institutions, such as the Public Debt Organization and Regié tobacco monopoly, operated to exclude many Ottomans from vast areas of economic activity. The result was that thousands of people, be they producers or merchants, went out of business. Thanks to the general economic discontent of the people, on the eve of the 1908 Revolution we can observe sporadic peasant protests
for the betterment of their economic conditions. As Donald Quataert notes, rural unrest was not a very exceptional phenomenon in Anatolia:

In the carpetmaking center at Uşak in March 1908, village spinners marched into the town and sacked three mechanized spinning mills that jeopardized their livelihoods. The revolt combined rural and urban dissidents and persisted until the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. Peasant discontent was constant but usually required some outside variable to erupt in open revolt or insurrection. These demonstrations eloquently expressed the weakened legitimacy of the state and helped pave the way for the Young Turk seizure of power.

Likewise, the peasants resented the high taxes. A contemporary observer, H. R. Buxton, writing in 1909, makes it clear that there was great hostility toward the heavy taxes among the people, since "the taxes, nominally light, were increased by the extortion of the tax farmers. Sometimes they would refuse a receipt, and then collect the tax a second, a third, and even a fourth time; and the utmost brutality was used." In 1906, for instance, people in Erzurum province refused to pay taxes, causing such widespread unrest in the region that the governor had to be recalled to appease the population. Buxton gives accounts of widespread resentment in Anatolia of the state. He mentions the conditions of the unpaid soldiers, abundant bribery in Istanbul, and the belief among the people that "no great improvement will be affected without war."

In the same vein, the manifestos of the Congress convened by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in collaboration with other oppositional forces from the non-Muslim communities in 1907 reveal the general conditions in Anatolia. Some of the manifestos claimed that the taxes were unfair, that the internal passport regulation
impeded trade, that the confiscation of all peasant resources was leading to the deterioration of agricultural production, and so on.\textsuperscript{22}

The economic slump in the Ottoman Empire before the revolution, coupled with the international inflationary wave of 1907, eased the tasks of the intelligentsia, creating the milieu in which they could organize "the people." The Unionists, in particular, agitated wherever they could. They encouraged, for instance, labor unrest during strikes in big cities such as Istanbul and İzmir, together with agitation among the workers, promising them a better life after the revolution.\textsuperscript{23}

The economic discontent, in conjunction with Sultan Abdülhamid's political repression, was important for the revolution; yet the problem of mass support remained. To cope with this problem, the Unionists increased their efforts among the peasantry, as well as the low-level officers everywhere, especially in the Balkans.\textsuperscript{24} According to Kazım Karabekir's memoirs, the peasants responded quite positively to the propaganda of the secret societies.\textsuperscript{25} It was enough for the peasants," he noted, "to hear short sentences such as, "Everything will be alright when Freedom comes." Thus, "it was not difficult," writes Karabekir, "to ask them for military undertakings, and to make them do whatever we wanted."\textsuperscript{25}

Similarly, Buxton, in his memoirs, reports evidence that the Unionists tried their best to recruit the peasants to their side. He himself witnessed the Unionists agitating among the peasants.\textsuperscript{26} This can be seen in his portrayal of Enver Pasha just before the revolution:
Assuming the dress of a peasant, and allowing his beard to grow, he travelled rapidly from place to place, now collecting groups of villagers and explaining the situation to them.  

In sum, for the first time in its history, the elitist Ottoman intelligentsia discovered "the people," thereby the peasants. Of course, this does not start exactly in the 1900s. Many intellectuals and statesmen had similar concerns during the nineteenth century. But the stimulus given by the course of events leading to the 1908 Revolution marked a turning point in the elite's search for mass support. The Young Turks desperately needed the revolution, and the revolution needed the support of "the people." Although such a conjunctural necessity played an important role in this change of attitude on the part of the intelligentsia, there were also long-term and structural causes that paved the way for the intelligentsia to side, more and more, with the people.

2.3. The Peasants for the Intelligentsia

Regardless of the short-term necessity of siding with the "people," the creation of a new kind of intelligentsia, which was a world-wide nineteenth-century phenomenon, changed the way in which the intelligentsia defined its relations with "the people." In the late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, a new kind of intelligentsia emerged that can best be defined by its differences, not only from the "traditional" elites, but also from the "bourgeois" intellectuals of western Europe. This new phenomenon, as exemplified in many other countries, coincided with the rise of the "modern" state. As internal and
inter-state necessities forced the Ottoman *ancien regime* to undergo a modernization movement, the role of the intelligentsia grew. However, from the state's point of view, there was a huge dilemma. On the one hand, the state elite insisted on sustaining the status quo while at the same time giving impetus to modernization attempts. The interesting concurrence of Abdülhamid's police state and his modernization attempts clearly exemplifies the situation. Such was also the case in late nineteenth-century Iran, China, Russia, and Mexico. In these cases, the intelligentsia wished to pursue a modernization process in its entirety, because they themselves were the *direct* products of the modernization process. Also, from the point of view of the intelligentsia, their future social and material status depended on the persistence of modernization. When the state insisted on the preservation of many of the features of the *ancien regime*, but could not incorporate the intelligentsia, the alienation of the elites intensified, which, in turn, radicalized them. This radicalization led them to search for possible allies from different strata of the society; and the higher their degree of radicalization, the more their attention turned to the lower classes of the society: in the historical context of the late nineteenth century, to the peasants.

In the Ottoman Empire, in their struggle against such an *ancien regime*, this new kind of intelligentsia used the notion of the "sovereignty of the people." To do so required the support of the people, and for this reason, they felt the necessity to "go to the people." Of course, the struggle against the state was not the only reason for the intelligentsia to seek mass support, especially after 1908, when the autocracy had lost much of its power. This time, due to the emergence of a new kind of Ottomanism
blended with Islamist nationalism following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the intelligentsia desperately needed the people, who were now defined mostly in religio-nationalistic terms.\footnote{29}

2.4. The Peasants for Nationalism

The denunciation, just after the 1908 Revolution, of the Ottomanist ideology, which embraced, at least in theory, all the Ottoman citizens, including the Christian communities, dramatically changed the intellectual climate of the Ottoman elites. On the one hand, a new kind of Ottomanism emerged that embraced only the Muslim citizens of the Empire. Such an orientation was widely accepted by the CUP and the upper echelons of the Young Turk elites. On the other hand, the Turkist intellectuals coming from Russia increased their intellectual influence in their endeavor to spread Turkish nationalism. These reorientations provided the most significant impetus for seeking mass support, especially among the peasantry. Two factors played an important role in this process. First of all, these two new orientations, sometimes competing, sometimes complementing each other, necessitated active grass-root support. There was nothing novel in this, since new ideologies all over the world have originated first among elites, who, however, can never reach their goals without the support of the masses. Especially for the Turkish nationalists, the problem of creating the Turkish nation out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire was painful, since historically the people of this multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious Empire had possessed strong identities.
defined mostly on non-national bases. For instance, for many, to be a Muslim was more important than to be a Turk, or Kurd, or a Circassion. Secondly, the practical, day-to-day necessities of responding to the dramatic course of events after the 1908 Revolution required active and immediate mass support. The desperate need not only for followers to compete with the separatist nationalisms in an empire in chaos, but also for "soldiers" in the upcoming wars made it inevitable for the Ottoman-Turkish ruling elite and intelligentsia to seek the support of the masses. Therefore, it is necessary for us to understand, first, the crucial events of the time and then the making of the nationalist ideology and its connection with the discovery of the people and the peasantry.

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 evolved in such a way that it ended up, ironically, contributing to the rise of a series of nationalist movements, including the Turkish one. This contradicted most of the Young Turks' expectations about the revolution, since their aim before the revolution had been to consolidate the Empire's unity, not further its disintegration. For the revolutionaries, the idea was to preserve the ethnic structure of the Ottoman Empire as it was by recognizing the equality of all citizens. After all, the slogan of the revolution, borrowed from the French Revolution, was "liberty, equality, and fraternity." Now that the political revolution was successfully accomplished, the Young Turks faced the challenge of supplementing it with the social transformation of the society. Most of the social forces that enthusiastically supported the revolution welcomed the overthrow of the Hamidian regime. However, the task of reconciling different and divergent interests was very difficult, if not impossible. The revolutionaries believed that, as the political system changed into a
liberal one, conditions would naturally get better as time passed. For this reason, after the revolution they gave special emphasis to broadening the "range of political activity and concern far beyond the small circle of the palace and the Sublime Porte, within which they had previously remained." \(^{33}\) In order to accomplish this goal, a series of elections, both general and local, were conducted. Perhaps for the first time in Ottoman history, the source of political legitimacy showed signs of shifting towards "the people." \(^{24}\) All the political parties tried hard to organize and mobilize the Ottoman people. The elections of 1908 and 1912 especially witnessed great participation on the part of the ordinary citizens of the Empire. As one observer of the 1908 election in İstanbul commented: "Certainly we have one thing to learn from the Turks, and that is how to make elections picturesque." \(^{35}\)

A new way of making politics, however, was not enough to solve the deep problems of the Ottoman Empire. Of the problems the ruling elite faced, the creation of the "Ottoman citizen" was the most difficult to accomplish. They tried everything at their disposal to construct the notion of "the people," but given the specific social fabric of the Empire, two years were enough to reveal that their scheme could not succeed. One outcome of the revolution, ironically, was the strengthening of the "national" identities, contrary to what the Unionists had hoped. According to their ideology of Ottomanism, the Unionists envisioned the creation of a homogeneous **Ottoman** people in the modern sense. To accomplish such a goal would have required constructing the notion of "the people" as *abstractly* as possible; in other words, common souls, common aims, common features that would transcend the concrete, traditional identity-defining elements had to
be found. But all this was quite difficult given the imperial social structure. In the Ottoman Empire, different communities, with their particular languages, ethnicities, and religions were so obvious there that such an endeavor was unlikely to succeed.

Moreover, the Christian communities did not enthusiastically support the idea of equality before the law as they could use their economically privileged position because of their existing links with European capitalism. Therefore, internal and external historical conditions made it virtually impossible to continue with the ideology of Ottomanism, which had previously been fruitful for the political activities leading to the revolution.

Events on the international scene seem to have determined the fate of the revolution and with it, the conventional Ottomanist ideology. A series of foreign threats created a severe trauma for the Ottoman intelligentsia. Shortly after the revolution, Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria declared its complete independence and Greece took Crete with the Proclamation of Union. However, the biggest shock came with the defeat in the Italian-Ottoman War of 1911-12. The prominent Turkish intellectual Yusuf Akçura's words very well show the psychology of the intelligentsia at the time:

Until now, we have not been the winning side in war. The Bulgar, the Serb, the Greek—our subjects of five centuries, whom we have despised, have defeated us. This unimaginable reality will serve as a terrific slap on our faces...to turn our heads in wise directions—if we are not yet entirely dead.

The frustration of the Turkish intelligentsia over military defeats by former Ottoman subjects and chaotic domestic politics marked an everlasting turning point in the
minds of the Turkish intelligentsia. The very democracy and mass mobilization that they had praised before the revolution, in fact, had stimulated the secessionist movements. As Arnold Toynbee remarked in 1922:

The Hamidian status quo was disturbed at once by the introduction of parliamentary institutions, which opened a field for all the potential conflicts of nationality in Anatolia, as in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. The Turks complain that the Greeks did not use the new liberty of the Press and of elections to secure their legitimate share in the management of the Ottoman Empire, but took advantage of it to promote their own secession from Turkey and union with the Kingdom of Greece— in fact, that they accepted the position of Ottoman citizens in order to behave as traitors.38

It is now obvious in retrospect that the Unionists did not reckon with the momentum the nationalist movements had gained during the Hamidian regime. What can be clearly seen in retrospect perhaps could not be seen easily at the time although a few intellectuals at the turn of the century, such as Yusuf Akçura, a staunch nationalist ideologue, pointed out that the "elements belonging to different ethnicities and religions, which up to now have never ceased being in conflict with and feeling contempt for each other cannot then be intermingled."39

On the second anniversary of the revolution in 1910, the Unionists repudiated their policy of Ottomanism as a total failure.40 This was followed by a dramatic policy change. On the one hand, the Unionists resorted to using Islam in order to create a nationalism based on the Muslim populations of the Empire which marked a sharp policy change from the previous perception of Ottomanism that embraced the Christians as well. On the other hand and in parallel to this process, the Unionists "subordinated liberalism to nationalism."41 They decided that everything possible had to be done to promote this
Muslim nationalism. But nationalism required a new kind of mass mobilization. For this reason, the Unionists encouraged the press to disseminate the nationalist ideology alongside many newly established associations involved in the same task.

It was among the Turkish nationalist intelligentsia rather than the statesmen and the CUP cadres that the interest in and concern for the concepts of "the people" and the peasantry became more important. As the empire disintegrated after the 1908 Revolution, the Turkish intelligentsia soon realized that it had to create its own nationalist movement, and therefore its own reliable "people," who could perceive themselves as Turks. However, constituting a nationalist ideology was not an easy task at all. First of all, the Turkish merchant and entrepreneurial classes were, politically and economically, weaker than their western European counterparts. This was an obstacle to the emergence of nationalism, since these classes played positive roles in the formation of nationalist ideologies in most countries. The "Turks," had to be recruited, therefore, for the most part, from the peasants. The second obstacle was that the term Turk had had a negative connotation and mostly referred to the lower classes.

However difficult it was, a nationalist consciousness had to be created. In this regard, the most significant contributions appeared in the influential journal Türk Yurdu, published in 1911. In this endeavor, emigré Tatar intellectuals, especially the prominent intellectual Yusuf Akçura, played a leading role. The Tatar Turks in late nineteenth-century Russia underwent a serious cultural revival. They were the ones, who faced growing Pan-Slavic cultural movements, and in reaction to them, searched for their own Turkic past and language. They were the ones, who were influenced by Russian
Populism, as we mentioned above. Furthermore, they were the ones who were very successful in entrepreneurial activities. As economic middlemen, they served as the link between Russia and Central Asia, since their merchant rivals had difficulty in penetrating the Muslim markets because of cultural barriers. Their economic position very much resembled that of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire. Encountering nationalism and self-determination, and excluded from Russian culture, the Tatar Turks increasingly felt the necessity of a national identity. Having been stimulated by this necessity, the Tatar intellectual İsmail Gasprinsky inaugurated the Jadidist movement, which was a modernist program for educational and cultural reform. The program consisted of raising the Muslim educational system to the standards of the Russian and European levels, developing a standard print language, encouraging publishing and political activities, emancipating women and promoting solidarity of all kinds among the Turkic population. The Jadidist movement, although facing some resistance from the conservative segments of the Tatar population, did indeed inspire new ideas and perspectives, not only for the Tatars themselves but also for the Turkish intelligentsia in the heart of the Ottoman Empire.

Most of the ideas İsmail Gasprinsky advocated found echoes in the Türk Yurdu periodical, but especially in the ideas of Yusuf Akçura, who was the editor of the journal for many years (1911-1917). Like Gasprinsky, Akçura was strongly influenced by Russian schools of thought and especially by Russian Populism. This was a common characteristic among the Tatar emigrés. According to François Georgeon, many of the Tatar emigrés of the Ottoman Empire embodied the influence of Russian populist
For the early phase of the new nationalist ideology, finding a mass base among the majority of the population was crucial. In other words, "going to the people" in theory meant going to the peasants and to the ordinary people of the cities, even though this never became a reality in practice. In opposition to the cosmopolitan views of the Ottoman intelligentsia, the emerging Turkish nationalism found in the peasants the "preserved pure features" of the nation. Such a populist outlook had a new purpose in serving the nationalist cause.

As early as 1912, the periodical *Halka Doğru (To the People)* was founded by the contributors of *Türk Yurdu*. The periodical was designed to serve as a more practical link between the intelligentsia and the people, especially the rural people. This was due to the belief that, so long as nationalist feelings and consciousness were rooted only among the intelligentsia and the officials, and not among the peasants, the nationalist ideology could not be strong. Accordingly, the number of articles about Anatolia, the Turkish countryside, increased considerably in both periodicals, in which both the life and people of Anatolia were exalted.

To Akçura, the purpose of *Türk Yurdu* was to promote two overriding attitudes: that of being "friends of the people" (*halkseven*) and that of being nationalist. However, unlike the conflation used by Gökalp and the later Kemalists, the concepts of people and
nation never meant the same thing for Akçura. Interestingly enough, Akçura always translated the concept *Halkçilik* (populism) into French as *démocratisme*, not *populisme*. He did not see the nation as an undifferentiated entity unified around common goals. Unlike Gökalp's romantic solidarism, Akçura used materialistic methodology to understand the history of the Turkic people by analyzing the changes in the economic and social structures of these societies. His intellectual experience in Russia and France gave him the insights to understand historical evolution through the prism of class analysis. This, of course, did not mean that he was a Marxist. He condemned Marxism for being economically deterministic. Yet, he was aware of the importance of historical explanations in accounting for the changes in economic and social structures. It is this theoretical concern that made Akçura a very exceptional figure in Turkish intellectual history for years to come.

What, then, did Akçura understand about the concept of "the people?" According to him, "the people" meant small or landless peasants of the countryside and the small artisans and wage earners of the cities. *Halkçilik* (populism), according to Akçura, would construct the basis of the nationalist ideology within "the people." All of these thoughts, however, did not mean that the active agents and carriers of the ideology had to be the national bourgeoisie. Inspired by the Tatar experience, in which the middle classes played an extraordinarily helpful role in the emergence of the Jadidist movement, Akçura emphasized again and again that a national bourgeoisie was essential for achieving the goals of Turkish nationalism. Nevertheless, Akçura maintained a critical position
regarding this class even in the heyday of the policy of "National Economics," by which efforts to create a Turkish bourgeoisie were extensively promoted. Akçura urged that:

However, as it has been the case everywhere and at all times, the Turkish capitalism also tends to seek only profit and hedonism even in its initial phase.  

Commitment to the belief that a national bourgeoisie was the sine qua non of nationalism and the perception of "the people" as such created serious contradictions in Akçura's mind. These contradictions were in fact an extension of the ideological contradiction between his romantic socialistic views and his commitment to nationalism. In his mind, these contradictions were compromised within an anti-imperialist context that Akçura advocated, probably under the influence of German socialist Helphand-Parvus. In other words, Turkey's imperialist exploitation by foreign capitalism legitimized the necessity for a national bourgeoisie, as he called it. At any rate, Akçura's methodology and his writings offered a vision of a more democratic and pluralistic Turkish society than the mainstream Unionists envisioned. As a defender of land reform and an advocate of the importance of the peasants, Akçura, and thereby Türk Yurdu, made interesting contributions at the time.

The significance of the peasants in Türk Yurdu was most strongly emphasized by Alexander Helphand, writing under the pseudonym of Parvus. According to Parvus, the Turkish peasants were ignored by the intelligentsia. On the basis of historical examples, Parvus argued that the Armenian, Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek intellectuals and politicians had taken care of their peasants, but the Turkish intelligentsia did not. They
even avoided their peasants. In so doing, Parvus continued, the Turkish intelligentsia not only left the Turks out of politics, but also made themselves aimless and disoriented intellectuals. Parvus stressed that the peasants were necessary for the intelligentsia in its nationalist project, yet the intelligentsia was not really doing what it needed to do. For this reason, Parvus harshly criticized the Unionist government and the Turkish intelligentsia:

You accepted the Constitutional way, however, you did not uncover the desires of the people. You, the intelligentsia, distance yourselves from the nation and you do not get to know your own people. You either idolize them like heroes in your dreams or disapprove of their ignorance and conservatism. There is no common point between your feelings and the life of the people....When you think that you are dealing with the issues of people's prosperity, in fact, you deal with your own dreams, not with their realities.

According to Parvus, although the military and economic basis of the Ottoman state had been the peasants, the state never helped them. The only times when the state thought of them were when it needed to draft soldiers and collect taxes. Parvus also related the declining power of the Unionists to their increasing distance from the peasants. In his opinion, the Unionists did not fulfill any of their promises, such as alleviating the taxes on the peasants.

Parvus's remarks point to the paradox between the discourse and the practice of the Young Turks. In other words, although the Turkish intelligentsia started talking about the people and the peasants, they had indeed achieved little, if anything, for the prosperity of the peasants. The great hopes and expectations of the peasants aroused by the 1908 Revolution were not fulfilled at all. According to a journalist, Ahmed Şerif, who toured
Anatolia a year after the revolution, the peasants were frustrated by the revolution, as nothing significant had changed for them. As many observers of the time noted, the taxes were unjust and not collected peacefully; murders and theft in villages continued, and life in the countryside became even worse and more chaotic than before.\(^3\)

Despite their claims, the CUP "never considered destroying the social, economic, and political power over the landlords,"\(^4\) whose absolute power over the peasants even grew with the coming of the Republic. As the CUP began to share political power, it adopted the habit of looking through the prism of the state rather than through the eyes of an opposition party. But more importantly, to transform the countryside would have required a distribution of land and thereby a confrontation with the landlords who were the main candidates for the Turkish national bourgeoisie. Despite their rhetoric, the Unionists in practice never saw themselves as the representatives or the spokesmen of the lower classes. Rather, as Akçura appropriately noted, "it is not incorrect to claim that by the end of World War I, the CUP represented the interests of the bourgeoisie."\(^5\)

Nothing can represent so strikingly the difference in the perception of "the people" between Akçura and the Unionists as the second Halka Doğru journal published in the summer of 1918. Celal Bayar, the head of the CUP in İzmir, the editor of the journal and later the third president of the Republic in the 1950s, explained in the first issue of Halka Doğru what he understood about the "people:"

As can be understood from its name, we founded this journal for the people. What we intend by the term "people" is the stratum of the nation, which forms mentally and culturally the good-mannered and educated middle class.\(^6\)
This variant of defining "the people" as consisting of the middle class did not, however, represent the mainstream ideological position regarding populism. It was with Ziya Gökalp, the ideologue of the Unionists and the single most important intellectual to influence the later generations of the Turkish ruling elite, that the dominant understanding of populism came out. This particular understanding was inherited, on the whole, also by the Kemalist cadres after the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

To understand Gökalp's populist ideology, we first have to see how he defined "the people." According to him, "the people" were the portion of the nation, who did not belong to the elite groups. By the term "elites," he meant a small group of people, who had the chance to have a superior educational background. What Gökalp meant when he emphasized the notion of "to the people" was the duty of the elites to educate the people. This was a duty, since the elites had the privileged knowledge of what "civilization" was. In return, the people, as the "living museum of culture," would teach the cosmopolitan intelligentsia the merits of Turkish culture, which had survived only among the people.

Unlike Akçura, Gökalp saw Turkish society as a classless society unified around common goals. As I pointed out above, Gökalp's distinction between the elites and the people is at the educational rather than the social and economic level. In that respect, he claimed that "In Turkey, only one class cannot monopolize the title of the people. Everybody, either rich or poor, is of the people....There are no privileged classes among the people."
According to Gökalp, therefore, Turkish society was a classless society. His perception of "the people" as the sum of the citizens, who were equal before the law, made him naively believe that if privileges emerged in society, legislative mechanisms, such as the Grand National Assembly, could amend them.

Once Turkish society was conceived of as classless, the logical consequence of this argument was that the contradictions in society were naturally reconcilable. Gökalp envisioned society as a sum of different organs which were mutually dependent on each other. This was more or less the Turkish version of the French *solidariste* thought proposed by Durkheim. According to Gökalp, then, the expected accomplishment of the populist ideology was within the context of solidarist thought:

Therefore, the aim of populism, having overthrown class and stratum differences, is to restrict the groups only to professional groups based on division of labor. That is to say, populism sums up its philosophy on this norm: No class, but profession!

Gökalp's romantic and legalistic way of grasping populism appealed to the Turkish intelligentsia more than Akçura's populism. This was partly because Gökalp's romanticism and legalism, as Georgeon points out, found resonance with the "petty-bourgeois" characteristics of the bureaucrats. More importantly, however, the social structure of the late Ottoman Empire provided the background that endorsed Gökalp's position. Because merchant and entrepreneurial classes mostly coincided with the non-Turkish elements of the Empire, it was possible for Gökalp to reduce the social
dimensions of populism advocated by Akçura to the necessities of the nationalist ideology:

In Turkey, God's sword was wielded by the Populists and His pen by the Turkists. When the Turkish fatherland was endangered, the sword and the pen were married and from this marriage was born a society, whose name is the Turkish nation.95

It was within this mentality that the concepts of "national merchants," "national bourgeoisie" and "national economics" found considerable support among the Turkish intelligentsia. The populist ideology theorized in Gökalp's writings, however, also functioned for decades to conceal all kinds of differences in Turkish society. The segments of Turkish society, who especially needed to organize themselves, were forbidden to do so by the populist claims that the state represented all the people, who were homogeneous anyway!

2.5. The Peasants and the Peasantists during the National Liberation

World War I and its aftermath witnessed the increasing mass mobilization of the Ottoman people thanks to the necessity of resisting the foreign occupation of the Empire. The state of warfare created an enormous impetus for the formation of nationalist ideology. On the one hand, the ideological discourse of "the fatherland in danger" and "the existence of all kinds of enemies" helped create a political climate more favorable than ever before to the unification of the people around "common" goals. On the other hand, the state of warfare served to legitimize all kinds of social and economic policies
since, it was argued, it was not the time for discussion and pluralism, given the conditions of emergency. Furthermore, because World War I coincided with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the external war went hand in hand with several different internal struggles. In this era, national mobilization included limited boycotts of Greek and Armenian businesses; the state-sponsored support of and even creation of a Muslim-Turkish bourgeoisie and many unconventional tactics to raise the social and economic status of the Muslim/Turkish communities. It is fair to say that eventually the strategies that the elite employed created a Turkish bourgeoisie at the expense of the non-Muslim citizens of the Empire and the Muslim lower classes.

In order to mobilize the Turkish and Muslim elements, the Unionists and their secret organization, Teşkilat-ı Malisüasa, held several meetings in the summer of 1914 in İstanbul to discuss how to consolidate hegemony of the Turks and Muslims in the social and economic life of the Empire. One mass base chosen to launch the Unionists' policies was the guilds, from which the Unionists also recruited many of their cadres. More importantly, however, during the war years, when speculation rather than market mechanisms became the rule, some members of the guilds were transformed, under the direction of the Unionists, into the so-called "national bourgeoisie." The Unionists, however, "did not attempt to win over the peasantry by distributing land." As a matter of fact, the economic conditions of the lower classes, such as workers, poor peasants, and lower-ranking officials, deteriorated sharply under the inflationary economic conditions of the war. On the other hand, at the expense of these classes and the non-Muslim
communities, the number of wealthy landowners and the "national" bourgeoisie grew considerably. Feroz Ahmad's account of these contradictions highlights the situation:

The Unionists were in fact trying to carry out a structural change in agriculture, which undermined the position of the small peasant....Despite the exploitation of the vast majority of the peasantry, a small class of prosperous "middle peasants" began to emerge, at least in western Anatolia where capitalist agriculture was not developed....Dr. Nazım, who had just been instrumental in setting up an association in İzmir for the moral and physical improvement of the peasantry claimed that the war had enriched the population of Turkey, and this was especially true of the region around İzmir....In contrast, the position of the Turkish peasantry as a whole deteriorated sharply.  

It is interesting to note, however, that despite the deteriorating conditions of the peasantry in the absence of a realistic and supportive agricultural policy, it was during the War of Independence that we witness an organized, though uninfluential, peasantist association in Anatolia. In 1919, Köycüler Cemiyeti (Peasantist Association) was founded by some idealist members of the Turkish Hearths (Türk Ocakları), an influential association of the nationalist cause (1912-1931). Köycüler Cemiyeti advocated putting the idea of "going to the people" into practice. As we have seen above, the slogan of "going to the people" was already circulating in the late Ottoman Empire. The name of the journal Halka Doğru (To the People), for instance, reflects the fact that the Turkish intelligentsia took the idea seriously, at least at the theoretical level. However, as long as the idea remained as an abstract theory, as long as the idea would not reach the peasants, no good could be attained.

It is in this sense that the motivation behind founding Köycüler Cemiyeti can be found in the critiques of some prominent intellectuals such as Halide Edip Adıvar and
Yusuf Akçura, who upheld the idea that something practical in the name of "going to the people" ought to be done. Halide Edip, on the eve of the organization's founding, for instance, stressed that she would prefer a populism based on action rather than intellectual abstraction. Likewise, Akçura emphasized that the notion of "going to the people" did not go beyond praising the people in the poems and short stories of the urban intellectuals. The peasants, argued Akçura, neither understood nor even listened to those literary works, whose meaning and usefulness for them were controversial, anyway.

Halide Edip Adivar assumed the presidency of the Köycüler Cemiyeti. She was the first Turkish graduate of the American College in İstanbul, one of the first Turkish woman novelists, and an outstanding and enthusiastic protesting of the foreign occupation of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. She was deeply impressed by the American Progressivists of the time, especially of Jane Addams's Hull House experiment. What she had in mind in founding the Köycüler Cemiyeti was probably the embodiment of similar ideas and practices of this American Progressivist agenda.

Although Halide Edip was the president of the organization, Reşit Galip deserves the greatest credit for the association. Born in Rhodes in 1893, and trained at the Military Medical School, Galip, as a medical doctor, voluntarily took part in the Balkan wars and World War I. He was one of the most active members of the Turkish Hearths (Türk Ocakları) in the task of spreading Turkish nationalism. After the foreign occupation of İstanbul, he went to Anatolia to help form the resistance movement, while at the same time participating in the activities of Köycüler Cemiyeti. Like Halide Edip and Akçura, Galip criticized the mainstream elites for ignoring practical, grass-roots activities.
later served in the notorious *İstiklal Mahkemesi*, the Independence Court, which convicted many leftists, Kurdish nationalists and some Islamists. In the 1920s, Galip was a deputy minister in the Grand National Assembly, and was appointed to many high governmental posts, including Minister of Education in 1932, serving until he was forced to resign by Atatürk in 1933.109

Galip's career makes it possible to make an interesting hypothesis about this association. It is quite probable that this peasantist attempt was part and parcel of the activities of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (The Special Organization), which was the secret, underground organization of the Unionists. Even today, we know little about this organization.110 The expectations of such a peasantist movement could be the recruitment of soldiers for the War of Independence and the consolidation of Anatolia's Muslim, Turkish character. Although it is impossible to prove this hypothesis, Galip's career in the core activities of the state, including a post in *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*,111 and his active support in raising money for the emerging nationalist movement112 raise the question of whether his peasantist activities were part of the general activities of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*.

Reşit Galip and fifteen of his friends, most of whom were medical doctors, settled in a few villages in western Anatolia in 1918 to establish practical links with the peasants, to educate them, and to help raise the peasants' life standards.113 But most of their activities revolved around the medical support that they gave to the peasants. They also planned to form model villages, which would serve as an ideal example for the nearby villages.114 In order to do so, they aimed to buy lands well-suited for all kinds of agricultural production. These villages were also thought of as centers for educating the
incoming peasantist members. Whether this project was realistic or not, it gave rise to discussions even among the peasantists themselves. Some accused the supporters of this project of being unrealistic in trying to form a businesslike pursuit. Those same people criticized the project for wasting the valuable energy of the highly trained doctors in such low-skilled, undemanding tasks. Moreover, soon after the association was founded, tensions appeared between the members in Anatolia and the ones in İstanbul. The former accused the latter of living in ivory towers.\(^{115}\)

Despite the shortcomings and internal tensions of the organization, the Turkish press in general welcomed *Köyçiler Cemiyeti* and its peasantist activities. The newspaper *İkadın*, for instance, underlined the significance of the peasantist activities, arguing that the peasants made up the majority of the people, that Turkey's economic prosperity lay in agricultural production, and that a peasantist movement should help create a rural intelligentsia from within the peasants.\(^{116}\) Furthermore, the newspaper claimed that the government could be characterized as populist only if it could be the government of the peasants. Such a populism, the newspaper continued, should not necessarily lead to a multi-party democracy, since what was at stake at the moment was the endorsement of national purposes and unification.\(^{117}\) Peasantism as an ideology and movement was praised as the basis of such a populist outlook. The activities of *Köyçiler Cemiyeti* ceased as the growing foreign occupation in western Anatolia made it impossible to continue the mission of "going to the people."\(^{118}\) The association ended in failure, because only a few people for a short period were mobilized, whereas such an attempt would have required a massive effort on the part of the intelligentsia to succeed.
Moreover, the limited scope of the objectives also must have played a role in this failure. The Turkish peasantists of the time were concerned mostly with health and educational issues rather than a transformation in social relations. Still, in a country where such grass roots attempts had been traditionally weak, Köycüler Cemiyeti remained a valuable experience in Turkish history.  

2.6. Conclusion

The 1908 Revolution marks an outstanding turning point in the history of the late Ottoman Empire, because of its deep impact on modern Turkey. Despite the nationalist historiography's underemphasis and downgrading of the role of this revolution in Ottoman/Turkish history as a whole, even a study of the roots of populism reveals the significance of the revolution. The quest for revolution mobilized not only "the people," but also the Turkish intelligentsia. Having changed the nature of politics in the Ottoman Empire, the revolution reintroduced the idea of political representation on the basis of elections, although this new political experiment abruptly ended with the coup of 1913 by the Unionists. Nevertheless, the revolution unleashed new forces, new styles and new ideas. All these forced the elitist Ottoman governing class and the intelligentsia to take into account more and more the demands and voices of the ordinary people. This was in itself revolutionary.

The necessity of the revolution brought the Young Turk intelligentsia closer to other oppositional forces of the Empire, creating channels of interaction among them. It
was through this process, as we have seen, that Russian Populist ideas reached the
Turkish intelligentsia. While they did not adopt the radical revolutionary aspects of the
Russian Populists, there was an unquestionable impact, as a result of which the idea of
"going to the people" gained currency among the Ottoman elite.

The most significant single effect in the rise of populism is related to the rise of
the Turkish nationalist movement. Though elitism persisted in day-to-day politics, the
notion of "the people" became the cornerstone for the legitimacy of the nationalist
ideology. Therefore, populism assumed an essential function in the making of Turkish
nationalism. In this respect, it is fair to say that populism was subordinated to the rise of
nationalism. Especially after World War I, populist ideas in Turkey were shaped with
regard to the needs of Turkish nationalism. As a consequence of this, the political
dimension of populism overwhelmingly exceeded its social dimensions. This meant that
rather than transforming social relations and waging class warfare in the society, Turkish
populism gave the intelligentsia the vision and leverage to enhance the consolidation of
national unity.

Although establishing national unity became the goal of most segments of the
Turkish intelligentsia, different viewpoints emerged as to how this unity could be gained.
Some nationalist intellectuals, inspired by Russian schools of thought, equated the people
with the peasantry and the lower classes. This recognition of the lower classes as forces
to be reckoned with differed from the more "solidaristic," "corporatist" definitions, which
denied even the existence of different social groups and classes. In the opinion of the
former, as exemplified by Yusuf Akçura's ideas, national unity could be strengthened
through the incorporation of these classes into the political life of the country. Akçura's philosophy was inspired by democratic principles, although he relied too much on the creation of a national bourgeoisie as the active agent of nationalism. But he clearly recognized the existence of deep social differences in society. Different as they were, the members of the intelligentsia close to the governing Unionist circles perceived the people as an undifferentiated entity without internal contradictions. Gökalp is a good example of such a theoretical position. Having detached all the social dimensions of populism, he reduced it to an instrument of the nationalist project.

The most distinguishing characteristic of the populist ideas in the late Ottoman Empire is that all were somehow tied to the necessities of the state. In other words, unlike many other populist ideologies around the world, such as Russian populism, Turkish populism was used as a tool to save the state rather than being an oppositional force against the political power. Even the Köyçiler Cemiyeti, as we have seen, was a top-down, state-sponsored project. As the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the single-party regime took place, the subordination of populism and peasantism to the needs of the state increased. This was in accordance with the omnipresent and omnipotent elitism of the Turkish bureaucracy.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2


4 The Russian populism of the nineteenth century is characterized in the same way, although the Russian experience differs greatly from the Turkish one. Peter Worsley in his discussion of Russian Populism argues that populism was "pre-eminently an ideology about the peasantry, not one created by them, nor one rooted in the peasantry. It preached learning from, being guided by, the people, when everything in it was created by a segment of the urban intelligentsia." See Peter Worsley, "The Concept of Populism," in Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics, p. 221.

5 For the intellectual dimensions of Russian Populism see my "On Russian Populism," pp. 131-148.


7 Ibid., p. 114.

8 Ibid., p. 110.

9 Ibid., p. 172. Yusuf Akçura, a staunch ideologue of Turkish nationalism, also mentions the support of different groups for the Young Turks: "During the development of the revolution, some of the non-Muslim and non-Turkish democratic parties (the Armenian Dashnaks and the Bulgar revolutionary parties) allied with and supported the CUP with the hope of fulfilling their own special interests." See the chapter entitled "İttifak'a Dair" in Akçura's İktisat ve Siyaset (in Ottoman script) (İstanbul, 1340/1924), p. 24.


İlhan Tekeli points out that the Internal Organization was a progressive and unique movement in Macedonia for it relied extensively on the active support of the masses and was greatly influenced by the socialist movements in Macedonia. See İlhan Tekeli, "Makedonya İç Devrimci Örgütü ve 1903 İlinden Ayaklanması," *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* 6 (İstanbul: İletişim, 1988), p. 1806.


Ibid., p. 368.

Salonica was characterized especially by cosmopolitanism. Several different ethnic and "national" communities made up the social structure of this city. By the turn of the century, Salonica had become the center of several revolutionary movements, including that of the Young Turks. See Tekeli and İlkin, "İttihat ve Terakki Hareketinin...," pp. 364-65.

Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, p. 29.

Ibid., p. 30, 37, 49. Karabekir's memoirs support Buxton's accounts. He also argued that at this time everybody thought that nothing could be achieved unless Abdülhamid was killed. Kazım Karabekir, *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Neden Kuruldu, Nasıl Kuruldu, Nasıl Idare Olundu?* (İstanbul: Turdav, 1982/1945), p. 98.
"In the case of the workers, to cite a less-known example that is particularly significant where political mobilization is concerned, Young Turk activists had forged alliances with aggrieved worker groups before revolution broke out in 1908, and had apparently led at least one Luddite disturbance, which resulted in good part from the current economic crisis." Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "The 1908 Strike Wave," *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* XVI (1992), p. 156, 176.

"[T]he Young Turks appear to have coupled discussions of general issues with exploitation of specific crisis conditions. No doubt, the extent to which the scope of political mobilization had broadened by then contributed to this result. Those who joined or responded to the Young Turk movement included not only civil bureaucrats and large elements of the military, but also non-bureaucratic elites, members of the non-Muslim communities, sometimes even workers." Carter V. Findley, "Economic Bases of Revolution and Repression in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28 (1986), p. 102.


Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, p. 36.

Ibid., p. 56. Other social groups notwithstanding, the bulk of the support to the Unionists came from the low-ranking officers of the Hamidian regime. Writing in 1924, Yusuf Akçura, in his analysis of the social basis of the early Unionists, argued that low-level officers who relied solely on their salaries provided the cadres of the movement. In other words, as Akçura points out, the political and economic discontents of the lower bureaucracy made up the most important social base for the Unionist movement. Akçura, *İktisat ve Siyaset*, p. 24.


"A main proposition of this study is that among the chief Muslim groups of the Ottoman Empire political nationalism was not a viable force until the end of World War I. Appeals to religion, which constituted a significant component of individual nationalist ideologies, paradoxically prevented nationalism from becoming the primary focus of allegiance for Muslim peoples, and as such actually defused nationalism." See Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), p. 13.
A missionary from the orphanage at Van described the political atmosphere in 1908 as follows: "For bloodshed and fear and race hatred are substituted liberty, equality, fraternity. How inconceivably great the contrast!" Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, p. 103.

"... it is more appropriate to seek the explanation in the processes of socialization that the revolution set in motion. The introduction of mass politics, a liberal press, and greater educational opportunities enhanced ethnic communal consciousness among certain groups, whereas they were promoted by the government with the purpose of achieving greater societal integration and administrative amalgamation." Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 13.

The merchants in particular welcomed the revolution, as can be seen in these two examples: first, the İstanbul Chamber of Commerce arranged an extraordinary meeting in which it decided to send a telegram to the Sultan expressing their pleasure upon the declaration of the Constitutional Government. See Hakki Nezihi, *Elli Yıllık Oda Hayatı* (İstanbul, 1932), p. 144. Secondly, the Ottoman Armenian merchants residing in Manchester, England, organized a banquet in celebration of the revolution. See Zafer Toprak "'Hürriyetin İlanı' (1908) ve Ermeni Tüccarlar," *Tarih ve Toplum* 10, no.55 (1988), pp. 43-45.


Şükrü Hanioğlu points out that one of the most important outcomes of the 1908 Revolution was the consolidation of the idea of political representation on the basis of election. See the interview with him in Milliyet, 23 July 1998.

See Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, p. 185.

"They [the Unionists] hoped that religious and ethnic differences would be superseded by a broader Ottoman identity. In the eyes of most Christians, however, Ottoman citizenship based on absolute equality, as preached by the Unionists, would undermine their community privileges, which had expanded since the Tanzimat." Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 82.


Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1976, first published in 1904), p. 28. According to Akçura, "the policy of Ottoman nationality, though implying many advantages for the Ottoman state, is impracticable." Ibid., p. 35. Akçura seems to exaggerate a little by fabricating an "age-old conflict" between different communities of
the Empire. Arguments like these tend to underestimate the strength of a peaceful and stable life in the Ottoman Empire prior to the age of nationalism.

40 British Documents on the Origin of the War 1898-1914, Vol IX, Part One, Enclosure in No.181 (London, 1926), p. 208. Mainstream historiographical views stress that the Unionists had from the outset promoted the policy of Turkish nationalism instead of Ottomanism. Even some of the Unionists later claimed that they had always favored Turkish nationalism. An example of this can be found in the Unionist ideologue Ziya Gökalp. He said that "the Ottomanist project was in fact nothing but a secret policy of Turkification." See Ziya Gökalp, Türkçe şehmek, İslamlıșmák, Muasırlıșmák (İstanbul: Toker Yaynlari, 1988), pp. 39-40. See also Mahmoud Haddad, "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered," IJMES 26 (1994): 201-222. However, these views are far from the truth. The most important evidence to support these standard views has been that the Unionists attempted to implement a universal compulsory military service and a homogeneous system of education, Turkish being the common language. (An example of such an evaluation can be found in Salih Keramett Bey's arguments written in 1924: "The Young Turks adopted the meddling policy of Turkification by force of non-Turkish nationalities. The Young Turks endeavored to impose their language, and also universal compulsory military service." See Salih Keramett Bey." The Young Turk Movement." in Modern Turkey: Politico-Economic Interpretation, 1908-1923, edited by E. G. Mears, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 477. In fact, these policies were consistent with the idea of creating a "homogeneous" citizen, which was the idea behind the revolution. The Unionists' insistence on Turkish as the standard Ottoman language resembles the standardization of languages in all emergent nations rather than a tool for the specific policy of Turkism.

41 Hovannisian, Armenia on the Road to Independence, p. 29. Also see Zafer Toprak, Türkiye'de "Milli İktisat" (1908-1918) (Ankara: Yurt Yaynlari, 1982), p. 348 for the abolishment of the Unionist liberalism. Of course, the ideology of Turkish nationalism had begun before this time. Literary, theoretical and linguistic studies to promote Turkish nationalism date back to much earlier times. However, it was around this time that the majority of militant Young Turks irreversibly accepted Turkish nationalism as the only policy to pursue.

42 "The British ambassador observed in his dispatch of February 5: 'I have the honour to note that the Committee of Union and Progress, which styles the Mahmoud Shevket Pasha Cabinet as the 'Cabinet of National Defense,' has also formed a committee of national defence on the lines of the French revolutionaries of 1793 and the Communists in 1870. They have issued rousing appeals to the 'nation' and all parties to rally to the cry of the 'country in danger,' and have declared the whole Ottoman nation in a state of mobilisation....The committee of national defence...is raising subscriptions and organising the country for a 'last ditch' effort....The new Sheik-ul-Islam has sent a religious appeal, for the defence of the Moslem fatherland, to his subordinates in the provinces, while committee agents have been preaching a holy war in Saint Sophia and other mosques."" Feroz Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908-1918," in The Modern
That the influential periodical Türk Yurdu was founded in 1911 must not be considered simply a coincidence. Some of the associations founded during this period are Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti (1911), Türk Ocağı Cemiyeti (1912), Türk Bilgi Derneği (1913). See Hüseyin Tuncer, Türk Yurdu Üzerine Bir İnceleme (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990), p. 14.

In the eyes of the intelligentsia, the breakaway communities of the Empire already exemplified the success of nationalist movements. In his memoirs, for instance, Kazım Karabekir Pasha tells us how he envied the other nationalist movements and why he thought that the emancipation of the Turks would be possible only if they could acquire a national consciousness. Kazım Karabekir, witnessing a nationalist demonstration of the Macedonian Bulgars told this story: "We heard that on April 23rd, some militants will be sent to exile from the train station. With a few friends we went there. 41 Bulgarians and 4 Greeks were put on the train two-by-two with their hands in handcuffs. As soon as the train took off, they altogether shouted in Bulgarian. 'Long live the Bulgarian nation!' ...I told my friends: 'Here is the national ideal! Our nation will be emancipated when it can act likewise.'" Quoted in Yalçın Küçük, "Bir İç Savaş Örgütlenmesi Olarak İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti," Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, Vol.6 (İstanbul: İletişim, 1988), p. 1831.

Interestingly, everybody was ashamed of using the term "Turk" although it was the name of the ethnic group of the Ottoman dynasty. For a long time, the intelligentsia did not take up seriously the lower class stratum to which the term referred. Prof. Mesaros, "Halkçılık-Garpçılık," Türk Yurdu 1 (21), No.3 (197) (March 1928), p. 14." As is well known, Ottomans attached to the term 'Turk' a meaning of contempt for Anatolian peasants and nomads." See also Masami Arai, Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), p. 66.


Ibid., p. 18.

Ibid., p. 13. The linen demand of the Russian army was supplied by the Akçura (Akçuraoğlu) family. Ibid., p. 18.

According to Devlet, the Tatar bourgeoisie endorsed the Jadidist movement to a great extent. Devlet, *İsmail Bey Gaspiralı*, p. 14. Gasprinsky's journal *Tercüman* (1883-1918) could not be financed without the money his wife, Zühre Akçura, brought with her when they married. Ibid., p. 28. "... from the 1880s onwards, the Tatar bourgeoisie effectively tried to spread the propaganda of pan-Turkism among the Muslims of Russia together with upholding the Islamist thought." Georgeon, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, p. 17.


"İsmail Bey was perceived by the majority of the people as a 'convert' because of his Western style dressing, his thoughts alien to the community, his knowledge and utilization of Russian and his call for consensus between the Muslims and the Russians." Devlet, *İsmail Bey Gaspiralı*, p. 31.

For the impact of Gasprinsky on the Turkish intelligentsia, see Georgeon, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, pp. 60-1. It was not surprising that when Gasprinsky died in 1914, *Türk Yurdu* published an obituary issue on him. From what were written about him, his influence and the value attributed to him by the prominent figures of Turkish nationalism are obvious. Yusuf Akçura noted that in the social and intellectual life of the northern Turks, the idea of reform came from İsmail Gasprinsky. To him, he was a reformer by all means. Yusuf Akçuraoğlu, "Muallim" e dair, *Türk Yurdu* 6, no.12 (1914/1330), p. 2409. Similarly Hamdullah Suphi (Tannröver) in his article said: "Bütün ömründe Türkü kurtarmak için yürüyen kahraman, Kırım'ın şimdi her zamandan daha sevgili olan topraklardaki milli kahramanımıza yarın fakir iken zengin, zayıf iken güçlü, bedbaht iken kutlu olacak Türk nesilleri Türk bayrağını göttüüp lahidine sereçekler ve onun başına üstünde Türk dehasının yarataçağı yeni bir tacimelik yükselecektir." Hamdullah Suphi, "Ben Onu Gördüm," *Türk Yurdu* 6, No.12 (1914/1330), p. 2404. The "national" poet, Mehmet Emin Yurdakul, wrote a long poem for him: "...İstediğin ki, medeniyet güneşi/ Zekalara çeliğini akıtsın; Milliyetin diriltici ateşi;/ Vecdanları aleüe ıstsın. / Ta ki Fatih Cengizlerin evladi/ İslavliğin pençesinden kurtulsun; Onun mazlum, sefil olan hayatı/ Hür ve mes'ut bir talie can bulsun..." Mehmet Emin, "İsmail Gasprinski'ye," *Türk Yurdu* 6, no.12 (1914/1330), pp. 2399-2400.

"...He was familiar with the Russian schools of thought. He wanted to understand economic and social issues by analysing the works of Russian writers such as Pisarev and..."
Chemishevskii. He tried to comprehend the "to the people" movement of the Russian youth, and the reasons for Westernization, and acquired many thoughts about socialism with which he was quite concerned." Cafer Seydahmet Kımlı, *Gaspirali Ismail Bey -- Dilde, Fikirde, İşte Birlik* (İstanbul: Matbaacılık ve Neşriyat, 1934), p. 18. "He was a populist not because it was a fashion...because he was not looking at his nation from the ivy towers or from cosmopolitan places. He came out from among the nation and lived among the nation." Ibid., p. 83. "He also read the works of the prominent writers such as Herzen, Chemishevskii, Belinsky and Pisarev." Devlet, *İsmail Bey Gaspirali*, p. 16. "For some time, he worked with Ivan Turgenev who was living as an emigré at the time." Ibid., p. 17.


56 "Russia as 'the homeland of populism' impressed the Ottoman intelligentsia. Of course, it was appealing to equate the Turkish society of the turn of the century with the Russian society of the mid-nineteenth century: there were still a huge mass of peasantry and a few industrial workers. Therefore, it was possible to equate the people with the peasantry. Some of the Ottoman intelligentsia who were influenced by the Russian schools of thought indeed directed their attention to the people in the 1920s. But they did this not for preparing them for the revolution, but for teaching them the basics of public health." Georgeon, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, p. 91.

57 Ibid., p. 71.

58 "The *Türk Yurdu* periodical emphasized that it always showed effort for exalting the people in order to 'go to the people, to understand them and to exalt the nation'. In order to exalt the nation, exalting the people; this formula revealed the core of the ideas of the movement and the organic connections between populism and Turkish nationalism." Ibid., p. 91.


60 Ibid., p. 91.

61 Tuncer, *Türk Yurdu Üzerine Bir İnceleme*, pp. 485-86. One of the articles written by Sahabeddin Süleyman argued that the youth and the intellectuals had to go to Anatolia to
wake the people up. Those people, according to the author, had to intermingle with the people. Şahabeddin Süleyman, "Anadolu ve Gençliğin Vazifesi," Türk Yurdu 3, no.10 (1913/1329), pp. 314-15.

62 "The motto of Türk Yurdu consists of nationalism and loving the people. To use clearer Western terms, it is 'people-loving nationalist (nationalist democrat).' "İktisadi Siyaset Hakkında," Türk Yurdu 12, no.12 (1917/1333), p. 179.

63 "...populism is a kind of nationalism, the distinguishing feature of populistic nationalism being its equation of 'the nation' and 'the people'. In a populistic phase of the drive for national independence, great emphasis is laid upon mobilizing 'the people' as an essential part of the struggle. In the imagery of populistic nationalism 'the people' are 'the simple folk'." Angus Stewart, "The Social Roots," in Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics, edited by Ionescu Ghita and Ernest Gellner (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 183.

64 Georgeon, Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri, p. 109.

65 In Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset, Akçura's attempts to explain the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire on the basis of economic rationale can be depicted. Besides, according to Georgeon, Akçura was the first Turkish intellectual who tried to understand the "Armenian question" in terms of economic struggles. Ibid., p. 31.

66 "He was complaining about the Ottoman intellectuals' ignorance of Marx. He himself learned the importance of economics and class struggle in the development of societies from Marxism. But he distorted it as a theoretical argumentation that would support his views for the emergence of Turkish bourgeoisie." Ibid., p. 78.

67 An example for Akçura's materialist methodology appears in his analysis of the political parties: "In the establishment, disputes and alliance of the political parties, it is not the ideological matters, but the economic interests of the social classes...." Akçura, Siyaset ve İktisat, p. 21. A Turkish conservative scholar, when evaluating Akçura, is surprised to see that Akçura did not harshly criticize Marxism: "While he was talking about Marxism, it is strange that he was just content with the presentation of the theory without any criticism." Mehmet Eroz, "Yusuf Akçura'nın Sosyal ve İktisadi Görüşleri," in Ölümünün Ellinci Yılında Yusuf Akçura Sempozyumu Tebliğleri, p. 53.


69 "The foundation of the modern state is the bourgeois class. Contemporary prosperous states came into existence on the shoulders of the bourgeoisie, of the businessmen and
bankers. The national awakening in Turkey is the beginning of the genesis of the Turkish bourgeoisie. And if the natural growth of the Turkish bourgeoisie continues without damage or interruption, we can say that the sound establishment of the Turkish state has been guaranteed." Akçura, quoted in Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, p. 425.

70 For the policy of "National Economics" see Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat*.


72 "While he regarded the socialist social ideas as an issue of romantic rationalism, he was extremely nationalist. He often hesitated between the tensions arising from these two world views." Kuran, "Yusuf Akçura'nın Tarihiği," p. 45.

73 Halil Berktay, *Cumhuriyet İdeolojisi ve Fuat Köprülli* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 1983), p. 28.


75 "The peasantry is the point of support of the strength and dominance of the Ottoman Empire. For this reason Türk Yurdu, always considering the interests of the peasants in its articles on economy, has been mostly occupied with the analyses of the ways by which the livelihood of the peasantry can be improved. Mr. Parvus's articles on economy and finance published in our journal were demanded from him as a service to this cause. He has a reputation of writing and acting on behalf of the people and the peasants of Russia and Central Europe." Akçura quoted in Georgeon, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, p. 142.

76 Parvus, or Alexander Helphand, was a Russian Social Democrat who lived in İstanbul between 1910-1915. He wrote in several Young Turk journals and newspapers on issues such as the peasantry, imperialism, and the fiscal problems of the Ottoman state. According to many Turkish historians, Parvus had an enormous impact on the Turkish intelligentsia. See Georgeon, p. 60, Akşin, p. 158, and Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, pp. 335, 425. When introducing Parvus to the readers of Türk Yurdu, Yusuf Akçura wrote that although there were some differences between Parvus's ideas and theirs, the journal and Parvus had a consensus on the principles of "loving the people" and "helping the poor people." Türk Yurdu, no.9 (1911/1327), p. 261. For more information on Parvus see Z. A. B. Zeman and S. B. Winfried, *The Merchant of Revolution: The Life of Alexander Israel Helphand (Parvus) 1867-1924* (New York, 1965), and O. F. Solov'ev, "Parvus: Politicheskii Portret," *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriiia*, no.1 (1991), pp. 162-185.
"Makedonya ve Ermeni köylülerine gelince, onları düşünüp müdafaaya edebilecek hamiler vardır. Ermeni, Bulgar, Sırıb ve Rum münevverleri (Efat-ı Münevvere eshabi) kendi milletlerini köylülere menafını düşünmüştür ve onlara muavenet etmekten çekinmemişlerdir."


Ibid., p. 265.


"Although the peasants were the ones who fed the whole state, the state never thought of helping them and it did not help them. In the end, the financial and spiritual conditions of the peasantry deteriorated." Parvus, "Devlet ve Millet," Türk Yurdu 3, no. 3 (1913), p. 85.

"One of the reasons behind the decline of the CUP influence is that nothing was done for the prosperity of the peasants for the last four years under the Constitutional administration. The peasants until now have been in an extraordinarily miserable situation. But, it is the peasants who make up the Ottoman army....The question of alleviating the tax burden of the peasants arose just after the revolution. This issue, however, was always postponed and finally nothing was done. This, though, was a fatal mistake." Parvus, "Esaret-i Maliyeden Kurtulmanın Yolu," Türk Yurdu 2, no. 7 (1912/1328), p. 587.


"But so far nothing has happened. In the past, some things used to function even better; today everything is in a mess....We go to the state office and the court but we cannot explain our problem. They only think of collecting taxes...We work all year round and we pay our taxes annually; if we don't they take them by force, even selling our pots and bedding. Thus we are always in debt. During the past few years there have been many peasants in the village who have not had seed to sow. Since there is no help from anywhere else we have had to buy seed from the aga at either 100-125 kurus a kile [a bushel] or return him three kile for one. Those agas are a menace; they can have the peasant beaten by their toughs, have him jailed, or sometimes have him bullied by state officials. In this way they collect their debt from those who cannot pay. As a matter of fact the Agricultural Bank is giving loans but that does not help us. The money runs out before it reaches our village." Ahmet Şerif, Anadolu'da Tanin (İstanbul, 1977), p. 286, quoted in Feroz Ahmad, The Making of Modern Turkey (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 41-2. Things more or less remained the same even 20 years after the revolution. A peasant talking to Mehmed Emin, the so-called "national poet," in 1928: "During the reign of Abdüllah, the pashas said 'give,' so we gave. They said 'die,' so we died. They vanished and instead other pashas came and they also said 'give,' so we gave. They said 'die,' so we died. They also vanished, and then you came. You also said 'give,' so
we gave. You said 'die,' so we died. We are now curiously waiting. When will you guys ever say 'take'?" Quoted in Tuncer, Türk Yurdu Üzerine Bir İnceleme, p. 483.

84 Only a minority of the CUP members advocated taking measures in order to get the support of the peasants. They realized that such support would be of great importance for the CUP since the peasants made up the majority of the population. Hüseyin Kazım, the Unionist governor of Aleppo, for instance, issued a proclamation to the people of the province attacking harshly the notables and the agas. According to Şerif, when the İstanbul paper Avam (The People) published the proclamation, it received letters of congratulations from many of its readers. Ahmet Şerif, Anadolu'da Tunin, p. 286, quoted in Ahmad, The Making of..., pp. 42-3.

85 Akçura, İktisat ve Siyaset, p. 27.


87 İlhan Tekeli and Gencay Şaylan, "Türkiyede Halkçılık Ideolojisinin Evrimi," Toplum ve Bilim, nos.6-7 (1978), p. 61. It also has to be noted that Gökalp's position as an ideologue caused him to modify again and again his ideological orientations due to the changes in practical activities. Tekeli and Şaylan stress that Gökalp's populism also underwent significant changes after 1921. See Ibid., pp. 61-63.


89 Note that this civilization that had to be carried out was Western civilization: "...the precious gift which they [the elite] carry to the people must be Western civilization, not Eastern civilization or its outgrowth, Ottoman civilization." Gökalp, Principles of..., p. 37.

90 "They must go to the people, live with them, note the words and phrases they use, listen to their proverbs and maxims, grasp their way of thinking and feeling, listen to their poetry and music, watch their dances and plays, share their religious life and moral feelings, learn to appreciate the beauty in the simplicity of their clothing, architecture and furniture. In addition, they must learn the people's folk-tales, anecdotes and epics and the surviving doctrines of the ancient töre (which is now known as the takdirname)." Ibid., pp. 34-5.

92 Ibid., pp. 116-17.


96 According to the memoirs of Kuşçubaşi, the director of Teskilat-i Mahsusa, in early 1914, there were two major problems: an incredible amount of opposition which exploited all kinds of freedom, and the dangerous non-Turkish elements which were striving intensely for the abolition and disintegration of the Empire. See Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım*, p. 1573.

97 "The CUP knew that the economic power of the Greeks could not be broken by a symbolic boycott movement. Therefore, alongside the boycott movement, the CUP started making attempts to create a Turkish bourgeoisie. Banks and cooperatives appropriate for the Aegean region were established. After World War I, the businesses of the non-Muslim communities were taken over by the Turks." Nurdogan Taçalan, *Ege'de Kurtuluş Savaşı Başlarken* (İstanbul: Hür Yayın, 1981), p. 56.

98 "To regulate the economic life, to take over the public enterprises from the foreigners, and especially to get rid of those who formally seem to be on our side yet in fact who are the tools of the enemies, is no less necessary than the struggles in the war fronts.... Do you know what our people say? They say 'can our Ahmet, Mehmet fulfill these tasks when Eftim, Panayot, Arin, Moiz vanish?' If we do not overcome this disbelief in ourselves, if people cannot feel that we can fulfill our own tasks, especially if we cannot show the people examples such as a successful railway construction, the fear of our liquidation activities will create a fear in ourselves before the Greeks." Kuşçubaşı talking to Enver Pasha in 1916, quoted in Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım*, p. 1593.

99 "The meetings continued in May, June and August of 1914....I can say that even some of the members of the cabinet did not know anything about these meetings." From the memoirs of Eşref Kuşçubaşı, quoted in Ibid., p. 1573.

100 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli...,* pp. 348-49.

101 Ahmad, "War and Society ...," p. 129.
Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli...*, pp. 346-47.

Ahmad, "War and Society ...", pp. 138-39.


Üstel, pp. 113-114.

Ibid., pp. 112-113.


Rumor has it that Galip took a critical attitude to one of Atatürk's private affairs and this triggered his dismissal. See Burhan Felek, *Milliyet*, 22 June 1980.

*Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* continues to be a mystery in Turkish history. After the war, a committee in the Parliament interrogated several officials about the organization yet could not find enough information since it was both "inside and outside" the state: "Halil Bey (Menteşe), Minister of Foreign Affairs, asked his interrogators about the organization. He was told that the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* began in the Caucasus region early in the war as a guerrilla band set up outside the regular army....The Grand Vizier from 1913 to 1917, Sait Halim Paşa, testified that the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* was a part of the army and was not the responsibility of his office. Furthermore, he knew little about its activities. He pointed out that even though various ministers had criticized the organization, it was not a matter that the Cabinet could discuss....His office had no budgetary control over the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* because, he said, the Ministry of War had ample funds of its own....The few sources of information about the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa* are generally silent on the personnel and activities of these missions, but it is clear that they went to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, Egypt, Central Africa, the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia, India and even as far as Java and Sumatra." Philip H. Stoddard, "The Ottoman Government and the Arabs, 1911 to 1918: A Preliminary Study of the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa*," Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1963, pp. 47-48, 62.

Ibid., p. 293.


Ibid., pp. 187-88.


Halil Hilmi, "Halkçılık, Köycülük I," *İkdam*, 19 October 1919.

Halil Hilmi, "Halkçılık, Köycülük II," *İkdam*, 20 October 1919.


This experience is considered to be a forerunner of the peasantist activities of the 1930s. See Elman, *Dr. Reşit Galip*, p. 28, for such a comment. The peasantry of the 1930s and after will be the topic of the later chapters of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 3
THE PEOPLE'S HOUSES AND THE CULT OF THE PEASANT IN THE 1930s

In 1922, a year before the foundation of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk declared that "the peasant is the master of our nation." In the 1920s, this populist rhetoric, however, was not accompanied by actual achievements. Most historians, though, have argued the contrary, citing the abolition of the tithe, the traditional tax taken as a portion of the peasant's annual produce, one of the biggest burdens of the rural population, as a turning point in the betterment of the lives of the Turkish peasants. But this should not be exaggerated as a big favor to the peasants, since new taxes based on payment in cash were introduced. As a matter of fact, as early as 1930 complaints about heavy taxation of the peasants appeared in the press.\(^1\) A survey on the agricultural taxes, published from November through December of 1930 in the semi-official newspaper Cumhuriyet, contended that the peasants often longed even for the traditional tithe, because of the hardships caused by the new taxes.\(^3\) As the tithe example reveals, in fact the young Republic hardly offered anything significant to the peasants in the first decade after its foundation. In this era, populism simply did not go beyond the slogan of "the sovereignty belongs to the people," who made up a classless society, allegedly unified around some abstract common goals.\(^3\)
In the 1930s, though, compared to the previous decade, a strong populist and peasantist rhetoric appeared in Turkey. The principle of populism was accepted as one of the six constituting principles of the governing Republican People's Party (RPP), and it was even put into the constitution. Since the overwhelming majority of the population consisted of the peasants, special emphasis was given to the peasants. During the 1930s, the peasantist ideology became one of the most important constituents of Turkish populism.

In this chapter, we shall focus on both on the intellectual and the institutional evolution of the peasantist ideology. To do so, we shall take into account mainly the intellectuals gathered around the People's Houses (*Halkevleri*), and the so-called peasantist activities of these institutions. The reason for choosing the People's Houses is that they were founded directly for the purpose of disseminating the propaganda of the governing Republican People's Party, and mobilized in their activities the prominent intellectuals and officials of the time. In this respect, we examine first the establishment of the People's Houses, the historical and political context that gave rise not only to this institution, but also to the peasantist ideology. We shall then assess the peasantist activities of the People's Houses, which were claimed to be one of the most important missions of these institutions. Our discussion will then go on to the basic intellectual characteristics of the peasantist ideology. To this end, we shall examine the anti-urbanist, voluntarist, and village-glorifying characteristics of the peasantist ideology, and show its relation to the two significant problematics of the early Republic: nationalism and
Westernization. Finally, we shall take into account the evolution of the peasantist ideology with an overall assessment regarding its place in early Republican history.

3.1. The Founding of the People's Houses

In 1932 the Republican People's Party established the People's Houses as adult education centers to conduct cultural, sporting and educative activities. In general, the Houses were expected to propagate the principles of the ruling RPP. Among the extraordinary indigenous developments that foreshadowed the founding of the People's Houses was the surprising success in 1930 of the new opposition party, the Free Party (Serbest Firka), which unexpectedly appealed to a significant number of people. This multi-party experience strengthened the culture of fear, a deep-rooted mentality in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republic, stressing that times were volatile, and that the enemies of the Kemalist regime were consolidating their power for their "separatist" goals. This attitude of the ruling circles shaped the mood of the Third Republican People's Party Congress of 1931, in which a series of new politico-ideological measures were taken, among them the founding of People's Houses. These measures mostly involved redefining the relationship between the Party and the state. For instance, governors of cities also became Party leaders in the cities. The Party-state control of any non-state institution allowed to continue in existence was strengthened. The rhetoric was "unifying the forces," and it increasingly shaped the attitudes of the ruling elite for the coming two decades. For the sake of "unifying the forces," many institutions which were
outside absolute governmental control were forced to "join" the state-controlled
institutions such as the People's Houses. The following comment from Kemal Atatürk
clearly summarizes the mentality of "unifying the forces" on the eve of founding the
People's Houses:

There are some periods in the history of the nation when in order to reach certain
goals all the material and spiritual forces must be gathered in one place, and must
be directed to the same goal....All the nationalist and Republican powers must be
put in the same place for the preservation of the nation against the dangers which
may come from inside or outside. Powers of the same kind must be unified
around the common goal. 8

In the light of this mentality, the activities of the People's Houses can be better
understood. The People's Houses embodied the project of replacing any autonomous
pre-existing intellectual and political associations. One of the most important of these
organizations at the time was the Turkish Hearths (Türk Ocakları), founded as early as
1912 to spread Turkish nationalism. 9 The Hearths was a prominent cultural and
intellectual organization which succeeded in bringing many of the outstanding Turkish
nationalists under its umbrella. Despite the lack of any opposition to the Kemalist regime
from this institution, like the Free Party, it was perceived to be a political threat, or at
least an alternative to the Kemalist leadership. That the People's Houses even used all the
former buildings of the Turkish Hearths after they were forced to shut down reveals the
extent of the replacement. 10 The Turkish Hearths were forced to terminate themselves,
because of their allegedly critical attitude and semi-autonomous position. The ruling
circles feared that even though the Hearths did not constitute a political party, they could
be centers of political opposition:
Behind this idea [the closure of the Turkish Hearths], there was also the intention to win the support of the large and dynamic masses in the peripheries of the Republican People's Party, who could easily shift to the opposition sides. These masses had to stay away from active politics, and in so doing, only the Party could remain in political life.\[11

Hamdullah S. Tanrıöver, the director of the Hearths, later accused the RPP of resorting to totalitarian tactics in closing his institution. He claimed that the purpose of the People's Houses resembled the totalitarian practices prevailing in contemporary Germany and Soviet Russia.\[12

The mass support given to the Free Party alarmed the Republican People's Party, for it indicated that the Kemalist Revolution was not supported by the people.\[13

Consequently, the RPP established the People's Houses as propaganda institutions in order to spread the principles of Kemalism,\[14 which were barely supported by the average people. This was especially true for the rural population, which made up almost 80 per cent of Turkey's population, was concerned.\[15 It is within this context that the People's Houses increasingly resorted to utilizing a peasantist ideology.

This is also the context within which we can understand why the People's Houses were perceived as adult education centers. Not only in Turkey, but also in many European countries of the 1930s, adult education centers flourished. The German and Central European experiences especially exemplified the success of adult education centers, and influenced the Turkish intelligentsia.\[16 As a matter of fact, in the early 1930s the state sent several intellectuals and officials to Europe in order to examine their institutions of adult education.\[17 The result was that in many of the writings of the ruling elite of the early 1930s we see an emphasis on the necessity of adult education. In the
speech with which he opened the People's Houses in 1932, Kemal Atatürk pointed out that an education system not supported and complemented by adult education could never achieve nationalist goals. According to the RPP elite, the People's Houses were supposed to create loyal and enlightened citizens, who in turn would serve as the basis of the true nation.

To motivate and transform ordinary people was not the only goal of the People's Houses. Also important was the goal of mobilizing the intelligentsia, who could in turn be used for educating ordinary people. The problem was not that Turkey lacked intellectuals who could spread the ideology of the new regime, but that the Turkish intelligentsia, according to many contemporaries, was unwilling to take on the task of serving the principles of the revolution. The contemporaries pointed out the loss of enthusiasm among the Turkish intelligentsia and the upper classes for the Kemalist reforms. The complaints of two prominent Kemalist writers in this regard demonstrate the apathy among the intelligentsia of the early 1930s. Writing in 1933, Falih Rifki Atay claimed that nothing since 1914 had occupied the attention of ruling circles so much as beauty contests. According to him, the word "revolution" had recently become tiresome to the people. "The words of revolution and regime," continued Atay, "were met by the question `still?' by the journalists." Likewise, in 1934 Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu noted that he had seen the most enthusiastic gathering of the previous decade in the famous Ankara Palas Hotel, where a French fashion exhibition was taking place. As these examples show, by the early 1930s the state desperately needed to extend its influence among the intelligentsia. Many official speeches made it clear that intellectuals
should join the people in the cause of totally transforming the country.\textsuperscript{23} Intellectuals should communicate with the people in ways that ordinary people could understand.\textsuperscript{24} In this respect, the People's Houses were regarded as places where intellectuals and ordinary people should get together and bridge the gap that had continuously widened between them and the people, and between the urban and rural population.\textsuperscript{25}

3.2. The Peasantist Activities in the People's Houses

The People's Houses gave a special role and significance to their Peasantist Divisions (\textit{Köyçülük Kolları}), which constituted one of the nine divisions necessary to establish a People's House.\textsuperscript{26} The basic duty of the Peasantist Divisions was "the development of social, medical and aesthetical aspects of villages while establishing mutual respect and solidarity with the city dwellers." In order to do so, the members of the Peasantist Divisions should go to the villages, give theatrical performances there, and do anything that could "enlighten" the peasants. Some villages were chosen as models for the nearby villages. The overall aim of all these, it was claimed, was to create prosperous and educated Turkish peasants.\textsuperscript{27}

The cultural advancement of peasants remained an outstanding concern for the Peasantist Divisions of the People's Houses. Such an attitude is reminiscent of the habit of many intellectuals in developing countries to emphasize culture in general and ideology in particular. They tend to believe that when they have the right ideas or ideology, they can solve all the problems of their country. Similarly, the People's
Houses, more than anything else, focused on raising the cultural level of the people. For this reason, the aim of defining the intellectual basis of the peasantist ideology was given priority. Owing to the need to establish an ethos, in its first issue Ülkü, the official organ of the Ankara People's House, announced the kind of articles it aimed to publish as far as the peasants were concerned. The articles had to focus on "interpreting the significance of the peasantist ideas for the sake of the future of the country," "showing youth the honor of working for the villages," "improving the cultural and material life of peasants," and "reforming the village life on the basis of local conditions."  

The Peasantist Divisions of the People's Houses were the most active. In their inaugural year, the divisions had 2,908 members nationwide, and by 1940, there were 154,000. In the same year, their members visited over two thousand villages all over the country. Visiting villages was the most important activity of the Village Divisions. Ülkü depicted a typical village visit as follows: First the flag is hoisted while the people sing the national anthem. After this ceremony, the high officials and members of the People's Houses "mix" with the people. They donate books and journals to the peasants, and doctors take care of outbreaks of disease. Then, everybody listens to authentic music sung by local youth, and watches sporting activities. Usually some members of the Dramatics Divisions of the People's Houses perform a theatrical show, and at the end of the day the visitors return to the cities.  

One of the most important aims of these village visits was to bridge the gap between the city intellectuals and the people. The visits were intended to allow both the intellectuals and the peasants to become better acquainted, as previously they had been
The village visits also offered both parties practical guidance. Experts in several fields gave advice to the peasants on topics such as how to increase agricultural productivity, how to market products, how to establish producer co-operatives and the like. The members of the People's Houses led the commemoration of national festivals, including the newly inaugurated "Land Festival." Medical care of the peasants was always a significant task of the visits. The Divisions not only worked in the villages, but also organized groups to help peasants visiting cities. Especially when peasants had any demands from or problems with the officials, the members of the divisions supported them in their dealings with officialdom.

Furthermore, the collection of authentic, folkloric data from different regions became an important task, and this constituted one of the most important and lasting effects of these village visits. The national culture was enhanced by the anthropological, linguistic and musical information which was gathered. For instance, the famous Hungarian composer Bela Bartok was invited by the People's Houses to help collect Anatolian folk songs in villages.

The Peasantism Divisions of the People's Houses would not only work in the villages, but also organize groups to help peasants visiting cities. Especially when peasants had any demands from or problems with the officials, the members of the divisions supported them in their official tasks. In the 1940s, the activities of the Peasantism Divisions also included social assistance because of the increasingly deteriorating economic conditions of the country. This can be observed in the monthly reports of the Peasantist Divisions throughout the pages of Ülkü. What was understood
by charitable works was materially helping the poorest people of the villages and
providing medical care. Though much attention and significance were attributed to social
assistance, it turned out to be frustratingly unsuccessful.34

In addition to the People's Houses, the government established People's Rooms
[Halkodalari] in 1939. These were small versions of the People's Houses established in
the villages that could enable the members of the Peasantist Divisions to visit villages
irrespective of the weather conditions and the lack of transportation facilities. Members
of People's Houses could stay in these rooms. The project of the People's Rooms aimed
to extend the activities of the People's Houses to the entire year. Moreover, what was at
stake was an attempt to find a mass base from within the villagers. In so doing, villages
could be controlled from within.35 The People's Rooms were also expected to resolve
local difficulties and prevent cases being brought before the city courts, thereby saving
time and energy for both the courts and the peasants.36 Needless to say, as in the People's
Houses, only RPP members or state officials could be directors of the Rooms; and their
activities, like those of the People's Houses, were strictly controlled by the RPP.37

Neither the Peasantist Divisions nor the People's Rooms succeeded in
transforming the Turkish countryside. In the first place, the structure of villages in
Anatolia made such an attempt incredibly difficult. The size of an average village in
Turkey was small, and villages were so widely dispersed throughout the country that it
was quite impossible to reach all of them. In other words, there were material
impediments to reaching the diversely settled Anatolian peasants. More importantly,
however, the mentality prevalent in the People's Houses became an obstacle in achieving
the goal of allowing intellectuals to mix with the peasants. First, the bureaucratic nature of these activities impeded progress towards transforming the countryside. For example, the villages to be visited were notified officially beforehand so that the peasants could make the necessary preparations. The state and Party were so concerned to control any autonomous and creative activity that local initiative was stifled by bureaucratic pressure. It should have been obvious from the outset that such an approach would hardly win the hearts and minds of the peasants. Moreover, the members of the People's Houses looked on the peasants as objects of social engineering. This attitude, however, only increased the rural population's distrust of the intellectuals and city-dwellers, which, in the eyes of the peasants, was deep rooted.

The village visits of the People's Houses ended in a fiasco. Fay Kirby characterizes the people who participated in these village visits as "foreign tourists or travelers". Similarly, as Cavit Tütengil contends, the village visits did not go beyond the "picnics" of intellectuals in summertime. Even the goals that the Peasantist Divisions set for themselves were not realized, except for a few collections of anthropological and cultural information about the countryside of Turkey. Even if they had been able to achieve their goals, the nature and extent of their aims were such that the real problems of the peasants would not have been solved. The focus of peasantist activities of the People's Houses was mostly limited to the cultural sphere. It was argued that raising the consciousness of Turkey's peasants would solve all their problems. While a change in social and economic relations was required, the People's Houses were content merely
with changing the peasants' outlook. It was obvious that these endeavors were doomed to fail from the outset.

Life in rural Turkey remained largely unchanged by the People's Houses, because they failed to contribute to the transformation of the rural structure. This fact should not lead us to downgrade the significance of peasantist ideas. Ironically, the impact of these ideas was more on the intellectuals than on the peasants. The discussions on peasantism inspired, for example, the Village Institutes project, on which we shall focus in the next chapter, and which is yet another example of the impact of peasantist thought on the intelligentsia. Given the significance of the peasantist ideology, it is necessary to examine in detail the cultivation of this ideology among the intelligentsia.

3.3. The Basic Characteristics of the Peasantist Ideology

It was in the 1930s that the peasantist ideas began spreading among the Turkish intelligentsia, especially among those who wrote in the journal Ülkü, published by Ankara People's House, although it has a history of its own during the late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, as discussed in chapter one. A study of peasantist thought in this period should focus especially on this journal for it represented the dominant views among the ruling and intellectual circles. The names of the Ülkü contributors reveal the significance of the journal since many leading RPP and state officials, famous intellectuals and academics, wrote in this semi-official journal. However, Ülkü was not an ideologically strict and theoretically monolithic journal. This was partly due to the
fact that Kemalism as an ideology perhaps neither intended to be monolithic, nor was it so in reality. For this reason, the ambiguities of the Kemalist ideology were reflected in the pages of this journal as well.\textsuperscript{43}

Around 1932 the interest in developing the villages gained momentum in Turkey. As I shall argue in chapter six, indeed this was a world-wide phenomenon between the two world wars, in part due to the Great Depression,\textsuperscript{44} which was seen as a result of urbanization and industrialization, and in part because of the catastrophic drought of the early 1930s, which made the problem of agricultural production extremely crucial.

Turkey surely was not an exception. Much evidence can be cited for the growing interest in villages and villagers during this time. Official speeches, including Kemal Atatürk's, started paying more attention to the development of the countryside, arguing that Turkey's most crucial task lay in developing the villages; the members of the People's Houses considered the peasantist activities as supremely important, and attempted to mobilize their forces about this issue; students and teachers were encouraged to go to villages in the summer; and, last but not least, the Ministry of Education started devising projects on improving education in villages.\textsuperscript{45} This was mainly initiated by the newly appointed Minister, Reşit Galip, who was known as one of the first peasantists in the late Ottoman Empire and in the new Republic.\textsuperscript{46}

The growing interest in the development of the Turkish peasantry found its reflection in the increasing number of articles and books concerning the issue. In Ülkü many people wrote about village life and its importance for national well-being. As far as the peasantist ideology was concerned, in Ülkü there were two general lines, one
represented by Nusret Köymen together with some other Ülkü writers, and the other by most of the leading official RPP authorities. While the former had clear-cut principles and views on peasantism, the latter can be characterized by eclecticism and pragmatism, though they also carried considerable peasantist outlook. Therefore, for the presentation of the characteristics of peasantism, we shall focus more on the first group’s ideas, for they represented a full-fledged example of its kind.

Despite the influence of the peasantist ideology in early Republican Turkey, the characteristics of this ideology still await an in-depth analysis. Therefore, we now need to focus on highlighting the main characteristics of this ideology: its anti-urbanist and anti-industrialist bias, the exaltation of villages and peasants, its role in spreading Turkish nationalism, its attitude toward Westernization, and finally its perception of education as the motor of rural transformation. These characteristics can be seen in peasantists such as Nusret Köymen, who had formed peasantist principles and who presented this ideology in detail. Although this peasantist worldview differed somewhat from the official perceptions of the peasantry, it is important to note that their similarities exceeded their differences, so this discussion of the characteristics of peasantist ideology transcends the pure, full-fledged peasantists, and helps us understand the ideological orientation of many of the ruling elite of the time.
3.3.1. Anti-Urbanism and Anti-industrialism

Although many peasantist ideologues in the world expressed contempt for industrialization, in Turkey it was anti-urbanization which formed the most significant characteristic of peasantism. Other peasantist ideologies, such as that under the Third Reich in Germany, also had anti-urban biases, but in this and other examples the consequences of industrialization and the fear of the growing working-class consciousness and activities occupied a more central role. In Turkey the crucial question was not being for or against industry, notwithstanding the fact that many of the peasantists had critical attitudes towards it. Many intellectuals feared industrialization, thinking that industrialization created a division of labor in which man was reduced to a mere extension of machines. But the peasantists made a distinction between the terms "industrialization" and "industry," and endorsed the latter while rejecting the former. This was theorized in such a way that Turkey was supposed to have industries without passing through an industrialization process. Interestingly enough, they were for industry but against industrialization, a term they used to refer to the historical experience of western Europe. These intellectuals envisaged an industrial development which would not dislocate the population in the countryside, and would not dissolve the traditional relations of production while improving the technological structure. In this way, the peasantists believed, immigration into the cities could have been prevented, and this could have led to the impeding of the formation of the working-class, which itself was an urban phenomenon to be avoided.
It was the cities, especially the big cities, the Turkish peasantists claimed, which symbolized the worst of all possible worlds. Cities embodied cosmopolitanism, class struggle, unemployment, economic depressions, workers' strikes, insecurities of all kinds, less social control and degeneration of all sorts. According to Köymen, for example, it was urbanization, not industrialization, which was the root cause of all social problems, since urbanization preceded industrialization. Although he accepts that social problems related to urbanization rose to unprecedented levels with the rise of industrialization, their origins still lay in the formation of cities, not in industrialization per se. In the cities, even before industrialization, Köymen argued, social problems emerged such as class struggles, which should be avoided by all means.

According to the peasantist ideology, one of the most important concerns was to prevent migration to the cities. This was, of course, a corollary of the anti-urban bias of peasantist ideology. For this reason, attaching the peasants to the countryside became a major concern of the peasantists. They accordingly argued that it was essential to develop the villages in order to bond the peasants to them; otherwise the peasant might attempt to seek in the city the rights and comfort he lacked in the village.

It should be noted that the peasantists were also against small and dispersed villages, as much as they opposed big cities. There were two reasons: on the one hand, small villages scattered randomly throughout the nation were quite difficult to incorporate into national life because of economic unfeasibility. In other words, such a village structure could not benefit from economies of scale. Secondly, it was difficult to establish state authority in these smaller villages.
The critical attitude of the peasantists towards urbanization went hand-in-hand with their resentment of the city dwellers. Many articles written from a peasantist perspective and many surveys and reports from villages identified the peasants' deep hostility towards the urban population. It should be noted, however, that the target of this hostility was not distinct social groups, but the abstract city dweller. So an imagined contradiction was presented between the city and rural population.

The peasantists resented the uneven development of the city and the countryside. They claimed that cities and villages should benefit from the same rights and privileges, but in reality the situation was quite to the disadvantage of villages. In a sense, the peasantists argued that what was needed was an equalization between the living and learning conditions of the villages and cities. They believed that the peasants were discriminated against. For example, the taxes taken from the peasants, they contended, were spent for public works in cities. For these reasons, what was necessary was bending the stick to the other side, since for centuries cities had been thriving at the expense of villages. Although village life was superior to city life, so they argued, owing to the power of the cities the villages had been exploited by the cities. According to Köymen, the "unproductive" cities had the economic, cultural, administrative and civilizational power, which made it possible for the city dwellers to exploit the "productive" peasants, even though the wealth and power of the cities depended on the sacrifices of the villagers. A similar mentality in the industrialized West, the argument went, led to one of the most important mistakes of human history by creating a division of labor.
unfavorable to villages.\textsuperscript{57} Inherent in these criticisms, of course, was an antipathy towards the industrial revolution of the West.

The dominance of cities and city people over the countryside, according to the peasantists, led to the misconception that villages were simple extensions and complements of cities. In other words, the mistake that many intellectuals made was to regard villages as small entities dependent on cities. In reality, they argued, cities were dependent on the villages, and it was a great mistake to relate the development of villages to urban development. Cities, in fact, were just the complements of villages, which offered them market places for agricultural products, and functioned as centers of public works for villages, but not centers in themselves. In this respect, many argued, a city was supposed to be nothing more than a big village.\textsuperscript{58}

3.3.2. The Glorification of Villages and Peasants

The peasantists' strong hostility towards urbanization coexisted with the glorification of village life and the peasants. The peasantists portrayed a utopian and unrealistic village life and economy to foster their cause. Peasants were the pure, unspoiled, noble, intelligent, flexibly-thinking people, who made up the roots of the Turkish nation and the motor of national development.\textsuperscript{59} In this respect, they always strongly criticized the Ottoman Empire for favoring cities at the expense of villages. According to them, this attitude was the consequence of the anti-nationalist and anti-peasantist character of the Ottoman Empire. They conceived a causal relation
between urbanism and anti-nationalism. During the Ottoman Empire, their argument went, the national identity and culture were lost (as if they indeed had existed!) since Ottoman intellectuals were individualistic, and did not have the sense of community consciousness, and were perceived to be antithetical to the peasantist ideology. According to them, the Ottoman intellectuals achieved no more than ornamental writings about the peasants.⁶⁰

Although numerous factors were cited for the superiority of village life, such as the fact that villages had good weather for child rearing, and were less vulnerable than cities for national defense,⁶¹ three areas of purported superiority of village life and people enable a better understanding of peasantist ideology: finding the "true" Turkish culture and race in villages, the eminence of the peasant economy, and the conservatism of the peasants.

In the 1930s many peasantists emphasized that villages were the places where the "pure" culture of the nation was preserved intact.⁶² As a matter of fact, although the peasantists extensively used this notion of superiority, the perception that villages contained the origins of national culture cannot be attributed exclusively to peasantist ideology. The idea of "pure cultural traits preserved in the countryside" had a long history in nationalist rhetoric all over the world, including Turkey. The eminent Young Turk ideologue, Ziya Gökalp, for one, stressed such a notion of pure cultural traits that could be found among the villagers as early as the 1900s.⁶³ Many nationalist movements, regardless of whether they had a peasantist orientation or not, believed in finding the roots of national culture and identity in villages. This is understandable from a nationalist
perspective, since cities embodied cosmopolitanism with their ethnically, culturally and economically mixed nature, although in reality Turkish villages were not ethnically less diverse.

Another presumably superior feature of villages was their preservation of the Turkish race. It is beyond the aims of this chapter to discuss whether the peasantists, in particular the People's Houses, engaged in racist activities, and endorsed a racist outlook, or to what extent their activities and publications evinced racism. During the era we are talking about, there were certainly racist elements, such as biological and anthropological research in search of the Turkish race, the use of the concept "turk" (race) with reference to blood, discussions on how the Turkish language and race were superior to others and the like. The peasantist ideologues frequently used a racist rhetoric to make their cases. However, their perception of race also included respecting other races and cultures. The peasantist rhetoric on this issue was much less aggressive and exclusive than the German Blut und Boden ideology in the same peasantist context.

The second merit of villages and peasants, according to the peasantists, stemmed from the alleged superiority of the agricultural economy over the urban and industrial economies. They worshipped the petty production characteristics of the agrarian economy, for this made it possible to use the household as the basic unit of production. The household economy of rural life enabled the peasants to stay away from the harsh alienation in the workplace, a negative phenomenon characteristic of industrial production. Since the producers owned their own land, they were more motivated and interested, economically and psychologically, in their work. This in turn enabled the
survival of a more harmonious society due to the fact that household production did not necessitate wage labor, a category perceived to corrupt not only the workplace but also the society as a whole. In other words, the peasantists glorified the countryside for the absence of a working class.

It was small agrarian production, Köymen argued, which fed the world throughout the ages. Yet, it was not "money" but "joy" that was at the center of this production, unlike the industrial commercialized economies. The agrarian economies relied on "honesty" and "trust," unlike the corrupt economic activities in the cities, which once more indicated the superior feature of rural to urban production. Furthermore, there was a more important characteristic of small agrarian production: its tendency to self-sufficiency. According to the peasantist rhetoric, self-sufficiency was a crucial feature of the Turkish agrarian economy. Indeed, did not the Great Depression once more vindicate the extraordinary necessity and advantage of self-sufficiency?

The third merit of the peasants was that they did not make up a restless and an internationalist class like the urban working class; rather they were characterized by conservatism. According to Köymen, this conservatism was the "social insurance" against the moral deterioration of the cities. For one thing, most peasants had at least a small amount of property, which made them in some sense entrepreneurs and prevented their turning into a "proletariat." On the other hand, industrialization in the cities, according to Köymen, created a division of labor in which humans were reduced to mere extensions of machines. Like many peasantists around the world, the Turkish advocates
of this ideology thought that workers were subject to lose their personal character due to the harsh division of labor brought about by industrialization.\footnote{77}

3.3.3. Nationalism and Peasantism

Peasantism can never be satisfactorily understood without taking into account its role in the context of Turkish nationalism. In the previous chapter, we have seen the role of nationalism in the emergence of populist and peasantist ideas in the late Ottoman Empire. During the early Republican era, the practical link between Turkish nationalism and peasantism revolved around Turkification of some of the minority groups, who were believed not to be "Turkish" enough. This was particularly true in the case of the Kurdish-speaking population of the southeast and the Muslim immigrant communities, who came from the Balkan regions after the Balkan Wars. The People's Houses and their Peasantist Divisions gave special importance to teaching Turkish to these communities.\footnote{78}

Apart from the practical and pragmatic necessities of the link between nationalism and peasantism, there was a very interesting theoretical problem concerning the concept of nation. According to many peasantists, the nation simply meant peasants. The peasantists conceptualized the peasantry as the backbone of the middle class and their image of the class-free Turkish society was a society in which everybody was part of the middle class.\footnote{79} The peasantists, moreover, saw a division in the current society between the urban and the rural, and took the side of the latter, favoring village-oriented social, political and economic policies. This conception of the nation as equivalent to the
peasants, however, was not completely shared by most of the official ruling circles in the state and the Party. According to the leaders of the RPP, such as Recep Peker, the nation meant the people, an abstract concept defined on a legal basis. The people included everybody who enjoyed equality before the law. Similarly, one of the leading Party intellectuals argued that in the past, it had been legitimate to conceptualize the people as consisting of the peasants, since there was no equality before the law; but with the foundation of the Republic, the argument went, the cleavages between different social groups no longer existed, thanks to the equality of law.

Although we mentioned above the romantic perception of the countryside as the reserve of the national flavor that permeated the contemporary writings of the intelligentsia, those same people also viewed the peasants as the least "nationalized" group of the people. This, in fact, was very much the real case, since the national project was more of an urban phenomenon. Given the necessity to spread the nationalist ideology to the countryside, the peasantist Köymen writes that "There are some villages in which a foreign language is spoken, although they are often racially Turkish, and have been living in this country for centuries; and there are even some villages in which people speak Turkish but do not adhere to Turkism sufficiently." As seen, the peasantists had a deep concern for consolidating the power of the nation-state in the countryside. Without the support of the majority of the people, they thought, it would be impossible for nationalism to take root in the country. They therefore saw their activities as indispensable to the task of building the hegemony of the nation-state given the fact that the peasants seemed to be less receptive to the nationalist ideology.
3.3.4. The Peasantist Ideology and Westernization

Given the hostility toward urbanization and industrialization together with the glorification of the village life and people, it is no surprise that the peasantists developed a hostile rhetoric toward Westernization. This is because western Europe historically embodied many characteristics that were antithetical to the peasantist ideology. The peasantists advocated the predominance of an agricultural economy, and argued that the path Turkey should take had to be determined by its own historical conditions. Besides, peasantists such as Köymen held a critical theoretical position towards Westernization, since the discrepancy between cities and villages, first and foremost, was a phenomenon of the West. Furthermore, Köymen insisted repeatedly that the Great Depression was the product of the urban and industrial Western civilization, which was going through a deep crisis. What the peasantists inferred from this historical experience was that the West should not be an example for the future development of Turkey. As a matter of fact, peasantist ideology and its principles were apparently at odds with the two major historical developments that took place in the West, namely urbanization and industrialization. We should, of course, note that the world of the 1930s was one of the best periods for such critiques of Westernization to flourish. After all, the Great Depression, perceived to be an inherently western and urban phenomenon, with its horrible consequences, made it quite difficult to be an ardent supporter of Westernization.
The hostile rhetoric of the peasantists towards Westernization also reflects their assumptions about the world-wide division of labor. They developed a theory of exploitation of the rural world by the industrialized West: The latter acquired its wealth at the expense of the former. In this way, the Turkish peasantists carried the logic of the urban versus rural dichotomy inside Turkey to the world scale. They cultivated a theory of division of labor in the world between the urban/industrial and rural/agricultural countries. Since the West exemplified the first, it is no surprise that they devised a critical attitude toward Westernization.66

We should note, in passing, that it was not only the peasantists but other small groups, as well, who had this attitude toward Westernization in the 1930s. One group consisted of the intellectuals grouped around the famous journal Kadro. This journal, like the peasantists, championed a different developmental path for Turkey, although one remarkably different from that endorsed by the peasantists. The Kadro writers offered a "third" way different from both liberalism and socialism, but their vision was mostly an urban and industrial one. They harshly condemned the West for its imperialism, liberalism, democracy and individualism. They were particularly critical of the French Revolution and its individualistic and liberal principles. According to the Kadro contributors, it was justifiable to adopt western methods and techniques, since they belonged to the entire humanity. The fact that at the time these methods and techniques were found only in the West, those intellectuals thought, stemmed from western exploitation of the world. In other words, the non-western countries also had a share in the formation of western methods and techniques. They also saw no problem in adopting
western social theories insofar as they were useful for their own goals. Kadro frequently criticized pro-western journals and newspapers, and condemned the inferiority complex towards the West that prevailed among many Turkish intellectuals.  

How should one explain the juxtaposition of the critical attitude toward Westernization seen above, and the rampant Westernization of the times in social life that many academics have so long pointed out? It is probably owing to the fact that there was a great discrepancy between the rhetoric and the reality. For instance, although no endorsement of full-fledged Westernization appears in the pages of Ülkü, if one carefully reads the accounts of the activities of the People's Houses, even among the peasantists, it is possible to locate quite a significant number of cases in which ambitious Westernization was pursued. Just to give an example, the only sport performed in Adana People's House was tennis, which even today is regarded as an elite sport in this region. Furthermore, Anıl Çeçen, who wrote a book on the People's Houses and is extremely sympathetic to them could not help, but confess that the People's Houses ended up contributing to the formation of a "bourgeois" (read western) life and cultural style in Turkey. Despite this evidence, barely anyone used the term Westernization. The preferred term to describe these phenomena was "progress towards the level of contemporary civilization" ("müasir medeniyetler seviyesine yükselmek"), but obviously this meant Westernization since, even according to many peasantists, the West still embodied contemporary high civilization. On the whole, it is fair to say that the peasantist rhetoric on the issue of Westernization also contributed to the ambiguous and contradictory nature of the single-party regime.
3.3.5. Education as the Motor of Rural Transformation

So far three basic characteristics of peasantist ideology have been discussed. It is now important to see the manner in which the peasantists wanted to accomplish their goals. For this reason, we need to take into account their emphasis on education and human will.

The peasantists saw education as the most important factor in transforming Turkey's countryside. This was because, for most peasantists, the root cause of economic and social backwardness in villages rested on the lack of education rather than on social structure and relations. They ignored the eminence of social relations and struggle, and instead focused on the struggle against the hardships of nature and the ignorance of the peasants. For this reason, they believed in educating the peasants to achieve their goals.

Their belief in education for social transformation notwithstanding, they rejected mainstream education, and advocated a distinct style for educating the peasantry as opposed to the city dwellers. In the first place, peasants had to be educated in villages, not in cities. The educational system for villages should be based on the necessities of rural life. In this respect, they opposed the system of general education that had been applied in cities. The peasantists needed a village education system completely different from that of the cities, one based on vocational training. 

The most crucial role in the achievement of a successful educational reform should rest with a new and different generation of village teachers. The peasantists,
together with many others, agreed on the vital role expected of village teachers. These teachers should be recruited from the peasant population since, their argument continued, teachers of city origin tended to return to cities at the first opportunity. Those teachers were unwilling to bear the difficulties of village life. For this reason, not only should teachers be educated in such a way that they would not leave the villages; they should also be granted some economic privileges in the villages. These ideas about village education became the core values for the Village Institute experiment that started in 1937 to which we shall devote a separate chapter.

We should note that expecting a social transformation from education was related to another significant characteristic of the peasantist ideology, namely its emphasis on voluntarism. Peasantists expected too much from subjective factors such as education. As the first director of the People's Houses pointed out, there was nothing that the power of human agency could not achieve. A peasantist, Said Aydoslu, who contributed articles on economics to Ülkü, denied all existence of historical necessity, and argued that human voluntarism was enough to accomplish any social change. Likewise in his article regarding voluntarism, Köymen noted that it was with an anti-urbanist and peasantist perspective that people should intervene in their own lives and should not allow their lives to be determined by the course of events and history. The peasantists rightly anticipated that even if they could not divert the historical development of Turkey toward urbanization and industrialization, by using state power these processes could somehow be controlled. After all, as Köymen pointed out, was not the Turkish Revolution a direct product of idealism and voluntarism?
3.4. The Demise and Rise of Peasantism After 1936

After 1936 these general characteristics of peasantist ideology gave way to a different interpretation advocated by senior state officials. While the ruling circles were extensively using and adopting some of the tenets of this ideology, the ideology itself was reinterpreted according to the pragmatic necessities of governmental policies. In order to understand the further development of peasantist ideology, one must examine the changes in the intellectual realm that took place in the mid-1930s.

Starting in late 1935, some self-criticisms appeared in Ülki. A realistic and sound one by S. Kandemir in his article entitled "Our Peasantist Ideology" (Köycülüğümüz) signalled the coming of other critiques. According to Kandemir, the development of villages and peasants could be possible only with the full-fledged assistance of the state. Institutions such as the People's Houses and personal initiatives were not enough to handle this enormous task. The People's Houses could be helpful only insofar as they conducted activities complementary to those of the state. In other words, the expectations of the People's Houses were too immense and unrealistic. Moreover, Kandemir pointed out that the theoretical search for peasantist ideology failed to go beyond presenting the problem itself. What had to be done was to create theoretical projects that could be applicable to practical situations. He admitted that the peasantist ideas in Turkey were still passing through their "romantic" phase.
Early 1936, however, constituted a turning point for discussions on peasantist ideology. The Prime Minister of the time, Celal Bayar, wrote an influential article in Ülkü discussing some of the repercussions of peasantist ideology. In addition, in the same year some peasantists such as Köymen questioned the viability of their project in the pages of Ülkü. Both of these developments marked a change in the way in which the peasant question had been discussed. Shortly after this incident, the number of articles in Ülkü advocating a peasantist agenda decreased dramatically. This does not mean, however, that discussion of and interest in the question of the peasantry slowed down in Turkey; as a matter of fact, the concern about village issues, especially on the part of the official elite, continued and even increased.

Celal Bayar, in his Ülkü article of March 1936, discussed whether Turkey should be predominantly an industrial or an agrarian country. He strongly criticized the idea that agriculture ought to take priority in the development of Turkey. According to him, to be successful and prosperous even at the level of agricultural production, the country needed a sound industrial base. This does not mean that he favored a full-fledged industrialization, but he made it clear that industrial concerns should have priority among state concerns. In the next issue of Ülkü, Köymen replied to Bayar's views on industry and agriculture. Instead of an industry-versus agriculture duality, Köymen devised the term köycü endüstri [peasantist industry], meaning that Turkey should be industrialized, provided that the peasants, first and foremost, benefit from this development, and the future horrible consequences of industrialization be avoided. In this sense, his priority apparently lay with the interests of the rural classes.
Köymen's concept of köycü endüstri has quite interesting peculiarities. Industries should be established in the countryside only, which would make it possible for workers to retain their own land. Citing the example of German factories' granting land to their workers, Köymen argued that this was a significant way of preventing the formation of a "proletariat." Another way to prevent this phenomenon was to sell some of the stock of the factory to the workers so that they would have a stake in their factories. But more importantly, according to his theory, instead of peasant immigration into the cities, industries should go to the villages. Constructing industries outside the cities, he believed, would have prevented many of the ills that cities had created, such as class struggle, shanty towns, the existence of two different realms of life in the cities and the villages, social corruption and the like.

Compared to urban industries, Köymen's köycü endüstri would:

- benefit from the low prices of land, wages and raw materials;
- be more resistant against negative effects such as strikes, fire, theft, and disasters in the countryside;
- be better protected from air bombardment;
- be less costly in times of temporary closure;
- employ fewer permanent workers, who will be easier to replace when demand was high;
- benefit from the availability of a direct consumption market which has no intermediaries;
- be part of the culture of the region, which will foster the interest of the workers in their jobs and make them culturally more sophisticated;
- can survive even in times of depression since the workers can easily switch to working on their lands.

Köymen's köycü endüstri would consist of small-scale factories. He criticized the fetish of establishing large factories, which would benefit from economies of scale on the basis of their declining productivity. He was probably scared that workers in large factories would organize and achieve class consciousness. He argued that large-scale factories carried the risk of being idle from time to time and of accumulating excess
inventory. Even in the stronghold of big factories, the United States, Köymen pointed out, recalling the "flexible specialization" discussions in the world political economy of the 1980s, large-scale had started giving way to flexible, small-scale factories.¹⁰⁸

To what extent this elaborate theory, presented as the peasantist answer to Bayar, was realistic is difficult to judge. It is possible to find some evidence to support such a theory in modern Turkish history. For instance, we know that most governmental policies discouraged the separation of workers from their villages,¹⁰⁹ and that the state-owned enterprises in Turkey were situated in such a way that workers would be "largely isolated in widely separated state plants."¹¹⁰

This endeavor to redress peasantist ideology while retaining its core ideas was followed by another interesting and fanciful Ülkü article by Köymen that contained significant self-criticism. He first confessed that the peasantists did not really know the peasants. Any reform, he argued, if not coming from below of necessity, could never be understood and supported by the peasants. Yet the peasants were unaware of their real interests because of their low intellectual capacity. For this reason, his argument went, the reforms that had begun in villages could not be successfully finished.¹¹¹ He declared that the peasantists had to give up working in villages, since not much could be gained from these activities. Not only was the peasant insensitive to any reform, but the dispersed nature of Turkish villages also made it virtually impossible to accomplish any nationwide success.¹¹² He came up with the "only way" to solve the peasant question without ever going to the villages: Peasant lodges [Köylü Hanı]. By establishing peasant lodges, and recruiting clever peasants when they came to cities, things could be done for
the peasants in the cities. This, however, was a very paradoxical theory, since it was on
the cities, which the peasantists in theory were against, that the fortune and prosperity of
villages depended once again.

After 1936 one can rarely find in Ülki a peasantist rhetoric as pure as it was, the
characteristics of which have been presented above. But, ironically, the state's
involvement in village and peasant issues gained momentum around the same time. Especially after 1937, the state-sponsored peasantist rhetoric using many of the themes
and viewpoints of the ideology (even if it were not as pure as depicted above) reached its
apogee with the launching of the idea of land reform, and the Village Institutes, a rural
educational programme aiming to transform the Turkish countryside, both of which
aroused immense controversies in Turkish history and politics.

3.5. Conclusion

The peasantist activities of the People's Houses can hardly be considered a
success. Perhaps this stemmed from the mentality of "for the people, despite the people."
According to this mentality, which has been quite strong among Ottoman/Turkish
politicians and intellectuals, the elite had the right to think and decide on behalf of the
people themselves, and implement policies regardless of whether the people would
approve or like them. The ordinary people of the cities and peasants of the countryside
never became actively involved in the activities of the People's Houses. The members of
these institutions were usually officials of the central government, intellectuals, landlords,
and "prominent citizens" of the region. Dr. İlhan Başgöz, who himself worked in the Ankara People's House between 1941 and 1946, for instance, points out that he never saw any person of working-class origin in Ankara People's House. These facts are certainly at odds with the original intentions of the People's Houses. As Kemal Karpat rightly argues, "the gap between government and people, something which the Houses were originally intended to eliminate", deepened. "The rigorous power of the bureaucracy and its arbitrary use of the Houses, especially in small towns, coupled with their disdain of the common people," writes Karpat, "gradually turned the latter away from these institutions and left them without support." The success of the People's Houses would have necessitated allowing the ordinary people greater initiative, but the People's Houses failed to go beyond functioning like an official institution. The state and the Party were exempt from criticism. When criticisms were raised once in a while, they found harsh responses from the Party and state officials.

Though the peasantist activities of the People's Houses did not transform the rural people and their environment, the peasantist ideology certainly influenced the intelligentsia and the official ruling circles. Many intellectuals who later worked in the Village Institutes, for instance, subscribed to the peasantist ideology, as we will see in the next chapter. Although this ideology had a considerable impact on the worldviews of the governing elite, it often contradicted a purely peasantist outlook. As discussed above whereas most ardent supporters of this ideology conceptualized the nation as equivalent to the peasants, the majority of the leading bureaucrats, such as Recep Peker, opposed this idea. Peker carefully and insistently differentiated his concept of Halkçılık from the
The concept of Populism. The government policies represented ambiguities and eclecticism that encompassed many different viewpoints. This situation can be seen clearly in the existence of different complaints about and expectations from the governmental policies. For instance, peasants such as Köymen always hoped to see more peasantist policies, while intellectuals of opposite viewpoints, such as contributors to Kadro, accused the state of not paying enough attention to étatist industrialization.

Most scholars and historians of Kemalist orientation have pointed out the progressive nature of the single-party regime for its advocacy of industrialization. As a matter of fact, as I have made clear in this chapter, there was no clear-cut policy of industrialization in the minds of the Turkish ruling elite. The widespread presence of the peasantist ideology in fact points to the dominance of the opposite tendencies. In this sense, it is just not a coincidence that two of the prominent senior officials, Dr. Reşit Galip and Mehmet Saffet (Arıkan), both of whom had several important official posts, including that of Minister of Education, in the 1930s, were known for their peasantist leanings. Likewise, M. Esendal, who became the general-secretary of the RPP in the early 1940s, a post dealing mainly with indoctrination, was known as the "enemy of industry and industrialized civilization." More examples can be adduced, but suffice it to say that it is now impossible to accept the claim that industrialization was one of the main tenets of the ruling ideology.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1 See Cumhuriyet, 2 January 1930 and 25 February 1930.


3 According to Kemal Atatürk, "the people" consisted of the entire population since all classes of Turkish society required protection: "Let's examine our people... The majority of our people are farmers and shepherds... How many people own large amounts of land in our country? What is the amount of this land? If explored it will be seen that compared to the largeness of our country nobody owns a large amount of land. Therefore, these landowners are people who need protection. Then come artisans and... the merchants in the towns. Of course, we have to protect and provide their benefits and positions, and the future of these people. Like the big landowners who are supposedly against the farmers, there is no big business against these small merchants. How many millionaires do we have? None. Therefore, we cannot be an enemy to those people who have some money. On the contrary, we are going to strive for creating millionaires and even billionaires. Then come the workers. Today in our country such establishments as the factory and manufacturing are limited....Therefore we also have to protect the workers....I see our
Throughout the 1930s 379 People's Houses were established in most of the major cities and towns of Turkey, and this number increased to 455 by 1946 in addition to 4066 People's Rooms (village version of the Houses). See Ibid., p. 198.


For a very good depiction of the mood among the ruling circles of the time, see A. H. Başar's *Atatürk'le Üç Ay ve 1930'dan Sonra Türkiye* (Ankara: Tan Matbaası, 1981).

The American ambassador to Turkey in the early 1930s, Joseph Grew, writes about the changes in the political system: "At the same time, a thorough reorganization of the People's Party was undertaken. If I am right in my conclusions, this reorganization will develop the People's Party into a politico-educational organism based on Fascist principles; Fascism translated into Turkish will equal a 'New Kemalism.'" See Joseph C. Grew, *The Turbulent Era -A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years 1904-1945*, vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), p. 880. The Kemalist regime was not a fascist regime, though. However, especially during the 1930s some prominent figures of the ruling elite had strong inspiration for and sympathy with the fascist regimes in Italy and Germany. Some well-known examples reveal their sympathies in their books and articles in their books and articles: Falih R. Atay, *Fasist Roma, Kemalist Tirnak ve Kaybolmuş Makidonya* (Ankara: Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası, 1931); Recep Peker, "İnkılap Dersleri," *Toplum ve Bilim* 18, İnkalap Ders Notları Special Issue (Summer 1983) first published in 1935, pp. 5-101; Şerif Aykut, *Kamalizm* (İstanbul: Muallim Almet Halit Kitabevi, 1936); Mahmut E. Bozkurt, *Atatürk İhtilali* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1995, first published in 1940) and *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, especially during World War II. For an excellent account of the Nazi influence in Turkey from 1938 to 1945, see Cemil Koçak's *Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi, (1938-1945)* (İstanbul: Yurt Yayınları, 1986).

See his speech in *Cumhuriyet*, 25 March 1931 [Italics mine].


13 One of the prominent members of the Free Party, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, in his memoirs notes the ignorance of the people towards the RPP and their enthusiastic support for the new party. See Ahmet Ağaoğlu, *Serbest Firka Hatırları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994), first edition 1950, pp. 50-51, p. 63.


15 The official statements regarding the primary role of the People's Houses in reaching the hearts and minds of people can be found in many articles in *Ülkü*. See, for instance, İsmet İnönü, "Halkevleri Yılı Dönümünde," *Ülkü* 1, 2 (1933), p. 100; Atatürk quoted in Nafi Kansu, "Halkevlerimiz," *Ülkü* 12, 68 (1938), p. 213; B. K. Çağlar, "Halkevlerinde Göze Çarpan Çalışmalar ve Beliren Değerler," *Ülkü* 10, 60 (1938), p. 550; Çeçen, *Halkevleri* (Ankara: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1990), p. 107 for clear examples of the intention to spread the ideology of the regime to the masses. As Tü tengil and many intellectuals who wrote in the publications of the People's Houses pointed out, the peasantism of the People's Houses was an attempt to reach the people. Tü tengil, *Kırsal Türkiye'nin...,* p. 87.


17 Selim Sırrı Tarcan was sent to Sweden and Vildan Aşır Savaşır to central Europe to examine adult education. Çeçen, *Halkevleri*, p. 95. According to Bağöz and Wilson "it was alleged that the formation of Halkevleri program was strongly influenced by both the Soviet and Fascist (Italian) practices." İ. Bağöz and H. E. Wilson, *Educational Problems in Turkey, 1920-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1968), p. 152.


19 See, for example, Recep Peker, the general secretary of the RPP, in the first issue of *Ülkü*. R. Peker, "Halkevleri Açılıma Nutku (Parçalar)," *Ülkü* 1, 1 (1933), p. 6.


25 Çeçen, Halkevleri, p. 123.


27 Çeçen, Halkevleri, p. 127.


29 "Ülkü'nün Yazı Bölümüleri," No author given, Ülkü 1, 1 (1933), p. 93.


31 B. K. Çağlar, "Halkevlerinde Göze Çarpan Çalışmalar ve Beliren Değerler," Ülkü 11, 66 (1938), p. 558. A village visit of the members of the People's Houses is reported in the semi-official Cumhuriyet and is worth quoting at length: "Halkevinin Köyçüler şubesi cuma günü Bursa'ya üç saat mesafedeki Aksu köyünde ilk defa bir köy bayramı yaptı. Köyçüler şubesi azalı azalan arasında Müddeiumum, Defterdar, Polis müdürü, H. F. reisi, ihisar müdürlerile bir çok doktor ve memur bulunmaktadır. Bu zevatı hepse bayrama istirak etmiştir. Köylüler, şehirlerle davul zurnalarla ve daha evvel Aksu'ya gönderilen Halkev bandosu ile karşılandılar...Bursa, bandonun cadastrı 11taşlarla mütehassisi...Köylüler de şehirler gibi milli marşımu ayakta dinlediler...Nutuklardan sonra herkes köylü ile görüşüyordu. Mebusların, AUTHORS adamlarının köylülerle başbaba, onların dertlerini dinlemeleri görülecek bir manzara idi. Köylüler bu defa çok mütahassist...Şehirden gelenler köylülerin sattıkları güveç, kavun ve karpuzlarla yemek yediler. Yemekten sonra milli havalarla öyunlar yapıldı. Bursa İdman yurdu'nun atletleri muhtelif spor numaraları gösterdiler. Doktor Osman Niyazi bey, köylü kadınlarını bir

32 Çeçen, Halkevleri, p. 123, 162.

33 Cavit Orhan Tütengil, Türkiye'de Köy Sorunu (İstanbul: Kitaş Yayınları, 1969), pp. 11-12.

34 Bağgöz and Wilson argue that "In the area of village aid [social assistance], the People's Houses were distressingly unsuccessful. Village aid involved visiting and rehabilitating villages, providing medical and other needed services and helping the peasants to transact their necessary business in the towns. These activities were only sporadically carried out, and, consequently, failed to achieve the populist goals expressed in the principle of the RPP." Bağgöz and Wilson, Educational Problems, p. 155.


38 Bağgöz recalls that many of the projects initiated during the village visits were consciously ignored by the peasants after the visitors left the village. Interview with Dr. İlhan Bağgöz, Bloomington, Indiana, May 4, 1997.

39 "I have found it impossible to form any impression regarding this division's work....If there is a question as to the value of these efforts to the village people, there is no doubt that it is good for city and city-dwellers, who serve in the Village Welfare Division. They cannot make excursions into the country without learning a few things of value to their social and political thinking....Whenever I talked with Party and Halkevi officials, I asked about the success of this element of the program: always the replies were anything but informing." Webster, The Turkey of Atatürk, p. 191.


41 "... 'Halkevi Köyçülüğü' adını verdiği yeni bir tutum kuvvet kazanmıştır. Bütün iyi niyetine rağmen, köye dışarıdan bakan, nutukçu ve öğütçü olmakta bir türlü kendisini kurtaramayan bu gel-geç köyçülük hareketi de, aydınların köye yaptıkları piknik halini alarak tavsımatmıştır." Tütengil, Türkiye'de Köy Sorunu, p. 93.

42 Just to give an idea of the writers, the leading statesmen included K. Atatürk, İ. İnönü, Ş. Kaya, R. Peker, C. Bayar, A. Çetinkaya; academics included F. Köprülü, N. Berkes, İ. Üzünçarşılı, Ö. L. Barkan, P. Boratav, Ş. Kansu, N. Kansu, P. Wittek, V. V. Bartold.
Needless to say, the prominent peasantists N. Köymen, İ. H. Tonguç, M. Saffet, S. Aydoslu and the like contributed to the journal.

43 In an article in Kadro evaluating Ülkü, the Kadro contributors argued that what Ülkü was lacking was the ideological consistency and the authority of "Ziya Gökalp." By this, they meant the lack of homogeneity of the journal. See "Mecmualarımız," no author given, Kadro 26 (1934), p. 47. Unlike Ülkü, the famous periodical Kadro, which was published at around the same time as Ülkü, but was forced to terminate itself in late 1934, had a strictly homogeneous theoretical and ideological position.

44 I think at this point William Roseberry's observation in the context of Latin American history is interesting. He asserts that "[B]oth country and city [and I would add peasant and proletarian] are ever-changing qualities and, as qualities, are to be understood in the context of capitalist history." In other words, the impact of the Great Depression to shift the focus on the "country" seems important. See William Roseberry, Anthropologies and Histories: Essays in Culture, History, and Political Economy (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p. 59. A similar comment can be found in Raymond Williams's The Country and the City (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 289.


46 For information on Galip see Ahmet Şevket Elman, Dr. Reşit Galip (Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1953) and chapter I of this dissertation.

47 For a good example in this regard see Nusret Köyman, "Sanayide Yayıncılık," Ülkü 7, 39 (1936), p. 175.

48 Ömer Lütfi Barkan also called attention to the double effects of industrialization in general. On the one hand, it created a world polarized between metropolises and colonies, and, on the other hand, it led to unfavorable working conditions for the growing number of working classes. See Barkan, Türkiye'de Toprak Meselesi, p. 27. See also Sait Aydoslu, "Ökonomik Devridaim III," Ülkü 4, 23 (1935), p. 357.


50 Köyman, Köycülük Esasları, pp. 19-20.


For an example of such a discriminatory exploitation of the rural people, see F. Madaralı, Tonguç Işığ. (no publication information), p. 107.


Köymen, Köyeçilik Esaslari, p. 23; Dr. M. Celâl Duru, "Halkevleri ve Halkodaları Çalışmaları," Ülkü 17, 102 (1941), pp. 541-543.


A discussion of racism in the People's Houses can be found in Aydin, "Türk Tarih Tezi ve Halkevleri," pp. 107-130.

See for instance Prime Minister İsmet İnönü's speech for the argument that the noble Turkish blood could be found only in villages. Ali, "İsmet Paşa ...," p. 403.


68 For a detailed discussion of German peasantism in the 1930s, see chapter 7 of this dissertation.

69 According to Aydoslu, there was nothing inherently superior in industrial production. He argued that productivity of an industrial worker was not more than that of an artisan. "Bir kundura fabrikasında çalışan yüz işçinin, geçen asrın yüz el işçisinden on veya yirmi defa fazla istihsal edebildiğine inanmak bir çocukluk olur. İlk önce bu yüz kişinin işine sınırları ilave etmek gerekir: bu yüz kişinin çalışabilmesi için ıktizası eden kömür, maden ve makine işçisi istihsal ve imal edenlerin işi, fabrika binalarını yapanların işi, bunlara lazım olanın kanalizasyonun inşa masrafları, idare masrafları....Bundan sonra, sanayi işçisinin gıda ihtiyacını, muvasara ihtiyacını, tedavi ihtiyacını, ve hukuki işlerini de hesaba katıncı, yirmicinci asır adaminın kuru kuru bürünmesine ve azameti, herhalde kendisine korkunç görünecek gerekir," Aydoslu, "Ökonomik Devridaim III," p. 357.


71 Köymen, Köycülük Esasları, p. 25.


73 Köymen, Köycülük Esasları, p. 23.

74 "Aynı zamanda köylerin muhafazakarlığı içtimai salgınlara, yanlış yapılan büyük ölçekli işlerin felaketli neticelere varmasına karşı en büyük sigortayı teşkil etmektedir." Ibid., p. 30. This is reminiscent of the Nazi rhetoric. See the striking similarity of even the phrasing: Hitler in Mein Kampf saw the rural population as the "best defence against the social diseases that afflict us." See Gustavo Corni, Hitler and the Peasants: Agrarian Policy of the Third Reich, 1930-1939, translated by David Kerr (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 19. For the official Nazi attitude toward the peasantry and a similar rhetoric see R. W. Darré, Das Bauernamt als Lebensquell der Nordischen Rasse (Munich, 1929); Adolf Hitler, "Parteiamtliche Kundgebung über die Stellung der NSDAP zum Landvolk und zur Landwirtschaft," Völkischer Beobachter, 6 March 1930, and R. W. Darré, "Landstand und Staat," Völkischer Beobachter, 19-21 April 1931.


77 Köymen, Halkçılık ve Köycülük, p. 18.


83 See Ibid., p. 21.

84 Ö. Lütfi Barkan pointed out similar views regarding the difference in understanding agrarian societies and industrial societies. "Bunun için diyebiliriz ki batı endiistri diş dünyası göz önüne bulundurulan teorilerle kendine mahsus problemleri olan tanm memleketlerini anlayamayız, bu âlemin dertleri ve 'mitolojisi' aynıdır." Barkan, Türkiye'de Toprak Meselesi, p. 24.


86 For an interesting example in this regard, see Hüsnü, et. al, Köycülüğümüzün Temelleri, p. 8.


91 See, for example, Saffet, "Kültür İnkılabımız," p. 352.


93 Saffet, "Köycülük Nedir?," p. 428; Elman, Dr. Reşit Galip, p. 49.


101 Ibid., p. 33.


Another Köymen article emphasizes the diffusion of industries in different places rather than concentrating on certain regions; see N. Köymen, "Parti Programında Köyçülük," Ülkü 5, 29 (1935), p. 396.


Ibid., p. 22.

"Gigantomania" at the time was a fetish especially in the former USSR and, to a lesser extent, in the USA.


For a discussion of why villages in Anatolia were historically so dispersed see Barkan, Türkiye'de Toprak Meselesi, pp. 483-84.


Karpat, "The People's Houses in Turkey...," p. 65.

Başgöz, Educational Problems in Turkey, p. 157.

Karpat, "The People's Houses in Turkey...," p. 66 [Italics mine]. Karpat also thinks that "the differences in mentality stemming from the new secularist-modernist
indoctrination of the cities and industrialization through the exploitation of agriculture pushed the village further into its traditional isolation and poverty." See p. 61.

119 An interesting case in point is an article complaining about the ways officials behaved toward the people that appeared in the May 1934 issue of Ülkü. The complaints included bad treatment of peasants in city hospitals, unfair credit practice in Ziraat Bankası (Bank of Agriculture), and the ignorance of the village teacher. In November of the same year, the governor of Bursa vigorously denied the complaints. See Refik and Ziya, "Bursa’nın Keleş Köyü, Köy Anketi," Ülkü 3, 15 (1934), pp. 234-240; and for the reply see "Keleş Köyüne Dair Bursa Valiliğinin Bir Tavzihi," Ülkü 4, 21 (1934), pp. 238-240.


121 Köymen, "Büyük Kurultaydan ...", p. 226.


124 Ibid., p. 453.
CHAPTER 4

THE VILLAGE INSTITUTES EXPERIENCE IN TURKEY

The Village Institutes embody an educational attempt in Turkey between 1937 and the mid-1940s to transform the Turkish countryside. There were many expectations from these institutions for the development of rural Turkey. Some of them were to modernize social relations, to end poverty and ignorance among the peasants, to create peasant intellectuals, to increase agricultural productivity, and to help spread the Kemalist Revolution in the countryside. Though there was a consensus in the beginning among the ruling circles as to what the goals of the Institutes should be, the actual historical experience turned out to be extremely controversial. The Village Institutes became one of the major foci of political and ideological debate in Turkey, especially in the 1950s and the early 1960s. Most leftist-oriented Kemalists saw in the Village Institutes the embodiment of Kemalist populism at its highest point, whereas many right-wing politicians and intellectuals condemned the Village Institutes, and made them the scapegoats for their political ambitions and anti-communist hysteria. On the other hand, some socialists such as Kemal Tahir, a famous Turkish novelist, criticized the Village Institutes as being fascist institutions by which the single-party regime aimed to spread its ideology. Such a diversity of opinion is compelling evidence for the necessity to
study the Institutes. This chapter, in part, is an attempt in this respect. Moreover, through the analysis of the Village Institutes experience we also aim to contribute to a better understanding of the social and intellectual climate in Turkey from about the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s.

4.1. The Historical Context

The crucial first step in order to elucidate the Village Institutes experience is to construct the historical context within which it was born. This is very important, since many discussions regarding the Institutes have been pursued without paying enough attention to the historical and intellectual context. For instance, many scholars have failed to grasp the real nature of the Institutes, because they have not taken into account the peasantist ideology, which formed the intellectual background of the Village Institutes. In the previous chapter, we dealt extensively with this ideology together with the historical developments that aroused increasing interest in the rural population on the part of the Turkish ruling class. Therefore, here we only briefly discuss the historical context leading to the emergence of the Village institutes.

As we have pointed out, two major necessities seemingly directed the attention of the ruling circles and the intelligentsia towards the peasants in the 1930s. On the one hand, the growing necessity to broaden the mass base of the regime throughout the country became more acute during this decade. In this respect, the Village Institutes experience, like the People's Houses, is part of a whole series of attempts whose aim was
to reach the hearts and minds of the people, eighty percent of whom were living in the countryside. On the other hand, we noted the absence of enthusiasm for the "revolution" among the intelligentsia. In other words, the single-party regime aimed to recruit a new group of intellectuals from the peasantry, difficult though it may have been, by establishing the Village Institutes. As in the case of the People's Houses, not only the masses, but also the elites had to be somehow gained for the Kemalist ideals.

The problem of how to reach the hearts and minds of the people was acute, especially in the mainly Kurdish-speaking region of eastern Anatolia. In this region, educational and economic reform in agriculture seemed to be more than crucial to Turkify the region. Likewise, the land reform attempt of 1937 aimed, first and foremost, to crush the political power of the Kurdish landowners and tribal leaders, thereby increasing the hegemony of the young Turkish nation-state.

Besides, the overall economic conditions, particularly in agriculture, continuously deteriorated thanks to the global negative effects of the Great Depression. To improve agricultural production, mechanization might have been a panacea, but because of the financial weakness at the time, this was not feasible. The abundance of diversely located petty-production units in the countryside made this option more and more difficult. By teaching the peasants better techniques to promote production, many contemporaries believed, that the question could be solved easily, and without too much cost. These historical necessities not surprisingly stimulated the intellectual debates revolving around the ways in which rural life could be transformed. A widespread peasantist rhetoric, as
we have seen, emerged in Turkey especially after 1932. In a sense the Village Institutes can be seen as an embodiment of the peasantist ideology.

4.2. The Road to the Village Institutes

The support for peasantism meant that education in the countryside was widely acclaimed as a means of not only getting the political support of the people, but also of improving the quality of life of the village population. In the 1930s we witness lively discussions on how to improve elementary and adult education in general and the agricultural education in particular. In order to solve the problems of rural education, the Kemalist governments began focusing on the issue. Reşit Galip, who became the Minister of Education in 1933, showed special interest in making "the Ministry a part of the dynamic resurgence of populism as applied to village development." One of his first acts was to form a Village Affairs Commission, including in its membership representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture and Health. Likewise, "At the Fourth General Congress of the Party in 1935, special attention was paid to village education." More importantly, however, İsmail Tonguç, a person known for his peasantist leanings, was appointed to the General Director of Elementary Education (İlköğretim Genel Müdürlüğü) in 1935.

The ideological impetus coming from the peasantist leanings resulted from the crisis in education, especially with that in rural education. For instance, the Village Aid program of the People's Houses, which was "purely philanthropic in character," had been
a total failure.\textsuperscript{16} This crisis appears to have been indicative of a more serious malaise in education, and a major factor in the emergence of the concept of the Village Institutes:

The first attempts of the Ministry of Education to handle village education in a fundamental way were inspired by neither populism nor peasantism, but by the objective failures of the newly established educational system in universities and secondary schools.\textsuperscript{17}

According to Fay Kirby, who made the most comprehensive study of the Institutes, secondary education at that time produced more graduates than the public and private sector could employ. More important, however, these graduates had not acquired the necessary practical skills to benefit economic life of the country. The students were taught neither practical nor managerial skills, but instead received an education that only enabled them to replace the older, less qualified bureaucracy. Within this context of an education at odds with the daily necessities of the economic life, the only option for these graduates was to be employed in governmental institutions. Students were financed by the state and paid their debt by compulsory employment in the public sector. This bizarre situation seems to have created a vicious circle that produced an idle and unproductive workforce.\textsuperscript{18} In sum, although the village education project could never be attributed simply to the crisis in education, as Kirby pointed out, it became a significant stimulus for attempts at village education.

The idea of founding Village Institutes officially arose in 1937, although the notion had been discussed by the intelligentsia and the ruling elite in the early 1930s. After a three-year experimental period, they were officially founded in 1940.\textsuperscript{19} In a
nutshell, the aim of founding the Village Institutes was to educate the peasant youth in technical matters suited to benefit the agricultural economy. The graduates of these schools were eventually recruited as teachers, who would work in their own villages. This was planned as a solution to the failures of the former village teachers, who were recruited from urban areas. Many believed that it was the alienness and indifference to village life of those students that accounted for the failure. Even though the broad aim of the Village Institutes was quite simple, in reality the Village Institute experience was so multi-faceted and highly controversial that it deserves to be analyzed in terms of its different characteristics in order to reach a thorough understanding. Both for its advocates and opponents, this was far more than an educational undertaking. Therefore, we have to focus now on some of its characteristics and the discussions about them in order to highlight the political and ideological aspects of the Village Institutes.

4.3. An Additional Departure from Economic Etatism

One of the most interesting characteristics of the Village Institutes is that they mark an additional departure from the idea of economic étatism (iktisadi devletçilik), which prevailed during the 1930s. This was because the Village Institutes project was designed to minimize the financial burden on the state. Establishing such a public project without major financial help from the state was one of the most important aims behind the idea of the Village Institutes. This was hardly surprising given the financial constraints of the time. However, the role and power of economic étatism have been
exaggerated in Turkish history. Not only did étatism lose momentum after 1939, but its existence had already been challenged during the 1930s. According to the famous Kadro journal, which championed a leftist version of Kemalism, étatism in Turkey was no more than a simple rhetoric, and was not really endorsed by the regime.

To meet the financial necessities, the Village Institute project aimed to utilize first and foremost a labor-intensive method which forced the people from the nearby villages and the students of the other institutes to work in the construction of the new institute buildings. The literature published by the Ministry of Education about the Village Institutes or written by their graduates is full of stories about how most of the Village Institutes were constructed by the heroic work of the teenage students with only the barest construction materials and transportation facilities. Whether the students willingly participated or not, there is evidence to suggest that the peasants resented their obligations to provide land and help build the Village Institutes. Although President İsmet İnönü supported the idea, noting that "building the village schools by using contractors and businessmen instead of building them together with the peasants was more expensive and time consuming," there were widespread rumors claiming that peasants were discriminated against. The fact that the "National Chief" İnönü had to acknowledge the rumors shows the extent of the resentments.

Such statements as "the schools were built in the cities by the state whereas in villages the peasants built these schools by themselves. It is a good thing to build primary schools, but poor peasants do that?" are among some of the things that I have heard. There will always exist these types of men who enjoy making propaganda against the government policies. I would like to make my citizens aware of these deceptive poisons. If they are careful enough, they will immediately see that this propaganda... comes from people who have vested interests in the ignorance of the peasants.
Further evidence of widespread discontent amongst the peasants may be seen in Kirby's observation that:

The peasants correctly asked why they had to pay and work while the city dwellers get all kinds of better educational opportunities for free.\[^{34}\]

According to the Village Institute law, peasants had to work twenty days a year on the construction of the institute buildings.\[^{35}\] Furthermore, it was the duty of the village council to find land to be used by the Village Institutes.\[^{36}\] These obligations probably explain why the peasants regarded the Village Institutes with suspicion.\[^{37}\] A female student recording her observations in the village laundry at Hasanoglan for the \textit{Köy Enstitüsü Dergisi} (Village Institute Journal) noted that the village women continuously articulated their difficulties because some of their land had been forcibly given to the institute, and in return they had been waiting for a long time to receive payment for it.\[^{38}\]

4.4. A New Perspective in Turkish Education: "Learning by Doing"

Until the mid-1930s the Kemalist educational system ignored vocational or practical education.\[^{39}\] In other words, an education based on general and abstract knowledge rather than the practical necessities of the workplace had overwhelmingly prevailed during the first years of the Republic. In a sense, this choice was understandable. From the early 1920s onwards, the new regime had been attempting to consolidate itself, and for that, an education that appealed to the hearts and minds of the
people commanded priority. By the mid-1930s, however, the necessity for a qualified labor force, particularly in the countryside, became pressing. An educational program focusing on work, therefore, became an important objective, and the Village Institutes were set up to achieve this goal. While the principle of "education for work," or "education for production" became the main motivation, the method of "learning by doing" accompanied it. In all the memoirs of the graduates of the Village Institutes and in all the institute publications, we see that the method of "learning by doing" was promoted to a great extent.\(^4\) Theoretical support for "learning by doing" could be found, for instance, in Kerschensteiner, the famous late nineteenth-century Swiss educator, who strongly influenced Tonguç and others. Kerschensteiner emphasized that the source of culture is not books, but work.\(^4\) However, we find that an important part of the appeal of practical education, as far as education in the countryside is concerned, is related to the characteristics of the rural people. Donald Webster observes that:

> Conservative as have been many of the influences in the life of the Turkish peasant, he is quick to learn with his eyes, if the lesson be written in objects rather than Arabic or Latin characters.\(^4\)

> Though the necessity of "learning by doing" in rural education seems clear in retrospect, it should not be assumed that at the time everybody believed in it; for instance most professors at Istanbul University, which was then still the only Turkish university, despised the idea.\(^4\) According to Kirby, these people illustrated the urban bias by insisting that physical labor does not have any value. Even the peasants were convinced by the city intellectuals to accept the inferiority of their physical labor.\(^4\) However, the
strong emphasis on work in preference to intellectually stimulating courses led to harsh
criticisms by intellectuals. Cavit Orhan Tütengil, who himself was an Institute teacher,
argued that in the first years it was normal to focus on constructing the infrastructural
necessities of the Institutes. He noted that during the war producing wheat was more
important than reading books. Whatever the role of the historical conditions, the
Village Institutes were repeatedly accused of neglecting the cultural development of the
students. Even many teachers in the Village Institutes complained about the poor quality
of courses that failed to improve the intellectual abilities of the students. Tonguç and
many other teachers despised learning abstract things. In fact, a great deal of anti-
intellectualism was evident in the Village Institutes at that time.

4.5. Educating the Peasants by the Peasants

For the educational undertaking in the countryside, the principle of work was not
enough in itself. It had to be accompanied by the availability of teachers who knew the
realities of peasant life and especially the regions where they were employed. As a
matter of fact, one of the most important goals of the Village Institutes was to educate
peasant youth so that they could go back to their native regions as village teachers. The
pedagogical superiority of this perspective is clear. As rightly pointed out at the time, it
was impossible to teach peasants even the basics without knowing their mentality or
understanding their "language."
The transformation of the villages by the village people cannot be perceived as merely a pedagogical attempt, though. It was also part of the peasantist and populist attempts to get the political support of the peasants. This, however, necessitated raising awareness of the realities of rural life, and most of the Turkish intelligentsia knew nothing about rural life. In the 1920s and early 1930s, there were serious attempts to achieve this goal, which apparently failed because of the intelligentsia's ignorance of the realities of rural life. Even Köymen, who wrote extensively on the peasants, saw only the villages "when he was travelling from İstanbul to Ankara." Kirby gives a very clear description of how the Turkish intelligentsia approached the peasants:

None of the people who wrote on the "village issues" could dare to stay even one night in a Turkish village. When those intellectuals intended to go to the villages -- as exemplified in the campaign for peasantism organized by Ankara People's House in 1933 -- they did so as if they were foreign tourists or like travelers, who try to discover the dark corners of Africa.

The Village Institutes, then, could hopefully fill the gap between the peasants and the elite by creating elites from amongst the peasants. As we saw, with such an approach, it would be easier to have a productive and social labor force trained in the work process.

4.6. Turkish "Stakhanovism"?

However hard the working conditions were, one cannot deny how enthusiastically the students participated in the daily routines of the institute work, as can be seen in all the memoirs and publications of the Village Institutes. Indeed, some parallels may be
drawn between the work ethic and discipline that characterized the Village Institutes, and those of Russian "Stakhanovism." In the 1930s in Soviet Russia, Stakhanov, a semi-legendary miner from the Donbass region, continuously broke production records; and the Stalinist regime strove to spread the phenomenon called "Stakhanovism" throughout the Soviet Union. This was based on an expectation of producing miracles in productivity from physical labor by relying merely on moral and ideological campaigns in an era of technological backwardness. In a way, the expectations of the Village Institutes very much resembled the Soviet situation. Faith in the power of human will, voluntarism, and work with enthusiasm, devotion, diligence, and passion were perceived as the panacea to solve the problems of rural Turkey, particularly the problem of low productivity. The following anecdote from the story of the construction of the Hasanoğlan Village Institute exemplifies the situation. One night when everybody was sleeping, some students secretly went out to continue the construction of the institute road, and when other students heard their noise they woke up and joined them. The teachers had a hard time convincing them to return to the dormitory and sleep. Likewise, a story of a boy from a Village Institute working with other men is exemplary of the stereotype of an industrious work force. While he was working, the other workmen complained about the fast pace of the student, but the boy insisted on doing his job on time and as well as possible. Viewed in this way the intent was more or less to create a capitalist "Protestant work ethic" in Turkish agriculture.

In an era of objective restrictions and structural backwardness the expectations of the Village Institutes, as in the case of Stakhanovism, were high in terms of human
factors such as discipline and commitment. This can be characterized as a voluntarism which, in fact, is a common characteristic of most of the peasantist and populist ideologies. Many peasantist-oriented people believed that there was nothing that the power of human agency could not achieve. A peasantist with Nazi leanings, Said Aydoslu, who contributed articles on economics to Ülkü, argued that there was no historical necessity as such, and that human voluntarism could produce many social changes. In an article entitled "Voluntarism and Peasantism," Köymen argued that people should regard their own lives with an anti-urbanist and peasantist perspective, and should not allow their lives to be determined by the course of events and history. However, he failed to realize that human factors such as enthusiasm, hard work and strong belief in voluntarism could not alone solve the historical, social and structural problems of rural Turkey. This was because what the Turkish rural economy lacked was not hard work and enthusiasm in themselves, but hard work supported by a notion of time, discipline and persistent productivity.

Many intellectuals, though, criticized the Village Institutes as being the core of an educational system of "coerced" labor in the countryside. As is well known, all the peasants living in the regions where the Village Institutes were located had to work for the Village Institutes twenty days a year. This work was compulsory, and for this reason the state was accused of recruiting free labor. As a matter of fact, such an experience was not unique to Turkey. In the 1930s and during World War II, many governments all over the world attempted to pass laws in order to use "coerced" labor. The term "coerced" may be a little strong, and certainly no government presented it as such. But how could
they? They sold the idea as a national work campaign to develop the nation. However, when the social and political circumstances of the Great Depression and World War II are taken into account, there is enough evidence for one to label these experiments "coercive."^59

In Turkey, the Village Institutes formed the core for organizing and disciplining rural labor along the same lines. Whereas in many countries such work campaigns were extended to the whole nation, in Turkey only the rural people, not the city dwellers, were forced to carry this burden. This unequitable situation drew harsh criticism, and critiques raising the question of discrimination against the rural population were rampant.^60

One of the most famous critics in this regard is the novelist Kemal Tahir, who wrote novels using themes from Ottoman and Turkish history that provoked several interesting controversies. Tahir’s Bozkırdaki Çekirdek focuses on the Village Institutes, and on the back cover of the book he says:

> Given the social and political circumstances in our country, the Village Institutes would only have resulted in a cruel exploitation of the peasant students in the most difficult tasks, and by making them endure the worst economic and social conditions. As a matter of fact, this experience, at the last instance, proved that we, the intelligentsia, do not feel sorry for the people, rather we are hostile towards them."^61

Very few observers have been critical of the way in which students were forced to work in the agricultural activities of the institutes. As is well known, each Village Institute had lands on which the students and teachers cultivated crops and raised animals. These lands were bought from the villagers at very low prices. A considerable revenue of the Village Institutes came from the agricultural activities performed on their own lands.
Most advocates of the Village Institutes praised the discipline and hard work of the institute students, seeing in them the industrious and aggressive human stereotype for a developing nation. In their opinion, the students were willing to do heavy work. But one can find evidence that the students were overworked. For instance, some peasant women who observed the way the students worked could not help being sorry for them. A petition written to Tonguç complained about overwork in Çifteler Village Institute. According to the students, the administration's "only concern was to make the students work and get the benefit of their physical labor." The photographs of the students verify how young the boys were who actively participated in the construction of the Village Institute buildings.

A related characteristic of the Village Institutes, less noticed and discussed, and very much related to the issues we took into account regarding the emphasis on hard work is that the Institutes were also designed to teach the peasants to get together and work for the common good of the villages. Historically, solidarity among the peasants in Turkey has been quite weak, and this situation especially created economic obstacles for the whole village economy. The infrastructural works such as building canals and roads could be achieved only by the communal work of the peasants. In a sense, the Village Institutes offered their nearby regions a leadership role to organize such communal works.

Moreover, as Yahya Tezel points out, one of the major economic problems in the countryside was seasonal unemployment. Except for a few months, most farmers did not work, but this at the same time made a huge number of people unproductive and idle. In
the seasons when they did not cultivate, they could work on different projects, especially on infrastructural projects, which, in the long run, could be beneficial for everybody in the region. Likewise, the idea behind the Village Institutes, in many respects, included an attempt to teach peasants to diversify production facilities together with a rationalization of the agricultural production.  

4.7. The Power Struggle Against the Aghas (Ağalar)?

Most advocates of the Village Institutes argued that one of the factors that led to the abandonment of the Institutes was that they challenged the social and political relations in the countryside. In their opinion, the Village Institutes threatened the aghas, the big landowners. According to this scenario, it was the power of the aghas among the ruling bloc which ended this progressive and unique experiment, maybe the first and most important of its kind in modern Turkish history. In other words, the big landowners, who supported the right-wing politicians, declared war on the Village Institutes.

Whether the aghas felt threatened or not by the Village Institutes should not be confused with the real problem here, which is whether the Village Institutes challenged the aghas during their original phase, namely before 1946. The aghas might well have considered them "potential" threats in the long run, but whether the Village Institutes actually challenged them is a different question. The literature that we have examined does not offer any significant evidence that there existed a struggle against the aghas.
Probably, the contrary is true. The Village Institutes cooperated with the aghas. In the first place, the locations of the Village Institutes indicate that they were built in places where most of the peasants had small landholdings, as opposed to places where aghas predominated. In Hasanoğlan village, for instance, most people had between 30 and 200 dönüm of land, which means that small farming rather than wage labor on big estates predominated in the region. Rauf İnan's memoirs are full of examples about the aghas. İnan mentions aghas who helped in supplying bread for his institute as well as those who endorsed the Institutes. A landowner who owned 550 hectares of land in the Diyarbakır region would have liked the idea of Village Institutes, because education in the institute would lead to the skilled labor on his land. Likewise, an institute director in eastern Turkey, where the aghas had significant political and economic power, advised the new graduates to come to terms with the aghas.

We should mention that many of the architects of the Institutes shared the view that the underdevelopment of rural Turkey was not attributable to social relations such as the exploitation of the peasants by the aghas, nor to production relations, but to the incompetence of the peasants in their struggle against the rural environment. Slogans such as "controlling and exploiting nature," "increasing productivity," "developing technology," "being rational," and the like in fact reflect such a mentality. The theme of "struggle against nature" can be observed in all the Institute publications, and in the books published at the time related to the Institutes. For instance, the early Tütengil in 1948 thought that the backwardness of the peasants lay in both the ignorance of the peasants and the primitivity of the production forces. There were quite a few
publications which emphasized the importance of changing the social relations. In sum, despite the image depicted in the 1960s with regard to the struggle against the *aghäs*, the impetus for the transformation of the rural life was believed to be in the struggle against nature, not in the struggle with the social relations surrounding the peasants.

Although one cannot clearly see a challenge to the existing power structure by the Village Institutes, they certainly represent an attempt in the struggle against nature, namely a change in the physical setting of rural Turkey. The Village Institute publications are full of stories and suggestions about how to control nature, improve, and exploit it as much as possible in order to increase productivity. Learning and practising modern techniques, being rational as much as possible and relying on the human will constitute the most important aspects of the struggle against the backwardness of the rural people, who were left alone in their struggle against nature. The most important rationale behind this attitude was the belief that if the environment does not change, the individual does not either.

This idea of relating human change to the environment was the cornerstone of the Progressivist movement in the United States in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Like the Progressivist attempt to "Americanize" immigrants, the Village Institutes aimed to change the environment in the villages in order to teach the peasants to be hard working citizens, to stay away from alcohol and gambling, to be clean and healthy, to be aware of the notions of time and space, to gain technical skills for higher productivity and the like. To accomplish these aims as in the case of Progressivism,
education was regarded as the first and most important tool in the transformation of the power relationship.

4.8. Consolidating Turkish Nationalism

Alongside the attempt to create a different lifestyle within the peasant population, the Village Institutes aimed to spread the nationalist ideology in the villages. In the first decades after the War of Independence, Kemalism failed to gain the hearts and minds of the peasants on a mass scale. It was in the towns and cities that Kemalism found its supporters easily. As was pointed out at that time, "in all the revolutions, it is the villages which accept the order of changes brought by the new regime with the most difficulty." Therefore, the problem of how to reach the peasants remained, and the ruling elite saw the opportunity to use the Village Institutes to solve this problem.

In many of his writings, the architect of the Village Institutes project and the director of Primary Education, İsmail Tonguç, summarized the necessity of having people who were loyal to the state and carriers of the ideology of Turkish nationalism. To Turkify the village population was a vital task for the new regime. The peasantist Köymen in his book published in 1935 admits that in some regions people spoke Kurdish, Arabic, Circassian, etc., and there were even villages named in Kurdish, Laz or Arabic. Many writers emphasized the significance of the Village Institutes in Turkifying the peasants, who did not exhibit enough loyalty to Turkish nationalism. In this respect, statements such as "Village Institutes are the first and last means 'to create a
nation can be understood. The Village Institutes did not represent an aggressive nationalism, however, such as we saw in the urban parts of Turkey during the same period. One does not find many racist arguments in the Village Institute publications, although Nazi-inspired racism was rampant among significant segments of the ruling elite especially during the early 1940s.

Despite the clear ideological expectations of the Village Institutes, Kirby maintained that the Village Institutes project was not a partisan attempt that could be attributed to a specific party or minister. She further argues that there was no vested political interest in the Village Institutes. She seemed to overlook the fact that the era we are talking about witnessed a single-party regime; and it is somewhat naive to believe that such a huge project could have nothing to do with the interests of the Republican People's Party (RPP), which at the time was an integral part of the state. She repeatedly argues that the Village Institutes were the embodiment of the Kemalist principles in the educational sphere. She seems to regard Kemalism not as a particular ideology, but rather as the ideology of the nation over all the political interests. In reality, the Kemalist regime in general, and the Republican People's Party (RPP) in particular, had a vested interest in the Village Institutes. Hürrem Arman, who actively took part in the Village Institute project from the outset, makes this point clearly. In 1944, in a conversation with Hasan Ali Yücel, the minister of Education at the time, İnönü asked whether the graduates of the Village Institutes would support the RPP if there were multi-party elections. As a witness to this conversation, Arman argued that İnönü and some other leaders of the RPP had the hope that the graduates of the Village Institutes would be the
militants of the Party, or at least support the Party in some way. Accordingly, in the first multi-party election of 1946, Tonguç sent letters to the administrators of the Village Institutes asking them to support the RPP by all means. The controversies in the late 1940s and 1950s, which we shall consider below, also underline the political and ideological nature of the Institutes.

4.9. The Conflicting Interpretations

The Village Institutes were shut down in 1950 by the same Party and leaders who founded them. The reasons why the Village Institutes were closed have triggered a major controversy in Turkish history and, without doubt, are related to the nature of the Kemalist movement, and to the specific historiographical stand that one takes. In the rest of this chapter, we shall assess this controversy in broad terms, and attempt to elucidate the real nature of the Village Institute phenomenon. Let us start with the right-wing critique, which became quite influential during the late 1940s and 1950s.

The main critique of the right-wing politicians against the Village Institutes revolved around their supposedly communist activities. It seems that the Turkish right-wing politicians, including the ones in the RPP, were in no less zealous than the American Senator Joseph McCarthy of the 1950s. For instance, they accused İsmail Tonguç of being influenced by one of the prominent Turkish leftists, Ethem Nejat, who was killed with his comrades in Trabzon in 1920. In the 1910s, at the time when Tonguç came to Eskişehir for his education, Ethem Nejat had been a well-respected teacher there,
and had been known for his ideas on educational reform. Tonguç certainly knew about Nejat, although we do not have any evidence that they talked to each other. First of all, if Tonguç knew Nejat, that does not prove that Tonguç was a communist. Secondly, Nejat accepted communist ideas only in the last years of his life, so at the time they were in the same city, Nejat was not even a communist. 

Along the same lines, Tonguç's political ideas came under attack because of the anti-communist hysteria. He was accused of being a leftist, if not a communist. As a matter of fact, the leftist and left-Kemalist scholars also underlined Tonguç's leftist and populist political views. However, Tonguç was an ardent follower of the Kemalism of his day. Moreover, if he has to be labeled as something, he belonged to a political ideology which had deeper roots in the late Ottoman Empire and in Turkey—corporatism. Tonguç envisioned a society based on the division of labor on the basis of professions. In this respect, he follows the tradition of Ziya Gökalp and the solidarism ideologues of the Second Constitutional period.

Some Turkish anti-communists argued that because there were similarities between the Turkish and the Soviet educational system, the Village Institute project was a communist conspiracy. It is true that Tonguç closely examined the Soviet educational system in order to adopt the best features of it. But we have to remember that Tonguç and his colleagues scrutinized not only the Soviet system but also those of many other countries, especially Germany and Bulgaria. Likewise, they held a deep respect for prominent American educators like John Dewey and Booker T. Washington. Moreover, the Soviet system was probably one of the least appropriate to follow given the overall value system of the Soviet regime of the 1930s. During the 1930s the Soviets
went through a harsh and catastrophic collectivization during which the image of the urban working class was praised and exalted at the expense of the rural, "backward," "kulakized" peasants. In this respect, too, the accusation that the Village Institutes were an imitation of the Soviet practice is unfounded.\(^96\)

The accusation of communism that came from right-wing opponents may also be attributed to some of the writings in the publications of the Village Institutes, the books that could be found in Village Institute libraries, and so forth. Closer scrutiny of the Village Institute literature, however, shows that this accusation is not appropriate. Among many articles in the*Köy Enstitüsü Dergisi*, only two of them might be characterized as leftist at all. One of them is a book review of Harold Laski's *Democracy and Socialism*\(^97\) in which the author neither praises nor condemns on the book, but summarizes it without criticizing it. The second one is an article written by a Village Institute teacher about the role of music, and this article seems to use "class analysis" to understand music.\(^98\) As for the books in the Village Institute libraries, it is impossible to argue that the Village Institute students were reading socialistic or communistic books. By today's standards, most of them could be considered quite liberal.\(^99\) Last but not least, the number of Institute students convicted of extreme political views is so insignificant that it could never justify the allegations of the anti-communists. According to Şevket S. Aydemir, who was very active in the bureaucratic and intellectual circles of the time, the number of students convicted of extreme political views was 4 out of 20,000, which is even smaller than the rate in the military schools.\(^100\)
The Village Institutes were also accused of being disrespectful to the army and the local state officials. According to the critiques, in the Village Institutes the students were provoked against the army; but this seems to be a totally unfounded argument. As a matter of fact, if we are to believe the information in the Köy Enstitüsü Dergisi, the students liked things related to the military. More interestingly, it has been argued that in theatrical and literary works, the local officials were criticized and attacked. One incident is a theatrical performance in which some local state officials take bribes. This play constitutes the most convincing evidence that the Village Institute students were indoctrinated with opposition to the state!

The rumors about the relationships between the girls and boys also contributed to the devaluing of the Village Institutes in the eyes of the Turkish public. Claiming that there were lots of incidents in which moral values degenerated, the Village Institutes' enemies were presented them as places where moral decay flourished. Ahmet Emin Yalman, who at the time was an ardent supporter of the Village Institutes, observed many Village Institutes, and argued that moral values and relationships between boys and girls deserved to be appreciated, and that they did, in fact, set a good example for the rest of society. Likewise both Kirby and Güner argue that in relation to the number of students in the Village Institutes such "wicked" incidents are exceptions to the rule and statistically insignificant compared to the rest of the school system.

Another important characteristic of the Village Institutes that bothered many right-wing intellectuals was the secular attitude driven by a significant critical approach towards religion and superstition. For instance, many preferred the term tanrı (god) to
Allah (God), as is documented in the Village Institute publications. Likewise, many conservative intellectuals accused the education of the Village Institutes of promoting contempt for religion.

The leftist interpretation of the Village Institute phenomenon is more complex and of course completely different from the right-wing critiques. According to many, the Village Institute experience turned out to be the victim of the two factions within the Kemalist movement. That is to say, the ruling elite, which led the Kemalist "Revolution," sometimes mistakenly conceptualized as a "bourgeois democratic revolution," consisted of two factions, one progressive and the other conservative, with the former trying to push the revolution towards a more leftist position. More specifically, the progressive faction was made up of the petty bourgeois faction, whereas the grand bourgeoisie and the landowners stood at the other end of the ruling bloc. This viewpoint perceives the whole history of the first two decades of the young Republic as a struggle between these two factions. The Village Institute project, in this scenario, is conceptualized as an effort of the progressive faction of the Kemalist movement, which was led by Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü. The closure of the Village Institutes in this case is explained by the defeat of the progressive faction within the ruling power bloc.

This viewpoint is also supported by a particular understanding of the role of the peasants in the making of the "Kemalist Revolution." In this view the peasants in Turkey actively participated in the "Revolution," but the predominance of the landowners in the ruling bloc prevented the endorsement of the peasants by the Kemalist state. In this
connection, the Village Institute project has been seen as an attempt by the progressive faction to return to the original supporters and makers of the "Kemalist Revolution."

This prevailing interpretation of the Village Institutes is quite flawed. In the first place, Kemal Atatürk, according to this paradigm, must be considered against Kirby's "real Kemalism," since he himself held virtually all power. Secondly, in 1937 Atatürk appointed as the prime minister Celal Bayar, who later became the leader of the Democrat Party, a party which strongly and relentlessly attacked the Village Institutes. Thirdly, the big landowners until the 1980s had occupied a very powerful place in the ruling bloc; and, as we have argued above, although the Village Institutes might threaten them in the long run, the original experiment did not witness a significant struggle against the big landowners. The struggle against the big landowners by the Village Institutes should be considered as a myth cultivated by the leftist literature in the political climate of the 1960s and 1970s. In the same vein, many intellectuals during this period fabricated a theory which perceives Kemalism as a variant of Socialism or Social Democracy. In fact, the RPP leaders, up until the mid-1960s, never ever used even the term "left" for themselves; and all kinds of leftist movements in Turkey during the single-party era faced severe punishments.112
4.10. Towards an Interpretation of the Village Institutes

If the critiques of the right-wing conservatives are irrelevant and reflect no more than an anti-communist hysteria, and if the "left-Kemalist" and some Socialist viewpoints are quite flawed, what better interpretation can we offer? Why do we have so many different and conflicting interpretations? Why did the very leaders who founded the Village Institutes end this original experience in Turkish history?

Contrary to widespread opinion, it was not the struggle between the different factions within the RPP that led to the demise of the Village Institutes, since there was not initially a wide range of viewpoints in the Party. In fact, there had been a general consensus on the necessity for such an enterprise. Emin Sazak, who was a big landowner in western Anatolia and later became a prominent Democrat Party leader, strongly endorsed the project. For the most part the Village Institute project was regarded as an attempt at education, nothing more. The only significant objection came from some deputies such as Kazım Karabekir, who expressed his suspicion concerning a possible rift between the urban and rural people, because the Village Institutes were to recruit students only from the villages. In his opinion, this might, in the long run, create two big classes: one living in the urban areas and the other in the countryside; but this ceased to be an issue. This aside, in fact, it can be said that by and large the ruling elite of the time endorsed the Village Institutes.

Probably one of the most important factors in creating confusion about Village Institutes is that with time, the Institute experiment evolved in such a way that the
consequences contradicted the original expectations. First of all, the populism of the Village Institutes exceeded the expectations of the ruling elite. As long as populism stayed a matter of rhetoric alone—in other words, as long as the distinction between the elite and the people could somehow be preserved in reality—there was no problem. The populism of the Village Institutes, however, showed indications of going from discourse to reality, as we can see in a quotation from a peasant telling an Institute director, Rauf İnan, his views about the way the Village Institute teachers and students approached the people:

Look, until today no official came to us talking like you did. They never considered us humans. They called us to their place, gave orders or sent gendarmes. So we understand that we are also humans. You showed us this!\(^\text{13}\)

As is well known, under the single-party regime, in which elitism was so rampant, respect for the people would have meant a lot for the peasants, who were spoken of as "the masters of the nation" but yet in reality were always despised! However, thanks especially to Tonguç's personal efforts, more respect for the peasants led to an increase in their self-esteem, which, in turn, might have challenged the privileged position of the elites.

The second unexpected consequence is that the education in the Village Institutes began creating a kind of student who happened to be too disobedient and self-confident, despite the mainstream norms of the single-party regime. This was probably because the students were given more initiative\(^\text{14}\); compared to their counterparts in mainstream schools, since they were "learning by doing," which required initiative. The literature concerning the Village Institute is full of stories in which students, when they went
outside of the schools for vacation or for some other purpose, caused problems with the authorities, because they were too eager to object to any kind of injustice. This type of a person ran contrary to the ideal character of the single-party regime. This was probably one of the reasons that many graduates of the Village Institutes represented a peasantist and populist outlook, and took part in progressive organizations and trade unions in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The third unexpected consequence was that the Village Institute students, by living, working and learning together, paved the way for developing a sense of collective mentality. In so doing, more radical populist ideas, which have historically tended to stress the significance of collective action and goals, could well have appealed to the Village Institute students. This was seen as a potential threat. As a matter of fact, considering the political leanings of the Village Institute graduates in the 1960s and later, who have actively taken part in the intellectual life of the country, one can find evidence to support this argument. If the potential threat, namely the development of any kind of collectivist mentality, were to have increased, it could clearly be at odds with the traditional conservatism and elitism of the ruling elite.

The fourth unexpected consequence is that the Village Institutes started opening up the little world of the peasants to the globe. By building roads, bringing electricity, introducing the radio, the Village Institutes were rightly perceived by many of their opponents as widening the horizons and increasing the mobility of the peasants. These contradicted one of the most important original aims of the Village Institutes, that is, to hold the peasants in their villages or, to put it differently, to prevent them from migrating.
into the cities, increasing the numbers of the working class, and thereby causing class
conflicts.\textsuperscript{119} Of course this phenomenon was something that the state greatly feared.\textsuperscript{120} In
the same vein, Engin Tonguç argues that one "of the aims of the Village Institute
enterprise was to cultivate a peasant intelligentsia, who would not and could not break
from its own class," and "who would never give up advocating the interests of the class
from which it came."\textsuperscript{121} Events developed differently, however.

Finally, one must consider the changing world conditions that affected Turkish
politics. Internal and external conditions changed so dramatically after 1946 that the
Village Institute experiment of the previous era could hardly survive under the new
conditions. With the defeat of Nazism and fascism and the US emphasis on democracy,
together with the growing political influence of the US on Turkish politics, many Turkish
intellectuals and bureaucrats sensed a new era\textsuperscript{122} in which Turkey no longer could manage
with a single-party regime. Under these conditions, institutions designed within the
parameters of such a political regime faced different pressures. As İsmet İnönü later said
about the Institutes, "it was impossible to continue such a project under the multi-party
regime."\textsuperscript{123}

The new RPP governments between 1946 and 1950 made substantial changes in
the Village Institutes, so marking the end of the Institutes as they had originally been
known. It was an era of a new kind of politics. Interestingly, however, there was no
substantial reaction to the attacks against the Village Institutes until the 1960s. It was
probably the lack of support from both the peasantry and RPP leaders and the
bureaucrats\textsuperscript{124} that explains the silent disappearance of the Village Institutes.
Regarding the place of the Village Institutes in Turkish history, we need to underline the following fact: the Institutes also became the victim of the inconsistent policies of the single-party regime, a characteristic that can be seen in many aspects of social and political life during this period. Under the single-party regime, many attempts were made to readdress the main issues concerning Turkey, but none was handled in a consistent, persistent and radical way. Uncertainty and ambiguity became the norm of this regime. For instance, the Kemalist elite feared industrialization and urbanization, and often preferred a peasantist rhetoric, but were unable to show any decisive action to achieve a radical rural transformation. Similarly indecisive and inconsistent attitudes may be seen, for instance, in the way the regime aimed to make a land reform, but did not pursue it with the radicalism that such an attempt would necessitate. They became content with distributing the state lands, and did hardly anything that could threaten the social relations in the countryside. More examples are easy to depict. In the case of the Village Institutes, such contradictory attitudes appeared: while the Village Institutes could be a tool for the transformation of the Turkish countryside, the Kemalist elite mistakenly believed that only rural educational would be enough to reach this goal. More important was the wavering approach to gaining political and ideological control of the countryside. The Village Institute project could certainly have helped consolidate the power of the nation-state in the countryside. For the new Republic and also for the Ottoman Empire, to control the countryside had been a difficult task. To use an analogy from the Ottoman Empire, the Village Institutes, in our opinion, may well be seen as an effort to bring back to rural Turkey the control of the Timarlı Sipahi in the form of the
Village Institute teacher. In other words, it was an attempt to restore and consolidate the direct power of the state. A former Village Institute teacher, Asiye Eliçin, who was accused of being a leftist and was forced to leave her Institute, later strongly criticized the Institutes for aiming to expand the control of the state, and increase productivity so that the state could increase its tax base. The direct exercise of power would require a direct representative of the state. Teachers trained in accordance with the Kemalist mentality, who were ambitious enough to transform the countryside, would be promising agents of the state. In the eyes of many, the Village Institute law, which granted economic, technical, and administrative privileges to Village Institute teachers, was proof of the intention of the bureaucracy to extend its power into the countryside. For example, teachers were granted free land, a house, seeds and some agricultural equipment. Whoever created trouble for the teachers would face severe punishment under the law. Furthermore, the teachers and students in the Village Institutes collected data relating to economic, geographic and social conditions in their regions and reported them back to Ankara either by reports or by publications. Even a brief survey of the Village Institute publications substantiates this point. State control required information, and the Village Institutes were instrumental in gaining this information. However, the consequence of such a restoration of direct power would eventually clash with the power of the landowners, and would necessitate a consistent and ambitious policy towards the aghas, and the RPP lacked such decisive and consistent actions. In this respect, the uncertainties and ambiguities of the Kemalist regime also paved the way for the failure of the Village Institutes.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1 Officially, it began in 1940, although experimental studies started in 1937. The Institutes continued until the early 1950s; the original phase of the Village Institutes ended in 1946 with the withdrawal of H. A. Yücel from the Ministry of Education and I. Tonguç from the administration of the Elementary Education. For Fay Kirby, who wrote the most comprehensive history of the Institutes, the post-1946 practices actually achieved the opposite of the original intentions. See Fay Kirby, *Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri* (Ankara: İmece Yayınları, 1962), p. 6.


4 E. Tonguç, *Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri,* p. 532.


6 An astute American observer of the time, Donald E. Webster, notes the relationship between the rural reform and the Kurdish issue: "In the spring of 1937 it was necessary to subdue another rebellion in the Kurdish region, this time in Tunceli, south of Elaziz. When the first news of it was published (June 15, 1937), it appears that the revolt had been in progress for two months or more but was then under control. The Government announced that it would increase its application of reform measures, including modernization of agriculture and promotion of education, in the recalcitrant region."


7 In the early 1930s the famous *Kadro* periodical, which aimed to theorize Kemalism and revive enthusiasm, for it advocated the idea of a land reform in order to solve the Kurdish question. See Ismail Hüsrev Tokin, "Türk Köylüsünü Topraklandırma. Fakat Nası?," *Kadro,* no.23 (1933), pp. 35-36.
According to Yahya Tezel, who wrote one of the most comprehensive economic histories of the 1923-1950 period, one of the strategic aims of the land reform was related to the conditions in the region. However, it was impossible to accomplish this goal without pretending to cover the whole country and within a single region whose boundaries have never been certain anyway. See Yahya Tezel, *Cumhuriyet Döneminin İktisadi Tarihi* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982), p. 347.

"It is probable that the date of the change also had great significance -in 1933 many nations, especially exporters of raw materials, suffered from the disastrous collapse of world markets resulting from the depression, and resolved to be less dependent on private trade in the future. Autarchical controls grew rapidly not only in Turkey but throughout the world." Max W. Thornburg, *Turkey, An Economic Appraisal* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1949), p. 35.


Tonguç, *Canlandırılacak Köy*, pp. 417-18. The interesting story of this Commission can also be found in Şevket S. Aydemir's book, *İkinci Adam*. Aydemir himself became a member of this Commission, like Dr. Reşit Galip, who in 1925, as a member of the extraordinary tribunal İstiklal Mahkemesesi, convicted Aydemir of his communist activities for ten years. See Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam*, Vol. II (İstanbul: Remzi, 1968), pp. 374-76.

Başgöz and Wilson, *Educational Problems...,* p. 150. He was called "Peasant İşmail" by his friends while he was working in the Ministry of Education before he took the office of General Director. E. Tonguç, *Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri*, p. 52.

Ibid., p. 272.

See Başgöz and Wilson, *Educational Problems...,* p. 130.

"A village aid program purely philanthropic in character with its major emphasis on social welfare could not succeed in a country where eighty percent of the population lived in small, impoverished villages, eking out a meager living from an exhausted soil with primitive farm techniques. The village aid program of the People's Houses further demonstrated the necessity for governmental programs of basic economic, agricultural and social reform." Başgöz and Wilson, *Educational Problems...,* p. 156.


20 Ibid., p. 34.


22 As a matter of fact, new studies inspire a challenge to the conventional historiographical views regarding state support for Turkish peasants even during the time of high etatism of the 1930s. According to Şevket Pamuk, for instance, the state intervention for agricultural prices remained limited in the 1930s, contrary to the conventional views for this period. See Şevket Pamuk, "İkinci Dünya Savaşının Yıllarında Devlet, Tarımsal Yapılar ve Dönüşüm," in *Türkiye'de Tarımsal Yapılar (1923-2000)*, edited by Şevket Pamuk and Zafer Toprak (Ankara: Yurt, 1988), p. 92.


27 "...starting with 1939 parallel to changes within the ranks of the ruling elite, a 'dilution' of etatism started which gathered pace during the war years and culminated in the rejection of etatism as the official economic policy in the post-war period." Korel Göymen, "Stages of Etatist Development in Turkey: The Interaction of Single-Party Politics and Economic Policy in the 'Etatist Decade,' 1930-1939," *METU Studies in Development*, no.10 (1976), p. 90, and also see Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye'de Devletçilik*
(Ankara: Gerçek Yayımları, 1974) for a similar periodization for the étatist policies in Turkey.


29 İ. Safa Güner, Köy Enstitüleri Hatıraları (İstanbul: Kervan Matbaası, 1963), p. 34; see also p. 53.

30 An incident exemplifies the situation. When the truck of one of the institutes was out of order, the teacher asked the students to go to the village on foot and carry the lumber with their hands. See M. Lütfi Engin, "Hasanoğlan Köy Enstitüsü Çalışmaları," in Köy Enstitüleri, 2 (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1944), p. 182.


32 See Cevat Geray, Planlı Dönmde Köye Yönelik Çalışmalar (Ankara: Türkiye ve Orta Doğu Amne İdaresi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974), p. 6. Under the single-party regime, there was ruthless censorship on the media. For this reason, we can normally guess that these rumors were so widespread as to require an explanation from the President. A prominent journalist who was an advocate of the regime, wrote in 1964, when he was describing the atmosphere of the time: "The situation of our press in the summer of 1939 can be summarized as follows: To criticize the 'National Chief,' government, and the Republican People's Party was forbidden. The general attitude of the government could not be criticized in any case." Nadir Nadi, Perde Aralığından (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Yayınları, 1964), p. 21. İsmet İnönü's son-in-law, Metin Toker, says in his memoirs that the press was forced to write the news in a certain way and that even the comments about the news were directly imposed by the government especially during World War II. According to him, all the newspapers were forced to publish large photographs of the "National Chief." Metin Toker, cited in Çetin Yetkin, Türkiye'de Tek Parti Yönetimi (İstanbul: A, 1983), pp. 163-64.

33 İsmet İnönü, "İlköğretimde Çalışmalar," Köy Enstitüsü Dergisi, nos.5-6 (February 1946), p. 3.

34 Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, p. 287.


One indication of their dislike could be that in the 1950 election, the Democrat Party which attacked the Village Institutes, was successful also in the villages where Village Institutes were located. "It was understood the next day that the results of the election were in accordance with the whole country." Güner, Köy Enstitüleri Hatıraları, p. 141.

"Bilhassa enstitünün köy arazisi üstüne kuruluşu, onların geçimlerini güçlendirip, alınan tarla bedellерinin ödenmeyişi enstitüyü kötülemek için ele aldıkları meselelerdir." Nazife Tuncay, "Hasanoğlan Çamaçuhanesi ve Köy Toplumundaki Önemi," Köy Enstitüleri Dergisi, nos.5-6 (February 1946), p. 12.

Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, p. 47.

To see the emphasis on "learning by doing" in the work of the architect of the Village Institutes see İ. Hakki Tonguç, "Köy Eğitim ve Öğretiminin Amaçları," Köy Enstitüleri, 2 (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1944), pp. 1-76. One other persistent advocate of this perspective was Rauf İnan, who was a major figure in the formation of the Village Institutes and later in the administration of several Village Institutes. See İnan, Bir Ömrün Öyküsü and also Arman, Piramidin Tabanı, p. 249.

Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, p. 47.

Webster, The Turkey of Atatürk..., p. 268; see similar arguments in Tonguç, Canlandırmaçak Köy, p. 73.

See İnan, Bir Ömrün Öyküsü I, pp. 172-175, and Ahmet Emin Yalman, Yarının Türkiyesine Seyahat (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1990), first published in 1944, p. 139.

Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, p. 162.


Tonguç's Canlandırmaçak Köy embraces a lot of anti-intellectualism. See especially pp. 16-18, 20, 23. For Tonguç's hostile attitude towards the intellectuals see Niyazi Berkes, Unutulan Yıllar (İstanbul: İletişim, 1997), pp. 95-96. We also have to keep in mind that during the 1930s and 1940s, anti-intellectualism was rampant in many totalitarian states, especially in Nazi Germany. For information on anti-intellectualism in the Third Reich see I. L. Kandel, The Making of Nazis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), p. 59, and Hitler's anti-intellectual bias in Mein Kampf, discussed in Klaus P. Fischer, Nazi Germany, A New History (New York: Continuum, 1995), p. 348.

This deficiency on the part of the intelligentsia was a well known reality and the Republican Party made attempts to recruit militants of rural origins as early as 1931. As one of the RPP documents shows, "Especially the public speakers who will talk to the peasants should resemble the people to whom they are talking in terms of their clothes and accent. These public speakers must memorize the Party principles that have been
mentioned...Our friends who will talk to the peasants and the people who have simple ideas must talk in a simple and concise way. The repetition of the good views continuously, and on every occasion without making the audience tired will create the effect of belief and awakening in these people." Instructions for the Public Speakers' Organization of the Republican People's Party, cited in Mete Tuncay, Tek Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması, 1923-1931 (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1981), p. 547.


50 Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, p. 60; For the campaign mentioned see "Köycüler Bölümü," Ülkü 2, 7 (1933), p. 63.


In the emphasis on human will and voluntarism, we find a common characteristic of most of the Populist movements of the late nineteenth century, particularly that of Russian Populism. The populists gave considerable significance to the role of intellectuals and leaders in transforming society. The theories on critically-thinking individuals, bypassing the capitalist stage, using a Kantian subjectivity rather than Hegelian or Marxist determinism and the like, all point to the voluntarist and subjectivist nature of the populist movements. Faith in transforming Turkish society with educational leadership very much resembles such a mentality. See two original sources by two prominent Russian populists on the issue discussed above: Peter Lavrov, "Historical Letters," in Russian Philosophy, Vol II, edited by James M. Scanlan and Mary-Barbara Zeldin (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994), pp. 123-169; and N. K. Mikhailovsky, "What is Progress," in Russian Philosophy, Vol II, edited by James M. Scanlan and Mary-Barbara Zeldin (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994), pp. 177-187.

53 Engin, "Hasanoglan Köy Enstitüsü Çalışmaları," p. 181. For similar stories regarding the industrious and ambitious working conditions in the Village Institutes, see İnan, Bir Ömrün Öyküsü I, pp. 100-103.


55 Berkes, Unutulan Yıllar, pp. 73-74.


It is no coincidence that İsmail Tonguç, the architect of the Village Institute system, studied similar policies employed in other countries, especially in Bulgaria and Germany. In Bulgaria of the 1920s, people were forced to work at least eight months of their life in public works (four months for women). The idea was to organize the labor force of the country and accomplish public works which were supposedly for the benefit of the people. In addition to work in labor camps, Bulgarians had to learn how to read and how to be good citizens. See John Bell, "Modernization Through Secularization in Bulgaria," in Diverse Paths to Modernity in Southeastern Europe, edited by Gerasimos Augustinos (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991), p. 23. In Germany, a similar law was passed in 1936 under Nazi rule. German youth between the ages of 18 and 25 had to work for the government for at least six months. The aim was much the same, but in Germany an intensive Nazi propaganda also constituted a significant part of this endeavor. E. Tonguç, Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri, p. 209. During the same years, the labor camps in the USSR and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) experience in the United States of the New Deal can also be counted as similar practices which aimed to benefit from the labor force in a time when capital was scarce. For a brief reference to these experiences, see Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, pp. 55-56. See E. Tonguç, Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri, p. 86, for a discussion on the CCC as an example.

"In such case Atatürk proceeded in the fashion of Bonaparte rather than Talleyrand. A sweeping ukase decreed that the new village schools would be built by the villages themselves and a very large proportion were built in fact by forced labor and money contribution of the villagers." Daniel Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East (New York: The Free Press, 1964), p. 121.

E. Tonguç, Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri, p. 211.


For an account of the village women complaining about the overwork of the institute students see Nazife Tuncay, "Hasanoğlan Çamaşırhanesi..., p. 12.

E. Tonguç, Mektuplarla Köy Enstitüsü Yılları, pp. 32-3.

See one of these striking photographs in Köy Enstitüleri, 2 (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1944), p. 199.

Tezel, Cumhuriyet Döneminin İktisadi Tarihi, p. 434, and Webster, The Turkey of Atatürk..., p. 268. In the Ottoman tradition we do not see the "peasant commune" that the Russian countryside, for instance, had. The peasant commune in Russia, at least to a certain extent, was the symbol of "inherent peasant collective" mentality. In the Ottoman Empire, we had instead what Halil İnalcık called the Çift-hane System, namely the legacy of the predominance of the small household production. See Halil İnalcık, "The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300-1600," in An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914, edited by H. İnalcık and D. Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 143-154.

"Küçük arazi sahibi aileler arasında köy ölçeğinde ve köyler arasında üretim yöneltik ortak çalışma ve işbirliği geleneğinin bulunmasını yı da yök sayıacak kadar zayıf olmasının önemli bir sonucu, tarımsal faaliyetin yoğun olduğunu birkaç ay dışında, tarım sektöründe görülen yaygın mevsilik eksik istihdam durumuydu. Köylü aileleri

67 See Cemil Çakır, "Köy Enstitüleri Üzerine," in Yeni Toplum, Kuruluşunun 36. Yılında..., pp. 34-5, for an example of such a viewpoint.

68 Köy Enstitüleri Dergisi, no.1 (January 1945), p 36.

69 İnan, Bir Ömrün Öyküsü I, pp. 37-38.

70 Ibid., p. 207.

71 I.e., in the speech delivered to the graduates by the director Şerif Tekben from Malatya Akçadağ (eastern Turkey) Institute. Note that those aghas were also from the Kurdish speaking region, which should have been more dangerous if there were a real problem with the aghas: "While talking on the employment of the new graduates, the director ended his speech, pointing out that it was time for cooperation and conciliation with the aghas, who were controlling some of the regions." Köy Enstitüleri Dergisi, no.1 (January 1945), pp. 161-62.

72 For the emphasis on the struggle against nature see Tonguç, Canlandırılacak Köy, p. 13; Makal, Köy Enstitüleri ve Ötesi, p. 55; and Arman, Piramidin Tabanı I, pp. 261-62.

73 Tütengil, Köy Enstitüsi Üzerine Düşünceler, p. 6.

74 "The exploitation of nature was made possible by the struggle with it." ("Doğanın somürülmesi, doğa ile savaşarak mümkün oluyordu.") Makal, Köy Enstitüleri ve Ötesi, p. 55. See also Hürem Arman, Piramidin Tabanı I, pp. 261-62.


76 Aydemir, İkinci Adam, p. 320.
"Today, we have 16,000 villages whose population is less than 250. If we do not go to these villages, if we do not have people loyal to our state, these villages will be full of criminals and bandits. If the people we educate as the hand of the state go there, our flag could be put there at least on national festivals and weekends." Tonguç, quoted in Özkucur, *Hasanoğlan Yüksek Köy Enstitüsü*, p. 133.


"Never forget that while in every region and village the majority of the people have Turkish blood, among them we can come across some people who actually are Turks but because of lack of historical knowledge and ignorance of the previous periods, chose another nationality with such names as Kurd, Circassian, Laz, and the like. It is obvious that making this whole peasant community accept Turkism without making them aware and without insulting them is not an easy task. Whereas it is really very easy for an urban citizen to prove with historical documentation... that there is no difference between them, for a peasant... it is not... Therefore, the Village Institutes must first of all make every peasant accept that he is Turkish and they must teach the history of the Turk; eventually they have to inject national consciousness and education which is appropriate for a Turk." Danis R. Korok, *Cumhuriyette Köye ve Köyçülüğü Doğru* (İstanbul: Türk Neşriyat Yurdu, 1951), p. 23 (originally written in 1943).

M. Sabri Taşkin, "İş Okulu ve Evrim Tarihi Etrafında," p. 139.

An exception is a translated text in the *Köy Enstitüleri Dergisi* by an Institute teacher in which it is stated that some races are inferior and this inferiority is genetic. See Mustafa Sarıkaya, "İnsan ve Çevresi," *Köy Enstitüleri Dergisi*, nos.5-6 (February 1946), no mention of the original author, p. 63.

Kirby, *Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi* for a presentation of the Nazi impact on Turkish intellectuals and officials.


"What was also at stake was the political interests of the Republican People's Party. One of the goals of the Institutes included the recruitment of the militants who would favor and endorse the Party." Yılmaz Elmas, "Tonguç ve Köy Enstitüleri," in *Yeni Toplum*, Kuruluşunun 36. Yılinda..., p. 68.

İnönü said: "Yücel, will these children support us when we go to their villages?" Hürem Arman, "Köy Enstitüleri ve Getirdikleri," in *Yeni Toplum*, Kuruluşunun 36. Yılinda..., p. 11.

"İnönü, bu hesapla birlikte bir başka düşüncesi de açığa vurun, kendisinden işittigim, kaygılı bir soru ile, çok partili bir dönemde Köy Enstitüsü meşunlarının köylere Halk..."
Partisini tutup tutmayacaklarını da hesabı içinde olduğunu gösteriyordu. Bu kanıya
vardıran tanığı olduğum soru 1944 17 Nisan'ında Hasanoğlan'da Hasan Ali Yücel'e şu
biçimde sorulmuştu: "Yücel, bu çocuklar köylere gidince bizi tutacaklar mı?" Bu soru
İnönü'nün ve sanırın bazı Halk Partili'lerin, Köy Enstitü mezunlarının köylere Halk
Partisinin birer militan olarak da görev yapacakları umudu içinde olduklarını gösterir."
For Arman's comments along the same lines see Hürem Arman, Piramidin Tabani; Köy

88 "Tonguç'ın yine aynı seçimi ilgili olarak ikinci girişimi Köy Enstitüsü yönetimcilerine
seçimlerde CHP'yi desteklemeleri için çağrida bulunmasıdır." E. Tonguç, Devrim
Açısından Köy Enstitüleri, p. 214.

89 Aydemir, İkinci Adam, pp. 380-81; see also Doğan Avcıoğlu, Türkiye'nin Düzeni

90 For the communist accusation based on Tonguç's admiration of Ethem Nejat, see F.
İşfendiyaroğlu, Havadis, 29 September 1960, republished in Köy Enstitüleri ve Koç
Federasyonu İicyüzleri, pp. 82-3. For Nejat's influence see Elmas, "Tonguç ve Köy

91 Arman, Piramidin Tabani I, p. 327.

92 Although Tonguç's son argues that he was quite leftist because he applied class analysis
in understanding societies, his father appears to have been much more like a corporatist.
See E. Tonguç, Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri, pp. 151-55, p. 163, and p. 606 for the
description of his father's political ideas concerning corporatism (meslekiçilik).

93 Elmas, "Tonguç ve Köy Enstitüleri," p. 64.

94 In 1932 and 1933 the Ministry of Education sent students to the United States to study
rural education and agricultural economy. They returned in 1936 and 1937. See E.
Tonguç, Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri, p. 559; Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, p.
74. According to Kirby, most of them were influenced by the principles of "Young
Farmer" and "4 H Club." Ibid., pp. 53-4.

95 Dewey was one of the most important intellectuals of the twentieth-century United
States. In 1924 he was invited to Turkey to prepare reports on the Turkish educational
system. In the 1920s, he published three articles in the New Republic about Turkish
education. Dewey's report prepared for the Turkish Ministry of Education was generally
accused of ignoring the realities of Turkish society. Yalman, Yarının Türkîyesine
Seyahat, pp. 134-35; Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, pp. 34-37. "Booker T.
Washington in 1881 established an industrial and agricultural school at Tuskegee,
Alabama. Its debut was far from auspicious. The Tuskegee Institute opened in a log
shack with 30 students and a single instructor....Above all, Washington sought economic
self-improvement designed to reach common black folk in fields and factories." J. W.
Davidson, et. al., Nation of Nations, A Narrative of the American Republic, 2nd edition

96 Some more sophisticated right-wing critics continued to argue for a possible link with
the peasants and socialism. As Sayilgan says: "I would like to give those people who
cannot reconcile peasantism with communism the example of Mao Zedung." Aclan


99 Here is the list of the books which were considered as communistic: Uyandırılmış Toprak, Ekme ve Şarap, Ana (Pearl Buck), Şahika, Reaya ve Köylü, Sari Estirler, Gölge Orduçu, Ninka Abla, Sünger Avcısı, Fantomare, Resim Öğretmeni, Değişen Dünya. Aclan Sayğan, İnkar Firtinası, 1962, republished in Köy Enstitüleri ve Koç Federasyonu İçyzleri, p. 139. Also keep in mind that the books the Village Institute libraries received were censored to a large extent. For a description of the censorship see Köy Enstitüleri Dergisi, no.1 (January 1945), p. 169.

100 Aydemir, İkinci Adam, p. 382.


102 See the photographs of the students' kind of militaristic campaigns. Köy Enstitüleri I (İstanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1941), pp. 60-63.

103 For a poem entitled "Yeter" (enough) which talks about the hardships of the peasants and attracted severe criticism later from the conservative commentators since the poet seems to advise the peasants to resist those who had exploited them. See Cesarettin Ateş, "Yeter," Köy Enstitüsü Dergisi, no.2 (April 1945), p. 313. For a conservative critique of this poem, see İsfendiyaroğlu, Havadis, (September 19, 1960), p. 42.

104 "Bu pıyes Atatürk'un kurmuş olduğu Cumhuriyet rejimimizin baştan başa aleyhine tertiplenmiştir. İçinde adliye cihazına, müllkiye amirlerimize ve jandarmalara türlü ırtıkaplar, ırtısalar, haksızlıklar ve çeşitli yolsuzluklar isnad ederek hepsini köylüler karşısında yerin dibine sokan ve suiistimalleri cümleserine teşmil eden çok zararlı telkinlerle doludur. Bu tecavüzkar dilin ve hakaretli cümlelerin işlerinde durmak lazımdır. İşte bu pıyesette bütün muhtarların, jandarmaların, nahiye müdürlerinin ve hakimlerin çeşitli yolsuzluklar yaptıkları iddiası var...." Ibid., p. 37.


106 Yalman, Yarının Türkîyesine Seyahat, pp. 164-65; Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, pp. 177-187; and Güner, Köy Enstitüleri Hàstralart, p. 129.

107 See for instance the discourse in a book review about the issue, Ülkü, April 1945. no.2, pp. 302-303.

108 İsfendiyaroğlu (September 29, 1960), pp. 66-7. See also Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, p. 175.

110 Feroz Ahmad shows that the peasants in Anatolia were quite indifferent to the War of Independence. "...[A]lienation became even more acute during the World War. The peasants saw the national struggle as a continuation of the war and having fled from one they fled from the other. The nationalists found it very difficult to recruit peasants into the army. The peasants were most receptive to the propaganda of the Sultan's government when they were told that they did not have to serve in the ranks of the nationalists. In the turmoil of those years, there was no peasant movement to seize land; most peasants remained passive, though some joined local guerrilla forces often led by bandits, already in rebellion against the state." See Feroz Ahmad, "The Political Economy of Kemalism," in Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State, edited by A. Kazancıgil and E. Özbudun (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1981), p. 155.

111 Engin Tonguç, for instance, believes in such an idea. See his Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri, p. 595.

112 During the single-party era it was not rare to be somehow punished even for very innocent political or cultural demands. One of the distinguished women journalists, Sabiha Sertel, in her memoirs documents many such incidents. See her Roman Gibi (İstanbul: Belge, 1987), first published in 1969.

113 İnan, Bir Ömürün Öyküsü I, p. 196.

114 For a similar comment see Yalman, Yarının Türkiye'ine Seyahat, pp. 19-20 and pp. 164-65.

115 For an example of how they challenged the ideas of a sociology professor see Köy Enstitüleri Dergisi, no.2 (April 1945), p. 203. For troubles caused by some of the Village Institute students to the local bureaucrats, see Yalman, Yarının Türkiye'ine Seyahat, pp. 175-77.


117 The Village Institute students told Yalman that their main goal was the collective development of the nation rather than individualism. See Yalman, Yarının Türkiye'ine Seyahat, p. 92.

118 İnan, in his memoirs, mentions how his institute offered the nearby region a platform for discussion about current political events, particularly the news of World War II, by listening to İnan's radio. İnan, Bir Ömürün Öyküsü, p. 96.

119 Note the case of a Village Institute student explaining his aims of preventing the transformation of the peasants into workers in his village after his graduation. ("...ziraate verilen ehemmiyet azalmış, halkın yüzde 70, 80'i amele olmuştur. Köyümü gidece..."
amelelinin önüne geçmek, köyde çalışma imkanları yaratmak için çareler arayacağını.

See Yalman, Yarının Türkiyesine Seyahat, p. 73. Similar approaches can be found in the educational principles of Nazi Germany: "The peasant, too, because he feels that he raises food for his people, is the true patriot, and his close association with the soil develops in him a love for his home which again is the basis of true patriotism...; it is attached to the soil; it has often been settled on the same land for centuries; it should be discouraged from migrating to the overpopulated cities..." Kandel, The Making of Nazis, p. 82.

120 While the Village Institute law was discussed in the Grand National Assembly Bingöl deputy Feridun Fikri welcomed the law for its promise to maintain the peasants in their villages: "But this enterprise has nothing to do with bringing the peasants into the cities. It was achieved in order that the peasants would work in their villages, where they should be attached to their village and land with love." Mustafa Ekmekçi, "Mecliste Köy Enstitüleri Nasıl Açildı, Nasıl Kapandı?" in Yeni Toplum, Kuruluşunun 36. Yılında..., p. 51. In the same session, Manisa deputy Kazım Nami Duru endorsed the law for exactly the same reasons. See Koçak, Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi, p. 240.

121 E. Tonguç, Devrim Açısından Köy Enstitüleri, p. 56. On the same page, he says that "Granting land and providing ways of extra revenue apart from salaries to the teachers and attaching them to the village are examples of this."

122 According to a prominent Turkish intellectual of the time, the post-World War II era would signal a new era, and a new world order. Even the title of Başar's 1943 book, Turkey and the New World, suggests his sense of a new era. See Ahmet Hamdi Başar, Türkiye ve Yeni Dünya (Istanbul: Barış Dünyası, 1943).

123 İnönü, quoted in Koçak, Türkiye'de Milli Şef Dönemi, p. 206.

124 Kirby, Türkiye'de Köy Enstitüleri, p. 304; Arman, Piramidin Tabanı II, p. 277.

125 Many articles can be found in Kadro presenting the ambiguity of the Kemalist principles. See especially Aydemir's 1934 article entitled "Programlı Devletçilik," p. 6 and Kadro (editorial), Kadro 3, 34 (1934), p. 4.

126 Timarlı Sipahis collected taxes from the peasants in the Ottoman Empire, and in return offered their service as soldiers in times of war. In a sense, they were mediators between the government and the peasants. In this sense, they represented the Ottoman government in the countryside.


128 Ibid., pp. 229-30.

129 It would be naive to think that the landowners did not feel threatened by the Village Institute enterprise. This feeling may also explain the intense opposition of the landowners as soon as the Village Institutes began consolidating themselves during the mid-1940s.
These ambiguities and uncertainties may well be explained by the organic relationships of the RPP elite with the ruling classes.
NOTE TO USERS

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UMI
CHAPTER 5

ELITE PERCEPTIONS OF LAND REFORM IN EARLY REPUBLICAN TURKEY

In order to trace the impact of the peasantist ideology in early Republican Turkey, one can hardly find a more appropriate theme than the theory and practice of the land reform, which gave rise to an incredible historical controversy. From about the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s, the idea of land reform in Turkey, epitomized by the Law for Providing Land to Farmers (LPLF), occupied a significant place in the minds of the Turkish ruling elite and intelligentsia. Yet, even today, we know little of the motives behind the land reform attempts of this period. It is no exaggeration to characterize this puzzling problem as one of the most difficult issues of the early Republican period that still needs to be fully explained.1 Even an astute observer, theoretician and witness of the period from the periphery of the ruling circles, Şevket Süreyya Aydın, confessed in 1968 that the reasons why the single-party regime engaged in a land reform still remain incomprehensible.2 Likewise, in his posthumously published memoirs, the distinguished scholar Niyazi Berkes characterizes the land reform attempt of 1945 as a "muddle."3 However, explaining this problem remains a critical task for two basic reasons: first of all, the nature of the political system and dominant ideology of the period, including the peasantist ideology, can never be fully understandable without it. Secondly, since the implications of the discussions about the land reform issue gave rise to many serious
political developments, among them the impetus to the transition to a multi-party regime in 1946, it is essential that we understand land reform and related issues for the later developments they triggered.⁴

Different and often controversial explanations revolving around the issue have remained, although there is a vast literature on the nature of the land reform attempts of the early Republican era. The most popular and widespread explanation belongs to the so-called Left-Kemalists. According to Doğan Avcıoğlu, who represented this position in a clear and competent way, land reform was the attempt of the radical and left wings of the Republican People's Party to gain the support of the small and middle peasants by improving their economic well-being against big landowners.⁵ The failure of land reform, according to this scenario, is explained by the weakness of the "progressive" forces vis-à-vis the "reactionary" political bloc composed of big landowners and merchants. Another explanation, quite different from Avcıoğlu's, and advocated by such prominent politicians of the time as Adnan Menderes, and by some academics such as the late Niyazi Berkes, maintains that the LPLF was nothing, but a copy of the German Erbhof Law, which was a part of the Nazis' agricultural program aiming to restrict the social mobility of German farmers. According to Menderes, in as much as it restricted mobility in the countryside, the law was a "backward" undertaking.⁶ Another explanation, belonging to economic historians Şevket Pamuk and Çağlar Keyder, underlines the dominance of the political over the economic concerns in the making of the LPLF of 1945. According to them, the economic rationale was absent from the law, for it was not the land, but draft animals that a serious economic reform for the peasants
would have taken into account. In their own terms, "landlessness emerged from poverty, not the other way round." The aim of the LPLF in this scenario was mainly seen as President İsmet İnönü's political maneuver in order to show the public that the emerging opposition in the assembly had vested interests in preserving big landownership. Pamuk and Keyder, like Avcıoğlu, see the LPLF as a radical endeavor, but note its "diversion from the overall political direction of the single-party era." Finally, some scholars underline the significance of the economic rationale, such as increasing the productivity of the small and middle peasants, in order to understand the LPLF. According to this explanation, the land reform attempts sought simply to transfer the agricultural surplus to industrial development by increasing the commercialization of agricultural production.

We are not going to delve into the specifics of these interpretations here, since each point needs to be dealt with in a separate study. Instead, we shall emphasize the necessity of understanding the idea of land reform in terms of both long- and short-term effects. Most interpretations of Turkish land reform have merely focused on the year 1945. We shift the emphasis to the 1930s, but also comment on the conjunctural developments in the immediate aftermath of World War II in our conclusion. Moreover, instead of sticking simply to economic interpretations, we underline the primacy of political and ideological factors, especially the underestimated role of the ideology of peasantism, in understanding the land reform attempts of the single-party era. In this respect, most of our attention will be to the elite perceptions of land issues rather than economic analysis of the objective conditions of Turkish agriculture. We shall also pay special attention to an underemphasized theme, that is, the relation between land reform
attempts and the consolidation of the political regime, especially as it relates to the consolidation of Turkish nationalism.

5.1. The Historical Background of the Land Reform

Before analyzing the reasons behind the idea of land reform during the single-party era, we need to take a look at some relevant developments from the 1920s through the mid-1940s as they relate to land reform. The interest in and concern for a land reform in Turkey came relatively late to the Turkish elite's political and intellectual agenda. However, before and after World War I in different parts of the world land issues had been a major concern for elites and governments, as was the case in the former Ottoman domains in the Balkans. In Turkey, the situation was the opposite. "In our country, leave aside the practical side of the matter," wrote Ömer Lütfi Barkan, a prominent economic historian, as late as 1943, "even theoretically as an idea or problem, land issues had not occupied as significant a place as they deserved among intellectuals and academics." According to him, this situation in Turkey could even falsely instigate a sense in which Turkey did not have a problem of this kind at all. Barkan, though he seems to exaggerate a little, points out an interesting phenomenon indeed: up until the mid-1930s, the Turkish elite was not actually interested in and concerned about land issues, which were vital to the lives of many peasants in Turkey.

Until the mid-1940s, the historical developments regarding land issues can be summarized as follows. In the early 1920s, the government distributed inconsiderable
amounts of land to satisfy practical and daily necessities, as in the case of providing land for Muslim immigrants, who came to Turkey from the former Ottoman lands. In the fall of 1929, Prime Minister İsmet İnönü proclaimed that his government intended to distribute land to the peasants while emphasizing that under no circumstances did they aim to hurt those big landowners, whose production was efficient and rational. In 1930, the government conducted an unsuccessful attempt to distribute state lands by promulgating the Land and Settlement Law. Serious discussions of why and how to distribute land to the landless and small peasants gained momentum especially after 1934. In June 1934, a more comprehensive Settlement Law was passed to provide land for those people, who were displaced between the East and the West of the country. This land distribution attempt was related to finding a solution to the Kurdish issue by diminishing the political power of Kurdish tribal leaders, which was thought to derive from their economic domination of the Kurdish peasantry; but from then on, for reasons to be discussed later in this chapter, the government shifted to a nationwide land reform plan. Nevertheless, this Settlement Law was significant as it was an initial step toward removing the obstacles that prevented the state from expropriating private lands. The government focused more on similar arrangements, especially during the last months of 1936. At this time, even diplomats in Ankara were acknowledging that "a reform is being prepared which will fundamentally affect the whole country." In November 1936, Kemal Atatürk declared that "it is absolutely necessary for every Turkish farmer family to possess enough land to cultivate and earn a living. The basis and improvement of the country are to be found in this principle." Atatürk did not forget to add that the
government wanted to "encourage ... the surplus production of rationally run big farms." In December of the same year, prime minister İnönü stated that the country's agriculture was in deep depression, and that the government would "allocate a significant amount of money to benefit agriculture and farmers from 1937 onwards." In the spring of 1937, these issues occupied a central place in the parliamentary discussions with regard to the changes in the Constitution. It was pointed out in these discussions that in order to make the farmers "active elements of the society," and for society to derive any benefit from their labor, they had to be rescued from working on other people's lands, and given land of their own. Probably the most important signal came with Atatürk's speech in November 1937, when he argued that the landless should be given land, and "more importantly, the lands of farming families should, under no circumstances, be divisible." This speech seemed to provide great momentum for the discussion of land issues in Turkey.

With the outbreak of World War II, the interest in land issues among the elite disappeared, as the war consumed its attention. As soon as the war ended in 1945, however, the government set out a proposal entitled Law for the Distribution of Land and for the Establishment of Farmer Homesteads. After the elimination of the points relating to the "Farmer Homesteads," (Çiftçi Ocaklari) which faced fierce opposition in the Grand National Assembly, the proposal was approved under the name Law for Providing Land to Farmers (LPLF), despite the existence of a considerable opposition for the first time in the single-party regime.
Although establishing Farmer Homesteads, a crucial aspect of land reform, was left out, it is important that we understand the idea of Homesteads. The notion of Farmer Homesteads embodies the motives behind the land distribution attempts of the governing elite of the 1930s and 1940s. The government's aim in establishing Farmer Homesteads was to create and maintain "independent farmer families," and to secure "the indivisibility of farmers' lands," which could range from 30 to 500 dönüms for each family. For 25 years, farmers were forbidden to sell these newly constituted indivisible lands. Such lands could be possessed only by a single individual, who was considered the head of the farming family. Similarly, these lands could be inherited by only one person in the family. Other members of the family had to be financially compensated in a way that would not put the inheriting member in a difficult financial position. Furthermore, the lands assigned as Farmer Homesteads could under no circumstances be distrained or mortgaged, a precaution to protect farmers from the pressures of commodification. Such lands, if not cultivated, would be reclaimed by the state, and transferred to another member of the family. Needless to say, sharecropping was strictly forbidden in Farmer Homesteads.

Briefly, the aims underlying the establishment of Farmer Homesteads were, first, to secure the indivisibility of lands; second, to end their commodification by preventing their purchase, mortgage and distraint, and in so doing, to detach a substantial sector of the economy from commercial relations and the market. Last but not least, the measure embodied the social and nationalist goals of sustaining "rooted" farming families, who relied solely on their own labor and property.
The notion of Farmer Homesteads, as noted earlier, was removed from the proposal, and instead, a revised law, "The Law for Providing Land to Farmers," was approved. In brief, the principles of this law were to give land to the landless and small farmers, to furnish farmers with credit and equipment that they might need for production, to set upper and lower limits for private landownership, and finally to make sure that all lands were continuously cultivated. The Law made it clear that it was not private lands that were to be redistributed first, but state-owned lands and other potentially productive lands, such as those that could be reclaimed by draining lakes and swamps. According to the Law, private lands could also be appropriated and redistributed, if other lands were not available. Private lands over 5000 dönüms were subject to redistribution, but this amount could be decreased to 2000 dönüms in regions where land was scarce. However, the Law was also open to flexible interpretation in that efficiently and rationally cultivated large holdings could be exempt from appropriation.

The most controversial part of the Law, however, was the famous Article 17, added at the last minute. This article made it possible for agricultural workers and sharecroppers to claim the land they were currently tilling. In a country like Turkey, where sharecropping was widespread, it would have been possible to appropriate huge amounts of private land by using Article 17, if there had been a genuine political will to do so.

The law gave rise to intense political controversies in the Grand National Assembly. Some prominent deputy ministers such as Adnan Menderes, Emin Sazak, and Cavit Oral, themselves big landowners, strongly opposed the law. Menderes, who became the prime minister of Turkey during the 1950s (and was later overthrown, and
hanged by the military regime in 1961), became the key spokesman for the opposition. According to him, Turkey did not have a problem of land scarcity, since potentially cultivable arable land was three times greater than land currently tilled. The real problem, he believed, was the adverse terms of trade for agriculture with industry. In other words, agricultural prices were too low and the industrial goods that the peasants demanded were too costly. Moreover, according to Menderes, what the peasants really needed was access to the necessary means of production, an increase in credit opportunities, and the introduction of scientific methods in agricultural production. Menderes also made a provocative assertion that the overall spirit of the law, as exemplified in the Farmer Homesteads, was simply copied from Hitler's 1933 law of Erbfah (entailed estates). We shall address Menderes's view in detail below; at the moment it is important to note that although the law was passed, most of its "threatening" articles, including the famous Article 17, were never implemented. As a matter of fact, a few months after the law was approved in August 1945, İnönü, now president after Atatürk's death in 1938, appointed Cavit Oral, a large landowner from the fertile region of Adana and a prominent opponent of the law, to head the Ministry of Agriculture, whose duty was to implement the law. As early as 1948, İnönü characterized the law which he himself had drafted as an "extreme one" that could be "detrimental to the agricultural and social life of the country."
5.2. Why a Land Reform?

5.2.1. The Problem of Landless Peasants

A first assessment of the Turkish land reform attempts of the single-party era concludes that their overriding motives were more political and ideological than economic.\(^{41}\) As a matter of fact, not only in Turkey but in other countries that underwent land reform in the same period, similar concerns were prominent.\(^{42}\) While many political regimes between the two world wars gave priority to political and ideological over economic concerns, this does not mean that the reforms had no economic implications. The economic literature on the issue points to such goals as increasing agricultural productivity by giving land to peasants, and consequently increasing the demand for industrial goods, thereby boosting the Turkish economy as a whole. Opposite economic interpretations maintain, on the other hand, that land reforms tend to freeze labor mobility, and to increase self-sufficiency rather than commercializing agriculture.\(^{43}\)

Despite such interpretations which emphasize the economic motives behind land reforms, the fact of the matter is that in Turkey, too, economic arguments play a secondary role. One reason might be that the elite of the time believed that the economic rationale of land reform was not strong, and indeed was skeptical that it could really solve the economic problems of rural Turkey.\(^{44}\)

In my opinion, one of the most important factors that helped shape the idea of a land reform in the minds of the Turkish political elite was its belief that there was a huge and increasing number of landless and poverty-stricken peasants in Turkey. This is a
controversial assessment, however. Many academics and politicians have argued for years that in Turkey the number of landless and poverty-stricken peasants was, in fact, not significant.45 For instance, Menderes, one of the critics to the Law for Providing Land to Farmers, exemplified this theoretical position by arguing that land was not scarce in Turkey, and that the problem of landless peasants was not crucial.46 Historian Haim Gerber's position in his *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East* is interesting as another case in point. Gerber believes that in Turkey, even in the twentieth century, "[the land system] was still basically the sixteenth-century institution, hardly affected by the historical vicissitudes of three-and-one-half centuries." He argues that an egalitarian land system "based on the independent household" predominated in Anatolia, since landless peasants made up only a minority of the peasantry. He further suggests that there were hardly any "dominant landowners, and semi-feudalistic institutions," and that sharecropping was a marginal phenomenon in Anatolia.48 Instead of working for somebody else, the peasants in Turkey, Gerber maintains, opened up new fields for cultivation.49 For Gerber, all characteristics of rural Turkey "clearly contradict the assumption that in a capitalistic system the small household and traditional village community must lose out to the city capitalist."50

Whether Gerber's rosy picture is true or not is hard to assess. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to ascertain the structure of agriculture in Turkey in the period in question because of the lack of reliable data. To discuss the economic motives for land reform, and the potential effects it might have on the agricultural structure, one needs to know the distribution of the land, and likewise, the number of landless peasants, and the
distribution of draft animals. Both now and in the past, historians in Turkey, including Barkan, have complained about the lack of reliable data. Given this lack of reliable data, the ruling elite's perception of the structure of the country's agriculture and peasantry becomes all the more important. The people, who made policies in this period, did not have the statistics to characterize accurately the objective conditions in rural Turkey, even if they thought they did. Since we know that these people had implemented policies based on what they thought they knew, it becomes once again supremely important to know how the ruling elite of the time visualized the Turkish peasantry and Turkish agriculture. Even so, what they envisioned as the objective conditions of the Turkish countryside is more important as a guide to their actions than what those objective conditions were.

For most of the Turkish ruling elite of the 1930s, there was a severe problem of landlessness and poverty in Turkey, and this was perceived as one of the most serious problems of the country. Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya's speech in June 1934 is typical: "Today a population of five million in the country works on other people's land," and it was the state's foremost duty to distribute land to the landless, thus making true the famous slogan of the time that "the peasant is the master of the country." The same concerns were repeated three years later in the course of making Constitutional amendments to prepare the legal grounds for land distribution:

Fifteen million out of eighteen million Turks are farmers. But most of them do not work on their own lands. To make the farmers, who form the majority of Turks, possess their own lands means to make them masters of their economic destiny, and, therefore, make them prosperous and active elements of the society.
In the 1920s and 1930s, a similar assessment appeared in some academic publications. A Soviet researcher, P. M. Zhukovsky, argued that five percent of the families in Turkey owned 65 percent of the total land.\(^{54}\) In 1934, İsmail Hüsrev Tökin predicted that if existing trends continued, the number of dispossessed farmers would dramatically increase in the near future.\(^{55}\) Barkan insisted that the belief among some members of the ruling elite that Turkey did not have a land problem was an illusion.\(^{56}\) Even in 1950, after some land had already been redistributed throughout the country, 37.9 percent of the families held 81.4 percent of all cultivatable land, and 0.8 percent with more that 700 dekars\(^{57}\) controlled 19.6 percent of all fertile lands.\(^{58}\) Some recent studies also confirm this. According to Yahya Tezel's calculations, for example, at least 20 percent of the peasants did not have their own lands in the early 1950s,\(^{59}\) including 21 percent in western Anatolia and 33 percent in the Mediterranean south. In the latter region, if we take into account the fact that 20 percent of the peasants were sharecroppers, then about 55 percent of farmers were desperate for land.\(^{60}\) Although all this information strongly suggests that land was a burning issue in Turkey, we do not want to insist that these findings represent the real, objective conditions of the time. As a matter of fact, we know that it was not a growing class of big landowners who were alone responsible for the problem of landlessness. Other factors such as population growth, the existence of huge state-owned and public lands, and the scarcity of capital and equipment all paved the way for the problem.\(^{61}\) Still, what is important for the moment is that, notwithstanding the possible mistakes and exaggerations in these figures, at least in the minds of the Turkish elites, a somber land issue prevailed.
Having established the Turkish ruling elite's perception of a land problem, we need to scrutinize the nature of their concerns about landlessness, and the relation of these concerns to the idea of land reform. Landlessness was seen as a social and political, rather than an economic, problem. Above all, landless peasants meant a potential source of unrest and social upheavals. Historical experience seemed to justify this view. After all, was it not the case that after World War I landless and poverty-stricken peasants in many parts of the world, especially in eastern and southeastern Europe, so the Turkish elite thought, occupied, and *de facto* possessed lands? Were not many Balkan states forced to implement land reforms independent of, and, often, despite their own will to legitimize this *de facto* condition? As a matter of fact, as Barkan pointed out at the time, most revolutionary movements of the twentieth century took place not in industrial but in agrarian societies where landlordism was contested, a phenomenon that in retrospect represents an irony of history and seemingly challenges Marxist interpretations of history. The role of land-hungry peasants in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, for one, remained a fresh memory in the minds of many Turkish elites. In short, the belief that landless peasants could trigger destructive social revolutions was an integral part of the mentality and a deeply rooted fear of the Turkish ruling elite. For this reason they repeatedly articulated the necessity of land reform in order to maintain "social peace and tranquility."
5.2.2. The Impact of the Ideological Background

Thus far, we have examined the Turkish ruling elite's perception, and fear of landless and other poor peasants. However, land reform and related issues cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration also the ideological background of the ruling elite and intelligentsia of the time. This is all the more important, because in early Republican Turkey there was no peasant movement pushing for land reform. In the absence of such a movement, the elite's ideological background and intellectual baggage become especially significant in understanding the motives behind the land reform controversies of the 1930s and 1940s.

Conventional assumptions about the nature of the elite's ideological background, and its commitment to modernization and industrialization, contribute nothing to understanding land reform. Instead, we need to consider the effects of a significant and widespread ideology of the time, namely peasantism.

Peasantism has, with a few exceptions, been neglected by the historians of Republican Turkey, in favor of a standard view of Kemalism (the eminent official ideology) as a progressive "modernization" program of which industrialization is an integral part. However, the historical experience and intellectual atmosphere of the 1930s and after should make us skeptical of such an interpretation. To give just one example, as late as 1936, Prime Minister Celal Bayar could speak of the lack of consensus as to whether Turkey should be predominantly an agricultural or an industrial country, a clue to the ambiguities of the time and the eclectic nature of the ruling elite's ideology.
Such ambiguities and eclecticism can clearly be observed in Turkey from the 1920s onward. As I have argued in chapter three, industrialization, interestingly enough, was not a significant part of the programs of the fourteen governments established during the 1920s.  

Dr. Reşit Galip, who was appointed to many important posts in these governments, including Minister of Education, was famous for his "peasantism," not for his support for industrialization. Likewise, Memduh Esendal, who became the general secretary of the RPP in the early 1940s, a very significant post for party indoctrination, was known as the "enemy of industry and industrialized civilization." As Şevket S. Aydın noted "... at that time, the term industrialization, though every so often pronounced, was a disbelieved and dubious term. The phrase 'the use of domestic goods' became a matter of ridicule." Although more examples could be adduced, suffice it to say that the claim that industrialization was the central plank of the official ideology is unsustainable.

In fact, a kind of conservatism, extensively colored by peasantism, was also widespread. As noted in chapter three, especially after 1932, peasantist approaches appeared everywhere in books and journals. Even those members of the elite who did not characterize themselves precisely as peasantist shared many of the peasantists' ideological traits and concerns, as can be seen in many writings of the ruling elite and the intelligentsia of the time. Although many senior RPP leaders did not consider themselves peasantists, their conservative imagination and mentality were fed by, and mingled with peasantism. Numerous articles in Ülkü, the semi-official journal of the RPP, exemplify this phenomenon.
As we have seen, the most important characteristic of the peasantist ideology was its hostile attitude towards cities and urbanization: urbanization and "urban civilization" were seen as the root causes of all current social infections. The Great Depression, for example, had started purely as an urban phenomenon, but peasants all over the world had paid its real costs. Cities meant cosmopolitanism, class struggle, unemployment, economic depressions, workers' strikes, insecurities of all kinds, diminished social control, and degeneration of all sorts. According to the peasantists, "urban civilization" rested on the exploitation of peasants, making cities and city-dwellers responsible for the current social, cultural and economic underdevelopment of rural areas.

The peasantists also stubbornly opposed the emergence of a working class in Turkey. They believed that the working class had an inherent tendency toward social upheaval and revolution, was less willing to accept the nationalism of the new state, and was prone to an unsettling "internationalism!" Peasants, on the other hand, meant small proprietorship and petty production, perceived as an antidote to all the social problems engendered by both American and Soviet style large-scale industry. While the peasantists agreed on the necessity of a national industry, they wanted the formation of industry that would favor the peasants. These intellectuals envisioned state-controlled industrial development located outside the cities, that would not dislocate the population of the countryside and forestall rural-urban migration, and would not subvert traditional relations of authority while stimulating technical change in farming.

Behind the land reform attempts, we can detect a fear of urbanization and proletarianization, two of the principal preoccupations of the peasantist ideology.
Distributing land to the peasants would prevent their urban migration and proletarianization. The peasantists wanted a Turkey, whose cities were not places of social and political unrest, as was the case in Europe and America, and in which the formation of a working class was inhibited. A land reform that distributed land to the peasants would serve as "social insurance" against all the problems envisaged.

Another important aim of a land reform related to the fear of proletarianization was the abolition of labor forms such as sharecropping in the countryside. This aim has been regarded as one of the most important goals of distributing land to the peasants. İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, who published extensively on the rural economics of Turkey but was not terribly sympathetic toward peasantism, argued that sharecropping was a backward and obsolete relation of production, since it meant cheap labor and technological backwardness. According to him, instead of investing in technology and mechanization, many farmers preferred using sharecroppers, who were easily available and less costly than machines. Moreover, sharecropping exploited the peasants. The senior RPP leaders and ideologues emphasized similar concerns. But the fact of the matter is that their interest in abolishing sharecropping and similar rural labor forms in Turkey resulted from their habit of correlating sharecropping with proletarianization. In their minds, sharecropping could well give rise to a dispossessed landless peasantry, and finally, proletarianization. In other words, their critical attitude towards sharecropping and desire to abolish it through land reform were very much related to the ideology of peasantism.
A related fear was that of communism. A land reform, by preventing the infrastructure of proletarianization, would at the same time forestall the development of socialist and communist ideas in Turkey. Moreover, it would lead to the formation of a peasant class of small and middle proprietors, whose conservatism would constitute an antidote to communism. This aspect of the land reform complies with one of the characteristics of the peasantist ideology, that is, the glorification of the peasant class for their innate conservatism. The conservatism of the peasants, according to the peasantists, was the "social insurance" against all sorts of current or potential social afflictions and calamities. The peasants, then, were to form the social and political mass base of the conservatism of the single-party regime. Support for this interpretation can be found in many speeches and writings of RPP leaders such as the General Secretary of the party, Recep Peker. According to a former Deputy Minister and historian, M. Goloğlu, Peker was the person, who most accurately understood the "real context of the land reform discussions in the Grand National Assembly." In the controversy over land distribution in 1945, Peker said that "if the farmers are not given land, the poisonous effects" of ideologies from many different sources after the war would inflame the entire society and damage the social fabric and national unity.

One should not be surprised to observe this linkage of a land reform and the prevention of "dangerous" ideologies, as advocated by many leaders of the RPP and its intellectuals during the single-party era, since such a theoretical and political position remained alive until recently in Turkey. Reşat Aktan, an academician, who studied land reform-related issues in the 1960s and afterward, supported the idea that "a society
composed of independent farmer communities will create a stable society that is resistant to harmful and dangerous ideologies. In this respect a land reform is the best antidote to communism. Such ideas were endorsed even after the military coup of 1980.

In short, it is erroneous to argue that the motives behind the land reform attempts in Turkey represented an inherently radical or left-wing impulse to modernization. The validity of this argument can be better understood if we remember that the USA advocated land reform in developing countries after World War II. Many US government experts during the Cold War suggested that land reforms were the best and most effective preventive against the guerrilla and socialist movements in the so-called "Third World." Despite such intentions and expectations, both in Turkey and the US, people, who advocated land reform, have often been mistakenly accused of being socialistic.

5.2.3. Land Reform and the Consolidation of the Political Regime

Another motive of the land reform attempts was to gain support for the political regime. In Turkey, according to peasantist assumptions, the "masses" meant the peasants, not only as the majority of the population but as the embodiment of the purest and best features of the Turkish nation. Although glorified as the "masters of the nation," the peasants were usually acknowledged as people indifferent to nationalist ideology. For this reason, one of the most important tasks of the peasantists was to "revive" nationalist feelings and ideas among the peasants and, by so doing, recruit them for the political regime of the time. This task, however, was not easy to accomplish, since in all
revolutions, as Aydemir points out, the peasants were the "last and most reluctant to accept revolutionary changes." Likewise, Ahmet H. Başar, who happened to be in Kemal Atatürk's entourage in his nationwide tour to understand the state of the country after 1930, notes that "the first thing he saw in villages was that the Turkish Revolution did not reach the countryside at all." In such historical circumstances, it might be hoped that a land reform could tie the fate of the small and middle peasants to the fate of Kemalism. Indeed, the Kemalist regime desperately needed to broaden its base, as it learned from the success in 1930 of the opposition Free Party, which found a startling degree of support, although it was permitted to exist for only a short time. In such an historical context, the development of the ideas of both peasantism and land reform should also be seen as attempts to broaden the mass base of the political regime.

Nowhere was securing support for the regime and the nationalist ideology so urgent and vital as in the eastern and southeastern regions of the country. Perhaps the overriding motive for a land reform in the early 1930s was the desire to solve the Kurdish issue, as a means to Turkify a large part of the Kurdish population in the southeast. The relation between land reform and the Kurdish issue is put forth cogently in Kadro, one of the most original journals of the time. Notwithstanding the overall differences of opinion between Kadro and the ruling elite, it is fair to say that the latter held the same views on this issue.

According to Kadro and others, the Kurdish issue, one of the "most difficult unsolved issues of the single-party regime," was in essence a question of class rather than ethnicity, with roots in the feudal relations of production that prevailed in the...
Appropriating land from the feudal landlords and distributing it to the peasants would dissolve these feudal relations of production, thereby wiping out the economic and social bases of Kurdish nationalism.

In 1933 İsmail H. Tökin, who wrote *Kadro's* influential articles on rural issues, clearly expressed the necessity of dissolving the power of Kurdish landowners through a land reform that would ultimately contribute to the solution of the Kurdish issue:

For maintaining the unity of the nation, it is especially necessary to end feudalism in the eastern region, and to give land to the peasants without compensation. Especially in the Kurdish-speaking lands, the social strata, which stand as the source of reactionary political currents and non-national movements, consist mainly of the landowners, who possess not only the peasants, but vast lands as well. Giving land directly to the peasants means the liquidation of a reactionary social class, and the end of the Kurdish issue altogether, which will be made possible with the liquidation of this social class.

Likewise, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir saw a direct relation between land issues and the Kurdish question during the single-party era:

The struggle for Kurdification and Turkification, one of the most fundamental issues of eastern Turkey, somehow continued. Wherever small land ownership emerged, the people there wanted to rely on the government, and in such places settled administration and schooling, and therefore Turkish, took root. Wherever the *aghas* and Sheikhs predominated, the land and villages there passed to the control of the *aghas*, and administration and schooling were withdrawn from those places, and in those regions Kurdish turned out to be the native language of the people.

Although solving the Kurdish issue remained one of the most critical goals of a land reform, this topic has not been covered as adequately as it deserves to be by historians. One reason for this might be that issues related to Kurds have been a taboo, at least until recently, for political reasons. Another reason is that scholars interested in land reform
have been more occupied with the economic rationale of the land reform than with its social and political motives.

However, the Kurdish issue certainly figured significantly in the land reform attempts of the single-party regime. As a matter of fact, whenever Turkish governments have aimed to do something for the "east and southeast," the issue of land reform has immediately come to the forefront, in 1997 as in 1937.\textsuperscript{107} Even in the summer of 1997, discussions on land reform appeared in the Turkish press with regard to the Kurdish issue, and politicians and statesmen, such as current Vice Premier Bülent Ecevit, argued that the problems of this "extraordinary region," that is, the southeast, could be solved by land reform.\textsuperscript{108}

Whether a land reform would be a panacea for solving the problems of this region, or to what extent it would, is open to speculation, and is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Our goal here is to uncover the relationship between land reform and the Kurdish issue that prevailed in the minds of the ruling elites of the time. Unfortunately, the "Kurdish dimension" of the land reform attempts in Turkey has been, by and large, disregarded in academia up until the present.

5.3. Conclusion

In Turkey, the goals of and intentions for land reform were less radical than conservative: attaching peasants to their villages, broadening the size of the propertied peasant class, and thereby, recruiting them to the regime, forestalling leftist or radical
movements, and securing the privileged position of the political elite in a static, undifferentiated society made up the primary rationale of land reform attempts in early Republican Turkey.

The notion of Farmer Homesteads reflects the elite's expectations in promoting land reform: to limit mobility in the countryside and immigration to the cities. The "Homesteads" could be used to create a conservative social fabric in the Turkish countryside. Although the concept of Farmer Homesteads was withdrawn from the law in 1945, it still serves as a good indicator of the mentality of the ruling elite of the time, and its motives for land reform.

Since the idea of land reform in Turkey was not radical, but conservative, one should not be surprised at the similarities of the Turkish experience with many conservative peasantist programs of the interwar period. A case in point is the conservative rural policies of Nazi Germany. As a matter of fact, it has been suggested that the discourse and practices of the Nazis towards the peasantry were similar to those of the Turkish single-party regime. One can easily find resemblances between the Nazi Erbfhof Law of September 1933 and Farmer Homesteads. According to the Erbfhof law, farms had to be kept to an optimum size, and the indivisibility of land had to be assured. The law forbade the selling, buying or mortgaging of Erbfhof lands. The overriding idea was the indivisibility of land, and inheritance laws were designed to accomplish this by male primogeniture. Through this law, at least a segment of the rural population could secure a perpetual and adequate income. Obviously, the Farmer Homesteads and Erbfhof resembled each other so strongly that one might agree with Menderes's and
Berkes's assertion that the idea of the "Farmer Homesteads" was copied from Germany. Aydemir's remark that the Minister of Agriculture, who drafted the LPLF, was too much influenced by his education in Germany seems to be revealing in this respect.

According to Barkan, however, the notion of Farmer Homesteads was not a German imitation as similar institutions already existed in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the Ottoman çift-hane system, recently analyzed by Halil İnalcık, the doyen of Ottoman studies, in my opinion, is reminiscent of Farmer Homesteads, consisting of small independent peasant households as the basis of agricultural production, and the most important form of agricultural unit in the Empire.

More interesting than the question of whether Farmer Homesteads were a German imitation or rooted in the Ottoman land tenure system, however, is the existence of similar peasantist attitudes in the two countries. The Nazis, at least at the discursive level, gave special importance to the glorification of peasants. Hitler saw the peasants as the "best defence against the social diseases that afflict us." Similarly, official National Socialist Party documents characterized the peasants as "the cornerstone of the German state," "the strongest custodians and bearers of the healthy physical and spiritual inheritance of our people," "most faithful sons," and the like. As in Turkey, a hostile attitude towards urbanization and industrialization was inherent in German peasantism. According to a poster in a Nazi election campaign, German farmers faced two dangers: "One... is the American economic system - Big capitalism!" and the other was the "Marxist system of Bolshevism," which "annihilates the self-sufficient farmer economically." The similarities, however, should not obscure the differences. For
instance, the peasantist leanings in the Nazi Party derived mainly from the racist *Blut und Boden* ideology, whereas in the Turkish case, racism did not play much of a role in the formation of peasantism, though some racist Turkish peasantists existed.\textsuperscript{122}

In retrospect, it is ironic that the land reform attempts of the single-party era were advocated in the name of progressivism and radicalism. The radicalism of the LPLF, if any, was contained in Article 17, which was added at the last minute and opened the way for sharecroppers and agricultural wage laborers to possess the lands they worked. However, as we have pointed out several times in this chapter, whenever the RPP leaders talked about distributing land, they never forgot to emphasize that private ownership would be protected.\textsuperscript{123} Their aims were no doubt limited to distributing only the state-owned lands. The sudden introduction of Article 17 should be seen as a political maneuver, since the original ideas that circulated during the 1930s had hardly anything to do with radicalism. We should remember once again that the original name of LPLF was "Law for the Distribution of Land and for the Establishment of Farmer Homesteads." In other words, the conservative concerns embodied in the notion of Farmer Homesteads determined the essence of the land reform attempts from the mid-1930s through 1945, while the daily political developments in the aftermath of World War II somewhat changed the original idea of land reform. Barkan, who was an acute observer of land issues in Turkey and an ardent advocate of distributing land to the peasants, argued after the withdrawal of the clauses related to Farmer Homesteads that the idea of land reform altogether lost its original, useful meaning.\textsuperscript{124} Barkan and many others were interested primarily in increasing the power of the state.\textsuperscript{125} According to Barkan, the Farmer
Homesteads, which in fact existed in his highly idealized Ottoman land tenure system, provided the ways in which the tax base of the state could be strengthened. Through a land reform, Barkan's "omnipresent and omnipotent state" could eventually gain political and social benefits.

In this chapter, we have emphasized the political and ideological background and motives of the land reform attempts of the single-party era. I underlined the significance of the ideological background, which in my opinion corresponded to a top-down conservatism inspired by peasantism. Understanding such an ideological background is particularly important since earlier explanations have focused more on the LPLF itself and the political conjuncture of 1945. Because the idea of land reform emerged as early as the mid-1930s, was frozen, but not given up during World War II, and came to the forefront immediately after the war, it was necessary to grasp the idea of land reform first in isolation from the political maneuvers of the post-war era, and this was the approach we pursued in this chapter. Yet, for the complete picture, we should conclude by commenting on some of the dynamics of the year 1945 to understand the final phase of the era in question.

When the world the Turkish ruling elite had envisioned and cultivated diverged from post-war social and political realities, the context of the LPLF changed accordingly. The Turkish ruling elite, even just after the war, continued to envision an undifferentiated and easily controlled country. In their imagination, Turkey should continue to be a place where urbanization did not bring about social problems as in the West; where industrial development occurred gradually under the strict control of the state; where the social
consequences of industrialization were avoided; where small and middle farming, rather than mechanized American-style big farms, prevailed; and, last but not least, where the privileged status of the political elite would be sustained. However, the external and domestic realities of the time, which made it difficult if not impossible to continue a single-party regime, signaled a quite different world.

Amidst the attempts to introduce a multi-party regime in 1945, some opposition deputies, with a vested interest in large landowning, opposed the land reform proposal that included the Farmer Homesteads. As a response to them, President İnönü and his close friends immediately added Article 17, believing that the new opposition leaders could be discredited easily since people could see their vested interests in blocking land reform. İnönü’s intentions perhaps had little to do with improving the conditions of small and landless peasants, for despite the claims about Article 17, the article itself posed many technical obstacles to land distribution.130 What was at stake, as Berkes also pointed out, was to scare the new opposition rather than to distribute private lands.131 Evidently, İnönü’s agenda was quite pragmatic based on the necessities of the day. With this law, he wanted to accomplish several goals: on the one hand, he wanted to improve his party’s relations with the small and middle peasantry. As Sevket Pamuk has incontestably demonstrated, during World War II the economic conditions of the small and middle peasantry deteriorated to a great extent due to the state agricultural policies of the war years.132 With a showy land distribution, the relations between the rural masses and the RPP could be ameliorated. On the other hand, İnönü and his associates used the issue of land reform as a lever to disseminate the illusion that only big landowners were
responsible for the deteriorating conditions of the small and middle peasants. To put it boldly, instead of the state policies of so many years, big landowners were made the only scapegoats of the deteriorating conditions of the peasantry. Furthermore, it is likely that İnönü also used the land reform debates as a test of the power of the emerging opposition. Unfortunately for him, his tactics backfired, and the opposition remained powerful and decisive. From then on, the opposition directed İnönü's weapon against him, greatly troubling him and his entourage in the Party. It is apparently for this reason that İnönü quickly complied with the big landowners' wishes by choosing a former opposition figure and a big landowner as his Minister of Agriculture, responsible for the land reform.

Since the idea and practice of land reform in Turkey came from above, existed primarily within the constraints of the necessities of the state, and failed to accomplish even its restricted goals, the benefits enjoyed by the peasantry remained quite limited. This was partly because in Turkey there was no organized peasant movement in which peasants participated actively for their own interests. The Turkish top-down situation was in contrast with the post-World War I experiences of eastern Europe and the Balkans, particularly Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia, where the "revolt of the masses," equipped with their own political parties, produced pressure for land reforms. Unlike in Turkey, land reform in these countries marked a radical democratic turning point in their histories, since land issues were the vehicle by means of which the masses entered increasingly into national politics. Moreover, the inevitable confrontations with big landowners in these countries, to a large extent, swept away those
landowners as a social class.\textsuperscript{135} In Turkey, however, despite the distribution of some state lands, nothing of such historic significance—such as dissolving "backward" agricultural relations or reducing severe inequities—came from the land reform. Perhaps for this reason, in Turkey, time and again, discussions on land reform have emerged in different conjunctures from the 1930s to the present day.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 5


3 Niyazi Berkes, Unutulan Yıllar (İstanbul: İletişim, 1997), pp. 245-246.


7 Keyder and Pamuk, "Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu...," p. 62.

8 Ibid., p. 61.

9 Ibid., p. 55.

10 For a speculative approach of this kind see Faruk Birtek and Çağlar Keyder, "Türkiye'de Devlet-Tanım İlişkileri, 1923-1950," Birikim, no. 22 (1976), pp. 31-40.

11 Ömer Celâl Sarç, "Toprak Meselelerimiz," İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası 4 (June 1944), p. 293.


14 An exceptional case in point is Yusuf Akçura. This outstanding Turkish intellectual, who represented quite different viewpoints on other issues as well, already in the early 1900s advocated a land reform, and often took into account the significance of the peasantry. See Halîl Berktay, "The Search for the Peasant in Western and Turkish History/Historiography," in Journal of Peasant Studies 18 (Special Issue on New


18 Avcioğlu, Türkiye'nin Düzeni, p. 234.

19 Tezel, Cumhuriyet Döneminin..., p. 323.

20 Barkan, "Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'," pp. 454, 478; Tezel, Cumhuriyet Döneminin..., pp. 322-23.


23 İnönü, cited in Avcioğlu, Türkiye'nin Düzeni, p. 232.


26 Regarding this speech, M. Fuad Köprüülü, in an editorial in Ülkü, pointed out that everybody knew that the development of the country relied on the development of the villages, but no one was sure how and in what ways this could be accomplished. He further noted that Atatürk, as usual, had shown the way so that everybody understood that this development depended on the question of land. M. Fuad Köprüülü, "Toprak Meselesi," Ülkü 10, 58 (December 1937), p. 289.

27 1 dönüm = 940 square meter.

28 Barkan, "Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'," p. 469.

29 Tezel, Cumhuriyet Döneminin..., p. 327; Barkan, "Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'," pp. 468, 491.
This aspect of the law is important: Keyder's and Pamuk's emphasis on draft animals rather than land becomes more difficult to sustain since the law, at least theoretically, also aimed to furnish the peasants with draft animals and credit. See Keyder and Pamuk, "Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu...," p. 61.

Barkan, "Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'....," p. 459.

Ibid., p. 460.

Ibid., p. 462.

For the story of Article 17, see Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, "Eski bir Toprak Reformunun Hikâyesi," Cumhuriyet, 29 November 1971.

Tezel, Cumhuriyet Döneminin..., p. 329.


Keyder and Pamuk, "Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'....," p. 54. Cavit Oral became the representative of big landowners for decades to come in Turkey. He was also the chairperson of the committee on land reform in the Grand National Assembly in the 1960s. He himself characterized the LPLF as a law that failed to accomplish anything significant. See Cavit Oral, Toprak Reformu Hakkında Cavit Oral'ın Konuşması (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1965), pp. 13-14.

Tezel, Cumhuriyet Döneminin..., p. 330.


Mitrany, Marx Against the Peasant, pp. 116-117; See also H. Hessel Tiltman, Peasant Europe (London: Jarrolds, 1936), p. 22.

Tôkin clearly states this point: "If a land reform is accomplished in our country, its end result will again be a social polarization under the impact of social differentiation and diversification, which are the tendencies and laws of the system of market economy. Lands given to the peasants will be centralized again in the hands of some farmers and city dwellers because of factors such as debt and price setbacks. For this reason, land
reforms are, in fact, far from being an absolute measure to solve land issues." Ismail Hüsrev Tökin, *Türkiye Koy İktisadiyatı: Bir Milli İktisat Tetkiki* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1990; first published 1934), p. 201. For a similar pessimistic expectation from land reform see Ahmet Hamdi Başar, *Atatürk’le Üç Ay ve 1930’dan Sonra Türkiye* (İstanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1945), p. 116.

45 According to Feroz Ahmad, for instance, it was not the scarcity of land, but labor that remained the primary problem in rural Turkey. See Ahmad, "The Political Economy of Kemalism," p. 153.


48 Ibid., p. 105. This, however, is absolutely wrong. İsmail H. Tökin, who devoted much of his time to rural issues in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s, cogently showed that sharecropping was rampant in Anatolia. See, for example, İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, "Koy İktisadiyatında Teknik Inkişaf," *Kadro* 2 (February 1932), p. 20; İsmail Hüsrev (Tökin), "Türk Kôylüsü Bir Toprak Reformu Bekliyor," *Kadro* 21 (September 1933), p. 24; İsmail Hüsrev, "Türk Kôylüsünü Topraklandırınalı. Fakat Nasıl?" *Kadro* 23, (October 1933), p. 37. See also Sarç, "Toprak Meselelerimiz," p. 300.


50 Ibid., p. 108. Gerber bases his analyses mostly on secondary village monographs on individual villages. In the absence of reliable statistical data, they are useful sources. But, one should be careful not to over-generalize from particular villages. The same kind of sources may reveal opposite tendencies. For instance, some village monographs that appeared in *Ülkü* contradict Gerber's results. Many villagers had huge debts to city merchants, and many had to go to towns and cities for work at least from time to time. Moreover, there is no question that poverty was rampant in Anatolia. If egalitarianism existed in rural Turkey, it was an egalitarianism of poverty. See for instance Ömer Türkmen, "Trabzon Köyleri," *Ülkü* 4, 20 (October 1934), p. 159; A. Süreyya İşgör, "Giresun Zihar Köyü," *Ülkü* 8, 48 (February 1937), p. 451. For news items concerning poverty and landlessness in major newspapers of the time, see Kivilcimli, *YoL*, pp. 115-314.


52 *Hakimiyet Miliyi*, 15 June 1934, cited in Muzaffer Erdost, "Toprak Reformunun Ülkemiz'in Toplumsal, Ekonomik ve Siyasal Yapısına Yerı," TMMOB Harita ve Kadastro Mühendisleri Odası, *Toprak Reformu Kongresi* (1978), (Ankara: İlkyaz Basımevi, 1978), pp. 216-17. Two years later, in a review of a book on the contemporary conditions of the peasantry, Ömer Lütfi Barkan quotes this speech and says: "Five million landless peasants! It is an amazing figure to believe even though it was mentioned in the National Assembly by a Minister. And this goes much beyond the figures of Mr. Hamid Sadi's estimates. Because, according to the 1927 census, 67.7 percent of the whole..."
population, namely 9,216,918 people, work in agriculture." Ömer Barkan, "Ziraat ve 

"Anayasamızdaki Değişiklik," Editorial Column, Ülkâ 9, 49 (March 1937), p. 57. A 
contemporary observer in 1930 also notes the widespread phenomenon of landlessness in 
rural Turkey. See Başar, Atatürk'le Üç Ay..., p. 114.

P. M. Zhukovsky, Zemledelcheskaia Turtsiia. Aziatskaia Chast-Anatoliia, (Agricultural 
Turkey. Asiatic Part -Anatolia), (Moscow: Gop. Izd-vo Kolkhoznii i Sovkhoznoi 
Literatury, 1933), pp. 313-34.

Tökin, Türkiye Köy İktisadiyati..., p. 151.

Barkan, "'Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'...," p. 480.

I dekar = 1000 square meters.

1950 Ziraat Sayımı Neticeleri (Ankara: İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü, 1965), Yayın No: 
371, p. 124.

Tezel, Cumhuriyet Döneminin..., p. 311.

Ibid., pp. 293-95.


See Mitrany, Marx Against the Peasant, p. 106; Barkan, "Balkan Memleketlerinin 
Ziraat...," pp. 442, 446.

Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "Harp Sonu Tarımsal Reform Hareketleri," in Türkiye'de Toprak 
Meselesi, Toplu Eserler I (İstanbul: Gözlem, 1980), p. 24. Originally published in 

According to Barkan, the Russian Revolution of 1917 generated fears in eastern and 
southeastern Europe that convinced many governments of the need for land reform of one 
kind or another. See Barkan, "Balkan Memleketlerinin Ziraat...," p. 428.

Barkan, "'Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'...," p. 452. Similar trends are visible in 
eastern Europe. As an observer of eastern European peasantry in the early 1930s noted, 
"It may be stated without exaggeration that, in regions where 'land hunger' had always 
been present, these reforms averted peasant revolts such as marked the overthrow of 
despotism and eventual triumph of Bolshevism in Russia." Tiltman, Peasant Europe, p. 
21.

Exceptions include Zafer Toprak, "Popülizm ve Türkiye'deki Boyutları," in Tarih ve 
Demokrasi, Tarih Zafer Tunava'ya Armağan (İstanbul: İstanbul Öğretim Üyeleri Derneği, 
1992); Yalçın Küçük, Aydın Üzerine Tezler III, 1830-1980 (Ankara: Tekin, 1985), and 
Füsun Üstel, "Tek Parti Döneminde Köyçülük İdeolojisi ya da Nusret Kemal Köymen," 
Tarih ve Toplum 74 (February 1990), pp. 47-51.


Fur Reçit Galip's peasantist ideas and activities see Ahmet Şevket Elman, Dr. Reşit Galip (Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1953), pp. 47-63.


Ibid., p. 453.

That their ideology was called "peasantist," and advocated "going to the villages" should not lead us to believe that they were not elitists. Few Turkish peasantists intended to transform the villages as the Russian Narodniks of the late nineteenth century aspired to. They were the bureaucrats and elites of a political regime in which the peasant was glorified as the "real master" of the nation, even while peasants were not allowed to enter Ankara at certain times of the day. For an example of the latter attitude see Berkes, Unutulan Yıllar, p. 88; Mehmet Doğan, Tarih ve Toplum: Türkiye'de Toprak Meselesi (Ankara: Rehber, 1989), p. 242.


Ibid., p. 147.

"At the time, there was a fear in Ankara of anything that was characterized as "international." Even religion was criticized on the grounds that it implied a "non-national, "international" system." Aydemir, Suyu Arayan Adam, pp. 421-22. The influential General Secretary of the RPP, Recep Peker, had the same mentality as the peasantists in this respect. According to Peker, "The peasants are nationalists; they see their interests connected to the interests of the nation. For this reason, the peasants have refused the workers' invitation in the name of proletarian unity." Recep Peker, "İnkılap Dersleri," Toplum ve Bilim 18, İnkılap Ders Notları Özel Sayısı (Summer 1983), p. 37.

See Yunus Nadi, editorial, Cumhuriyet, 12 May 1935; Aptullah Ziya, "Köy Mimarisi," Ülkü 2, 7 (August 1933), p. 38. One of the characteristics that Ülkü announced as a criterion for publication was that articles had to show the dangers of immigration to the cities. "Ülkü'nün Yazı Bölümleri," no author given, Ülkü 3, 13 (March 1934), p. 79.


82 İnonü, cited in Avcioglu, Türkiye'nin Düzeni, p. 234.

83 On the thinking of Minister of Agriculture, Hatiboğu, and Prime Minister Saracoğlu on the issue see Erdost, "Toprak Reformunun Ülkemizin...," pp. 218-220.

84 Interestingly, during the single-party era, small and middle proprietorship was not only desired in agriculture, but in industrial production as well. For an acute description of this phenomenon see Aydemir, Siyu Arayan Adam, p. 454.


86 For a recent theoretical article suggesting the inherently conservative character of the early Republican period, see Tanül Bora, "Muhafazakarlığın Değişimi ve Türk Muhafazakarlığında Bazı Yol İzleri," Toplum ve Bilim 74 (Fall 1997), p. 16.


88 Goloğlu, Demokrasiye Geçiş, p. 31.

89 Peker cited in Tezel, Cumhuriyet Döneminin..., p. 339; Goloğlu, Demokrasiye Geçiş, p. 31.


91 Pamak, Türkiye'de Toprak Tarım Reformu ve Köy Kalkınması, p. 31. Pamak was a member of the Advisory Assembly established by the military regime.

92 Of special interest is the American academic Roy L. Prosterman, who argued that the most serious revolutions of the twentieth century occurred in countries where peasant discontent emerged. Prosterman prepared land reform programs for the US and other governments to be implemented in the "Third World," including the Philippines, El Salvador and South Vietnam. In 1993, he was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his studies and activities in land reform, he was nominated to the Nobel Peace Prize. For some of Prosterman's important works on land reform see Roy L. Prosterman and Jeffrey Riedinger, Land Reform and Democratic Development (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), and Roy L. Prosterman, Mary N. Temple, and M. Hanstad Timothy, Agrarian Reform and Grassroots Development: Ten Case Studies (Boulder: Lynne Rinner Publishers, 1990).


According to the peasantist rhetoric, Kurdish and Arabic-speaking peasants were regarded as "Turkish" people who happened to forget to speak Turkish. For an example, see Danis R. Korok, *Cumhuriyette Köye ve Köyçiliğe Doğru, Millî ve İctimai Tetkikler* (İstanbul: Türk Neşriyat Yurdu, 1951), first edition 1943, p. 23.


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Şevket S. Aydemir maintained similar views even in the 1970s, claiming that the Kurdish issue could be solved by land reform in this region. See Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, "Bir Sahipsizliğin Hikâyesi," Cumhuriyet, 19 April 1971.

Tökin, İsmail Hüsrev, "Türk Köylüsünü Topraklandırmalı," p. 35.


D. E. Webster, who served as the cultural attaché of the US in the mid-1930s, also observed the relationship between Kurdish rebellions and agricultural reform: "In the spring of 1937 it was necessary to subdue another rebellion in the Kurdish region, this time in Tunceli, south of Elaziz. When the first news of it was published (June 15, 1937), it appears that the revolt had been in progress for two months or more but was then under control. The Government announced that it would increase its application of reform measures, including modernization of agriculture and promotion of education, in the recalcitrant region." Donald E. Webster, The Turkey of Atatürk: Social Process in the Turkish Reformation (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1939), pp. 111-112.

Ecevit was harshly criticized by a deputy minister from the region on the grounds that Ecevit's appraisals were based on the assumption that the region were still the same as it was 30 years ago. See "Ecevit'e, Harranlı Bakandan Toprak Reformu Tepkisi," Sabah, 28 August 1997.

The critiques by the opposition of the "Farmer Homesteads" included the following: First, its intonation in inheritance was seen as against Turkish customs. Second, the complementary measures to implement such an institution as alternative credit facilities were absent. Third, the lack of cadastral surveys of Turkey made any implementation very difficult. For these reasons, the government favored the withdrawal of "Farmer Homesteads" from the land reform proposal. For a detailed discussion on the issue, see Barkan, "Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'...," p. 469.

See footnote 6.


According to Barkan, the notion of "Farmer Homesteads" was in no way a German imitation. In his opinion, such institutions already existed in the Ottoman Empire. Barkan, "Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'...," p. 507.


See Barkan, "Çiftçi Topraklandırma Kanunu'...," p. 507.
See Halil İnalcık, "The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300-1600," in An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914, edited by H. İnalcık and D. Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 143.

In an obituary for Kemal Atatürk, the Nazi newspaper Völkischer Beobachter wrote the following: "Both in Turkey and Germany, a strong peasantism is the everlasting force of the national power. The two countries have the same political goals." This is cited in "Atatürk Hakkında Dünya Neşriyatı," Ülkü 12, 79 (December 1938), p. 354. A similar quotation can be found in Kadro: "German Chancellor Hitler said the following to Siirt Deputy Minister Mahmut Bey: 'As life and order in Turkey were based on the peasants, ... we also pursue the same path. The policies that will assure the development of the peasants make up the most vital issues of the new regime.'" Hitler, cited in Tahir Hanrückin, "İnkılâp ve Köy," Kadro 20, (August 1933), p. 29. For a comprehensive account of the Nazi influence on Turkey from 1938 through 1945, see Cemil Koçak, Türkiye’dede Millî Şef Dönemi, 1938-1945 (Ankara: Yurt Yayınlari, 1986).

The following three official sources are important in understanding the Nazis' attitude toward the peasantry: R. Walter Darré, Das Bauernkam als Lebensquelle der Nordischen Rasse (Munich: Lehmann Verlag, 1929); Adolf Hitler, "Parteiämliche Kundgebung über die Stellung der NSDAP zum Landvolk und zur Landwirtschaft," Völkischer Beobachter, 6 March 1930; and R. W. Darré, "Landstand und Staat," Völkischer Beobachter, 19-21 April 1931. For the peasantism of the Nazis, see especially Anna Bramwell, Blood and Soil: Walter Darré and Hitler's Green Party (Buckinghamshire: Kensal, 1985).


Hitler, cited in Ibid., p. 28.

Cited in Michael E. Zimmerman, Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity, Technology, Politics, and Art (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 42. Peasantism in Germany also had to do with the famous "Third Way" approach, which became an integral part of many fascistic movements during the interwar period.

For the peasantism of two prominent racists, Nihal Atsiz and Fethi Tevetoğlu, see Toprak, "Popülizm ve Türkiye’deki Boyutları."

Even Barkan, who was an ardent supporter of distributing land to the peasants, often wrote that nobody should be hurt from land reform, see Ömer Barkan, "Kitaplar ve Mecmualar," Ülkü 11, 61 (March 1938), p. 84. For a similar argument see also Doğan, Tarih ve Toplum..., p. 307.

Barkan, "'Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu'..." p. 489.

As Barkan's seminal and preeminent role in the formation of a "statist" historiography from the 1930s onwards is taken into account, obviously his ideas show more than personal views of an historian. As Berktay cogently illustrates, his views reflected the dominant tendencies of the ruling elite of the time. See Berktay, "The Search for the Peasant...," pp. 149-56.

Barkan, "Balkan Memleketlerinin Ziraatı...," p. 405.
Barkan, "'Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu'...," p. 508. Halil Berktay interestingly points out that for many Turkish historians, such as Halil İnalcık and Barkan, "the peasant existed purely in terms of his obligations towards the state, that is, as tax-payer only." See Berktay, "The Search for the Peasant...," p. 158.

As a matter of fact, empirical analyses show that in most parts of the world that underwent land reforms after World War II, it was states rather than poor peasants who actually benefitted from the outcomes of land reforms. John Powelson convincingly argued that by regulating farming bureaucratically, and monopolizing credit and agricultural marketing, and without transferring full title to the beneficiaries, most states engineered land reforms to expand their financial and political control. In these state-sponsored land reforms, to use his own term, the peasants were "betrayed." See John P. Powelson and Richard Stock, The Peasant Betrayed: Agriculture and Land Reform in the Third World (Boston: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, 1987), pp. 3-9, and John P. Powelson, The Story of Land. A World History of Land Tenure and Agrarian Reform (Cambridge, MA: The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1988), pp. 311-312. For a similar phenomenon with regard to land reform in Iran, see Carter V. Findley and John A. M. Rothney, Twentieth-Century World, 2nd edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990), pp. 447-48.

Barkan, "'Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu'...," p. 458; Avcioglu, Türkiye'nin Düzeni, p. 233; Tezel, Cumhuriyet Döneminin..., p. 326.


Berkes, Unutulan Yillar, p. 247. For a similar comment, see Keyder and Pamuk, "Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu...," p. 62.


"The policies adopted in the summer of 1942 and continued until the end of the war distributed the burdens and opportunities of wartime conditions unevenly. Small and middle peasants producing cereals witnessed a sharp decrease in their consumption and real income levels during these years, while large landowners took advantage of the rapidly rising cereal prices in the marketplace." Ibid., p. 136.


"Though achieved without bloodshed the land reforms which followed the First World War amounted even outside Russia to a social revolution. They were indeed a three-fold revolution--social, economic and political. They did not merely redistribute property, they abolished the class of large landowners altogether....The change in the division of the land also brought with it considerable changes in the use of the land, as the eastern peasants preferred a system of mixed farming for their own subsistence to raising staple crops for marketing. All that implied at the same time a political revolution: land being
the chief source of wealth and power in the eastern countries the loss of one shook the hold of the upper class on the other, and opened the way for organized peasant influence." Mitrany, *Marx Against the Peasant*, p. 107.
CHAPTER 6
THE PEASANTS IN EARLY TURKISH LITERATURE

Any inquiry into the intellectual history of peasantism in Turkey requires taking into account peasantist leanings in Turkish literature. The main reason for this is that literature used to play a more significant role in Turkish intellectual life than it does in many other countries. For one thing, the omnipresent and restrictive censorship during the single-party era made it difficult to support and spread ideological positions through any medium other than literary works. The widespread perception among the intellectuals was that it was safer to express oppositional thoughts via literary works. Besides, the Turkish intelligentsia, like their nineteenth-century Russian counterparts, loved using literature as a way of expressing, defending and spreading their own ideological and historical views. This tendency was complemented by the availability of readers who enjoyed picking up political and historiographical standpoints from literary works, especially from novels.

Many novels and short stories from the era we are investigating offer rich opportunities for analyzing elite perceptions of the peasantry and village life. Many outstanding Turkish literary figures wrote on these issues and helped create a body of literary works that reflected their own worldviews rather than the actual conditions in the Turkish countryside. Especially important among these writers from our period were
Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Sabahattin Ali, and Memduh Şevket Esenyal. They were not, however, simply complying with peasantist ideology, nor were they directly inspired by it. Moreover, each of the authors mentioned above, whom we will examine in detail below, represented different agendas, concerns and perspectives on the same issues. In this chapter, I shall focus on these three important and representative figures, compare and contrast their approaches and, by so doing, attempt to broaden our knowledge of the elite perceptions of the peasantry in the single-party era.

The first literary work which focused on village themes and chose villagers and village life as its topic goes back to the early 1890s of the late Ottoman Empire. Nabizade Nazim's *Kara Bibik*, in fact a story of around forty pages, is the first fictional narrative which deals with the rural social problems of ignorance, poverty, landowner exploitation and usury, as well as the emotional and sexual behavior of the villagers.¹ Ebubekir Hâzim Tepeyrân's *Küçük Paşa*, published in 1910, presents the heavy tax burden of the peasants, the indifference of the officials and medical doctors towards the peasantry, the "backwardness" of Anatolia, the bad conditions of the schools and roads, the problems of the draft and the like.²

After the establishment of modern Turkey, the number of literary works increased considerably; however, it should be noted that the so-called "peasantist literature" as a genre reached its peaks not in the single-party era, but from the early 1950s onwards. Nevertheless, despite their relative weakness, the early Republican literary works paved the way for this later flourishing of the peasantist genre. In this chapter, we shall take a
look at three different intellectuals from the single-party era who represented different styles and perspectives as they related to village themes and the peasantry.

6.1. A Kemalist Outlook: Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu

Yakup Kadri's place in the development of the peasantist genre is unquestionably eminent. He is one of the most renowned Turkish literary figures of Republican Turkey. Because he was always a staunch Kemalist, his political and ideological concerns revolved around the interests of the state and bureaucracy rather than those of the people. Thus, his outlook was statist and his approach bureaucratic. This feature is best seen in his novel *Ankara*, in which he envisions a fictitious future social and political life strictly dominated by the state. In his future society, everybody works for the state; all the workers are state employees; the harmony of the society is made possible only by the state, and all good comes from the state. Interestingly, among the characters of the novel a mayor of Ankara who represents an "elected" rather than an "appointed" official becomes a target of criticism. In other words, as a representative of the bureaucratic orientation, Yakup Kadri seems intolerant when it comes to the "elected" people. It is, therefore, fair to say that Yakup Kadri's ideas and approach, by and large, reflect the dominant circles of the bureaucracy of the time. This makes it all the more important that we take into consideration his views on village themes and the peasantry. His most appropriate literary work for our goal is *Yaban* and in a moment we shall focus on it.
Yakup Kadri was born in Cairo in 1889, after which his family came to Manisa in western Turkey. He was a descendant of the well-known, aristocratic Karaosmanoğlu family who owned vast lands in western Anatolia starting in the eighteenth century. The influence of the family came not only from their economic well-being, but also from the bureaucratic posts that many family members held in the Ottoman local administration.

Yakup Kadri in his youth took part in eminent literary circles of the Ottoman Empire such as the *Edebiyat-i Cedide* (New Literature) and *Fecr-i Ati* (Dawn of the New Age). Besides, he was one of the most prominent literary figures who became extensively familiar with western literature.⁶

Yakup Kadri actively participated in the War of Independence and later became a deputy minister in the Grand National Assembly while continuing his literary works. A close friend of Kemal Atatürk, a prominent member of the ruling circles and a staunch supporter and ideologue of Kemalism,⁷ from 1932 to 1934 he was involved in publishing the famous journal *Kadro*, which aimed to theorize Kemalism; however, the journal was shut down by the government due to widespread claims that it espoused harmful interpretation of Kemalism. After having been forced to terminate his journal, Yakup Kadri was appointed to high diplomatic posts in several different countries, where he had to stay away from daily politics.⁸ After the military takeover of 1960, he was again involved in politics in the Grand National Assembly (1964-69) and continued producing literary works until the end of his life in 1974.

Yakup Kadri's novel *Yaban* (Stranger) was one of the first in Republican Turkey to focus on the villagers and the village life. (Yakup Kadri does not make any distinction
between a villager and a peasant. The first term encompasses anybody living in the villages. Peasants, however, represent mostly lower-class village people. Therefore, in the case of Yakup Kadri, it seems more appropriate to use the concept "villager.") For many historians, literary or otherwise, \textit{Yaban} marks a turning point in the development of the Turkish novel in that it was a manifesto calling for the Turkish intelligentsia to direct the attention of the nation to the villagers and village issues, remind the regime of the importance of the villagers as a social base for the new regime, and criticize the intelligentsia, who had ignored those issues. \textit{Yaban} has been considered the first original village novel; it sparked great interest among the Turkish ruling elite, and many historians believe that the interest in village issues that began in the early 1930s is partly due to the impact of this novel.\textsuperscript{9} Therefore, we need to take a close look at this novel and understand what it is that gives it such an outstanding character.

\textit{Yaban} is the story of Ahmet Celal, a World War I veteran, an intellectual, and a member of an upper-class İstanbul family who is forced to live in a small Anatolian village during the War of Independence (1918-1922) against the foreign occupation of Anatolia in the aftermath of a World War I defeat. The novel consists of the description of the village life and people through the eyes of Ahmet Celal and of his own internal psychological confrontations. There is no clear-cut, definite flow of events in the novel. In the beginning, Ahmet Celal has great expectations and hopes to unite with the people of Anatolia who, he thinks, represent the real Turkish nation. He expects respect from the villagers for his sacrifices during World War I. While he comes to the village with great hopes to develop relationships with the villagers, they consider him a "stranger." Thus
begin Ahmet Celal's frustrations with the people, the village environment, and above all, with himself, that is, with the intelligentsia. The novel consists mostly of Ahmet Celal's confrontations with the village people, especially with their ignorance about the War of Independence. Whatever he does in order to communicate with the villagers, the result turns out to be a great frustration. Eventually, he leaves the village since the foreign occupation reaches it. Ahmet Celal sets out again in order to contribute to the resistance forces.

Although *Yaban* belongs to the peasantist genre, it is by all means unique. Whereas the later genre of village literature, which dominated Turkish novels and stories after 1950, depicts the countryside and the peasants in positive terms and, usually makes a fetish of some characteristics of the countryside, *Yaban* offers quite a different depiction. The main character, Ahmet Celal, in fact, has contempt for the villagers and the social and natural environment surrounding the village. But such a depiction of the countryside in no way means that Yakup Kadri wishes the reader to ignore this bothersome reality. On the contrary, he wants to show how bad the conditions are and urge the reader to do something about it.

From Yakup Kadri's description of an Anatolian village, one gets the impression that a static material and social life constitutes the basic characteristic of villages. Villagers, according to Ahmet Celal, are pre-social creatures who live in the primitiveness of the Stone Age. The author, in this respect, does not see any significant difference between them and the villagers of thousands of years ago. These villagers are portrayed as a "people without history" since their village is basically the same as an
ancient "Hittite ruin" and the people look like "broken sculptures that were just uncovered from the soil." Likewise, the villagers, Ahmet Celal claims, are unable to sense the concepts of time and space, and a village in the middle of Anatolia is nothing but a "frozen halting place.""12

Yakup Kadri's "stranger" in this hostile, frozen, static, primitive, ugly village, not surprisingly, sees himself as a "Robinson Crusoe." His house in the village seems to him "a desolate island." He has no clue as to what the soul of a villager is, if it exists at all. "The soul of the Turkish villager" writes Yakup Kadri, "is a quiet and deep water. What lies in its depths? A steep rock or a mound of clay or a soft layer of sand? It is impossible to discover." Yakup Kadri's character is unable to understand and communicate with the villagers. He confesses that he does not know what the villagers care for and talk about. Interestingly, what Ahmet Celal does not understand is the simple but vital economic life and activities of those villagers, their struggle for survival in their simple life. To these, however, Ahmet Celal is indifferent since he is too much occupied by the current military and political debates in the country, the War of Independence and the like! Yakup Kadri's contempt for the villagers can best be summarized in his own words when he says:

To become like them, to dress like them, to eat and drink like them, to sit and stand like them, to talk in their language....Let's say I can do all these. But how can I think like them? How can I feel like them?"15

The author's attitude towards the villagers can also be observed in his characterization of village women and love. According to Ahmet Celal, village women
are inherently "despicable and treacherous." They smell terrible, lack any sort of
elegance and are not worth making love to, since, according to the author, even though
one can imagine how animals have sex, in the case of the villagers, he says, it is
impossible even to imagine.

In addition to the objective and historical backwardness of the villagers, Yakup
Kadri accuses them of being ignorant of the War of Independence. This can also be read
as an ignorance of nationalism. The only worry on the part of the villagers, so far as this
war is concerned, is their fear of being drafted into the army. In fact, there is nothing
surprising in this fact, since the Anatolian people at least from 1911 onwards spent a great
deal of their time on battlefields and were tired of them. Yakup Kadri's character could
have understood this phenomenon, but this time it is his turn to be ignorant! He is
indifferent to the villagers' conditions and becomes angry with them when the villagers
show great interest in superstitious beliefs and religious fanaticism instead of nationalistic
concerns. The villagers drive him crazy when he witnesses them honoring and fearing an
ordinary Sufi shaykh who visits the village. For our Kemalist observer, belief in such
phenomena once again proves the backwardness of the villagers. Yet, how could the
villagers who for so long defined themselves on levels other than nationalism subscribe to
this "stranger's" notion of vatan (homeland) and Turkishness? Yakup Kadri is aware of
the difficulty of winning them for the nationalist cause. In one of Celal's conversations
with a villager, the latter makes it clear that he sees himself as a Muslim and refuses to be
called a Turk. Likewise, Yakup Kadri claims that the victory over the foreign powers
will only save the lands and not the nation because the nation as such does not yet exist.
Nevertheless, the villagers, according to Yakup Kadri, were not to be blamed for their backwardness, hostility, ignorance of nationalism and the like. Interestingly, it is the intelligentsia who are held responsible for whatever shortcomings the villagers have. This is the message that makes Yaban all the more interesting and significant. Yakup Kadri's critique of the intelligentsia is a striking one:

The reason for this, Turkish intellectual, is you! What did you ever do for this devastated country and this poor mass of people? For thousands of years you sucked his blood and threw him back onto the hard soil like sediment, and now you come and find in yourself the right to loathe him. The Anatolian man had a soul you could not influence. He had a mind you could not enlighten. He had a body you could not feed. He had a land he lived on; you did not help him harvest it. You left him in the grip of animal-like feelings, ignorance, poverty and drought. Between the hard soil and the sky he blossomed like a wild grass. Now, with the sickle in your hand, you came to harvest. What did you sow so that you could harvest?...The thing that upset you is your own accomplishment, your own.23

Yaban also offers an eyewitness account of the incredible gap between the villagers and the intelligentsia of the time. Yakup Kadri confesses that even the national catastrophe that followed World War I could not unite the villagers with the nationalist intelligentsia. On the contrary, it increased the existing gap since the villagers were too ignorant and often even helped the enemies who invaded Anatolia after World War I.24 Yaban eloquently describes both this gap and the estrangement between the intelligentsia and the peasantry that was the reason for it:

As time passes I understand more clearly that the Turkish intellectual is a bizarre, lonely person in this vast and desolate country called Turkey. Is he a recluse? no; I have to say a strange creature. Imagine a person whose race and species are unknown. As he goes towards the deepest parts of the country that he considers his homeland, he feels that he is going away from his own roots....I do not know whether there exists the same deep gap in every country between the intelligentsia and the villagers! But the difference between a literate Istanbul young man and an Anatolian villager is greater than the one between a London Englishman and a Punjabi Indian.25
Yaban is not only a striking critique of the intelligentsia, though. We have to remember that Yakup Kadri was a staunch spokesman for the intelligentsia and especially for the bureaucracy. He still sees in the intelligentsia a mission for the country. That is why his novel is also a call for the Turkish intelligentsia to emancipate the villagers, to fill the gap between them, to transform the villagers into Turkish citizens, and, by so doing, to lift the level of the Young Turkish Republic.

But against how should the intelligentsia accomplish its mission? Here Yakup Kadri shares a common concern with the peasantists of the time. Like them, he believes that everything the villagers lack is in one way or another related to their unequal struggle against nature and the natural environment, not to human social relations. One can infer from reading Yaban that the main problems of the Turkish countryside consist of the backwardness of peasant production, the backward agricultural techniques, the inability to wage a war against the natural elements and the like. In a nutshell, what needed to be done for the villagers, who for ages had suffered the hardships of nature, was to dominate nature. It was in this task that the intelligentsia should help the villagers. Almost all the contemporary reviews of Yaban stress this message of dominating nature and improving agricultural techniques as one of the most important messages of the novel.

By way of concluding this discussion on the importance of Yaban, I think the following points should be stressed once again: Yaban, first and foremost, is an exposé and a confession of the devastating conditions of the villagers, who were officially exalted as the masters of the nation, and a call for the Turkish intelligentsia to go to the
villages and win their hearts and minds. The novel's message is that Turkey's
development and the future of Turkish nationalist ideology revolved around the
transformation of the Turkish countryside. The basic impediment to the accomplishment
of these aims, we are told, comes from the intelligentsia. This is because they have been
indifferent to the realities of the Turkish people, especially of the villagers. In this
respect, the novel is a harsh self-critique of the intelligentsia. As we have seen in the
previous chapters, here again we see a common characteristic of peasantism, which
blames the intelligentsia, rather than social classes, for being the root cause of all socio-
economic problems. In the eyes of Yakup Kadri, both the cause and the solution of the
problems of the Turkish countryside could be found within the intelligentsia. As we
remember, at the time the novel was published (1932), Yaban constituted one of the most
important spurs to the campaign of reaching the hearts and minds of the Anatolian
villagers. Yakup Kadri's romantic description of the Anatolian village and his use of the
intellectuals as the scapegoat for everything good and evil must have contributed
immensely to peasantist rhetoric of the period because these were notions commonly used
by the peasantists of the 1930s and 1940s.
6.2. A Socialist Outlook: Sabahattin Ali

It was not only the intellectuals of Kemalist orientation like Yakup Kadri who invoked an interest in village themes and the peasantry in literature. Not surprisingly, contemporary left-wing intellectuals also raised the importance of the villages and the peasantry as a class in the development of modern Turkey. Their concern was in part stimulated by the weak power and imperceptible representation in Turkey of the working class, who were a powerful force in west European left-wing political movements. This underrepresentation is understandable given the fact that Turkey was still a predominantly agrarian country. It was quite difficult for the left-wing intellectuals to put forth a working-class politics in a country whose principal political agent, the working class itself, at least due to objective conditions, was remarkably underdeveloped. For this reason one should not be surprised to see a great deal of concern with and interest in the peasantry in the works of Sabahattin Ali, who is a well-known socialist writer. As a matter of fact, it was he, not the peasantists of the ruling Republican People's Party, who was deeply and genuinely concerned with a realistic description of the peasantry and social relations in the countryside.

Born in 1905 in a village of western Thrace in today's Bulgaria, Sabahattin Ali was raised in a lower-class family who financially suffered a great deal during the Greek occupation of western Anatolia after World War I. He graduated from İstanbul Teacher's College in 1926 and was sent to Germany by the government from 1928 through 1930, as he proved himself a talented candidate in the exams offered by the Ministry of Education.
Upon his return to Turkey, he became a secondary-school German teacher in several Anatolian cities, such as Aydin and Konya. While he was in Konya, he was accused of writing a poem criticizing the leading political figures of the time and spent about a year in several prisons, where he found the opportunity to communicate with different people from different regions and social backgrounds. This is why many of the personalities in his works are said to be people whom the author met during his invaluable prison experience. Such encounters must have marked a turning point in his shifting toward a more realistic description and presentation of Turkey's social realities.  

After he was released from jail, he applied to the Ministry of Education once again for a job, but he was asked to prove that he had changed his political ideas. In order to show his loyalty to the regime, he published a poem called "Benim Aşkını" ("My Love") in which he praised Atatürk. After having been forced to publish such a poem, he was offered an official job, although for the rest of his life he lived as a distrusted intellectual. He was so tired of being monitored by the police and juridically threatened by the government that he felt he had to flee the country. His attempt to do so ended tragically in 1948. He was murdered at the Bulgarian border by a crooked smuggler who had ties to the police and did not spend much time in prison.  

Sabahattin Ali is known as the first realistic Turkish writer and one of the most competent writers of the early Republican era, who chose village themes for his short stories. His portrayal of the countryside and its people is marvelously detailed and his approach remarkably realistic. His language is simple yet elegant. In his novel Kuyucaklı Yusuf (Yusuf from Kuyucak) and in his short stories, Ali always refrains from
didacticism. He portrays events, circumstances and personalities through the eyes of his literary characters. Nevertheless, his works usually carry with them a flavor of social protest.

*Kuyucakli Yusuf* is probably Sabahattin Ali's best-known work that should be taken as a village novel. This novel starts in a village in western Anatolia and proceeds in Edremit, a small town along the Aegean coast. Having the reputation of being among the first novelists who took into consideration village themes, characters and problems, Sabahattin Ali in this novel chooses as his main character a village born teenager who faces tremendous difficulties in the town; the novel, among other things, embodies the psychological dilemmas of its main character, caught in between urban and rural values.

The novel starts in 1903 and ends during World War I. Because it contains so many social critiques, many commentators believe that the reason Sabahattin Ali chose this period is to escape any punishment by the Republican regime since his critiques were still valid at the time the novel was published. The main character Yusuf's parents are killed by bandits in a village, and the governor of the town adopts Yusuf as his child. So begins peasant Yusuf's life in a privileged family in the vastly different setting of Edremit. As he grows up, he has difficulty adapting to the social life of the town. Yusuf fights with the son of a local notable and the latter, relying on his family's economic and political power in the town, decides to marry Yusuf's step-sister in order to take revenge. Although Yusuf somehow manages to prevent this marriage, his problems do not end. Among the problems from which he suffers most is his deep love for his step-sister. This he is reluctant to confess even to himself. Eventually, he marries his step-sister by
kidnapping her (though this was also his sister's desire). For a while, things seem promising for Yusuf when his family accepts the marriage and he is united with the person whom he loves most in his life. But everything changes dramatically with the death of his step-father sometime during World War I. Financial problems arise. Moreover, the newly appointed governor harasses Yusuf because this corrupt person develops good relations with the rich and powerful family who want to take revenge on Yusuf. The new governor appoints Yusuf to the post of tax-collector so that he has to be away from his home and his dear wife. In Yusuf's absence, under the influence of her corrupt mother and amidst a severe financial crisis, Yusuf's wife finds it impossible to avoid going to parties day and night, and spending a great deal of time with this degenerate, once-hated rich family. She tries to compensate for her loneliness and economic breakdown by attending these rich people's parties. The novel ends with Yusuf's killing the members of the notable family, the new governor and, mistakenly, his wife. Having found no way out, Yusuf escapes to the mountains in the end.

Unlike Yakup Kadri, who depicts the villagers as people of no dignity and great primitiveness, Sabahattin Ali's villager is a man of dignity, honesty and self-esteem. Yusuf, as a villager, never gets accustomed to the values and lifestyle of the town. Many people in the town are characterized by deceit, injustice, insincerity, corruption, and economic exploitation. Yusuf is a man of virtues and feelings, though not of reason. He does not understand politics, complex bureaucratic affairs, corrupt businesses, and the like. Only in nature and the countryside does he find relief from the problems of everyday life. For Sabahattin Ali, the countryside and the village embody the natural, the
innocent, and the honest, as opposed to the superficiality, corruption, and deception of the town.

Such a depiction of village people can be seen in Ali’s short stories, too. Peasants are usually portrayed as people who must grow up as fast as possible without really enjoying their childhood, in order to handle the hardships of life. The countryside is characterized as "brutal lands" where "nothing is as easy as to die and kill."37 Despite the inherent savagery of the countryside and the recurring fights of the villagers with each other, especially over water and land issues, they do not feel resentment towards each other.38 The villagers are presented as people of tolerance. They do not even get angry with the Gypsies although the latter steal their property.39

Sabahattin Ali’s village characters, such as Yusuf, are people of low intelligence who are unable to handle complex matters, especially when they require official undertakings. As one old peasant in "Bir Orman Hikayesi" ("A Forest Story") admits, "You know, we are peasants. Our minds are not well-suited for further complications."40 Yet, they are portrayed as people of instincts, a positive feature they possess from their traditions and experiences.

The economic and political domination of the social life of the town and the villages by the local notables, be they big landowners or capitalists, is one of the main and most important themes in Sabahattin Ali’s Kaynaklı Yusuf and in many of his short stories. His novel, for one, is a staunch political protest against the power of these social classes over the little townsmen and the villagers. The power of the rich and notables is absolute. Even bureaucrats, such as governors and judges, are unable and usually
unwilling to confront the rich and the influential. As a matter of fact, the bureaucrats are depicted in Sabahattin Ali's novel in such a way that in fact they have no power at all vis-à-vis the local notables, even in cases of some honest bureaucrats who want to stand beside the ordinary people. For instance, when, in the novel, the son of a rich and politically influential family murders an ordinary villager, the criminal simply walks away from the crime. Sabahattin Ali's description of the situation shows us a well-known fact of the Turkish countryside:

Things go in the same way in the present as they did in the past, and despite freedom and the ideas of equality that the 1908 Revolution brought, even the prominent people of the town were unable to even imagine that Mr. Hilmi's son could actually be imprisoned.41

Sabahattin Ali's character Yusuf wants to resist the power of the local notables; he tries his best, but the reader is always made aware of the impossibility of his success. Whatever Yusuf can do is limited by the social structure. Unlike Yakup Kadri, Sabahattin Ali does not offer a way out for his villager from this difficult situation. It is the social structure, the reader senses, that limits the degree of his success. With his powerful realism, the author merely describes the social conditions instead of dogmatically expanding messages like a teacher.

This unavoidable domination of the rich and notables is a theme that we can also find in many of Sabahattin Ali's village stories. For instance, in "Kağın" ("The Cart,"), a mother whose son is killed by a rich and influential person in the village is "convinced" by her fellow villagers that there was no point in going to court to sue the murderer and that she ought to forget her son's death.42 Similarly, the economic exploitation of the
villagers by the rich and the powerful is a recurrent theme in Ali's stories. In "Köpek" ("The Dog")." for instance, the agha, or village head, does not pay his debt to a poor shepherd for two years. Likewise, in "Kafa Kağıdı" ("Identity Papers"); a peasant complains about the loss of his land, which he has cultivated for decades, to a prominent and wealthy person who was able to "prove" in court that the land belongs to him because he has the official title deed!

Like Yakup Kadri, Sabahattin Ali launches a relentless critique of the urban intellectuals. Yet, his is a different one. Ali has contempt for the intellectuals. They are depicted as people who only despise the peasants, who know nothing about the peasants and their surroundings and, instead of solving their problems, are content with unrealistic utopian fantasies of their own. The discrepancy between the peasants and the intellectuals is a strong theme of his story "Köpek." An engineer who has graduated from a college in the United States encounters a shepherd on his way to Konya from Ankara. His fiancé asks him to stop his car because, she says, she is very curious to see a peasant since she has never seen one in her life. The engineer tells the shepherd that they are also of peasant origin and asks him to tell him his problems so that he can help. Having understood nothing of the engineer's silly and irrelevant questions, the shepherd keeps silent, and this situation drives the engineer crazy. While the peasant sincerely feels sorry for making him upset, the engineer, as he leaves, deliberately kills one of the shepherd's beloved dogs in revenge for the shepherd's attitude. The killing of the shepherd's dog symbolizes the irreconcilable gap between the intellectuals and the peasants.
Sabahattin Ali harshly criticizes the intellectuals for despising the countryside and its people. In one of his most interesting stories, the governor of a small Anatolian town cannot endure the "simple, boring, despicable, and uninteresting" living of the town and gives up his post, and thereby his future career, in order to return to Istanbul. There he begins earning his life as a poor shoeshine man, yet he is happy to do so since for him, anything in Istanbul is superior to living in Anatolia. For Ali, this ex-governor sincerely reflects the mood of his generation at the time in Turkey when he says:

Don't talk to me about patriotism or the need to enlighten these people! What you are going to say will be true, yet...for us, for our generation, loving the country is just a fantasy, self-sacrifice is a word erased from the dictionary and selfishness is the most prudent moral quality. I am different from the others in that I tell what I think openly and sincerely.

Instead of the peasants and ordinary men and women, Sabahattin Ali consciously despises the intellectuals. In this respect, his work represents just the opposite of Yakup Kadri's approach. Ali's account of the intellectuals and privileged urban classes usually focuses on their ignorance, insolence, selfishness, insincerity and low moral values. Often, they are simply liars. They never cease to repeat the motto, "But still, the peasants are our masters," yet they never regard them as such in practice. One of Ali's main characters in a story underlines this fact:

What does the peasant take in return for what he gives? He is forced to construct his road himself, his streets are darker than his unfortunate fate and schools are not available even in one percent of the villages. Gendarmes go there just to collect taxes rather than providing tranquility. Let's not deceive ourselves, the peasants continuously have given, but in return got nothing. Even to admit this probably would make the piece of bread we are eating stick in our throats, if a little conscience still remains in us. And the motto "The peasants are the masters of our nation" is a good morphine in order not to hear the voice of our consciousness. But no motto is able to change the reality.
Obviously, this is a sharp critique of the Turkish intellectuals. It becomes even sharper when Ali criticizes and satirizes the peasantists of the time. In his interesting story "Bir Konferans" ("A Conference"), the peasantists and the way they approach the peasants are chosen as a target of harsh criticism. The story revolves around the opening of a school in a village in Anatolia. The guests who come from the city for the occasion consist of prominent official figures and the "peasantists," who are elegantly dressed and carry their cameras with them. The peasants welcome them on the road in silence. Among the guests there are even some peasantists who have studied peasantism in Paraguay. One of the guests, an economist, wants to use this occasion to give a lecture on cooperativism. The idea is to "enlighten" the peasants about the uses of cooperatives. Without their consent, the peasants are forced to gather in a room to be "enlightened" by the economist. Of course, none of the peasants understands anything of the lecturer's sophisticated presentation. Yet, they must pretend that they understand a great deal to escape further questions and explanations from the speaker, which would have required them to spend more time on this boring conference. As a matter of fact, this story reflects a typical peasantist excursion to a village such as we have presented in chapter two. The urban intellectuals and officials, without any organic relation to or deep understanding of the countryside, want to employ from above their utopian and inapplicable ideas with their insolent, arrogant, supercilious, and patronizing style.

Like the intellectuals, the government officials are subject to harsh criticisms in Sabahattin Ali's works. The relation of the peasants to the state is a critical recurring
theme in many of his short stories. Instead of solving the problems of rural Turkey, the
government officials themselves are perceived to constitute a major source of the
peasants' problems. They are depicted as corrupt, selfish, money-oriented officials who
hate the peasants, and their values, life-styles, and traditions. Many examples can be
found of the negative attitude of the government officials. In "Sulfata" ("Quinine"), a
town doctor, instead of helping the peasants, practically tortures his patients by not giving
them the necessary drugs to cure their illnesses. Likewise, in another story, a governor,
instead of finding the criminals who raped a woman, himself wants to rape her. In
"Kağni," an old woman, instead of prosecuting her son's murderers, is scared to death
even by the idea of going to the court since she believes that nothing positive and
significant could come from the existing justice system. She prefers living with the
sorrow of her son's death to spending many days in the corridors of the court for a result
that she thinks would be unfavorable to her anyway. Even if she wanted to go to the
court, she could not risk being away from her land, which needs to be cultivated for her
survival.

In Sabahattin Ali's stories the gendarmes embody the corrupt power of the state
over the peasants. In almost all instances, gendarmes act against the peasants' interests,
sometimes for the sake of the law, and sometimes just in order to impose their own
arbitrary "laws." They sometimes rape women, often imprison desperate people who
are unable to pay their taxes, detain the innocent just to show their superiors that they
perform their jobs efficiently and properly, allow a victim's enemies to beat him after
they themselves do the same, arbitrarily harass an old lady, and treat the peasants
badly, considering them inferior people.\textsuperscript{62} The gendarmes' contact with the villagers, unlike that of the intellectuals "is forced by circumstances rather than personal interest," and they are "often more ignorant and more overtly destructive and hostile."\textsuperscript{63}

The gendarmes usually side with the rich and the powerful against the ordinary peasants. This is clearly the message in the story "Bir Orman Hikayesi," in which a private company ruins the forests of a village to gain financial benefits from this malevolent business. The forest, however, in the eyes of the peasants not only symbolically represents an inheritance from their ancestors; all their material well-being depends on it, as well. Moreover, the peasants are concerned about the environmental destruction of their village. They hopelessly ask the official authorities to stop the company's undertakings, but instead of helping the peasants, the officials sent gendarmes to suppress the resistance of the peasants to the company by using the most brutal treatments.\textsuperscript{64}

Despite the gendarmes' ruthless, inhuman activities and attitudes, it is interesting to note that the peasants consider it "natural" that the gendarmes behave the way they do. In the story "Candarma Bekir" ("The Gendarme Bekir"), for instance, a peasant detainee mumbles to himself, "Of course he will beat me; he's a gendarme, isn't he?"\textsuperscript{65} It is as if the gendarmes are perceived to have the right to do whatever they please. Therefore, in Ali's novels and stories the image of state power as embodied in the gendarmes indicates the deep-rooted fear of the state which was a legacy of the Ottoman state tradition, resembling what Max Weber would call the arbitrariness of state power.\textsuperscript{66}
Contrary to the overall image of the bureaucrats and intellectuals, only village teachers assume positive characteristics in Sabahattin Ali's works. This may be due to the fact that Ali himself was a teacher. Most of the time village teachers are characterized as idealistic, caring people who want to help the peasants fight against the absolute power of the local notables and the arbitrariness of the government officials. A case in point is Ali's story "Asfalt Yol" ("Asphalt Road"). In this story, a teacher does his best to enlighten the peasants not only in educational but also in civic matters. For instance, he teaches the peasants the Constitution in order that the peasants may seek their rights when they need to in their relations with the government. The teacher also feels it his duty to solve the village's acute road problem. Yet, far from solving their problems, he unintentionally and unfortunately creates worse ones. In fact, this sort of situation is a recurring theme in Ali's works. Teachers are intent on being useful to the peasants, but despite their good intentions, they end up failing to fulfill their aims of helping the peasants.

In sum, Sabahattin Ali's view of intellectuals and bureaucrats is sharply different from Yakup Kadri's. For Yakup Kadri, the intellectuals and the bureaucrats, if only they could see the right way, can help the peasants to prosper and to become civilized. This attitude probably results from his belief that the basic contradictions in the Turkish countryside stem from the hardships of nature, not the social structure. In Sabahattin Ali's works, however, it is the social relations and social structure, first and foremost, that have to be changed. Unlike Yakup Kadri, Sabahattin Ali does not expect anything significant from the intellectuals and the bureaucrats for the sake of the peasants. This is
obvious, for instance, in his novel *Kyucakti Yusuf*, in which he claims that nothing significant has changed since the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. As a matter of fact, far from expecting any solution from the intellectuals and the bureaucrats, Sabahattin Ali sees these social groups as the creators of social problems in the countryside. The government officials, as mentioned above, have no power at all vis-à-vis the local notables and the wealthy, against whom the peasants should be protected. In this respect, it is understandable that we can expect nothing from the government or the intellectuals. The finale of Sabahattin Ali’s novel exemplifies this fact and constitutes a major difference in viewpoint from Yakup Kadri’s. While Ali’s novel ends with Yusuf’s escape to the mountains, which represents hopelessness and overall rejection of state authority, Yakup Kadri’s *Yaban* ends with the promising sounds of the Kemalist artillery from Ankara, announcing the approach of the nation-state.

6.3. A Populist Outlook: Memduh Şevket Esendal

Memduh Şevket Esendal is one of the most interesting literary figures of early Republican Turkey. His works are not exclusively on village themes, yet he is one of the writers who, even before Yakup Kadri and Sabahattin Ali, touched upon such topics, though many of his stories were published much later than they were originally written. His concern about the villagers is part of his wider objective concerning his curiosity in and emphasis on the presentation of ordinary men and women in literature. Like Sabahattin Ali, Esendal refrained from an unrealistic, idealized and romantic depiction of
village life and villagers that was common among some "peasantist" intellectuals of early Republican Turkey.

Born in 1883 in Çorlu, a small town in western Turkey, Memduh Şevket Esendal was the son of an immigrant family from the Balkans. Because of his family's desperate financial situation and the troubled times of ongoing wars, Memduh Şevket was unable to complete his education. He was basically a self-educated man. Early in his life, he became a member of the then-secret İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti ("The Committee of Union and Progress") in 1906. As one of this organization's inspectors, he was able to visit the whole country after the 1908 Revolution; this enabled him to get to know the realities of his country and people. In the meantime, he had to earn his family's living from agriculture. Things worsened during World War I, when his family lost all its lands. At the heyday of the Turkish War of Independence, Esendal served as the first ambassador from the new regime in Ankara to Azerbaijan. Upon his return to the country, with his former Unionists friends he published in 1925 the weekly newspaper Meslek (Profession). This had a negative reputation in the eyes of the governing Republican People's Party, not so much because of the ideology the newspaper advocated, but because of the political identity of the contributors, who were perceived as rivals to the governing elite of the new regime. Esendal first published his short stories in Meslek. The newspaper championed a corporatist outlook, envisioning a society organized and governed on the basis of professional groups. After the 1926 attempt to assassinate Atatürk in İzmir, which gave the government the excuse to exterminate and liquidate the Unionists, he was again sent abroad as an ambassador. He escaped a harsher
punishment probably because he was not among the core leaders of the Unionists and was willing to compromise with the new regime.

Esendal stayed in Iran, the Soviet Union and Afghanistan until 1938, except for two years (1930-1932) when he was appointed as a deputy minister in the Grand National Assembly. During his stay abroad, he learned Persian, French and Russian while getting acquainted with foreign literature, and continued to write short stories. After his return in 1938 he again became a deputy minister and reached the apogee of his political career when he held the post of Secretary General of the Republican People's Party from 1941 to 1945. He had to resign in 1945 after finding himself at loggerheads with the prime minister, Ş. Saraçoğlu, over the issue of land reform. From the time of his resignation until his death in 1952, he concentrated on his literary works, and it was during this time that he gained prominence as a story writer. His late fame in literature was partly owing to the fact that his real name was not known in the literary circles since he always used pseudonyms, probably because he was an eminent politician and a diplomat. Esendal preferred to separate his identity as a literary figure from his political identity.

Although much of Esendal's life as a politician and diplomat passed within the dry, day-to-day, often clumsy and bureaucratic sphere of realpolitik, he was a utopian. He called his utopia the "horizontal civilization," by which he meant agrarian civilization. Antithetical to his utopia was the "vertical civilization," by which he meant industrial civilization. Esendal was, as Ş. Süreyya Aydemir characterized him, an "enemy of industry and industrial civilization." His standpoint, obviously, is quite reminiscent of the peasantist outlook that we have been discussing in this dissertation. He believed in
agrarian civilization so deeply that he saw it as the first and foremost duty of an artist to accept, advocate and spread the idea of agrarian civilization. In an interview shortly before his death, Esendal makes it clear that:

there is no "vertical civilization;" it cannot survive. Those things that we see today - the atoms, new weapons, discoveries, political crises, depressions -, all these are the evidence that the "vertical civilization" is falling apart. I believe that eventually the "horizontal civilization," namely agrarian civilization, will be victorious. I see humanity's happiness and the fulfillment of a stable national life in the rise of agrarian civilization. This task cannot be fulfilled by the governments, but by the artists. It is the artists who should work on this idea, develop it, cultivate it, lead the people to become familiarized with the idea of "agrarian civilization," and make the people accept it.

One wonders to what extent Esendal's short stories reflect the society and civilization that he imagined. Except for his story entitled "Yurda Dönüş" ("The Return to the Homeland)," in which he tried to depict a future society exemplary of his utopian agrarian civilization, he barely mentioned issues related to the topic. But this is understandable when we take into account how Esendal positions himself as an artist. According to him, there are two kinds of artists: those who lead and those who follow. The former live and think ahead of society, present new goals, visions and horizons to the nation and can rarely be found in society. Esendal shows great respect for such people, yet he does not locate himself in this distinguished group. As he himself claims, he belongs to the latter group: artists who are content merely with following the society in the sense that they reflect the present state of the society and societal relations rather than pointing to a future life. In this respect, it is possible to understand why Esendal in his
literary works only mirrored what he experienced and witnessed in his life and did not engage in propagating his vision of "agrarian civilization."

Instead, Esendal's works are reflections of the everyday life and struggles of the "little men." His characters are not heroic, charming, sophisticated, or cosmopolitan people. They are modest, simple and ordinary "little" men and women, who are simply concerned with their "little" problems. Such a choice might be related to Esendal's own personality. He is known as one of the most modest politicians and intellectuals of his era. His rejection of anything extreme must have played an important role in his focusing on the "little men." He always advised his children to be modest and to refrain from being overly concerned with the material benefits of life.

A case in point is his designation as the ambassador to socialist Azerbaijan in 1920. The Azerbaijanis wanted a "modest" person who belonged to "the people" for this post, and the first person who came to mind was Esendal. He mentions this appointment on the basis of such criteria always as a matter of honor.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Esendal's literary works is his use of a simple and unsophisticated language. Even earlier in his career, during the late Ottoman Empire, Esendal's language was extremely simple, lucid, and direct compared to that of contemporary counterparts. In this respect, he can be considered a forerunner of the state-sponsored linguistic movement of the 1930s, which aimed to purify the language. On the one hand, Esendal's concern is pragmatic. He wants his ordinary readers to understand his works. On the other hand, his approach seems more philosophical. According to the literary critic Tahir Alangu, Esendal's use of simple and
direct language is related to the populist *Halka Doğru* (To the People) tendency that began to take root among the Turkish intelligentsia in the early 1900s. Esendal considers it more populist and less elitist to write in a simple way. A hidden critique of elitism is at work here. He once pointed out that if we examine the way the peasants talk, we immediately realize that they communicate in a simple, direct instead of a complex, refined and sophisticated way. Taking the style of the peasant as an example for his writing style did not mean creating a cult of peasantry, since Esendal categorically rejected making a cult of anything.

In Esendal's short stories, intellectuals and government officials are often criticized because they create problems for ordinary people. They are outsiders who interfere in the peasants' lives. Moreover, Esendal perceives the bureaucratic nature of the state as antithetical to his corporatist worldview, advocated in the weekly *Meslek*, for he envisioned a political life with the strong participation of professional groups. Such a political structure would have increased the participatory aspect of the system and would have significantly decreased the number of parasitic elements, such as government officials. A recurring theme in Esendal's stories is a persistent critique of government officials. For instance, his story "Köye Düşmüş" ("Stuck in a Village") depicts a former government official and an intellectual who, for some time, is obliged to live in a village. His only concern is to get away from the village since he despises the village people and their environment. In another story "Müdürün Zügürdü" ("The Poor Official"), which is a good example of Esendal's critique of government officials, Esendal presents the corrupt affairs of a local official who arbitrarily forces the innocent peasants to give him
money and is backed up by an influential local notable. The same theme of official abuse of authority recurs in "İane" ("A Donation"). Likewise, in "İşin Bitti," ("Your Work is Done"), a village headman is asked to come to the town, which takes hours of walking. When he arrives, the officials for no reason make him wait for hours. Eventually, they ask him whether a certain villager is alive or not. Just for the answer to this simple question, the officials practically torture the village headman, causing him to miss a full day of work on his land. Such attitudes naturally lead the peasants to mistrust the state to the extent that instead of going to courts, they often try to create their own system of justice, mostly by killing their enemies, as exemplified in Esendal's stories "Keleş" ("Bald"), and "Dursun Haci" (the leading character's name).

Like Sabahattin Ali's works, Esendal's literary works convey a critical attitude towards the gendarmes and aghas, who are the economically and politically dominant local figures. Yet, compared to Ali's sharp and harsh critiques, Esendal's are soft and often compromising. There are several reasons inherent in Esendal's personality, literary style and political ideology to account for this soft attitude towards these two groups, who had traditionally been a real problem for the peasants. First of all, Esendal's personality, as we have seen, was a modest one, always open to compromise and to understanding people rather than condemning them. All through his life, he wanted to stay away from extremities of all kinds. Secondly, he believed that artists should be as optimistic as possible in order to accomplish their duty of inspiring hope among the people. As he points out, he "enjoys literary works that inspire hope, joy and strength." A case in point is his story "Eşek" ("Donkey"), in which a peasant loses his beloved donkey and
starts thinking that the world is a miserable place. He later finds his donkey, and his thoughts and feelings immediately change to optimism about life. The third reason for his soft attitude is related to Esendal's political ideology. He was an ardent supporter of the idea of progress and embraced the Enlightenment's naive belief that the human soul is inherently good. When such beliefs and ideas blend with the belief he inherited from his experience of the Committee of Union and Progress that an elite can change the world and teach the people what is good and bad, the result is an unshakable optimism.

Esendal's presentation of village life is not as sharply critical as Sabahattin Ali's. Although he depicts the poverty, the miserable conditions and the ongoing problems of the peasants, he intentionally refrains from making social criticisms. In this sense, he was much less of a politically and socially oriented writer than Ali. This may well be due to the fact that his corporatist worldview prioritized harmony in society and that he hated all kinds of extremes. Unlike Sabahattin Ali, Esendal believed that society consisted of harmonious social groups and classes, and peace in society could be sustained if it were not for the misuse of power and the corruption of officials. Disregarding the differentiation of social groups and classes, Esendal easily found his scapegoat in the government officials, and assumed it was his duty to ameliorate the state and party apparatus, which he sincerely tried to do during his tenure as Secretary General of the governing Republican People's Party in the first half of the 1940s.
6.4. Conclusion

It is not easy to ascertain to what extent our three literary figures were influenced by the peasantist rhetoric that was so widespread in Turkey in the 1930s and afterward. But, there is no doubt that their literary works, discussed above, had an impact on the advancement of peasantist concerns in the intellectual realm of Republican Turkey. For instance, many people regard the publication of Yakup Kadri’s *Yaban* as a turning point in stimulating the interest and attention of the Turkish intellectuals in the peasantry and the problems of the countryside. Sabahattin Ali’s village stories became "best-sellers" among the students of the Village Institutes, who were educated in a peasantist spirit. Sabahattin Ali himself visited the Village Institutes several times. Esendal inspired other artists to focus on the lives of the ordinary people, especially on the peasants.

The fact that all three of our distinguished writers chose to write extensively on village themes is in itself important. Yakup Kadri’s concern is related to the necessity of consolidating Turkish nationalism and finding a mass base for the political regime. Despite the unfavorable characteristics of the countryside that he depicted in *Yaban*, for Yakup Kadri, the countryside was still the repository of national values. In the case of Sabahattin Ali, a moderate socialist, the importance of the peasantry probably stemmed from his sympathy for an oppressed class. For him, in the absence of an urban industrial working class, the peasants were the most significant subaltern group who directly faced the domination of the ruling classes, especially that of the bureaucracy and the landowners. This fact itself made it worthwhile to pay attention to the peasantry.
Besides, it was a common phenomenon among contemporary socialists everywhere to regard the peasantry as a potential revolutionary class. Even communists, who habitually focused on the cities and the working class as more radical, organized, aggressive and militant advocates of a more radical worldview than Sabahattin Ali's moderate ideas, wrote a huge literature on the alliance of workers and peasants. Esenşal's interest in the peasantry, meanwhile, it stemmed from his desire to represent in his literary works the ordinary, simple and common people, and who could represent these characteristics better than the peasants in a country where the rural people constituted almost eighty percent of the population?

To what extent our writers shared the "backward-looking," static, undifferentiated vision of a social formation that was advocated by many mainstream peasantists of the 1930s is difficult to assess. Yet, it is possible to find some traces of this attitude especially in the cases of Yakup Kadri and Esenşal. It is a well-known fact that Yakup Kadri and his ideological colleagues in the journal Kadro championed a classless society devoid of an industrial working class of western European type. In this respect, the peasantist emphasis, which values the peasantry as the source of a conservative and classless society, converges with Yakup Kadri's and Kadro's ideological orientation. In the case of Esenşal, his ideological visions are full of "backward-looking" characteristics. He was known as an enemy of "industrial civilization" and, as his biographer points out, longed for a medieval sort of guild-like social organization. Esenşal's utopian "agrarian civilization," in my opinion, is also an indication of his "backward-looking" vision in the industrialized world of the twentieth century. As for Sabahattin Ali's position, we do not
have enough data to determine whether he also retained such a "backward-looking" vision, since he did not leave many written materials about his theoretical and political worldviews. It is interesting, though, that among our writers, it is Sabahattin Ali who best exemplifies the glorification of the peasant and rural values, an important characteristic of the peasantist ideology. As discussed above, this can best be seen in the way he depicts peasant personalities.

Among the writers we have investigated, in Sabahattin Ali and Memduh Şevket Esendal we can see the traces of anti-intellectualism, which, as we have discussed in chapter two, is a characteristic of the peasantist ideology. Both of them in their literary works show hostility towards the intelligentsia, who are mostly depicted as selfish people who do not understand the realities of their country. Instead of helping the peasantry to solve their problems, the intelligentsia themselves generate serious problems. The attitude toward the intelligentsia in Yakup Kadri's perspective, however, is quite different. As a devoted elitist, Yakup Kadri does not hate the intelligentsia. He condemns them, sees them as responsible for the "backwardness" of the villages and villagers, but still considers them the only agent that can lead and enlighten the rural people, if only they could realize their mission.

Along the same lines, Sabahattin Ali offers a critical perspective when it comes to the presentation of government power in the countryside. The government officials in Ali's work are portrayed as being in alliance with local civilian power centers, who exert an absolute economic and political power and influence on the ordinary rural people, almost exclusively to the disadvantage of the peasantry. This attitude is related to Ali's
belief that without changing social relations, especially power relations, it would be impossible to solve the problems of rural Turkey. In other words, in Ali's works the social relations constitute the crux of the matter.

Similar critiques and attitudes can be found in Esendal's works, as well. On two crucial points, however, his attitudes differ from Ali's. While Ali believes that nothing good can come from the officials at all, Esendal thinks that an improvement of the state and party apparatus can lead to the betterment of the conditions of the peasantry. Secondly, Esendal naively believed in the harmonious, positive, linear evolution of societies. His literary works barely embrace social criticism. If it were not for the bad officials and the unnatural government intervention, the society, inherently in peace, as a whole could spontaneously advance toward a higher degree of evolution.

Yakup Kadri, on the other hand, considers the government the source for the "development" of the countryside. This belief rests on Yakup Kadri's conviction that the struggle against the hardships of nature is needed for the betterment of life in rural Turkey. In other words, like the peasants of the time, he saw the human's relation with nature as the most important and crucial starting point for defeating the "backwardness" of the villages. The corollary of this is that Yakup Kadri perceived the rural problems as technical problems emanating from the weakness of human beings in relation to nature. He simply disregarded human-to-human relations. When the problem is posed "technically," naturally the state, as the biggest and most capable body of technical experts, steps in. This is what Yakup Kadri always desired. It would not be an exaggeration to characterize Yakup Kadri as the spokesman of the "Republic of the
Bureaucracy. In many of his other works, especially the ones in Kadro, he advocated extreme state intervention in all realms of social life. Such an attitude, needless to say, goes well with the peasantist ideology of the time, which itself, after all, was a state-sponsored ideology.

As we have discussed in this chapter, our three writers contributed greatly to the increasing concern in the peasantry and the countryside. Yet, despite these outstanding examples of literature on village themes, it has to be pointed out that none of the literary figures in early Republican Turkey was a peasant himself. They were educated urban writers who felt that they had to take into account the peasantry and the problems of rural Turkey as topics for their literary works.

Despite the blooming of a peasantist ideology in this era, the number of early peasantist literary works cannot match the body of later literary works belonging to this genre. Only after 1950 did a strong "village literature" emerge in Turkey, written by a new "peasantist" intelligentsia who were born in villages. When, for example, Mahmut Makal, who was a graduate of the Village Institutes, came up with his path-breaking work Bizim Köy ("Our Village") in 1950, the dry but realistic depiction of the Turkish countryside shocked many people of the time. From around the early 1950s through the 1970s, the so-called "peasantist literature" as a genre mushroomed and, in one way or another, influenced many Turkish literary circles. This extraordinary development was partly thanks to the graduates of the Village Institutes, who seriously and ambitiously chose to focus and write on village themes. In addition to their efforts, the political and ideological climate of this era, characterized by a move towards populism on both the left
and right of Turkish politics, resonated with "peasantist literature." More important, of course, was the rapid industrialization and disintegration of the peasantry, together with a considerable immigration into the cities, which emerged in the 1950s.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1 The famous novelist Kemal Tahir, for instance, wrote many controversial novels in which he picked up interesting, significant and controversial historical themes and came up with "unique" theories and even sometimes with new historiographical viewpoints.


5 Fethi Naci, 40 Yılda 40 Roman (İstanbul: Oğlak, 1994), pp. 49-50.


7 The literary critic Fethi Naci rightly considers Yakup Kadri the "author and ideologue of the bureaucracy." See Naci, Türkiye'de Roman ve Toplumsal Değişme, p. 143.

8 The story of Kadro's termination by the state and his life as a diplomat is found in Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Zoraki Diplomat (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1967), first published in 1955.


11 Ibid., p. 27. "Gerçektken, bir eski Hitit harabesine benziyen bu köyde, insanların, toprak altından henüz çıkarılmış küçük dökük heykellerden farkı ne?"

12 Ibid., p. 27.

13 Ibid., p. 98.


"Onlar gibi olmak, onlar gibi giyinmek, onlar gibi yiyp içmek, onlar gibi oturup kalkmak, onların dilyle konuşmak....Hâydi bu'nun hepmini yapayım. Fakat, onlar gibi nasıl düşündüğüm? Nasıl onlar gibi hissedebilirim?"


Ibid., p. 40.

Ibid., p. 30.

Ibid., p. 40.

Ibid., p. 42.


"Felaket bile bizi birleştiremedi. Aramızdaki, benimle onlar arasındaki uçurumu belki, daha ziyade derinleştirdi." Ibid., p. 155.

26 For such a characterization of Yakup Kadri, see Naci, *Türkiye'de Roman ve Toplumsal Değişme*, p. 143.


29 For a similar comment see Naci, *Türkiye'de Roman ve Toplumsal Değişme*, p. 144.

30 Demirtaş, *Türk Edebiyatındaki Anadolu*, p. 32.


34 Oktay, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Edebiyat*, p. 130.


38 Ibid., p. 114.


43 Sabahattin Ali, "Köpek" (1937), in Ibid., p. 129.

For a similar comment see Korkmaz, Sabahattin Ali, p. 135.


Ibid., p. 135.

Ibid., p. 137.


"Bana vatanperverlikten, oralann tenvire ihtiyacından bahsetme! Soyleyeceklerin doğrudur, lakin... lakin... lakin benim için yetiştigim gençlik için, memleket memleketi bir fantezi, feragat lugattan silinen bir kelime, hodabinlik en makul seciyedir. Benim başkalardan farklı, samimiyetim, düşüncelerimi açıkça söyleyip yapmam'dır." Ibid., pp. 146-47.


60 See "Candarma Bekir" (1934), in Ibid., pp. 118-123.


63 Rathbun's overall evaluation of the gendarme stereotype well suits the ones in Ali's works. See Rathbun, _The Village in the Turkish Novel_, p. 85.


66 A critique of Weber in the context of the Ottoman Empire can be found in Haim Gerber's _State, Society and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective_ (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

67 For a similar comment see Ramazan Korkmaz, _Sabahattin Ali_, pp. 215-216.

68 Alangu, Tahir, _Cumhuriyetten Sonra Hikaye ve Roman, 1919-1930_ (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1968), p. 123; Rathbun, _The Village in the Turkish Novel_, pp. 28-29.

69 Çetişli, _Memduh Şevket Esendal_, p. 20.


72 Ibid., pp. 16-17.

73 Oktay, _Cumhuriyet Dönemi Edebiyatı_, pp. 660-661.
But this does not mean that Esendal and other Unionists who advocated "professional representation" favored multi-party democracy. They wanted political elections where political parties represented a profession group. See Ibid., p. 45.

Memduh Şevket Esendal, "Köye Düçmüç" (1932), in Otlakçı, Bütün Eserleri, Hikayeler 3 (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayncılığı, 1989), pp. 90-93; Rathbun, The Village in the Turkish Novel, pp. 80-81.


Memduh Şevket Esendal, "İane" (1923), in Esendal's Sahah Külbastısı Hikayeler 3 (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayncılığı, 1983).9-15.


For an example of the aghas' bad treatment of the peasants see Esendal's "Yirmi Kuruş" ("Twenty Piasters") (1922), in Esendal, Memduh Şevket, Otlakçı, Bütün Eserleri, Hikayeler 3 (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayncılığı, 1989), pp. 161-165.


Esendal, "Eşek" (1922), in Memduh Şevket Esendal, Otlakçı, Bütün Eserleri, Hikayeler 3 (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayncılığı, 1989), pp. 197-200.

Oktay, Cumhuriyet Dönemi Edebiyatı, p. 96.

See footnote 11.


Fikret Madaralı, Tonguç Işığ, p. 113.

See, for example, Dr. Hikmet Kivilecmü, Yol (İstanbul: Bibliotek Yayınları, 1992).


Demirtaş, Türk Edebiyatındaki Anadolu, p. 58.
CHAPTER 7
THE "PEASANTIST BIAS": A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Until now, I have dealt with the peasantist ideology and the ideas, practices and institutions inspired by it in Turkey. However, the Turkish case can never be understood adequately in isolation from the global historical developments which contributed to the formation of peasantist ideologies in many parts of the world, especially in Europe. For this reason, a broader look at these ideologies is the focus of this chapter. To understand the soil from which peasantist ideologies sprang, I shall first discuss briefly the impact of some late nineteenth-century developments, such as industrialization, the decline of the ideas of the Enlightenment, the rise of nationalism, and the intellectual disorientation widespread at the turn of the century. In the same vein, I shall then address the impact of World War I. The chapter will continue with a detailed discussion on Hitler's Germany and Stamboliski's Bulgaria, where the cult of the peasant became one of the most important intellectual motifs of these political regimes.

I have chosen these two cases not because there was a direct intellectual impact from them on Turkey, but because I believe that peasantist ideologies in these countries were important and exemplary. Furthermore, that both Germany and Bulgaria have had deep historical contacts with Turkey made my choice more relevant. The political,
ideological and economic interaction of Turkey with these countries was intense. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the relations of the Ottoman Empire with Germany were quite strong and important. At the intellectual level, for instance, the Prussian ideals of economic étatism and the fetish of the state were characteristics common in both countries. The German idea of "national economics," for instance, strongly influenced the Turkish intelligentsia, so much so that it would not be incorrect to call it a dogma in Turkish intellectual thought. Last but not least, as the Nazi organ *Völkischer Beobachter* in 1938 claimed, both the Turkish and the German regimes had a strong peasantist inclination.\(^1\) As for Bulgaria, this former Ottoman Balkan province formed a focus of interest for both the Ottoman and the Turkish ruling elite. Many Turkish intellectuals and the statesmen of the single-party era were born and came of age in the Balkans. For instance, many of the Village Institute teachers and administrators were emigrés from the Balkans. Furthermore, the Bulgarians and the Turks shared hundreds of years of common cultural, economic and political heritage. Just to give an example, many of the prominent governing elites of Bulgaria before World War II graduated from schools in Istanbul. Not surprisingly, the socioeconomic conditions of these two countries resembled each other to a great extent. Consequently, it goes without saying that before World War II, the Turkish intelligentsia had a great interest in social, political and economic developments in Bulgaria.

Elaborating on the German and Bulgarian cases offers the opportunity to greatly enhance our understanding of Turkish peasantism. This is because not only similarities but also differences can emerge through a comparative approach. Moreover, the German
and Bulgarian experiences are valuable because they constitute very good examples through which we can trace the role of global causation. Also significant is that there have been few, if any, studies which have compared National Socialist and Bulgarian peasantist ideologies and practices with the political regime in Turkey during the interwar period.

7.1. The Late Nineteenth-Century European Context

While one of the most spectacular changes in the nineteenth century was the development of industrialization, the twentieth century's most notable development was the tremendous decline of agrarian economies, closely connected with the spread of industry worldwide. The pace of this change was certainly uneven throughout the world: many parts of the so-called Third World have remained predominantly rural until the present time. Even in the United States, the urban population came to outnumber the rural only by 1920. The dissolution of the agrarian structures in many parts of the world, albeit uneven, created a strong pressure on the rural populations that led to social, political and intellectual movements all over the globe. In the industrialized countries, these movements were largely reactionary, whereas in countries where the rural population continued to be the most significant portion, they took quite different forms, either reactionary or revolutionary, but mostly a combination of both.

A critical attitude towards the consequences of industrialization is as old as the phenomenon itself. As early as the late eighteenth century, the French philosopher Jean-
Jacques Rousseau expressed his hostile feelings against the "corrupt" and "immoral" life of the cities and glorified the simplicity of the rural life over the "false sophistication of urban society." He occasionally lived in solitude away from Paris to enjoy the virtues of the countryside. Such views and attitudes, however, gained momentum especially in fin de siècle Europe, later reaching their apogee in the interwar period, when the collapse of the traditional became more and more acute. In an era of dissolving values and lifestyles, people strove to preserve the previous values in an attempt to confront the new pressures relentlessly infringing upon them.

It is no wonder, then, that in interwar Europe we see vast literary and intellectual production glorifying rural life similar to Thomas Jefferson's idealization of independent small American farmers of the late eighteenth century. Several examples can be depicted. In Germany in the late 1920s, Walter Darré, later the Minister of Agriculture under the Nazi regime, wrote two best-selling works in which he championed and upheld "the virtues of the peasant and the need to re-organise society through rural corporations." In 1921, the great Russian agrarian economist V. V. Chayanov, in his science-fiction novel, envisioned a prosperous peasant society in which each farmer owns an airplane and attends classical music concerts. Similarly, agrarian ideals were strongly supported by the Zionist ideologues in Palestine during the interwar era, not to mention the predominance of peasantist ideologies in Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War I.

Although our comparative study will focus on the peasantist ideologies and leanings of the interwar period, it is impossible to understand them without taking into consideration the historical background that was shaped from the 1880s onwards. Nor is
it possible to comprehend the main features of the peasantist ideologies without understanding the related social, cultural and economic changes. To do so, we shall very briefly look at, first, the impact of industrialization, second, the sharpening cultural crisis and third, the changes in the political philosophy of late nineteenth-century Europe.

Industrialization in Europe led to an enormous and unprecedentedly rapid dislocation of the agrarian population. This dislocation was caused by the dissolution of the traditional rural structures in the countryside. Millions of people filled the ghettos of the cities and found themselves disoriented in an alien urban world. Faced with a different kind of poverty, and cultural and political turmoil, many soon realized that this new urban life was not fulfilling the hopes that it once seemed to promise. Furthermore, their rural values could hardly match the new urban values of the cities, in which millions of people found their customs and aspirations challenged, discredited and threatened.

This sense of alienation and turmoil felt by millions of ordinary citizens of the nation-states, especially those of the newly-created ones, had repercussions in the realm of intellectual life, as well. Many historians point to a cultural crisis in the Europe of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Artists, scholars and intellectuals from all around the world "complained about the degeneracy, meaninglessness, and emptiness of bourgeois life in fin de siècle Europe." In their eyes, the materially-oriented life style, the commercialization of everything, and the mechanistic view of the universe paved the way for a life in which values such as emotion, intuition, passion, adventure, romance and the like started disappearing. The creativity of artisanal production was replaced by the anonymous and tedious assembly line, and the courage of soldiers became non-essential.
thanks to modern mechanical weapons. Traditional religion was challenged, and for many, a new secular world failed to provide a point of reference. "Around the turn of the century, Nietzsche in Germany, Freud in Austria, and D. H. Lawrence in England all emphasized the importance of instinctual, biological, and sexual motives that were concealed and denied by the overly rational, repressive bourgeoisie."® Books with titles similar to Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* appeared increasingly.® Deep cultural pessimism spread all over Europe and the United States, from intellectuals to both lower and old upper classes, the first undergoing a deep frustration with their poor lives, and the latter dreaming of a golden age in the distant and rural past.

The spectacular rise of nationalism throughout the globe profoundly challenged the political views of the age of the Enlightenment. The major Enlightenment philosophies of liberalism and cosmopolitanism were challenged by nationalist projects for the purpose of recruiting a "certain" kind of citizen. This is quite important, because the nationalist regimes and intelligentsia also looked to the rural people to gain support for nationalism. According to nationalists, liberalism was indifferent to national greatness and to the citizens of the nation-state, while cosmopolitanism constituted the irreconcilable enemy in many places like Germany and Eastern Europe. Another political project, socialist internationalism, a child of the Enlightenment, also constituted a target for the nationalist attacks.® In all these rival ideologies, nationalists found the "expressions of the overzealous rationalism of the Enlightenment."® Furthermore, in many countries, the critique of and hostility toward urbanization, industrialization, modernity and the Enlightenment led to peasantist ideologies in one form or another.
7.2. The Impact of World War I

The experience of World War I, perhaps more than any event in the previous decades, gave an impetus to nationalism, which was complemented this time by a greater emphasis on populism. A "state-of-siege atmosphere" helped mobilize the citizens of the nation-states in armies in which peasants by far constituted the majority. Furthermore, the war experience seemingly served to level the differences among the population, since everybody in the same uniform contributed to the uniformity of the nation. Everybody became a citizen and a soldier, although this citizen was hardly an "individual," but a standardized servant of the nation-state.  

On the other hand, it was with World War I, for the first time, that the impact of industrialization on warfare was questioned broadly by intellectuals. Here was an industrialization in the service of slaughtering millions of people, which in the eyes of many seemed absurd, scary and unacceptable. Here was an end to the individual heroism of traditional combat. For many people, the promises of a modern society fueled by industrialization ended in frustration, which contributed immensely to the anti-modernist reactionary ideologies of the interwar period.  

World War I further depreciated the intellectual value of liberalism. The liberal assumption that the free market economy offers by far the most efficient path was dismantled by the actual experience of the state-controlled economies. This depreciation of the economic dimension of liberalism went hand in hand with the political
depreciation, not only in the realm of economics, but also in politics. It was the heyday of the consolidation of state power. The states directly intervened in the private lives of individuals. What was striking, then, was that many people tended to see state intervention as something positive. It is within this mentality of acquiescing in the growth of state power that many regimes after the war found legitimacy for their totalitarian projects and for the social engineering that they imposed on their citizens.

The impact of World War I on the peasant strongholds of eastern Europe was a different story. The Russian Revolution of 1917, one of the most significant outcomes of the war, stirred serious peasant uprisings in eastern Europe. The fear of revolution's spread and the peasant unrest led many rulers of eastern European countries to make serious land reforms to stave off revolt. Social revolution swept most of the countries of eastern Europe. A radical redistribution of land went hand in hand with the abolition of the landowning class. The abolition of this class meant an extraordinary social revolution in eastern Europe. For the first time in their history, the peasant masses began participating in politics, and peasantist movements sprang up everywhere, demanding representative government based on universal franchise. A contemporary scholar noted in 1922 that "what has happened in Europe since the war has been a vast victory for the peasants, and therefore a vast defeat both for the Communists and the capitalists....In a sort of awful silence the peasantry have fought one vast and voiceless pitched battle with Bolshevism and its twin brother, which is Big Business, and the peasantry have won."
The consequences of World War I in defeated nations helped create the socio-political conditions for the aggressive nationalisms of the 1930s. In countries such as Germany and Turkey, where national unity had for a long time been an obsession, the desperate search for this unity had gained momentum because of the disastrous consequences of the war. For these countries, the disintegration that defeat caused became a terrifying warning once again about inadequate national integration. It is within this context that the Nazis in Germany rose to power and it is within this context that they formulated peasantist ideological tendencies, which we shall consider below.

7.3. The German Experience

7.3.1. The Völkisch Factor

Before a discussion of the peasantist leanings in Germany of the interwar period, it is essential that we understand the so-called Völkisch ideology. This ideology embraced a kind of nationalist romanticism. The general socio-cultural milieu of the late nineteenth century, which I have briefly described above, crystallized in Germany in the form of the Völkisch. To understand this intellectual tradition is essential, for the German experience offers one of the most interesting and comprehensive examples of reactionary and romantic ideologies, from which many peasantist approaches, including the National Socialist one, emerged.

It is probably not by chance that in Germany we find the most comprehensive example of reactionary, nationalist and romanticist ideologies. This must be related to
the peculiarities of German history, that is, the specific historical conditions of the late
nineteenth century that shaped German modernism, in general, and industrialization, in
particular. Of course, one can argue that what seem peculiarities to most scholars may
well be a widespread phenomenon in many parts of eastern and southeastern Europe.18
At any rate, compared to France and the Low Countries, the Enlightenment remained
weak in Germany. Even when the Enlightenment penetrated to the German intelligentsia,
it stayed within the limits of high abstractions. The Enlightenment in Germany was not
represented by practically-thinking Enlightenment figures like Voltaire, but by thinkers
like Kant, who are known for their high abstractness. Similarly, the Laissez-Faire
economic mentality had been quite weak in Germany, especially compared to England.
Instead, direct and extensive state intervention had always marked German history,
especially after the unification in 1871. Some relate this weakness of the liberal tradition
to the lack of a bourgeois revolution in Germany. Whatever the list of German "non­
existences" were, Germany underwent a quick and massive industrialization, and the
tempo and suddenness of this phenomenon collided with traditional social and cultural
patterns.19 The weakness of the Enlightenment, together with the rapid, harsh and
sudden confrontation of modernity and tradition, laid the social and historical background
for the Völkisch ideology.

The Völkisch intellectuals were obsessed with the dismantling and disappearance
of many of the previous values and beliefs, which in their eyes depleted life of
meaning.20 In compensation, they came up with the deification of the Volk. In a sense, as
Zimmerman points out, this was to compensate for the loss of God, resulting from the
"reason" of the Enlightenment. They glorified the *Volk* as the embodiment of a superior, collective, national meaning and purpose of life. "Only the radical renewal of the spirit of the *Volk*, so they believed, could halt Germany's slide into nihilism and restore greatness to the German nation."²¹ Instead of the Enlightenment's notion of modern progress, the *Völkisch* intellectuals turned to history, especially of the medieval period, in order to strengthen their ideological base. It was in the images, myths, ideas, and practices of the *Volk*'s past, they argued, that one could find virtues, ethics and emotions.²² Besides, as the mass societies of the late nineteenth century turned individuals into anonymous citizens, many perceived a loss of meaning, emotion and excitement in life. The *Völkisch* intellectuals, like many other romantics, stressed the significance of the hero, genius, individual, and personality.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the *Völkisch* ideology for our purposes is its emphasis on "rootedness" and nature. The *Völkisch* ideology glorified nature, for it represented an alternative to the evils of urban life. Compared to the dirty, unplanned, overpopulated, and complex cities, nature signified purity and simplicity. *Völkisch* intellectuals saw the primitive life and the pure, unexploited features of the countryside as virtues to be preserved. City life was far from being simple. It had created complex networks of relations within a differentiated society. Under the simplicity of nature, so they believed, there was a kind of divine order of things, though it was too complex to understand by reasoning. All in all, a return to nature, and therefore to the countryside, meant resistance to the evils of urban life.
Moreover, the *Völkisch* intellectuals hated and feared the so-called "proletarianization" of the peasants, a direct product of industrialization. Their anti-urban bias was closely related to this hatred and fear. "Dominance of the big city will be equivalent to the dominance of the proletariat." Such intellectuals feared the growing power of working-class politics. According to them, the proletariat was a class which could never have roots of any permanence. They were obsessed with the necessity of "rootedness." The working class, however, exemplified, more than any other social group, instability and restlessness. What made matters worse was that the growing working-class political agenda tended to emphasize internationalist politics, which the *Völkisch* intellectuals regarded as a great betrayal of nationalist ideals.

In addition to the growing numbers and influence of the working class, cities have always tended to be more cosmopolitan. City dwellers, especially those of the upper classes and the Jews, who, by and large, lived in the cities, were less interested in local and national cultures. Their education and tastes, so believed the *Völkisch* intellectuals, were cosmopolitan.

From the second half of the nineteenth century, the *Völkisch* ideology assaulted the city and everything connected to it. In German literature, works glorifying German peasants and rural ways of life proliferated. The peasant was the quintessential German man, rooted and stable and close to nature. Moreover, for some *Völkisch* writers, such as the former Marxist Voltmann, it was in the German peasantry, living within nature, that the real German race was preserved. A famous *Völkisch* idea asserted that "a nobility of blood was synonymous with a nobility of the peasantry." As George Mosse has pointed out, "in contrast to nature, which engendered the harmonious forms of
Germanism, there were the big cities, diabolical and inorganic, destroying the virtues of race.\textsuperscript{29} The "purity" of the race could be maintained only in the countryside, since big cities embodied the mixing of races.

The \textit{Völkisch} intellectuals, like the National Socialists of the twentieth century, were very much concerned with preventing the destruction of rural life. They had developed utopias to counteract the process of migration into the cities and to end the commercial exploitation of the peasant. This was due to the fear that the objective basis of the German \textit{Volk} could be destroyed by capitalist penetration, which aimed to exploit the land, the sacred German soil.\textsuperscript{30} In sum, as George Mosse argues, the \textit{Völkisch} ideology laid the intellectual foundations of the Third Reich in Germany. Therefore, we can now turn to Nazi Germany to elucidate the peasantism of the National Socialist regime.
7.3.2. The Rural Bias of the Nazis

Many of our present ills are the result of the unhealthy relationship between the population of town and country. The need to keep a healthy peasant estate as the basis of the whole nation cannot be stressed too highly....Industry and commerce will therefore withdraw from their unhealthy position of leadership, and be integrated into the general framework of an economy with national needs.

Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf.

The German farmer stands in-between two great dangers today: The one danger is the American economic system -Big capitalism! It means "world economic crisis"; it means "eternal interest in slavery";... it enslaves man under the slogans of progress, technology, rationalization, standardization, etc.;... it wants to make the world into a giant trust; it puts the machine over man; it annihilates the independent earth-rooted farmer....The other danger is the Marxist system of Bolshevism. It knows only the State economy; it brings in the controlled economy; it doesn't just annihilate the self-sufficient farmer economically --it roots him out.... it brings the role of the tractor; it nationalizes the land and creates mammoth factory-farms.

from a poster in a Nazi election campaign.

These two quotations clearly illustrate the strong peasantist inclinations of the Nazi ideology. The Nazi message here, taken together with above discussions on the global causations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and World War I, and the ever influential Völkisch ideology, suggest that one should not be surprised to find a peasantist ideology also in the Germany of the interwar period. As a matter of fact, peasantism in the Third Reich even became a part of German state policy. Therefore, it is necessary that we present and discuss some of the peasantist ideas and practices of the Third Reich.

The glorification of an idealized peasant, "the free man on free land," emerged as a prominent theme in Nazi propaganda, as well as in the intellectual writings of the ultraright wing movements in Germany during the 1930s. Adolf Hitler saw the peasants as
the "best defence against the social diseases that afflict us." Similarly, the official National Socialist Party documents characterized the peasants as "the cornerstone of the German state," "the strongest custodians and bearers of the healthy physical and spiritual inheritance of our people," "most faithful sons," "the backbone of military power," and the like. The reflections of such a characterization can be seen in the arts as well. The theme of longing for a return to mother nature became widespread in this era. In 1937, for instance, in a representative exhibition of German arts, landscapes constituted forty per cent of all paintings whereas there were only two pictures with a factory motif.

The Nazis stressed the superiority of peasant production, claiming that only such production could ensure the security of the country's food provision. We have to keep in mind that this was the era of the Great Depression, and international trade and industry suffered dramatically as the international flow of commodities remarkably decreased. Moreover, merchants and industrialists, especially the financiers, were charged with major responsibility for the Depression. In this context, the glorification of the peasants had a strong objective basis. Nevertheless, the Nazis were not content themselves with assigning a merely economic motive for their stress on peasant virtues. They also used many moral arguments, pointing out that the peasants represented freedom, loyalty, hard work, pure race, healthy upbringing and the like. According to them, for the peasant, "land is more than a means with which to earn a living; it has all the sentimental overtones of Heimat (homeland), to which the peasant feels himself far more closely connected than the white collar worker with his office or the industrial worker with his shop." Likewise, the famous agricultural minister Darré saw "a causal relationship
between German 'peasantness' and Germany's national survival and creative capacity."

Were it not for the contact with the urban and mercantile lifestyles, German peasants would be much better off.⁵⁴ According to him, the peasants were the only people to supply the "best blood," which had been declining due to warfare and lower birth rates.⁵⁵

When they came to power in 1933, the Nazis wanted to accomplish three major goals in the countryside: "self-sufficiency through protectionism, revitalization of agriculture through the development of a new peasant order, and a better organization to represent farmers' interests."⁵⁶ In the era of the Great Depression and rearmament, it was very logical to attempt to attain a national autarky for national security (even earlier Germans had been obsessed with the idea of self-sufficiency). Having abolished the wholesale food industry, the government regulated rural production by establishing a marketing system, setting prices and quotas, and controlling quality.⁵⁷ With a program called "Back-to-the-Land," the Nazi regime formed and encouraged new peasant settlements⁵⁸ and, more importantly, a new constitutional law on Erbhöfe (entailed estates), promulgated to establish a hereditary tenure system, especially for small and medium-sized farms. According to the Law, "holdings were indivisible," to be handed down to the most deserving person in the family.⁵⁹ Although the non-inheriting relatives were compensated, the compensation was relatively so insignificant that many scholars have pointed out that "the law froze all possibility of upward social mobility" for the non-inheriting members of the family.⁶⁰ The aim of the law was to create stability and continuity among the farmers. In order to do so, the law stated that farms between 7.5 hectares and 125 hectares could not be left to more than one heir, a provision that made
partition of the land more and more difficult. In 1939, 60 per cent of German farms were Erbhöfe, and their proprietors for the most part were provided by the state all the necessary political guarantees. It is interesting to note that the Nazis promulgated the Erbhöfe law not simply to stabilize the mobility of the rural population. The racist "blood and soil" ideology pervaded the spirit of the law. The law stated that "the inexorable tie between blood and soil is the indispensable pre-requisite of the healthy life of a people."

During the 1930s, the Nazis encouraged youth to make journeys into the countryside. This widespread practice became an educational policy, since students were forced to visit the countryside and thereby learn the virtues of physical labor, feel close to nature and get to know the peasant class. According to Kandel, who himself observed this phenomenon as early as 1935, the "point of departure is that the city is to-day devitalizing and offers a bad environment in which youth should grow....[T]hey will be taught to appreciate the qualities of the peasant class. Close contact with nature has made them hard and vigorous, patient and enduring." We should also note, in passing, that this attempt to make the youth visit the countryside and party camps was related to a specific indoctrination policy of the Nazi regime. During the Third Reich, "the household lost its dominant role in the rearing and training of children." The Nazis were aware of the fact that as long as the household remained a powerful educational unit, it would be more difficult for them to gain the hearts and minds of the youth, whose political support was essential for the new regime. The regime perceived these practices, such as journeys and camps, as a way of separating the youth from the political and ideological influence.
of their parents. As a matter of fact, strengthening the influence of the educational system vis-à-vis the parents and the older generations became a very widespread concern for many nationalist regimes during the 1930s.

Because the Nazis regarded the peasants as "the foundation of the Völkisch state," they gave special emphasis to the education of the peasants themselves. More specifically, the Nazi government envisioned education of the peasants as part of a wider educational program: the education of the adults. A prominent Nazi leader, Heinrich Himmler, for instance, strongly praised adult peasant education, for he considered it essential for the development of peasant self-consciousness.51

In fact, there are more examples to support the argument about the eminence of the peasantist ideology in the Third Reich. The few, but striking, examples that I have chosen should be enough to make the point. More important, now, is to investigate the intellectual baggage and intentions that made these examples possible. For this reason, I shall focus on the "anti-modernist" intellectual traits of Nazism.
7.3.3. The Intellectual Basis of Peasantism in Germany: The Reaction to Modernity

The peasantist bias of National Socialism cannot be fully understood if it is not placed within a wider theoretical context of reaction against modernity. The first aspect of anti-modernism, as it relates to our discussion, is the National Socialists' attempt to define and create a new German society by avoiding liberal inspirations. They hated and questioned the liberalism of "the ideas of 1789" and of the economic "spirit of Manchester." Similarly what the prominent German sociologists Max Weber and Werner Sombart had argued, the National Socialists condemned the way society had been structured according to the premises of liberalism. According to the Nazis, liberalism, especially its Anglo-Saxon version, inspired an atomistic and rootless society in which rugged individualism corrupted the meaning of life and ideals of the nation. Instead, like the Völkisch intellectuals, the National Socialists insisted that society be an organic community without class divisions (Gemeinschaft) "rather than an agglomeration of selfish individuals pursuing their hedonistic desires" (Gesellschaft). They perceived liberalism, together with socialism, as sharing many common characteristics of bourgeois materialism, and condemned it in the name of preserving the traditional fabric of German society.

To reach the goal of recovering the lost Gemeinschaft, the National Socialists, like the Völkisch intellectuals before them, envisioned a state which would prevent the potential decadence that industrialization brought about. Such a state would be essentially different from the state of the laissez-faire regimes. It was supposed to be
the state that would lead the German nation on a third path, distinct from both liberalism and socialism. Needless to say, this emphasis on a third way, in which the state assumed crucial functions, was quite popular around the world during the 1930s. Such a conception of the state had at least four important implications. First, it assumed the dominance of politics over economics and the market, which had been used by the Nazis as the tie between their romanticism and rearmament of Germany. Second, state intervention of all kinds was perceived as the most important pre-condition of any constructive accomplishment. Attributing such a significance to the state, of course, required the obedience and dependency of the people, which in turn meant increasing authoritarianism. Third, this conception enabled the state to present itself as the great broker among different classes or groups in German society, a vision which Hitler extensively exploited to broaden his political base. Last but not least is the implication that in this era the state was perceived as "the embodiment of the spirit of the Volk; hence, the aims of the state had to take precedence over those of the individual." This did not mean that individualism would be destroyed; it just belonged to a higher spirit, that of the state, in the way the great "idealistic" philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel theorized in the early nineteenth century.

The second aspect of the National Socialist ideology's anti-modernism is that the Nazis perceived technology as something inherently bad for the Volksgeist. According to the Nazis, technology implied modernity and imprisoned the men who created it. It had to be developed only for the good of society, not for the sake of progress at any cost. Insofar as technology did not corrupt the simplicity of life, such as that already
found in the German countryside, there was no problem. Similarly, so long as technology would not further differentiate German society, it could be accepted. Therefore, the critical attitude toward technology did not mean that Germany during Nazi rule stayed away from technological innovations. In fact, to a great extent, technological development continued to take place during the Third Reich. The Nazis, for pragmatic purposes, did whatever they could to enhance the technological power of Germany not because they saw some value in it, but because it was necessary for their anti-modern and militaristic purposes.64

Thirdly, anti-modernism based itself mostly on romanticism. Instead of reason, the Nazis emphasized emotions and instincts, and instead of values such as progress, technology, industry, and cosmopolitanism, they praised tradition, consciousness of the past, honor, love of country and the like.65 In Nietzsche, for instance, they found intellectual underpinnings for their approach. Instead of reason, Nietzsche valued the explorations of unconscious and primeval instincts.66 Such intellectuals stimulated renewed interest in humankind's archaic past, and they also led to a deeper understanding of the symbolic language by which the archaic heritage had been passed on through legend, myth, and ritual. Moreover, the encounter with the primitive and the archaic served as a fruitful corrective to modern patterns of life, reminding anxiety-ridden city-dwellers that important lessons might be derived from inveterate customs and archaic patterns of social life.67

It is not hard to see how people who had been influenced by such an intellectual tradition would glorify the rural people: it was in rural Germany that the archaic and primitive could easily be found. In this respect, according to the Nazi discourse, not only the past but also the future lay in the countryside and among the peasants.
In order to show the extent to which anti-modernist intellectualism gained momentum in the Germany of the 1930s, one should remember that these ideas were supported not simply by the Nazi political ideologues but also by distinguished German intellectuals. To illustrate this fact, we should briefly look at one of the most controversial and, for many, one of the most prominent philosophers of the twentieth century, Martin Heidegger, whose thought glorified rural Germany.

Heidegger was very much influenced by Nazi ideology. After World War II, the de-Nazification commission examined his situation and suspended him from his university. Even in the last days of his life in the late 1960s, Heidegger claimed that he had done nothing wrong. In an interview with the prestigious magazine Der Spiegel in 1969 (published posthumously in 1976), he "refrained from any expression of regret concerning his allegiance to them [the Nazis]." Heidegger not only betrayed his own Jewish teacher, Edmund Husserl, but also spied on his Jewish colleagues. He desperately wanted to be the official philosopher and intellectual leader of the National Socialist movement. "His dream was to become head of a governmental body that would first reorganize, and then control, all the German universities."

I shall not discuss the anti-modernism of Heidegger, which has inspired so many of the post-modernist theories of our contemporary world. Many books have been written on him concerning this issue. His disdain for the works of modernity; and his strong assault on technology, industry, liberalism, democracy and individual freedom, and, above all the Enlightenment, are well-known. For this reason, I shall limit my discussion to his peasantist views.
Heidegger came from a peasant family, and his political views praised rural life and the peasantry:

In a speech to six hundred unemployed workers ...Rektor Heidegger proclaimed that he knew "whither urbanization has brought the German man" and that only his return "to soil and land would renew the German community. Cities were the home of industry, exploitation, dehumanization, and class conflict. Apparently for Heidegger, only the hardy stock of the peasantry, grounded in their homeland, could provide the model necessary for German "manhood" to save itself from the evils of modernity. It is worth recalling here that Heidegger's grandfather was a shoemaker, his father a part-time cooper, and his mother a peasant. His overt concern about the fate of these simple and noble ways of life suggests to some critics that Heidegger's political views were linked with those of the conservative agrarian movement of the early twentieth century."

Heidegger appreciated the rural life of the peasantry and had strong contempt for urban life. In a radio address on March 7, 1934, "Why Do We Stay in the Provinces?" "He compared his own philosophical work both to the interplay of natural forces (mountain brooks, primeval rock, winter snowstorms) and to the stern simplicity of the peasantry:" Heidegger said that

[the effort of molding something into language is like the resistance of the towering firs against the storm .... This philosophical work does not take its course like the aloof studies of some eccentric. It belongs right here in the midst of the peasants' work. When the young farmboy drags his heavy sled up the slope and guides it, piled high with beech logs, down the dangerous descent to his house, when the herdsman, lost in thought and slow of step, drives his cattle up the slope, when the farmer in his shed gets the countless shingles ready for his roof, my work is of the same sort. It is intimately rooted in and related to the life of the peasants."

Peasantism, as this quotation implies, always goes hand-in-hand with anti-intellectualism. National Socialism represented a deep distrust of intellectuals and analytical thinking. "It was the education of the will rather than the mind that now received primary consideration." An American observer as early as 1935 noted the growing anti-intellectualism under the Nazi regime, especially as far as education was concerned:
... [T]he goal of education leads to an exaggerated preoccupation with the abstract and a neglect of the realities of life. This widespread opposition to intellectual training dominates the reforms so far introduced in all branches of education from the elementary to the university."

The distrust of and antipathy toward intellectuals is not simply related to the Nazis' critique and fear of reason; but also has something to do with their belief that intellectuals are harmful, for they ruin community cohesion. Intellectuals, according to the Nazis, destroy faith in nationalism, since they are quite cosmopolitan. Hitler himself said that "a man, though scientifically little educated but physically healthy, who has a sound, firm character, filled with joyful determination and will power, is of greater value to the national community than an ingenious weakling." Like the Nazis, Heidegger hated intellectuals and endorsed a peasant-style anti-intellectualism. He advised his students at Freiburg University to refrain from the dangers of elite intellectualism. Instead, they should learn the value of manual labor. The reason for this was that manual labor would create "the basic experience of the hardness, nearness to the soil and tools, the lawfulness and strictness of the most simple bodily and thereby essential work...." Heidegger suggested that students should combine university study with camping, hiking, visiting the villages and the like, which would give future leaders of German society a sense of rootedness that had hitherto been available only in the countryside.

Though Heidegger is seen as one of the most controversial philosophers of the twentieth century, there is little room for controversy as far as his peasantism is concerned. As a prominent intellectual of the Third Reich, he reflected and contributed to the peasantist bias of the Nazi regime.
From what we have discussed so far, it must now be clear that the Nazi regime did many things for the glorification of the peasantry. Its intellectual motives and concerns, as I have pointed out in the case of Heidegger, were absolutely sincere. What we need to do now is to turn our attention to the inconsistencies between rhetoric and actual practice in order to assess whether the Nazis achieved their promises about the German peasant or not.

7.3.4. German Peasantism: The Rhetoric and the Reality

Im Gegenteil: seine [Hitler's] Schriften und Reden wie die ganze verquollene nationalsozialistische Ideologie sprechen dafür, daß die Tradition und die Werte der Vergangenheit wiederhergestellt werden sollten; die Nazis gaben sich gerne dort catonisch, wo sie in Wirklichkeit radikale Neuerer waren.**

From the anti-urban, rural-based movement. On the contrary, despite the extreme anti-urban and peasantist rhetoric that we are not used to finding in other highly urbanized and industrialized countries, the Nazis represented, first and foremost, an urban movement.*

In spite of the rhetoric, German industry and cities grew during the Third Reich. This was partly due to the military necessities that constituted a crucial concern for the aggressively imperialist Nazi policy. Everybody knew that military victories could be won only by industrial strength. Moreover, the industrialists had the immense financial capacity to fund the Nazi Party, and it did not take too much time for the Nazis to come to terms with them. Moreover, the Nazi Party received its main support from large cities, and, in particular, from presentation made so far, we should not conclude that National

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Socialism was basically anthe wealthy districts of these cities. Certainly, the image of the Nazis as the protectors of the "little man," the lower classes and the peasants in particular, played an important role in their rhetoric. For instance, to appeal to the "little men" of the cities, the Nazis took advantage of the "fear and antagonism of small shopkeepers towards their larger competitors" by boycotting big stores. The party gradually abandoned this kind of political action, though, and even when it did act, it boycotted only retail outlets, mostly owned by Jews or foreigners. It did not touch large industrial plants or commercial banks. However, this rhetoric also created strong tensions among the diverse supporters of the party. In the case of peasantism, for instance, this rhetoric made many urban supporters of the Party upset. Darré, for one, was harshly criticized in the party because of his extreme peasantism.

Moreover, the agrarian sections of the National Socialist Party were not established as late as 1930. As a matter of fact, except for the rhetoric, the party hardly had a concrete program for agriculture until 1930. Also, the fact that there were scarcely "any members of peasant origin in the upper ranks of the Party" is quite compelling evidence of the tensions between rhetoric and reality. Likewise, during the Nazi years, the position of women in the countryside underwent great changes. The Nazis organized and mobilized women and thereby helped them more and more to enter public life. Notwithstanding the demands of the regime on women, especially due to the necessities of the war economy, "Nazism brought a certain 'liberation' from the traditional confines of village life."
Especially with the coming of World War II, many aspects of social life in the countryside changed deeply. For instance, the influx into the countryside of large numbers of evacuees from the bomb-threatened cities, as well as refugees, intimidated the rural population, who had traditionally disliked strangers. In the eyes of many peasants, the mobilization for war seemed to be destroying the traditional fabric of village life while increasing economic pressure on them.\textsuperscript{94}

Furthermore, we know that wages in general fell during the Third Reich,\textsuperscript{95} a fact that disfavored many German peasants as well. The laws restricting moving from the countryside to the cities put downward pressure on the wages of many peasants and favored the landowners,\textsuperscript{96} despite the fact that flight from the land persisted.\textsuperscript{97} Nevertheless, Nazi rhetoric, supported by minor improvements for the peasants, by and large succeeded in gaining the support of rural Germany, especially the younger generations.\textsuperscript{98} The Nazis knew that "what mattered was how people would perceive their position: myth is always more important as a persuader than sober analysis of reality."\textsuperscript{99}

Despite the strong rhetoric against modernity, the National Socialist practice, in effect, subscribed to modernity. As Ralf Dahrendorft argues, Hitler needed modernity, little as he liked it, in order to establish his rule. This, of course, necessitated breaking into pieces the traditional, and in effect anti-liberal loyalties to region and religion, family and corporation, in order to accomplish his total claim to power.\textsuperscript{100}
7.4. The Bulgarian Experience

During the single-party era in Turkey, Bulgarian intellectual and government undertakings related to rural development and the peasantry became a matter of utmost interest for the Turkish intelligentsia and the governing elite. A brief survey of the Turkish press of the 1930s, for example, would prove their interest in issues relating to agricultural developments in Bulgaria.¹⁰¹

Bulgaria at the turn of the century witnessed one of the first genuine peasantist political movements in Europe. The Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU), which had formed in the 1890s, became the strongest and most enduring peasantist political movement in eastern Europe. Already in the 1890s, many of the Bulgarian intellectuals were convinced that the key to Bulgaria's national development lay in defeating the ignorance and backwardness of the peasantry.¹⁰² Thanks especially to its charismatic and talented political and ideological leader, Alexander Stamboliski, who assumed the leadership of the movement in 1907, the BANU became the most powerful political force in Bulgaria at the end of World War I.¹⁰³ For practical purposes, here I am not going to delve into the BANU's historical development, but instead focus on the basic characteristics of the Bulgarian peasantist ideology. However, suffice it to say that during its reign from 1920 through 1923, when a military coup toppled the BANU from power, the peasantist movement made a dramatic and lasting impact on Bulgarian history.
It has to be pointed out from the outset that the Bulgarian peasantist ideology did not stem from a reactionary and backward-looking approach, as was the case for the peasantism of the National Socialists in Germany. Bulgaria was not an industrialized country like Germany. The majority of its population lived in the countryside. In this respect, peasantism had nothing to do with hostility towards the outcomes of industrialization and urbanization. True, the BANU exalted the values of village life and people, but its goal was not a return to a distant rural past or to revive traditional agrarian relations. In this respect, Bulgarian peasantism was not reactionary. Rather, it aimed to create a society of efficient farmers, who would, at the same time, be good citizens. In other words, the peasantist ideology in Bulgaria was largely inspired by developmentalist and populist concerns.

Like many other ideologies of the 1930s, the Bulgarian peasantist ideology embraced a "Third Way" approach. It endorsed a practical ideology that was based on the denial of both liberal capitalism and communism. In his harsh critique of communism, the leader and the ideologue of the BANU, Stamboliski, advocated a biomatricalism, "which conceives the uniformities of natural phenomena of nature in terms of a biologico-materialistic parallelism....[B]iological materialism holds that even during the era of the omnipotence of the rational faculty, the instinct for self-preservation and perpetuation of the species is one of the factors of human existence." Inspired by a Darwinist outlook, Stamboliski insisted that instincts played an essential role in human existence. In his 1909 book, he referred to three instincts: "the instinct of self-preservation, the instinct of feeding oneself, and the sexual instinct for the continuation of...
the race." Private property, he argued, should be seen as one of the most important and unavoidable human instincts in our lives. The corollary of these arguments about the instincts and private property led Stamboliski to reject socialism, which he thought was at odds with human nature and freedom. Therefore, basing himself on such a biologically-inspired theory of instincts, Stamboliski condemned socialist theory and politics.

Although Stamboliski's peasantist movement rejected the socialist notions of collective ownership of land and the means of production, it maintained a critical attitude towards capitalism as well. According to the Bulgarian peasants, unlimited and uncontrolled development of private property and capital could be no less harmful to the harmony of the society. In other words, while the peasants were for individual freedom and private property, they clearly advocated a radical egalitarianism that had to be enforced by the state. This function of the state as a regulator, they thought, was essential to "keep all citizens at approximately the same level."

Like adherents of Russian and other populist movements of the late nineteenth century, Stamboliski and his colleagues had a deep contempt for party politics. The corruption of the political system and professional politicians had always been a focal point of Stamboliski's major critiques. Instead of party politics, he proposed the "estatist organization" of politics in which major economic groups such as the peasants, workers, traders, professional groups and the like should organize in order to defend the interests of their estates. Indeed, the peasants never conceived themselves as members of a
political party, but rather as members of a "union" or an "organization" who were defending the interests of the Bulgarian peasants.  

In addition to the "estatist" organization of politics, the peasantists wanted to use the idea of cooperativism in order to reach their goals. Stamboliski and other prominent peasantist leaders such as G. M. Dimitrov enthusiastically promoted the idea of cooperatives, which, they thought, were superior to corporations. As a matter of fact, perhaps no other institution better embodied the "Third Way" approach than cooperatives. On the one hand, cooperative collectivism was compatible with freedom, for it did not require abolishing private property, while on the other hand, cooperatives had to be based on the distribution and redistribution of the profits among the members of the cooperatives. In this way, cooperatives were perceived as the means by which the peasantists wanted to actualize their egalitarian goals. Indeed, "...while the profits of stock companies go into the pockets of the stockholders," as Dimitrov pointed out, "the profits of cooperatives are spent for purposes of social improvement."  

Bulgarian peasantism differed from many other populist and peasantist movements in that most of its leaders came from villages or had peasant origins. This is an important characteristic since many populist and peasantist movements were the achievements of the intelligentsia. Even Russian Populism, one of the most radical movements of its kind, was the intelligentsia's movement and ideology about the peasantry. Furthermore, geographic and social distances among people from different regions were easy to maintain. This is perhaps one of the factors that contributed to the grass-roots character of the peasantist movement. Leaders such as Stamboliski and
Dimitrov all knew the actual life of the peasants, for they were no strangers to theealities of peasant life. Although there existed in Bulgaria romantic literary works,
written by urban intellectuals, about the peasantry and the countryside, it is important to
note that those same urban people who exalted rural values in their literary works had
contempt for the leaders and organization of the peasantist movement.123

The Bulgarian peasantists, like the National Socialists in Germany, had often
shown contempt for the intelligentsia as a class. It would not be an exaggeration to claim
that they often used an anti-intellectual rhetoric. In a sense, their critique of the
intelligentsia was understandable, since many of the mainstream Bulgarian intellectuals
were ignorant of the realities of the Bulgarian countryside. Even when these intellectuals
wrote on rural issues, their attempt did not go beyond projecting their own visions onto
the peasants. They declined to go to the people and accomplish some tangible benefits
for the peasants. The peasantists, therefore, were not wrong at all in their critique of the
intelligentsia. But because of those critiques, the adversaries of the peasantists
represented them as "enemies of culture and the intelligentsia, contemptuous of the rule
of law, corrupt and thus unfit to represent the country in the eyes of the outside world."124

More than the economic life of the country, the peasantist ideology in Bulgaria
had an impact on the cultural value system. As John D. Bell points out, "what took place
in Bulgaria during Agrarian control resembled a class/cultural war and it in fact was
frequently portrayed as a war between the city and countryside, between civilization and
barbarism, the clash of two irreconcilable visions and systems of values."125 Indeed,
Stamboliski and other peasantist leaders exalted the peasant values and lifestyle while
condemning their urban counterparts.\textsuperscript{126} The peasantist leader Dimitrov for instance, considered the peasantry a "repository of ideal values, a model of the genuine human being."\textsuperscript{127} The peasantry was perceived as the backbone of the nation. The villages were places where a sense of solidarity and community consciousness prevailed. Most of the rural values were seen as antithetical to those of the cities, where the profit motive and the individualism of "Western Civilization" dominated every aspect of social life.\textsuperscript{128} The glorification of rural values went hand-in-hand with hostility towards the cities. The cities were cosmopolitan centers inhabited by "aliens," who had for so long exploited the "real people," namely, the peasants, and who had no genuine interest in the development of the national well-being.

Stamboliski argued that agricultural and small-scale production were superior to industrial and large-scale production. This notion of the superiority of the agricultural producers was based on the comparison of the labor forms utilized in agriculture and industry. Contrary to industrial production, agrarian production was self-sufficient because there was no need for monetary exchange. Besides, small rural producers were independent people who could make decisions by themselves. The peasantists especially appreciated the small-scale over the large-scale. The American version of agricultural production, they felt, was inhuman and dangerous in that it celebrated specialization of work and products. This phenomenon, the peasantists believed, was inhuman and open to exploitation. The small-scale peasant production, on the other hand, takes place under the sun, in the pure air, and without the damage of the pollution of the cities. The superiorities stemming from the objective conditions of the countryside, the peasantists
believed, had an impact on the souls of the peasants that made them spiritually superior to
the producers in the cities.\textsuperscript{129}

The Bulgarian peasantist ideology, like its many counterparts of the interwar era, embraced a
strong anti-communism. After World War I, the Bulgarian Communist Party became the second
largest party, supported by the urban intelligentsia, the working class and the poorest peasants.\textsuperscript{130} Perhaps this was an expected consequence in a country such as Bulgaria, where the lack of industrialization hindered the formation of a middle class. Because of the strength of the Communist Party, Stamboliski perceived communism as the immediate threat to the peasantist movement. But this perception of communism as the biggest threat was not just because of the current political rivalry. Communism constituted the antithesis of the main principles of the peasantist ideology. As we have seen, Stamboliski stood against the nationalization of land, a slogan zealously supported by the communists. Whereas the communists made a fetish of the large-scale, the peasants praised small-scale production. Whereas the communists were historically ardent supporters of industrialization and exalted the working class as the carrier of historical change and progress, the peasantists approached industrialization with suspicion and glorified rural values and the peasantry. Therefore, there were more than enough justification on the part of the peasantist ideologues to perceive communism as a political rival and threat. Moreover, Stamboliski's enmity toward communism made him consider taking precautions even at the international level. In opposition to the "Communist International," he advocated in 1922 the creation of a "Green International" for the purpose of spreading the peasantist ideology all over the world. The BANU

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ideologues, especially Stamboliski, represented the peasantist ideology as having a universal character that could be applicable to many other countries. In this sense, the "Green International" was supposed to challenge both the socialist and capitalist worldviews. However idealistic and optimistic the peasantists were, nothing significant came out of the "Green International."

The government of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) came to an end with Stamboliski's murder in 1923. During its short term in power, the BANU made many changes in Bulgarian society. An extensive land reform was undertaken on the principle that "the land belongs to those who till it." The landless peasants and dwarf holders were able to acquire land with payments made over a twenty-year period. A compulsory labor service was imposed to construct infrastructural works such as schools and roads. The cooperative movement was established to help finance the peasants, improve agricultural production techniques, and create community solidarity. Educational achievements advanced to unprecedented levels. The peasantists undertook a foreign policy that was genuinely peaceful. They were also true believers in democracy, harshly opposed to any kind of dictatorial regime that did not represent the majority of the Bulgarian population. Having realized that the political power of BANU could not be overthrown by democratic means, its opponents, with the help of Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization terrorists, staged a coup and killed Stamboliski in 1923. Although the BANU continued to exist and act to some extent even after the communist takeover in 1944, it never enjoyed the popular support it had during the time
of Stamboliski. Yet, the BANU and Stamboliski had a profound intellectual impact on the ideology of peasantism both inside and outside of Bulgaria.

7.5. Conclusion

The Nazi attitude toward the peasantry during the interwar era offers significant points of reference with which to compare other cases, including Turkey. Of course, we should be very careful in our comparison since significant structural and historical differences must be taken into account. In the first place, Germany was one of the most industrialized nations in the world, whereas Turkey did not have a significant industry. Even this single point should warn us about easy comparisons and straightforward conclusions. Moreover, the power of romanticism and the weak influence of the Enlightenment, and the distinctive trajectory of German nationalism, with its overemphasis on race, constitute a unique historical experience. The anti-modernist and anti-technological bias of the Nazis, a phenomenon hard to find in the Turkish experience, was perhaps related to this historical experience. Notwithstanding the structural and historical differences, striking similarities exist, however. Both movements glorified the peasantry and nature; both attempted to find the pure race or people they wanted in the countryside, though this was so to a much lesser extent in Turkey. Likewise, both wanted to indoctrinate the rural population through adult and peasant education; both made peasantism part of their anti-liberal and "Third Way" ideologies; both were very much obsessed with controlling the mobility of the peasants and aimed to
limit the transformation of the peasants into an urban working class. On the other hand, both believed that the soul of the "real national man" was to be found in the village, and therefore saw the peasantry as the constituent element of a "classless" society. Last but not least, both peasantist rhetorics revealed strong anti-intellectual biases.

Whereas the German experience offers comparative elements from a highly industrialized country, the Bulgarian one constitutes a good example of a poorly industrialized and a less urbanized country. Although Turkey's and Bulgaria's social formations looked like each other, significant differences existed in terms of the motives and the impact of the peasantist movements. Most striking of all is that in Turkey the peasantist ideologues had no organic connection with the peasants, whereas in Stamboliski's Bulgaria the peasantist movement was an actual mass movement of the peasants. In this respect, the peasantist ideology marked a genuine democratic experience in Bulgarian history, while in Turkey even the peasantist activities were conducted with an extremely elitist perspective. Such activities in Turkey were part and parcel of the preemptive mobilization attempts that seem to embody the Turkish populist slogan of "despite the people, for the people." This explains the highly elitist nature of their "populist" endeavors. In this respect, the peasantist rhetoric in Turkey was used in order to prevent the actual mobilization of the masses.

Related to the grass-roots characteristic of Stamboliski's peasantism, it is important to note that a radical egalitarianism became one of the most prominent goals of the peasantist ideology in Bulgaria. Despite the single-party regime's populist rhetoric in Turkey, egalitarianism was not really praised by the Turkish ruling elite. Even most of
the peasantists accepted that the peasants were inferior people, who needed to be "enlightened" by the elite.

Although peasantist rhetorics in both Turkey and Bulgaria embraced an anti-intellectualism, they were, in essence, different. In Bulgaria anti-intellectualism was a genuine critique by the peasants and their leaders against the actual urban intellectuals. In Turkey, however, anti-intellectualism was a product of the intellectuals in order to divert attention from government policies and from the politics of social class by way of making scapegoats of intellectuals.

The Bulgarian experience, however, also had several similarities with that of Turkey. First, both in Bulgaria and in Turkey, the peasantist projects and intellectual endeavors were attempts on the road to modernization. The peasantist intellectuals in both countries believed that the welfare of the country depended on the welfare of the peasants. In terms of wishes and desires, this viewpoint was a modernist one. Yet, historically, certainly there were "reactionary" elements in this viewpoint. In an age of industrialization and urbanization, to rely on a peasant economy for the social and economic development of the nation was probably useless and ineffective. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that both the Turkish and Bulgarian peasantisms differed from that of the Nazis in that in Germany peasantism, in terms of both intention and actuality, clearly represented a "reactionary" movement.

Furthermore, both the Turkish and the Bulgarian regimes degraded party politics. Whereas in Turkey (as well as in Germany), this was to legitimize single-party rule, in Bulgaria the hostility toward party politics stemmed from more democratic concerns, as
exemplified in Stamboliski's "estatist" organizations. The Bulgarian case had nothing to do with the rhetoric of a "classless" society, such as we find in Turkey and Germany. Rather, the Bulgarian peasantists accepted divisions in the society and recommended that they be the organic representatives of the peasants only.\textsuperscript{135}

The appreciation of a "Third Way" approach with a strong emphasis on state intervention in all aspects of life was a characteristic that was shared by all three peasantist movements. Likewise, in all three cases, the peasantist ideology was strongly anti-communist. In other words, the fear of a proletarian revolution played a prominent role in the formation and development of the three peasantist ideologies.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 7


2 "For us, to exist is to feel, and our sensibility is incontestably prior to our reason." Rousseau, quoted in H. G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969), p.4.


4 Ibid., p. 7.

5 Henry A. Turner, "Fascism and Modernization," in *Reappraisals of Fascism*, edited by Henry A. Turner (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), p. 123. "As the nineteenth century drew to a close, astute observers noticed a strong undercurrent of revolt against bourgeois civilization and the values on which it was anchored: parliamentary democracy, scientific rationality, and capitalism. These values presupposed the existence of a stable, predictable universe, but that universe was being undermined steadily by some of the leading intellectuals of Europe who displaced the axis of social thought from the objectively verifiable world of physical experience to the subjective and only partially accessible world of unconscious motivation, as in the works of Sigmund Freud." See Klaus P. Fischer, *Nazi Germany, A New History* (New York: Continuum, 1995), p. 13.


7 Spengler's pessimism about Western Civilization can be seen in his *The Decline of the West*. In this book, published in two volumes, the first in 1918 and the second in 1922, he argued that cultures, like living organisms, went through a phase of birth, youth, maturity, and death. Spengler insisted that Western Civilization was coming to the end of its duration. See Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 216.


17 Allen, "The Appeal of Fascism and the Problem of National Disintegration," p. 44.


20 Especially, "youth in particular attempted to escape from the 'materialist' society in which they had been reared, and tried to find a new meaning in life, a new dynamic which would enable them to recapture their own individuality." See George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology, Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p. 312.
21 Zimmerman, Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity, p. 10.

22 Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology, p. 67. The interest in the past of a nation is related "to appropriating the popular." In his study on nationalism in Bengal, Partha Chatterjee sees similar trends: "The second theme is that of the classification of tradition. A nation, or so at least the nationalist believes, must have a past. If nineteenth-century Englishmen could claim, with scant regard for the particularities of geography or anthropology, a cultural ancestry in classical Greece, there was no reason why nineteenth-century Bengalis could not claim one in the Vedic age....A classification of tradition was, in any case, a prior requirement for the vertical appropriation of sanitized popular traditions." Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments -Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 73.

23 Ibid., p. 22.

24 Needless to say, the Nazis used this notion of uprootedness to legitimize their massacres of the Jews, who most represented the "uprootedness."


26 One of the most interesting discussions in late nineteenth-century Germany was between the "Agrarians" and the "industrializers." For an elaborate discussion of this see Herman Lebovics, "'Agrarians' versus 'Industrializers'," International Review of Social History 12 (1967): 31-65.

27 Ibid., p. 24.

28 Quoted in Ibid., p. 117.

29 Ibid., p. 101.


32 Quoted in Zimmerman, Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity, p. 42.

33 David Schoenbaum, Hitler's Social Revolution (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), p. 152. For official sources of the Nazi policy on the peasants see R. Walter Darré, Das Bauernum als Lebensquell der Nordischen Rasse (Munich: Lehmann Verlag, 1929); Adolf Hitler, "Parteiamtliche Kundgebung über die Stellung der NSDAP zum Landvolk


39 "Certainly, Darré saw peasant society and urban industrialism as mutually exclusive categories, and this was inherent in his vision." Bramwell, *Blood and Soil*, p. 203.

40 Ibid., p. 68. For a brief but precise exposé of Darré's own views on the issue see his article entitled "Landstand und Staat," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 19-21 April 1931.


42 As a matter of fact, similar policies were used widely throughout Europe, the colonies and the later post-colonial regimes as a way to tax agriculture in favor of the state sector.


44 The law formulated a hierarchy for finding out who that person was supposed to be. "...[T]he testator's sons and the sons of his children's sons first, then parents, followed by brothers and their sons; wives, daughters and their daughters came fourth and were followed by sisters and their children and lastly by other female heirs." Comi, *Hitler and the Peasants*, p. 144.

45 Ibid., p. 144. I discussed the similarities of this law with the rationale behind the Turkish land reform attempt in chapter four of this dissertation.

46 Ibid., p. 144. Nicos Poulantzas has argued that the aim of the law " was to create a stable fraction of rich and middle farmers" because of the minimum hectares of land that had the right to benefit from the law. Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, p. 289.
On this issue, the National Socialist ideology seemed to make an interesting and valid argument. The leftist German historian and philosopher Ernst Bloch likewise argued that "German Marxism was so committed to capitalist development that it left the field of cultural revolution and appeals to myth and emotion to the right." Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism - Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 41. One of the most important critiques of the socialists for being pro-industrialization came from the late Werner Sombart. See H. LeBovics, "A Socialism for the German Middle Classes," Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1964, pp. 132-33.

"These ideas also figured prominently in Thomas Mann's novels and essays. Mann believed that the liberal values of 1789 had been corrupted by bourgeois materialism and that only a national regeneration, touching the real spiritual roots of the German past, could serve as a corrective to the decadent values of the fin de siècle." Fischer, *Nazi Germany*, p. 25.

Even in its homelands liberalism was in decline. As Carlo Sforza noted as early as 1931, "...[E]ven in France and Great Britain parliamentary institutions are no longer regarded with the veneration and love which was their mainstay in our grandfather's day." Count Carlo Sforza, *European Dictatorships* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1931), reprinted in 1967, p. 4.

Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, p. 121.


Fischer, *Nazi Germany*, p. 23.


62 Ibid., p. 47.

63 For more information about the Nazis' critical attitude to technology, and how the pro-Nazi philosopher Martin Heidegger related technology to his anti-modernism, see Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *Heidegger and Modernity*, translated by Franklin Philip (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), especially chapter III, entitled "Heidegger, Nazism, and Modernity," pp. 55-80.

64 This is quite similar to Herf's point in the conclusion of his book that in this respect, Nazism differed from the traditional anti-technological bias of romanticism. See the conclusion of Jeffrey Herf's *Reactionary Modernism*. For their pragmatism, see also Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution*, p. 276. For a similar discussion on Nazi pragmatism as far as technology is concerned, see also Turner, "Fascism and Modernization," p. 126.

65 Fischer, *Nazi Germany*, p. 25.


68 In a speech addressed to his students as the rector of the University of Freiburg, he said: "May you ceaselessly grow in courage to sacrifice yourselves for the salvation of our nation's essential being and the increase of its innermost strength in its polity. Let not your being be ruled by doctrine or 'ideas.' The Führer himself, and he alone is the German reality, present and future, and its law ...Heil Hitler!" Quoted in Gabriel

69 Ibid., p. 18.


73 Zimmerman, Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity, p. 70.

74 Ibid., p. 70.

75 Heidegger, quoted in Ibid., p. 70.

76 Fischer, Nazi Germany, p. 348.


78 Hitler Mein Kampf, p. 613 quoted, in Fischer, Nazi Germany, p. 348.

79 "Philosophy, he once remarked, 'belongs right in the midst of the labour of farmers': to which Theodor Adorno acidly riposted that one would like to know the farmers' opinion of that." Eagleton, "Falling Prey: Martin Heidegger: A Political Life," p. 8.

80 Heidegger quoted in Zimmerman, Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity, p. 69.


82 Dahrendorf, Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland, pp. 432-33.

83 However, having inconsistent policies does not mean that the Nazi attitude toward the countryside was just a simple lie or manipulation. As Schoenbaum has pointed out, they were sincere in their beliefs. Schoenbaum, Hitler's Social Revolution, pp. 153-54.

84 Turner, "Fascism and Modernization," p. 126.


89 "Only after the electoral success of that year, and with the emergence of Darré as the principal Nazi theorist on agrarian problems, did the party begin a determined campaign to erect a network of political organisations capable of winning over further peasant votes to the party." Ian Farr, "'Tradition' and the Peasantry -On the Modern Historiography of Rural Germany," in *The German Peasantry -Conflict and Community in Rural Society from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, edited by Richard J. Evans and W. R. Lee (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 19. See also Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, p. 287.


91 Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, p. 287.

92 The intensive mobilization of population makes up of one of the most important characteristics of the fascist regimes in general and distinguishes it from conservatism. As Roger Griffin points out, "...[F]ascism as we define it embodies a vision of the regenerated nation which is not just anti-parliamentarian and anti-communist, but also anti-conservative, aiming to mobilize not only the traditional ruling elites but the whole people." Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, p. 117.


94 Ibid., pp. 23-24.


"So wie die Herren der neuen Länder in unserer Zeit die Stammesloyalitäten der Menschen zerbrechen müssen, um ihre Herrschaft zu etablieren, so mussten die Nationalsozialisten die überlieferten -und in ihrer Wirkung antiliberalen -Loyalitäten zu Region und Religion, Familie und Korporation zerbrechen, um ihren totalen Machtsanspruch durchzusetzen. Hitler brauchte die Modernität, so wenig er sie mochte." Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie in Deutschland*, p. 434.

See for instance *Cumhuriyet*, 11 November 1931; 9 January 1932; and 13 September 1932 editorial by Yunus Nadi.


Ibid., p. 24.


Bell, "Populism and Pragmatism...," p. 23.


See Ibid., p. 305.

"His concept of the progress of civilization through the stages of 'savagery, barbarism, and civilization,' each with its characteristic mode of production, was taken from the American anthropologist Louis Henry Morgan, whose *Ancient Society*, an immensely popular and influential book in its time, was published in Bulgarian translation in 1897. The idea that instincts underlie human behavior that private property has a basis in
instinct can be found in William James's *Principle of Psychology*, as well as in Darwin's *Descent of Man*, both of which were available to Stamboliski in Bulgarian translation. Bell, "Populism and Pragmatism...," pp. 27-28.

Bell argues that Stamboliski rarely mentioned this theory of instincts except when he condemned Marxism. Bell, *Peasants in Power*, p. 71.

Moser, *Dimitrov of Bulgaria*, p. 305.

Ibid., p. 309.


"The most fundamental element in Stamboliski's statement of Agrarian theory -the assertion that the conditions of modern life demanded the supplanting of political parties by corporative or 'estatist' organizations that would group the major occupational formations of the country in a system of functional representation- had been implicit in the Agrarian movement from the beginning." Bell, "Populism and Pragmatism," p. 28.


This, of course, does not mean that Russian Populism had a deep intellectual impact on the Bulgarian intelligentsia. Russian Populists such as Lavrov and Mikhailovsky had an influence in Bulgaria. See Bell, *Peasants in Power*, p. 19.

Bell, "Populism and Pragmatism," p. 27.

Ibid., p. 41.

Ibid., p. 41.
126 Moser, *Dimitrov of Bulgaria*, p. 305.

127 Ibid., p. 303.


129 Moser, pp. 310-313.

130 Walters, *The Other Europe*, p. 256.


133 Ibid., p. 171.

134 Bell, "Populism and Pragmatism, pp. 39-40.

135 Bell, *Peasants in Power*, pp. 60-64.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This dissertation enables us to challenge many mainstream historiographical views which have been the cornerstones of history writing in Republican Turkey. One among them is that during the first decades of Republican Turkey, populism and peasantism were presented as the merits of the new regime. Perhaps this is understandable as new regimes often tend to emphasize their originality and superiority. This attitude, however, became a main trend among the Republican intelligentsia, for they attributed everything positive to the new regime while downgrading all the remarkable achievements of the Ottoman era. Our discussion of populism and the concern for the peasant during the late Ottoman Empire challenges the Republican claim of uniqueness in this regard. It is important to note that not only did populist concerns exist in the late Ottoman era; the Kemalist elite was very much influenced by the way their Ottoman predecessors had approached and used populism. As was made clear in chapter one of this study, the Ottoman intelligentsia's quest to discover the "people," by means of populism and peasantism was determined and shaped by the necessity of saving the state. Consequently, the populist ideas and practices were primarily determined by the raison d'être of the state, rather than the actual necessities of the "people." This is all
the more important, since the Turkish intelligentsia and statesmen, though they fiercely rejecting any influence whatsoever from the Ottoman past, inherited the mentality of prioritizing the needs of the state as well as despising the "people" by characterizing them as "backward," reactionary, and unenlightened.

Despite the Kemalist elite's widespread use of populist and peasantist rhetorics during the single-party era, in fact the elite deeply feared possible grass-roots movements. What was desired during the period in question was to forestall potential mass movements, and to prevent the spread of would-be ideological rivals by creating new channels for the official ideology. Our discussion on the most important propaganda organs of the era, the People's Houses, cogently demonstrates this fact. Even the peasantist activities of the People's Houses, which were considered the most "populist" activities at the time, left no room for mass initiative and freedom of expression, since they were strictly controlled and carefully monitored by the state authorities. The bureaucratic and superficial nature of the village visits of the People's Houses is a good case in point. All of these should not be surprising, though, because even the idea of founding the People's Houses came to the forefront as an intention to control any potential ideological and organizational challenge to the Kemalist regime. In this sense, contrary to the common beliefs in Turkish historiography, the Kemalist elite aimed to use populism and peasantism as a means to pursue a preemptive mobilization.

Interestingly, as this study has demonstrated, there is evidence that in fact the statesmen's and party officials' strong populist and peasantist rhetorics based on the cult of the peasant aimed to target the intelligentsia more than the peasants. By the early
1930s, the prominent RPP leaders noticed that most of the Turkish intelligentsia and upper classes were ignorant of the Kemalist "Revolution," and were believed to pursue a degenerate, bohemian, meaningless, decadent, and materially oriented lifestyle as depicted in many novels and memoirs of some prominent figures of the regime. Peasantism could serve the intelligentsia as an ideal to believe in. Moreover, populism and peasantism were used against both liberalism and socialism, which were seen as ideological threats to the Kemalist regime. In short, populism and peasantism served to preempt the influence of ideologies different from the official one.

Unlike the dominant perceptions of Kemalism and the official historiographical viewpoints, this study has made it clear that Kemalism should not be thought of as simply a progressive modernization agenda. The conservative dimensions of Kemalism should never be underestimated. The intellectual foundations of the belief that Kemalism embraced a progressive modernization derive from its attitude to religion and Westernization. In this scenario, the Ottoman Empire was perceived simply as a religiously-governed "eastern" empire whereas the Turkish Republic embodied a modern, secular, and western model. But to accept Kemalism as a progressive modernization on the basis of secularization and Westernization, both of which are controversial anyway, is to concentrate on the trees instead of the forest. Our discussion of the intellectual perspectives and state policies regarding the peasantry in the single-party era offers challenging views about the nature of the Kemalist regime.

The claim that Kemalism embodied a radical and/or progressive modernization program has been based also on the Kemalist attitude towards industrialization. Kemalist
scholars have presented the history of Republican intellectual life as an unfolding of an "industrialist idea" and vision. Such a perception of Kemalism has been so strong that only a few scholars have dared to question it. On the other hand, the strength of the belief that the Kemalist regime was an ardent supporter of industrialization, and thereby, of progressive modernization, has obscured divergences from those ideals, as well as the ambiguities and eclecticism of the ruling elite's ideology. The extent of the Turkish elite's hostile attitude towards industrialization and urbanization, supported by a peasantist outlook, has usually been underestimated. In fact, industrialization did not constitute a significant part of the programs of the fourteen governments formed during the 1920s. The excuse offered by the leading figures of the time, and by many scholars, is that the tariff rates imposed by the Lausanne Treaty in 1924 restricted state policies by setting limitations for industrialization. However, these limitations could have been avoided with different and creative state policies. There are scholars who argue that even the new tariff rates, which the state adopted after the abolition of the Lausanne Treaty in 1929, did not have protective characteristics. One can even further argue that the state hardly did anything significant about industrialization in the 1920s and the early 1930s. As late as 1936, Prime Minister Celal Bayar could talk about the lack of consensus as to whether Turkey should be a predominantly agricultural or an industrial country. A similar situation can be seen clearly in the existence of different complaints about and expectations from the governmental policies. For instance, peasantists such as Köymen always hoped to see more peasantist policies, while intellectuals of opposite
viewpoints, such as contributors to *Kadro*, accused the state of not paying enough attention to *étatist* industrialization.¹⁰

Even when favorable conditions for industrialization emerged in the 1930s, and even when the intention to industrialize gained strength among the intelligentsia and the officials, their conservative, peasantist outlook and their fear of the social and political consequences of industrialization and urbanization restricted the depth and scope of their attempts. They feared the formation of a dynamic, organized society, and the growth of working-class political activities, all of which could threaten the ruling elite's monopoly of political power. For this reason, there was no serious attempt to dissolve the traditional social fabric of the Turkish countryside. The corollary of all these realities is that the state was unable to provide any well-thought-out or consistent policies toward either industrialization or rural transformation. The ruling circles wanted to see industries flourish, yet at the same time feared the consequences of industrialization. They were anxious to transform the rural structure without destroying the political power centers of the countryside. All of these concerns, in fact, prevented the application of any kind of radical policy which would have paved the way for Turkey to become urbanized and industrialized much earlier. In addition to the structural factors of early Republican Turkey, the ambiguities and eclecticism of the state policies should be seen as contributing to the preeminence of a huge peasantry in Turkey even until the 1980s.

The peasantist rhetoric of the single-party era should be taken as an indicator of ambiguous and eclectic state policies on issues vital to Turkey, especially with regard to plotting a consistent path for the country's development. This argument can be supported
by two important examples which have occupied an important place in Turkish history: the Village Institutes experience and land reform attempts, both of which were strongly inspired by the peasantist ideology. The Village Institutes became a victim of the tensions between the conservative inspirations of the ruling elite, and the radical necessities of transforming the Turkish countryside. What was expected from the Institutes was to raise the technical and economic level of the peasants by pursuing educational reforms in rural Turkey. The idea behind founding the Institutes was to help the peasant to better struggle against the hardships of nature. The scope of this idea was limited and unsatisfactory, however. Totally disregarded was the attempt to change power relations in the countryside, since maintaining social order was the overriding concern of the Kemalist elite. For example, leave aside the rest of the country, even in southeastern Turkey, where the Kurdish tribe leaders and landlords were perceived as a threat to the regime, the government did not pursue a consistent policy to crush the political and economic power of those big landlords.

A similar case appears in the discussions on land reform of the single-party era. Although most scholars have considered the land reform attempts a radical pursuit, I have strongly argued in this dissertation that the goals and intentions of land reform were less radical than conservative. Interestingly, with the implementation of land reform, many Kemalists aimed to return to the idealized Ottoman land tenure system rather than to transform social relations in rural Turkey. The aims of land reform included attaching the peasants to their villages, broadening the size of the propertied peasant class, limiting mobility in the countryside and immigration to the cities, and preventing the spread of
leftist and radical movements by winning the support of small peasants. Moreover, the concern for securing the privileged position of the political elite in a static, undifferentiated society occupied a central role in the land reform attempts of early Republican Turkey. In this sense, the interests of the state were given priority over the interests and necessities of the peasants. This much can be seen even in the motives behind the idea of land reform. The fear of the growing number of landless peasants that could challenge the stability of the regime (as the historical experience of eastern Europe after World War I had shown) provided a significant stimulus for land reform in Turkey. Therefore, preempting possible mass mobilization of the peasants stood at the center of land reform. For all these reasons, in this study it has been important to emphasize the conservative dimensions of land reform as it was widely perceived as one of the most, if not the most, radical and progressive achievements of the single-party era.

The peasantist intellectual orientation of the single-party era indirectly affected many intellectual and political movements of modern Turkey at least until the late 1970s. Intellectuals, especially the graduates of the Village Institutes, have created a literary style called köyçü edebiyat (peasantist literature) dating back to the publication of Mahmut Makal’s Bizim Köy (Our Village) in 1950. Although one could find the traces of such a literature in the single-party era, which we noted in chapter six of this dissertation, in the 1950s and the 1960s this literary genre overwhelmingly dominated Turkish literary circles. This kind of literary work chose topics from villages; exalted the values and lifestyle of the peasants; and exposed the injustices, economic hardships, ignorance of the government, oppression of the gendarmes, cleavages between the city and the country,
and the like. Writers belonging to this school appreciated peasant values, and found
decency in being and living like a peasant.

When the political and intellectual climate inspired by this genre was mixed with
the worldwide influence of Maoism in the 1960s and 1970s, it was no surprise that most
segments of the Turkish socialist left supported a radical peasantism in the name of
socialism. The peasant-oriented socialist movements, which constituted the majority in
the socialist movement, appreciated Kemalism, considering it a radical and progressive
petit-bourgeois movement for its peasantist orientation. Although the Kemalist peasantist
project represented a radical intention, so they believed, it turned out to be unsuccessful
and unfinished. Instead of waging a political struggle in the rapidly industrializing cities,
most socialists formulated theories about the need to pursue political activities in the
villages, although only a minority of them actually went to the countryside to realize their
goals. This attitude, of course, is reminiscent of that of the Kemalist peasantists of the
single-party era.

On the other hand, right-wing and Islamist political parties until the 1980s also
gave special importance to their political activities in the countryside. Cherishing the
conservatism of the peasants, they sought political support in rural Turkey, and to a large
extent they were successful in this endeavor. While carefully refraining from a radical
transformation of the countryside, and frequently siding with the landlords, the right-wing
parties, which for the most part have governed Turkey in the decades since 1950,
sustained their conservative politics in part thanks to the preeminence of a huge peasantry
in Turkey.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1 See, for example, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's *Ankara* (İstanbul: Remzi, 1972) and Ahmet Ağaoğlu's memoirs in *Serbest Firka outraged* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994), pp. 117-121.

2 The Kemalist regime never detached religion from state affairs. Rather what it accomplished was the control of religion by the state.

3 See Tanlı Bora’s "Muhafazakârlığın Değişimi ve Türk Muhafazakârlığında Bazı Yol İzleri," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 74 (Fall 1997), and İdris Küçükömer’s *Diizenin Yabancılaşması*, 2nd edition (İstanbul, Alam, 1989).


5 This was the treaty between the western powers and Turkey that marked the end of the military struggle. The treaty served as a basis for population exchanges and also for economic relations with the West.


7 See, for instance, Kurmuş, "Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında...," p. 6.

8 Bayar, "C. Bayar’ın Endüstri Planımız Üzerinde Söylevi," p. 9. For some leading officials, the ambiguities and eclecticism meant flexibility in the principles of the Party.


10 Vedat Nedim, "Niçin ve Nasıl Sanayileşmemiz Lazım," *Kadro 6* (1932), pp. 16, 18; Aydemir, *İkinci Adam*, vol.1 (İstanbul: Remzi, 1968), p. 424. In addition to the peasantist rhetoric, which blurred the policies for industrialization, the power of the merchant class, which influenced and dominated ideas and visions about economic issues, also played an important role in state's failure to pursue a coherent industrial policy. This is important, since until the early 1930s the state supported the merchants rather than the industrialists, as can be seen in the conflicts between the merchants and the industrialists within the then semi-official İstanbul Chamber of Commerce and Industry. For cases of such a support see H. A. Şanda, *İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası 1926-1927-1928 Seneleri Faaliyet ve Muamelatına Ait Umumi Rapor* (İstanbul: ITSO, 1935), p. 68; İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası 1928 Yılı Mükerrerata (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1935) (in Ottoman script), no page given; "Millî Sanayimizin Himaye ve Teşviki," in İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası, 1928 *Kongre Raporları* (İstanbul, 1928), p. 5.
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