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### Young Turk social engineering : mass violence and the nation state in eastern Turkey, 1913-1950

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**Publication date**

2009

**Document Version**

Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Üngör, U. U. (2009). *Young Turk social engineering : mass violence and the nation state in eastern Turkey, 1913-1950*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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## 6. Culture and education in the eastern provinces

The previous chapters gave an account how, among the Ottoman political spectrum, a hybrid but powerful Turkish-nationalist group seized, monopolized, maintained, and exercised the administrative and executive power of the state to reshape society through coercion and mass violence. The violent expulsion of Balkan Muslims, the genocidal destruction of the Ottoman Armenians and Syrians, and the massacres and deportations of Kurds can be interpreted as principal vectors of the Turkish process of nation formation. How did the Young Turk regime use culture and education as vehicles of “Turkification”? So far, not much has been written on how the Young Turks perceived cultural and educational policies as vehicles for assimilation of minorities in Eastern Turkey; this chapter will present these policies as aspects of nation formation and social engineering. Starting from World War I, the Young Turks acted upon ideas to take the nationalist message ‘to the people’. Due to the war and subsequent deconcentration of power, they were not able effectively to devise and carry out grand cultural and educational projects. But after 1923, Mustafa Kemal personally took the lead to assign the culture and education offices of the single-party dictatorship to launch ambitious projects of nation formation. This chapter will explore how the party attempted to penetrate every remote cell in the country using the educational infrastructure of tens of thousands of schools in order to impose Turkish culture in Eastern Turkey. The Diyarbakir region, special because it was targeted to become “a center of Turkish culture in the East”, was infused with Turkish culture with particular care. The chapter will also address how high levels of coercion during this process produced high levels of popular resistance against government policies.

### **The Young Turk cultural revolution**

Young Turk cultural and educational policies are a hotly debated and contested terrain with fierce disagreement on their meaning, intentions, and consequences. The debate ranges from issues such as racism and cultural othering to power relations. One group of scholars argues that Young Turk policies were neither openly racist in content nor particularly successful in practice. According to one of them, “the interwar Kemalist regime lacked the resources or cadres to establish an effective educational system in this region and inculcate a Turkish identity, myths and language into the local population.”<sup>1147</sup> Another expert argues that modernization of the educational system “was one of the most important and commendable of

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<sup>1147</sup> Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p.357.

the Kemalist reforms”, one that achieved “impressive results”.<sup>1148</sup> In this beneficial and inclusivist process of “modernization”, another scholar argues, “an important factor was education, in which the Young Turks achieved their greatest successes”.<sup>1149</sup> Turkish cultural and educational policies towards the ethnic minorities in the eastern provinces (such as Kurds) in this tradition is typically explained as “acculturation”, the exchange of cultural features that results when groups come into continuous firsthand contact, leading to cultural change among both groups, but with both groups remaining distinct.<sup>1150</sup>

But a second group of scholars criticizes this approach for its alleged Turcocentric bias, regime apoloia, and the whitewashing of the symbolic violence inherent in systems of cultural domination. They argue the opposite, namely that Young Turk cultural policies were hegemonic, exclusivist, oppressive, and racist towards non-Turks.<sup>1151</sup> One sociologist uses labels such as ‘colonization’ and ‘cultural genocide’ to describe Young Turk assimilationist policies in Eastern Turkey.<sup>1152</sup> These approaches use postcolonial theory and draw upon Frantz Fanon’s accounts of French education in Algeria to explain the feelings of dependency and inadequacy that non-Turkish people experience in a state permeated by Turkish cultural nationalism. They emphasize the loss of native cultural originality and identity, and the imposition of an alien culture. This purportedly engenders an inferiority complex in the minds of minorities, who will try to appropriate and imitate the cultural code of “Turkish-nationalist cultural colonialism”.<sup>1153</sup> In this perspective, the Young Turks colonized the eastern provinces and collectively disempowered the population, subjugated their bodies, and peripheralized their economies.

How can we reconcile this sharp opposition?

This chapter will argue that most Young Turk nationalists treated Turkey’s Muslim minorities as assimilable raw ethnic material. They adhered to the epistemological thesis that individual human beings are born with no innate or built-in mental content, in a word, ‘blank’: not only was their entire resource of knowledge built up gradually from their socialization by the outside world, this socialization could be engineered from above. In other words, their ideologues considered the population fully malleable. In interwar Turkey, integral nationalism

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<sup>1148</sup> Michael Winter, “The Modernization of Education in Kemalist Turkey,” in: Jacob M. Landau (ed.), *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), pp.183-94, at pp.192-3.

<sup>1149</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.229.

<sup>1150</sup> Metin Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>1151</sup> Mustafa Çapar, “Tek Parti Dönemi: Milli Eğitim, Milli Dil ve Türkleştirme Politikaları,” in: *Türkiye’de Azınlık Hakları Sorunu: Vatandaşlık ve Demokrasi Eksenli Bir Yaklaşım* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2006), pp.83-8.

<sup>1152</sup> This argument is developed in: İsmail Beşikçi, *International Colony Kurdistan* (London: Parvana, 2004 [1990]).

<sup>1153</sup> See e.g.: Welat Zeydanlıoğlu, “Kemalism’s Others: The Reproduction of Orientalism in Turkey” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Anglia Ruskin University, 2007).

triumphed in social and political discourse, and was shared by the collective dictatorship of the party-state. But the regime abandoned its belief in sociological categories above biological ones when it came to the non-Muslims, such as Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and perhaps also Syrians. Although there were attempts to “Turkify” these groups, they were generally essentialized in their identifications and considered largely ‘unturkifiable’. Moreover, as they were privileged to maintain their own educational infrastructure, the regime had limited means to extend its reach into their schools and spread Turkish nationalism. The rest of the population, consisting of the former Muslim millet, became the object of large-scale educational and cultural policies aimed at “Turkification” – especially in the culturally diverse and historically multi-ethnic eastern provinces. This was of course a formidable task.

### *Education*

The genesis of Young Turk educational philosophy was rooted in Ziya Gökalp’s beliefs that reshaping society was necessary and desirable (see Chapter 2). Throughout the Young Turk era, Gökalp’s philosophy informed and guided government policies, even after his death.<sup>1154</sup> According to the sociologist, education should be based on the principles of “Turkism”, “Islamism”, and “Modernism”. The curriculum should include Turkish language, literature, and history, Koran recitation, catechism, the history of Islam and Islamic languages (Arabic and Persian), and mathematics, natural sciences and European languages, as well as handicrafts and gymnastics. In other words, education was to be modern in style, and Turkish in spirit.<sup>1155</sup> From his sociological observations, Gökalp drew several conclusions concerning education. He argued, “since education inculcates culture and culture is national, education must be national”. For him, the difference between plain education and national education meant that primary schooling must include “Turkish culture”. Also, a major aim of Turkish education must be to develop the youth into “idealists” with enough “national character” to be the future guiding elite of the nation.<sup>1156</sup> Gökalp’s philosophy laid out how education could be utilized as a tool of Turkification and as party ideologue of the CUP, his ideas were in power all throughout the Young Turk era.

Education as nation formation predated Kemalist rule. Although Sultan Abdulhamid’s “School for Tribes” had already tried to affiliate boys from Kurdish tribes with the regime,

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<sup>1154</sup> Ziya Gökalp, *Milli Terbiye ve Maarif Meselesi* (Ankara: Diyarbakır Tanıtma ve Turizm Derneği Yayınları, 1972).

<sup>1155</sup> Andreas M. Kazamias, *Education and the Quest for Modernity in Turkey* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p.110.

<sup>1156</sup> Gökalp, *Milli Terbiye ve Maarif Meselesi*, pp.15-6. For Gökalp’s statements on education see: Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, transl. and ed. by Niyazi Berkes), pp.236-43.

this policy was not informed by nationalist preoccupations with culture or language.<sup>1157</sup> But existing practices changed into new ones as the Young Turk accession to power heralded the era of coerced, assimilative schooling. The shift from imperial politics to identity politics affected education as the CUP attempted to use education to tie minorities deemed assimilable to Turkey and to bolster its control over the eastern provinces. Kurds and Armenians became the object of this resolve. Before World War I, the CUP allotted significant funds for schools to be opened near Van and in Kurdish villages.<sup>1158</sup> In this phase, the CUP began seeing boarding schools as effective tools to assimilate children into Turkish culture. In 1913 it ordered the Ministry of Education to establish a boarding school in Istanbul that could house dozens of Kurdish children.<sup>1159</sup> (Chapter 4 detailed how during World War I, CUP social engineers organized the forced assimilation of Armenian children in schools established for this purpose.)

The Young Turk regime not only transformed the existing Ottoman educational system into a decidedly Turkish-nationalist one, but also made serious attempts to reform the system of primary education. In 1913 a new law was passed, aimed at public support of primary schools and better organization of the program of study. The Primary Education Law (*Tedrisat-ı İptidai Kanunu*) of 1913 included compulsory and free six-year education in state schools and the limitation of class size to not more than fifty pupils. The purpose of these schools was stated as preparation for secondary education.<sup>1160</sup> Legally, this law remained in effect well after the metamorphosis of the CUP into the RPP. Although it underwent some superficial changes during the war years, it was still fundamentally the same law in the 1930s. One scholar of education in the Young Turk era underlined this continuity: “The Atatürk Revolution did not radically alter this aspect of Turkish society; rather, it solidified what was already nascent during the pre-republican decades.”<sup>1161</sup> One important example of continuity was the fate of the Academy for Civil Service. After a brief eclipse during World War I, the school reopened in 1918. In 1934 its name was changed to School of Political Sciences, two

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<sup>1157</sup> Stephen Duguid, “The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia,” in: *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.9, nr.2 (1973), pp.139-55; Eugene L. Rogan, “Asiret Mektebi: Abdulhamid II’s School for Tribes (1892-1907),” in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.28, no.1 (1996), pp.83-108; Alişan Akpınar, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Asiret Mektebi* (Istanbul: Göçebe, 1997); Bayram Kodaman, *Şark Meselesi Işığında: Sultan Abdülhamid’in Doğu Anadolu Politikası* (Istanbul: Orkun, 1983). For a study of education under Sultan Abdulhamid II see: Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>1158</sup> Michail S. Lazarev, *Kurdskii vopros (1891-1917)* (Moscow: Akademija Nauk SSSR, 1972), pp.225-6.

<sup>1159</sup> *BOA*, DH.KMS 20/49, document 2.

<sup>1160</sup> Kazamias, *Education*, p.83. After 1923 the Kemalists flew over American, Swiss, and German pedagogic experts such as John Dewey (1859-1952), George Kerschensteiner (1854-1932), and Edwin Walter Kemmerer (1875-1945), and requested them for recommendations concerning education in Turkey. Ernest Wolf-Gazo, “John Dewey in Turkey: An Educational Mission,” in: *Journal of American Studies of Turkey*, vol.3 (1996), pp.15-42.

<sup>1161</sup> Kazamias, *Education*, p.133.

years later it was moved to Ankara, and in 1950 it was attached to the University of Ankara as its Faculty of Political Sciences.<sup>1162</sup>

At the local level, too, attempts were made to modernize and “Turkify” primary and secondary education. Diyarbakir Young Turks such as Pirinçizâde Aziz Feyzi, saw in the Armenian genocide an opportunity to modernize education in Diyarbakir in a single maneuver, and continuously pressed for reforms.<sup>1163</sup> Interestingly, he also lobbied for a School of Agriculture to be established in Diyarbakir.<sup>1164</sup> The educational infrastructure of Diyarbakir Armenians was sequestered by the regime and ordered to be redistributed to Turkish children.<sup>1165</sup> These policies, confiscating the schools of the minorities and re-using them for Turkish-nationalist ends, continued from the CUP era into the Republic. The Ministry of Education profited from the sequestration of Armenian property as much as any other state organ. Thus, the Young Turk party offshoot Turkish Teachers’ Association (*Türkiye Muallimler Birliği*), which had 110 centers in the country, requested the Prime Minister’s Office that it be allotted “abandoned property”.<sup>1166</sup> Schools were named after local Young Turk heroes, thus giving birth to schools such as the Ziyâ Gökalp Lycée.

When the fledgling Young Turk movement established its Ministry of Education on 2 May 1920, it had a foundation to build on: the CUP had bequeathed them a nationalist curriculum and cadre of teachers. In July 1921, they convened a Congress on Education in Ankara with the objective of giving “a national direction to education.”<sup>1167</sup> The assemblage of such a conference in the midst of raging warfare symbolized how the Young Turks prioritized education. In the same year they held the First Convention of Education, which lasted a month and culminated in a new law. On 3 March 1924, the same day the Ankara parliament passed a law to abolish the caliphate, the Law for the Unification of Education was passed.<sup>1168</sup> It nationalized the education system by subordinating all educational institutions to the Ministry of Education. This included Islamic seminaries and schools formerly administered by private foundations, whose budgets were now integrally transferred to the Ministry. Within a decade, throughout the devastation of war, the Young Turks had assumed a monopoly of schooling

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<sup>1162</sup> Türkkeya Ataöv, “The Faculty of Political Science of Turkey,” in: *Middle East Journal*, vol.14, no.2 (1960), pp.243-5.

<sup>1163</sup> *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* (Ankara: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Basımevi, 1985), election period 1, session 2, vol.1, p.526.

<sup>1164</sup> *Ibid.*, p.299.

<sup>1165</sup> *BOA*, DH.HMŞ 12/25.

<sup>1166</sup> *BCA*, 030.10/140.3.3, Turkish Teachers’ Association to Prime Ministry, 4 September 1341.

<sup>1167</sup> Yahya Akyüz, “Atatürk ve 1921 Eğitim Kongresi,” in: *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Eğitim* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1983), p.89.

<sup>1168</sup> *Resmî Gazete*, 6 March 1924.

over other religious, private, and foreign schools. All children in the country now fell under their educational policies.<sup>1169</sup>

For the time being, the Ministry saw as its main responsibility to administer that part of the existing system which was at that particular time under Kemalist military jurisdiction. The Ankara government estimated in 1921 that there were 2345 schools in thirty-nine provinces with 2861 teachers (2384 of whom were male and 477 female). Of these schools, 581 were known to be closed, and only 875 teachers were graduates of pedagogical academies.<sup>1170</sup> Efforts to organize the new Ministry of Education branched into four general directorates, each having one chairman and two clerks. These four administrative units dealt with primary education, secondary education, statistics, and most importantly, culture. This is where Gökalp's philosophy met Young Turk policy: culture and education were seen to be inextricably intertwined. In addition, there was a three-man Inspectorate and a seven-man Board of Curriculum Development. Collectively, the Ministry was assigned to implement the Kemalist government's educational program.<sup>1171</sup> In the face of rampant misery including war, famine, poverty, and epidemics causing sky-high mortality, plus a workforce of demoralized teachers most of whom had not been paid in more than six months, it nevertheless formulated the following strategies: "Our children's education must be more religious and nationalistic; We must revitalize our schools and cultural institutions according to scientific and modern principles; We must prepare new school books fitting our national spirit, and our historic, geographic and social character."<sup>1172</sup>

The application of nationalist principles and doctrine was at the forefront of Young Turk educational practices. As such, education was the centerpiece of the Republican People's Party's political platform for the "internal colonization" (*dahili kolonizasyon*) of the eastern provinces. Throughout the Kemalist era, education served two purposes: Turkification and the spread of the regime's propaganda.<sup>1173</sup> This was of such importance that Mustafa Kemal personally spearheaded the national campaign for education. In his opening speech to the 1921 Congress on Education, the general outlined his vision for the future of Turkish education:

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<sup>1169</sup> For a lengthy monograph on education in Turkey see: Osman Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi* (Istanbul: Eser, 1977), 5 volumes.

<sup>1170</sup> İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, *Eğitim Yolu ile Canlandırılacak Köy* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1947), pp.259-60.

<sup>1171</sup> İlhan Başgöz & Howard E. Wilson, *Educational Problems in Turkey 1920-1940* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p.38.

<sup>1172</sup> Nevzat Ayas, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Millî Eğitimi* (Ankara: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1948), p.122.

<sup>1173</sup> Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde*, pp.239-40.

Although we are at war and our resources must be spent on the war effort, we should still try to formulate carefully a national educational policy for the post-war period. By this policy I mean a culture fitting for our national and historical character, completely separate from all influences from both the East and the West, and far from influences foreign to our own character.<sup>1174</sup>

The aim, according to Kemal, was “to create a Turkish youth strong enough to battle other nations.”<sup>1175</sup> Three years after the Congress, Kemal expounded this approach and dismissed “religious education” and “international education” in favor of “national education”. The latter would be adopted to create “a new generation in the New Turkish Republic.”<sup>1176</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, Mustafa Kemal launched himself and was presented as the “Chief Teacher” who would lead the nation into learning. In one classic photograph Kemal is seen wearing a dark suit, pointing at a blackboard to explain the new Latin alphabet to the locals.

Whether out of true conviction or political appeasement, in reality Atatürk had trusted followers who supported his enthusiasm and echoed his cries for a nationalist education. İsmet İnönü repeated his superior in a speech about his interpretation of ‘national education’. Speaking of Turkish society, he complained that “the people still do not exhibit the appearance of a monolithic (*mütecanis*) nation.” A new generation needed to be moulded in order for “the political Turkish nation fully to become a cultural, mental and societal Turkish nation.” According to İnönü, “foreign cultures need to melt into this monolithic nation... there can be no other cultures in this nation... if we are to live, we shall live as a monolithic nation. That is the general aim for the system we call national education.”<sup>1177</sup> If this was not clear enough language, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya particularized this approach in parliament:

No matter what happens, it is our obligation to immerse those living in our society in the civilization of Turkish society and to have them benefit from the prosperity of civilization. Why should we still speak of the Kurd Mehmet, the Circassian Hasan or the Laz Ali. This would demonstrate the weakness of the dominant element... *If anybody has any difference inside him, we need to erase that in the schools and in the body politic*, so that man will be as Turkish as me and serve the homeland.<sup>1178</sup>

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<sup>1174</sup> *Cumhurbaşkanları, Başbakanlar ve Millî Eğitim Bakanlarının Millî Eğitimle İlgili Söylev ve Demeçleri* (Ankara: Türk Devrim Tarihi Enstitüsü, 1946), vol.1, p.4.

<sup>1175</sup> Hasan Ali Yücel, *Millî Eğitimle İlgili Söylev ve Demeçler* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1993), p.118.

<sup>1176</sup> *Atatürkçülük (Birinci Kitap) Atatürk'ün Görüş ve Direktifleri* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1988), p.290.

<sup>1177</sup> Minister of Education Esat Sagay speaking on 13 December 1931, quoted in: Hasan Ali Yücel, *Türkiye’de Orta Öğretim* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1994), p.25.

<sup>1178</sup> *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi*, vol.2, session 71 (21 June 1934), p.249.

As the message trickled down through the bureaucracy, it seemed to radicalize. Soon lower-level officials of the Ministry of Education personnel were witnessed delivering lectures in which they formulated theories that “the Turkish school is obliged to transform every Turkish child into an thoroughly useful Turkish citizen who has fully grasped the psychology and ideology of the Republic, the Turkish Nation, and the Turkish Republic.”<sup>1179</sup> The ostensible homogeneity and purity of the nation was not a conjunctural but a structural aspect of Young Turk ideology. Well into World War II, the Minister of Education called for educational policies that would create “a Turkish youth in a... homogeneous nation” (*mütecanis bir millet*), crafted by an elite that would “govern the country with the exact sciences.”<sup>1180</sup> This combination of watchwords represented Young Turk social engineering in its purest form: scientism needed to usher population policies towards the long-term fantasy of total ethnic homogeneity.

How could this policy of homogenization be reconciled with the realities of diversity in the eastern provinces? The reports written by veteran Young Turk social engineers in 1925 provided ample reference to the ends education would aspire in the eastern provinces. Mustafa Abdülhalik Renda pleaded for “special relevance to be accorded to education... in order to teach Turkish and revert inclinations to Kurdishness back to Turkishness.” Cemil Uybadın’s report stated that “a strong national organization and educational propaganda will wipe out notions of Kurdishness.”<sup>1181</sup>

According to a report by the Republican People’s Party, the aim of education was to “create a unitary people, with a single mother tongue, and a single ideal.” Such a policy had to make sure that minorities would “feel Turkish... and exhibit no loyalty to any other nation,” and this had to be “engraved (*nakşedilmesi*) into their minds”. Policies had to “melt them into the Turkish nation and have them *forget* their ethnic particularities (*kavmi hususiyetlerini unutturmak*)... never to *remember* their old ethnicity again and fully appropriate them for Turkishness”.<sup>1182</sup> These general plans served as the official planning documents for policy-making dealing with Kurdish issues. Further directives by the Ministry of Education provided more precise criteria for education: “Students need to be raised with fully republican and

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<sup>1179</sup> Esat Sagay, “Son Yapılan Teftiş Neticesi Hakkında Talimat,” in: Hasan Ali Yücel, *Türkiye’de Orta Öğretim* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1994), pp.364-5.

<sup>1180</sup> Nuran Dağlı & Belma Aktürk (eds.) *Hükümetler ve Programları, vol.I, 1920-1960* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1988), p.105.

<sup>1181</sup> Mehmet Bayrak (ed.), *Kürtler ve Ulusal-Demokratik Mücadeleleri: Gizli Belgeler - Araştırmalar - Notlar* (Ankara: Özge, 1993), pp.460, 475.

<sup>1182</sup> Faik Bulut, *Kürt Sorununa Çözüm Arayışları* (Istanbul: Ozan, 1998), pp.174, 179-182, 185, italics added. The emphasis on remembrance and oblivion speaks volumes. Identity and memory are closely related, and the Young Turk incursion into Eastern Turkey was profoundly a project of memory: forgetting Armenian and Kurdish pasts and inhabiting Turkish identities and futures.

nationalist sentiments; Teachers need to pursue the aim of realizing the national ideals and purposes; Teachers need to consider the Turkish Nation as an indivisible whole and... work as a cultural agent for its development and progress.”<sup>1183</sup> In other words, teachers who were sent to the eastern provinces were commissioned as missionaries of “Turkishness”. Their duty was to transmit not only knowledge but also ideology and national culture. But in the face of significant cultural difference, the transmission of national culture was a formidable challenge, which many teachers attempted to compensate with zeal. One teacher recalled about his duty in the eastern provinces that “nationalist sentiments were really excessive.”<sup>1184</sup>

Initially, exhortations by top government officials were no more than a cloud of propaganda designed to impress friend and foe, but a glance at the curricula taught to children under Kemalism shows that their ideas were soon translated into reality. The curriculum of the elementary schools included the following subjects: Turkish language, history, geography, civics, natural sciences, mathematics, writing, music (only in urban schools), study of the environment, drawing and manual work, agriculture (only in rural schools), physical education (only in urban schools) and domestic science. The largest single block of time was devoted to Turkish language: 28% of the total weekly class periods in the urban, and 30 % in the rural schools.<sup>1185</sup> In practice, the latter figure was even higher in the eastern provinces, where most pupils started school without any significant knowledge of the Turkish language. The curriculum of the secondary schools envisaged performing the tasks of “developing national consciousness and the feeling of patriotism, protecting the values of Turkish culture and history and following the principles of the reforms, respecting the constitution of the Turkish Republic and its laws, protecting Turkey’s natural resources and understanding the importance of science and the scientific method in the development and improvement of life, and improving the ability to read, write, and speak the Turkish language correctly.”<sup>1186</sup> These revolutionary plans were most saliently echoed in the curriculum of the lycées, which stated point blank that the lycée needed “to train a Turk who is committed to the Turkish language, the principles and policies of the Turkish revolution and in general to Turkish ideals.” Being Turkish was thus the most important feature of primary education. “Turkishness” was not a matter of modesty, as attested to in the aim of the history courses. These were “to teach the student that our race has been a leader in civilization.”<sup>1187</sup>

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<sup>1183</sup> Nevzad Ayas, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Millî Eğitimi: Kuruluşlar ve Tarihçeler* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1948), pp.338-9.

<sup>1184</sup> Necdet Sakaoğlu, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Eğitim Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Cep Üniversitesi, 1993), p.95.

<sup>1185</sup> *Millî Eğitimle İlgili Kanunlar* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1953), pp.931-52.

<sup>1186</sup> *Orta Okul Programı* (Ankara: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1949), pp.5-6.

<sup>1187</sup> Hasan Ali Yücel, *Türkiye’de Orta Öğretim* (İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1938), p.198.

It is hardly surprising that the set of principles guiding Turkish education in the 1930s was thoroughly nationalist. This, after all, was the characteristic outlook sweeping across the European continent in the interbellum. What made the Turkish case particularly striking was the totalitarian and militaristic nature of primary and secondary education. Although the Young Turk officers had taken off their uniforms, military ethics were too deeply imbibed to be bothered by liberal ideas on education. In one of his speeches on education Mustafa Kemal declaimed: “Teachers! The victory won by our army only laid the groundwork for the victory to be won by your army. The real victory will be achieved by you. I and all my friends will follow you with absolute faith and will crush all the obstacles you may come across in your path.”<sup>1188</sup> His idea of using army sergeants as village teachers later translated into the idea of the village educators. According to Kemal, “just as the army is a school, so is the school an army.”<sup>1189</sup> During this period military training was added to the curriculum of secondary schools. The textbooks used in these classes were a conjunction of ethnic nationalism and militarism. They addressed the student as follows:

YOU ARE A TURK! You are from the greatest nation on the face of the earth... Be aware that, in the eyes of other nations, their first example, support, and advice is your nation, THE GREAT TURKISH NATION.

YOU ARE A TURK! Twelve thousand years ago, when other nations on the planet were living like savages in caves, the civilization your grandfathers established in the heart of your native land CENTRAL ASIA bedazzled everyone. It was your ancestors who brought prosperity and civilization to the world, who brought down horses from mountains like lambs, who mounted them and crossed mountains, leaving other bewildered cave-dwelling nations looking at your nation, THE GREAT TURKISH NATION.

YOU ARE A TURK! You are an unbending, lion-hearted son of the greatest nation that will ever walk the face of the earth! ... There is no nation that can twist your arm or bow your head. First and foremost, be aware of this and keep your spirit strong and your head up as we will teach you your nation’s spotless history. Do not even give in an inch to the enemies of the Turkish homeland and your Turkish character... YOU ARE A TURK!<sup>1190</sup>

As an ideological paradigm, the Atatürk myth was so dominant it outlived Young Turk rule. In the classroom, Kemal was omnipresent in everything he represented. After his death, İnönü too became a role model in the school. A 1941 textbook boasted: “İnönü is at the head of the Turkish Nation, İnönü is at the front of the Turkish Nation. We follow him, we do as he

<sup>1188</sup> *Cumhurbaşkanları, Başbakanlar ve Millî Eğitim Bakanlarının Millî Eğitimle İlgili Söylev ve Demeçleri*, vol.1, p.7.

<sup>1189</sup> Kadri Yaman, *Yurt Müdafasında Türk Gençliği* (Istanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1938), p.40.

<sup>1190</sup> From the 1934 *Textbook of the Soldier (Askerin Ders Kitabı)*, quoted in: Tanıl Bora, “Ordu ve Milliyetçilik,” in: Ahmet İnel & Ali Bayramoğlu (eds.), *Bir Zümre, Bir Parti: Türkiye’de Ordu* (Istanbul: Birikim, 2004), pp.163-78, at p.165.

orders, we walk the path he points to. He tells us the truth, he makes us walk the right path. We are carrying out our historical and national duties under his command... In order to fulfill his duty for the Turkish Nation every Turk needs to fix his eyes on the Great Chief's, on İnönü's finger."<sup>1191</sup>

This was not hollow rhetoric. The whole system of education was highly centralized and policy making and school administration were conducted and regulated at the ministerial level.<sup>1192</sup> From their desks in Ankara, the Ministry appointed teachers and principals, appropriated money, and sent out its inspectors, who would report any observed irregularities. The tight, top-down bureaucratic control over the schools is typified further by the fact that administration and supervision of the schools were minutely prescribed by regulations issued by the central office.<sup>1193</sup> Foreign observers wrote about the stifling government control and regulation of schools: "It is difficult to imagine a system in which less opportunity is given for individual schools and teachers to exercise initiative, and in which all changes and adjustments must come from a place as remote from the real school situation."<sup>1194</sup> In the classrooms of Kemalist Turkey too, authoritarian culture reigned supreme. Visiting educators from abroad frequently commented on and criticized what was an authoritarian, formal, and rigid classroom atmosphere where no free discussion took place, especially in light of the taboos imposed and maintained by the regime. Teachers controlled and directed most classroom activities, whereas pupils memorized and merely recited what they had "learned" from their textbooks. Particularly at the level of the lycées, instruction consisted of lectures by the teacher and recitation by the students, who would repeat memorized parts from textbooks in answer to simple, general questions by the teacher.<sup>1195</sup> All in all, education in the Young Turk era, authoritarian in form and nationalist in content, served primarily as a vehicle for nation formation. The regime hoped to stamp out ethnic differences in the eastern provinces through its vast infrastructure of obligatory education.

### *Culture*

In the Young Turk conscience, education and culture were two sides of the same coin. Not for nothing, in the Kemalist state the 'Cultural Affairs' desk fell under the jurisdiction of the

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<sup>1191</sup> Hasan Ali Yücel, *Milli Eğitimle İlgili Söylev ve Demeçler* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1993), pp.128-9.

<sup>1192</sup> M. Tunç Özelli, "The Evolution of the Formal Educational System and its Relation to Economic Growth Policies in the First Turkish Republic," in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.5, no.1 (1974), pp.77-92.

<sup>1193</sup> Kazamias, *Education*, pp.120-1.

<sup>1194</sup> Richard E. Maynard, "The Rise and its Curriculum in the Turkish Educational System" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1961), p.103.

<sup>1195</sup> Kazamias, *Education*, pp.154-5.

Ministry of Education, and only later was a Ministry of Culture developed. Among the many “revolutions” Mustafa Kemal presided over, several were related to culture: besides general Turkification in the cultural field, two 1934 laws prescribed European dress (such as the famous top hat), and abolished all titles and appellations, such as religious and tribal ones.<sup>1196</sup> For the Young Turk social engineers, their reference point for cultural policies was again Ziya Gökalp. Ever since the ideologue had espoused Turkish nationalism, he argued that the life of the new Turkish nation must be drawn from a rediscovery of the indigenous Turkish culture: its traditions, values, and spirit. Nation formation, according to Gökalp, was the product of the political elite’s consciousness of its own distinct culture, which he defined as “the integrated system of religious, moral, legal, intellectual, aesthetic, linguistic, economic, and technological spheres of life.”<sup>1197</sup> By situating culture at the focal point of the nation-formation process, the sociologist set the tone for years of cultural policy.

Ziya Gökalp’s philosophy was influential and widely discussed among the Young Turk intelligentsia. The development of Turcology - the study of Turkish languages, history, and culture – in Europe, and the immigration to Turkey of educated Tatars from the Russian Empire had given birth to the establishment of the first Turkish Society in Istanbul in 1908. Its objectives were defined as “studying the ancient remains, history, languages, literatures, ethnography and ethnology, social conditions and present civilizations of the Turks, and the ancient and modern geography of the Turkish lands.”<sup>1198</sup> In 1912 Gökalp joined the editorial board of the society’s organ, *Turkish Homeland*, and published many cultural and political articles on the newly discovered Turkishness. Associated with the journal was another club called the Turkish Hearths (*Türk Ocakları*). This organization was established on 25 March 1912 in Istanbul. Its aims were “to work for the perfection of the Turkish race and language and for the progress of the national education, and the scientific, sociological, and economic level of the Turks.”<sup>1199</sup> Through “social revolution” it intended to rebuild a completely new society based on “Turkishness” and social scientific principles imported from Europe. The Turkish Hearths quickly spread to other cities and became entwined with the CUP regime. The most obvious link between the two organizations was the person of Gökalp, a prominent member of both. At establishment he was voted into the Committee for Culture with an overwhelming majority of votes. Throughout World War I, the Hearths generally worked with

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<sup>1196</sup> Law nr.2596, “Bazı Kisvelerin Giyilemiyeceğine Dair Kanun,” of 3 December 1934, published in: *Düstur*, set 3, vol.16, p.24, and in: *Resmi Gazete*, no.2879 (13 December 1934).

<sup>1197</sup> Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism*, p.245.

<sup>1198</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.343.

<sup>1199</sup> François Georgeon, “Les Foyers Turcs à l’époque kémaliste (1923-1931),” in: *Turcica*, vol.XIV (1982), pp.168-215.

the CUP on all of its policies, including the persecution of Christian minorities and forced assimilation of Muslim minorities. After Gökalp had consolidated his position in the organization, nation formation as a project to be taken ‘to the people’ became more pronounced. The Hearths were to induce an “awakening” of the Turks and approach them “with the sacrificial dedication and devotion like missionaries.” When Gökalp gave a speech at the Turkish Hearth in Adana on 10 April 1923, he advocated the spread of Turkish culture in the eastern provinces. When Mustafa Kemal spoke to villagers in the same Turkish Hearth and the peasants exhibited a negligible knowledge of Turkish history, Kemal assigned the Hearths with task of “introducing the Turks to themselves.”<sup>1200</sup>

Discussions on what constituted Turkishness were divided, with the best part of the Hearth cadre siding with Gökalp’s culturalist ideas. During the First General Congress in 1924 Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver) posed the question: “Do you want a Turkishness based on race and blood? Are you going to draw blood and send it to chemists for analysis, they will say it consists of 5% Armenian, 16% Russian, and who knows what percentage Circassian, Albanian, and Turkish blood. You have to choose one of the two paths. Either you accept race, or culture.”<sup>1201</sup> The model of biologicistic racism was quickly abandoned for that of cultural socialization. However, cultural touchstones presented an equally difficult task in defining a nation. But however hard it was for the members of the Hearths to define what Turkishness really was, and who a Turk really was, consensus was very soon reached on what Turkishness was definitely *not*. According to one researcher, Gökalp would visit the Hearths and infuse his ideas to the youth with particular zeal. During these discussions, his greatest fear was not the threat of alternative nationalisms but the “menace” of individualism. One of the major conclusions of the 1924 Congress was the outspoken definition of the “enemies of Turkishness.” These were “those who support the ideology of Ottomanism, intellectual cosmopolitanists, and internationalists.”<sup>1202</sup> Thus, positive definitions were antedated and perhaps even supplanted by negative ones. This was a highly significant development. The incipient definition of Turkishness was based primarily on exclusionary criteria, which were much clearer in the Young Turk mind than the ambivalent and uncertain inclusionary criteria that required more precision and further crafting.

Young Turk support for the Turkish Hearths was incessant. As early as 1924 Mustafa Kemal had declared that “all of the nation’s future hopes are directed towards the Turkish

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<sup>1200</sup> Füsün Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus-Devlete Türk Milliyetçiliği: Türk Ocakları (1912-1931)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1997), pp.100, 126, 168.

<sup>1201</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.152-3.

<sup>1202</sup> “Türk Ocakları Kongresi,” in: *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 30 April 1924, no.110.

youth who have gathered around the Turkish Hearths.”<sup>1203</sup> During the 1927 congress, one delegate proposed to work closely with the government “since these principles essentially exist in their ideas as well.”<sup>1204</sup> The building for the Hearth’s central committee was erected in the Cağaloğlu district of European Istanbul on an “abandoned” Armenian cemetery. It was constructed in 1926 and opened on 21 March 1927 by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, himself a staunch member of the Turkish Hearths since 1917.<sup>1205</sup> Ziyâ Gökalp was buried in the courtyard, which has become a place of pilgrimage for Turkish nationalists ever since. In the interwar era the Ministry of Education supported the Turkish Hearths and more and more overlap appeared in membership lists of the RPP and the Hearths. For example, Justice Minister Mahmut Esat Bozkurt was elected chairman, and Kütahya deputy (later RPP chairman) Recep Peker became vice-chairman. From 1925 to 1926 the Hearths grew from 135 to 217 branches as membership rose to 30,000. By 1930, there were 255 branches of the Hearths in Turkey, a growth which had been registered especially in the Eastern provinces. At that point, Mustafa Kemal no longer saw reason to leave the Hearths to operate independently from the party and disbanded them, reorganizing and renaming them the People’s Houses (*Halkevleri*).<sup>1206</sup> These developments of closer collaboration and more organic links between the Turkish Hearths and the RPP concluded the marriage between the power center of the single-party state and the ideological nexus of Young Turk nationalism.

The purpose of the People’s Houses was “to bridge the gap between the intelligentsia and people by teaching the former the national culture of the Anatolian masses and the latter the rudiments of civilization and indoctrination of the nationalist secular ideas of the Republican regime.”<sup>1207</sup> Whereas İnönü emphasized that “the People’s Houses are not political institutions but social and cultural ones,”<sup>1208</sup> Şükrü Kaya explained the establishment of the Houses as follows: “The People’s House was established to spread, intensify, and

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<sup>1203</sup> “Türk Ocakları Kongresi,” in: *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 30 April 1924, no.110.

<sup>1204</sup> *Türk Ocakları Üçüncü Kurultayı Zabıtları* (İstanbul: Kader, 1927), pp.196-7.

<sup>1205</sup> Üstel, *Türk Ocakları*, pp.230-1.

<sup>1206</sup> Kemal Karpat, “The People’s Houses in Turkey: Establishment and Growth,” in: *Middle East Journal*, vol.17 (1963), pp.55-67.

<sup>1207</sup> Arzu Öztürkmen, “The Role of People’s Houses in the Making of National Culture in Turkey,” in: *New Perspectives on Turkey*, vol.11 (1994), pp.159-81; Anıl Çeçen, *Halkevleri: Atatürk’ün Kültür Kurumu* (Ankara: Gündoğan, 1990); Neşe G. Yeşilkaya, *Halkevleri: İdeoloji ve Mimarlık* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1999); Sefa Şimşek, *Bir İdeolojik Seferberlik Deneyimi Halkevleri 1932-1951* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2002); Şerafettin Zeyrek, *Türkiye’de Halkevleri ve Halkodaları* (Ankara: Anı, 2006); Adem Kara, *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Kalkanmanın Mihenk Taşı: Halkevleri 1932-1951* (Ankara: 24 Saat, 2006); “The Halkevi: The Turkish People’s House,” in: *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vol.1 (1944), pp.21-2; Robert Mantran, “Les ‘Maisons du Peuple’ en Turquie,” in: *Revue d’Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes* (1963), pp.21-28. The concept ‘indoctrination’ is here literally translated from the Franco-Turkish ‘endoktrinasyon’. Indoctrination is distinguished from education by the fact that the indoctrinated person (the student) is expected not to question or critically examine the doctrine they have learned. Based on this definition, it may well be possible to argue that education in the Young Turk era included indoctrinatory aspects.

<sup>1208</sup> İsmet İnönü, “Yeni Halkevlerini Açma Nutku,” in: *Ülkü*, vol.5, no.25 (March 1935), p.2.

ingrain the principles of the Atatürk revolution among the people. In this regard, one should call them the homes for cultural broadcasting and protection of the revolution.”<sup>1209</sup> In other words, while intending to stimulate more national integration of the various social strata in Turkey, the challenge at hand came to be projected as a top-down affair to educate a population consisting for three quarters of illiterate peasants. In official propaganda texts the People’s Houses were “organizations of mass education and culture, run by the committee of culture of the Republican People’s Party.”<sup>1210</sup> To this end, the Houses were organized into nine branches covering a whole range of cultural phenomena: language, history and literature; fine arts; dramatic art; sports; social assistance; popular lessons and courses; libraries and publications; museums and exhibitions; village life.<sup>1211</sup> Within months, the reach of the Party spread deep into the country, including the provincial peripheries of the East. Under full control of the regime, the number of People’s Houses rose from 14 in 1932 to 479 in 1950.<sup>1212</sup> The relevance of the People’s Houses in the nation-formation process launched by the Young Turks can hardly be overstated. For the first time in history, a uniform canon of culture was being spread all over the country. How the Houses functioned in daily life and how the population perceived these policies will be treated for Diyarbakir province below.

Gökalp’s glaring disrespect for anything tribal and Arab and his portrayal of Kurds as noble savages fit for nothing but cultural assimilation was shared by a wide range of Young Turk intellectuals and political leaders. The Turkish Hearths discussions are most noteworthy for their production of a colonial and aggressively assimilationist discourse on the multi-ethnic, predominantly Kurdish eastern provinces. One of its ideologues, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, wanted the Turkish Hearth emissaries to be sent primarily to “certain regions where the national culture has not developed yet” and added that regions such as Sivas, Konya, İzmir, and Adana had “already understood the significance and meaning of Turkishness.” It was not necessary to “Turkify” these regions.<sup>1213</sup> That the eastern provinces were special and therefore needed special treatment was forcefully argued by Mehmet Emin Erişirgil, who emphasized that the Turkish Hearths had a different mission in the eastern provinces: “The reinforcement of national unity, the spread of Turkish culture, the diffusion of the real and pure Turkish language in the eastern provinces is a vital field of activity for the Hearths.”<sup>1214</sup> The differential treatment for the two different regions produced inspection

<sup>1209</sup> Şükrü Kaya, “Halkevlerinin Açılış Konferansı,” in: *Ülkü*, vol.11, no.61 (March 1938), p.9.

<sup>1210</sup> *Public Instruction in the Republic of Turkey* (Ankara: Press Department of the Ministry of the Interior, 1936), p.59.

<sup>1211</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60; *C.H.P. Halkevleri Talimatnamesi* (Ankara: Hâkimiyeti Milliye Matbaası, 1932).

<sup>1212</sup> Cevat Dursunoğlu, “Halkevlerinin 18. Yıldönümü Konuşması,” in: *Ülkü*, vol.4, no.39 (March 1950), p.1.

<sup>1213</sup> *Türk Ocakları Üçüncü Kurultayı Zabıtları* (İstanbul: Kader, 1927), p.255.

<sup>1214</sup> Mehmet Emin, “Türk Ocakları,” in: *Hayat*, vol.1, no.2 (14 April 1927), p.381.

reports for the Eastern provinces that included passages such as: “We considered it a duty to attribute a special significance to the Eastern half of the homeland.” The Central Committee of the Turkish Hearths during their second meeting of the 1927 Congress had agreed that the eastern branches had to work with special care towards Turkification through language schools and “special conferences”. Only the growing convergence between the Hearths and the RPP could enable this. Tanrıöver declared that the Hearths and the government were in principal “struggling for the same objective,” adding that “the East is an issue that our government, with its colossal apparatus and various organizations, is handling with great care. We too are concerned with the East and we are organized to approach the same issue.”<sup>1215</sup> By 1931, the spread of Turkish culture and language in the East had become a priority, and even an obsession.

The key discursive device which the Kemalist center employed to represent their relationship with the Kurdish periphery was ‘civilization’ (*medeniyet*). The non-Turkish population of the eastern provinces was looked down upon as primitive and inferior, fit for colonial rule by a Turkish master nation which operated in the name of progress and rationality. They were viewed, moreover, as inherently treacherous and anti-Turkish, and hence as threats to security against which Turkish state and army personnel had to be permanently on guard. In the period after 1931 official discourse acquired a particularly denigrating and racist undertone towards Kurds, among others. *Cumhuriyet*, the mouthpiece of the Kemalist party-state, wrote about Kurds that “they allow their emotions and brains to be led by simple instincts like ordinary animals and therefore can only think crudely and foolishly... there is absolutely no difference between African barbarians and cannibals and these creatures who mix raw meat with cracked wheat and eat it just like that.”<sup>1216</sup> In a series of articles, the nationalist journalist Yusuf Mazhar wrote about Kurds,

Even though they may be more capable than the redskins in the United States, they are – history is my witness – endlessly bloodthirsty and cruel... They are completely bereft of positive feelings and civilized manners. For centuries, they have been a plague for our race... Under Russian rule they were prohibited to descend from the mountains, where they did not lead humane and civilized lives, therefore these creatures are really not inclined to profit from civilization... In my opinion, the dark spirit, crude mental state, and ruthless manners of this Kurdish rabble is impossible to break.<sup>1217</sup>

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<sup>1215</sup> *Türk Ocakları 1927 Senesi Kurultayı Zabıtları* (Ankara: n.p., 1928), p.122.

<sup>1216</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 13 July 1930, p.4.

<sup>1217</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 18, 19, and 20 August 1930, p.3.

The racist code words and imagery that accompanied nation formation in Eastern Turkey were often exceedingly graphic and contemptuous. The Young Turks consistently emphasized the nonhuman nature of the Kurds, routinely turning to images of “savages” and “barbarians” to convey this. They portrayed the Kurds as inherently inferior men and women who had to be understood in terms of primitivism, childishness, and collective mental, intellectual, and emotional deficiency. It is important to recognize at this point that this was a clear departure from pre-existing Ottoman-patriotic or Muslim-nationalist attitudes towards Kurds, both of which had included them in the imagined community. But why did the Young Turks dehumanize the Kurds? Firstly, there were genuine concerns for the repercussions that the (dis)loyalty of the ethnically Kurdish population could have for state security. A second possible explanation could be that such an attitudinal climate was necessary for (and would prove to be highly conducive to) the harsh treatment of the civilian population of the East and the committing of violence against them. These ideas substantiated the belief that the Kurds were a contemptible and treacherous foe who deserved no mercy on the battlefield.

Philosophizing about the eastern provinces as culturally “Turkified” territory obviously did not bring about this fantasy. Action plans without teeth were mere blueprints with little impact on the real world; policy-making was needed. The veil on how the culturally distinct peoples would be treated was briefly lifted by Mustafa Kemal in an early speech: “Nowadays there are citizens and compatriots within the political and sociological Turkish nation who have been subjected to propaganda of Kurdism, Circassianism, and even Lazism and Bosniakism.”<sup>1218</sup> Later he elaborated somewhat and called for “the necessity of struggling against all foreign elements and the full enthusiasm for national thinking when raising our children.” According to Kemal this required “the indoctrination of the necessity of defending the nation with violence and self-sacrifice against all contrary ideas.”<sup>1219</sup> Kemal thus dismissed the reality of ethnic difference and promised harsh action against non-Turkish cultures, but again left the detailed planning of population policies in the eastern provinces to his diligent subordinates. Social engineers such as Mustafa Abdülhalik Renda had clearly stipulated in the first government reports on the eastern provinces that Kurds needed “to be forced to become Turkish.” Cemil Uybadın was relentless in advocating cultural measures in the East:

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<sup>1218</sup> Nimet Arsan (ed.), *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1959-1964), vol.II, p.72.

<sup>1219</sup> *Atatürkçülük (Birinci Kitap) Atatürk'ün Görüş ve Direktifleri* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1988), p.296.

In reality the Eastern territories are under the influence of Kurdism... The people are very attached to their language and nationality. The intellectuals are all Kurdish nationalists. We need to work consciously for the destruction of... the ideal and movement of Kurdism in the eastern territories and prevent it from effusing into the area west of the Euphrates... [The region] has to be turned into a battlefield with a strong organization of education, Hearths, sports, and youth groups, and through the press, schools, theatre, national and general plays the national sentiments of the people and Turkish traditions need to be invigorated.<sup>1220</sup>

The martial metaphors suggesting that the eastern provinces were a theater of war were not idle. Chief of Staff Marshal Fevzi Çakmak personally went on an inspection tour through the eastern provinces and on return to Ankara gave orders to the Turkish Hearths headquarters: “I want you to strengthen the Hearths in the East.”<sup>1221</sup> During the Sheikh Said rebellion İnönü predicted: “Nationality is our only instrument of adhesion. The other elements are not vested with any power in the face of the Turkish majority. It is our duty to render Turkish everybody in the Turkish homeland, no matter what. We will cut out and throw out the elements that oppose Turks and Turkism.”<sup>1222</sup> Moral or practical protests against these ambitious plans were easily dismissed. When during the fifth congress of the Turkish Hearths a delegate argued that coercing people to become Turkish would meet with resistance, delegate Besim Atalay waived the objections away and answered: “Nations are like organisms. They cannot live if they do not eat. You have to kill, you have to kill in order to live.” Delegates muttered approvingly.<sup>1223</sup> These politicians and ideologues believed in the nationalist version of social Darwinism, wherein competition between nations (and not individuals) drives social evolution in human societies.

A major acceleration in the cultural “Turkification” of the eastern provinces to which the Kemalists aspired developed in 1934. Parliamentary discussions during the drafting of the Settlement Law (see Chapter 5) revolved around the notion of culture. The draft read that the law would operate to “assimilate those who have stayed distant from Turkish culture.” The government would be vested with “all types of authority” and would “melt those who have not set their hearts on the Turkish flag... into Turkish culture and tie them more strongly to the homeland”. The objects of the law were “those from a different language and culture,” who were to become the focus of cultural policies to ensure “that they thoroughly melt into

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<sup>1220</sup> Bayrak, *Kürtler*, pp.462, 468, 475-6.

<sup>1221</sup> Üstel, *Türk Ocakları*, p.236, footnote 336.

<sup>1222</sup> *Vakit*, 27 April 1925, no.2632.

<sup>1223</sup> *Türk Ocakları 1928 Senesi Kurultayı Zabıtları* (Ankara: Türk Ocakları Matbaası, 1929), pp.123-4, 151-2.

Turkish culture and become dough inside the great Turkishness”.<sup>1224</sup> The metaphor of human beings as dough kneaded into shape aptly captures how the political elite saw the population. The kneading would guarantee that within a few generations the “dough” would have “risen” and “baked”: it would definitively become “solid” and homogeneous, never to revert to heterogeneity again. The path from “dough” to “bread” was envisioned as a one-way journey. The establishment of the People’s Houses across the country and the effectuation of the directives in the 1934 Settlement Law delineated the limitations and circumstances under which local authorities would conduct the mission of cultural “Turkification” in the East. Again, Diyarbekir would occupy a special place in this process.

### **The nation in the province: culture and education in Diyarbekir**

The main pillar of this policy was regular state-sponsored education, which was also seen as a cultural mission. Government programs stipulated under the paragraph for “Education” that “in accordance with the Chief’s directives, a cultural center will be launched in our eastern region.”<sup>1225</sup> The 1924 Law for the Unification of Education and the ensuing blanket laicization were frontal attacks on old and established forms of education among the various population groups in Diyarbekir province. These were the seminaries of the Syrians (*madrashto*) and the Kurds (*medrese*). The Kemalist Ministry of Education set out proactively to eradicate these centers of education which it considered “backward”, “fundamentalist”, “feudal”, and “reactionary”. One of the official tasks of the Inspectorate-General, based in Diyarbekir city, was indeed to employ “idealist and strong teachers... to educate Kurdish children based on Turkish culture and the principles of assimilation”.<sup>1226</sup> This was not entirely new. What was remarkable and recognizable was that education, like other forms of population politics, was a bifurcated process. Besides top-down orders and directives from the Party, local elites often took the initiative to propose suggestions on education in their respective provinces. In the adjacent province of Urfa, for example, a Committee for Enlightenment and Education drafted an educational program on “the importance and necessity of national education in schools”. The scheme included the following principles: “to enlighten the people about the saviors and elders of Turkey and their services to the

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<sup>1224</sup> *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi*, vol.23, period IV, session 3 (7 June 1934), Appendix no.189: “Esbâbı mucibe lâyihası: İskân muvakkat encümeni mazbatası,” 27 May 1934. The draft differs from the final version inasmuch as the drafts includes the Young Turks’ internal discussions, which were not for public consumption and demonstrate their thinking.

<sup>1225</sup> Nuran Dağlı & Belma Aktürk (eds.) *Hükümetler ve Programları, vol.1, 1920-1960* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1988), p.80.

<sup>1226</sup> *BCA*, 030.10/70.461.1, Report by Inspector-General Abidin Özmen dated 24 August 1937.

motherland; to persuade people about the sanctity of the Republican regime and its superiority compared to all other forms of government; to inform the people of our national existence and our national enemies by indoctrinating them on what Turkishness and Turkish civilization are; to teach them what do to in order to defeat our enemies.” The committee asked the government to show them “the paths” that would lead to the overarching objective, “beginning our national existence strongly from the perspective of national education.”<sup>1227</sup> The government did not need this call to arms and very soon schools began mushrooming in the country, including the eastern provinces. Whereas the population doubled between 1927 and 1955, the budget of the Ministry of Education more than quadrupled in the same period.<sup>1228</sup>

In Diyarbekir a similar process was happening. Schools had been renamed after (local) Young Turk heroes, such as the Ziya Gökalp Lycée, and the nationalist curriculum was being taught to countless students. Foreign observers did not fail to discern the nationalist and ideological goals embedded in ostensibly ‘neutral’ education. British diplomats visiting the region observed that “there was in the Kurdish districts no national feeling worth speaking of, neither Kurdish nor Turkish. Atatürk therefore welcomed the intention of the Minister of Education to run the schools in the east with teachers thoroughly imbued with modern Turkish ideas.”<sup>1229</sup> The Inspectorate-General was reported to rely on three factors for carrying out nation formation: “agriculture, road-building, and education of all kinds, which, in a word, means Turkification.”<sup>1230</sup> The Danish engineer Rygaard painted perhaps the most poignant picture about education when touring the region west of Diyarbekir:

The village children are now learning the Latin alphabet and mathematics instead of, as they did previously, the verses of the Koran that were incomprehensible to them. There is a tense relationship between the section and the fanatically nationalist school teacher, who, like the gendarme officer and... Turkish government doctor, intensely dislikes the foreigners. If the Turkish youth in Anatolia are to be brought up in the dumbest, most hateful, and excessively self-conscious spirit built on the thinnest of foundations, which these teachers represent, then the outlook for intergroup relations in these areas is very bleak indeed.<sup>1231</sup>

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<sup>1227</sup> BCA 030.10/140.3.3, Urfa Committee on Enlightenment and Education to Prime Ministry, 1 December 1925.

<sup>1228</sup> Başgöz & Wilson, *Educational Problems in Turkey*, pp.233-4. Although nation-building was not the only task of education, the state reports of the Ministry of Education show that it was the main objective.

<sup>1229</sup> *Public Record Office*, FO 424/268, pp.85-6, no.49, Clerk to Chamberlain, 22 June 1927.

<sup>1230</sup> PRO, FO 424/272, p.116, no.68, Edmonds to Henderson, 21 May 1930, “Notes on a Tour to Diarbekir, Bitlis and Mush.”

<sup>1231</sup> Olaf A. Rygaard, *Mellem Tyrker og Kurder: En Dansk Ingeniørs Oplevelser i Lilleasien* (Copenhagen: Nordisk Forlag, 1935), p.70.

Nationalism was not just a matter of primary or secondary education. As part of his plan to 'modernize' Turkey, Atatürk reorganized Istanbul University in 1933 and established several faculties in Ankara during the 1930s. Turkish universities were expected to produce a strong indigenous elite. The Minister of Education, Dr. Reşit Galip, spoke: "The most essential quality of the new universities is their nationalism and revolutionism. New departments have been established for national history. The ideology of the Turkish Revolution will be made by the university."<sup>1232</sup> The future University of Diyarbakır too, was supposed to produce a "national elite" on local level.<sup>1233</sup> In 1940, the construction of the University of Diyarbakır was proclaimed around the city with speakers. The aim, in accordance with national guidelines, was to build "a cultural nest to which the nation's intellectuals could wholeheartedly adhere."<sup>1234</sup> This nationalist elite would be equipped with the intellectual tools to carry through Atatürk's ideas. But apart from a hospital that functioned as a Department of Medicine, a university was never established in the Young Turk era. As an offshoot of Ankara University, Diyarbakır's Tigris University (*Dicle Üniversitesi*) was formally established only in 1966.

From the earliest plans to the day that policy took shape, Diyarbakır was seen as a center in the eastern provinces from which Turkish culture would radiate. Kemalist propaganda stressed with a vehemence that Diyarbakır would be a "great center of Turkish culture"<sup>1235</sup> and in accordance with the geo-body of the nation, the organizational structure of the Turkish Hearths consisted of four regions: North, West, South, and East. Diyarbakır was designated the center of the Eastern constituency. In February 1932 thorough preparations were made and great care was taken for the opening of the Diyarbakır People's House, one of the first to be established. Recep Peker, chairman of the Republican People's Party, instructed İbrahim Tali Öngören, First Inspector-General in Diyarbakır city, to organize an opening ceremony, assign leadership, and announce the establishment of the House throughout town. If newspapers were not available, declarations were to be printed and hung on walls in public places such as mosques and city walls. The party also dictated a precise program for the opening ceremony. After a recital of the national anthem, an oath would be taken to the Republic and an opening speech would be delivered.<sup>1236</sup> Tali reported the opening of the

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<sup>1232</sup> Cavit Binbaşıoğlu, *Türkiye'de Eğitim Bilimleri Tarihi* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1995), p.231.

<sup>1233</sup> "The New University in Turkey," in: *School and Society*, vol.39, no.994 (January 1934), p.45.

<sup>1234</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/1006.882.1, RPP People's Houses Inspector Kemal Güngör to RPP People's Houses Bureau Directorate, 8 October 1943.

<sup>1235</sup> *Cumhuriyetin 15inci yılında Diyarbakır* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Matbaası, 1938), p.20.

<sup>1236</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/937.637.01, RPP General Secretary Recep Peker to First Inspector-General İbrahim Tali, 12 and 14 January 1932.

Diyarbakir People's House on 23 February 1932. At that point it was lodged in the Turkish Hearth building, using its equipment, but it was soon to be moved to the former governor's residence.<sup>1237</sup> The early months of the People's House were marked by teething troubles such as organizing the presidency, selecting committee members, and logistics. By the time Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya visited the eastern provinces for inspection, he noted that all People's Houses were up and functioning properly, including the Diyarbakir one.<sup>1238</sup>

After consolidation, the Diyarbakir People's House began working towards the construction of a canon of Turkish culture tailor-made for the province. The Kemalists' desire was for culture, obviously always Turkish, to include a strong local component. The correspondence between the Diyarbakir People's House and the Interior Ministry provides a vivid insight into the activities of the House. The first inspection report dated from 1935 and registered that in the past two years the House had worked hard. In the branch for Language, History, and Literature "special importance was accorded to language and culture works" in the city and in the villages. In the villages it had organized courses in Turkish language and "knowledge of the fatherland". Also, the branch was praised for having "collected more than 500 pieces of poetry, songs, and folklore, and launched initiatives to write the history of Diyarbakir." The Sports section had established a shooting range and a hunting club, for which the Gendarmerie had provided help, as well as a football club named 'Turkish Sports' (*Türkspor*) with two teams, and a tennis club named 'Grey Wolf' (*Bozkurt*). The Art section had established an orchestra, which so far had performed nine concerts. The Social Aid section had been very active: it had bought clothes for 200 orphans, provided support for 100 widows, sent out doctors and veterinaries to villages, vaccinated 700 children against smallpox, distributed quinine and aspirin, opened an eye clinic in the People's House building, and most of these services were provided free of charge. Section 8 (Museum and Exhibition) had "compiled a photo album of old historical photos of Diyarbakir". The last section (Villages) had ventured into the countryside "to spread Turkish" and "assign villagers who speak Turkish as teachers to those who did not". Plans were pending for the construction of a cinema, and the furnishing of a central heating and a comprehensive electricity system.<sup>1239</sup>

The Diyarbakir People's House cadre consisted of CUP veterans. The chairman of the House was Tahsin Çubukçu and the mayor of Diyarbakir was Şeref Uluğ. The Inspector-

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<sup>1237</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/937.637.01, First Inspector-General İbrahim Tali to RPP General Secretary Recep Peker, 29 January 1932.

<sup>1238</sup> *BCA*, 030.10/117.817.2, Şükrü Kaya to İsmet İnönü, 2 October 1932.

<sup>1239</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/1005.880.3, People's House Inspector Alaettin Tekmen to RPP General Secretary Recep Peker, 28 August 1935.

General's function was circumscribed as being "the spiritual and physical patron of all the People's Houses in the area of the Inspectorate-General." He had assigned a "young and active idealist friend" by the name of Osman Eti to the party's "daily affairs".<sup>1240</sup> Diyarbekir's deputies for the Grand National Assembly in Ankara were former CUP operatives and sympathizers Veli Necdet Süngütay, General Kâzım Sevüktekin, Zeki Mesun Alsan, Zülfü Tiğrel, and Rüştü Bekit. A professional breakdown from January 1941 of the thirty-seven members of the People's House showed sixteen teachers, eight civil servants, four merchants, three doctors, one retired military official, one pharmacist, one dentist, one lawyer, one photographer, and one publisher. This list of names conveys a strong sense of continuity of Diyarbekir's local elites from the CUP era into the RPP era. Of the 35,000 inhabitants of Diyarbekir, 958 people had officially enlisted, of which 194 were women and the rest men.<sup>1241</sup>

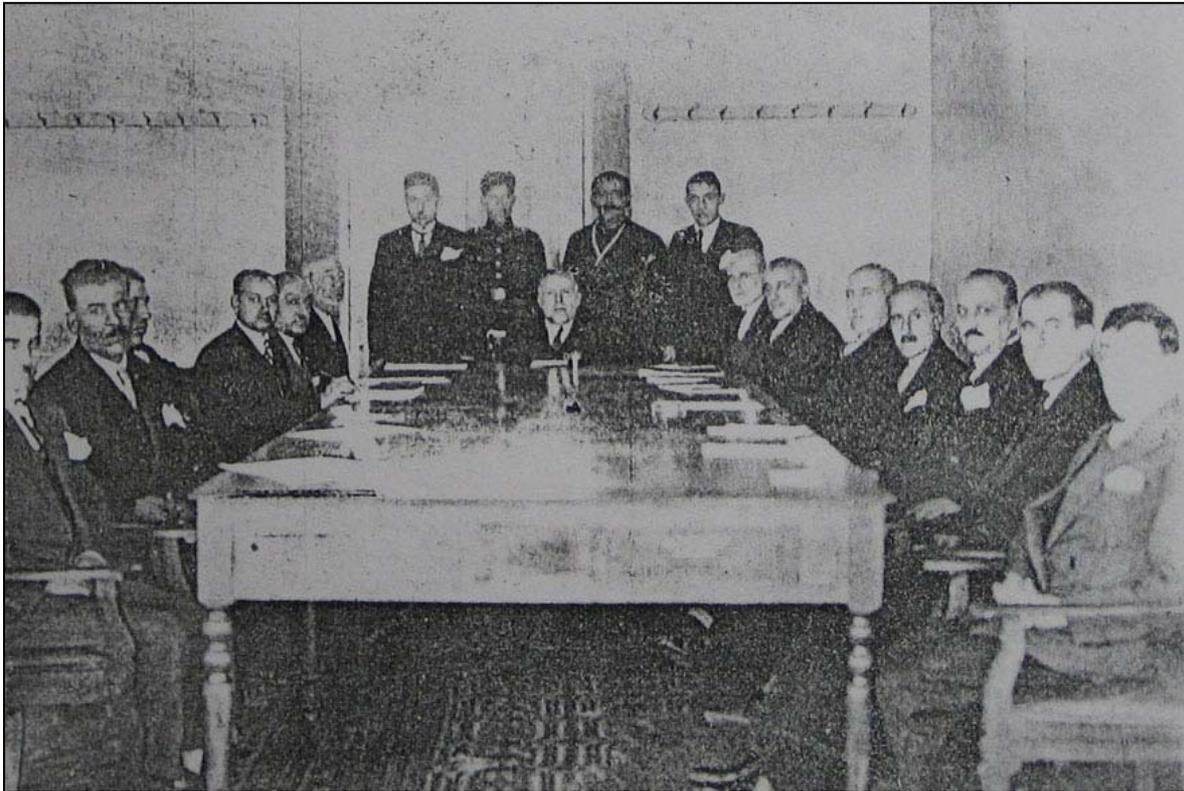


Photo 37: The Young Turk elite in Diyarbekir in 1937 (Birinci Genel Müfettişlik, 1939)

Other visitors frequented the House without being full members. The financial expenses of the House indicated how seriously the cultural revolution was taken. For the entire campaign the People's House had spent 4,145 Turkish Lira in 1932, which had more than doubled to 9,318 Lira in 1933. In 1934 the budget had grown to 15,320 Lira and halfway through 1935 it

<sup>1240</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Şükrü Kaya to First Inspectorate-General, 26 April 1938, appendix 1937 Diyarbekir People's House Evaluation.

<sup>1241</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, RPP General Secretariat to Fourth Bureau, 3 January 1941.

was already 21,941 Lira.<sup>1242</sup> In 1941 the budget exceeded 50,000 Lira, half of which was provided by the provincial authorities and the other half by various admission fees.<sup>1243</sup>

The Houses were involved in a broad spectrum of nationalist policies. Local officials reported that they had drawn up lists of villages with non-Turkish names and had “requested the appropriate offices for these names to be changed.” House members had also published books on “Diyarbakir folklore” and the advent of the railways, and plans were on the way to write a history of Diyarbakir (see Chapter 7). Particularly striking was that the villages where folkloric dances, expressions, and other cultural phenomena had been “collected” were, exclusively the few Turkoman villages in the vicinity. The People’s House generally operated in the city, but in 1935 attempts were made to take the message to eight villages on the Diyarbakir plain.<sup>1244</sup> The objectification of ordinary peasants’ dress, habits, and lives as “folklore” was a projection of the RPP regime that saw in peasants a “pure Turkish” society, uncorrupted by city life. Nationalism, folklorization and ruralism were three dimensions of a cultural policy that propelled the idealization of peasant life yet never developed into agrarian utopia.<sup>1245</sup> Rather, the objective was to discover and unearth “the rich folkloric treasure” that the Turks possessed. The ultimate aim of this undertaking was to establish a “Folklore and Ethnography Museum” and publish books on the local “folklore” of Diyarbakir.<sup>1246</sup> In the same year, a compilation of Diyarbakir’s “folklore” was published by the People’s House.<sup>1247</sup> Subsequent books published across the country mapped the various “regional folkloric traditions” that together integrated into an exclusively national canon that bore two features: it was Turkish and thus devoid of any ethnic or alternative cultural connotations, and confined to the borders of the nation state.<sup>1248</sup> The folklorist Ferruh Arsunar (1908-1965) cruised the country, collecting music and folkloric traditions as the cultural assets for the national canon. Diyarbakir became an object of cultural attribution, reification, and sacralization.<sup>1249</sup> Thus

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<sup>1242</sup> BCA, 490.01/1005.880.3, People’s House Inspector Alaettin Tekmen to RPP General Secretary Recep Peker, 28 August 1935.

<sup>1243</sup> BCA, 490.01/996.850.1, RPP General Secretariat to Fourth Bureau, 3 January 1941.

<sup>1244</sup> BCA, 490.01/1005.880.2, Report evaluating the “Language and History” sections of all the People’s Houses in 1935.

<sup>1245</sup> M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, “The People’s Houses and the Cult of the Peasant in Turkey,” in: *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.34, no.4 (1998), pp.67-91.

<sup>1246</sup> BCA, 490.01/1006.882.1, RPP People’s Houses Inspector Kemal Güngör to RPP People’s Houses Bureau Directorate, 8 October 1943. Scholars of nationalism have analyzed these practices of attempting to root the nation as the “invention of tradition”. See: Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in: Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.263-308.

<sup>1247</sup> Şevket Beysanoğlu, *Diyarbakır Folkloru* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Matbaası, 1943).

<sup>1248</sup> Cenab Ozankan, *Türk Millî Oyunları: Ağrı Bölgesi, Balıkesir, Bursa, Çorum, Diyarbakır, Ege Bölgesi, Elâzığ, Erzurum, Gazi Antep, Hatay, Kars, Kastamonu, Konya, Malatya, Rize, Seyhan Bölgesi, Sivas, Trabzon, Urfa* (Istanbul: Sucuoğlu Matbaası, 1955). For a discussion of folklore as nationalist practice in Turkey see: Arzu Öztürkmen, *Türkiye’de Folklor ve Milliyetçilik* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1998).

<sup>1249</sup> Cahit Beğenç, *Diyarbakır ve Raman* (Ankara: Ulus, 1949), p.33. For one of Arsunar’s collections see: Ferruh Arsunar, *Türk Anadolu Halk Türküleri* (Ankara: Başnur, 1965).

Turkish songs were sprouting from regions where Turkish was hardly known or spoken, let alone sung. The new national repertoire was published in the form of a booklet, titled *Diyarbakir Folk Songs (Diyarbakir Halk Türküleri)* in 1937. It contained eight songs, making up the backbone of a growing canon in exclusively Turkish ‘folk music’.<sup>1250</sup>

In the course of 1937, a radicalization developed in Kemalist nation formation. The predominantly Kurdish and discordant region of Dersim had been opposing the structures of the Turkish nation state in their area. When in the summer of 1937 a violent incident occurred between villagers and gendarmes, the tribal resistance crossed a threshold and escalated into violence against state officials. The ensuing clashes between several Kurdish tribes and Turkish gendarmes developed into a guerrilla war that lasted for almost a year and ended in large-scale massacres and deportations of Dersim Kurds in the summer of 1938.<sup>1251</sup> To the Kemalists this was a sign that the policy of assimilation in the eastern provinces needed to be accelerated, especially in the villages. Frustration and impatience about the absence of immediate results of the “Turkification” in which they had so passionately invested turned to radicalization. A new chairman was assigned to the Diyarbakir People’s House, the young doctor and anthropologist Bedri Noyan (1912-97). He had published on folklore and was one of the young social scientists who had traveled into the Anatolian heartland to “discover” and provide the government with ethnographic data on the minorities. His books, wrought with Turkish nationalism, produced a condescending discourse towards Kurdish sheikhs in particular and prescribed how Islamic culture needed to be understood.<sup>1252</sup> In the course of 1937, the premises of the People’s House were expanded as well: instead of two scattered buildings a single large one was constructed just outside the city walls. The new director was counseled to “work systematically” in order to be more productive.<sup>1253</sup> In July 1937 the new Inspector-General reported with content: “These fruitful institutions of culture and national ideal in the East will be one notch more productive and useful”.<sup>1254</sup>

In order to gauge how this improvement of cultural assimilation was to be developed, the government sent a special envoy to inspect the countryside. In the autumn of 1940, People’s Houses Inspector Kemal Güngör traveled through southeastern Turkey and wrote a lengthy report on the cultural state of affairs in the region. The inspector noted about the

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<sup>1250</sup> *Diyarbakir Halk Türküleri* (Istanbul: Numune Matbaası, 1937).

<sup>1251</sup> Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede: Mission, Ethnie und Staat in den Ostprovinzen der Türkei 1839-1938* (Zürich: Chronos, 2000), pp.408-12.

<sup>1252</sup> See his multi-volume book on Anatolian Shi’ites: Bedri Noyan, *Bütün Yönleriyle Bektâşilik ve Alevilik* (Ankara: Ardıç, 1998-2006). For comments on sheikhs as “ignorant reactionaries” and “traitors of the motherland”, see vol.VI, pp.703-9.

<sup>1253</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/1006.882.1, RPP People’s Houses Inspector Kemal Güngör to RPP People’s Houses Bureau Directorate, 8 October 1943.

<sup>1254</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, RPP General Secretariat to First Inspector-General Abidin Özmen, 22 July 1937.

provincial towns of Diyarbekir that for the majority of the people Turkish was a second or even third language. GÜNGÖR expressed strong disapproval that across the countryside people spoke Kurdish and Arabic “in their houses, at the market, in the coffeehouse, and even in the People’s Houses.” He solicited their superiors to take measures that would “eradicate the deplorable influence of these cultures and render our national culture and mother tongue dominant in their stead.” According to GÜNGÖR this would require a higher level of organization in the countryside of Diyarbekir, stretching eastwards. That way, he argued, chances were much higher to “spread our national language here and remove the foreign influence” and “render worthwhile services to our national unity and integrity, as well as our mission for a national culture”. After all, he concluded, it was imperative to “spread our national culture and revolution into these corners of the motherland because these areas need it... most of all from a cultural and social perspective”.<sup>1255</sup> Thus, radicalization on the one hand implied geographical expansion and on the other hand resulted in a shift from urban politics to rural politics.<sup>1256</sup> To realize their goals, the government developed the concept of the People’s Rooms, the rural equivalent of the People’s Houses. Starting from 1940, the Rooms quickly spread into the districts of Diyarbekir’s countryside, as narrated by an American observer:

Like on an expedition to Africa, a large convoy consisting of many members, intellectuals, and politicians arrived in the village by car and by bus. Among them were doctors, dentists, poets, Pedagogy students and People’s House orators. They were equipped with an amount of canned food that would have sufficed for a convoy out to discover an unknown continent. After the flag was hoisted and speeches were given, the sick in the village were examined and treated. The rural experts in the convoy took many interesting pictures of the village and the villagers.<sup>1257</sup>

Rituals such as these represented nation formation in the province. The villagers were now confronted with new symbols they should adhere to. Kemal GÜNGÖR also noted that one effective medium to reach the people in the countryside was the radio. He wrote: “I am convinced that sending radios to the villages will prove more effective than many other measures.” The special inspector was irritated that especially in the villages, he had witnessed

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<sup>1255</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/1006.882.1, RPP People’s Houses Inspector Kemal GÜNGÖR to RPP General Secretariat, 10 November 1940.

<sup>1256</sup> As every niche of society now had to be “Turkified”, even prisons, enclaves normally placed outside the confines of society, were subjected to the nation formation process. According to one report in the city prison of Diyarbekir a reading room was opened for the convicts to learn Turkish. *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 15 August 1941.

<sup>1257</sup> Fay Kirby, “The Village Institute Movement in Turkey: An Educational Mobilization for Social Change” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Teachers’ College, Columbia University, New York, 1960), p.71.

Kurdish songs being sung by children who did not speak Turkish.<sup>1258</sup> The radio, “a most important instrument of enlightenment in our age”, would reach into the homes of people living “far from the center” and spread Turkish language and culture among those who would tune in to Ankara radio. Güngör’s final recommendations included supplying the Diyarbekir People’s House with speakers strong enough to reach an audience in the streets, and sending as many radios as possible to the villages.<sup>1259</sup> After approval from Ankara, the People’s House immediately began implementing these principles as People’s Rooms mushroomed in every district of Diyarbekir.

The first People’s Room established in the province was that of Bismil, a small town 40 kilometres east of Diyarbekir city. Initially, setting up a People’s Room in this town was a plan advanced tentatively to test public reaction. Its convenient proximity to the provincial capital was advantageous because it made the Room easy to observe for the Diyarbekir elite. According to reports by the founding officials, at establishment most people in town spoke Turkish. In the villages, on the other hand, everybody spoke Kurdish, with the exception of seven villages close to the town. Out of a total population of 2,612 inhabitants, 224 children were enjoying primary education as the process of appointing teachers and building schools continued. Since by January 1941 there was still no radio, the chairman of the Room ordered some.<sup>1260</sup> By the end of that year the People’s Room was reported to be modest but functioning. Visitors reportedly came to listen to the radio and celebrate national holidays.<sup>1261</sup> The People’s Room was kept under tight surveillance, and when an inspector found out that citizens had used the Room to organize a lottery, he immediately took measures and had the culprits arrested.<sup>1262</sup> The nation, after all, was no joke and its activities were expected to be taken very seriously. Since the overall response of Bismil’s population had been positive towards the activities of the Room, this trial and the formula were declared a success and the decision was taken to expand the enterprise into other areas.

The difference in nation formation manifested itself in those districts where few people spoke Turkish and even fewer identified with the nation state. The small, provincial, county or district town acted as tiny capital for the surrounding villages and was typically a sleepy place, periodically awakened when the brief bustle of the weekly market or Friday call to prayer broke the quiet. Yet it was through these towns that Young Turk ideology and the

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<sup>1258</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/1006.882.1, RPP People’s Houses Inspector Kemal Güngör to RPP General Secretariat, 10 November 1940.

<sup>1259</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, RPP General Secretariat to Fourth Bureau, 3 January 1941.

<sup>1260</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 27 January 1941.

<sup>1261</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 2 December 1941.

<sup>1262</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, RPP General Secretary Dr. Ahmet Fikri Tuzer to Bismil People’s House, 19 January 1942.

changes it suggested were transmitted to the surrounding countryside. In such a social microcosm, political processes functioned according to the principles of center and periphery, very much like a colonial situation. The provincial towns were under the trusteeship of Ankara, which ruled them from afar by sending them its civil servants, its newspapers, its garrisons. It was in these towns where the cultural mission of “Turkification”, that Turkish Hearth and People’s House members propagated, was most challenging and immediate.

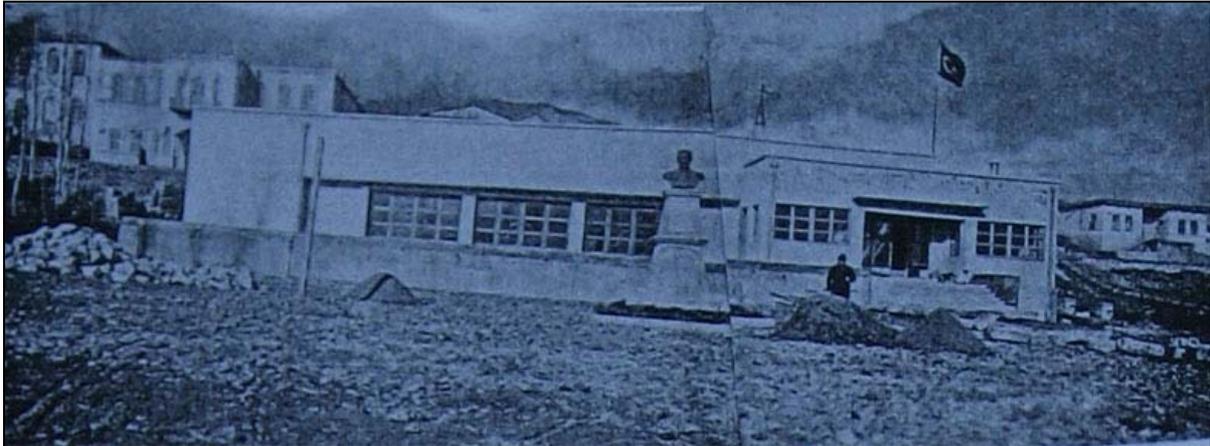


Photo 38: The Ergani People’s Room, 1937 (Republican Archives)

With only 50% of its children in school, a quarter of the men and only one in ten women being able to speak Turkish, the northwestern district of Ergani was such a region. According to official reports, of the 3253 town-dwellers and 18,015 villagers, “most speak in the Zaza language, others in Kurdish.”<sup>1263</sup> The People’s Room in Ergani was a makeshift one, with newly planted trees, a newly constructed road, and a loosely arranged library – of which reports boasted it did “not include any prohibited books”. The Room was run by local Kemalists such as the town’s schoolteacher, Şükrü Tanili, who, according to the Diyarbakir People’s House journal, would “lecture on the topic of the Turkish revolution in front of hundreds of excited locals”. The town doctor, Şevki Kılıççı, in his turn lectured on venereal diseases, which reportedly left a “deep impression” on the people. Anniversaries of the Republic and the establishment of the People’s Houses were celebrated with feasts involving “the decoration of the whole town with the party and national flags”. The ceremonies would routinely be opened with the national anthem as schoolchildren would read nationalist poems and sing nationalist songs. At 3:00 PM the radio was turned on as Prime Minister Refik Saydam delivered a “great and valuable lecture”. Finally, the local chairman closed the

<sup>1263</sup> BCA, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 30 April 1941.

celebration by declaring that everybody needed to work “day and night” to preserve the legacy of “the Eternal Chief Atatürk”.<sup>1264</sup> Through repetition the national anthem, principles of national defense, and patriotism in general were instilled.<sup>1265</sup>

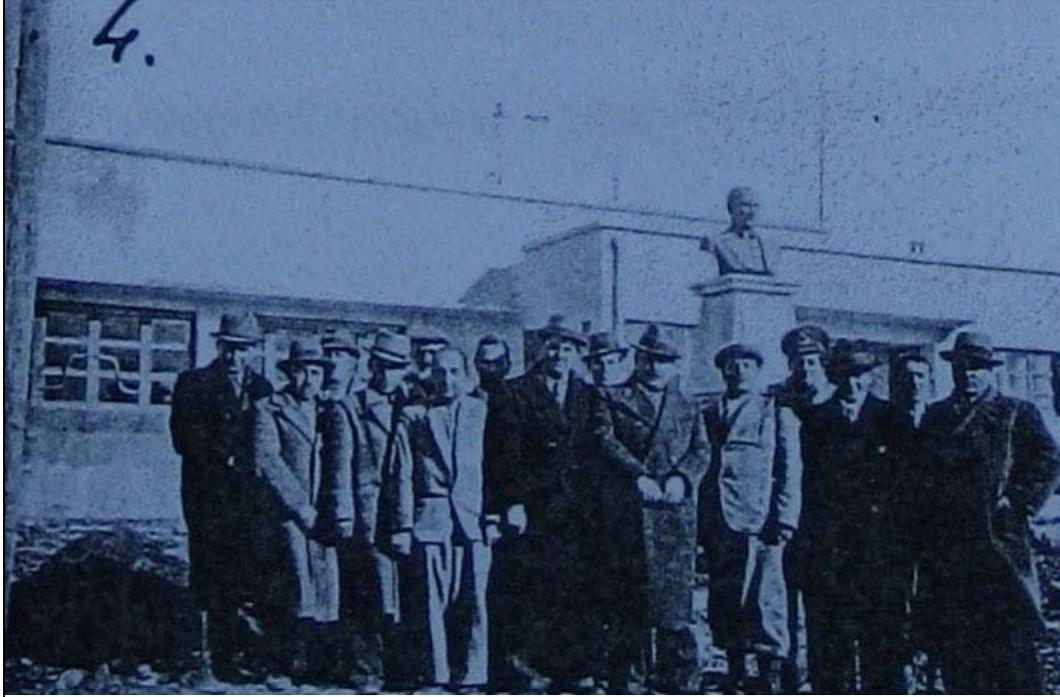


Photo 39: The staff of Ergani's People's Room, 1937 (Republican Archives)

In 1941, Çermik, the adjacent district more to the west of the province, had a population of 3,360 people living in the town and 26,627 living in the villages. In the city, one-fifth of the girls and half of the boys were reported to be in school. In the 14 villages, 237 of 279 boys and only 73 girls were in school. Again, the use of languages was closely monitored. Reports noted that whereas Turkish was understood by most townsfolk, only in ten villages were there people who spoke Turkish: “the rest speaks in the Zaza and Kurmanci languages.” Officials had taught thirty people Turkish in one month of intensive teaching. The people had been taught how to use the radio and how to use the library, which numbered 278 volumes of books and magazines. The People's House headquarters in Diyarbakir ordered that once every two weeks, the young people should assemble in the square in front of the People's Room and “dance national dances and sing national songs”. Moreover, teachers needed to make “the youth sing marches with one voice” and inculcate “national morals”.

<sup>1264</sup> Münip Gültekin, “Ergani Halkevi Çalışmaları,” in: *Karacadağ*, vol.III, no.25, 20 February 1940.

<sup>1265</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 30 April 1941.

People's Room officials needed to "take great care to eliminate the languages of these citizens... while conducting language and literature research in the villages of these people, who are racially Turks." Therefore it was pivotal "especially in this region to teach them how to read and write Turkish."<sup>1266</sup> The highbrow discussions on cultural "Turkification" of the 1930s had trickled down into actual policies on the ground a decade later.

Relatively small in comparison to the other district towns of Diyarbekir, Piran (later renamed Dicle) was situated only fifty kilometres north of the provincial capital and was populated by 25,359 people. Here, as in most towns, most men were able to speak Turkish but only few women were. In the villages of Piran "only those who have completed their military service can speak Turkish." Half of the locals spoke Kurmanci, the other half spoke Zazaki.<sup>1267</sup> It is noteworthy that the report mentions the existence of 285 Armenian Catholics in the district.<sup>1268</sup> The People's Room was "functioning well" with 130 books and journals stored in its library. In 1940 twelve people were taught to read and write Turkish. Once in every fifteen days the youth was assembled in the Room to "sing national songs (especially our national marches with one voice all together)". The inspector further wrote to Ankara that "although this is the place where Sheikh Said's rebellion erupted, the people whom I have met are loyal to the government." According to the inspector, the only things the town needed was a district governor and a capable gendarmerie officer.<sup>1269</sup> In the far northeastern district of Kulp, a dilapidated town of only 671 inhabitants, twenty-eight girls and seventy-seven boys were going to school. Here, too, many in the town were reported to understand Turkish, but in the villages everyone spoke Kurmanci. The report put the proportion of the Turkish-speaking population at only two percent, perhaps the lowest in the entire province. Of all the social problems in the district, inspector Soykam identified the crucial challenge to be the spread of the Turkish language among the local Kurds. This process had been lagging behind because of corruption. The local district governor had been using the People's Room radio for his personal ends and literature sent to the People's Room was known to be in his private possession. Every time the district governor was asked for commentary he happened to be

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<sup>1266</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 29 April 1941.

<sup>1267</sup> The majority of the Kurds in Turkey speak Kurmanci, a minority the related language Zazaki; due to intermarriage, historically, some people spoke both. Both languages were historically spoken, not written. Even though many Kurdish men traditionally spoke or understood Turkish, it was never a marker of ethnic identity, much like Russian in the Caucasus.

<sup>1268</sup> It is quite possible that at this time 285 Armenians were living in Piran district. According to an account of an Armenian man from the region, one large extended family of Armenians had survived the genocide under Sheikh Said's protection. Interview conducted with Dikran E. in Hilversum (the Netherlands), 29 May 2005.

<sup>1269</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 31 May 1941, and Dr. Münir Soykam's inspection report synopsis, 27 May 1941.

“organizing the census in the countryside”. In general the Kulp People’s Room was very modest.<sup>1270</sup>

More serious problems were registered in the eastern district of Silvan. Of all the inspection reports, the Silvan People’s Room was the thickest file, for “Turkification” was not progressing fast enough according to the Party’s wishes. The 1940 census stated that the town’s population of 2,930 included mostly Kurds, but also 73 Armenians and Syrians. Again it was emphasized that most of the men spoke Turkish but only a fraction of the women and children did. In the 160 villages of the district, the report noted that all of these spoke Kurmanci. The Silvan People’s Room was housed in the former Armenian church, which needed repairs, but since there were no ownership documents, it was left in dilapidation when the Room moved.<sup>1271</sup> Discontent over the Silvan People’s Room was rooted in their dysfunctional performance: apparently, the “level of work was zero”, members had “wasted time gossiping”, the logbook had been used as a visitor’s book, the radio was broken with no attempts made at repairing it, and the record-keeping was described as “a disgrace”. But what outraged the leadership most of all was the fact that the Turkish language courses were poorly taught.<sup>1272</sup> Another one of the problems the People’s House headquarters in Diyarbekir faced was transportation. The road from Diyarbekir to Silvan was not up to par, and during heavy rainfall a considerable detour became necessary. Officials did not find the functioning up to standard and “wanted these shortcomings eliminated immediately.”<sup>1273</sup> Inspector-General Abidin Özmen dismissed the Silvan People’s House director and assigned the district governor as the new one, “totally removing any discord” and streamlining the organization. Among the measures taken were the increase of members, the opening of branches, the convening of more meetings, and greater care for record-keeping.<sup>1274</sup> From then on conditions improved: the library began functioning anew, newspapers and journals were being read, and very soon all was “as intended.”<sup>1275</sup>

In the northern district of Lice there were flaws as well. Its People’s Room could not function ideally due to the fact that the building was not sufficient to provide for it. The Room was housed on the bottom floor of the municipal building, which was in need of repairs. Therefore, not enough sessions for activities could be organized. With its population of 6160,

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<sup>1270</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 22 May 1941.

<sup>1271</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Şükrü Kaya to First Inspectorate-General, 26 April 1938, appendix 1937 Diyarbekir People’s House Evaluation.

<sup>1272</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, First Inspector-General Abidin Özmen to RPP General Secretariat, 9 May 1938.

<sup>1273</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, RPP General Secretariat to First Inspector-General Abidin Özmen, 30 April 1938.

<sup>1274</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, RPP General Secretary Dr. Tuzer to Silvan People’s House, 17 June 1941.

<sup>1275</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 31 May 1941.

a total of 85% of Lice's men and 60% of its women could understand Turkish, though few children spoke it. In the villages practically nobody spoke Turkish but Zazaki, which was portrayed as "a mix between Asiatic Turkish and coarse Persian." The radio was listened to and the library owned 437 books, journals and newspapers, though no proper shelves existed for them. Here too, the reports were ubiquitously positive about the people's stance on the government's policies of nation formation. "All of them," Soykam wrote to Ankara, "reported their gratitude and indebtedness to the Republican government and our elders... and said they were always at their command."<sup>1276</sup> Suggestions for improvement of the Lice People's House ranged from involving more women in the library activities to offering villagers the opportunity to have letters and petitions written for them, for free.<sup>1277</sup>

The inspection report for the People's Room of Hani is noteworthy for including an important example of popular resistance against Turkish nation formation. Hani, a town of 2475 inhabitants, boasted dozens of shops, two mosques, and three bakeries. For a small Kurdish town it was remarkable that 95 % of the men and 70 % of the women and children understood Turkish. Most people were reported to speak Zaza, although Kurmanci was widely spoken as well. On "national days and whenever ordered", many activities were organized. Although the radio was temporarily out of order, and the doctor was in military service, the library was up and functioning with 106 books, newspapers and journals, and a reading table. There was special surveillance and vigilance regarding Hani since many locals had joined Sheikh Said in 1925. One of the resisters was Ömer Boran, son of Sheikh Salih Bey, who had been one of Sheikh Said's supporters and advisors. Because his father had been executed in the summer of 1925, Boran was under continuous scrutiny by local government officials. According to inspector Soykam, the man "assumed a negative attitude toward the Republican government and the People's Room... because his father had been rightfully hanged." The local teacher was Mehmet Güzel, a friend of Ömer Boran and brother-in-law of another sheikh who had been executed in 1925, Sheikh Sıddık from the village of Güzelşeyh. Mehmet Güzel's family had been deported to the western province of Kütahya, and therefore he too had been resisting the government. The children of the three executed sheikhs (Sheikh Salih, Sheikh Mustafa, and Sheikh Seyfullah) were in touch with each other and bore a grudge against the government. Moreover, they had befriended local gendarme officers and were pitting them against District Governor Mustafa Çetin, who had been awarded a medal during the violent suppression of the 1925 rebellion in the region. Münir Soykam immediately took

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<sup>1276</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 11 May 1941.

<sup>1277</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 9 May 1941.

action and had both Güzel and Boran deported, and the gendarme officers assigned somewhere else. He then assembled the locals in the People's Room and gave a speech about the "blessings of the Republic" and the People's Rooms. He emphasized that the government existed to "educate and integrate" them, and warned that anyone who resisted the government would meet with severe measures.<sup>1278</sup> The state's response to organized dissent and frustration followed the same pattern everywhere: imposition, silencing, dispersion, and in the worst case incarceration.

The considerable efforts the government expended on cultural policies can count as evidence for how seriously it took the cultural program in the East. But the Kemalists essentialized culture. Rather than a continuously changing and socially learned process of shared interpretations and intangible symbols, culture was viewed as a vehicle for Turkification and a carrier or embodiment of Turkishness. This reification of culture in the Kemalist single-party state is exemplified in the 1934 law prescribing European and prohibiting indigenous dress. The law not only prohibited sheikhs from wearing their traditional clothes, but also discouraged ordinary villagers from wearing their traditional baggy pants (*şalwar*) and headgear (*puşi*), suitable for the climate, in favor of the corduroy pants and top hat. In the Kemalist mind, the traditional Diyarbekir headdress was associated with Kurdish ethnicity and therefore potentially dangerous. Indeed, Kurdish nationalists had flaunted traditional dress as a symbol of Kurdishness in Diyarbekir city.<sup>1279</sup> The Kemalists kept an eye on these developments and made sure nobody appropriated the dress as symbols of Kurdish culture. In later policies the approach to "Kurdish" dress was softened and the clothes were relegated to "local folklore".<sup>1280</sup> A seemingly banal phenomenon as dress could become a battleground for national hegemony.<sup>1281</sup>

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<sup>1278</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 12 May 1941.

<sup>1279</sup> Ekrem Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım* (Brussels: Kurdish Institute, 1991), pp.36-7.

<sup>1280</sup> *Diyarbakire Bir Bakış* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbekir Basımevi, 1935), p.2.

<sup>1281</sup> Dress was but one example of how national hegemony was achieved through cultural policies; film was another. Although the government saw in film a powerful propaganda tool, the Ministry of Culture issued clear regulations on its use. During Young Turk rule, all films produced and viewed in Turkey needed to comply with ten constraints and requirements, according to which films were not to: offend national sentiments and harm the national ideal; oppose the Republican regime and suggest other forms of government; suggest ideas against the military and weaken sentiments for National Defense; weaken the notion of family; weaken the morals of the student; stimulate religious feelings whether negatively or positively; contain lewd scenes or shots of debauchery; contain occurrences of murder and suicide; contain scenes of mass violence or cruelty, even against animals; weaken discipline in the student. Esat Sagay, "Son Yapılan Teftiş Neticesi Hakkında Talimat," in: Hasan Ali Yücel, *Türkiye'de Orta Öğretim* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1994), pp.373-4. The Diyarbekir People's House lacked many resources to screen films. Therefore, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya ordered more "moral and cultural" films to be sent to Diyarbekir and suggested the House staff repeat the screening of the two available government propaganda films. *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Şükrü Kaya to First Inspectorate-General, 26 April 1938, appendix "Diyarbekir People's House Evaluation of 1937".



Photo 40: Ethnographic photos of Zaza women, c.1936 (Republican Archives)

A major component of Kemalist cultural policies in the East was music. Şükrü Kaya had proudly declared that “music is an element of national upbringing.”<sup>1282</sup> But what type of music was it acceptable to listen to? The musical heritage of the past was a reminder of an embarrassing age and therefore, far from harmless. After all, Ottoman music confronted the Turkish nationalists with its offensively conspicuous multi-cultural Ottoman past, during which Armenian composers, Albanian instrumentalists, and Greek singers played music in the Ottoman language. The Ministry of Culture therefore ignored Ottoman music and replaced the musical canons with European music or ‘Turkish Folk Music’ (*Türk Halk Müziği*), an aggregate of many Turkish-language songs collected in the countryside. An official propaganda booklet boasted in 1936,

Turkey has now abandoned oriental music, under the influence of which she had remained for centuries. The lurid and monotonous music of the Arabs and Persians which could no longer satisfy our country, was doomed to disappear, sooner or later. At the head of this movement, which is sure to have a positive influence on the development of our own national music, is Atatürk himself. That

<sup>1282</sup> Ekrem Ergüven (ed.), *Şükrü Kaya: Sözleri - Yazıları 1927-1937* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1937), p.157.

is why the dominating spirit in the Normal School of Music, ever since its foundation, has been one of modern and European character, based on western technique... The Normal School of Music of Ankara is an advanced temple of Occidental Music in Asia Minor.<sup>1283</sup>

This was not mere propaganda but a nation-wide policy. British observers reported from Diyarbekir that every Friday “a military band discoursed Western music to... the entire population.” But conservative urbanites refused to listen to the Western music, especially on the holy Friday, reserved for religious observance.<sup>1284</sup>

For the regime, the indigenous music of the eastern provinces was equally problematic due to its manifestly multicultural character. This was perhaps even more dangerous to the Kemalists. Kurdish, Syriac, Zaza, and Arabic music could raise awareness among Kurds and Arabs of their ethnicity and therefore needed to be banned. Turkish Hearths members had discussed the role of music for nation formation in the East. When during its 1927 congress the floor was opened for submitting proposals, Mardin delegate Dr. Cevdet Şakir had proposed that “the customs bureau needs to take great care that gramophone records and written music imported to the Eastern provinces are not in Arabic and Kurdish,” and even proposed a law to be adopted for such a prohibition.<sup>1285</sup> Such a law was never passed because it was never considered necessary explicitly to pronounce the prohibition of non-Turkish culture and music – this was self-evident under Young Turk rule. Indeed, from then on, the government prohibited entry of many records with Kurdish and Arabic music at a time when gramophones were penetrating the eastern cities.<sup>1286</sup>

In a peasant society, oral traditions sung by bards (*dengbêj* in Kurdish) were naturally more widespread than record players. Upon realizing that Kurdish oral culture was continuing to produce Kurdish music in the interbellum, the Kemalists even banned this tradition. Seîdê Axayê Cizrawî, a famous troubadour in the eastern Diyarbekir region, would tour the province and sing Kurdish songs (often laments on recent history) during clandestine nightly storytelling sessions (*şevbuhêrk* in Kurdish) of notable Kurdish chieftains. On one occasion he sang the following lament about the 1925 massacres in Diyarbekir province:

The land of the Kurds is fertile and blessed /  
It is all minerals, silver, and gold /  
What can we do, nowadays it's in the hand of others /

<sup>1283</sup> *Public Instruction in the Republic of Turkey* (Ankara: Press Department of the Ministry of the Interior, 1936), pp.39-40.

<sup>1284</sup> PRO, FO 424/271, p.28, no.10, Clerk to Henderson, 11 July 1929, “Notes from a Journey from Angora to Aleppo, Diarbekr, Malatia, Sivas and the Black Sea Coast, June 9-29, 1929”.

<sup>1285</sup> *Türk Ocakları 1927 Senesi Kurultayı Zabıtları* (Ankara: n.p., 1928), p.353.

<sup>1286</sup> PRO, FO 424/271, p.28, no.10, Clerk to Henderson, 11 July 1929, “Notes from a Journey from Angora to Aleppo, Diarbekr, Malatia, Sivas and the Black Sea Coast, June 9-29, 1929”.

Ah alas alas /  
They killed us and threw us in the rivers /  
There are no more lion-hearted valiants left among us.

When local government officials found out that Cizrawî was singing this lament they ordered his arrest but he escaped and fled to the Syrian border town of Qamishli.<sup>1287</sup>

Parallel to a ban on all non-Turkish music, in Diyarbakir efforts were underway to build a local canon of Turkish music. This was difficult since most musicians in the province were surviving Armenians and Syriacs who had played in various formations in the city. The young musician Celal Güzelses (1900-59) was assigned by the Diyarbakir People's House to "research the regional folklore". In 1938 he published his results, a compilation of songs from Diyarbakir.<sup>1288</sup> What was interesting is that in his repertoire, Turkish-language songs had been improbably traced to Kurdophone villages. Indeed, of the untold number of songs Güzelses had collected, he had kept the melodies but had translated their texts into Turkish. In 1943 he faced difficulties in attempting to establish a Diyarbakir Music Ensemble (*Diyarbakır Musiki Cemiyeti*) due to lack of musicians. The interwar expulsions that had rid the province of most of its last Christians had also dealt a fatal blow to musical life in the region. Whereas in the mid-1940s two out of the ten musicians of the Diyarbakir Music Ensemble were still Armenians (a violinist and a percussionist), in 1948 there was not a single Armenian musician left.<sup>1289</sup> The government's policies were as counterproductive as its aims incompatible: on the one hand it expelled Armenian musicians to Syria, while on the other hand it spurred the People's House to perform more musical works. Musical activity stagnated to the degree that the People's House director complained to the Party that it needed a violinist, "preferably a graduate of the conservatory", to play in its orchestra.<sup>1290</sup> It took years before the Ensemble could function at a modicum of activity. Only in early 1945 could the director report that "the Folk Music Ensemble is continuing its productive activities. It has drawn great attention and praise for its weekly concerts in our House and during its trips to surrounding districts." In accordance with instructions from the Ministry, the Ensemble had also widely played "national songs."<sup>1291</sup>

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<sup>1287</sup> Salihê Kevirbirî, *Bir Çılgılığın Yüzyılı: Karapetê Xaço* (Istanbul: Sî, 2002), p.59.

<sup>1288</sup> Celal Güzelses, *Diyarbakır Halk Türküleri* (Istanbul: n.p., 1938). Reportedly, Güzelses was summoned to Dolmabahçe Palace by Atatürk and had his skull measured for ascertaining his racial profile. He turned out to be soundly Turkish. Şeyhmus Diken, *Sırrını Surlarına Fısıldayan Şehir: Diyarbakır* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003).

<sup>1289</sup> Compare the two photographs published in: Şeyhmus Diken, *Diyarbakır Diyarım, Yitirmişem Yanarım* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), pp.183, 250.

<sup>1290</sup> BCA, 490.01/832.283.01, Diyarbakir People's House Director Çubukçu to RPP General Secretariat, 28 September 1937.

<sup>1291</sup> BCA, 490.01/1036.986.01, Diyarbakir People's House Director Reşid İskenderoğlu to RPP General Secretariat, 9 February 1945.



Photo 41: The Diyarbekir Music Ensemble in the 1930s. Celal Güzelses sitting in the center, Armenian percussionist Garabet Bube Menekşe sitting on the left, Armenian violinist Hayk Aşçı standing on the left (Diken, 2003)

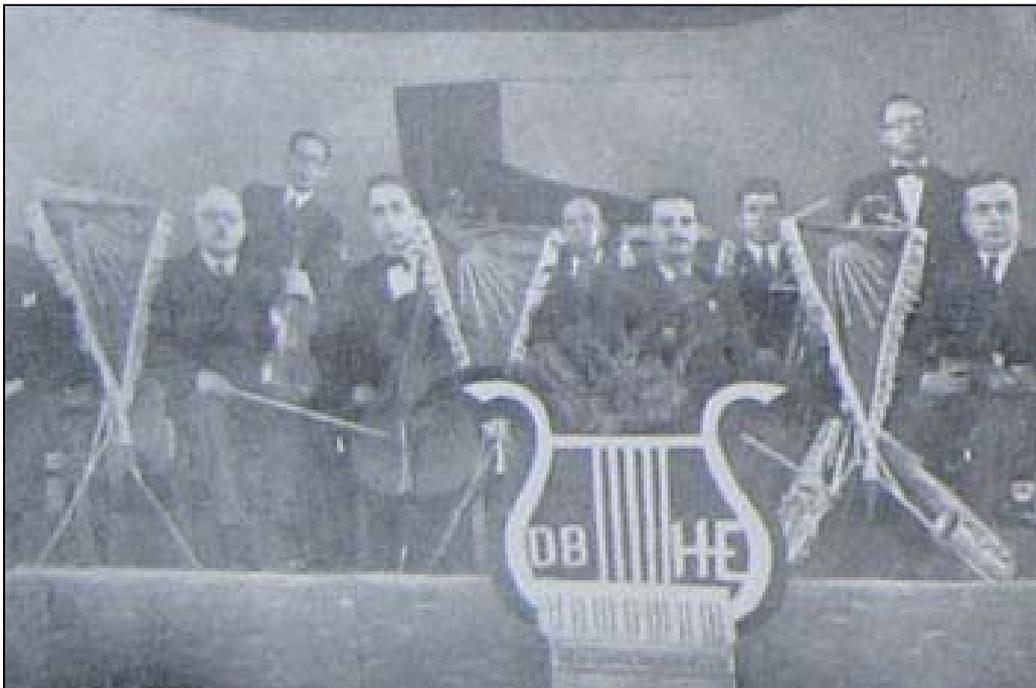


Photo 42: The Ensemble in the 1940s (Birinci Genel Müfettişlik, 1939)

How did the population perceive and receive these educational and cultural policies? Some scholars of peasant societies have argued that peasants are often suspicious towards education imposed by the state. Education is often perceived as “a foreign element, coming from the outside. It limits the family’s rearing influence, tears the child from the harmonious system of work and life and introduces into its consciousness patterns which are dissonant with, and values foreign to or impossible of realization within that system: hence the resistance confronted by the school in rural areas.”<sup>1292</sup> A frequently quoted rhetorical question among peasant families in the countryside is: “So you study, and then what?” (*Okuyup da ne olacaksınız?*). For many villagers, it was much more important to have their children continue working on the farm. Conversely, if one takes the People’s House reports at face value, nation formation was an unequivocal success in Diyarbakir province. Both postulates, of total rejection and of total success, lack sufficient evidence to allow the conclusion that nation formation towards eastern peasants failed or succeeded as a result of social engineering in the Young Turk era. Careful analysis is required to assess the full implication of the material at hand.

The official correspondence was openly celebratory. If one is to believe the account of the general evaluation of all People’s Rooms in Diyarbakir province, the policies yielded nothing but approval by the population. According to the 1941 progress report, “in these days when the whole world is plunged into fire, blood, death, tears and pain,” the people ostensibly felt gratitude because of their “fortunate lives” and because they could “sleep well at night, knowing that their elders were working for the happiness of the nation.”<sup>1293</sup> Some foreign allies of the regime, too, portrayed a happy population enjoying free government education. The Swiss anthropologist Eugène Pittard (1867-1962), who had become a cultural advisor to Mustafa Kemal, lavished superlatives on the Kemalist educational campaign: “I went from Ankara to Diyarbakır, from Sivas to Konya. I stopped in every village and town; I witnessed the zeal that the entire population felt and the enthusiasm of young and old was impressive. I gave lessons to a young man in Diyarbakır. This young fellow walked two hours a day to meet with me.”<sup>1294</sup> In these accounts, the educational policies of the Young Turk regime were nothing but successful.

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<sup>1292</sup> Bogusław Gałęski, “Sociological Problems of the Occupation of Farmers,” in: Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Peasants and Peasant Societies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp.180-201, at p.195.

<sup>1293</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/996.850.1, Dr. Münir Soykam to RPP General Secretariat, 30 April 1941. This was obviously propaganda since the strict wartime censorship was observed with even more vehemence in the eastern provinces. Interviews conducted with elderly peasants confirm that they knew next to nothing about the brutality of World War II.

<sup>1294</sup> Eugène Pittard, “Atatürk’ün Hatırası Tazim,” in: *Bellekten*, vol.3, no.10 (April 1939), p.175.

However, the fate of the government's enthusiastic radio policies aptly demonstrates that Young Turk high-modernist social engineering achieved only limited success. According to official statistics of 1963, out of 663 villages in Diyarbekir province 323 had radios in public possession and 965 households owned radios that ran on batteries.<sup>1295</sup> This meant that many people listened to public broadcasts in the Turkish language. But when Turkish journalist Nedim Gürsel was touring the south-eastern region in 1962, he found locals listening not to the state's broadcasting company TRT (*Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu*) but to Radio Teheran and, to his horror, Radio Yerevan. When admonishing the villagers to tune to TRT, the Kurds burst into laughter and tuned to Ankara's frequency. The radio muttered a dull crackle, intermittently emitting vague sounds.<sup>1296</sup> The authorities were distraught by this situation and attempted to scramble the signal of Radio Yerevan and send more radios to the border regions. In its broadcasting policies too, the regime regarded Diyarbekir as a missionary center from where "Turkishness" would radiate. In the words of a Young Turk official: "For the Eastern Anatolian region, TRT Diyarbakır bears vital importance".<sup>1297</sup> In Diyarbekir, Radio Yerevan was a very popular radio channel, particularly because it broadcast music in Kurdish. As one Kurd reminisced about his adolescence, "I vividly remember my father laying on the couch and listening to Radio Yerevan. He would hold the small radio close to his ear, finger on the button, ready to switch it off in the face of spying eyes. My mother would be terrified then, cursing around: 'Is he listening to those damn Kurds again?' But as long as Radio Yerevan kept broadcasting, my father kept on listening."<sup>1298</sup>



Photo 43: Kurds listening to Radio Yerevan (Meiselas, 1997)

<sup>1295</sup> Mustafa E. Erkal, *Bölgeler Arası Dengesizlik ve Doğu Kalkınması* (Istanbul: Şamil, 1972), pp.196-7.

<sup>1296</sup> Necmi Onur, *Şark Cephesinde Yeni Birsey Yok* (Istanbul: Belge, 1972), pp.290-1.

<sup>1297</sup> Erkal, *Bölgeler Arası Dengesizlik*, p.196.

<sup>1298</sup> Interview conducted with M.Ü. in Istanbul, 19 June 2004.

Evidence of resistance against education is even more compelling.<sup>1299</sup> Observers of education in the Young Turk era have frequently commented on the villagers' lack of appreciation for an extended period of schooling or for any schooling at all. First of all, the academic year of state education was discordant with the peasants' temporal regime: "The village schools open in Autumn and continue until the end of Spring. These two seasons are periods in which the children are especially needed for work in the villages. Starting from an early age there is always work for a village boy to do. That is why they work for their families rather than attend school."<sup>1300</sup> One researcher who had traveled to the countryside argued that most peasants had scoffed at the intangible results of modern education. "According to such families, the boys will sooner or later learn to read and write in the army, and the girls need not know at all... most of the village families are not yet aware of the meaning of education. To them, gardening, digging a ground toilet, ploughing a field are activities which have nothing in common with education."<sup>1301</sup> Another writer well acquainted with the countryside noted that "village children have little motivation to go into town to school. It is not within the village pattern of behavior for them to do so. Normally, the village child graduates from a primary school in his or a neighboring village and then reverts to the traditional pattern of village life. In village eyes, he is 'educated'. That is enough."<sup>1302</sup> A particularly revealing example of rural obduracy lies in the answer given to an official who had asked the inhabitants of a village in the East what they wanted from the government. Without hesitation the villagers replied: "Sir, take this school away from our village, and we will ask nothing of you. Because of it, our cows go astray, and our work does not progress."<sup>1303</sup>

Problems also stemmed from the clash between the secular nationalist values of the teachers, and the pious and conservative outlook of the peasants. An official from the Ministry of Education complained,

The teacher sent by the Ministry to the villages looks down on the villagers. He does not like village children. Moreover, he [the villager] wears clothes that are objectionable to the theoretical knowledge that the teacher gives him. The imam

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<sup>1299</sup> Not wanting education has to be distinguished from not being able to enjoy education. Village school children often found it difficult to avail themselves of opportunities for a secondary school education. Many such children lived in very isolated villages away from towns or cities, often without means of transportation to and from places with secondary schools. Leaving the village to study in the city presented the peasant child with insurmountable obstacles. Due to widespread poverty only very few could afford the luxury of sending their child(ren) to school.

<sup>1300</sup> Emin M. Soysal, "Köy Muallimi ve Köy," in: *Dönüm*, vol.20 (1934), p.23.

<sup>1301</sup> İbrahim Yasa, *Hasanoğlan: Socio-Economic Structure of a Turkish Village* (Ankara: Public Administration for Turkey and the Middle East, Yeni Matbaa, 1957), p.145.

<sup>1302</sup> Andreas M. Kazamias, *Education and the Quest for Modernity in Turkey* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p.173.

<sup>1303</sup> Maynard, *The Lise*, p.63.

of the village, on the other hand, taught the Koran, *İlmihal*, and *Muhammediye* [sacred literature] to the village children, led the villagers in prayer at the village mosque five times each day, went to weddings and funerals and visited the sick where he performed his ritual of chasing away evil spirits by blowing on the patient. The imam had a small house, a garden and a field given to him by the villagers. At harvest time each year, the villagers set aside a share of their produce to be given to the imam. Also, if the imam did not work his field, the villagers worked it for him. They paid the imam at births and weddings, for the night worship during Ramadan, and they gave him alms during the *Bayrams* [religious feasts]. Since the imam also settled disputes among the villagers, he was held in higher esteem than the teachers.<sup>1304</sup>

Similar processes occurred in Diyarbekir province. An idealistic teacher who was sent to a village west of Diyarbekir wrote in his memoirs that villagers resisted the message of secular education. Most villagers did not speak a word of Turkish whereas the teacher did not speak a word of Kurdish. Most of all, they despised his atheism and venerated the imam. Disillusioned and bitter, the teacher finished his mandatory duty and left, never to return. Village life carried on as usual.<sup>1305</sup>

How ethnically non-Turkish children in the eastern provinces perceived this style of education is difficult to gauge.<sup>1306</sup> Many people who were educated in the Young Turk era have passed away. Şahin Cizrelioğlu of the noted Cizrelizâde family, remembered in an interview that on the morning of 9 November 1938 (Atatürk's death), he was sitting in class when the teacher walked in and ordered the children to cry. When the young Şahin responded, "But Sir, my eyes won't fill with tears," the teacher told him to rub saliva on his cheekbones.<sup>1307</sup> An insight into these experiences of education is provided by the noted Kurdish author Mehmed Uzun (1953-2007), a native of a village west of Diyarbekir city. Uzun's account of his first day in school is so vivid one is justified in quoting him at length:

The first lesson goes back to 1960, the year I was seven. On a hot, clear day at the end of summer, the very day on which, dressed in new clothes from head to foot, I was beginning grammar school, I received a violent slap in the face in the guise of a lesson on the importance of language and words. I had been born and raised in the shelter of a Kurdish tribe. My family possessed no books except for the Koran, which hung on the wall, and had neither a radio nor a television set. In this enormous house, its garden planted with some pomegranate trees and an equal

<sup>1304</sup> Kâzım Nâmi Duru, "Köy mü, kasaba mı?," in: *Anadolu Terbiye Mecmuası*, vol.2 (1922), p.4.

<sup>1305</sup> Kazım Cömert, *Çiğdemler Çıkarsa Eğer* (Istanbul: Aydınlar Matbaacılık, 1992). Interview conducted with Kazım Cömert in Zwolle (the Netherlands), 18 December 2003.

<sup>1306</sup> Without presenting any credible evidence, one researcher argues that education for Kurdish children inevitably led to trauma and identity crisis. Rohat, *Kürdistan'da Eğitim Süreçleri* (Diyarbakır: Dilan, 1992), pp.46-50.

<sup>1307</sup> Interview with Şahin Cizrelioğlu conducted by Şeyhmus Diken, published in: Şeyhmus Diken, *İsyân Sürgünleri* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005), p.213.

number of peach trees, the garden where roses bloomed, there was nothing besides my father's *bilur* (shepherd's pipe), the stories and legends told by my grandfather, and the beautiful *strans* (traditional songs) that my grandmother sang in the *Zaza* dialect of Kurdish. It was a universe forged in the feelings, ideas, norms, and values of the Kurdish language. I was seven years old and loved this universe that I was part of. But from the first hour of the first day that I set foot in school I was instructed by a slap in the face, ineradicably engraved in my memory, that my universe was meaningless, useless, primitive, and taboo, and that I had to leave it. While I was joining the ranks of my classmates in the yard of the grammar school, which was named after the poet Ibrahim Rafet, the teacher, who came from central Anatolia and was fulfilling his civil service, called me to order by a violent slap because I was speaking with a classmate in my maternal tongue. "It is forbidden to speak Kurdish!"<sup>1308</sup>

Another Kurdish man from the northern Lice, who later became a teacher himself, argued that the children's treatment depended on how nationalist their teacher was. His primary school teacher, a fervent nationalist, would frequently beat the children "for even whispering a single word in Kurdish."<sup>1309</sup> One anthropologist documented the most radical example of linguistic oppression: an old Kurdish man had his tongue cut out by the army for speaking Kurdish.<sup>1310</sup> Another scholar, a musicologist researching the Kurdish oral tradition, once met a man named Seyidxan Boyacı, a bard singing traditional songs and laments in Diyarbakir. Boyacı was once threatened by the authorities that if he sang inside the city walls his tongue would be cut out.<sup>1311</sup> Examples such as these possibly suggest that cultural and educational policies could not and did not achieve the desired ends in the East on a short term. But the Young Turk legacy outlived the Young Turks themselves, for their curricula and methods remained in effect after the end of Young Turk rule in 1950.

### **The boarding school for Kurdish girls**

The policy of "Turkification" through schooling manifested itself in the eastern provinces most identifiably in the boarding schools. The 1925 Kemalist reports on "Reform in the East" had vaguely sketched that the policy of assimilation would be carried out through boarding schools. In regions where Kurds and Arabs lived, Turkish Hearths and schools needed to be opened and "most importantly, all sacrifices need to be endured to establish girls' schools and

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<sup>1308</sup> Mehmed Uzun, "Diyarbakir: the Slap in the Face," in: *International Journal of Kurdish Studies*, vol.1, no.1 (January 2003).

<sup>1309</sup> Interview conducted with Amed Tigris in Stockholm, 18 May 2005.

<sup>1310</sup> Christopher Houston, "Creating a Diaspora within a Country: Kurds in Turkey," in: Melvin Ember, Carol R. Ember & Ian Skoggard (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World* (New York: Kluwer Academic, 2004), vol.2, pp.403-14.

<sup>1311</sup> Interview conducted with Seyidxan Boyacı by Emrah Kanısıcak in the summer of 2007, available at: <http://sazny.blogspot.com/2008/05/nightingale-of-amed-new-edit.html> [accessed 6 November 2008].

ensure that the girls enroll... By opening boarding schools, the region can be saved from getting involved with Kurdism... and girls' schools can induce women to speak Turkish."<sup>1312</sup> These ideas would materialize when during the interwar campaigns, the Turkish military elite understood that assimilating the Kurds could not only be a matter of destroying and dispersing the armed resistance. Education was rediscovered as a complementary and vital method of social assimilation. The Chief of Staff solicited the government for the foundation of an educational institute that could accelerate the "Turkification" process.<sup>1313</sup> Precise plans for the establishment of boarding schools in the East were formulated by Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya. On 4 June 1937, Kaya sent the Ministry of Culture a top-secret circular about the boarding schools:

Boarding schools for girls and boys need to be opened and girls and boys from the age of five need to be brought into these schools for education and upbringing. These boys and girls need to be married to each other and settled dispersedly on property inherited from their parents where they can establish a Turkish Nest so that Turkish Culture can be thoroughly implanted [in the region]... Therefore ... it is necessary and essential that small children be placed in this type of boarding schools.<sup>1314</sup>

According to Kaya, girls in particular needed to be placed in the schools since mothers were seen as the carriers of the Kurdish culture that needed to be exorcised from their minds. This order had come from Atatürk himself, who had expressed determination to pursue a policy leaving no place for mothers to raise their children with languages other than Turkish. The aim was to drive a cultural wedge between generations in order for Kurds to become 'future Turks'. The road to the nation was as coercive as it was gendered: women were seen as carriers of national reproductivity, vessels of national identity, and transmitters of culture.

The first boarding school in the eastern provinces was established in Elazığ in 1937.<sup>1315</sup> Although it mostly aimed at schoolgirls from the Dersim district, it also drew students from the regions north of Diyarbakir.<sup>1316</sup> There were pupils from Çermik, Ergani, and Palu – the latter being a district of Elazığ province by that time. A relatively young and idealistic teacher from Istanbul named Sıdıka Avar was appointed as director. Avar's private

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<sup>1312</sup> Bayrak, *Kürtler*, p.487.

<sup>1313</sup> Nuriye D. Hekimoğlu, "Kız Enstitüsü Niçin Açıldı," in: *Altan: Elaziz Halkevi Dergisi*, vol.33-34-35 (January 1938), pp.32-33.

<sup>1314</sup> Şükrü Kaya to Ministry of Culture, 4 June 1937, reproduced in: Nurşen Mazıcı, *Celal Bayar: Başbakanlık Dönemi 1937-1939* (Istanbul: Der, 1996), p.233, appended document no.3.

<sup>1315</sup> For a study of Avar's school see: Sevim Yeşil, "Unfolding Republican Patriarchy: The Case of Young Kurdish Women at the Girls' Vocational Boarding School in Elazığ" (unpublished MA thesis, Middle East Technic University, Department of Gender and Women's Studies, 2003).

<sup>1316</sup> See Abidin Özmen's report in: Cemil Koçak, *Umûmî Müfettişlikler (1927-1952)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), pp.101 ff.

archive and its distillate, her memoirs, offer a rare and valuable source of insight into the official perspective on educational policies in the East, and into how the Kemalist policy-makers organized the transformation process of the children from “primitive Kurds” to “civilized Turks”.<sup>1317</sup> From the authorities’ point of view, this “civilization process” required a twofold assault on Kurdish children’s identities. On the one hand, the school needed to strip away all outward signs of the children’s identification with tribal and rural life, that is to say, their “savage” ways. On the other hand, the children needed to be instructed in the principles, values, ideas, and behaviors of Turkish “civilization”. These twin processes – the tearing down of the old selves versus the building of new ones – were to be carried out simultaneously. As the “savage” Kurdish selves gave way, so the “civilized” Turkish selves would emerge.

From the moment of her assignment Avar began travelling in the countryside on horseback, searching for girls to enroll in her boarding school. On arrival in a village, she

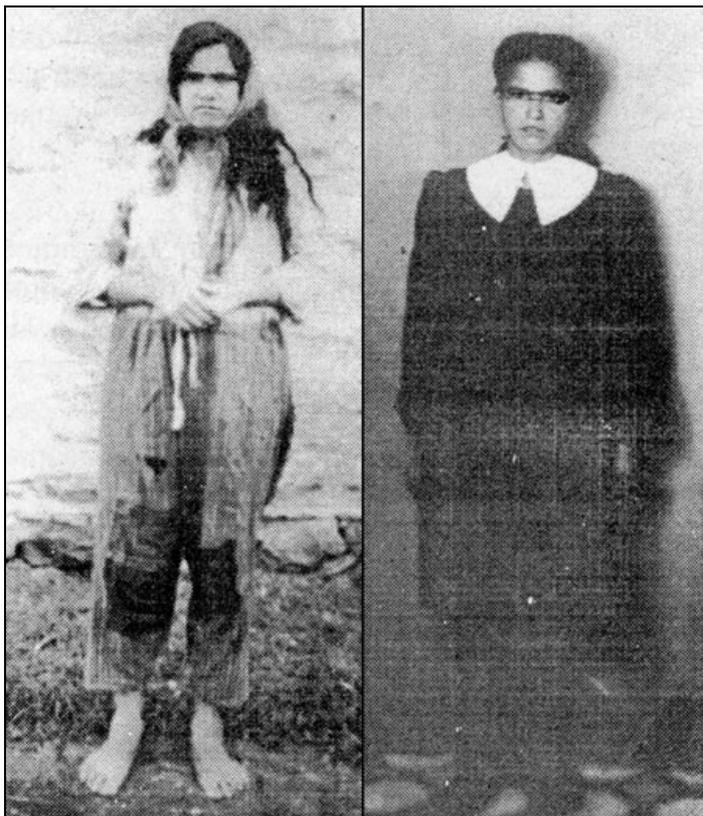


Photo 44: Kurdish girl named Teti, photographed before and after enrolment, undated (Avar, 1986)

would approach the locals and explain to those who understood Turkish what her objective was. In some villages she was received cordially, in others with outright hostility. After taking girls from a village, each one was photographed on arrival. These “before the school” photos would later be contrasted with the “after the school” photos to demonstrate the transition to “civilization”. The girls would be put in quarantine for two weeks and only then began attending classes. The curriculum in the boarding school was obviously nationalist and patriarchal. A standard program for

the Kurdish village girls was three years and provided training with a special curriculum at elementary school level. Forty-four hours of class were taught in a week, and clear priority

<sup>1317</sup> Sıdıka Avar, *Dağ Çiçeklerim (Anılar)* (Ankara: Öğretmen, 1986).

was given to Turkish language classes. Other classes were civics and math, but also child-care, housekeeping, cooking, embroidery, and sewing, which, Avar argued, were “indispensable for a housewife”.<sup>1318</sup>

The levels of coercion in enrolling children varied from relative voluntariness to legalized abduction, especially in the case of young orphans who had lost their families in the massacres of 1925 and 1938. Those coerced into attending school were probably more bitter than those who went voluntarily and with their parents’ blessing. Children who had visited the city before must have found it easier than those taken directly from the village. Because different Kurdish tribes had been exposed to the Ottoman and Turkish states with varying intensity and experience, it was to be expected that those children coming from cultures where there had been sustained contact with Ottoman and Turkish officials would find both the idea and necessity of schooling more comprehensible than those to whom the boarding school was the first taste of education. Regardless of these varying circumstances, leaving for boarding school was generally an awkward and painful affair. Many naive and hesitant villagers fostered prejudices towards Avar’s school. They suspected that their daughters would be taken away to the highly despised and distrusted city to be “turned into communists” or “given away to English officers”. It was feared that the girls who came back would “neither remember their own parents nor speak their own language anymore”.<sup>1319</sup>

The often traumatic nature of being taken to the boarding school is evidenced by the example of an orphan girl named Xezal. In August 1938 Avar received a phone call from the General Inspectorate headquarters. The army had found children of “those who had been mass-executed” roaming around the mountains. The Inspectorate ordered Avar to receive the children, not to educate them, but to make them work in the school. According to the authorities the orphans were children of “dishonorable insurgents” and therefore did not deserve to be educated. Xezal was one of these girls who had lost their family in the 1938 massacre. She was malnourished, dressed in rags, and life in the mountains had brutalized her. When Avar first approached her, the terrified girl slapped the morsel of bread from Avar’s hand and resisted being taken to the school. When Avar contained her by force and took her to school, she stripped her of her clothes and found a festering wound in her shoulder, most likely from a ricochet gunshot. It took Avar a long time to calm down the hysterical Xezal, who kept screaming in Kurdish. The girl finally went to sleep, but when her bed was found empty during dormitory inspection, Avar found the trembling girl under her bed, rolled up in

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<sup>1318</sup> Yeşil, *Unfolding Republican Patriarchy*, pp.96-8.

<sup>1319</sup> *Ibid.*, p.234.

her blanket. It took her weeks to get used to her new environment and she never really reconciled herself with her fate or, for that matter, with the new Turkish name that was assigned to her.<sup>1320</sup> This example, however, was not typical of girls' experiences in the boarding school. Some of the girls prospered in the school, but a common theme that recurs is that most of them felt alienated from their families, and in a sense, from their earlier selves.

Despite these difficulties, for Kemalist philanthropists the journey of Kurdish children to the boarding school was that first step out of the darkness of "savagery" into the light of "civilization". The official discourse was euphoric in the example of Avar's boarding school. One major official explained at length that the objective of the school would be "speaking in the national language" for students who would be "told that they are Turks in their feelings and in their lifestyles." These students would be raised "as conscious citizens and educated mothers committed to the revolution, the national ideal, the country", then to be sent back to their villages. There, they were expected to "indoctrinate (*aşılama*) their children to protect and maintain... the works of civilization brought by the Republic to their region," for "only in this manner, the civilization brought by the Republic will not remain as a veneer that disappears at the slightest strain, but will leave profound traces in the deepest corners of the public spirit that cannot be rubbed out by any force".<sup>1321</sup> The veteran Young Turk journalist Ahmed Emin Yalman called Avar a "first degree Turkish-nationalist raider (*akıncı*)" who had promoted "cultural unity in our eastern provinces" by introducing "Turkish civilization" in that region. A secondary school teacher wrote a letter to Avar, praising her for "elevating the children to the level of civilized people by teaching them our language".<sup>1322</sup> The observations of the mayor of the small town of Karlıova are at least as thought-provoking:

You know the story of how in America a cow enters [a factory] at one end and a sausage exits at the other. Here in Elazığ we possess such a factory for 'civilized people'. In the Girls' Institute, the most primitive and savage young girls are taken in from all villages... Madame director gathers children like Janissaries... Yes indeed, squalid, ragged, savage-natured, stubborn and ill-tempered children with no language skills are going to school now. It is difficult to believe that the jovial, civilized child that offers you coffee two, three years later and speaks fluent Turkish is the same girl.<sup>1323</sup>

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<sup>1320</sup> Ibid., pp.87-90.

<sup>1321</sup> Nuriye D. Hekimoğlu, "Kız Enstitüsü Niçin Açıldı," in: *Altan: Elaziz Halkevi Dergisi*, vol.33-34-35 (January 1938), pp.32-33.

<sup>1322</sup> Muzaffer B. to Sıdıka Avar, 18 April 1955, quoted in: Ibid., pp.341.

<sup>1323</sup> Ibid., p.233, quoted from his book: *Köyden Haber* (Istanbul: Varlık, 1950).

This equation of “civilization” with “Turkishness” was expressed by Avar herself as well. In one of her annual reports to the Ministry of Education she wrote that her school was engaged in a “war for the sake of Turkishness” in which she claimed to be facing “a populace that does not welcome us with good will but always perceives us with suspicion and hesitation... and therefore needs to be indoctrinated with the Turkish ideal”.<sup>1324</sup>

The boarding school, especially in the eastern provinces, was the institutional manifestation of the government’s determination to restructure completely the Kurds’ minds and personalities. To understand how it functioned in this regard one must attempt to understand how Kurdish students actually came to know and experience it. And this effort must necessarily begin at that point in time when Kurdish youth left behind the familiar world of tribal and rural ways for the unfamiliar world of the state’s school. The girls’ immediate physical transformation included the cutting of hair, the changing of dress, and the changing of names. The first transformation, the cropping of their hair, was a *rite de passage* which symbolized their initiation into “modernity” and “civilization”. For many Kurdish village girls long hair was traditionally seen as a symbol of beauty and femininity, and the cutting of it was perceived as humiliating. The girls felt it made them look boyish.<sup>1325</sup> Although the short-hair policy was rooted in considerations of controlling the problem of head lice, the reason went deeper than cleanliness. At the heart of the policy was the belief that the children’s long hair was symbolic of “savagism”, and removing it was central to their new identification with “civilization”. The changing of dress was another policy that stripped the children of their past culture. The traditional baggy trousers (*şalwar*) worn in the villages were prohibited in favor of school uniforms.<sup>1326</sup> Since the Kemalists saw in Kurdish given names symbols of Kurdish ethnicity, many students’ names were forcibly changed on arrival. Many of the orphan girls snatched from the countryside had their names changed.<sup>1327</sup> As another graduate remembered, “When I arrived at the school, my Kurdish name was changed into a Turkish one. But I never forgot it: Delale”.<sup>1328</sup>

Finally, and most importantly, the assault on Kurdish ethnic identity diverged into the absolute prohibition of speaking Kurmancî and Zazaki on the one hand, and the practising of Islam on the other. Fatma Demir, according to Avar one of her favorite students,<sup>1329</sup>

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<sup>1324</sup> Ibid., p.255.

<sup>1325</sup> Yeşil, *Unfolding Republican Patriarchy*, pp.111-4.

<sup>1326</sup> Avar, *Dağ Çiçeklerim*, p.389.

<sup>1327</sup> Yeşil, *Unfolding Republican Patriarchy*, pp.121-2. Aziz Baran, “You Must Give a Kurdish Baby a Turkish Name,” in: *Kurdish Times*, vol.1, no.1 (1986), pp.12-15.

<sup>1328</sup> Interview conducted with Şemsiye Gezici (born 1936), in Bursa, 15 June 2002.

<sup>1329</sup> Avar, *Dağ Çiçeklerim*, pp.203-6.

remembered the total ban on the Kurdish language well: “Some of my friends spoke Kurdish among themselves because they did not understand Turkish yet and they were punished severely. They were not given dinner, they were beaten on the palms of their hands with a ruler, and had to stand on one foot for a long time”.<sup>1330</sup> Another girl responded, “We would never speak in Kurdish among ourselves. None of us. Who can dare to speak in Kurdish? There is no such possibility. There were watchmen and others...” Speaking Kurdish or bad Turkish entailed corporal punishment, as one girl remembered: “We did not like the Turkish language classes because our former teacher was scolding us, beating us with a ruler.” Religion was another factor. It was no surprise that the Kemalist state, a secular dictatorship, prohibited all expressions of any religion in the schools. Students bitterly remembered the prohibition of the prayer, the veil,<sup>1331</sup> and various fasting episodes, important pillars of Islamic faith. Avar defended the measures with the argument that praying was “unscientific” and fasting bad for “a healthy brain”.<sup>1332</sup>

Throughout the years, the boarding school operated under strict control of the General Inspectorate and by proxy, the army. Their official visits to the boarding school are worthy of mention as they clearly demonstrate how the authorities considered the children as objects of their ideas for social engineering. Avar’s account of the visit by Bingöl Governor Mehmet Rıfat Şahinbaş is revealing:

The governor asked, “Are these the Kurdish girls?” The expression on the faces of the children immediately changed from affection into malice. “These are the Turkish girls of Tunceli, sir.” The governor continued, “You have seen how your fathers and grandfathers have paid with their lives for having rebelled.” I wanted to interrupt him and said, “Please sir, not the fathers of these children, they are honorable...” “What do you mean? Aren’t they all Kurds? If you behave like this...” Although I tried to interrupt him again he continued, “The government is very strong. It will destroy all of you!”<sup>1333</sup>

The governor then stepped out to inspect the other classes. When Avar came back into the class, the girls were all crying and asking questions such as: “Why do they blame us like that? Why do they insult us by calling us Kurds? Why do they view the Kurds as lower than trash? I thought you said we were all Turks?” Prime Minister İsmet İnönü’s visit in early September 1944 disclosed what the highest echelons in the dictatorship expected from the boarding

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<sup>1330</sup> Interview conducted with Fatma Demir (1925-2007), in Istanbul, 10 June 2002.

<sup>1331</sup> See: “Kemalism: The Civilizing Mission,” in: Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp.57-82.

<sup>1332</sup> Quoted in: Yeşil, *Unfolding Republican Patriarchy*, pp.115-6, 118, 132-3.

<sup>1333</sup> Avar, *Dağ Çiçeklerim*, pp.197-8.

school. İnönü was curious about whether it had produced any “results”, and inspected a girl by the name of Elmas. After a brief conversation with the girl in Turkish, İnönü expressed his satisfaction and grabbed her wrist, pulled her hand up and addressed the people: “This hand will not hold a weapon or a sword, it will hold a pen and a needle!”<sup>1334</sup>



Photo 45: İnönü visits the school; Avar looks on from the left, 1940s (Avar, 1986)

A final account was the visit by Inspector-General General Abdullah Alpdoğan, which stirred up much excitement among the boarding school staff. Everything had to be perfect, as the general was known for his brusque manner. Alpdoğan marched into a class and saluted the children in military fashion, whereupon the children rose as a phalanx and exclaimed, “Thank you!” When the general asked Avar which class he was facing, Avar answered that it was the third grade. Alpdoğan snubbed, “Incorrect, you have to report properly.” When Avar asked what that meant, the general answered she had to recite the grade, the number of students present, the number of students absent, the name of the class, and the topic. Avar declaimed: “Third grade, thirteen present, none absent, sir! The class is Turkish, the topic is 23 April, sir!” In Alpdoğan’s honor the children had to sing nationalist songs and military marches. One of these was: “Turkish children, Turkish children / Eyes ahead, heads high / Tomorrow’s life is the nation’s horizon / Everything is yours, Turkish children.”<sup>1335</sup> The general’s visit seemed

<sup>1334</sup> Ibid., p.124.

<sup>1335</sup> Ibid., p.56

an exception, but it was the rule. The boarding school environment was not only authoritarian, but militaristic. The school was organized like a military training camp, ostensibly because of the sheer organizational problems created by having to house, feed, teach, and, most significantly, control many children. Good health, neatness, politeness, the ability to concentrate, self-confidence, and patriotism were also attributed to military regimen. But there were deeper reasons for the military atmosphere, reasons related to Kemalist perceptions of the “wildness” of Kurdish children. Kurdish children, it was argued, were products of cultures devoid of order, discipline, and self-constraint, all prized values in “Turkish civilization”.<sup>1336</sup>

Like other examples of Young Turk social engineering, the boarding school was closed after the Kemalists were ousted from power in 1950. In the end, all discourse they



Photo 46: Exercise, undated (Republican Archives)

produced on the boarding school, whether Avar’s memoirs, official inspections, or newspaper articles, was celebratory. The lived experiences of the girls was silenced and their afterlife as women was sanitized of anything perceived as negative. The discrepancy of discourse versus reality surfaces when comparing Avar’s published memoirs with

her unedited notes. Indeed, she mentions that many girls fled, many relished being back in their villages, and several girls committed suicide. But the most telling example of these silences built into the official narrative is the case of Anik Ö. (her last name is not disclosed in the memoirs). According to Avar’s memoirs, Anik was a girl from a surviving Armenian family that had blended in with local Kurds. She was beautiful, “with dark eyebrows, long wavy hair, a round face beaming with joy, and a charming giggle.” As a student Anik was successful; when she graduated she returned to her village, where conflicts arose because her newly acquired values clashed with existing rural and tribal values. According to Avar’s official version, the girl had hanged herself on a tree in her village because her “struggle to

<sup>1336</sup> Zeynep Türkylmaz, “The Republican Civilizing Mission: The Case of Mountain Flowers in Dersim/Tunceli (1937-1950),” paper presented at the annual conference of the Middle East Studies Association, Washington, DC, 24 November 2002.

bring civilization to their villages had met with resistance from the villagers.” In Avar’s words, the “little heroine” was a “victim of the onslaught of civilization”. But from her raw memoirs evidence arises that Anik had plunged into a severe identity crisis: time and again, she came into conflict with her family over cultural practices. Years of nationalist indoctrination had perverted her sense of self: was she Armenian, or Kurdish, or Turkish?<sup>1337</sup>

The boarding school represented the Kemalist belief that the school’s capacity to accomplish the transformation from “savage Kurds” to “civilized Turks” would determine the long-term fate of the Kurds, for if the doctrine of historical progress and the story of Turkish civilization taught anything, it was the incompatibility of “Turkish civilization” and “Kurdish savagism”. The assault on cultural identity was not seen as a racist and colonial practice but as a *mission civilisatrice* – like all colonial and nationalist civilizing offensives. This idea was so enduring that, in her preface to her mother’s edited memoirs of 1986, Avar’s daughter could argue that her late mother had been a member of “the Turkish army of education” that had ventured to “enlighten the East”.<sup>1338</sup> In an effort to eradicate all traces of tribal identity and culture, the Kemalists presumed that the school would break up persisting associations with Kurdish cultural and tribal life. Forced education through boarding schools indeed caused considerable damage to the structure and function of Kurdish tribes in the eastern provinces. But interviews with the students, now in their seventies, disclose the coexistence of opposing attitudes in the women’s world views and identities. On the one hand, they seem to identify with Turkish national identity and believe in Kemalist ideology, even though the Kurdish language (which was still spoken in their families) is an embarrassing reminder of their “uncivilized” pasts. Even some orphans whose families were murdered, or children who were often beaten and maltreated for speaking Kurdish, decades later remain loyal to their tormentors.<sup>1339</sup> But for many others the boarding school was the first place where they realized they were Kurds. For them, the chief consequence of attending the boarding school was an enlarged sense of Kurdishness. This fundamental ambivalence is compounded by the fact that many children of the boarders suffer from persisting identity uncertainties: although they were never taught Kurdish, they were still perceived as Kurds. Ironically, the very institution designed to extinguish Kurdish identity altogether may have well in fact contributed to its persistence in the form of pan-Kurdish consciousness and nationalism at the

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<sup>1337</sup> Avar, *Dağ Çiçeklerim*, pp.111-3, 281, 373; cf. *Sıdıka Avar Private Archive* (unpublished and uncatalogued), second notebook, pp.177-9.

<sup>1338</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>1339</sup> For examples see Yeşil, *Unfolding Republican Patriarchy*, p.115. This may be typical of victims’ behavior: Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma & Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), p.180.

turn of the millenium. Only extensive further research would test the veracity of this hypothesis.

## Discussion

One of the key elements of the vision of the new Turkey was that it was an indivisible unity. The Turkish citizen ought to bear no marks in the public sphere of his or her difference from the others in the national community. Although this meant that in principle difference was confined to the private sphere of the home, episodically rather than structurally, it too was often raided by social engineers, strongly resolved on eradicating difference. The new Turkey sought to create a nation in which no cultural and linguistic divisions would exist, with a single national culture that was open and accessible to all who were willing to adopt it. But in principle, within the Turkish nation and national imagery there was no recognized place for ethnic diversity or regional difference. The dismantling of the ancien regime from 1913 on guaranteed that never again would there be any question of individuals or groups getting special treatment, rights, or concessions according to their culture. Rather than a minimum of Turkish culture, minorities were expected to acquire fully Turkish national culture and assimilate into national society. Space for negotiating ways to be integrated into the nation was thin, and with considerable ethnic difference in the eastern provinces, this was a formidable task. Still, Young Turk nation builders sought to invent a nation with a single identity, one that was culturally homogeneous, admitted no sub-groups or categories of citizenship, but would instead be made up of universal citizens all equal to one another. While the universalist, assimilationist values did manage to integrate many minorities into the nation, difference persisted in the eastern provinces and simmered on, until it was politically mobilized in the late 1960s.

The relationship between education and nationalism has been researched fairly thoroughly.<sup>1340</sup> Education plays a critical role in the establishment and consolidation of nations. Indeed, “education is the most important means of consolidating national unity and passing it on to later generations.”<sup>1341</sup> In the era under discussion in this chapter, education embodied “an ideal of undivided one-ness” and, much as in the French case, “a programme for creating a single, undifferentiated culture for all citizens.”<sup>1342</sup> Paradoxically, this was at the same time an espousal of egalitarian principles and a mistrust of cultural difference. Partly

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<sup>1340</sup> For an overview of the literature see: Susanne Wiborg, “Political and Cultural Nationalism in Education,” in: *Comparative Education*, vol.36, no.2 (2000), pp.235-43.

<sup>1341</sup> Abram de Swaan, *Human Societies: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), p.126.

<sup>1342</sup> Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p.140.

for this reason, education is a contested borderland between the public responsibilities of the state and the private concerns of parents, since the identity of new generations is constructed in transactions which occur at and across this boundary. It is in these transactions that a balance between private and public socialization is struck, and the future of communities shaped.

So how do we resolve the conflict between those who argue that Young Turk education must be interpreted as ordinary forms of state formation, and those who insist that they are colonial forms of cultural domination? Is this an issue incapable of resolution? Not quite. The false opposition implicit in this polemic must be seen as part of the problem rather than a genuine concern for finding an answer to the problem. Here, violence and intentions seem to be key notions in conceptualizing and understanding the issue, for there is a clear axis of tension between heavily violent and less coerced cultural policies. There is an ontological difference between the cultural and linguistic policies of dictatorial regimes and those of relatively moderate states. In a continuum of population policies, contemporary democracies would figure at one end with considerable space for negotiation and low levels of coercion. Gliding towards more coercion, nineteenth-century educational policies in southern France would figure next, before colonial policies towards Native Americans and Aboriginals (such as boarding schools). The overtly destructive policies of occupational regimes such as Stalinist Russia in the Caucasus and Nazi Germany in Eastern Europe would figure firmly at the other extreme of the continuum.<sup>1343</sup> The problem of intentions revolves partly around the tension between contingency versus conspiracy: cultural change can be the unintended historical product of two groups that make contact, or the manipulation of a group's future through pro-active cultural policies, respectively. The Young Turks adhered to the latter theory.

Colonialism is associated with the seizing of land and the imposition of an alien dominant culture by force. It would perhaps stretch the definition of colonialism to apply it to Young Turk population policies in Eastern Turkey and label these forms of internal colonization.<sup>1344</sup> After all, the Young Turks did also attempt to redistribute land to landless peasants and sedentarize nomads. But some aspects of their policies do bear the imprint of colonialism, if only for the fact they were literally worded that way by Young Turk leaders.

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<sup>1343</sup> For a comparative, theoretical argument see: Robert van Krieken, "Reshaping Civilization: Liberalism between Assimilation and Cultural Genocide," in: *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*, vol.29, no.2 (2002), pp.215-47.

<sup>1344</sup> The arguments are made in: Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975); Elia T. Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

Although much more research would be needed on different regions to draw wider conclusions, Young Turk population policies in Eastern Turkey can perhaps be placed in the realm of the colonial. The policies were professedly intolerant of local cultures, were resolved to impose a single hegemonic culture, but left the door open for assimilation. Most importantly, they were accompanied by large-scale campaigns of violence against those who refused to be subdued. The violence cannot be bracketed off and analyzed separately, for it was part and parcel of the same logic of subduing populations perceived to be different. There is a sense of fate here. After the massively violent suppression of Kurdish dissent in the 1920s and 1930s, cultural policies could hardly have been soft-handed. Terminology such as “extermination of cultures” and “eradication of languages” perceived as alien and inferior, fundamentally were coupled to the large-scale violence against civilian populations.

One important clue to the colonial nature of Young Turk culture and education is indeed its diction. Intimately connected to the ideology of excising “backwardness” was the Kemalists’ world view. According to one specialist, one of the key concepts of Kemalist ideology was the notion of “civilization” (*medeniyet*).<sup>1345</sup> This concept, Eissenstat argues, “was fundamentally designed to act as an inclusionary (if aggressively assimilationist) rather than exclusionary discourse.”<sup>1346</sup> The opposite of civilization was Eastern Turkey, which, they declaimed, was living in the Middle Ages. The Young Turks’ apprehension of this conception of ‘civilization’ is characterized by Ussama Makdisi as ‘Ottoman orientalism’, which, in the case of the Young Turks, featured a complex of attitudes produced by exposure to an amalgam of modern European ideas, “that implicitly and explicitly acknowledged ‘the West’ to be the home of progress and ‘the East’, writ large, to be a present theater of backwardness.”<sup>1347</sup> Interwoven throughout much of their writings was the belief that Turkish is the language of civilization, administrative rationalism, and cultural enlightenment – and that the non-Turkish peoples operated on a lower cultural plane. Nation formation in the Young Turk era was therefore also a civilizing mission, comparable in discourse and practice to the European colonial ones.<sup>1348</sup>

Moreover, educational policies in the eastern provinces were not regarded primarily as intellectual enrichment of the population, but as a vehicle for forcible assimilation of a

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<sup>1345</sup> Erik-Jan Zürcher, “The Core Terminology of Kemalism: Mefkûre, Millî, Muasir, Medenî,” in: François Georgeon (ed.), *Les mots de politique de l’Empire Ottoman à la Turquie kemaliste* (Paris: EHESS, 2000), pp.55-64.

<sup>1346</sup> Howard Eissenstat, “Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and the Beginnings of Nationalism in the Turkish Republic,” in: Paul Spickard (ed.), *Race and Nation: Ethnic Systems in the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp.239-56.

<sup>1347</sup> Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” in: *American Historical Review*, vol.107 (2002), pp.768-96.

<sup>1348</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, “‘The Great Work of Uplifting Mankind’: Zivilisierungsmissionen und Moderne,” in: Boris Barth and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Zivilisierungsmissionen* (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2005), pp.363-425.

population perceived as alien. Top-level government officials declared innumerable times that Muslim minorities in the East needed to be “Turkified” through education. The fundamental difference between education and indoctrination here is that the pupils were never expected to question or examine critically the doctrine they were taught, especially when it came to political and historical matters (see next chapter). The space for critical self-evaluation and skeptical scrutiny of the ideas transmitted by Young Turk teachers was very limited. The totalitarian ambition of the regime manifested itself most explicitly in the field of cultural and educational policies. For almost three decades, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture officials closely monitored attendance at schools, films, plays, exhibits, and rallies, examined library circulation, and reported on book sales. Parallel duties were carried out by the same ministries, as well as police and gendarmerie, to ensure that no non-Turkish culture was produced visibly and distributed in the eastern provinces.

But the totalitarian nature of the Kemalist dictatorship is symbolized perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the boarding school for Kurdish children. The Ministry of Education held the children in its powerfully assimilationist embrace, designed to carry out the mission of “Turkification” as a classical example of a ‘total institution’.<sup>1349</sup> But the children started their education in Turkish at the age of 7 to 12, too late to socialize children from scratch. Psychologists have argued that by that age, a child will have passed “the capacity for full cultural acquisition” of one single national culture.<sup>1350</sup> Sociologists, too, emphasize that “identities which are established this early in life – selfhood, human-ness, gender, and... kinship and ethnicity – are primary identities, more robust and resilient to change in later life than other identities.”<sup>1351</sup> Partly for this reason, the boarding school experience for many initially was a traumatic, and on the long term an alienating experience. At the time, the practice was presented as promoting the welfare of individual Kurdish children, because Kurdish cultural identity was seen as an insurmountable obstacle to the capacity to take a

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<sup>1349</sup> Erving Goffman identified the following characteristics of total institutions: “First, all aspects of life (eating, sleeping, playing, working, learning) are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of a member’s daily activity is carried out in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day’s activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole circle of activities being composed from above through a system of explicit, formal rules and a body of officials. Finally, the contents of the various enforced activities are brought together as parts of a single, overall, rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution.” By Goffman’s definition, examples of total institutions include concentration camps, mental hospitals, army barracks, plantations, prisons, and work camps. Erving Goffman, “The Characteristics of Total Institutions,” in: Amitai Etzioni (ed.), *Complex Organizations: A Sociological Reader* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), pp.313-4.

<sup>1350</sup> For a general discussion of language acquisition by children see: Victoria Fromkin et al. “The Development of Language in Genie: A Case of Language Acquisition Beyond the Critical Point,” *Brain and Language*, vol.1 (1974), pp.81-107. For a criticism of this approach see: David Singleton, *The Age Factor in Second Language Acquisition: A Critical Look at the Critical Period Hypothesis* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1995).

<sup>1351</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.21.

“normal” part in “modern” Turkish social life. As such, contemporary officials maintained that the overall effect was beneficial, and that the intentions were good.

Inasmuch as the Young Turks allowed difference and cultural initiatives in the civil society, these were only tolerated if they served “Turkishness” as defined by the regime. Whether in Kurdish, Arabic, Syrian-Aramaic, Laz, Zaza, Circassian, or any other non-Turkish language, no texts were published, no music was played and sold, no plays were performed, and no programs broadcast in the public space. The prohibition of non-Turkish culture in the public space may have been rigorous, but ordinary people, surrounded by omnipresent “Turkishness”, created within its strictures space to live their lives, and non-Turkish culture could function invisibly, that is, not visible in the public domain. One expert has argued that by 1960, “there were quite a few cases of successful assimilation”, but adds that this was an urban phenomenon.<sup>1352</sup> But decades after the end of Young Turk rule, millions of peasants living in the countryside continued speaking their own languages until a new wave of nation formation prohibited the private use of Kurdish.<sup>1353</sup> Urbanization, as a result of labour migration from the 1960s on, or the destruction of villages during the war between the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and the Turkish army (1984-1997), contributed more to the spread of Turkish language and culture among these people than the massive campaigns of nation formation in the Young Turk era ever did. (This, however, is beyond the scope of this study.)

Therefore, one can perhaps argue that Young Turk nation formation in the eastern provinces largely failed, not because it was Turkish, but because it was totalitarian and violent.<sup>1354</sup> The high levels of coercion behind the educational and cultural policies were violent forms of political expression the regime deployed in order to retain its sovereignty over the region and the population. It was the culture of prohibitions, impositions, coercion, and violence that deeply upset many people. For many, too much violence had been at the foundation of Turkish nation formation to be truly attractive. That violence backfired when culture and education became a critical point of contention for the Turkish Republic after World War II. Disgruntled Kurdish nationalists saw in decades of Kemalist educational

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<sup>1352</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “Race, Culture, Nation and Identity Politics in Turkey: Some Comments,” paper presented at the Annual Turkish Studies Workshop *Continuity and Change: Shifting State Ideologies from Late Ottoman to Early Republican Turkey, 1890-1930*, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, 24-26 April 1997, pp.8-9.

<sup>1353</sup> Hamit Bozarslan, *La question kurde: états et minorités au Moyen-Orient* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1997), p.84.

<sup>1354</sup> Cultures are ‘blind processes’, products of history in continuous change and interaction, and simply cannot fundamentally change into one single direction the way that high-modernist social engineers would like them to. Therefore, victim groups’ sentimental rhetoric of “cultural genocide”, too, is self-defeating for it overlooks this reality.

policies “cultural genocide”<sup>1355</sup> or “linguistic genocide”,<sup>1356</sup> and demanded that the Kurdish language be taught in the eastern provinces. Many Kurdish nationalists who fled Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s and now live in diaspora in their turn categorically refuse to speak Turkish, and raise their children only in Kurdish. But Kurdish resistance towards Turkish education went much farther when in the late 1980s the PKK fatefully declared teachers “agents of cultural genocide in Kurdistan”. From then on, the organization began murdering teachers, often symbolically on “National Teachers’ Day” (24 November). Between 1987 and 1997 the organization assassinated an estimated 138 teachers and 153 Ministry of Education officials, of which at least 33 in Diyarbakir province.<sup>1357</sup> One of the most notorious killings occurred in the village of Hantepe in central Diyarbakir. On the night of 30 September 1996, two PKK militants raided the teacher’s house in the village and kidnapped four teachers, including a 19-year old female one. The teachers were taken away, made to kneel down at a nearby ditch, and shot in the back of the head.<sup>1358</sup>

Identity is a matter of self-conviction or perhaps self-hypnosis. For those who were not convinced, either from experiences with discrimination or memories of mass violence, education was a difficult ordeal. But once a Kurd had convinced himself that he was Turkish, he found himself backed by the state’s powerful educational infrastructure that confirmed the identity every day and left little insecurity for the person. The Self was continuously reinforced by the nation state. One expert portrayed this as a zero-sum identity game in which Kurds could only join the Turkish nation if they cancelled, postponed, repressed, or forgot their Kurdishness.<sup>1359</sup> The word ‘forgot’ could not have been phrased better since identity is closely related to memory. That ‘identity work’ was related to ‘memory work’ even the Young Turks had understood: Kurds had to “forget” their Kurdishness to become Turkish. The Young Turk regime would sustain this autohypnosis by a body of knowledge in the form of myths and symbolization, a prime function of another vector of Young Turk nation formation. That phenomenon was the politics of memory, and the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>1355</sup> Haydar Işık, “Kürtlerin sonu,” in: *Yeni Özgür Politika*, 30 November 2006. See also: Abdullah Öcalan, *Kürt Sorununda Demokratik Çözüm Bildirgesi* (Istanbul: Mem, 1999), p.36.

<sup>1356</sup> Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, *Linguistic Genocide in Education or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000), pp.320-7.

<sup>1357</sup> *Zaman*, 2 October 1996.

<sup>1358</sup> *Diyarbakır Olayı*, 1 October 2007.

<sup>1359</sup> Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003), p.120.