

LAND USE, PEASANTS AND THE REPUBLIC:  
DEBATES ON LAND REFORM IN TURKEY, 1923-1945

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **LAND USE, PEASANTS AND THE REPUBLIC: DEBATES ON LAND REFORM IN TURKEY, 1923-1945**

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This dissertation examines debates over land reform in the single-party period of the Republic of Turkey. It commences with a lengthy background discussion of tenurial relations in Ottoman and early Republican Anatolia. This part builds on secondary literature and revolves around the question as to whether commercialization of agricultural production altered patterns of land use and ownership in Anatolia. Therefore, the discussion starts off from nineteenth-century when Ottoman countryside was integrated to world markets through exportation of agricultural produce. Having shown the extent of land concentration and expropriation in nineteenth-century Anatolia, the present study proceeds to the Republican era and explores the evolution of tenurial relations from 1923 to 1945.

Land reform is a scarcely studied subject in Turkey. Almost all scholarly studies on the subject are underlain by a common historical narrative which traces the development of a Kemalist land reform scheme through a series of key historical moments. These moments are deportation and land distribution laws enacted in the aftermath of Sheikh Said Rebellion, Settlement Law, land law bills of 1937-1935, constitutional amendment of 1937 and, finally, Law for Providing Land to Farmers of 1945. The present study examines all these moments with an eye to understanding why Kemalists sanctioned intervention in property relations on land. It also argues that the common/conventional narrative excludes certain crucial developments like 1930s' wheat purchase scheme and wartime policies of procurement. This dissertation aims to fill the gap by situating Kemalists' land reform attempts in the context of overall agricultural policies.

Keywords: Land Reform, Distribution of Land, Law for Providing Land to Farmers, Settlement Policies, Tenurial Relations in Anatolia

## ÖZ

### TOPRAK KULLANIMI, KÖYLÜLER VE CUMHURİYET: TÜRKİYE’DE TOPRAK REFORMU TARTIŞMALARI, 1923-1945

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Bu tezin konusu tek parti dönemindeki toprak reformu tartışmalarıdır. İlk önce, bu tartışmaların arka planını resmetmek için, toprak üzerindeki mülkiyet ve tasarruf ilişkilerinin geç Osmanlı döneminden erken Cumhuriyete nasıl değiştiği incelenmektedir. Burada esas soru, tarımsal üretimin ticarileşmesinin toprak üzerindeki mülkiyet ve tasarruf ilişkilerini ne ölçüde değiştirdiğine dairdir. Bu sebeple, tartışma Osmanlı tarım kesiminin pazar ekonomisinin bir parçası haline geldiği on dokuzuncu yüzyıldan başlamaktadır. Burada meta üretimi, toprak yoğunlaşması ve mülksüzleşme süreçlerinin on dokuzuncu yüzyıl Anadolu’sundaki seyri ikincil literatür üzerinden ele alınmaktadır. Daha sonra ise, imparatorluktan miras kalan mülkiyet yapısının Cumhuriyet yönetiminin ilk yirmi yılında ne ölçüde ve ne şekillerde değiştiği yine ağırlıklı olarak ikincil literatür ışığında tartışmaya açılmaktadır.

Türkiye’de toprak reformu fikrinin gelişimi yeterince çalışılmamış bir konudur. Bu tezde, var olan az sayıda çalışmanın ortak bir tarih anlatısından beslendiği tespit edilmektedir. Söz konusu anlatının öne çıkardığı tarihsel uğraklar sırasıyla şöyledir: Şeyh Said İsyanından sonra çıkarılan tehcir ve toprak dağıtımı kanunları, 1934 tarihli İskân Kanunu, 1935-1937 döneminin Toprak Kanunu tasarıları ve anayasa değişikliği ve nihayet 1945 tarihli Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu. Bu çalışmada, bahsi geçen uğraklar tek tek incelenmekte ve her birinde Kemalist rejimin toprak üzerindeki ilişkilere ne ölçüde ve hangi sebeplerle müdahale ettiği sorusu üzerine gidilmektedir. Diğer yandan, ortak/yerleşik tarih anlatısı birtakım önemli gelişmeleri dışarıda bırakmakta ve Kemalist toprak reformu projesinin evrimine dair ancak kısmi bir resim çizmektedir. Buna karşılık, bu tez, toprak reformu girişimlerini Kemalist rejimin güttüğü tarımsal politikaların bütünü içerisinde değerlendirmeye çalışmaktadır. İşte bu sebeple, 1930’ların hububat alımı politikası ve İkinci Dünya Savaşı yıllarının iâşe tedbirleri tartışmaya dahil edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toprak Reformu, Toprak Dağıtımı, Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, İskân Politikaları, Anadolu’da Toprak Mülkiyeti ve Tasarruf İlişkileri

In memory of my grandfather Hüseyin Hüsnü Kaya

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|      |  |
|------|--|
| AAC  | : Administration of Agricultural Complexes |
| CUP  | : Committee of Union and Progress          |
| ÇTK  | : Çiftiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu            |
| LPLF | : Law for Providing Land to Farmers        |
| MHSA | : Ministry of Health and Social Assistance |
| MİİV | : Mübadele İmar ve İskân Vekaleti          |
| NPL  | : National Protection Law                  |
| RPP  | : Republican People's Party                |
| SÎMV | : Sıhhat ve İçtimaî Muavenet Vekâleti      |
| SPT  | : Soil Products Tax                        |
| TMO  | : Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi                |

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The memoirs of Semyon Ivanovich Aralov, the Soviet ambassador in Ankara in 1922-1923, record an intriguing conversation with Mustafa Kemal. Shortly after the War of Independence (1919-1922) was concluded in favor of Turkish nationalists, Aralov paid a visit to the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly at his residence in Çankaya. The two had a private conversation where Mustafa Kemal informed Aralov about Ankara's course of action for immediate future. After remarking that Turkish economy was dominated by foreigners, he stated that they would foster national economy and help Anatolian merchants get rich. As a true believer in the October Revolution, Aralov could not help but pose the question: "What about peasants?" To this Mustafa Kemal replied: "We will help them. We will abolish *aşar*." Aralov was not satisfied. To him, the abolition of the Ottoman tithe would not suffice as Anatolian peasants were enslaved by "feudal lords, usurers and hodjas." He believed that Turkey's new government should provide land to peasants and rescue them from the hands of usurers. Turkey should follow the example of Russia where workers and peasants united to "forever save [the country] from feudal lords." Mustafa Kemal's answer was rather simple: "Things are different over in Russia."<sup>1</sup>

Aralov admits that the details of this conversation, which apparently went on for a while, elude his memory. He does recollect Mustafa Kemal's comments on the absence of a Turkish equivalent of an organized and conscious working class as well as his own response to the effect that there were classes and class conflict in Anatolia, but that is all. Nonetheless, even this much would resonate among students of early Republican history

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<sup>1</sup> Aralov, 2007, p. 232.

as the anecdote evokes a familiar theme: the political alliance that was forged between nationalist leaders and *eşraf*<sup>2</sup> during the early stages of the National Struggle (*Millî Mücadele*). It is commonly assumed that this alliance deeply influenced the future course of Kemalist politics. Many explain what they perceive as the absence of a social revolution in 1920s with reference to the fact that the new regime had to rely on property-owning classes for support. In other words, Kemalism remained a Westernizing/modernizing revolution because of its social basis. What E. Özbudun writes touches the heart of the matter: “The local nobility supported the modernization program of the national military-bureaucratic elite, in return for which it was allowed to retain its land, status, and local influence, as evinced in the conspicuous absence of any real land reform under the Republican governments.”<sup>3</sup>

“Local nobility” is a strange choice of term, by which Özbudun surely means Anatolian *eşraf*. Regardless, the term does include landowners. Unlike Özbudun, F. Ahmad writes on Turkish national movement’s relation specifically to the owners of landed property. According to him, Anatolian peasants remained indifferent to the national movement whereas landowners lent their full support. This is why Kemalist policies were always biased in favor of status quo maintenance in the countryside. Put otherwise, Kemalists were compelled by political reasons to adopt policies which favored landowners. Ahmad is of the view that things could have turned out differently only if there had been a mass of “politicized” peasants. If nationalists had been in a position to mobilize the peasants, they would have made a land reform to please their supporters once victory was won.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Eşraf* translates as local notables, and covers traders, landowners and other people of wealth of Anatolian towns.

<sup>3</sup> Özbudun, 1970, p. 389.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmad, 1981, pp. 154-6.

Toprak looks at the matter from a nuanced perspective. She touches on the difficulties of involving peasant masses in national (social or political) movements in general.<sup>5</sup> The first problem is that nationalist ideas do not make sense to peasants unless they are couched in terms that are already familiar to them. Turkish nationalist movement, she writes, managed to overcome this difficulty, partly, because references to Islam proved pivotal in garnering peasants' support. Hence nationalist forces promised to save the sultanate and the caliphate, and invited peasants to the nationalist cause. The second problem Toprak mentions is more relevant to the present topic. Because villages and peasants are isolated, nationalist leaders (or leaders of any sort) cannot appeal to the masses directly but need the mediation of "traditional networks of authority." In the Turkish case, traditional leaders through whom peasants were mobilized were *eşraf*, which, Toprak notes, included the ulema as well as *ağas* (landowners). As Toprak writes, the nationalist leaders first had to "secure the loyalty of those groups which formed a link between the central government and villages".<sup>6</sup>

It is a pity that the rest of Toprak's account focuses solely on the role of ulema in mobilizing the peasantry during the National Struggle. She brilliantly illustrates how Kemalists secured manpower and financial support for the nationalist army with the help of *müftüs* and *imams*, who not only called peasants to jihad but also took part in tax commissions (*Tekalif-i Milliye Komisyonları*) to raise money for the army.<sup>7</sup> However, as Toprak notes, mobilization of the peasantry turned out to be a "short-term" strategy. When the War of Independence was won, priorities changed: nationalist leaders were now preoccupied with creating a modern state apparatus together with a "Westernized elite" to command it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Toprak, 1981, pp. 59-65.

<sup>6</sup> Toprak, 1981, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Toprak, 1981, pp. 64-6.

<sup>8</sup> Toprak, 1981, pp. 66-7.

The precise nature of the relation between nationalist leaders and provincial landowners is, sadly, yet to be studied. In the absence of scholarly analyses, it seems justifiable to refer to anecdotes. I will mention two here, both of which are illustrative of the clout of Kurdish landowners in particular. The first anecdote is narrated by Ş.S. Aydemir. As is well-known, nationalists decided in June 1919 to convene a congress in Erzurum with the purpose of uniting the resistance forces in the Eastern provinces of what remained of Ottoman State. According to Aydemir, a certain Mutkili Musa, who controlled most of the Muş plain, was officially invited to attend the Erzurum Congress. In the end, although Musa was a no-show, he not only was named a delegate, but was also elected to representative committee of the congress.<sup>9</sup> This incident epitomizes how desperate nationalists were to enlist the support of Kurdish *ağas*. Mango cites another anecdote via Sabiha Sertel, who was still a very young journalist in the days of the National Struggle. Sertel interviewed Mazhar Müfit (Kansu), an ex-governor who joined Mustafa Kemal very early on. When inquired whether nationalists had any plans to reform land tenure, he replied: “It is impossible to explain land reform to the [Kurdish] *ağas*.”<sup>10</sup>

There is some ground to argue that this alliance continued well into the republican period. For instance, in Yalçın-Heckmann’s study of Kurdish *aşirets* there is mention of a certain Zirkan family. Yalçın-Heckmann notes that Zirkans allied themselves with the nationalist movement of Mustafa Kemal in 1919-1922. The cooperation lasted, however, as the family fought on government’s side when two minor uprisings erupted in 1930 and 1936 in their historical homeland.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Aydemir, 1966b, p. 78.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Mango, 1999, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Yalçın-Heckmann, 1990, p. 299.

The collaboration between the nationalist movement and landowning interests is also a ubiquitous motif in the literature on land reform in Turkey. According to İnan, for example, land reform was delayed precisely because Kemalists could not afford to lose the backing of landowners.<sup>12</sup> In similar vein, Tezel maintains that even after the enactment of the Law for Providing Land to Farmers (*Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu*) in 1945, Kemalists did not really commit themselves to implementing reform since local branches of Republican People's Party were dependent on landowning classes.<sup>13</sup>

It is one thing to point out that nationalist leaders relied on landowners to fight the liberation war, but quite another to argue that it was this alliance which stood sternly in the way of land reform for some twenty years. The latter argument *assumes* that the agrarian structure of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Turkey called for redistribution of land. Now it is an indisputable fact that Kemalists remained uninterested in property relations on land for more than ten years following the promulgation of the republic in 1923. This fact, however, cannot be explained solely by the social alliance which supposedly laid the foundation of the new regime. For one thing, as I will argue in the following pages, early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Anatolia was a region with much uncultivated land and sparse population. This is also to say that nascent Turkey was not a country where pressure for land reform was building up. It is high time that we began to investigate the ways in which this state of affairs was reflected in Kemalist politics. Hence it is not without a reason that, for many years, provision of land to farmers was a measure confined to annual budget laws. This practice started in 1925 when a provision on land sales to farmers was included in the budget law (Law No. 627). According to Article 23 of the law, state lands could be sold to peasants who were in need of (extra) land in return for 10-year installment payments.

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<sup>12</sup> İnan, 2005, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 400.

Those eligible for sale were peasants who had less than 200 *dönüms* of land.<sup>14</sup> Budget laws of following years contained the same provision on the sale of state lands.<sup>15</sup>

Yet Kemalists gradually came to embrace a notion of land reform. In fact, the objective of distribution of land to farmers was included in Republican People's Party program at its fourth congress in 1935. On November 1, 1937, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk delivered his last parliamentary opening speech as the president of the Turkish Republic.<sup>16</sup> Agricultural development was one of the highlights of this speech. He stated that Turkish Grand National Assembly should decide on a new agricultural policy, one which was based on "serious studies," so as to make agricultural development possible. Atatürk went on to mention a number of measures which he thought should be included in the new policy:

First of all, there should remain no landless farmer in the country. More importantly, a plot of land which is just large enough to sustain a peasant family should be indivisible under any circumstances. There should be an upper limit for lands that large farmers and estate owners can operate, and this upper limit should vary depending on density of population and productivity of land in different regions.<sup>17</sup>

Atatürk named other measures as well. For instance, he called for an urgent plan to help agricultural producers acquire better draft power and new equipment, and this included

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<sup>14</sup> Note that this also included peasants who had no land at all. But it must have been highly unlikely for landless peasants to purchase land no matter how manageable payment was. There was a ceiling for the acreage that could be sold to a single person. The rule was that the person should have no more than 200 *dönüms* of land after the sale. To illustrate, if a peasant had 150 *dönüms*, he could buy up to 50 *dönüms*; if he had 50, he could buy 150. According to the second paragraph of the same article, in the event that there were no persons in need of land in a given locality, then state lands could be auctioned. 1341 Senesi Muvazenei Umumiye Kanunu, 1925, Yirmi Üçüncü Madde (Article 23), p. 203.

<sup>15</sup> Barkan, 1980, pp. 453-4; İnan, 2005, p. 45; İnci, 2010, p. 351; Kuruç, 1987, p. 158. Finally, in 1934 the principle was included in the Law on Auction, Bidding and Tenders numbered 2490. See Arttırma, Eksiltme ve İhale Kanunu, 1934, Elli Altıncı Madde (Article 56), p. 719.

<sup>16</sup> This was the last opening speech Atatürk delivered in person. The following year, president's written speech was read by premier Celal Bayar as Atatürk's health was rapidly deteriorating through the fall of 1938.

<sup>17</sup> Öztürk, 1969, p. 260, my translation.

both small and large farmers. He also stated that each agricultural region should have a “center for agriculture” where peasants would get to know modern farming. It is not that necessary to extend the list any further here especially since this is one of the topics I will explore in the pages to come. The few sentences I have quoted above appear in almost all the studies on the subject of land reform in Turkey. These words of Atatürk are read as a conclusive statement as to Kemalists’ determination to reform ownership relations on land. What needs to be explained is how and why indifference gave way to reformism in the course of two decades.

Perhaps the most readily observable problem of the literature on the history of land reform in Turkey is that reform is understood almost exclusively as redistribution of landed properties. That is, it is conceived as a transfer of ownership to peasant cultivators. There are as many varieties of land reform as there are etatism. Historically speaking, many land reform schemes were concerned solely with redistribution of land. There were others, however, which also involved regulation of tenancy and rural labor, settlement of title, consolidation of landholdings etc. It is true that redistribution of land was the dominant dimension in Turkish debates over reform; yet, as I will try to show in the course of this dissertation, there were other concerns as well.

Another point I should make right away is that statesmen of early Republican era rarely used the term “land reform.” This was simply not how they defined what they aspired to do. More often, they preferred to call it “the land law”. In 1945, however, they opted for a term which carried no troubling connotations: “distribution/provision of land to farmers.” The term “land reform” was popularized in the 1960s partly as a result of the rise of leftwing politics. Even today it resonates more than its alternatives, this being the reason why I use the term.

This dissertation consists of five substantial chapters besides introduction and conclusion. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 examine land tenure in late Ottoman and early Republican eras

and lay the groundwork for subsequent chapters. Here I rely almost exclusively on secondary literature. Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 trace the evolution of Kemalist land reform project. The bulk of these three chapters is taken up with analyses of a series of laws which are commonly cited in the literature as important moments in the history of land reform in Turkey. My account of the laws in question is based on an analysis of legislative documents and parliamentary minutes, and this is where I hope to make an original contribution to the debate on land reform.

Chapter 2 opens with a discussion of commercialization of agricultural production in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman Anatolia. The question I address is whether commercialization brought about major changes in land tenure. I advance the argument that Anatolian agriculture had been characterized by small production already before the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that commercialization did not result in polarization of ownership. This poses a contrast to historical experiences of other peripheral empires where integration to world economy was accompanied by estate formation and expropriation of direct producers. I therefore attempt to explain why Ottoman Anatolia deviated from this more common pattern. In doing this, I visit the well-known *çiftlik* debate in order to shed light on the conditions in which Anatolian peasants carried out production for the market. As should be obvious, Chapter 2 identifies a general pattern of development for 19<sup>th</sup>-century Anatolia. Yet that this pattern was not uniform throughout Asia Minor. Fertile plains of Çukurova stand as the most notable special case. Hence one of my concerns in Chapter 2 is to account for Çukurova's almost singular development. I also devote a separate section to Egypt, which at the time was a de facto independent state, as I believe that its divergent development sheds additional light on the peculiarities of the Anatolian case. Another topic of Chapter 2 is the Land Code of 1858. I especially dwell on its repercussions with the purpose of finding out whether the code affected a change in tenurial relations. My major argument is that, in Anatolia, small peasant production survived. In other respects, however, the life of Ottoman peasants did change. I discuss this issue in a short section where I briefly

mention the repercussions of monetization and commercialization and portray how dependence on the market and indebtedness stabilized small peasant production for good.

The next chapter moves on to the discussion of land tenure situation in modern Turkey. First off, it depicts the agricultural economy of war-struck Anatolia in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The primary question is again tenurial change; that is, it is whether the dominance of peasant property continued into the early Republican era. Unfortunately, this is not a question one can answer with reference to statistical data as Turkey's first complete agricultural census came only in 1950. Although there was a partial census (1927) and a sample survey (1937) before 1950, it is controversial how reliable they are. Nevertheless, given the scarcity of data, I do refer to the results of the 1937 survey on occasions. I also make use of a second source of data: village monographs. Monographs that portray Anatolian villages of early Republican era are quite numerous. For instance, there are many studies published in *Sosyoloji Dergisi* (Journal of Sociology) of İstanbul University. In 1930s and 1940s, there was a growing interest in villages and rural life, which, I think, has a lot to do with the founding of People's Houses (*Halkevleri*) and Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*) – those institutions Kemalists designed to penetrate into Anatolian towns and villages. This is why we have a great number of village monographs written by those from outside the academia. To illustrate, Hasanoğlan High Village Institute (*Hasanoğlan Yüksek Köy Enstitüsü*) published a student journal, *Köy Enstitüleri Dergisi* (Journal of Village Institutes), in which monographs abounded. In this chapter I make use of a number of better-known, more professional kind of monographs, some of which were published as books.<sup>18</sup> It is still the case that neither aggregate data nor any selection of village monographs would allow one to make a definitive statement about early Republican land tenure. This is why I take a somewhat more speculative approach in most of Chapter 3: I identify factors which could have altered patterns of landownership in 1920s through early

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<sup>18</sup> Sociologists and historians who study land tenure situation in 1960s' Turkey have an invaluable source: the Village Inventory Studies (*Köy Envanter Etüdüleri*) published by Ministry of Village Affairs between 1962 and 1967. This is a complete inventory of villages of 56 (out of 67) administrative provinces. Sadly, there are no comparable studies for earlier decades.

1940s and discuss whether they actually exerted any influence. Hence I first look into the consequences on land tenure of the deportation and forced migration of Ottoman Armenians and Greeks. I then proceed to the topic of taxation and examine the combined effects of a couple of taxes on farmers, both small and large. Finally I mention the effects on small peasants of overall agricultural policies. Chapter 3 continues with a general portrayal of Anatolian countryside as of 1945 where I also identify the factors which would later transform it. The chapter ends with a discussion of the extent of landlessness. Although it is extremely hard to spell out numbers, I maintain that peasants who did not have sufficient land to secure an adequate living posed a greater problem than outright landlessness.

Having thus outlined the general characteristics of land tenure in early Republican Turkey, I inquire into the development of a political interest in relations on land in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. These two chapters cover the period up to 1945 and engage in a dialogue with the literature on the Kemalist project of land reform. I start out by making some observation on the literature, which is hardly extensive.<sup>19</sup> Here I make two assertions. I first point out that scholarly accounts of pre-1945 development of the land reform project are remarkably similar. Almost all the studies give the same sequence of events leading eventually to the land reform law of 1945. It seems necessary to present an outline of this narrative here in advance.

Scholars date the beginning of an interest in land reform to the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925. They assume that social unrest in the Kurdish province of Diyarbakır made Kemalists sensitive to the problem of large landownership. According to this line of reasoning, once rebels were militarily subdued, statesmen started playing with the idea of social reform in the East. The idea was that aghas and sheikhs provoked peasants into

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<sup>19</sup> Notable studies in the literature are Aksoy (1969), Aktan (1966), Avcıoğlu (1974), Avcıoğlu (2001, first published in 1968), Barkan (1980, first published in 1945), Erdost (2010), İnan (2005), İnce (2009), İnci (2010), Karaömerlioğlu (2000), Kuruç (1987), Önal (2010) and Tezel (1994).

rebellion, which they easily could since they effectively owned the lands on which peasants subsisted. Therefore, literature argues, statesmen came to believe that a decisive restoration of order in Kurdish provinces hinged on reforming relations on land. Landlords should be expropriated and their estates partitioned among landless Kurds. For only then would it be possible to prevent the emergence of similar uprisings in the future. Literature mentions two laws here, Law No. 1097 (Law Regarding the Deportation of Certain People from the Eastern Zone to the Western Provinces) of 1927 and Law No. 1505 (Law Regarding the Land to be Distributed to Farmers in Need within the Eastern Zone) of 1929. These laws are jointly regarded as the first attempt at tenurial reform.

All this is tantamount to saying that Kemalists advocated land reform for political reasons. According to this, deportation law of 1927 and land distribution law of 1929 amounted to a political maneuver to emancipate Kurdish commoners from subservience to landlords. What government attempted to do was therefore anti-feudal in essence. This is a theme which scholars carry on to the Settlement Law of 1934. As is quite well-known, Article 10 of Settlement Law outlawed *aşirets* (tribal social organizations) and sanctioned confiscation of their properties. Scholars read this as a reinforcement of government's anti-feudal stance. Article 10 is in this context regarded as a potent measure which could have (but did not) put an end to landlordism in the Kurdish-populated East. As it goes without saying, scholars contend that land reform still remained a localized concern for the government.

It is possible to say that the year 1935 is taken as a turning point in this respect. Scholars assume that mid-1930s marked a time when single-party government became convinced of the need to reform land tenure all over the country. The first challenge here is to explain how a localized concern evolved into a general project of land reform. This is where the literature displays less consensus. Some underscore the relevance of the global crisis of 1929 to Kemalists' emerging interest in issues of landownership. According to this, single-party government was determined to help farmers weather the storm, and distribution of

land was a part and parcel of this plan. Others claim that Kemalists came up with an idea of reform because they needed peasant support in the face of the political crisis of early 1930s, which flared up when *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Free Republican Party) was met with zealous support in Anatolian towns. A third argument is that Kemalists came to endorse redistribution of land in the belief that this would stimulate an increase in agricultural output.

Scholars identify a number of developments which, they believe, attest to the presence of a sweeping vision of reform in the second half of the 1930s. The historical sequence scholars establish goes like this: Distribution of land was written into the RPP program for the first time at the Fourth Party Congress held in 1935. Shortly after, Kemalists prepared the first land reform bill, which ignited such a backlash that it was withdrawn before it could come before the parliament. Given that most of the objections revolved around expropriation of landowners, Kemalists next move in 1937 was to change the constitutional provisions on confiscation of land. This was followed by the inclusion of land distribution in government's program<sup>20</sup> and drafting of a second land reform bill, both of which happened in 1937. The second draft, too, was shelved after negative responses, and it is at this moment that the literature winds up the pre-1945 history of tenurial reform.

Similarities in the literature are so compelling that I speak of a conventional narrative on the evolution of a land reform project. I observe that the origins of this narrative can be traced back to Ömer Lütfi Barkan. This prominent historian published an article in 1945 on the Law for Providing Land to Farmers of the same year.<sup>21</sup> In this article, he also discussed the background of the 1945 land distribution law. Barkan reconstructs the pre-1945 history in the exact same terms as I have outline above. I also argue that this narrative

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<sup>20</sup> This was the ninth republican government, which was headed by Celal Bayar as prime minister.

<sup>21</sup> Barkan, 1980.

was popularized in the 1960s thanks to the writings of land reform advocates such as Reşat Aktan, Suat Aksoy and Doğan Avcıoğlu. I believe that its popularity has survived to this day and permeated scholarly accounts on the history of land reform in Turkey.

This brings me to my second assertion. The literature almost never uses primary sources. Let me clarify with an example. Almost all scholars take the deportation law of 1927 (Law No. 1097) as an important first step towards land reform, but there is hardly any reference to the law itself, let alone the parliamentary process leading to its enactment. What I do in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 is to follow the narrative through 1920s and 1930s and investigate whether it stands the trial of primary resources, that is, official parliamentary records. Just like the conventional narrative, I start with the deportation and land distribution laws enacted in late 1920s following the Sheikh Said rebellion. I follow this with an examination the Settlement Law of 1934, as does the conventional narrative. Then, I study land laws bills of 1935 and 1937, both of which failed to make it even to the parliament, and the constitutional amendment of 1937. Given that, according to the narrative, these are the major stepping stones that paved the way for the eventual coming of a land reform law in 1945, I try to unearth how and why they sanctioned intervention into property relations on land.

A further problem from my point of view is that there were other developments in the 1920s and 1930s which are relevant to the topic at hand, but overlooked by the existing literature. I take up two of them here. I discuss the advent of the wheat purchase program of the 1930s using primary resources in Chapter 4. Then, in Chapter 5, I make a detailed reading of the reports submitted to the First Congress on Village and Agricultural Development (*Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi*) of 1938 and examine whether land reform fit in. Finally, although my interest resides in the ways in which Kemalist politics came to endorse intervention in relations on land, I also spend some time exploring how intellectuals advocated reform. Hence I focus on intellectual accounts of Sheikh Said rebellion (Chapter 4) and on peasantist discourse (Chapter 5) in two sections. In doing

this, my aim is twofold. On the one hand, I would like to show that the conventional narrative at times conflates the discourse of statesmen with those of reform-minded intellectuals. In particular, I believe that the narrative relies excessively on *Kadro* journal's point of view on problems of land tenure so much so that it assimilates Kemalist discourse to the former. On the other hand, I find it necessary to trace the affinities between peasantism as an intellectual current and Kemalist political discourse. Establishing this connection could enrich our understanding of why Kemalists advocated reform.

Chapter 6, which is on the Law for Providing Land to Farmers (*Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu*) of 1945, is the most voluminous chapter of this dissertation, and rightly so, because this is the climactic moment in the history of land reform in Turkey. The chapter opens with a close reading of the draft law, which was initially titled Law for Distribution of Land to Farmers and Establishment of Farmers' Homesteads (*Çiftçiye Toprak Dağıtılması ve Çiftçi Ocakları Kurulması Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı*). Afterwards, I proceed to a discussion of how government's draft was received by the reviewing parliamentary committee. Here I give an outline of the many changes that the provisional committee made to the original bill and highlight those which in my view are the most crucial. A section on farmers' homesteads explores this often underemphasized constituent of government's reform scheme. Here I synthesize the arguments I have made in previous chapters and suggest that farmers' homesteads were as vital as redistribution of land for Kemalist reformism. Then comes an examination of parliamentary deliberations on the revised draft. In this section, I first describe the two positions that crystallized in the parliament – the reformist position and parliamentary opposition. Rest of this section is organized thematically into subsections on major topics of deliberation. The final quarter of Chapter 6 sets out to contextualize the reform attempt of 1945. It picks up where Chapter 5 has left off and investigates the ways in which experiences of Second World War shaped single-party regime's plan for reform. First, I delineate how war and mobilization affected townspeople on the one hand and peasants on the other, after which I discuss government attempts to fight scarcity, stabilize prices and raise funds for

treasury. Here I examine the pillars of wartime legislation: National Protection Law (*Millî Korunma Kanunu*), Capital Levy Law (*Varlık Vergisi Hakkında Kanun*) and Soil Products Tax Law (*Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi Kanunu*). In particular, I go through the making of these laws for signs as to a change in Kemalists' attitude towards large landownership. Chapter concludes with a critique of available literature and some remarks on the general character of Law for Providing Land to Farmers.

This study shares one weakness with the existing literature, namely, absence of a comparative dimension. I had initially designed my project as an asymmetrically comparative study. Yet it soon became obvious that the heavy load of research that was required for my primary case would not allow me to get on with analyzing secondary cases. I therefore dropped the comparative dimension. Although there still are some references to other national cases of land reform activism in the dissertation, they are few and far between.

Secondly, as my interest is in the ways in which Kemalists came to endorse reform, I rarely touch upon how laws and regulations were implemented. There are occasions where I do make remarks about practice on account of its repercussions for future developments. On every such occasion, I had to rely on available literature for the simple reason that consulting primary sources was impracticable.

In this study, I draw on archival material to unearth governments' motives in enacting laws and regulations which had a bearing on relations on land. In the main, I analyze parliamentary documents and minutes to identify the political discourse within which reformist aspirations were voiced. A likely objection here is that there can always be a discrepancy between discourse and actual intentions and, therefore, that relying on discourse might well be misleading. I do not mean to discard the possibility of ulterior motives involved in the making of laws, yet this is not the line I pursue in this dissertation. As I have stated earlier, the major shortcoming of the available literature is that it narrates

a history of land reform without recourse to historical records. I endeavor to provide new information on archival records as a corrective to available literature. This is why I focus on what documents revealed rather than what they might have concealed.

## CHAPTER 2

### COMMERCIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE AND CHANGES IN LAND TENURE IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY OTTOMAN ANATOLIA

The 19<sup>th</sup> century history of the Ottoman Empire bears outstanding similarities to some other, better-known histories such as those of contemporaneous China, India, Japan or Russia. Each and every of one these cases came to fall within the sphere of influence of capitalism through foreign trade, albeit in different degrees. That is a familiar history in which free trade treaties, plunders, state transformations and protests abounded. One crucial aspect of that history was the development of export orientation and the subsequent commercialization of agricultural production. The process of commercialization of agriculture in the Ottoman Empire provides the context for the account to follow. The question regards whether commodity production in the countryside ended up transforming patterns of land use and ownership. Did commercialization come to threaten peasant access to land? Did production for the market issue in the emergence of large commercial estates? Was the expropriation of the peasantry implicated by this process? In a nutshell: Did the whole process bring forth a polarization in ownership of land? These are the main questions that we hopefully will deal with in subsequent pages.

The penetration of capitalism through commodity production was a highly uneven process. It was uneven across empires, and it was uneven within them. The effects were varied too, not the least because the antecedent rural structures were quite different from one another. Fortunately, many disparities of this sort need not concern us here. This chapter is intended as a comprehensive prelude to our account of land tenure structure of early Republican Turkey. Accordingly, the exposé to follow is confined to Ottoman Anatolia and eastern Thrace, that is, those parts of the Ottoman Empire which fall within

the boundaries of the Turkish Republic. There are studies which specifically focus on Anatolia. The same, however, cannot be said of eastern Thrace. Consequently, here, we will have to be content with unearthing the development in Anatolia.

## 2.1. State Centralization and Commercialization

We may set about explaining the beginnings of commercialization of agricultural production in Anatolia. The key factor here was an increased demand for Ottoman exports as burgeoning industries of Europe needed primary resources, a development which, according to many observers, was enhanced owing to the effect of Napoleonic wars.<sup>22</sup> One might be tempted to associate the development of export orientation in Ottoman agriculture with the impact of the Anglo-Ottoman free trade treaty, or, with other similar treaties that shortly followed; yet Pamuk notes that the primary factor in the expansion of trade was not the lifting of restrictions on trading of agricultural commodities, and that change was already underway before 1838.<sup>23</sup> As for domestic demand, its contribution to the upsurge in commodity production was certainly negligible.<sup>24</sup>

All these curiously happened at a time when Ottoman state was crucially transformed by the so-called reform movement of *Tanzimat*. This was an epoch of far-reaching modernization. *Tanzimat* modernization involved not only a reconstitution of the imperial center, which remains, to this day, its most commonly studied aspect. Modernization had repercussions on the countryside as well. Ottoman government subdued local notables, whose might had previously verged on autonomy, both politically and financially; and state power was extended deeply into the countryside.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kasaba, 1992, p. 80; Novichev, 1966, p. 65; Pamuk, 1987, p. 179; Quataert, 1981, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> Pamuk, 1992, pp. 38-9.

<sup>24</sup> Quataert, 1980, pp. 38-9; Pamuk, 1987, pp. 180-1.

<sup>25</sup> Burke, 1991, p. 29; Quataert, 1991, pp. 39-40, 46-7; Pamuk, 1987, pp. 183, 189, 196.

This era of centralization and state-strengthening was at the same time a period of liberalization. Liberalization of foreign trade was but one aspect; the state relinquished many pre-modern controls on the trade in agricultural produce, including state monopolies and the practice of compulsory state procurement.<sup>26</sup> The question then follows: why would a re-strengthened state concede to loss of authority, say, in regulation of foreign trade? It is possible to say that Ottomans acquiesced because European powers pressured the government to liberalize the trade in agricultural produce, which certainly was the case, given the pressing need for raw materials.<sup>27</sup> Yet this is very unlikely the sole reason why the government followed suit. In fact, the Ottoman state quickly realized that it stood to gain from the advent of commercialization, for tithe revenues would increase; therefore the government started to promote commodity production in the countryside.<sup>28</sup> <sup>29</sup> The same question should be posed in relation to the 1858 Land Code as well. We will see in due course that for many observers promulgation of the code was nothing but a nasty concession since it supposedly was a retreat from state ownership of land. However, security of tenure foretold increased productivity; hence, once again, the concern was one of increasing production and of generating revenues for the state. Ottomans, İslamoğlu writes, were utilitarian in their view of property.<sup>30</sup>

Back to state's policy of supporting commodity production, such support came in familiar ways. Firstly, there were certain lucrative incentives for producers such as tax

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<sup>26</sup> Güran, 1998, pp. 50-1.

<sup>27</sup> Kasaba, 1992, pp. 73-4.

<sup>28</sup> Arıcanlı, 1991, p. 127; Güran, 1998, pp. 45-59; İslamoğlu, 2000, pp. 21-2; Kasaba, 1992, pp. 73-4; Quataert, 1980, pp. 48, 54; Quataert, 1981.

<sup>29</sup> The state was not the sole agent with an interest in increasing production, however. Ottoman Public Debt Administration, an organ which controlled a significant portion of state revenues on behalf of state's creditors, promoted production for the market as well. (Arıcanlı, 1991, p. 127)

<sup>30</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, pp. 33-4, 40.

exemptions.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, state undertook infrastructural investments; railroad construction was the most crucial one since rails connected the countryside, where exports were produced, to Ottoman ports and thence to foreign markets. On the other hand, the state also employed some less routine measures in order to meet the labor requirements of agricultural enterprises; as will be discussed later on, such measures famously included compulsory sedentarization of tribes.<sup>32</sup>

## **2.2. Predominance of Smallholding in Anatolia**

Let us start with reiterating the primary question we hope to provide an answer for. We would like to know whether the advent of agricultural commodity production for world-markets altered land tenure structure in Anatolia.

There is a great deal of benefit to be drawn from being geographically as specific as possible. In an empire as vast as the Ottoman, there was bound to be marked disparities in land tenure already before the onset of commercialization of agriculture. Such disparities were determined by local customs, climatic conditions, relative availability of factors of production, and so forth. It is possible to identify, within the early 19<sup>th</sup> century borders of the Ottoman Empire, a number of more or less homogenous regions, which later were transformed by commercialization of agricultural production in uneven and dissimilar ways.

In the following pages, I will argue that, typically, large scale expropriation did not accompany the process of commercialization of agriculture in Ottoman Anatolia. In other words, the predominance of small peasantry (smallholding) continued. Hence, large scale

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<sup>31</sup> Quataert has misgivings regarding the effectiveness of government incentives, as a result he finds it problematic to associate commercialization with government intervention. (Quataert, 1980, pp. 48, 54)

<sup>32</sup> Arıcanlı, 1991, p. 127.

agricultural enterprises were no more than an exception, save for a number of very remarkable geographic enclaves, which I will deal with in due course.<sup>33</sup> It cannot be overemphasized that these observations about the non-emergence of polarization in landholding structure are built on Ottoman Anatolia. If geographical focus is enlarged to include the rest of the empire, most notable the Balkans and the Arab provinces, the argument becomes much less tenable. This is because other parts of the empire followed dissimilar courses. Take the case of Syria. There, the advent of production for the market resulted in dispossession coupled with some concentration of landholdings. The result was absentee landlordism and sharecropping.<sup>34</sup>

There even were some significant differences within Anatolia in terms of the degree of commercialization of agriculture, which, in turn, was determined by factors like the relative availability of the factors of production, transportation facilities, and the like. Considerations like these have led many scholars to differentiate parts of Anatolia and Thrace via certain criteria. For example, Pamuk employs a three-fold classification according to which (i) western Anatolia, the Adana plain, Black Sea Coast, and Thrace (ii) inner Anatolian plain (iii) eastern Anatolia fall within different regions.<sup>35</sup> The chief criterion Pamuk draws upon is the degree of the penetration of capitalism through commodity production, which affected all three regions, but did so in a descending order of intensity. Throughout this paper I will talk about internal differences when it is due; yet, most of the time, I will be analyzing Anatolia in general with the aim of extracting a broad trend.

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<sup>33</sup> Akçay, 1987; Arıcanlı, 1991, p. 131; Faroqhi, 1987, p. 19; Gerber, 1987, pp. 87-8; Güran, 1998; Kasaba, 1991, pp. 114-7; Keyder, 1983a; Keyder, 1983b; Keyder, 1991, pp. 3-5; Keyder, 1993; Pamuk, 1987; Quataert, 1980, pp. 48-9, 54; Quataert, 1981; Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, p. 330.

<sup>34</sup> Sluglett and Farouk-Sluglett, 1984, p. 409.

<sup>35</sup> Pamuk, 1987, pp. 191-202.

Keyder succinctly summarizes this broad pattern: “Commodity production by small-owning peasantry represents an alternative mode of integration into the market.”<sup>36</sup> Hence growing export orientation in Anatolia brought forth a reshuffling of small production in lieu of the birth of large commercial estates. We are talking about a transition on the part of small peasants from subsistence farming to production for the market. One important consequence of the expansion of commodity production in the countryside was a vast increase in total area planted in cash crops. But it was also the case that subsistence crops came to be sold at the market place, a development which could be observed through a much-increased ratio of marketing for grain in the Anatolian interior.<sup>37</sup> The transition to commodity production left landholding structure largely intact, however. Thus it is hard not to agree with Quataert who purports that in the case of Ottoman Anatolia, the changes wrought by commercialization and export orientation were “more in the realm of marketing than landholding.”<sup>38</sup> That this was the case in Anatolia is counterfactually proven by the fact that expansion of commodity production in the countryside was not halted when the state succeeded in curbing the power and confiscating the properties of local magnates, who controlled large tracts of land.<sup>39</sup>

How are we to account for this general pattern? First of all, as Gerber eloquently puts it, what was absent in the Ottoman case was “peasant subordination.”<sup>40</sup> Comparatively speaking, landlords in Anatolia could not put much pressure on small peasants, and consequently, they could not exclusively benefit from commercialization as did their Indian or Chinese counterparts, because land in Anatolia was “*effectively owned* by the

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<sup>36</sup> Keyder, 1991, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Novichev, 1966, p. 66.

<sup>38</sup> Quataert, 1980, p. 54.

<sup>39</sup> Kasaba, 1991, p. 117.

<sup>40</sup> Gerber, 1987, p. 89.

small peasant.”<sup>41</sup> What is at issue here is not the presence or otherwise of legal categories of absolute ownership; it is about peasants’ actual access to land. Hence the point is that Anatolian peasantry had customarily had secure access to land, and that commercialization of agriculture did not bring about a situation where access to land was threatened or altogether denied. I will deal with the changes regarding the legal status of land and landed property in the following pages, but, for now, suffice it to say that progressive commodification of land in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not result in large scale expropriations or anything of that sort. Granted, peasants lost their plots here and there due to bad debts; such incidents, however common, did not add up to a general and rigorous trend toward expropriation. To recap, then, without expropriation or enclosures, Anatolian peasants could not coercively be rendered a proletarian force, as a result of which they were able to continue independent production.

This state of affairs had a great deal to do with relative availability of factors of production in Anatolia. Ottoman Anatolia had historically been characterized by a quite high land-to-labor ratio.<sup>42</sup> I am thus proposing relative abundance of land / relative scarcity of labor as the first determinant of Ottoman Anatolian pattern of commercialization of agriculture. But a note of caution is necessary. True, Asia Minor was blessed with abundance of land. This is not the same as saying that cultivable land was always readily available. There were vacant lands which could be converted to farmland, but breaking new land was hardly easy. Land reclamation required substantial human labor and draft power. Thus many peasants might have found it hard to reclaim new land for farming. What I say applies to 20<sup>th</sup>-century Anatolia as well. I advance the argument regarding relative availability of land (or conversely, relative scarcity of labor) with this proviso.

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<sup>41</sup> Gerber, 1987, p. 90, my emphasis.

<sup>42</sup> Arıcanlı, 1991, pp. 130-1; Faroqhi, 1987, p. 18; Güran, 1998, pp. 54-7, 63-9; Hütteroth, 1974, pp. 21-22; Kasaba, 1991, pp. 114-9; Kasaba, 1992, pp. 81-2; Keyder, 1983a, pp. 132-4; Pamuk, 1987, pp. 183-5; Teoman & Kaymak, 2008, p. 330.

Cultivable land was abundant in Ottoman Anatolia, and most villages were surrounded by strips of uncultivated lands. According to the British council in Trabzon, as of the 1860s, land under cultivation comprised merely about 17% of all lands.<sup>43</sup> Though only a rough estimate, this bears proof to the abundance of land as relative to population. It is a telling fact that there were marginal lands even on the Black Sea Coast, which had a higher than average rural population density.<sup>44</sup> Such lands were not yet reclaimed not because they were of marginal quality, but because of want of manpower. Open, uncultivated lands were bound to remain so until there was a significant change in population trends. In other words, land reclamation had to await an increase in population.

There had been a secular decrease in population which dated back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Plague and other epidemics were the major causes of this long-term trend.<sup>45</sup> Another striking fact is that from the 16<sup>th</sup> century up until mid-19<sup>th</sup> no new rural settlements emerged in Anatolia. This was connected to the downward trend in population, for sure; but there was an equally relevant factor which prevented the formation of new settlements, namely, the problem of constituting law and order in the countryside at a time when revolts and, later, the strengthening of local potentates wreaked havoc with state control.<sup>46</sup>

As for labor shortage specifically in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kurmuş maintains that the primary cause was military conscription for incessant wars. Kurmuş cites the remarkable example of the province of Aydın. In the period extending from the Crimean War of 1853 to the Greek War of 1897, an estimated 200,000 were conscripted, which surely must have

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<sup>43</sup> Cited in Gözal, 2007, p. 89.

<sup>44</sup> Pamuk, 1987, pp. 198-9.

<sup>45</sup> Güran, 1998, p. 65; Pamuk, 1987, p. 183.

<sup>46</sup> Hütteroth, 1974, pp. 21-2.

drained the labor pool in the Aegean.<sup>47</sup> For, as Zürcher points out, Ottoman army was a predominantly peasant army.<sup>48</sup>

There is no doubt that a shortage of labor is bound to affect agricultural production. As Kurmuş writes, there is a variety of probable effects. Labor shortage might induce mechanization on big farms owing to high labor costs. It might help bring about owner-operated farms, which realize a higher degree of labor subordination compared to estates leased to sharecroppers. Yet, in the singular case of Western Anatolia, labor shortage resulted in a partial termination of production on large estates.<sup>49</sup>

It is commonly assumed that a high land-to-labor ratio requires immobilization of labor as the scarce factor of production, which entails imposition upon people either serfdom or slavery.<sup>50</sup> It is statement of the obvious to write that neither happened in our case on any general scale. It is beyond the purpose of this paper to discuss how Ottoman *reaya* compared to European peasants; yet it is safe to say that in the age of commercialization of agriculture peasant status did not change much in Ottoman Anatolia, which is accounted for by state's determination to uphold a free legal status for the peasantry.<sup>51</sup> Some scholars argue that a regressive change in status of the peasantry did happen often in the Balkans, but it is hard to argue that a parallel development materialized in Anatolia – a point I will return below when going over the *çiftlik* debate. As for slavery, Ottoman government could not possibly said to have licensed the imposition of such a status on the native populations of the core provinces. Yet there are historical records attesting to the use of slave labor. According to Kurmuş, outlawing of slave trade within Ottoman domains in

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<sup>47</sup> Kurmuş, 1974, pp. 95-6.

<sup>48</sup> Zürcher, 1996, pp. 235-6; Zürcher, 2000, p. 86.

<sup>49</sup> Kurmuş, 1974, p. 96.

<sup>50</sup> Arıcanlı, 1991, p. 130.

<sup>51</sup> Faroqhi, 1987, p. 6.

1846 notwithstanding, there was a continuous flow of African slaves to western Anatolia. Numbers are extremely difficult to ascertain; nevertheless Kurmuş cites 13,500 as a reasonable estimate for the number of African slaves employed in agriculture in western Anatolia. As for state's response, it appears that local authorities preferred to turn a blind eye to the problem, unless urged by foreign embassies to put an end to the inflow of slaves. Even then, however, authorities were reluctant to take action, as was the case with the governor of Aydın, who, in reply to the British ambassador, stated that slave trade was a private matter.<sup>52</sup>

Committed as it was to the maintenance of a smallholding-dominated countryside, Ottoman government could not do much in way of engendering a pool of rural laborers at the disposal of large owners. Elsewhere, this problem was dealt fairly easily through the imposition of a head tax, which functioned to make the peasants dependent on the market for their livelihood.<sup>53</sup> This option was off-limits in Anatolia for the reason just mentioned, that is, because Ottoman state was reluctant to separate peasant producers from their land.

In western Anatolia, there already was a labor market of seasonal workers, who flooded from nearby villages to fertile plains at harvest time. Yet the problem was that, as landowners constantly complained to the government, agricultural wages were rather high<sup>54</sup>, which had a lot to do with the fact that migrants were not entirely expropriated. Having some land and some capital of their own at home, migrant workers had a relatively strong bargaining position vis-à-vis large owners.<sup>55</sup> Same was true for agricultural laborers who worked on big farms year-round. This British entrepreneurs experienced quite bitterly. Having purchased land and established large-scale farms in the İzmir area, British

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<sup>52</sup> Kurmuş, 1974, pp. 96-9.

<sup>53</sup> Pamuk, 1987, p. 198.

<sup>54</sup> Güran, 1998, p. 68.

<sup>55</sup> Kasaba, 1991, p. 119.

entrepreneurs were on the search for wage laborers to employ on their farms. However, they faced a difficult problem: Ottoman peasants demanded relatively high wages. This was not all, though. British had vast estates which required large numbers of permanent workers; yet, even if they acquiesced to paying high wages, landowners could not find enough farm hands in this labor-scarce locale. British had to employ share-tenants.<sup>56</sup> To conclude, then, most laborers were neither dispossessed nor severely sub-landed. Rather, when their produce was not enough for their subsistence, they had no choice but sell their labor power on the market.<sup>57</sup> In particular, fragmentation of holdings by inheritance commonly led people to seek jobs outside family farms for some extra income.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, Ottoman state employed other means to deal with the problem of labor scarcity. Government efforts to relieve the problem of labor shortage rested on settlement policies. Policies of settlement pertained to two groups: transhumant tribes of Anatolia and Muslim peoples who fled from the Balkans and Circassia for Ottoman territories. We will see below that, in its quest for agricultural development, the Ottoman government forced nomadic tribes into sedentary life in places like Çukurova once land was reclaimed and improved. As for the Balkan and Circassian refugees, the state settled many of them along newly-constructed Anatolian railroad and around fertile plains near the coast so as to assure their engagement in agricultural production.<sup>59</sup> Whereas members of pacified tribes were turned into agricultural laborers<sup>60</sup>, emigrants were given family-size farmsteads as well as some equipment and capital.<sup>61</sup> In this latter case, the state did two

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<sup>56</sup> Kurmuş, 1974, pp. 99-122.

<sup>57</sup> Güran, 1998, pp.116-7, 187-8.

<sup>58</sup> Güran, 1998, pp.117-8, 189-90.

<sup>59</sup> Karpat, 1985, pp. 61-3, 69-70, 76.

<sup>60</sup> See the “Adana” section below for more details.

<sup>61</sup> Güran, 1998, pp. 81-5.

things at once: it assured small peasant property while expanding its tax base through creating taxable agricultural income.<sup>62</sup>

A massive flow of emigrants notwithstanding, scarcity of rural population remained a perennial problem until the very end of the empire<sup>63</sup>, which is to say that newcomers fell short of consummating all available marginal lands in Anatolia. One might also ask whether immigration affected any qualitative change, i.e., change in tenurial relations. For this we have to look at land distribution in newly formed *muhacir* villages. Hütteroth analyzes the cadastral maps of a number of refugee settlements and, with the help of historical accounts transmitted orally from one generation to the next, he observes that lands were distributed evenly at the time of initial settlement. According to the writer, the prime reason for this sort of equal distribution was that refugees were fairly similar to one another in socioeconomic terms, without meaningful differences in wealth or status. That is, no one was powerful enough to influence the division of land in his favor. We are in no position to determine the percentage of *muhacir* villages corresponding to this pattern. Nonetheless, we cannot rule out the strong possibility that refugee settlements reinforced the smallholding dominated structure in Anatolia.<sup>64</sup>

We have seen above that commercialization of agriculture did not adversely change peasant status on the whole. I have suggested that this was primarily due to a particular composition of factors of production in agriculture. On the other hand, I have mentioned the ways in which the Ottoman state endeavored to relieve labor shortage. Needless to say, the state could have dealt with this problem to the detriment of the status of the peasantry. That it chose not to do so should be counted as another factor which accounts for the survival of peasant production amidst commercialization of agriculture and

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<sup>62</sup> Quataert, 1981, p. 75.

<sup>63</sup> Pamuk, 1987, pp. 183-4.

<sup>64</sup> Hütteroth, 1974, pp. 33-38, 43.

commodification of land. Hence we are talking about a relatively strong political center committed to preservation of small peasant production. And the concern with the continuance of peasant production entailed taking a stance against estate formation.<sup>65</sup>

Just before export orientation began in earnest, the balance of powers had already tilted in favor of the Porte since local power-holders endured a severe blow when their estates were confiscated during the 1830s.<sup>66</sup> Though an integral part of centralization, this was not a battle fought for the sake of political power only. It was also about the appropriation of peasant surplus, which created a constant tug of war among rival components of the ruling class, i.e. central state versus local foci of power. Once local potentates were subdued, the central state was once again able to get the lion's share of peasant surplus via the collection of the tithe.

It goes without saying that state's interest the survival of peasant property should not be translated as an unqualified concern for peasant well-being. True, the state did want to prevent dispossession, but it is important to acknowledge that the burden of taxation fell heavily and disproportionately on small peasants while large owners remained under-taxed.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless the central state had to support the peasantry in order to appropriate as much agricultural surplus as possible. The policy favoring small peasantry went against not also large proprietors but also foreign investors<sup>68</sup> and urban creditors<sup>69</sup> who lent money to peasant households. In other words, the Ottoman state was disinclined to buttress the claims of landlords and moneylenders insofar as they clashed with the policy of supporting

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<sup>65</sup> Faroqhi, 1987, p. 6; Gerber, 1987, p. 117; Keyder, 1983a, p. 135; Keyder, 1993, pp. 176-7; Quataert, 1981, p. 74; Pamuk, 1987, pp. 185-9; Pamuk, 1992, p. 51.

<sup>66</sup> Pamuk, 1987, p. 189.

<sup>67</sup> Pamuk, 1987, p. 185.

<sup>68</sup> Pamuk, 1992, p. 51.

<sup>69</sup> Pamuk, 1987, p. 197.

peasant property. Yet we should not lose sight of the fact that this simply was state's prevailing orientation. This issue will be visited below at some length, but let us at once sound a note of prudence. It is one thing to say that the Ottoman state was inclined to support peasant property as opposed to landlords, traders, or moneylenders; but quite another to say that the state did favor peasant claims in each and every instance. It was not only that as a pre-modern state, the Porte had limited capacities to intervene in the affairs of the countryside. In addition, shifts in the balance of powers and/or state's position vis-à-vis local agents presumably had the effect of rendering state policy much less consistent than I have suggested above. A very interesting case from mid-19<sup>th</sup> century northern Anatolia<sup>70</sup>, which will be outlined and discussed in pages to come, shows that such factors indeed had a huge part to play. Finally, strategic and political reasons might have led the state to be much more permissive, which seems to have been one of the reasons why Ottoman government tolerated formation of large estates in the Kurdish provinces. As is well-known, the Porte never could institute any degree of central control in Eastern Anatolia, which became a much more pressing problem with the rise of Armenian nationalism in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The imminent threat posed by Armenian activism fundamentally changed the priorities of the state and made it overlook the trend toward estate formation in order to garner the allegiance of local potentates and secure order.<sup>71</sup>

There was one further exception to the general rule, and that concerned estate formation on wastelands, lands that belonged with the legal category of *mevat*. Many large estates in Anatolia were formed on what formerly were *mevat* lands; that is to say, unused and unproductive state lands were granted to private persons (including high ranking government officials) as freehold on condition that they be reclaimed, which Ottomans

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<sup>70</sup> Şahin, 2007.

<sup>71</sup> Gözel, 2007, pp. 145-7.

called “*ihya*” or “*şenlendirme*”.<sup>72</sup> The practice of granting *mevat* land preceded 19<sup>th</sup> century commercialization as many *çiftlik*s, viz. large-scale commercial enterprises, had previously been formed on lands of the same category.<sup>73</sup> According to Quataert, the Ottoman state did not refrain from sanctioning large estates formation on *mevat* land because there were few “social costs” at stake.<sup>74</sup> Large landed properties of that kind entailed low social costs precisely because peasant production had never existed on *mevat* lands, as a result of which neither dispossession nor disruption of production was implicated by the emergence of commercial estates. We will see in following pages that Adana region exemplified this trend impeccably. We may conclude this issue for now by saying that many of the large commercial estates of Anatolia came into being *sans* expropriation of small proprietors or usurpation of lands of local peasants.

It is important to keep in mind that these were rare instances of estate formation. The rule was commodity production by small peasants. That this was so is incidentally proven by Anatolia’s relative quiet, which presented an unambiguous contrast to many other countries where rapid commercialization comprised peasant access to land, thereby issuing in long waves of rural unrest. We do not need to look far beyond the empire to find a meaningful contrast as we have the case of the Balkans – a part of the empire routinely shaken by peasant insurgency instigated by landlords’ transgression of peasants’ customary rights on land.<sup>75</sup> It is not intended to say that 19<sup>th</sup> century Anatolia was altogether free of rural tensions; there certainly were protests and dissensions of other sorts. One might object here and hold that the presence of rural social conflicts does not tally with the supposed abundance of land in relation to rural population. Yet it would be wrong to assume that conflicts erupted only when peasants’ access to land was somehow

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<sup>72</sup> Gerber, 1987, pp. 86-8; Keyder, 1991, p. 7; Quataert, 1981, pp. 75-6; Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, pp. 316-7.

<sup>73</sup> Faroqhi, 1987, pp. 19, 23.

<sup>74</sup> Quataert, 1981, p. 75.

<sup>75</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, p. 32, 34.

denied or threatened. There must have been other causes. To illustrate, under conditions of labor scarcity, conflicts might have ensued from landlords' attempts at controlling peasant labor; for the former needed manpower to employ on their estates.<sup>76</sup>

The present account has suggested a high land-labor ratio and state policy of supporting small peasant property as two factors which determined the course that commercialization of agriculture followed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. To conclude this section, I will finally note another possible dimension. Teoman and Kaymak suggest an additional factor to account for the non-emergence of large commercial farms in the Ottoman case, which is insufficiency of demand for cash crops. It is necessary to stress that they do a comparative analysis with Egypt where not only was foreign demand for cotton much higher, but there also was considerable domestic demand for cotton, created by an insurgent industry.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, it could plausibly be argued that the problem was not really insufficient demand for Anatolian exports; Anatolia in fact had only limited commercial potential. Güran notes that transportation facilities are as important as relative availability of factors of production in accounting for patterns of agricultural development of different countries.<sup>78</sup> If we are to resume the comparison with Egypt, Ottoman Anatolia was quite sizable but difficult to access either from the coast or by rivers.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, again in contrast to Egypt, Anatolian interior was arid plain of dry farming, which did not promise nearly as much as the Nile delta even when railroads were constructed.<sup>80</sup> All these added up to a commercial pull that certainly was not as strong as it was in Egypt, for the simple reason that agricultural production was much less profitable. To summarize the argument in a nutshell, Anatolia's rather limited commercial potential could well have functioned

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<sup>76</sup> Aytakin, 2009b, pp. 2-3.

<sup>77</sup> Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, p. 329.

<sup>78</sup> Güran, 1998, pp. 63, 69-74.

<sup>79</sup> Gerber, 1987, pp. 117-8.

<sup>80</sup> Gerber, 1987, pp. 117-8.

as a disincentive for gigantic commercial undertakings. We might also make use of another counter case to display the peculiarities of Ottoman Anatolia, and that is the Balkan provinces. Relative ease of transportation and proximity to export markets combined to produce a strong trend toward large estate formation in the Balkans<sup>81</sup>, whereas no move of similar force occurred in Anatolia. This is offered here as another explanation as to the absence of a significant change in property relations.

### **2.3. Commodity Production, Monetization, and Peasant Indebtedness**

I have established that commercialization in agriculture did not result in a polarization of landholding structure in the historical case of Ottoman Anatolia. Having said this, we must be careful not to imply that there were no changes concerning peasant production at all. Small property and peasant production survived, but did so in a significantly altered environment.

Commercialization did not solely promised profits for small peasant who sold their surplus at the market place; the process at the same time entailed dependence on the market. In this chain of events, the initial spurt was not commercialization of agricultural production *per se*; a thorough monetization of the economy in general was the factor with more far-reaching effect. In this new, monetized economy peasants needed cash income, above all, to pay money taxes – besides paying occasional debts and buying staples not produced within the village community, of course.<sup>82</sup> Thus the introduction of monetary taxes exerted a “pressure to commercialize” on the part of the peasants, which, in turn, set in motion a cycle of indebtedness.<sup>83</sup> It makes sense to speak of a cycle here because indebtedness in this new era was more structural than it was incidental. No longer subsistence producers,

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<sup>81</sup> Pamuk, 1987, p. 196.

<sup>82</sup> Aytekin, 2009b, p. 4; Güran, 1998, pp. 116-7, 187; İslamoğlu, 2000, p. 35; Pamuk, 1987, p. 185.

<sup>83</sup> Aytekin, 2008, p. 295.

peasants' livelihood depended on the vicissitudes of the market place; they were tremendously affected by decreases in grain prices, which immediately meant that they could no longer cover their expenses. Hence they borrowed; and in the event of a bad debt, they risked losing what little they owned in capital. Expansion of sharecropping appears to have been an immediate outcome.

Sharecropping pre-dated commercialization, for sure; however, the practice was probably much more common than before in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although we do not have exact data to confirm, monetization of the economy could plausibly be said to account for a higher prevalence of sharecropping.<sup>84</sup> Yet one should not read too much into this. More sharecropping does not necessarily implicate expropriation of small peasantry. That is to say, it is wrong to assume in advance that landless and/or sub-landed peasants were engaged in sharecropping arrangements with big proprietors. In fact, using data contained in an 1869 British consul report, Pamuk asserts that “small-to-small tenancy agreements”, whereby small owners rented out part of their lands to fellow smallholders, were highly common within the empire.<sup>85</sup> This is a point not to be missed, because it cautions us against associating the frequency of land tenancy with polarization of ownership structure.

On the other hand, a higher frequency of sharecropping was certainly a symptom, forasmuch as there was a parallelism between peasant indebtedness and sharecropping. Thus Teoman and Kaymak are right in claiming that peasant indebtedness resulted in tenancy, and that dispossession was less common.<sup>86</sup> This is to say that indebtedness was not necessarily a prelude to expropriation; it was a permanent state instead.<sup>87</sup> But there is no gainsaying that there was dispossession. The argument advanced here is just that

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<sup>84</sup> Keyder, 1983a, pp. 134-5.

<sup>85</sup> Pamuk, 1987, p. 186-8.

<sup>86</sup> Teoman & Kaymak, 2008, p. 316.

<sup>87</sup> Aytakin, 2008, p. 296.

dispossession was not a result of enclosures or usurpation of peasant lands. Peasants lost their properties because they had become dependent on the vicissitudes of the market. That is, they became market-dependent. They were dispossessed when the harvest was bad and they defaulted on their debt. Hence peasant production was destabilized since commercialization and ensuing indebtedness jeopardized the “economic reproduction of smallholding agriculture.”<sup>88</sup>

Indebtedness was one side of the coin, the other was usury. Usury was yet another way to appropriate peasant surplus; hence indebtedness meant a tighter squeeze of the peasantry.<sup>89</sup> Who were the moneylenders then? If we take a short look at the composition of creditors, we might get a sense of why usury was profitable in a manifold of ways. We know that men engaged in money lending did not comprise a class of professional creditors *per se*; Ottoman creditors should rather be characterized as a wide range of propertied people engaged in money lending, a group which involved large owners as well.<sup>90</sup> Keyder notes that propertied people involved in this nexus were able to exert some “indirect influence” over production.<sup>91</sup> This insight might be taken to mean that, although independent production did not nominally cease to exist, indebted peasant families were hardly autonomous in making decisions. On the other hand, Faroqhi warns us that Anatolian creditors were unlike, say, Syrian creditors in that the former were not in a position to hold sway over the countryside.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> AYTEKIN, 2008, p. 295.

<sup>89</sup> AYTEKIN 2008, p. 296; İSLAMOĞLU, 2000, p. 35.

<sup>90</sup> AYTEKIN, 2008, pp. 301, 306; PAMUK, 1987, p. 186.

<sup>91</sup> KEYDER, 1991, p. 12.

<sup>92</sup> FAROQHI, 1987, p. 14.

There is good ground to assert that some immobilization of the labor force was involved in the vicious circle of usury-sharecropping-indebtedness.<sup>93</sup> That is, laborers were immobilized through indebtedness, which was far more than an added bonus, because in a labor scarce economy immobilization of the labor force is a prerequisite of production for the market. This must have been one of the reasons why usury was so lucrative from the point of view of large owners. Pamuk hints precisely at this when he writes that many large landlords opted to become money lenders at the same time, since “given the relative scarcity of labor, permanent indebtedness of peasants secured tenants for their land.”<sup>94</sup>

We will return to the status and character of share-tenants later on. But one last word about large landownership is necessary. In light of above observations, we conclude that what Warriner writes of the Fertile Crescent must have been equally true of Anatolia, namely, that “landownership [was] a credit operation and nothing more.”<sup>95</sup>

#### **2.4. The Debate on *Çiftlik*s**

Any examination of change in landholding patterns in Ottoman Anatolia will be incomplete without a consideration of *çiftlik*s. This is so because many contributions to the scholarly study of *çiftlik*s imply that there took place a tremendous change in landholding patterns in the Ottoman Empire of latter centuries. It is widely accepted that the genesis of *çiftlik*s dated back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and that *çiftlik*s most notably took root in Balkan soil without having been confined to that locality only. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that research on this phenomenon has thus far centered mostly on Balkan provinces. All in all, the question of *çiftlik*s is far from fitting perfectly into our scheme either temporally and spatially. Nevertheless it is necessary to briefly consider the

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<sup>93</sup> Brass, 1999, pp. 9-43.

<sup>94</sup> Pamuk, 1987, p. 186.

<sup>95</sup> Warriner, 1966, p. 77.

presence of *çiftliks* in Ottoman Anatolia and (eastern) Thrace as well as the extent to which such enterprises affected a transformation of land tenure.

Given that there is a multiplicity of views about what *çiftliks* actually were, it is best to adopt the most general definition to be compiled from current literature; and this is *çiftliks* as large scale commercial enterprises which are said to have actualized not only privatization of land but also reduction of peasants' status to that of dependent cultivators. None of the studies on the subject is bold enough to assert that these processes of privatization and peasant subordination were complete; nevertheless it is precisely the supposed presence of these two which has made *çiftliks* such a hot topic.

In recent years, the image of Ottoman *çiftliks* has been markedly altered by some new information we now have thanks to scholars' contributions. These contributions were empirically based studies which ended up falsifying the received wisdom. It is in fact misleading to speak of a single conventional view because there seems to have been two radically different orthodoxies on the subject. On one side is the notion of *çiftlik* as a capitalist enterprise. Viewed as such, *çiftliks* were no less than the harbinger of agrarian capitalism. Karpat's brief remarks epitomize the conventional view on *çiftliks*. According to this, *çiftliks* were capitalist undertakings because, above all, they brought to being novel property and labor relations. These were absolute private property, wage labor, and capitalist rent. Accordingly, local magnates who came to control these large estates are regarded the forerunners of an insurgent Ottoman middle class.<sup>96</sup> On the other side we have the other orthodoxy, which is associated with world system analysis. Here the Ottoman case is assimilated to an alleged pattern of peripheral development, the paradigmatic case of which was Eastern Europe. The attention shifts to a supposed upsurge in foreign demand for grain, which is believed to have ignited a trend toward formation of commercial plantation. This second view is in concordance with the former

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<sup>96</sup> Karpat, 1968, pp. 81-2.

in arguing that commercialization culminated in a significant change in landholding patterns and in labor relations. There, however, are important differences between the two views, the most vital of which is that for the second perspective the change in labor relations was toward reenservment rather than free labor.<sup>97</sup>

The formation of *çiftliks* in various parts of the Empire pre-dated the promulgation of the Land Code. Hence *çiftliks* were hardly a product of changing laws and regulations; their emergence had more to do with increasing demand as well as re-constitution of security in the countryside.<sup>98</sup> Despite the fact that they had already made an appearance before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *çiftliks* could still be perceived as a part and parcel of the process of change which we have been discussing so far. Now it is time to assess the relative importance of *çiftlik* enterprises by discussing three issues: (i) their prevalence (ii) their relative sizes (iii) the novelty of such enterprises.

Starting with the question of frequency, I should immediately state that as far as Anatolia and eastern Thrace were concerned, *çiftliks* were certainly not as widespread as once assumed.<sup>99</sup> Yet there is no gainsaying that *çiftliks* existed in Anatolia. For one thing, there is the well-known example of Kara Osmanoğlu estate of Aydın. Neither were *çiftliks* confined to western Anatolia, as shown by a recent study of a large estate in the Canik region in the north.<sup>100</sup>

As for the size of *çiftlik* enterprises, the first thing to note is that although *çiftliks* of various sizes were present in many parts of the empire, those which were made up of whole

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<sup>97</sup> AYTEKIN, 2008, pp. 294-5; AYTEKIN, 2009b: 7; KEYDER, 1991, pp. 2-5.

<sup>98</sup> SLUGLETT and FAROUK-SLUGLETT, 1984, p. 413.

<sup>99</sup> KEYDER, 1991, p. 2; PAMUK, 1987, pp. 182-3, 196;

<sup>100</sup> ŞAHİN, 2007.

villages were rare.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, with regard to their relation to nearby villages and small peasants, Ottoman *çiftliks* should be characterized as “isolated farms, not farms dominating villages.”<sup>102</sup> Overall, we might safely say that *çiftliks* were not as large as it is generally assumed; in fact, they were smaller than they should optimally have been, which had a lot to do with the fact that labor was scarce, and therefore, costly. Otherwise said, scarcity of labor had the effect of delimiting the size of *çiftliks*.<sup>103</sup> The same phenomenon was also responsible for turning *çiftliks* into barely profitable enterprises during periods of decreasing prices for agricultural commodities.<sup>104</sup> It is worth noting in passing that the primary economic activity on many large estates was stock raising; this made perfect sense in a labor-scarce economy because stock raising is the agricultural activity which requires the least labor input.<sup>105</sup>

Finally, we should evaluate the extent to which *çiftliks* marked a watershed in tenurial relations, a question which might be broken into two dimensions: privatization and transition to novel forms of labor. It seems that private appropriation of land was only partial and contingent. Lands that comprised *çiftliks* were never really turned into private land proper; they remained *miri*.<sup>106</sup> As their status as state property did not change, lands comprising *çiftliks* were liable for the tithes.<sup>107</sup> Qualitatively speaking, *çiftlik* owners were not any different ordinary intermediaries who collected taxes in the countryside, as their source of revenue was extraction of rent. The only difference was that they appropriated

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<sup>101</sup> Gerber, 1987, p. 72.

<sup>102</sup> Gerber, 1987, p. 88.

<sup>103</sup> Keyder, 1991, pp. 7-8. Also see Güran, 1998, pp. 94-6.

<sup>104</sup> Güran, 1998, p. 96; Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, p. 320.

<sup>105</sup> Arıcanlı, 1991, p. 132; Güran, 1998, pp. 54-5, 101; Quataert, 1981, pp. 74-5; Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, p. 317.

<sup>106</sup> Gerber, 1987, p. 68.

<sup>107</sup> Keyder, 1991, p. 8.

a larger share of peasant surplus.<sup>108</sup> This is also to say that *çiftlik* owners were worlds apart from some sort of yeomanry as they were only scarcely involved in agricultural production.<sup>109</sup> As to the second dimension, it is hard to state that *çiftlik*s brought about an epochal change in labor relations towards wage labor. We now know that many *çiftlik*s did not employ either wage labor; rather, small plots of land were given out to small peasants to sharecrop.<sup>110</sup> In other words, it is virtually impossible to characterize *çiftlik*s as properties which were run *en masse* by agricultural entrepreneurs who employed wage labor. Absenteeism and sharecropping do not justify accounts like Karpat's which liken *çiftlik*s to capitalistically managed enterprises. Yet, as mentioned above, other accounts suggest that *çiftlik* formations engendered a mass of enserfed or enslaved laborers. A generalization of this sort, too, seems unable to stand the test of history because neither did a regressive change towards servile forms of labor occur throughout the empire. The number of slaves or enserfed peasants put to work on *çiftlik*s situated in the central provinces of the Empire was meager when compared to other similar enterprises elsewhere.<sup>111</sup> Most of the time peasant producers managed to survive alongside *çiftlik*s.<sup>112</sup> Hence peasants working on *çiftlik*s should not be regarded dependent producers as they generally continued independent production on their own plots.<sup>113</sup>

Add to this the fact that whatever rights *çiftlik* owners de facto enjoyed were in reality revocable<sup>114</sup>, we might then safely say that the emergence of *çiftlik*s fell short of signaling a wholesale change in tenurial relations. It is not difficult to see, however, that these

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<sup>108</sup> Keyder, 1991, p. 8; Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, pp. 317-8.

<sup>109</sup> Kasaba, 1991, pp. 114-7; Keyder, 1991, p. 12.

<sup>110</sup> Faroqhi, 1987, pp. 22-3; Pamuk, 1987, pp. 196-7; Teoman and Kaymak, 2008: p. 317.

<sup>111</sup> Arıcanlı, 1991, p. 132; Faroqhi, 1987, p. 21.

<sup>112</sup> Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, p. 319.

<sup>113</sup> Kasaba, 1991, p. 117; Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, p. 320.

<sup>114</sup> Keyder, 1991, p. 13.

enterprises nonetheless were repulsive in the eyes of Ottoman statesmen. The reason for this was not only that *çiftliks* threatened the very foundation of the system of land tenure based, as it was, on a strict distinction between public and private lands.<sup>115</sup> It was also the case that *çiftliks* jeopardized the idealized, unmediated relationship between the state and its peasant subjects.<sup>116</sup> This brings us to state's attitude towards *çiftliks*. It has been asserted above that there is a considerably widespread agreement in current scholarship as to Ottoman state's commitment to preservation of peasant property. On the other hand, this is not to say that the state in every instance strived to uphold small proprietorship, or that it always succeeded in buttressing peasant claims. To the contrary, the central state might well be shown by historical evidence to have proved incapable of halting acquisition of land by locally powerful groups. It also might have been the case that Ottoman attempts at upholding peasant property were at times less than wholehearted. There is a recent study on the Black Sea region which might be of use to illuminate this point.<sup>117</sup> The study deals with the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century disputes over ownership of land and peasant dues in the *sancak* of Canik. The parties to this particular controversy were the Hazinedarzade family, who not only controlled vast lands but at the same time occupied high government positions, and some 5000 peasant families who tilled former's land. In legal parlance, Hazinedarzade lands comprised a *çiftlik* proper.

The Canik controversy became known to the central government when peasants filed a complaint against the Hazinedarzade family. It appears that peasant claims were threefold; peasants claimed (i) that Hazinedarzade family usurped peasant lands (ii) that they imposed on peasants unduly obligations, which, coupled with state taxation, drove peasant households to destitution (iii) that Hazinedarzades appropriated, in an unlawfully manner, lands which peasants recently opened up for cultivation. Şahin writes that the initial

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<sup>115</sup> Aytekin, 2009a, p. 943.

<sup>116</sup> Keyder, 1991, pp. 1-2.

<sup>117</sup> Şahin, 2007.

response of the state was delegating the matter to the provincial council, which proved most unfruitful given council's bias in favor of property owners. This was hardly surprising, for the posts were occupied by landowners themselves, that is, local *ayan* and *eşraf*. Subsequently, peasant complaints persisted, which forced the central government to implement a second measure, namely, formation of a *çiftlik* commission in the imperial center. Having examined the title deeds held by the Hazinerdarzade family, the commission made a number of rulings, which strike the observer as quite paradoxical, because the very commission set up to address peasant grievances ended up recognizing Hazinerdarzades' rights of ownership on *miri* land. From peasants' standpoint, these were the lands that they customarily held in usufruct, the title deeds of which, they claimed, were coercively seized by the landowning family. As for *mahlul* and *mektum* land controlled by the Hazinerdarzades, the commission ruled that they be auctioned with revenue thereby obtained sent to the treasury. However, the lands in question were never put to sale; local *ayan* and *eşraf* who dominated the provincial council effectively blocked the implementation of commission's decision for decades. Hence *mahlul* and *mektum* lands remained in Hazinerdarzades' possession.

Şahin's argument is that the case of Canik illustrates the way locally powerful groups could frustrate central authority's commitment to securing peasant property. Otherwise put, for Şahin, the incident does not discredit the idea that Ottoman state policy was one of securing peasant property against landlords. Rather, it bears testimony to the power of local landowners in influencing outcomes. However, I believe that it is necessary to question state's inclination to delegate matters to provincial authorities. An inclination of that sort was in effect a permission extended to local power holders. Nonetheless the state did erect a special estates commission to ameliorate the problem - a fact which could be taken to mean that by mid-century the presence of *çiftlik*s presented so much trouble that the state could no longer turn the other way, as it had been doing for decades. This second interpretation is equally warranted, which leads me to suggest that we need to know more about cases like that of Canik to arrive at a definitive answer.

One thing is almost certain, however. State's attitude could never have been the sole reason for the relative insignificance of *çiftlik*s in Anatolia as elsewhere. It has been proposed, for example, that peasant resistance could well have been a factor which hindered the formation of large estates in many cases.<sup>118</sup>

Finally, as for the tenants who worked the lands of *çiftlik*s, Pamuk writes the following: "Tenant families came from the ranks of poor peasantry which did not have the means to cultivate marginal lands on their own."<sup>119</sup> If we take a couple of steps backwards, more light could be thrown on the issue of tenancy. The picture Pamuk seems to be depicting is one in which landless peasant families were surrounded by uncultivated, open lands, on which they nonetheless could not undertake independent production. What we gather from the quotation just above is precisely this. Even where *çiftlik*s existed, there were marginal lands that could be reclaimed; yet the peasants did not have the necessary means to till such lands - that being the very reason why they became tenants in the first place. To illustrate, if a peasant household lacked a pair of oxen or a wooden plough, the family had no choice but sharecrop on landlord's estate.<sup>120</sup> An alternative scenario would be that peasants had tiny plots of land but could not work on it for the above-mentioned reason, i.e. absence of capital. For we know that the lack of draft animals sometimes made people abandon (sell or let out on lease) their tiny plots of land to become laborers on other people's properties.<sup>121</sup> No matter which scenario actually played out, one thing is almost certain: the problem was not one of land hunger *per se* in either case. It was rather about not having draft animals and/or equipment.

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<sup>118</sup> Aytekin, 2009b, p. 9.

<sup>119</sup> Pamuk, 1987, p. 196.

<sup>120</sup> Conversely, when peasants lacked land but owned some capital, they could lease land and cultivate it. (Güran, 1998, p. 205)

<sup>121</sup> Güran, 1998, pp. 189-90.

It is quite possible to say that what we have before us is a pattern which is to be found in late Ottoman and early republican Anatolia alike. As Keyder puts it, in the Ottoman-Turkish case “sharecropping results from a difficulty in continuing with independent farming, rather than from land unavailability.”<sup>122</sup> This is a conclusion Keyder draws from relative ratios of land and labor, and it is an argument which is of some use if we are to understand the overall agrarian trend in Anatolia. There in fact is a second dimension to Keyder’s argument. According to him, agrarian history was marked by a succession of periods in which small holding or share cropping dominated. The alternation from independent smallholding to sharecropping resonated, respectively, with periods of economic expansion and depression. Accordingly, during periods of depression small peasants had to cease independent cultivation for lack of means of production. That is to say, in an era of economic depression, peasants tended to borrow and, then, default on their debt; most of the time they had to sell their lone possessions: draft animals and/or farm equipment, which meant that they no longer had at their disposal the means to work the land on their own <sup>123</sup> Keyder’s remarks provide us with the insight that peasants did not necessarily lose their land during periods of depression. It might have been the case that they merely could not cultivate lands in their possession, and that they subsequently became tenants. As for the alleged connection between sharecropping and economic contraction, it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the question whether the flourishing of *çiftlik*s coincided with an economic downturn as far as agricultural prices went. Nonetheless it is obvious that Keyder’s argument helps one better understand the composition of labor employed on Ottoman *çiftlik*s.

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<sup>122</sup> Keyder, 1983a, p. 132.

<sup>123</sup> Keyder, 1983a, p. 137.

## 2.5. The 1858 Land Code: Aims and Impact

The first modern land code of the Ottoman Empire was promulgated in 1858. The code not only reflected certain changes that had been underway for some time; it also laid the foundation for new relations on land. I am not going to embark on a technical, item-by-item analysis of this crucial text. I am interested in the meaning and the long-term legacy of the 1858 Code, which we will touch upon through a series of themes.

Maybe it is best to start with a somewhat theoretical insight which concerns the relationship between legal change and social change. The question is: Did the code *start* the processes of privatization and commodification of land? Or, conversely, was actual commodification of land followed by its codification? As Aytekin maintains, the literature on the code is plagued by a major shortcoming, namely, the “overemphasis on the state as the initiator of change”.<sup>124</sup> Hence the central question addressed in current literature: Did the state succeed in fulfilling its goals in drafting the code?<sup>125</sup> It surely is naïve to assume that the 1858 Code came out of the blue. On the contrary, it should be the case that certain transformations had already been taking place, which later came to be codified in new regulations. The necessary corrective, then, is to view the code as much a consequence of social processes as a cause that set in motion the process of change.<sup>126</sup> Take the example of *çiftliks*. According to Gerber, the lone innovation of any real weight consisted in the articles on *çiftliks*, which set out to regulate the latter in ways which suggested that they were substantially different from smallholdings on state land. Nevertheless, even there, novelty was just a semblance, as real relations on land had already changed. It is not surprising, Gerber continues, that the provisions on *çiftliks* of the 1858 Code echoed quite

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<sup>124</sup> Aytekin, 2009b, pp. 10-11.

<sup>125</sup> Aytekin, 2009a, p. 935.

<sup>126</sup> Aytekin, 2009a, p. 936; Aytekin, 2009b, p. 12.

closely court records from 17<sup>th</sup>-century Bursa.<sup>127</sup> Subsequently, following Gerber, we can say that what happened in 1858 was an example of legal change catching up with real social change.

Before heading towards the controversy over the essence of the law, we should clarify why we have referred to the 1858 Code as “modern.” It was so in two ways. First, it was modern in introducing the practice of registration of title deeds, which reinforced bureaucratic control over land. The notion that all kinds of transactions on land required state sanction was implicit in the code. Hence what the law introduced was a system of state surveillance – one of the hallmarks of the modern state.<sup>128</sup>

The code was truly modern in another sense as well, and this pertained to the prohibition of collective registration. The clause against registration of a village’s entire land in the name of a single individual or the village as a collective body had, for sure, as one of its intentions the urge to disallow powerful local man from usurping village lands *en masse*. That was not the whole story, however. It is equally important to recognize that the clause in question deemed collective ownership of village lands illegal, which was, *de facto*, quite common in many parts of the empire. Seen in this light, the code excluded all forms of property except individual property. Therein laid the “modern” nature of the Ottoman Code.<sup>129</sup>

Having just alluded to state’s stance vis-à-vis local notables, I should immediately mention in passing that one of the aims of the code was to eliminate local intermediaries standing between the government and the peasants so as to assure that state appropriated agricultural surplus without having to share it with any local power-holders. On reading

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<sup>127</sup> Gerber, 1987, pp. 70-3.

<sup>128</sup> Jorgens, 2000, pp. 108-9.

<sup>129</sup> Aytakin, 2009a, pp. 936-7.

Warriner, one gets the sense that this was particularly significant when it came to the Fertile Crescent, a region many parts of which were dominated by tribes. Accordingly, individual peasant ownership was an idea with much appeal since it pledged to do away with the power enjoyed by tribal shaiks.<sup>130</sup> The Ottoman government, adds Warriner, took pains to introduce individual ownership in the Fertile Crescent; however, peasants did not cooperate for fear that registration of title deeds in their own names would call forth conscription.<sup>131</sup> The problem may not have been as pressing as it was in the Fertile Crescent, yet same concerns and similar difficulties applied to Anatolia, as we shall later see.

Broadly speaking, there seems to be two conflicting views on the 1858 Code. On one hand, there is the notion that the 1858 Code heralded path-breaking change in opening the door to the recognition of absolute rights of private ownership on land. Thus conceived, the code is said to have affected a total break from old practices. According to the rival view, however, the new law left intact the essence of the classical land regulations. For Jorgens, for example, the code did not mark anything like a clear break from old regulations; in fact, the ultimate principle remained untouched: assertion of state ownership of arable land, on which peasants enjoyed solid usufruct rights. Otherwise put, the 1858 Code was a renewed affirmation of the old dictum. As such, the new law concerned itself with actual deviations taking place despite the age-old regulations.<sup>132</sup> For Sluglett and Farouk-Sluglett, too, the kernel of the code was retaliation; statesmen strived to reverse the process they themselves had set in when they conceded to practices of *iltizam* and *malikane*.<sup>133</sup> Even though they all agree that the code was intended as a confirmation of state's sole ownership of land, some scholars within this second group

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<sup>130</sup> Warriner, 1966, pp. 73-4.

<sup>131</sup> Warriner, 1966, p. 76.

<sup>132</sup> Jorgens, 2000.

<sup>133</sup> Sluglett and Farouk-Sluglett, 1984, p. 413.

imply that the 1858 law was not as ambitious as their peers tend to suggest. Hence Gerber states that the Land Code was essentially conservative in the way it approached the problem of landed property. That is to say, the state did *not* endeavor to undo a process of change which had been taking place for some decades, and neither had statesmen the intention to introduce a new set of relations from scratch. All the code did was to reflect actual changes whose origins dated back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, according to some analysts who do believe that preservation of the status quo was the main objective, the code nevertheless proved quite revolutionary in an unintentional sort of way. Both Karpat<sup>135</sup> and Gerber associate this with the practice of land registration. Thus Gerber maintains that what initially was just a technical innovation ended up immensely altering the countryside in the long run. One reason for this was that registration applied to lands already held and cultivated as well as lands newly acquired and opened up for cultivation, which served as a stimulus for land reclamation.<sup>136</sup> Likewise, Keyder admits that registration of landholdings was the true novelty introduced by the code as it was no less than the recognition of “titled and alienable property on land”.<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, Keyder does not assert that this innovation altogether transformed the land tenure structure. Because the state continued to ally itself with the peasants, Keyder writes, it took relatively long for substantial changes in landholding to arrive. That is why, for example, enclosure remained a marginal occurrence.

Fortunately, the authors of the 1858 Code were self-reflective, which makes it a little easier for us to prefer one perspective over other. To cut the long story short, the official discourse purported that the new regulations were merely a continuation of their

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<sup>134</sup> Gerber, 1987, pp. 67-73.

<sup>135</sup> Karpat, 1968, pp. 85-8.

<sup>136</sup> Gerber, 1987, p. 72.

<sup>137</sup> Keyder, 1991, p. 11.

predecessors.<sup>138</sup> Yet if taken to the letter, this self-vision could be very misleading. This is so because members of the establishment are usually reluctant to admit change, even when they codify it. Subsequently, it might be better to find a middle ground between the two views. I think İslamoğlu's take on the code provides us with an opportunity to do so.

On a number of occasions, İslamoğlu stresses the parallelism between the recognition of title holder's right to absolute ownership and state's exclusive claim to taxation. The former right excluded all rival claims over the use of land, while the latter rendered void previous entitlements to revenues from land, which used to belong with the members of the ruling class. Thus as peasants became the owners of lands they customarily held, the state emerged as the singular authority to claim a portion of revenue created therein. By the same stroke, local magnates, with entitlements and privileges revoked, were subject to state taxation.<sup>139</sup> Far from having been a compromise settlement, therefore, recognition of individual ownership actually furthered state's exclusive control over the land.<sup>140</sup> Sluglett and Farouk-Sluglett adopt a similar position and write that the code was, in essence, a "revenue raising device"; for *tapu* had, from the point of view of the state, the unmistakable benefit of ascertaining who the taxpayer was – i.e. to whom the *aşar* was due.<sup>141</sup> Hence the taxpayer was none other than the title-holder.

A further point should be emphasized. Although the code concerned itself exclusively with state lands, thereby leaving aside *mülk* and *vakıf* lands, its provisions eventually came

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<sup>138</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, p. 34.

<sup>139</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, pp. 7, 19-20, 24-5.

<sup>140</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, pp. 28, 34.

<sup>141</sup> Sluglett and Farouk-Sluglett, 1984, p. 414.

to apply to these latter categories.<sup>142</sup> Once administrative practices of registration and issuing of title deeds were extended to non-state lands, so did state taxation.<sup>143</sup>

If this perceived connection between exclusive ownership rights and direct taxation by the state is indeed correct, then we have to admit, as do Sluglett and Farouk-Sluglett<sup>144</sup>, that so long as title-holders continued production and paid the taxes due, the formation of larger-than-usual holdings in no way contradicted the intentions of the Land Code.

The view outlined just above may well be seen as a compromise position as to the real meaning and intentions of the code. It is a compromise position because it stands between the two views, one suggesting that the code introduced private property on land to the detriment of state control, whereas according to the second view, the new code was nothing but an affirmation of state control over land.

Having thus settled the questions regarding the intentions of the architects of the code, we can now proceed to second question: What were the lasting impacts of the code? For some, the 1858 Code set in motion the process of the conversion of *miri* land into *mülk* land. In order to be able to assess this claim, we need to spend some time defining *miri* and *mülk*, for there seems to be an air of confusion surrounding these categories of land. Gerber provides a good starting point here. The author takes issue with the notion that local magnates had taken charge of *miri* land, and that the 1858 Code was a definitive counteroffensive against this state of affairs. Gerber objects to this line of reasoning by suggesting that the underlying assumption of a gradual “usurpation” of *miri* land by private persons is misinformed. It is misinformed in being built upon

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<sup>142</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, pp. 26-7.

<sup>143</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, p. 30.

<sup>144</sup> Sluglett and Farouk-Sluglett, 1984, p. 415.

a basic confusion between the modern (both Western and Middle Eastern) concept of state land and the concept of *miri* land (alas, often translated as state land, too). State land, in the modern sense, is a land that the state wishes to keep out of individual use, such as forest land. Such a legal category did not exist in the Ottoman Empire and came into being only in the new states. *Miri* land was not state land in this sense. There was never really a question of usurpation of such land; at the most it could be misused.<sup>145</sup>

What of *mülk* land, then? İslamoğlu writes that it is erroneous to regard *mülk* as private ownership; *mülk* signified no more than the entitlement to the tax revenues of a specified plot of land, though it was possible for the “owner” to dispose of the land in such ways that were reminiscent of private property.<sup>146</sup>

It is beyond any doubt that legal categories of land underwent some revisions, though not entirely explicitly. Nonetheless, it is not wise to phrase the transition as one from *miri* to *mülk* due to the very pre-modern connotations of these terms. Was it a transition to private property in the modern sense, then? If modern implies absolute, inalienable and transferable rights, it would be far-fetched to give an answer in affirmative.<sup>147</sup> This is because property rights on land were restricted in a plethora of ways.

For İslamoğlu, the code reflected the contemporaneous “politics of property.”<sup>148</sup> This is the reason why the text contained so many ambiguities. In many of its articles, a clash between what İslamoğlu calls the “property claim” and the “subsistence claim” was therefore easily discernible.<sup>149</sup> This was the case with articles on pasture land, where right to property contested peasants’ customary grazing rights. Likewise, despite the fact that one of the rationales of the code was guaranteeing title holder’s absolute control over the

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<sup>145</sup> Gerber, 1987, p. 68.

<sup>146</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, p. 18.

<sup>147</sup> Arıcanlı, 1991, pp. 128-9.

<sup>148</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, p. 26.

<sup>149</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, pp. 30-1.

land, many restrictive clauses were built in the text, lest disposability risked dispossession.<sup>150</sup> Finally, the rule set forth in the code that lands left uncultivated reverted back to the state should be seen as a further restriction on title holder's right to absolute ownership. This time, however, restriction of the right to property was for the sake of continuity of production.<sup>151</sup>

In view of the presence of such restrictions, some observers may be led to characterize the land code as only partially modern. Yet, in response to those who argue that the 1858 Code was pre-modern in the way it imposed restrictions on the use of state-owned lands, Aytekin maintains that some of such restrictions might have been no more than a formality. The aim was not so much putting restrictions on land use as it was keeping track of various transactions involving land. On the other hand, some of those restrictions did set limits to the way owners could use state land. Nonetheless in such cases, too, restrictions were geared towards the objective of guaranteeing the continuity of (grain) production. All in all, it is misleading to assume that restrictions to be found in the code epitomized a desire on the part of the state not to let go the titular ownership of agricultural land.<sup>152</sup>

Furthermore, commodification of land was furthered in subsequent decades through several new regulations. Rights of inheritance were progressively extended, which voided the meaning of category of *miri* land. More importantly, the above-mentioned restrictions were gradually lifted, with the result that land was turned into an ordinary commodity that could be mortgaged and sold for a bad debt. Alienability and free circulation of land was thus secured.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, pp. 31-2.

<sup>151</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, p. 32.

<sup>152</sup> Aytekin, 2009a, pp. 937-8.

<sup>153</sup> Aytekin, 2009a, pp. 938-9, 946-7.

The process nonetheless fell short of having as definitive a result as the consolidation of a landlord class.<sup>154</sup> That is to say, the 1858 Code did not directly culminate in the emergence of large commercial estates. Of course, estates did come to being in certain locales. Yet Toksöz demonstrates that, as far as their formation is concerned, the real turning point as was not the enactment of the 1858 Code. In fact, the code failed to produce any substantial results well into 1870s. The change was brought about only then, as a result of both an upsurge in demand and agricultural improvement.<sup>155</sup>

The Land Code had one unambiguously universal consequence, and that was the guaranteeing of security of tenure. Security of tenure facilitated land reclamations and flourishing of new rural settlements as the practice of *tapu* “acted as a further stimulus to plough pasture land.”<sup>156</sup> In addition, security of tenure as guaranteed by the new land law had further accelerated commercialization.<sup>157</sup> It nonetheless needs to be stated that both of these processes were made possible by state’s re-constituting of order in the provinces.<sup>158</sup>

As a last word, I should mention the differential impact of the code on diverse parts of the empire. The impact the code exerted on land tenure structures varied from one region to the other. Hence land law of 1858 had regionally-varied effects on land tenure. So the issue is not confined to the code, it is more about the ways in which the new land regulations interacted with local custom and balance of powers. Take the case of Iraq. From Jwaideh’s account we gather that the implementation of the new land law failed to

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<sup>154</sup> İslamoğlu, 2000, p. 35.

<sup>155</sup> Toksöz, 2009, p. 82.

<sup>156</sup> Hütteroth, 1974, pp. 41-2.

<sup>157</sup> Burke, 1991, p. 29.

<sup>158</sup> Hütteroth, 1974, pp. 22-3.

altogether alter the pattern of landholding in southern Iraq. That is because the indigenous pattern of landholding, which could best be described as a tribal system of usufructory rights to land, survived to co-exist with its more modern counterpart until the demise of the Empire.<sup>159</sup> As for the situation in Syria, Rafeq examines the changes in tenurial relations in the province of Damascus circa mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Quite contrary to the intentions of the architects of the new law, in Damascus, the 1858 Code ended up strengthening the position of large owners since some concentration of landholding had already occurred as a result of peasants' deserting the villages. That is to say, it was common for indebted peasants to sell their plots to large holders, who, most of the time, were town-dwelling money lenders.<sup>160</sup> Finally, the coming to being of a body of property-owning peasants was a geographically-specific consequence. That is, the entrenchment of peasant property happened in a limited number of provinces, among which was Anatolia.<sup>161</sup> As elsewhere, this result should be explicated on the basis of the antecedent social structure. In other words, the emergence of a property-owning small peasantry derived from the way pre-commercialization era land tenure structure interacted with the new regulations embodied in the code.

In conclusion, Quataert is right in asserting that all the Land Code of 1858 did was "confirming and ratifying rather than creating and establishing."<sup>162</sup> Hence, in Anatolia, the "prevalence of small family holdings" was later "sanctified by the Land Law of 1858."<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Jwaideh, 1984.

<sup>160</sup> Rafeq, 1984, pp.388-390.

<sup>161</sup> Sluglett and Farouk-Sluglett, 1984, p. 413.

<sup>162</sup> Quataert, 1991, p. 39.

<sup>163</sup> Quataert, 1991, p. 39.

## 2.6. Adana as an Exceptional Instance of Large Estate Formation in Anatolia

The fertile plain of Adana laid dormant for most of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The initial spurt for the development of agriculture came with the Egyptian occupation of 1833-1840. İbrahim Paşa of Egypt initiated major projects geared toward the improvement of agricultural land and creation of a work force, which nonetheless were reversed after Ottomans' regaining of Adana.<sup>164</sup> At first, the Ottoman state showed no real interest in encouraging agriculture on the plain. Later, however, American Civil War gave a strong boost to cotton production in the area, as British industry was heavily struck by the disruption of the flow of cotton from America's south.<sup>165</sup> The British effectively lobbied to get the Ottoman government support cotton production within the realm.<sup>166</sup>

Swampy and malarial, the Adana plain was a virtually uninhabited area until the commencement of cotton production for external markets. In the course of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, large estates came to be formed on newly-reclaimed agricultural lands on which small-scale production never existed.<sup>167</sup> This is also to say that, unlike most parts of Anatolia, the biggest impediment to large scale commercial agriculture in the Adana plain was *not* the presence of peasants who, for centuries, enjoyed usufruct rights over the land. There were, instead, two obstacles to agricultural production in 19<sup>th</sup> century Adana. Swamps constituted the first obstacle, which was overcome via the draining of the river delta. The lands upon which large estate subsequently came into being were thereby opened up for cultivation. It is important to note that, swamps as they were, the lands in question belonged to the category of *mevat* land.<sup>168</sup> Afterwards, when

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<sup>164</sup> Toksöz, 2009, p. 79; Toksöz and Yalçın, 1999, pp. 437-8.

<sup>165</sup> Novichev, 1966, p. 67; Toksöz, 2009, pp. 78-9.

<sup>166</sup> Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, p. 322.

<sup>167</sup> Pamuk, 1987, pp. 199-200; Quataert, 1980, p. 49; Toksöz, 2009, pp. 79, 81; Toksöz and Yalçın, 1999, pp. 436-7.

<sup>168</sup> Quataert, 1981, pp. 75-6.

rendered cultivable, these were granted to private persons. This was facilitated by a *ferman* dated 1862, according to which unused lands were granted to people, without charge, on condition that they be tilled.<sup>169</sup> Then, secondly, there was the problem of labor shortage, which was caused by absence of permanent human settlement in the delta. For the plain was only partially populated by nomads or, more correctly, transhumant tribes. The government handled this problem by means of tribal pacification. Local tribes were thus coercively sedentarized on the plain and recruited to work on cotton farms of Adana. A subsequent measure adopted to help meet labor requirements was the settlement on the plain of refugees who flowed in the Empire following the loss of frontier territories. In addition, it shortly turned out customary for seasonal migrants to flood into the plain at harvest time in search of employment. All in all, once the delta was drained and a labor force implanted in the region, the stage was set for big farms to flourish.<sup>170</sup> And they did.

These somewhat extraordinary measures aside, the Ottoman government employed more routine policies to boost cotton production on the Adana plain. Latter policies included provision of cheap credits, tax exemptions and the introduction of higher-quality seeds for crop improvement.<sup>171</sup> It was not only the government which invested in agriculture; foreign companies got involved too. It might suffice to mention the example of the German railroad company which undertook the construction of the Adana-Mersin line. With a major stake in the expansion of production, the company supplied credits to producers and introduced improved seeds as well as novel machinery.<sup>172</sup>

I have already mentioned the origins of the new agricultural laborers of the region. I should now talk about the property owners. As mentioned above, the Ottoman state granted plots

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<sup>169</sup> Toksöz and Yalçın, 1999, p. 439.

<sup>170</sup> Pamuk, 1987, pp. 199-200; Quataert, 1981, pp. 75-6; Toksöz, 2009, pp. 79-81; Toksöz and Yalçın, 1999, pp. 439-40, 443.

<sup>171</sup> Toksöz, 2009, pp. 79-80.

<sup>172</sup> Pamuk, 1987, pp. 199-200; Toksöz, 2009, pp. 82-3.

of the *mevat* land of the Adana plain to private persons. But who exactly were the grantees? Pamuk writes that they were “locally powerful groups.”<sup>173</sup> Others are more specific. Toksöz for instance, notes that largest owners in the region of Adana included merchant-cum-moneylenders and the heads of local transhumant tribes.<sup>174</sup> It must have been a fairly common occurrence elsewhere to come across moneylenders and merchants as landowners; for they appropriated considerable portions of peasant surplus by means of usury and trade. But the point about tribal chieftains is interesting. Just like Toksöz, Gerber points out that tribal chiefs were the major recipients of land grants in and around Adana. As tribes were settled, the chieftains ended up landlords.<sup>175</sup> Gerber cites the example of the Mürseloğlu family which traditionally mustered control over a large rank-and-file tribes people. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the family came to own numerous villages on which, apparently, expropriated peasants did sharecropping.<sup>176</sup> This pattern exhibits a strong resemblance to what happened in the Fertile Crescent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century where, as Warriner shows, cash cropping culminated in a transfer of effective ownership from communal bodies to tribal chieftains, urban moneylenders, and other local magnates.<sup>177</sup>

Abstracting momentarily from the case of Adana, it is quite possible to say that what we have here is more or less a pattern which could be said to have stretched all over the empire. That is to say, we might hypothesize that there was a correlation between the emergence of large holdings in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the presence of an antecedent social setting dominated by *aşirets*, i.e. primeval tribal entities. For, once the practice of registration of title deeds was introduced in 1858, it might have been the case

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<sup>173</sup> Pamuk, 1987, p. 199.

<sup>174</sup> Toksöz, 2009, p. 82.

<sup>175</sup> Gerber, 1987, pp. 87, 112, 116.

<sup>176</sup> Gerber, 1987, p. 87.

<sup>177</sup> Warriner, 1966.

that in places like Adana (or in the Kurdish provinces, for that matter) leaders of tribes registered as their personal property lands which had traditionally been under the collective possession of tribes. There is no doubt they were in a position to do so, given that they enjoyed tremendous power in their localities. Gerber notes that this took place oftentimes in Arab provinces dominated by Bedouin tribes.<sup>178</sup> Arab provinces need not concern us here as our focus is Ottoman Anatolia. Yet, there is some benefit in touching on the Kurdish provinces of eastern Anatolia. We know for a fact that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century this region was not characterized by the dominance of small peasant property; agrarian relations there were, rather, more feudal.<sup>179</sup> The Kurdish provinces were already exceptional in this sense. This system of land tenure was legally entrenched following the promulgation of the Land Code and introduction of cadastral registration as tribal chieftains registered all lands in their own names.<sup>180</sup> This development is hardly surprising owing to the aforementioned tendency of Ottoman land regulations to sanction established practices. Nonetheless it seems far-fetched to say that the Kurdish provinces were akin to Adana in terms of the transformation of tenurial relations. The reason for this is that the region was not yet within the sphere of commercialization of agriculture; in fact eastern Anatolia comprised the least commercialized part of the Ottoman heartland in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>181</sup> Kurdish provinces would only gradually be opened to commercialization during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To conclude, emergence of large properties in the east had nothing to do with the 19<sup>th</sup> century commercialization of agriculture. Instead, this eastern Anatolian phenomenon should best be considered as yet another regionally specific consequence of the land law of 1858.

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<sup>178</sup> Gerber, 1987, p. 73.

<sup>179</sup> Akçay, 1987; Keyder, 1983b, p. 45.

<sup>180</sup> Gözel, 2007, 69-80; Pamuk, 1987, p. 194.

<sup>181</sup> Pamuk, 1987, pp. 191-5.

I have thus far mentioned a number of historical aspects of the Adana plain that altogether rendered the region quite exceptional. I have referred to the original status of land and the antecedent social structure around Adana as specificities to be reckoned with in accounting for the causes that eventually led to a peculiar outcome in terms of land tenure. The outcome, that is, emergence of large commercial estates coupled with prevalence of wage labor, both permanent and seasonal, has also been noted. It is necessary to say in passing that Adana plain was notable in terms of the extent of mechanization of agricultural production.<sup>182</sup> Consequently, the picture we arrive at is one of large landed holdings which employed wage labor and state-of-the-art machinery to produce cotton for export markets. There is one last factor that should be mentioned, namely, a permissive attitude on the part of the state. It should be evident from the above account that the Ottoman state had no qualms about encouraging the formation of private estates on the plain of Adana. Needless to say, this stood in distinct contrast to the policy of guaranteeing the survival of small peasant property the state normally adopted elsewhere in Anatolia. Quataert inquires into the reasons for this discrepant policy and writes that the state had much to gain, tax-revenue-wise, from the advent of large scale agriculture on this fertile but uninhabited plain. Equally important, it was obvious to Ottoman statesmen that there was nothing much to be dreaded in pursuing this strategy. This was because a policy of fostering estate formation in Adana would entail “low social costs” as there were no prior small holdings that could suffer along the way.<sup>183</sup> As anticipated, large-scale commercial enterprises did not disturb a previously-existing peasant economy for the simple reason that no such thing had existed. It is safe to conclude that that in terms of the stance that the government took regarding relations of ownership on land Adana was the exception that proved the rule.

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<sup>182</sup> Kurmuş, 1974, pp. 114-5; Quataert, 1980, p. 52; Quataert, 1981, p. 78; Toksöz, 2009, p. 82.

<sup>183</sup> Quataert, 1981, pp. 75-6.

With unequivocal state sanction, estate formation started in earnest from mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onward. The construction of Adana-Mersin railroad and the flow of foreign investment into the region accentuated the trend.<sup>184</sup> The eventual result was an extremely polarized ownership structure which was singular so far as the rest of Anatolia was concerned.

It is unambiguously true that such a polarization did not come into being on so large a scale elsewhere in Anatolia. There nonetheless seems to be some ground for arguing that similar developments on lesser scales might have taken place in other localities with comparable features. This should not come as a surprise because quite a few of the most fertile plains of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century used to be uninhabited localities. From what Gerber has written we understand that there was something akin to a general pattern, which could also be observed in the plains of Ula, Antalya and Erdemli. In each case, large-scale commercial agriculture flourished at sites which had very recently been malaria-ridden plains lacking permanent settlement.<sup>185</sup> Although these latter cases are, as yet, much less documented, there is no problem in suggesting that they could not have matched Adana in the extent of estate formation, spread of wage labor or mechanization.

## **2.7. Egypt: A Polar Opposite**

I now turn to a contemporaneous case of commercialization of agriculture, that of Egypt, the agrarian history of which was both akin to and different from Anatolia. It is dissimilarity which interests us more here, because this might shed light on our case of primary focus, the Ottoman Anatolia.

Similarities to be found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century lay in a sharp upsurge in exports, which was a manifestation of commercialization of agricultural production driven by foreign demand.

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<sup>184</sup> Toksöz and Yalçın, 1999, pp. 442-3.

<sup>185</sup> Gerber, 1987, pp. 86-7.

The magnitude of this development was incomparable to the Anatolian example, though. Pamuk shows that expansion of exports in Anatolia and Egypt was parallel to one another up to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It was only afterwards that the respective performances of the two provinces began to diverge with the eventual result that exports from Egypt surpassed Anatolia by two and a half times just before the world war.<sup>186</sup> Pamuk pinpoints that the reason for this divergence should be sought in the development of monocrop agriculture in Egypt. This is an important point for my purposes here due to the fact that monocropping is characteristic of large-scale commercial agriculture. The composition of agricultural exports is much more diversified when production for foreign markets is undertaken independently by peasant families. The latter was the case with Anatolian exports.<sup>187</sup> On the other hand, this mere fact is far from explaining the causes of divergence; it rather adds another layer to the question itself. We know that level of exports in Egypt, in total, was much higher than in the Ottoman Empire. I have also pointed out that there developed in Egypt large-scale commercial agriculture, or in other words, commercial estates engaged solely in cotton production. The question should be formulated as follow: why was it the case that commercialization thoroughly transformed agriculture in Egypt while it stopped short of altering land tenure in the Ottoman Empire? A closer look at the case of Egypt might ultimately be of some use in analyzing the much milder pace of development in the Ottoman Anatolia.

Examining 19<sup>th</sup> century Egypt in contradistinction to Ottoman Anatolia might sound like comparison of what were actually incommensurate. This is because Egypt during early 19<sup>th</sup> century (i.e. prior to the advent of commercialization) was an altogether different story in terms of geography and demography. The first thing to note about Egyptian agriculture is that cultivation was confined to the Nile Valley. With only negligible rainfall, agriculture was dependent upon irrigation. The problem of irrigation, however,

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<sup>186</sup> Pamuk, 1992, pp. 38-41.

<sup>187</sup> Keyder, 1991, pp. 8-9.

had the effect of setting strict limits to land reclamation. Egypt's agricultural land was, therefore, basically a tiny strip of irrigable belt surrounded by impracticable deserts. Needless to say, the corollary was a very high rural population density. The advent of commercial agriculture has accordingly entailed ever-rising land rents. Under these land-scarce, labor-abundant conditions landowners sought to take advantage of commercialization, and proved successful in charging higher rents. Finally, high prices for land encouraged absenteeism since leasing land in small pieces to peasants was more lucrative than working an estate as one single agricultural enterprise.<sup>188</sup>

Many historians accentuate the earlier termination of tax-farming as an *explanan* of Egypt's divergence from the Empire. Mehmed Ali of Egypt succeeded in subjugating the tax-farmers, confiscating their sinecures and imposing taxes upon them. Lands thus brought under the control of the central state were later granted to state officials and private persons<sup>189</sup> as freehold. This was the kick off for large estate formation. Estates, in time, got enlarged as landowners brought new lands under cultivation. Estates owed their growth to a second process, however. Egyptian peasants, already stretched too thin because of heavy taxation, were driven away from the land. This is to say that Egyptian landlords succeeded in their feat to change the status of the peasantry, who lost access to the lands they held in usufruct for ages. Expropriation was not solely an outgrowth of indebtedness, however; it was also related to a secular increase in population, as a result of which land reclamation came to exhaustion. Otherwise put, changing demographics, coupled with estate formation, entailed rural over-population and, consequently, a severe population pressure on land. The pressure on land was such that in the opening decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century all arable land was already under cultivation in Egypt<sup>190</sup>, whereas in Anatolia area under cultivation reached its limit only in the early 1960s. It thus goes

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<sup>188</sup> Mansfield, 1965, pp. 168-71; Warriner, 1948, pp. 26-41; Warriner, 1957, pp. 15-19.

<sup>189</sup> Non-state grantees included village notables and Bedouin sheikhs (Baer, 1969b, p. 225).

<sup>190</sup> Pamuk, 1992, p. 53.

without saying that the other side of the coin was widespread landlessness. It has been estimated that at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century one quarter of the rural population could well have been landless.<sup>191</sup> Hence production on estates was undertaken either by expropriated tenants, who had precarious sharecropping arrangements or, more often in later decades, by poorly-paid wage laborers. There nonetheless existed a group of small proprietors in agriculture; yet this sector was not well-off either as the majority of family farms were too small to allow peasants live off the land. These holdings over time tended to get even smaller through hereditary succession. Burden of (monetary) taxation and fragmentation of farm holdings combined to produce an ever-increasing need on the part of the peasantry to borrow from moneylenders. This fed into latter's acquiring large tracts of land and, thereby, joining the ranks of absentee landlords. One might be tempted here to arguing that peasant indebtedness was present wherever the subsistence economy of rural society was disturbed by the emergence of a market. Nonetheless Egyptian case provides a poignant contrast to the situation in Anatolia. In Egypt of late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the extent of peasant indebtedness was such that mortgage foreclosures became a routine event; soon after, not surprisingly, a tide of protest instigated by a "promise to cancel peasant debt and banish the usurers" sent shock waves to the foreigners and the wealthy.<sup>192</sup> Last but not the least, there were foreign players on the field, that is, European landowners, their agricultural enterprises and cotton companies. Otherwise put, unlike Ottoman Anatolia, there was massive foreign involvement in agriculture in Egypt. The composition of FDI in Egypt might illustrate the point. Pamuk calculates that the share of mortgage companies specialized in financing of agricultural investments was about 60%, which had to do with the cotton boom and the consequent rise in land prices.<sup>193</sup> This, basically, is the panorama of Egyptian agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Baer, 1969b, p. 215.

<sup>192</sup> Burke, 1991, p. 33.

<sup>193</sup> Pamuk, 1992, pp. 47-8.

<sup>194</sup> Baer, 1969a; Baer, 1969b; Gerber, 1987, pp. 101-4; Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, pp. 323-30; Warriner, 1948, pp. 26-38, 48-51; Warriner, 1957, pp. 15-31.

It should by now be clear that there took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a crucial divergence in the rural histories of Ottoman Empire and Egypt. The root causes of the divergence is quite difficult a matter. For some, the difference had to do with laws and regulations concerning possession and use of land. To cite a well-known example, this is what Gabriel Baer argues.<sup>195</sup> According to him, the temporal proximity of respective land codes and the presence of common provisions in the texts have misled many to believe that Khedive Sa'id's Land Law was simply a variation on Ottoman Law of 1858. Baer, on the other hand, urges us not to read too much into the similarities to be found in the two codes. According to Baer, common clauses brought no novelty; they merely codified already existing practices of the use of *miri* land. Similarities of this sort aside, Baer maintains that the two codes were worlds apart in terms of their spirit. While the Ottoman Code set to re-institute central control over land, in Egypt, where state control had already been firmly established, the real deal was about extending ownership rights so as to facilitate an increase in agricultural production.<sup>196</sup> This is reflected, Baer continues, in the way permissiveness of the Egyptian law contrasted with the restrictiveness of the Ottoman code.<sup>197</sup> As for further extension of ownership rights later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Egypt was always ahead of the Empire.<sup>198</sup>

This view has not gone undisputed, however. Denise Jorgens, among many others, has conducted a similar comparative examination of the Ottoman Code of 1858 and Khedive Sa'id's Land Law of the same year.<sup>199</sup> Having made a detailed textual analysis, Jorgens has reached a peculiar conclusion, namely, that the Egyptian Law had much in common

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<sup>195</sup> Baer, 1966.

<sup>196</sup> Baer, 1966, pp. 83-4.

<sup>197</sup> Baer, 1966, pp. 84-5.

<sup>198</sup> Baer, 1966, pp. 85-7.

<sup>199</sup> Jorgens, 2000.

with the Ottoman Code, which preceded the former by just four months. Jorgens shows that the two codes contained similar provisions regarding the use and possession of *miri* land. Both reasserted state ownership of arable land at the same time as they aimed to guarantee peasants' rights on *miri* land. The latter goal, in both cases, served a double purpose: curbing the power of local magnates and increasing productivity via warranting security of tenure. Extension of peasants' rights of inheritance, Jorgens notes, was crucial in this respect.<sup>200</sup> Consequently, following Jorgens, it is quite possible to say that the two cases that we are dealing with for some time were more similar than different in terms of laws and regulations regarding land use. Then the question poses itself: how are we to explain the very divergent paths of agricultural development Ottoman Empire on the one hand and Egypt on the other? It is once again necessary to remind ourselves of the fact that Ottoman and Egyptian land codes pertained to *miri* land alone. Many historians have noted that both *mülk* and *vakıf* lands were beyond jurisdiction, a point already made in preceding pages. However, it is the case that the codes in question left out *mevat* land as well. And it was on *mevat* lands in the Nile delta that large estates were gradually formed, which ended up changing Egyptian countryside for good.<sup>201</sup>

The whole debate over the true nature of Egyptian land code could alternatively be read as an illustration of the perils of legal fetishism. This is not just about the point Jorgens makes, namely, that the whole aggregate of different sorts of relations on land were beyond the compass of the code. This note of precaution against overstating the primacy of Sa'id's law has also to do with what I have suggested above about the Ottoman Code of 1858. To repeat, it is somewhat erroneous to regard the code as an initiator of change as antecedent practices of land use went a long way in explaining the eventual outcome. The conclusion, in a nutshell, is that one should definitely not overlook extra-legal factors in explaining change in tenurial relations.

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<sup>200</sup> Jorgens, 2000, p. 109.

<sup>201</sup> Jorgens, 2000, pp. 112-3.

Back to the causes of divergence, we have, then, diametrically opposed land-to-labor ratios. Egypt's rising population put a formidable pressure on land, while Ottoman Anatolia continued to be characterized by scarcity of labor and abundance of land. The above account of 19<sup>th</sup> century Egypt suggests that there were other dimensions to the varying pattern of developments. First of all, it has been previously asserted that Ottoman state had a stake in perpetuating and consolidating the smallholding-dominated structure. It is impossible to say this of Egypt of Mehmed Ali and his successors, who actually laid the groundwork for estate formation. In addition, as hinted before, Egyptian rulers seems to have been indifferent to the expropriation of the peasantry. Hence a permissive attitude on the part of the state proved crucial in concentration of landed property in Egypt. If so, then it is necessary to ask why Egyptian rulers acted so differently from their Ottoman counterparts. In his brief discussion of the matter, Pamuk seeks the answer in the relative balance of powers. The political power large Egyptian landlords enjoyed, he writes, was a stark contrast to the Ottoman case where the central state was much stronger vis-à-vis provincial power holders.<sup>202</sup> Hence the almost polar opposite case of Egypt serves to reinforce the argument I have put forward above about the determinants of the peculiar pattern of commercialization of agriculture in Ottoman Anatolia.

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<sup>202</sup> Pamuk, 1992, pp. 50-2.

## CHAPTER 3

### LAND TENURE IN REPUBLICAN TURKEY, 1923-1945

Visiting Anatolia in the early 1920s, E.F. Nickoley remarked that “the lands mostly lie fallow.”<sup>203</sup> Primary reason was, no doubt, early 20<sup>th</sup>-century demographic decline, which was brought about by wars.<sup>204</sup> The problem of the shortage of human power was so severe that Anatolian landscape was full of abandoned villages.<sup>205</sup> Particularly telling is the decline in male population: the 1927 census found out that about 30% of women were widowed.<sup>206</sup> This adversely affected agricultural production as the latter requires *manpower* especially for plowing.

Hence it is no wonder that in the absence of labor-saving technologies, land under cultivation decreased. According to an official survey conducted in 1927, only 5% of lands were under cultivation.<sup>207</sup> Even in agriculturally developed provinces like Aydın and Adana, arable land not under cultivation was larger than cultivated land.<sup>208</sup>

Draft animals were in short supply too, which must have contributed to the early 20th-century decline in acreage under cultivation. The new state was quick to respond to this predicament. In 1924, government issued a law to mitigate the problem of scarcity both

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<sup>203</sup> Nickoley, 1924, p. 280.

<sup>204</sup> Stirling, 1965, p. 140.

<sup>205</sup> Stirling, 1965, p. 140.

<sup>206</sup> Çomu, 2011, pp. 80-1.

<sup>207</sup> Kanbolat, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>208</sup> Nickoley, 1924, p. 284.

of manpower and draft animals. According to this, peasants in possession of a pair of oxen would cultivate a minimum of 100 *dönüms* of land. In addition, the law introduced a principle of labor dues as all peasants were put under the obligation to work on fields which belonged to war orphans and widows. Finally, another clause of the 1924 law obligated state institutions to cultivate idle land.<sup>209</sup>

How, then, did tenurial relations look like in the immediate aftermath of the promulgation of the Republic? Speaking of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman lands, Nickoley observes that there were three systems of exploitation: direct cultivation, working on shares, and renting, of which direct cultivation was the most common.<sup>210</sup> As for Anatolia, Nickoley is more specific. “Small holdings”, he writes, “take in seventy-five per cent of all cleared land in Asia Minor.”<sup>211</sup> On the basis of what little data are available, he notes that peasants owned from 20 to 1000 *dönüms*, but the average holding size was 150 *dönüms*.<sup>212</sup>

There are some serious difficulties one encounters when studying land tenure during the early Republic, and most of them issue from scarcity of reliable statistical data. This is because it was as late as 1950 that the Turkish state compiled the first agricultural census in the true sense of the term. Therefore one has to rely on impressionistic accounts or village monographs in addition to some very limited surveys, which will be discussed below. And the impressionistic picture of land tenure in early Republic is no different from the description of late Ottoman society which has been offered in the previous chapter. Otherwise put, in the light of above observations, it is tempting to say late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw few changes as to land ownership in Anatolia. Predominance of smallholding continued to characterize the Turkish countryside.

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<sup>209</sup> Keyder, 1981, pp. 26-7; Keyder, 1983a, p. 140.

<sup>210</sup> Nickoley, 1924, p. 294.

<sup>211</sup> Nickoley, 1924, p. 295.

<sup>212</sup> Nickoley, 1924, p. 294.

This is not to deny the phenomenon of large ownership. There indeed were large holdings at the dawn of the Republic. Yet very few of them were owner-operated estates; instead, cultivation was usually undertaken by sharecroppers.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, large estates not only were technologically backward; it was also that only a tiny portion of each holding was cultivated, the rest was used for stock raising.<sup>214</sup> According to Aksoy, the reason for this was scarcity of capital.<sup>215</sup> Speaking of a later date, i.e. the 1930s, Köylü estimates that only 10% of large holdings were cultivated; the rest was used as pasture.<sup>216</sup> It has been pointed out in the previous chapter that this had also been the case with Ottoman *çiftlik*s. That is, they too were only partially cultivated. It is, therefore, plausible to assert that there is a line of continuity here. It appears that this is a long-lasting continuity which survived into the 1960s and 1970s since agricultural censuses of 1970 and 1980 show that average holding size was larger in regions specialized in stock-raising. That is to say, many large holdings were at least partially used for grazing purposes.<sup>217</sup>

Of course, tenurial relations were not uniform throughout Turkey. There were important differences whose roots dated back to Ottoman centuries. According to Kandiyoti, for the period before the late 1940s, it is possible to talk about three distinct areas, each with its own characteristics. These are (i) “large landownership areas” (ii) “labor intensive, non-mechanized cash-crop areas” (iii) “areas where land is more or less evenly distributed among small peasant proprietors.” Kandiyoti specifically notes that villages of the Anatolian interior belong with the third type.<sup>218</sup> There is solid ground to assume that

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<sup>213</sup> Aksoy, 1969, p. 56; Köylü, 1957, pp. 135, 139.

<sup>214</sup> Aksoy, 1969, p. 55; Köylü, 1957, p. 139.

<sup>215</sup> Aksoy, 1969, p. 56.

<sup>216</sup> Köylü, 1957, p. 140.

<sup>217</sup> Altan, 1987, p. 37.

<sup>218</sup> Kandiyoti, 1975, p. 207.

Kurdish provinces epitomize the first type, because she mentions feudal lords. Then, coastal areas should be the second type since this is where peasants grew lucrative crops on family plots with little outside labor.

Next to consider is the characteristics of household economies. From the early years of the republic and well into late 1940s, many peasant households' relation to the market was rather unstable. According to Stirling, peasants had no incentive to cultivate more than a certain amount of land for a number of reasons. First of all, peasants had surplus to sell when harvest was good but this also entailed low prices for grain. Secondly, transportation was poor, and, as a result, it was difficult for peasants to transport their surplus to the local market. Finally, when peasants sold their surplus to the tax-farmers or some other powerful men in the village, they were not in a position to bargain and, thus, had to accept low prices.<sup>219</sup> All three factors functioned as disincentives to produce more. In any case, because farming techniques were primitive, a household could not plough additional land.<sup>220</sup>

Hence, at the İzmir Economic Congress of 1923, the working committee made the following observation regarding Turkish agriculture. Production was carried out by peasant producers, said the report, and it was geared towards subsistence. Peasants did sell part of their produce, but just in order to buy the most essential consumer items. In other words, they did not produce specifically for the market. At this point, committee's report resorts to the agricultural statistics of 1913. The survey of 1913 found out that total wheat production within the Empire (which at that time still included Iraq and Syria) was slightly over two and a half million tones. According to committee's report, this made 250 kilos of wheat per person, which barely sufficed for annual per capita consumption of bread. This is to say that wheat was produced for subsistence, i.e. household consumption, with

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<sup>219</sup> Stirling, 1965, pp. 135-6.

<sup>220</sup> Stirling, 1965, p. 135.

probably very little left to market.<sup>221</sup> Consequently, having thus established that Turkish agriculture was trapped in subsistence production, the committee put the target as an increase in production.<sup>222</sup>

This state of affairs would finally begin to change towards the end of the 1940s with the adoption of novel agricultural policies. As will be briefly analyzed towards the end of this chapter, these policies would offset the effects of all three barriers Stirling mentions, and pave the way to an unprecedented growth in agricultural production.

Now the question regards the kind of resources at hand to study change – both in peasant economies and in land tenure. It has already been pointed out that the dearth of statistical data is a fundamental challenge, especially for earlier periods. The problem does not end there, however. To repeat, we do not have reliable data for the period before the early 1950s, which makes it impossible to assess the changes in tenurial relations that took place between 1923 and 1950 with any certainty.<sup>223</sup> That is to say, although there are statistics on, say, size distribution of land holdings for the period after 1950, there is little basis to conduct any comparison with the previous decade.

What precisely is the data at hand, then? Now, on the one hand, there is some aggregate data compiled by state institutions. Amongst these are the findings of partial census conducted in 1927, a 1937 sample survey, and the agricultural censuses of 1950 and 1963. Starting with the 1927 census, this was a limited survey, which gave “superficial information” on the Turkish countryside.<sup>224</sup> The 1937 survey is much more interesting. The survey was conducted towards mid-1930s and followed up a few years later. This was

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<sup>221</sup> Ökçün, 1971, p. 71.

<sup>222</sup> Ökçün, 1971, p. 72.

<sup>223</sup> Tezel, 1994, 335.

<sup>224</sup> Köylü, 1957, p. 119.

a limited questionnaire, whose results were later generalized to all the country by the parliamentary committee which was formed to review government's bill on land distribution in 1945.<sup>225</sup> The survey was originally conducted in selected provinces and included only 360 agricultural enterprises.<sup>226</sup> It appears that the findings of the 1937 were never printed in their entirety.<sup>227</sup> Interestingly enough, the committee which reviewed Law for Providing Land to Farmers in 1945 used this set of data to challenge government's scheme of redistribution of landed property.<sup>228</sup> Given that this is a limited survey, there is every reason to doubt its credibility. Nevertheless, having noted that the 1937 survey is not representative of all provinces, Margulies and Yıldızoğlu conclude that its findings might well be considered as accurate since they are consistent with the results of the much reliable 1950 census.<sup>229</sup>

The problem is compounded by the fact that the results of the 1937 survey and of 1950 and 1963 censuses are not entirely commensurable. This is not only because the surveys employed different categories. It was also the case that techniques used to compile data were at variance.<sup>230</sup>

Luckily, statistical data is not the sole source of data at service. On the other side are numerous village surveys from the 1940s to the 1960s, many by prominent sociologists of the time. Because agricultural censuses fail to give an adequate picture of tenurial relations, there are insights to be gained by combining the two set of data.

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<sup>225</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 476.

<sup>226</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 63.

<sup>227</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 63 n. 6.

<sup>228</sup> Kanbolat, 1963, p.2; Keyder, 1981, p. 133 n. 3; Silier, 1981, p. 67.

<sup>229</sup> Margulies and Yıldızoğlu, 1987, p. 275.

<sup>230</sup> Aksoy, 1969, pp. 105-6; Köylü, 1957, p. 126.

In what follows, the development of tenurial relations from the first years of the Republic to the early 1960s will be examined. The analysis starts with a discussion of the impact on land tenure of two landmarks from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: the deportation of Ottoman Armenians in 1915<sup>231</sup> on the one hand and the 1923 exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece on the other. These two events changed Turkey's demographics significantly; yet, there unfortunately is only scant information regarding the effects they exerted on property relations on land. This is followed by a section on taxation, where the change in fiscal policies is reviewed with an eye to understanding their repercussions on land tenure. Then follows an examination of the development of agricultural policies that the Turkish state adopted. The analytical focus here will be, again, on the ways in which state policies might have affected distribution of landed property. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the phenomenon of landlessness.

### **3.1. Transfer of Land Ownership from Non-Muslims to Muslims: 1915 and 1923**

Two crucial events in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – one taking place a little before the demise of the empire and the other shortly after the birth of the nation state – altered Anatolia's demographics drastically. First was the deportation and killing of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in 1915. The “Great Crime”, which was the catastrophic culmination of a series of atrocities perpetuated against the Armenians, considerably de-populated the eastern provinces of Anatolia. There is a wide controversy surrendering the number of people either killed or deported in 1915. There is bound to be some serious disagreement over a topic field which is as politicized as this. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that demographic data from early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire is far from being reliable.<sup>232</sup> Estimates as to the number of people killed range from 200,000 to 1,500,000.

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<sup>231</sup> Armenian deportation is examined here in this chapter because the issue of the allocation of abandoned properties among the remaining Muslim population was not entirely resolved until after the demise of imperial rule.

<sup>232</sup> Dündar, 2008, p. 336; Zürcher, 1995, p. 170.

According to Zürcher, the number should have been somewhere between 600, 000 and 800,000.<sup>233</sup>

Then came the compulsory exchange of population between Turkey and Greece in 1923. In fact, Greek emigration out of Turkey started long before *mübadele*, in the early 1910s, and escalated with the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922. The total number of Greeks who immigrated to Greece before population exchange is estimated to have been as high as one million.<sup>234</sup> Nonetheless, the pre-1923 emigration had a particular spatial pattern: Their homeland hit by war, it was the Greeks of the Aegean coast and hinterland who had fled in largest numbers. Therefore, of the 150.000-200.000 Greeks who were actually exchanged for Muslims between 1923 and 1926, those from the Black Sea region and the Anatolian interior comprised the majority.<sup>235</sup> As for incoming Muslims, *mübadils*, their number was in the vicinity of 500.000.

It is plain obvious that deportation and population exchange modified Turkey's demographics. What is much less emphasized is that the departure of non-Muslims brought about a reshuffling of land ownership especially in ethnically composite provinces. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman population was overwhelmingly rural, which makes it plausible to say that the majority of the non-Muslim deportees were rural people. Among them were large owners as well as smallholders, whose lands came to constitute "abandoned property" in legal parlance.

Although there were some abandoned lands which remained state property, most of them were distributed to the Muslim population. There were a great number of potential recipients of abandoned property. The Empire was still shrinking on the borders in the

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<sup>233</sup> Zürcher, 1995, pp. 170, 239.

<sup>234</sup> Keyder, 1981, pp.21-2.

<sup>235</sup> Keyder, 2003, pp. 104-5.

early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Anatolia therefore kept receiving *muhacirs*. Because Ottoman state did not keep track of the incoming population, historians can only guess how many *muhacirs* arrived in Anatolia. Suffice it to say that as many as 640,000 Muslims fled to the Empire after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 alone.<sup>236</sup> To cite an example, following the deportation of Armenians, the *Commission for Abandoned Properties* allotted Armenian property in the province of Diyarbakır to Muslim settlers of diverse origins. At a time when Russian advance forced Muslim populations on border areas into the empire, the government made an effort, first, to settle those uprooted citizens on abandoned lands. People settled and compensated from Armenian property also included Caucasian and Balkan emigrants. The number of Caucasian and Balkan emigrants settled on Armenian property in Diyarbakır increased vis-à-vis the former group over time.<sup>237</sup> The grantees did not solely include Muslim refugees, however. Also included in the picture were native farmers as well as Kurdish/transhumant peoples settled/pacified by the state.<sup>238</sup>

It is important to recognize that deportation and population exchange did not solely set in motion a transfer of ownership along ethnic lines. At the same time, these two developments must have influenced the distribution of landed property among the remaining population. To clarify, there are three possible scenarios. The first is that distribution of ownership and tenurial relations remained intact despite the departure of non-Muslims. Secondly, it could have been the case that appropriation of abandoned properties reinforced concentration of ownership. Alternatively, the same process could have resulted in fragmentation of holdings. Hence the question to be posed in this section is as follows: how did the transfer of ownership from Armenians and Greeks to Muslims have an impact on distribution of landed property and on tenurial relations? It needs to be recognized that the outcome of the process was not a function of numbers alone. In other

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<sup>236</sup> Dündar, 2001, p. 56.

<sup>237</sup> Üngör, 2011, pp. 119-20.

<sup>238</sup> Üngör, 2011, pp. 108 ff.

words, the direction of change in population was not the sole determinant. As shall be seen below, equally important were local balance of power and state's intervention.

Long before deportation and population exchange, the state initiated a course of action which facilitated a transfer of ownership from Armenians to Muslims. S.H. Astourian shows that in Eastern Anatolia this was a double-sided process involving both usurpation and confiscation. On the one hand, the state remained reluctant to intervene in inter-ethnic conflicts between Kurdish tribes and the sedentary Armenian population, as a result of which it ended up condoning land usurpations perpetrated against Armenians. On the other hand, lands of Armenian peasants were confiscated due to overdue taxes at the same time as the *Agricultural Bank* seized family plots in return for unpaid loans. In the case of confiscation, Astourian continues, state's aim was to re-settle Muslim refugees on these very lands.<sup>239</sup> On reading this account, one gets the impression that the dispossession of the Armenian peasantry was specifically a demographic policy. In other words, the contention in eastern Anatolia was not about land ownership *per se*; it was not a matter issuing out of land scarcity. It is quite remarkable that "[r]efugees were settled on Armenian lands even when uncultivated lands were available in the same region."<sup>240</sup> That is to say, uprooting of the Armenian peasantry was yet another way to alter the demographic makeup of the realm.

The events of 1915 are extremely difficult to study not the least because is impossible to ascertain how much property was seized in Eastern Anatolia, which is due to lack of data and/or inaccessibility of records.<sup>241</sup> In fact, more or less the same is true for lands abandoned by departing Greeks. Keyder, though, estimates that Greek properties

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<sup>239</sup> Astourian, 2011, pp. 58-67.

<sup>240</sup> Astourian, 2011, p. 66 n. 44.

<sup>241</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 72.

amounted to about one sixth of all cultivable land in Western Anatolia.<sup>242</sup> This is the most that could be said given the fact that both the number of people who fled or were deported as well as the size of their holdings is open to debate.

The dearth of knowledge concerning appropriation of non-Muslim lands after population exchange is not as acute, though. Çomu's study on post-*mübadele* Adana, *The Exchange of Populations and Adana, 1830-1927*, illuminates many aspects of this process. An interesting point regards the method of selection of settlement zones. Turkish government decided on ten zones for settlement throughout Turkey. The first criteria employed here was the availability of abandoned properties. So, prior to the arrival of *mübadils*, the government set out to determine the number of abandoned estates in different localities. Secondly, the government chose areas where there were adequate transportation facilities. More specifically, areas selected were close to the ports at which migrants would arrive.<sup>243</sup> Adana was one of the settlement zones. Çomu shows that incoming Muslims from Crete and Alasonia were given dwellings in the city center as well as farms and vineyards in its environs.<sup>244</sup> Given the numbers Çomu cites, it is fair to say that immigrants came to own very modest family plots. In Adana, the 8500-*dönüm* estate of a certain İsakyan was distributed among 90 immigrant families.<sup>245</sup> Each family, then, received a little below 10 *dönüms*.

Let us go back to 1915 and start with the events following the deportation. This constitutes a field in which there unfortunately are very few studies. Üngör and Polatel's *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* stands alone as a comprehensive study on confiscation and distribution of Armenian properties in the

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<sup>242</sup> Keyder, 1981, p. 23.

<sup>243</sup> Çomu, 2011, pp. 84-8.

<sup>244</sup> Çomu, 2011, pp. 95-8.

<sup>245</sup> Çomu, 2011, p. 103.

provinces of Adana and Diyarbakır. Üngör and Polatel show that the process of “colonization” started in the immediate wake of deportation and confiscation of Armenian property. The administrative agency endowed with the missions of deportation and settlement, *İskân-ı Aşâir ve Muhacirîn Müdüriyeti* (Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants)<sup>246</sup>, set the procedures for deportation and settlement in its “Guidelines for the Distribution of Property and Land to Refugees”<sup>247</sup> One important rule was laid out as equity between Turks.<sup>248</sup> Given the number of refugees flooding into the Empire, this is anything but unexpected. It seems that the concern with equity was especially strong in places like Adana and Diyarbakır because quite a number of Balkan refugees were settled in abandoned Armenian villages in these two provinces.<sup>249</sup>

As noted above, abandoned properties either passed to private persons or were rendered state property. Üngör and Polatel’s study demonstrates the extent of state’s appropriation of Armenian property in Diyarbakır and Adana. Although civil and military institutions got to own many of the abandoned properties<sup>250</sup>, most of what state appropriated seems to have been buildings. It then makes sense to suggest that landed property largely fell into the possession of private individuals.<sup>251</sup> As for the people who received Armenian property in Adana and Diyarbakır, Üngör and Polatel write they fall into three distinct

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<sup>246</sup> This agency was later named *Aşâir ve Muhacirîn Müdüriyet-i Umûmiyesi* (General Directorate for Tribes and Immigrants).

<sup>247</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 81.

<sup>248</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 81.

<sup>249</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, pp. 113-4, 145-6.

<sup>250</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 82.

<sup>251</sup> There certainly were lands which were not distributed to individuals at least for some time. For example, Boran mentions a former Greek estate on Manisa plain which was turned into a state farm (Boran, 1992, p. 39). Another interesting case comes from Adana. There some land was granted to the local *Turkish Heart* organizations (Üngör and Polatel, 2011, pp. 125-6).

categories. These are, first, Muslim settlers (including both emigrants and refugees), second, the nascent bourgeoisie, and, finally the CUP elite.<sup>252</sup>

As is obvious from the above account, there were too many claimants on abandoned property, the whole process turned out to be extremely contentious. Appropriation of abandoned properties by local notables was regarded as abhorrent<sup>253</sup>; nonetheless, it was the bureaucrats who were at the center of many accusations of embezzlement. Üngör and Polatel note that settled refugees issued numerous complaints against the local government officials and *müteğallibe*, who unjustly appropriated abandoned properties in Adana.<sup>254</sup> Nonetheless, the Diyarbakır province appears to have been a more suited example of an administration of corrupt officials who embezzled Armenian property at the expense of settlers. Üngör and Polatel write that the governor, Mehmed Reşit, was at the top of this organization, which included his (fellow Circassian) *Special Operations* militias, lower-ranking officials, and collaborating local notables. These men thereby developed into a war rich.<sup>255</sup> Apparently, central government attempted put an end to this state of affairs – but to no avail.<sup>256</sup> The impression which is likely to arise from Üngör and Polatel’s account is that officials and notables were not as interested in land as they were in mansions, jewelry, antiques or carpets.

Çomu’s study demonstrates that similar problems were observed in post-*mübadele* Adana. *Mübadele İmar ve İskan Vekaleti* (MİİV) had command over abandoned properties to be distributed to the migrants. Given the number of complaints, illegal occupation by third

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<sup>252</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, pp. 79-82.

<sup>253</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 81.

<sup>254</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 126.

<sup>255</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, pp. 138, 146-8.

<sup>256</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 143.

parties of such properties must have been quite widespread.<sup>257</sup> As for the illegal occupiers, these were government officials of all sorts including the police. MİİV ordered evacuation more than once, but occupiers resisted.<sup>258</sup> It is significant that Çomu talks about “*residences* under occupation”, which, again, means that we are talking houses – not landed properties.

This is not to deny that there were rival claims on lands abandoned by non-Muslim. In fact, things got more complicated following the end of the world war. After the collapse of Unionist rule in İstanbul, Armenian and Ottoman Greeks were allowed to return home and claim their properties. Doğan Avcıoğlu vividly narrates how the contestation over abandoned property during the armistice period turned into a “blood feud” between Armenian returnees Muslim refugees who came into possession of their lands.<sup>259</sup> But even without vengeful returnees, this was already a bleak picture. Thus Kıray writes that the 1920s brought a “vital struggle for land” in Adana province.<sup>260</sup> Everywhere in Anatolia abandoned land was up for grabs. But it might well be argued that nowhere else in Anatolia was struggle for land as harsh as it was in Adana. In fact, Keyder implies that in many localities, abandoned land was a non-issue because open, uncultivated fields were plentiful.<sup>261</sup>

There is some merit in looking at the case of Adana more closely. There is no exact data as to the amount of landed property abandoned by non-Muslims; Hinderink and Kıray write that it was “several hundred thousand *dönüms* of land.”<sup>262</sup> This seems to be a

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<sup>257</sup> Çomu, 2011, pp. 115-7.

<sup>258</sup> Çomu, 2011, p. 116.

<sup>259</sup> Avcıoğlu, 1974, pp. 1170-1.

<sup>260</sup> Kıray, 1974, p. 181.

<sup>261</sup> Keyder, 1981, p. 23.

<sup>262</sup> Hinderink and Kıray, 1970, p. 18.

plausible estimation given the fact Adana was home to many Armenian landlords as well as smallholders of Armenian descent. The development of export-oriented cotton production towards the end of the previous century had made land a precious commodity in Adana. Now, with vast areas lying bare without legal owners, commoners of all sorts rushed to claim some land:

Peasant farmers chipped off parts of former estates adjoining their land. Turkish immigrants from Greece occupied properties of Armenians and became farmers in this region after a difficult period of adjustment. Former *ortakçıs*, migrant workers, and poor people from the cities also took advantage of the chaotic times and established themselves without license for a time as squatters on “free land.”<sup>263</sup>

However, it was not the smallholders who got the lion’s share of abandoned lands. In fact, appropriation of abandoned estates eventually contributed to the emergence of a new class of landlords. This parvenu class was composed of members of notable Adana families as well as Adana MPs. These people managed to acquire title deeds for lands which had been abandoned by Ottoman Armenians. This they did thanks to their connections to the republican regime.<sup>264</sup> This was at a time when state authority was finally re-constituted in Adana; and reconstitution of state authority signaled the end of an era of disarray during which peasant farmers came to have *de facto* access to landed properties of Armenian deportees. What became of these people then? They were not evicted, but reduced to a sharecropping status by the new legal owners of the lands which the former tilled.<sup>265</sup>

It is necessary to recall that Adana was a quite unique locality around 1915-1923. Firstly, unlike many other parts of Anatolia, land was scarce relative to population. Marshy areas aside, there probably were very few productive lands that could be reclaimed. Consequently, it should not come as a surprise that estates abandoned by Armenians

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<sup>263</sup> Hinderink and Kıray, 1970, pp. 18-9.

<sup>264</sup> Hinderink and Kıray, 1970, p. 18-9; Kıray, 1974, p. 181.

<sup>265</sup> Hinderink and Kıray, 1970, p. 19; Kıray, 1974, p. 182.

became the most sought-for item in town's economy. In addition, Adana was a large ownership area, and, therefore, there already were people with power and influence who could lay claim to abandoned estates. This, presumably, was not the case in much of Anatolia where villages were communities of smallholders. Events should have turned out rather differently in most Anatolian localities. For instance, Keyder purports that land left behind by non-Muslim minorities reverted "mostly to the control of the Moslem *small peasantry* in the same locality."<sup>266</sup> Take the case of Zeytun, a mountain town in Southern Anatolia where a recalcitrant Armenian population lived. Precisely because of this, deportation order was carried out quite early in 1915 in Zeytun.<sup>267</sup> Once the entire Armenian population was deported, Balkan *muhacirs* settled in Zeytun. Hence all lands were granted to *muhacirs*, and local landowners around the town did not benefit from redistribution of land.<sup>268</sup>

Furthermore, it could well be argued that state's involvement in the process of appropriation of non-Muslim properties assured a more egalitarian distribution than would otherwise have been possible. Hence Keyder writes: "[A]lthough the mode of appropriation of these lands varied from one locality to another, one concern was constant: those who had lost their family members in the wars (i.e. widows, orphans) and those whom the community judged to be needy, always received some land."<sup>269</sup>

Nonetheless, one encounters a good deal of evidence of locally influential persons appropriating abandoned lands at the expense of others in a number of Anatolian towns and villages. For example, Stirling speaks of a certain Kara Osman in the village Elbaşı in Kayseri, who climbed the social ladder rather fastly. Kara Osman's fate changed, he

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<sup>266</sup> Keyder, 1983a, p. 139, emphasis added.

<sup>267</sup> Bloxham, 2005, pp. 80-2.

<sup>268</sup> Bloxham, 2005, pp. 82, 89.

<sup>269</sup> Keyder, 1983a, p. 140.

writes, as he appropriated 1000 *dönüms* of a nearby village emptied after *mübadele*.<sup>270</sup> One wonders whether emigrants from Greece were not settled in this central Anatolian village. For, if there had been settlement, however powerful he might have been, it would have been quite difficult for a villager to appropriate such a large portion of village land.

Üngör and Polatel make use of Damar Arıkoğlu's memoirs, published in 1961, to illustrate how Armenian property was usurped by private persons during the transition from the empire to the republic.<sup>271</sup> Arıkoğlu, who was an Adana notable and a CUP/RPP representative for Adana, himself admits to having appropriated large tracks of land during World War I.<sup>272</sup>

Village monographs and field studies involve some other interesting cases as well. Yalman's study on the Diyarbakır region is one of such resources which contain valuable anecdotes. Apparently, some properties changed hands *before* the departure of Armenians. Yalman mentions the case of Şinasi Bey of Diyarbakır, who came to possess a large estate circa 1915. Yalman's oral history reveals that this Şinasi Bey sheltered an Armenian landowning family during the catastrophe of 1915 and bought their land, which amounted to a whole village, in a very lucrative deal.<sup>273</sup>

Another original piece of information comes from Boran's study of the villages of the Manisa plain. Boran notes that some of the land that was left behind by Ottoman Greeks was distributed to native villagers in the early 1930s. Unfortunately, the reason as to why distribution of abandoned land was retarded by a decade is not stated.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Stirling, 1965, pp. 145-6.

<sup>271</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, pp. 121, 124-5.

<sup>272</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 125.

<sup>273</sup> Yalman, 1971, p. 205.

<sup>274</sup> Boran, 1992, pp. 38-9.

On the other hand, there is some other information contained in Boran's study which sheds light on how movements of population in general affected property relations on land in the 1920s and early 1930s. First, Boran mentions one instance in which an estate which used to belong to an Ottoman Greek was appropriated by an urban dignitary who held administrative office in Manisa.<sup>275</sup> So, it is seen once again that proximity to the new regime was crucial for triumphing over others in the 1920s' scramble for land. Second, Manisa villagers were not entirely welcoming hosts as they resented the fact that village pastures were granted to Balkan refugees, and later, to Kurdish deportees.<sup>276</sup> Finally, Boran notes in passing that Balkan refugees bought land from natives of the Manisa plain.<sup>277</sup> State's distribution of land, then, was not the sole way of obtaining property for incoming Muslims. It is, in fact, possible here to make a statement that goes beyond Manisa; for Üngör and Polatel's study on Adana and Diyarbakır shows that wealthy Balkan refugees were not entitled to a share of Armenian property.<sup>278</sup> It could be that, in making this decision, the state wanted to guarantee an equitable distribution of abandoned property and preclude a possible concentration of land.

Illuminating and thought-provoking as these cases may be, it is nevertheless necessary to try to discover a pattern in the way abandoned lands were appropriated in different localities. Keyder hints at a very interesting angle as he compares the way non-Muslim properties were seized and/or distributed in Thrace on the one hand and in the Aegean littoral on the other. The argument runs as follows. Thrace was not one of the war zones so that Greeks left only with population exchange whereas Western Anatolia was the battleground upon which Greek-Turkish war was fought. Naturally, Greeks of Western

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<sup>275</sup> Boran, 1992, p. 38.

<sup>276</sup> Boran, 1992, p. 155.

<sup>277</sup> Boran, 1992, pp. 39, 42.

<sup>278</sup> Üngör and Polatel, 2011, p. 81.

Anatolia departed *before* population exchange, and this left non-Muslim properties without owners. Under conditions of war, local men of power and influence were in a position to snatch abandoned lands, and this they did. In Thrace, however, lands were abandoned at a time when republican authority was already in place. As a result, distribution of land was done “in a relatively orderly fashion” with much fewer prior appropriation.<sup>279</sup> Then, it is reasonable to suggest that forceful seizure of fields were much more common in war zones, and that, in such localities, concentration of ownership happened before *mübadele* and state’s distribution of abandoned properties.

### **3.2. Taxation of the Agricultural Sector**

The question to be dealt with in this section pertains to the linkage between taxation and changes in property relations in the countryside. Is it possible to say that state’s taxation policies affected any changes in land ownership? Generally speaking, taxation might affect land ownership in a number of ways. For example, if small peasants are heavily burdened by taxation, they might get indebted and eventually lose their plots. Conversely, if state levies, say, a progressive land tax, this punishes large owners who might choose to sell part of their holdings. So the question is whether taxation policy of the Republic brought about such dramatic changes.

The abolition of the tithe was the earliest and most important fiscal measure the new Turkish state adopted. Ottoman tithe, that is, *aşar* had passed from the Empire to the Republic, and the new government collected *aşar* at 12.5% until it was abrogated in 1925.<sup>280</sup> The abolition of the tithe was brought to the agenda for the first time at the İzmir Economic Congress of 1923, which was convened before the promulgation of the Republic. In the actual fact, abolition of the *aşar* was one of the most celebrated issues

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<sup>279</sup> Keyder, 1981, pp. 22-3.

<sup>280</sup> Özbek, 1998, p. 46.

that emerged from the congress. This was hardly surprising given the composition of the 1923 convention. Delegates to the İzmir Economic Congress was selected in each district on the principle of occupational representation. Selection process favored the agricultural sector; therefore, in İzmir, agricultural delegates formed the largest group.<sup>281</sup> The agriculture section of the congress made a number of policy recommendations, the foremost of which was the abolition of the tithe.<sup>282</sup> Apparently, the delegates to the Congress disagreed solely on one matter: what to be done after the abolition of the tithe. The agriculture section pertinaciously argued that peasants were too poor to be burdened by new taxes, whereas industry and commerce sections proposed that a “modest” *aşar* be introduced to replace the traditional tithe.<sup>283</sup>

Parliamentary discussions on the subject were fairly routine. It appears that abolishing the tithe was regarded as an exigency by all so much so that parliamentary deliberations focused on ways to recoup loss of revenue that would inevitably incur.<sup>284</sup> The proposal to abolish *aşar* went uncontested probably because this was perceived as a regime question. That is to say, the new political cadre was convinced of the need to financially relieve the peasantry in order to garner their support for the republican regime. This certainly should be the reason why the law abolishing the tithe was hastily brought to the parliamentary floor with little prior committee work.<sup>285</sup> Some other political considerations might have also played their part in creating such a sense of urgency. For instance, Özbek purports that “escalating discontent” in the Kurdish provinces fed into the process.<sup>286</sup> Arıcanlı looks at the matter from a different angle. In his account, the decision to abolish *aşar* had a lot

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<sup>281</sup> Finefrock, 1981, pp. 376-81.

<sup>282</sup> Finefrock, 1981, p. 20.

<sup>283</sup> Ökçün, 1971, pp. 394-5.

<sup>284</sup> See Silier, 1981, pp. 35-7.

<sup>285</sup> Özbek, 1998, p. 46.

<sup>286</sup> Özbek, 1998, p. 46.

to do with state's endeavor to garner the support of "local powers". The state, he writes, renounced its share of the peasant surplus in favor of local claimants, i.e. large owners, creditors and commercial intermediaries.<sup>287</sup>

One way or the other, the abolition of *aşar* was certainly a political decision; for it made little sense as fiscal policy. For one thing, in abolishing *aşar*, the state let go a vital monetary resource. Suffice it to say that close to a quarter of state revenues came from *aşar* dues in 1924.<sup>288</sup> The following year, however, government's budget deficit tripled as a consequence of loss of *aşar* revenue.<sup>289</sup> On the other hand, the new Republican cadre could have streamlined *aşar* without abolishing it altogether. Had they done so, it would have been possible to create a pool of agricultural resources and inputs readily available for urban industries. Furthermore, if *aşar* had been improved into a nominal tax, this would have brought about a swifter monetization of agriculture, thus turning the rural areas into a market for industrial goods. As a result of these two effects, a modernized *aşar* could have served as a vehicle for capital accumulation.<sup>290</sup>

On the other hand, the abolition of *aşar* helped commercialize the middle peasants. It did so, first, because peasant now had a surplus to sell. Secondly, he now needed cash money to pay the new monetized taxes which replaced *aşar*.<sup>291</sup>

The Turkish state adopted a number of measures to compensate the loss of *aşar* revenue. First, a short-lived *Toprak Mahsülleri Vergisi* (Soil Products Tax) was levied on marketed

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<sup>287</sup> Arıcanlı, 1991, p. 129.

<sup>288</sup> Özbek, 1998, p. 46.

<sup>289</sup> Önder, 1988, p. 119.

<sup>290</sup> Önder, 1999, pp. 71-3.

<sup>291</sup> Keyder, 1981, pp. 16, 19; Silier, 1981, p. 40.

produce with varying rates for grains and cash crops.<sup>292</sup> Secondly, the rate of the land tax was substantially increased.<sup>293</sup> Land tax, which predated the Republic, was a flat-rate tax on wealth which could have generated some sizable revenue. The problem was not only that the last assessment was done in 1915; the difficulty was actually confounded as landed properties were undervalued at that time.<sup>294</sup> Subsequently, land tax garnered only meager revenue, which amounted to 2.5% of government income between 1925 and 1935.<sup>295</sup> In the face of a gradual rise in general prices, the land tax was further eroded in time owing to the absence of updated valuations.<sup>296</sup>

It goes without saying that the land tax and Soil Products Tax were nowhere near countering the negative financial effect of the abolition of *aşar*. However, there were two more direct taxes which grew in importance after 1925. These were the animals' tax and the road tax. Similar to land tax, animals' tax was an Ottoman tax which was revised after the abolition of the tithe. In this case, however, the improved tax did reap considerable revenue. Önder shows that about 5-6% of budgetary income came from a livestock tax between 1925 and 1940.<sup>297</sup> It also needs to be stated that the animals' tax was not a fixed proportion of income earned from livestock. Instead, animals were taxed per head.<sup>298</sup> According to Silier, the animal tax was therefore a huge burden on poor peasants who had a few animals. Otherwise put, for Silier, animal tax discriminated in favor of well-to-do peasants with herds.<sup>299</sup> On the other hand, Stirling settles for arguing that the amount of

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<sup>292</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 38.

<sup>293</sup> Önder, 1988, p. 126; Silier, 1981, p. 37.

<sup>294</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 37.

<sup>295</sup> Önder, 1988, p. 126.

<sup>296</sup> Kaldor, 1981-82, p. 92 n.2.

<sup>297</sup> Önder, 1988, p. 125.

<sup>298</sup> Ergüder, 1970, p. 72; Keyder, 1981, p.34; Silier, 1981, p. 35.

<sup>299</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 35.

animals' tax paid by villagers was "considerable".<sup>300</sup> In any case, the rate of livestock tax was progressively reduced from 1931 onward to be finally repealed in 1961.<sup>301</sup> The last direct tax to note is the road tax, which was levied on adult male population and paid either in money or in construction labor. Stirling writes that monetary equivalent of construction labor was rather high for poor peasants, and therefore, that road tax remained the most unpopular of Republican taxes until it was abolished in 1952.<sup>302</sup>

Hence, speaking of the late 1940s, Stirling mentions three separate taxes paid by peasants, namely, land tax, animal tax and road tax. He writes that the last of these, the road tax, was in effect a poll tax.<sup>303</sup> There is, however, another tax that should be mentioned. This is the so-called *salma*, a sort of head-tax levied in a village. *Salma* was legislated with the Village Law of 1924. Boran's study of Manisa villages in the early 1940s provides information as to how this tax was collected. *Salma* was not flat-tax; it was in village council's discretion to decide the amount to be paid by each household. The poorest households could be exempted from paying *salma*, again, by a decision of the village council.<sup>304</sup>

This exposé has so far been limited to *direct* taxes collected by the new state. There also were a number of *indirect* taxes. It was actually the latter which came to generate substantial source of income for the treasury.<sup>305</sup> The indirect taxes in question were certain consumption and transaction taxes, the revenues from which amounted to as high as one-

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<sup>300</sup> Stirling, 1965, p. 269.

<sup>301</sup> Ergüder, 1970, p. 72.

<sup>302</sup> Stirling, 1965, p. 75.

<sup>303</sup> Stirling, 1965, pp. 75, 269.

<sup>304</sup> Boran, 1992, pp. 125-6, 143.

<sup>305</sup> Keyder, 1981, p.34; Özbek, 1998, p. 46.

fifth of all budgetary income in 1926.<sup>306</sup> Naturally, these taxes were much harder to evade on the part of the peasants, who had to buy sugar, salt or gas oil. Yet it should not be forgotten that the weight of the new indirect taxes fell on the urban population as well. Urban population was thus put under financial burden so that a new source of revenue would be engendered for the state. Therefore, there is no harm in asserting that the burden of taxation shifted from rural areas to towns where the majority of consumers lived.<sup>307</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact stands that tax burden on the agricultural sector was gradually reduced during the decades following the promulgation of the Republic. Ziya Gökalp Mülayim calculates that in 1903 42% of all tax revenues came from direct taxes paid by the agricultural sector whereas this proportion dropped to a mere 3% in 1953.<sup>308</sup> As Önder and Özbek rightly point out, the abolition of *aşar* was a watershed; from then on, it was the working population of the cities (consumers) that bore the brunt of taxation.<sup>309</sup> Otherwise put, the rural sector was financially relieved.

There was one exception to this general course, however, and that was the Soil Products Tax of World War II years. This new in-kind tax was introduced by the government in June 1943 to finance military mobilization, and was instantly resented. From the point of view of peasants, this was nothing but the return of the tithe.<sup>310</sup> The amount of tax to be delivered by the peasants was determined on the basis of government officials' estimates as to the volume of the harvest. The problem was that the assessment was done prematurely, quite before the harvest, as a result of which actual yields rarely matched the

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<sup>306</sup> Boratav, 1988, pp. 41-2; Keyder, 1981, p.34; Önder, 1988, p. 131; Silier, 1981, p. 39.

<sup>307</sup> Boratav, 1988, p. 42.

<sup>308</sup> Cited in Ergüder, 1970, p. 63 n. 1.

<sup>309</sup> Önder, 1988, p. 131; Özbek, 1998, p. 46.

<sup>310</sup> Pamuk, 1991, p. 137.

estimates. Even if the yields turned out low, however, the peasant had to pay the pre-determined amount.<sup>311</sup>

Now it is time to consider whether taxation had any transformative effect on land tenure during the early Republic. It has been demonstrated above that the overall tax burden on the peasantry was reduced to a point where the agricultural sector became *the* under-taxed sector of the Turkish economy. Hence it is safe to assume that taxation did not lead to expropriation of poor peasants on a widespread basis.

There are two caveats, however. Firstly, the world crisis of the 1929 severely disturbed life in the Turkish countryside. Agricultural prices collapsed, which threatened peasant livelihood. Late 1920s and early 1930s were indeed hard times for peasants, and their troubles were alleviated only with advent of government's wheat purchase program. Now it is possible that during this short interval many peasants had to borrow to weather the storm, and later, defaulted on their debts. According to Silier, this state of affairs sometimes resulted in dispossession as peasants had to sell their land to clear their debts.<sup>312</sup> There are no statistical data to support this assertion; nonetheless, it does make sense. Yet dispossession of this sort had little to do with taxation; rather it was about cycles of world economy – a topic which will be dealt towards the end of this chapter in more detail.

The second caveat regards the Soil Products Tax of war years. As pointed out above, this tax brought a heavy burden on the agricultural sector, which could have issued in piling debts for peasants. Between 1943 and 1946, therefore, there might have been foreclosures and expropriation of small peasants. The question is: how common was that? This is a difficult issue to grapple with for the simple reason that there is no agricultural census to rely on when studying this period. In the absence of aggregate data, it is once again useful

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<sup>311</sup> Ergüder, 1970, pp. 74-6.

<sup>312</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 40.

to take a look at village monographs. Kıray's study of a number of Çukurova villages makes it clear that more land was sold during war years than what was usual. Yet Kıray does not cite taxation as the reason. Instead, she associates this phenomenon with military conscription. As adult men were under arms, many villagers had no choice but sell their plots because they could not till the land due to lack of manpower. That is, they had to sell because they had no other means of livelihood, but they needed cash to survive.<sup>313</sup> It is not really surprising that in Çukurova, where land already was scarce and high-priced even before 1950, there was an increase in land sales. But for the rest of Turkey, the situation should not have been so similar. Even though there are no records, it is tenable to say at least that such a development was not as common as it was in Çukurova.

All this is to say that there are grounds to rule out the scenario of dispossession due to heavy taxation. Unfortunately it is impossible to ascertain the extent to which this reasoning is correct, because, as noted many times, people working in this field are faced with a dearth of reliable data either on taxation or changes in ownership. One possible objection to this line reasoning could be that the phenomenon of under-taxation might have triggered land concentration. That is to say, if agricultural income and/or wealth remained under-taxed, then there must have been ample opportunity for farmers producing for the market to enlarge their holdings. For instance, in Kıray's previously mentioned study, it was during World War II years that landlords of Adana accumulated sufficient capital to shift to cotton monoculture.<sup>314</sup> Large owners of Çukurova could accumulate notwithstanding the Soil Produce Tax, because prices of cereals rose sharply due to cereal shortages during war, which opened the door to speculation and profiteering.<sup>315</sup> Again, however, it is difficult to say how common this was outside Adana. Nevertheless, there is no harm in assuming that the phenomenon of under-taxation might have facilitated

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<sup>313</sup> Kıray, 1974, p. 191.

<sup>314</sup> Kıray, 1974, p. 193.

<sup>315</sup> Kıray, 1974, p. 193; Pamuk, 1991, p. 131.

accumulation and land concentration for larger owners who could take advantage of market prices. But such developments could only occur when and where agriculture was a profitable business.

Finally, it should be clear that, under condition of land abundance, concentration of holdings need not be through expropriation of poorer peasants. To clarify, if it were the case that middle or large farmers used their market profits to reclaim new land, then this would be land concentration without expropriation. Yet there seems to have been certain technical obstacles to even this type of land concentration. As will be discussed below in the section on the 1950s' developments, Turkish agriculture was bound to remain stagnant until these obstacles were overcome. Suffice it to say for now that these obstacles, *inter alia*, included low agricultural prices and scarcity of man-power as well as animal-power.

### **3.3. Agricultural Policies**

Agricultural production, which had been adversely affected by wars and population movements, was yet to recover in the 1920s. On the other hand, investment in agriculture held out rewards in the early days of the Republic as international terms of trade were in favor of agricultural commodities during the 1920s.<sup>316</sup> A regime of private property on land, the early development of which was discussed in the previous chapter, was not fully established, though. Many acts of the new state pertained to this problem. Hence the 1924 Constitution, the Cadastre Law and the Civil Code of 1926 entrenched the rights of titleholders over land. Not only was private property now the rule; nationalization was rendered a cumbersome business as well.<sup>317</sup> Furthermore, the parliament passed a law (Law No. 1515) in 1929, according to which all Ottoman papers conferring usufruct rights over specific plots of land were accepted as legitimate basis for property claims over land.

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<sup>316</sup> Bulutay et al., 1974, pp. 70-80; Margulies ve Yıldızoğlu, 1987, p. 272.

<sup>317</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 17; Tezel, 1994, p. 371.

Thus if a family had a paper of this sort showing they had usufruct, they could register the said land in their own name.<sup>318</sup>

Government policies in the 1920s encouraged export agriculture. At a time when peasant production was just recovering from decades of war to a subsistence level, a policy of encouraging export-oriented agriculture was tantamount to supporting large owners who produced for international markets. As part of this policy, the government fostered mechanization on commercial farms, most of which were located on the Aegean and Mediterranean littorals. Hence about 2000 tractors were imported – a development which led to some land reclamation.<sup>319</sup> Yet, this first wave of reclamations was not far-flung at all. Expansion of cultivated land was bound to remain limited because it was mechanized large owners, a really small group in the 1920s, who broke new land. The situation did not change in the following decade either, as cultivated land barely rose from 4.86% of the total area in 1924 to 12.25% in 1940.<sup>320</sup> The real expansion of land under cultivation had to await the late 1940s and widespread agricultural mechanization.

Let us take a closer look at government agricultural policies in the 1920s. Silier offers a succinct portrayal of 1920s' policies. The government, she writes, aimed to increase the area under cultivation by supporting larger farmers. This was achieved through a number of measures. One such measure was the exemption from military service of large owners and some of their employees. Hence a 1924 law exempted large farmers and their employees from military conscription. The number of employees to be exempted depended on the acreage cultivated as well as the number of tractors and animals owned.<sup>321</sup> Secondly, certain inputs (e.g. chemicals and fuel) used in agricultural production were

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<sup>318</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 371.

<sup>319</sup> Margulies ve Yıldızoğlu, 1987, p. 272; Silier, 1981, p. 19.

<sup>320</sup> Margulies ve Yıldızoğlu, 1987, p. 274.

<sup>321</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 19. It appears that at least 500 decares were required for exemption, which freed the land owner and two employees.

exempted from import dues.<sup>322</sup> Finally, government-owned tractors were leased to large owners at below market prices.<sup>323</sup>

Keyder touches upon an important peculiarity of 1920s' policies. Prior to the 1930s, he writes, government strived to support commercialized agriculture; transfer of surplus from the countryside was just a secondary goal. This, he continues, could be observed in the way internal prices (i.e. terms of trade) closely followed global prices. In other words, government did really not manipulate internal prices to pump surplus out of the agricultural sector.<sup>324</sup>

This was to change very quickly as the Turkish state stepped in to regulate the agricultural market in the early 1930s. The core of the new policy was a wheat purchase scheme, which came with some institutional innovation. When wheat procurement commenced with the passing of Wheat Protection Law (Law No. 2056) in 1932, it was the Agricultural Bank (*Ziraat Bankası*) which organized the purchases. In 1938, an Office for Soil Products (*Toprak Mahsulleri Ofisi* or *TMO*) was founded specifically for this job.

The wheat purchase scheme was perfectly compatible with the over-all government policy in the 1930s. After all, this was the decade when the Turkish state made a definite move to take command of the main arteries of the economy. That is to say, state monopoly of wheat trade sat very well with the new étatist orientation.

State's purchase program was a response to the so-called wheat crisis. The early 1930s were marked by a full-blown agricultural crisis as wheat prices in the Turkish market

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<sup>322</sup> Silier, 1981, pp. 23-4.

<sup>323</sup> Silier, 1981, pp. 20-1.

<sup>324</sup> Keyder, 1981, pp. 35-6, 44.

declined very sharply in tandem with world prices.<sup>325</sup> Hence in devising a purchase scheme the government wanted, above all, to stabilize wheat prices.<sup>326</sup> Regulation of prices required that commercial intermediaries be replaced since fixing of prices would not work unless the state was the sole buyer. Otherwise put, the state had to stand in for grain merchants. At first, however, the state did not have the necessary infrastructure to purchase and store grain, but a dense network of purchasing stations was gradually built. Many of these stations were situated in the Anatolian interior where wheat production was concentrated.<sup>327</sup>

Particularly essential from the point of view of the government was controlling the seasonal fluctuation of wheat prices. With the crisis, prices took a plunge each year at harvest time, and peasants had no choice but sell their produce at whatever price they were offered. Thanks to the new state purchase scheme, wheat-producing peasants were now assured with a politically-determined price for their produce.<sup>328</sup>

On the other hand, a subordinate goal associated with wheat procurement was to bolster the purchasing power of small and middle peasants so as to help create an internal market for the newly-erected import-substituting industries.<sup>329</sup> More importantly, wheat purchase was the primary mechanism through which surplus was transferred out of the agricultural sector to feed urban industries<sup>330</sup> – a mechanism, Keyder argues, which had been absent in the 1920s. Therefore, import-substituting state industries would have remained a dream had it not been for resources generated by the wheat purchase scheme.

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<sup>325</sup> Özbek, 2003, pp. 226-9.

<sup>326</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 80.

<sup>327</sup> Özbek, 2003, p. 230.

<sup>328</sup> Özbek, 2003, p. 230.

<sup>329</sup> Silier, 1981, pp. 78-9.

<sup>330</sup> Boratav, 1988, pp. 61-2.

In their joint article, F. Birtek and Ç. Keyder<sup>331</sup> throw an interesting light on this aspect of the 1930s' policies. Actually, theirs is an account of the alternation of agricultural policies during early decades of the Republic. It is worthwhile to cite their interpretation in some detail. The gist of the argument is that shifts in agricultural policies were underlain by changing alliances the state built with rural classes. Thus they argue that up until 1930 there was an alliance between the state and large export-oriented farmers, who benefited from both liberal trade policy and government's subsidizing tractors to increase output.<sup>332</sup> With the 1929 depression, however, large farmers ceased to be an indispensable ally for the government, since with the collapse of international trade this segment lost much of its power within the ruling coalition, a development that got even more accentuated as the government abandoned liberal trade policy to adopt protectionism.<sup>333</sup> Between the years 1930-1939, on the other hand, the government had the wheat-growing middle farmers as its "client group", whose production was bolstered by price supports within an autarchic economy.<sup>334</sup> In this relationship, the government functioned as the commercial intermediary via purchasing stations, thus by-passing private commercial capital.<sup>335</sup> The government, Birtek and Keyder argue, had a huge stake in expanding wheat production, because government's purchase of middle farmers' produce was the primary means of the transfer of agricultural surplus for nascent import-substituting industries.<sup>336</sup>

Now, it is an open question to what extent 1930s' wheat procurement scheme was a policy devised to support the peasantry, and to what extent it was a surplus-extracting

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<sup>331</sup> Birtek and Keyder, 1975.

<sup>332</sup> Birtek and Keyder, 1975, pp. 450-451.

<sup>333</sup> Birtek and Keyder, 1975, pp. 451-452.

<sup>334</sup> Birtek and Keyder, 1975, p. 454.

<sup>335</sup> Birtek and Keyder, 1975, p. 454.

<sup>336</sup> Birtek and Keyder, 1975, p. 455.

mechanism. As just noted, for Birtek and Keyder, this decade was a brief interval when the state allied with wheat-producing peasantry. Many others would not go so far as to say that this was an alliance. There is no gainsaying that peasants benefited from government's wheat purchase program – at least as long as the purchasing price was above the market price. The interesting thing is that agricultural prices finally started to improve on a global scale in 1936. Yet the Turkish government did not adjust *TMO* prices accordingly, as a result of which government-determined wheat prices came to lag behind actual market prices. This is to say that from 1936 onwards the program of wheat purchases began to go against the peasants.<sup>337</sup> Özbek purports that peasants were nonetheless better-off than they would otherwise have been, because *TMO* prices were in any case above harvest-time market prices, and peasants no longer had to sell their produce to private intermediaries when the price was at the lowest.<sup>338</sup> This is the picture one gets upon comparing government's purchasing prices with market prices. Second to be considered is inter-sectoral terms of trade. On this score, Pamuk contends that 1930s' program of wheat purchases involved only moderate support for producers as terms of trade remained against agriculture, which assured the transfer of resources from the countryside to industrial areas.<sup>339</sup>

If one wants to assess whether peasants received substantial support in the 1930s, it is crucial not to lose sight of the fact that government determined consumer prices as well. As Stirling aptly puts, villagers “receive[d] artificially high prices for their goods, but [were] forced to pay also artificially high prices for what they consume[d].”<sup>340</sup> Furthermore, Silier notes that at times, when they were financially stretched, peasants had to sell their produce before the harvest to commercial intermediaries at prices which were

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<sup>337</sup> Margulies ve Yıldızoğlu, 1987, pp. 274, 277; Özbek, 2003, pp. 231-2.

<sup>338</sup> Özbek, 2003, p. 234.

<sup>339</sup> Pamuk, 1991, p. 128.

<sup>340</sup> Stirling, 1965, p. 78.

below *TMO* prices. In such cases, it was these very merchants who benefited from state purchases because they later sold the wheat to *TMO*.<sup>341</sup> In addition, state's purchasing stations were not evenly distributed throughout the country; there were regions without a single station. In places like these, peasants still sold their harvest to the merchants, and merchants then took the produce to the nearest station and sold it with a profit since government prices were higher than what they themselves offered to peasants.<sup>342</sup>

On the whole, the balance-sheet of the 1930s might be said to have been in favor of the peasants. This is because non-intervention into the market for agricultural goods would have entailed more indebtedness and probably more bankruptcy on the part of small and middle peasants.

It is time to turn to World War II years. War-time policies had devastating effects on the Turkish countryside. The government experimented with a number of policies, each aimed at getting hold of agricultural resources. Government policies included re-introduction of in-kind taxation on the one hand, and forced purchases at below-market prices on the other.<sup>343</sup> Thus peasants were either forced to surrender part of their produce as tax or sell it to the government at pre-determined prices. This is also to say that, although there were profound increases in cereal prices during the war, most peasants could not really profit from rising prices.<sup>344</sup>

What is more important, cereal production actually declined during war World War II. The first factor responsible for the decline in production was the shortage of (male) labor, which issued from conscription. Then there was the declining availability of draft animals,

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<sup>341</sup> Silier, 1981, pp. 101-2.

<sup>342</sup> Özbek, 2003, pp. 234-5.

<sup>343</sup> Pamuk, 1991, pp. 132-7.

<sup>344</sup> Pamuk, 1991, p. 131.

which was not just a result of requisitioning, but also had to do with the difficulties with obtaining fodder at a time when there were cereal shortages. Finally, government policies of in-kind taxation and forced purchases made peasants withhold their output, which was reflected onto the statistics as a decline in production.<sup>345</sup> Yet it is not clear if there was a corresponding decrease in acreage under cultivation. It is highly probable that there was, given scarcity of labor and draft animals; but data we have is inconsistent.<sup>346</sup> Another factor which possibly contributed to the decline both in acreage under cultivation and total produce was scarcity of agricultural implements. During the war, peasants everywhere complained to the government about the unavailability and/or costliness of implements like ploughs and scythes. Government responded by founding an Agency for Farm Equipment (*Ziraî Donatım Kurumu*) to provide farmers with agricultural implements and machinery in 1943.<sup>347</sup>

### **3.4. The Beginnings of Change in Anatolian Countryside**

Although the 1950s are beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is necessary to briefly see how rural stasis finally gave way to substantial change in that decade as a result of a new set of agricultural policies.

After the war, in the late 1940s, the government was presented a number of reports on how to reform the Turkish economy. The so-called Thornburg report of 1949 is the epitome of such documents, which all were prepared under the auspices of either international institutions or American think-tanks. The Thornburg report is first and foremost an ardent critique of étatist policies. The document constantly stresses that if Turkey wants to attract foreign investment, she should start with dismantling the étatist

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<sup>345</sup> Pamuk, 1991, p. 130.

<sup>346</sup> Keyder and Pamuk, 1984, p. 60; Pamuk, 1991, p. 140, n. 8.

<sup>347</sup> Metinsoy, 2007, p. 138.

industrial structure. As for the policy recommendations contained in the report, one cannot fail to notice the emphasis on agriculture and infrastructural investments. The argument is that scarce resources should be diverted from over-ambitious heavy industry projects to agricultural investments and road building. On the other hand, the report in no way suggests that Turkey can do without any industries. According to the Thornburg document, Turkey does need industry, but the kind of industry she needs is light industry, which would produce food, simple agricultural implements, and some basic transportation tools.<sup>348</sup>

By the late 1940s, Turkey already embarked on a new developmental strategy – a strategy in line with U.S. advice. That is, change in policy came about before Democrat Party wrestled power away from Republican People's Party.<sup>349</sup> This means that there was an emerging consensus among statesmen and politicians regarding the path to be taken. The gist of this new consensus was an agriculture-led development strategy. Protectionism and autarkic policies were replaced by a liberal foreign trade policy and export-orientation.<sup>350</sup> As will be outlined later in this chapter, this new strategy involved incentives for farm mechanization as well as a favorable price policy for agricultural products, inflationary consequences of which will manifest themselves towards the end of the decade. Nevertheless, the strategy of agriculture-led growth would change the face of the Turkish countryside for good.

Prior to the late 1940s, tractors were a rare sight in most of Turkey. This was even true for highly commercialized areas specialized in cash crop production. A good example is the fertile Manisa plain where, as of 1941-42, there was not even a single tractor.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Thornburg et al., 1949, pp. 205-255.

<sup>349</sup> Boratav, 1988, pp. 76-8.

<sup>350</sup> Boratav, 1988, p. 74.

<sup>351</sup> Boran, 1992, p. 95.

Apparently, the same was also true for central plateau villages stretching along the railway between Ankara and Kırıkkale. İbrahim Yasa, who taught sociology at the Institute of Hasanoğlan between 1942 and 1946, penned one of the first village monographs in literature; his was on the Hasanoğlan village. According to his account, no household in the village Hasanoğlan owned a tractor in early 1940s.<sup>352</sup> This is an important piece of information since Hasanoğlan is very close to the capital city and to its quite considerable urban market. Mechanized agriculture was unknown in even such a village.

Widespread use of tractors had a huge impact on Turkey's agriculture. It did so because the coming of tractors solved the perennial problem of Turkish agriculture, i.e. labor shortage. Before that, labor scarcity was such that in many cases wealth was a function of manpower, as Stirling writes on inner Anatolian villages towards the end of the 1940s: "when cultivable land was still plentiful, wealth depended on manpower. (...) If a man had many sons, together they could plough fresh lands, and the head of the household would become wealthy."<sup>353</sup> What is more, before the introduction of tractors, "shortage of draft power" used to plague agriculture, especially in the semi-arid interior. Due to this very shortage, plowing could not be carried out on time, which affected the productivity of the land, and fallow land could not be taken care of. This problem too was finally overcome with tractors.<sup>354</sup>

The most striking feature of pre-1950 rural landscape was that vast tracks of productive land use to lie idle. To be more specific, before 1950, three-fourths of agricultural land was still pasture land.<sup>355</sup> Çukurova was probably the only area without new land to break

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<sup>352</sup> Yasa, 1957, pp. 70-1.

<sup>353</sup> Stirling, 1953, p. 38.

<sup>354</sup> Hirsch, 1970, p. 251 n. 39.

<sup>355</sup> Pine, 1952, p. 263.

in late 1940s.<sup>356</sup> Çukurova stood as an exception because the area had two features that were very peculiar. Firstly, mechanization in the Çukurova region started much earlier, in the 1920s, which promptly spurred land reclamations. Secondly, density of rural population was incomparably higher on this fertile plain, making land, not labor, the scarce factor of production.

Change came much more slowly to many other regions in Turkey, and mechanization<sup>357</sup> was the primary development which fueled change. Only then, with labor-saving technologies, was it possible to expand the land under cultivation and, thereby, increase production. Indeed, from late 1940s to mid-1950s, land under cultivation increased by around 50%.<sup>358</sup> If the year 1948 is taken roughly as the beginning of the change in policy, then it is seen that land under cultivation soared from 13,900,000 to 23,227,000 in 1960, which amounts to about 67 per cent increase.<sup>359</sup> This was tantamount to a one-third increase in land per rural dweller.<sup>360</sup> As for the increase in production, cereal output is the best indicator – assuming that most of the newly-reclaimed land was planted to cereals. Official statistics show that cereal output increased by a stunning 97.6 per cent between 1938 and 1966.<sup>361</sup> Once again, information contained in village monographs agrees with aggregate data. Upon revisiting village Hasanoğlan in 1966, Yasa writes that there now

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<sup>356</sup> Robinson, 1952, pp. 452, 460.

<sup>357</sup> Agricultural mechanization does not only refer to the use of tractors, for mechanical inputs imported from late 1940s on also included tractor ploughs, harvesters, combines, grain drill, motor pumps etc. But tractorization is much more important for the topic at hand due to its link to land reclamations.

<sup>358</sup> Keyder, 1983a, pp. 141-2; Keyder, 1993, p. 182.

<sup>359</sup> Calculated from official numbers cited in Kanbolat, 1963, p. 24.

<sup>360</sup> Keyder, 1993, p. 182.

<sup>361</sup> *Trends in Turkish Agriculture*, 1968, p. 35.

were 8 tractors.<sup>362</sup> Mechanization in Hasanoglan facilitated extensive land reclamations, as a result of which cultivated land “increased rather considerably.”<sup>363</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, government kept on distributing state-owned pastures to peasants in accordance with the Law for Providing Land to Farmers. Pastures, therefore, constantly shrunk. Yet, as numbers clearly show, the total amount of pastures distributed by the state is much smaller than the total amount of pastures opened to cultivation.<sup>364</sup> This is further testimony to the fact that farmers reclaimed pasture land in great proportions. In fact, in many cases, *Land Distribution Commissions* did little more than distributing title deeds for plots which had already been opened to cultivation by peasants themselves.<sup>365</sup> Otherwise put, redistribution of land took the form of *ex post facto* sanctioning of autonomous land reclamations.

Land reclamations continued throughout the 1950s. The process came to a definitive halt by the early 1960s as croplands could not be extended anymore.<sup>366</sup> But it would be an overstatement to assert that land reclamation followed directly from mechanization. Equally important was the global rise in agricultural prices.<sup>367</sup> Before that, many villages were surrounded by marginal lands which peasants did not cultivate, not only because of want of man and/or animal power, but also because to do so was not profitable enough. This state of affairs changed in the 1950s as increase in agricultural prices engendered a strong motivation to reclaim land on the part of all peasant strata.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Yasa, 1969, p. 162.

<sup>363</sup> Yasa, 1969, p. 148.

<sup>364</sup> Aksoy, 1969, pp. 66-7; Kanbolat, 1963, pp. 44-5.

<sup>365</sup> Akşit, 1993, p. 191; Keyder, 1983a, pp. 142-3; Keyder, 1993, p. 182; Taraklı, 1976, pp. 73-8.

<sup>366</sup> Akşit, 1993, p. 192; Margulies and Yıldızoğlu, 1987, p. 279.

<sup>367</sup> Aktan, 1957, p. 275.

<sup>368</sup> Keyder and Pamuk, 1984, p. 61.

Improvement of transportation facilities, too, was important in inducing the peasant to produce for the market.<sup>369</sup> This is because improved transportation means that it is easier and less costly for both the producer and the commercial intermediary to take the surplus to the market. In other words, better transportation functions as an incentive to produce more for the market. This is also to say that improved transportation is as yet another incentive for reclamation of new land. This is what happened when the republican government constructed new rail lines that ran from Ankara to Sivas and from Sivas to Samsun. In this way, more grain producing areas were connected to the market, and the volume of marketed surplus increased.<sup>370</sup> The new lines added some impetus to land reclamation.

Finally, the expansion of agricultural credits should be cited as the fourth factor that contributed to growth in the 1950s. Turkish agriculture had always been plagued by scarcity of funds. Peasants were financially stretched almost all the time, and indebtedness always loomed close. Peasants' problems were gradually alleviated as *Agricultural Bank* credits increased tenfold to reach over 2 billion liras by 1960.<sup>371</sup> On the other hand, it would be misleading to assume that funds were evenly distributed among various rural strata. Although government credits got cheaper, small peasants were certainly disadvantaged.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Aktan, 1957, p. 275; Hiltner, 1960, pp. 620-1; Makal, 2001, pp. 111-2; Nicholls, 1955, p. 68.

<sup>370</sup> Keyder, 1981, pp. 29-31; Margulies and Yıldızoğlu, 1987, pp. 274-5; Özbek, 2003, pp. 223-4, n.7.

<sup>371</sup> *Trends in Turkish Agriculture*, 1968, p. 25.

<sup>372</sup> Kanbolat, 1963, p. 21.

### 3.5. The Problem of Landlessness

Last to consider is the extent, and development over time, of the problem of landlessness in Turkey. The earliest systematic data on the Turkish countryside is provided by the 1927 census of agriculture, which, however, excluded peasants which did not own any land.<sup>373</sup> Nonetheless, Tezel cites a study which has calculated on the basis of a comparative analysis of the findings of the 1927 agricultural census and the population census of the same year that as high as 17% of households could have been landless.<sup>374</sup> It is crucial not to lose sight of the fact that this is just an estimate, and one which is built on partial findings.

The 1937 survey has found out that 61,008 out of 1,107,036 households, which amount to 5.5 percent of the total, are entirely landless.<sup>375</sup> The provisional committee which reviewed the Law for Providing Land to Farmers extended the findings of this limited survey to all provinces and proposed that there were 128,690 landless households all over Turkey.<sup>376</sup> The number of agricultural enterprises was cited as 2,499,182.<sup>377</sup> If numbers were correct, the percentage of landless households must have been about 5.2%, which is very close to the original finding of the 1937 survey.<sup>378</sup> It is impossible to know for sure if these numbers corresponded to the reality. Nevertheless, Barkan, who has seen committee's memo and made public some of its findings in his 1945 article on the question of land reform, does not take issue with these numbers. It appears that he is satisfied with

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<sup>373</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 362.

<sup>374</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 362.

<sup>375</sup> Barkan, 1980, 477. Strangely enough, this number is not to be found in any official document. The source is an article by Esat Adil Müstecabioğlu which was published in *Tan* newspaper in 1945 (Barkan, 1980, p. 476 n. 35).

<sup>376</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 476 n. 35.

<sup>377</sup> Barkan, 1980, p.473.

<sup>378</sup> I assume that 2,499,182 households include the landless as well. If this is not the case, then the total number of households increases to 2,627,872, which gives a percentage of landless around 4.9.

around 5 percent landlessness. Barkan does raise an objection to these calculations, and this relates to the number of sub-landed peasants. Recall that the provisional committee's estimates were based on the 1937 survey, which, incidentally, established that small peasant property was quite widespread: a whopping 97% of all agricultural enterprises were small holdings.<sup>379</sup> Now, according to the provisional committee, the number of peasant households with insufficient land was 1,001,520 (including the landless) which equaled to 33% of all rural households.<sup>380</sup> Barkan presumes that what the committee did was single out households with less than 20 *dönüms* as sub-landed. According to him, however, 20 *dönüms* would not suffice for subsistence. Yet he is not certain as to how much land would suffice. He gives a number between 50 and 100 *dönüms*. If 50 *dönüms* were made the threshold, 1,597,322 households would qualify as sub-landed (which includes the landless) and the percentage would rise to 68%. If 100 *dönüms* were the threshold, then the number would be 1,993,045, which would make 85 percent.<sup>381</sup> It goes without saying that determining the number of peasants who are in need of land is an extremely difficult task. A lot depends on the location, nature of the soil etc, and that is why a single, national threshold does not make much sense.

Turning now to the first true agricultural census in Turkey, the 1950 census does not involve a national size distribution of land holdings owned by rural households.<sup>382</sup> This is why analysts use the data from the Autumn Survey of 1952, which was meant to complement the findings of the 1950 census. However, Tezel argues that the reliability of 1952 findings is highly suspect owing to some measurement mistakes.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Köylü, 1957, p. 129.

<sup>380</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 476 n. 35.

<sup>381</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 476 n. 35.

<sup>382</sup> *1950 Agricultural Census Results*, p. iii.

<sup>383</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 362.

Because the 1950 census has no precise data on the number of households without any land, scholars have to find ways to get at a realistic landlessness figure. What follows is Kanbolat's calculation. The 1950 census classifies rural households into two groups: farmers and non-farmers. The latter refers to families who do not operate any land. Kanbolat assumes that an overwhelming majority of non-farmers, whose number has been given as 410,000 in the census, are agricultural laborers who do not own any land.<sup>384</sup> He then adds to this number two more categories, namely, households who do not farm but raise livestock and household who rent all the land they operate.<sup>385</sup> These latter categories bring together 137,410 households in total.<sup>386</sup> Subsequently, Kanbolat arrives at 547,410 as the number of the landless.<sup>387</sup> Tezel uses exactly same categories to eventually find that 20% of all rural households are landless. In his calculation, non-farmers correspond to 15% of rural households whereas stock raisers and full tenants amount respectively to 1.7% and 3.3%.<sup>388</sup>

The fact that Kanbolat and Tezel have come up with the same figure might lend some credibility to the assertion that about 20% of village families were landless as of 1950. But, as many scholars point out, agricultural censuses usually overstate landlessness. This is what Hirsch writes of the 1950 census. To repeat, the census of 1950 has found out that 15% of rural household do not operate any land, the majority of which might well work as agricultural laborers. Yet also included in this 15 percent are those engaged in non-agricultural works (those who work in coffee houses, mills etc.) as well as nomads.<sup>389</sup> As

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<sup>384</sup> Kanbolat, 1963, p. 33.

<sup>385</sup> The category of households who rent all the land they operate involves both fix-rent tenants and share-tenants who do not own any land of their own.

<sup>386</sup> Kanbolat, 1963, p. 34. Of this, 47,716 are stock breeders and 89,694 are full tenants (Aksoy, 1969, p. 103).

<sup>387</sup> Kanbolat, 1963, p. 35.

<sup>388</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 363.

<sup>389</sup> Hirsch, 1970, p. 239 n. 14

Tezel himself admits, craftsmen, fishermen, and government officials such as teachers or forest rangers must have slipped into the category of non-farmers.<sup>390</sup> As for farmers, Keyder adds that some households which actually had access to land were categorized as landless in the censuses. These were the sons and daughters who worked their parents' fields – fields which they would eventually inherit.<sup>391</sup>

It therefore goes without saying that 20 percent is too high to be realistic. In any case, the essential question of land reform should be about the number of households *in need of land*. For not every household without any holdings need land to survive. As just pointed out, there are fishermen, stock raisers, who make a living by non-farming means, and whose presence in statistics as a segment within the category of the landless magnifies the need for reform out of proportion.

In Keyder's account, the percentage of the landless revolved around 5%.<sup>392</sup> Behind this low estimation is the notion that middle peasantry grew significantly from the early 1920s to the 1950s.<sup>393</sup> R. Aktan, a leading agriculturalist who also served as undersecretary of agriculture and Minister of Agriculture in the 1960s, puts the number between 8-10%.<sup>394</sup> Aktan was a protagonist of land reform; thus, his somewhat moderate estimate might come as a surprise. Yet, according to him, the ranks of the sub-landed were much wider. He estimates that, as of 1957, about half of the rural population did not have enough land.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 363.

<sup>391</sup> Keyder, 1983b, p. 47.

<sup>392</sup> Keyder, 1981, pp. 16-7; Keyder, 1983b, p. 47.

<sup>393</sup> Keyder, 1981, pp. 16-7.

<sup>394</sup> Aktan, 1957, p. 275.

<sup>395</sup> Aktan, 1957, p. 275.

So, outright landlessness was relatively rare, but there nonetheless were a substantial number of sub-landed peasants. Let us briefly discuss why there were so many families with insufficient amount of land. It is possible to say that two factors were crucial in widening the ranks of sub-landed farmers. The first factor is fragmentation of family holdings through inheritance whereas the second pertains to the practice of fallowing. It is proper to dwell on fallowing for a short while. The absence of fertility enhancing techniques had the effect of making fallowing an imperative in Turkish agriculture. For without fallowing, continuous cultivation would wear out the land and progressively decrease its productivity. Put conversely, fallowing helped restore the land. Every year, Anatolian peasants cultivated half of their farmland, leaving the remainder fallow. Hence a family with 100 *dönüms* of land sowed only 50 *dönüms* in actual fact. This had important repercussions for household economies. Let me illustrate by pursuing the same example. 100 *dönüms* of land would easily secure subsistence in many places, but 50 *dönüms* may have failed to suffice. Theoretically speaking, a family with a 100-*dönüm* plot could well be in need of extra land. Yet this was merely a possibility. One should take into account a considerable number of variables (such as quality of land, type of crop planted and family size) to determine what subsistence size would have been in, say, Eskişehir in the 1930s. This is not to mention the difficulties involved in defining subsistence. These considerations aside, it is certain that the widespread practice of fallowing in Anatolian agriculture had the effect of aggravating the problem of subpar family landholdings.

For Keyder, it is possible to confute official statistics on the basis of village surveys. Many monographs on individual villages have found a smaller number of landless peasants.<sup>396</sup> That censuses exaggerate the number of the landless is thus proven by village surveys. Helburn's study is a case in point. Helburn did 9 months of field work in Central Anatolia in the early 1950s. A typical Central Anatolian village, he writes, is a village of 80

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<sup>396</sup> Keyder, 1983b, p. 49 n. 8.

households<sup>397</sup>, of which up to 10 might be landless.<sup>398</sup> Quite interestingly, Helburn has found out that landless families do not typically do sharecropping or tenancy. Some of them do animal husbandry, some work as shepherds and watchmen, and some others work in the construction sector in Ankara.<sup>399</sup>

As already pointed out, in discussions of land reform, the number of the sub-landed is as important as the number of the landless. But, to repeat, the number of the sub-landed is even more difficult to ascertain. Now, according to the findings of the 1950 census, 62% of households owned all the land they operated, which is rather high. Yet Tezel claims that several of these holdings were too small.<sup>400</sup> As should be obvious by now, this actually is too general a claim, for, say, 30 *dönüms* of land in semi-arid regions could be characterized as too small for livelihood, yet the same cannot be said of an irrigated plot of the same size on which a cash-crop is cultivated. Consequently, the question as to who needs additional land is a tricky one. Kanbolat's solution to the problem is to assume that all households who rent land from others are sub-landed. That is to say, everyone except full owners, i.e. those who own all the land they operate, is to be considered as households with insufficient amounts of land. The 1950 census gives the number of partial owners (tenants and share-tenants who own part of the land they operate) as 498,838 households, and Kanbolat says this is the number of the sub-landed.<sup>401</sup> The trouble is also included in this category of partial owners/partial tenants are mechanized farmers who rent and cultivate other people's land for additional income. Needless to say, such farmers are certainly not sub-landed. Kanbolat's assumption is therefore misleading.

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<sup>397</sup> Helburn, 1955, p. 375.

<sup>398</sup> Helburn, 1955, p. 384.

<sup>399</sup> Helburn, 1955, p. 384.

<sup>400</sup> Tezel, 1994, pp. 363-4.

<sup>401</sup> Kanbolat, 1963, pp. 35-6.

This is not to deny that many rural families derived insufficient incomes from their farms. The argument here is threefold. Firstly, the number of the sub-landed is hard to determine. Secondly, the number is not as high as land reform advocates like Kanbolat would have us believe. Finally, neither the number of the landless nor the sub-landed seems to have multiplied over time.

It has been suggested at the beginning of this chapter that aggregate data on land tenure in Turkey is not entirely commensurable. Nonetheless, a comparative analysis of size distribution of landholdings on the basis of the 1937 questionnaire, the Autumn Survey of 1952 and the agricultural census of 1963 would show that it is impossible to talk about a meaningful trend towards either concentration of landholdings or dispossession of small peasants.<sup>402</sup> This is not the place to conduct a detailed analysis, but it is possible to make use of the number of the landless as an indicator of concentration/dispossession. According to the survey results of the 1963 census of agriculture, the number of rural households without any land was 308, 899<sup>403</sup>, which amounted to 8.79% of all agricultural enterprises.<sup>404</sup> Afore-mentioned problems associated with the 1950 findings on landless households notwithstanding, it is plausible to say that dispossession did certainly not escalate in the 1950s when Turkish countryside saw an unprecedented growth. The tendency towards concentration landholdings was reinforced later, in the 1960s.<sup>405</sup> Hence it is no coincidence that the ranks of the landless widened, albeit slightly. The subsequent agricultural census shows that the percentage of landless households rose from 8.8% to 11.6% in 1970.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Margulies and Yıldızoğlu, 1987, pp. 283-4.

<sup>403</sup> *1963 Census of Agriculture Sample Survey Results*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>404</sup> *1963 Census of Agriculture Sample Survey Results*, p. 18.

<sup>405</sup> Boratav, 1972, pp. 777-9, 782-3.

<sup>406</sup> Boratav, 1972, p.785.

Finally, some comments on sharecropping are in order now. Even before the advent of agriculture-led growth, sharecropping was more complex than commonly assumed. It is crucial to recognize that land is not the only resource of peasant households. As Stirling writes, besides land, animals and human power are the two major resources that peasant economies rely on.<sup>407</sup> It is fair to say that sharecropping is a very common consequence of an imbalance in resources. For instance, when people have too little land for their manpower, sharecropping is a way out of such an imbalance – provided that they have animal-power. Conversely, sometimes peasants cannot cultivate all the land they possess because they do not have enough draft-power or seeds – this Yasa observed in the village Hasanoğlan circa mid-1940s.<sup>408</sup> Hence Stirling writes:

Those who put their land out to sharecroppers are not necessarily well-to-do. They include the aged, the sick, the widows, or those who have lost or been forced to sell their oxen or are short of seed. (...) Correspondingly, those who take on share-cropping are not the poorest village households. To share-crop a man needs resources – oxen and supporting manpower. In fact most share-croppers are middle range land owners who prefer to take on more land than supplement their income by other means.<sup>409</sup>

As Stirling writes, then, people cannot work their land by themselves when they lack one of the following: (i) manpower (ii) draft animals (iii) tools (iv) seeds. So the problem is not just one of availability of land.

Keyder makes a stronger argument. In a country with a high land/labor ratio, he asserts, the reason why people have to recourse to sharecropping is not that they do not have land. On the contrary, “sharecropping results from a difficulty in continuing with independent farming, rather than from land unavailability.”<sup>410</sup> Some peasants have no choice but cease

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<sup>407</sup> Stirling, 1965, p. 83.

<sup>408</sup> Yasa, 1957, p. 67.

<sup>409</sup> Stirling, 1965, pp. 54-6.

<sup>410</sup> Keyder, 1983a, p. 132.

independent production once “they have lost the means of cultivating their own land.”<sup>411</sup> This is what happens when peasant households do not own, or are forced to sell, basic means of production, i.e. the much-needed oxen as well as the plough.<sup>412</sup> Kıray’s field observation supports Keyder’s thesis. In village Oruçlu near Çukurova, she notes, there are no large owners or landless households. Although some families have holdings of less than 10 *dönüms*, which may not suffice for subsistence, one would expect to find households doing independent production. Nonetheless Kıray writes that people do sharecropping due to “lack of draught animals.”<sup>413</sup> Stirling makes a similar observation about Kayseri villages: when land was still plenty, people who used to be unable to independently cultivate were oxen-less rather than landless.<sup>414</sup> Unavailability of land, then, is not the sole reason for working on shares; therefore, share-tenancy should not be read as a symptom of landlessness.

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<sup>411</sup> Keyder, 1983a, p. 137.

<sup>412</sup> Keyder, 1983a, p. 138; Keyder and Pamuk, 1984, p. 61. Tezel’s analysis of early Republican countryside shows a strong resemblance to Keyder’s account. Tezel’s argument can be summarized as follows. Agricultural production in the 1930s and 1940s was beset by the inability of the mass of peasants to work on land. Yet, the reason for this was not that they were landless; rather, a great number of Turkish peasants did not have draft animals. This is also to say that there was plenty of marginal lands which peasants could cultivate had they had necessary assets (Tezel, 1994, pp. 392-3).

<sup>413</sup> Kıray, 1974, p. 185.

<sup>414</sup> Stirling, 1965, p. 137.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRE-1945 HISTORY OF LAND REFORM I (1927-1934)

Writing in 1998, Karaömerlioğlu observes that students of Turkish history have not produced an answer to the question of why the leadership of the Republican People's Party came to embrace land reform.<sup>415</sup> This assertion still holds true today after 15 years.

To a relative outsider, it might seem that this is a story which started towards mid-1940s. Yet, Turkish land reform has a prior history – a history which is older than Land for Providing Land to Farmers (*Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu*). Unfortunately, however, the literature on the pre-1945 development of the idea of redistribution of land is quite modest. There are just a handful of studies that examine the subject. Moreover, very few of these studies are specifically on the 1920s or 1930s.

Nevertheless, one can detect from the available literature a conventional narrative on the pre-1945 history of land reform in Turkey. According to this narrative, Kemalists developed an interest in reform during the second half of the 1920s. The dominant tendency in the literature is to identify the Kurdish uprising of 1925 as the factor responsible for arousing a concern with property relations on land. As will be shown below, in the aftermath of the rebellion of Sheikh Sait, Turkish government passed a number of laws and decrees to facilitate the deportation of a certain number of people from the insurgency zone. This legislative attempt also included provisions on redistribution of landed properties. What I refer to as the conventional narrative on land reform recounts Law No. 1097 (Law Regarding the Deportation of Certain People from

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<sup>415</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 1998, p. 31.

the Eastern Zone to the Western Provinces) and Law No. 1505 (Law Regarding the Land to be Distributed to Farmers in Need within the Eastern Zone) as the first experimentation with redistribution of land.<sup>416</sup> However, it is strongly emphasized in the literature that reform of land tenure was still a localized concern by 1920s.

The second historical moment to find a place in the narrative is the Settlement Law of 1934. Yet, as I will argue at some length below, the treatment of the 1934 law in the literature on land reform is lop-sided. As a matter of fact, a single article (Article 10) has received all the attention so far. What is interesting is that the article in question was geographically specific much the same way as Laws Nos. 1097 and 1505. Therefore, the picture rendered by the literature does not still reveal a generalized idea of reform as of 1934.

After the Settlement Law, the narrative moves to mid-1930s and defines a number of landmarks toward the emergence of a full-blown national scheme of reform. It is evident that the period which stretches from 1935 to the legislation of Law for Providing Land to Farmers in 1945 is regarded as the high point of land reform activism. This is so despite the accepted fact that the RPP government took no initiative towards redistribution of land from 1937 up to 1945. The narrative nevertheless holds certain developments of mid-1930s in high esteem. The first of such developments was the inclusion in the party program of the objective of distribution of land to farmers in 1935. The same year saw the first abortive initiative to make a land law. This was the Draft Law on Land and Settlement (*Toprak İskan Kanunu Tasarısı*), which did not even make it to the parliament. According to the narrative, the next landmark was the constitutional amendment of 1937. The amendment paved the way for land reform in that confiscation of landed properties was no longer subject to provisions of general law. Consequently, the financial burden of

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<sup>416</sup> As the titles clearly imply, the former (*Bazı Eşhasın Şark Menatıkından Garp Vilayetlerine Nakillerine Dair Kanun*) was a law on deportation while the latter (*Şark Manatığı Dahilinde Mühtaç Zürraa Tevzi Edilecek Araziye Dair Kanun*) was an unambitious land distribution law. They were legislated respectively in 1927 and 1929.

confiscating land was lessened. This development in early 1937 was followed by the Draft Law on Agricultural Reform (*Zirai Islahat Kanun Tasarısı*) of the same year. However, like its predecessor, this second draft did not get legislated either. In spite of this setback, distribution of land was included in government's program for the first time later same year. This was the government of Celal Bayar, which was formed after İsmet İnönü was ousted from premiership. For the conventional narrative, all these developments from 1935 to the late 1937 are signs that the government was determined to undertake a reform of property relations on land. This argument is bolstered by references to several parliamentary speeches delivered by İsmet İnönü and Kemal Atatürk. Curiously enough, the fact that land reform dropped off the political agenda shortly after this climax is not taken into serious consideration.

The first person to write the history of Turkish land reform in this fashion is historian Ömer Lütfi Barkan. As far as debates on land reform are concerned, Barkan's 1945 essay on Law for Providing Land to Farmers<sup>417</sup> of the same year has proved seminal and enduring. Barkan was followed in the 1960s by Reşat Aktan and Suat Aksoy of the Ankara University's Faculty of Agriculture. These two academics, who studied respectively in the fields of agricultural economy and agricultural law, believed that the 1945 reform failed and therefore advocated the adoption of a new land law. Their works must have been widely read in the 1960s and 1970s when reform of land tenure was a hot topic in political circles.<sup>418</sup> However, they were not nearly as popular as socialist thinker Doğan Avcıoğlu, whose writings in weekly *Yön* and multivolume histories of Ottoman-Turkish society displayed a similar outlook on land-related matters.<sup>419</sup> As a result, it is fair to say that it

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<sup>417</sup> Barkan, 1980.

<sup>418</sup> Aksoy's popular 1969 book and an academic article of Aktan's (1966) will be referred to in the following pages.

<sup>419</sup> This chapter will make use of Avcıoğlu's books *Türkiye'nin Düzeni* (2001, first published in 1968) and *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi* (1974).

was through Barkan, Avcıoğlu, Aktan and Aksoy that the common historical narrative has been transmitted to the younger generation of scholars.

Elements of this narrative can be consistently found in almost all recent studies on the subject.<sup>420</sup> It goes without saying that these scholarly accounts are not identical to one another. The point is rather that they contain elements of the narrative the contours of which I have just drawn. Some highlight parts of the narrative, while some have all the elements. There are minor disagreements, of course. But the common ground is much stronger.

Taking cues from the existing literature, it seems wise to divide the present analysis into two chapters. This chapter covers the period which came to a conclusion with the passing of the Settlement Law in 1934. Chapter 5 picks up the discussion at the year 1935.

#### **4.1. Insurgency, Crisis and the First Gaze on the Countryside**

As noted above, an important tenet of the literature regards the birth of an interest in land reform on the part of the republican administration. According to this, it was Kurdish insurgency which set in motion the project of reforming tenurial relations in mid-1920s. It is also asserted that the rationale was political, not economic. Although the emphasis on the role of Kurdish uprisings is greater in some of the studies than others, there is complete unanimity among scholars on this score.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> For elements of the narrative in various studies, see Aktan, 1966, pp. 319-21; Avcıoğlu, 1974, pp. 1392-9; Avcıoğlu, 2001, pp. 351-6, 489-511; Erdost, 2010, pp. 23-5; İnan, 2005, pp. 45-7; İnce, 2009, pp. 35-8; İnci, 2010, pp. 350-7; Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, pp. 118-20; Kuruç, 1987, pp. 168-182; Önal, 2010, pp. 10-11; Tezel, 1994, pp. 375-82.

<sup>421</sup> Following studies make remarks about the Kurdish connection: Aydemir, 1966b, pp. 335-6; Balta, 2002, p. 278; Erdost, 2010, p. 23; İnan, 2005, p. 45; İnci, 2010, pp. 352-3; Karaömerlioğlu, 1998, pp. 32, 38-40; Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, pp. 119, 128; Kuruç, 1987, pp. 158-9; Tezel, 1994, pp. 376-7. The emphasis is stronger in the studies of Kuruç, Karaömerlioğlu and Tezel.

Hence there is consensus that the official preoccupation with land reform originated with the Kurdish uprising of 1925. This incident, the argument goes, engendered an aversion towards large landownership.<sup>422</sup> The narrative puts the causal relationship between Kurdish insurgency and the rise of the project of land reform as follows: the government came to the conclusion that revolts were instigated by local notables whose power derived from landowning.<sup>423</sup> Sharecropping was held in particular contempt because Kurdish commoners were entirely expropriated and subsisted on land as tenants of *ağas*.<sup>424</sup> According to this new understanding, landless Kurds were personally dependent on their lords – this being the reason why they were so easily incited to rebel against the state.<sup>425</sup> Redistribution of land in the Kurdish provinces was meant to end this “dependency relationship.”<sup>426</sup> This change in attitude towards landlordism was strictly confined to the Kurdish provinces, however.<sup>427</sup>

Karaömerlioğlu’s account says slightly more. According to him, Kemalists realized that the young republic stood in need of a peasant constituency, and nowhere was this more strongly felt than in Kurdish provinces.<sup>428</sup> Karaömerlioğlu does not openly suggest the reason why he thinks peasant support in the ‘20s or ‘30s hinged on land reform. Yet, given that this was not an era of competitive politics, his reasoning could be that large landownership was perceived as an impediment to state’s penetration into Kurdish-populated areas. Consequently, the government wished to bypass Kurdish landlords and reach the peasants in an unmediated fashion.

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<sup>422</sup> İnci, 2010, p. 352; Tezel, 1994, p. 376.

<sup>423</sup> İnan, 2005, p. 45; İnci, 2010, p. 352; Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, p. 119; Kuruç, 1987, p. 158.

<sup>424</sup> İnan, 2005, p. 45.

<sup>425</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 376.

<sup>426</sup> Tezel, 1994, pp. 376-7. According to Tezel, this concern reached a climax in the Settlement Law of 1934.

<sup>427</sup> İnci, 2010, p. 352.

<sup>428</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, p. 128.

One way or the other, it is asserted that the Kemalists were drawn to redistributing land because of political reasons. Although not openly uttered, the assumption here is that the RPP leadership set out to undertake *social* reform in the Kurdish provinces in the late 1920s. In other words, according to the conventional narrative, those who ran the state came to the conclusion that putting an end to the insurgency in the East required a reform of relations on land. Deportation, re-settlement and partition of large estates among landless peasants are thought to have been elements of this radical reform program.

These arguments regarding the genesis of land reform advocacy are not supported by references to legislative documents (drafts and committee reports) or parliamentary debates. This is a very substantial problem since it is impossible to know why a given law is made unless one examines the particular legislative process through which it comes into being. Therefore, as stimulating as they may be, above-mentioned accounts are bound to remain inconclusive. Furthermore, as I try to show later on, the narrative attributes to lawmakers certain notions and ideas which, in reality, were espoused by writers and intellectuals. Analysis of parliamentary documents and debates on Laws Nos. 1097 and 1505 suggest a different story than told by the narrative, which is the topic of the next section of this chapter.

Problems with the narrative do not end there, however. Even if it is admitted that the 1920s' uprisings provided the initial spark, one needs to explain why the idea of land reform was later applied to the whole country. This is where the narrative is at its weakest. Some scholars merely say that Kemalists came to the realization that tenurial problems were not confined to the East. İnan and Tezel further such an argument. According to both scholars, RPP leaders arrived at the conclusion that tenurial relations in the Turkish countryside had to be altered in order to increase agricultural production. That is to say,

once they associated agricultural underproduction with large ownership, Kemalists took a critical stance towards large ownership.<sup>429</sup>

On the other hand, some others draw attention to the causal connection between crisis and the birth of an interest in land reform. Kuruç puts the emphasis on economic crisis. According to this, the collapse of agricultural prices led to a decision on the part of the state to “fix inequalities in land ownership.”<sup>430</sup> The trouble is that Kuruç fails to show exactly how economic crisis triggered such an understanding.

The more elaborate explanation comes from Karaömerlioğlu – though in his case the emphasis is more on political crisis. Karaömerlioğlu attributes causal significance to the strongly-felt need on the part of the RPP to widen its support base following the *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Free Republican Party) incident of 1930.<sup>431</sup> Early 1930s are aptly portrayed in Karaömerlioğlu’s account as an era of both economic and political crises. On one hand, the Turkish countryside was devastated by the sharp decline in global agricultural prices. On the other hand, the newly born opposition party was instantly met with zealous popular support, which made RPP leadership realize for the first time that their hold on power was precarious. What followed was an “increasing concern of the Kemalist elite with the peasantry and agricultural production.”<sup>432</sup> According to Karaömerlioğlu’s account of this era, alongside People’s Houses (*Halkevleri*) and Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*), land reform schemes were part and parcel of “political attempts to secure peasant support.”<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> İnan, 2005, p. 45; Tezel, 1994, p. 388.

<sup>430</sup> Kuruç, 1987, pp. 164-7, 171.

<sup>431</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, pp. 127-8.

<sup>432</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, p. 116.

<sup>433</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, pp. 116-7.

The section on the Law Regarding Wheat to be Purchased by the Government via the Agricultural Bank (*Hükümetçe Ziraat Bankasına Mubayaa Ettirilecek Buğday Hakkında Kanun*), commonly known as the “wheat protection law”, will return to this subject. It is in this section that I will discuss the conjuncture of the aftermath of crisis in order to test the assumed link between crisis and land reform advocacy.

Before moving ahead, yet another problem should be pointed out. This is that the conventional narrative is too often teleological. It is as if land reform was always on the mind of the Kemalists, just waiting for the right time to be unleashed. The picture one gets from the literature is that the idea of land tenure reform matured slowly but steadily over 20 years. As generally is the case with historical accounts tinged by teleological reasoning, the development is assumed to be perfectly unilinear. It is as if nothing in the 1920s or 1930s ran counter to the much-awaited coming of the 1945 law.

Take Kuruç’s account as an example. While discussing the deportation law of 1927 and land distribution law of 1929, both of which were made exclusively for the Kurdish provinces, Kuruç alleges that these legislation acts amounted to a “pilot project” of land reform.<sup>434</sup> In making this claim, Kuruç plainly assumes that the RPP leadership wanted to reform land tenure and that they get it started with eastern Turkey. I argue in the following pages that there actually were no signs that land reform was on the political agenda in the late 1920s – either for the whole country or for a specified region. A close examination of the legislative process leading to the adoption of Laws Nos. 1097 and 1505 would reveal that deportation and land distribution were devised as security measures. This is to say that the two laws were not a stepping stone towards a countrywide land reform. If anything, they were test cases of the policy of cultural assimilation via re-settlement.

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<sup>434</sup> Kuruç, 1987, p. 158.

This is not the only instance where Kuruç's teleological reasoning becomes evident. He also writes that RPP leadership launched such measures like wheat purchase and credit cooperatives in lieu of land reform. According to this, Kemalists craved to redistribute landed properties; they soon realized, however, that external circumstances were not accommodating. Precisely because they could not reform land tenure, the RPP leadership set out to help farmers in other ways. Otherwise put, the policy innovations of this era were the second best option.<sup>435</sup> An alternative to Kuruç's argument, which is quite hard to substantiate, would be evaluating these policy measures as what they were, not what they were not. Again, take the case of the wheat protection law of 1932 which set off the wheat purchase program of the 1930s. The examination of this legislative venture hopefully will also show on what grounds RPP government forged such a policy measure.

After this lengthy introduction, it is now time to turn to Law Nos. 1097 and 1505. The question I would like to address is whether deportation and the desire to distribute of land emanated from a concern with land ownership and/or landlessness.

#### **4.1.1. Law Regarding the Deportation of Certain People from the Eastern Regions to the Western Provinces (Law No. 1097)**

As the new republican government consolidated its power at the center and hopes for Kurdish autonomy started waning, a series of rebellions broke out in Kurdish provinces. By the time the first uprising in 1925 was militarily subdued, those who ran the state apparatus had already started to ponder more lasting measures to do away with Kurdish resistance. Law No. 1097 was among those measures.

Law Regarding the Deportation of Certain People from the Eastern Regions to the Western Provinces (*Bazı Eşhasın Şark Menatıkından Garp Vilayetlerine Nakillerine Dair*

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<sup>435</sup> Kuruç, 1987, pp. 159-60.

*Kanun*) was a deportation law enacted in the aftermath of the Sheikh Sait rebellion of 1925. According to the first article, the law was to be administered within the martial law area and the province of Bayazıd.<sup>436</sup> People who would be deported from designated areas fell into three categories: (i) certain 1,400 (non-convicted) persons and their families (ii) families of some 80 rebels who fled beyond the borders and (iii) people who were sentenced to imprisonment over five years.<sup>437</sup> Deportees were legally forbidden from returning, either temporarily or permanently, to their hometowns (Article 5).<sup>438</sup>

A deportation policy might serve a variety of purposes. For instance, it could be employed for security reasons or to change ethnic demographics. On the other hand, a decision to deport people might have more ambitious goals. For example, as many scholars studying the history of land reform in Turkey seem to imply, deportation can well be a preparation for and a means to redistribution of land. The question is: what precisely did the Turkish government hope to achieve with Law No. 1097? To answer the question and see what purpose it was meant to serve, one should not just analyze the articles of the 1927 law but also follow its whole journey through the legislature to see what purpose it was meant to serve.

The best starting point is of course the preamble of the government draft. The draft law prepared by the Prime Ministry was submitted to the parliament on 22 December 1926.

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<sup>436</sup> Bayazıd (or Beyazıt), which lies near the border with Iran, used to be a province in the 1920s. After the Kurdish rebellion of 1930, it was made a district of Ağrı. Today the town is called Doğubeyazıt. The province of Beyazıt was added to the deportation law presumably because the Ağrı rebellion was already underway in 1927. There are constant references in the draft law and government's preamble to rebels who took refuge in neighboring countries. These must be Ağrı rebels who crossed the border when the Turkish government attacked the region to restore order. On the other hand, İsmet İnönü mentions in his memoirs some Kurdish political opponents who fled beyond the Syrian border after national state was born. He names the Cemilpaşazade family as an example (İnönü, 1987, pp. 270-1). The law may have meant to cover apply to these people as well.

<sup>437</sup> Bazı Eşhasın Şark Menatıkından Garp Vilayetlerine Nakillerine Dair Kanun, 1927, Birinci Madde (Article 1), p. 431. Also see T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, pp. 155-6.

<sup>438</sup> Bazı Eşhasın Şark Menatıkından Garp Vilayetlerine Nakillerine Dair Kanun, 1927, Beşinci Madde (Article 5), p. 431.

The draft came before two parliamentary committees for reviewing. The joint committee on internal affairs and justice reviewed the law without any delay. The second committee to review the bill was the budget committee, which submitted its report six months later on 1 June. This must be why parliamentary deliberations on the bill were delayed until 18 June. As will be seen below, although both committees proposed important amendments to the government bill, those made by the budget committee were more fundamental.

The preamble of the draft makes it clear that from the point of view of the government, deportation was both a preventive measure and a means to an end. The real purpose was put as “radical reform” in the East. The problem was that there were people in this region who would reasonably be expected to oppose reform. If those people remained in the East, it was said, they would surely hinder attempts at reform.<sup>439</sup>

One might be tempted to assume that what government meant by radical reform was *social* reform. The rest of the preamble as well as Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya’s parliamentary speech prove otherwise. The linchpin of government’s discourse was a critique of Ottoman administration. Ottomans were chastised on the grounds that they relinquished all authority in the East to provincial notables.<sup>440</sup> Hence tribal chiefs, sheiks and sayyids ruled the East in an unrestrained fashion; in Şükrü Kaya’s words, each was a “sultan” of his own race. This form of rule belonged to the middle ages (*kurun-ı vusta*) and was no longer acceptable.<sup>441</sup> In the eyes of the new Turkish regime, Kurdish notables comprised a *mütegallibe* – a privileged class of unlawful oppressors.<sup>442</sup> It was declared that, unlike the Ottomans, the new republican regime was determined to spread law and order in the East as well. That entailed a struggle with *mütegallibe* because the latter

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<sup>439</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, p. 155.

<sup>440</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, pp. 153, 155; T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927c, p. 83.

<sup>441</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927c, p. 84.

<sup>442</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, p. 153.

abhorred law as it went against their privileges.<sup>443</sup> Şükrü Kaya asserted that this was why the new regime was so fiercely opposed in eastern provinces.<sup>444</sup>

To the RPP leadership, then, the problem was much deeper than it might have seemed on the surface. The Sheikh Sait incident was no simple insurgency; it was how the antagonism between “civilization” and “medievalism” was played out.<sup>445</sup> Hence it should not come as a surprise that the preamble of what would shortly become Law No. 1178 associated deportation of native populations with *vazife-i temdin*, i.e. civilizing mission.<sup>446</sup>

It cannot be overstated that all this talk about middle ages had nothing to do with feudalism. What RPP leadership criticized was neither feudal ownership nor bondage. This is the reason why one cannot find either in the preamble or in parliamentary minutes any mention of large estates or landlessness. For the drafters of the law, the problem revolved around the vestiges of Kurdish autonomy. This was *the* “medieval” practice which they detested. In the past, Kurds had been unrestrained by imperial authority; they used to govern themselves. And now they did not want to accede to the authority of the national state.

Seen from today’s perspective, the 1925 rebellion is most easily legible as an eruption of social discontent. To the newly-founded state, however, the problem was much more about resistance to its exclusive claim to sovereign power. In a sense, the state analyzed the situation correctly. In 1925, state’s antagonist was an army of 15,000 men which laid siege to Diyarbakır. What is more, the rebels were commanded by elite military officers,

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<sup>443</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927c, pp. 83-4, 86.

<sup>444</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927c, p. 83.

<sup>445</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927c, p. 84.

<sup>446</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927b, p. 1. Law No. 1178 will be discussed separately below.

who climbed carrier ladder through Abdülhamit's *Hamidiye* regiments. It is no wonder that once the rebellion was defeated, the state targeted Kurdish autonomy.

It goes without saying that there was no independent concern with landownership in the making of Law No. 1097. The new regime diagnosed a problem, but that problem had almost nothing to do with land tenure. This is why there is no single word to be found anywhere in parliamentary minutes about landownership.

İsmet İnönü's take on Kurdish uprisings confirms that what Kemalists had in mind at that time was not land reform. In his memoirs put to paper in late 1960s, İnönü responds to criticisms which have been leveled against Atatürk and himself. For him, it is unfair to say that nothing in the way of social reform had been done during single-party years. İnönü admits that they never had the time to work out a developmental plan specifically for the eastern provinces. To their credit, however, they built railroads, which was an indispensable precondition of reform. What İnönü says is in fact stronger than that: railway construction *was* social reform.<sup>447</sup> İnönü sees the matter in this light because, to him and many of his contemporaries, the problem was as simple as this: state authority could not penetrate the East. Non-state authorities (sheikhs) who reigned in the region were responsible for this state of affairs.<sup>448</sup> Hence it was not for nothing that the Dersim incident was finally extirpated when the province was connected to the capital by all-season roads.<sup>449</sup>

Then why is it the case that Law No. 1097 is conceived as a first step towards altering land tenure? Maybe this is because it contained certain provisions on landed properties, to which the discussion now turns. The bill naturally dealt with the fate of abandoned

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<sup>447</sup> İnönü, 1987, pp. 269-70.

<sup>448</sup> İnönü, 1987, p. 203.

<sup>449</sup> İnönü, 1987, p. 269.

(immovable) properties. In fact, it was this aspect that underwent most changes through legislative process. At the very beginning, when the government submitted the bill, deportation was supposed to proceed as settlement. That is, deportees would be given property upon their arrival to their new residence in western provinces. Property given would be in proportion to property abandoned in the eastern provinces. In the event that the former exceeded the latter in value, deportees would have to pay the excess in installments, just like ordinary settlees. This was stated in Article 4 of government's bill. In addition to that, government draft contained a clause on redistribution of land. Article 5 stated that land and real estate left behind by the deportees would remain at state's disposal to be distributed to "those in need."<sup>450</sup>

The joint committee on internal affairs and justice amended government's proposal. While the original bill did not treat land separately, committee made a distinction between land and other immovable properties. When it came to immovable properties other than land, the deportees now had a choice. They could either sell those properties themselves in two years (Article 3) or they could ask to be settled by the government (Article 4). Put otherwise, if they took on the responsibility of liquidating their properties, they would not be eligible for settlement – i.e. they would not be given property in their new residence. On the other hand, if they chose to follow the first option but proved unable to make the sale in the two-year time period, the government would take the matter in hand, sell the properties in question and pay owners in turn (Article 3). As for landholdings, the amended bill had the exact same provision as government's proposal: landed properties would remain at state's disposal to be distributed to people in need of land (Article 5).<sup>451</sup>

The budget committee slightly modified Article 3 and specified that the government would auction the properties of the deportees in case they proved unable to sell them in

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<sup>450</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, p. 155.

<sup>451</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, p. 156.

two years. This became Article 8 of the draft as amended by the budget committee. The provision on landed properties was this time rendered clearer: Article 9 stated that abandoned land would revert to the Treasury. The article also ruled that local commissions would be established in every district to assess the value of properties left. According to Article 11, settlement of deportees would be carried out on the basis of the valuations made of abandoned properties. With Article 10, deportees were given the right to object to the decisions of assessment commissions. In the event that an objection arose, the commission was charged with making a new assessment.<sup>452</sup>

Yet, neither Article 9 nor any other articles of the new draft stated that abandoned lands would be distributed in any way.<sup>453</sup> The provision about the distribution of land to those in need was thereby dropped by the budget committee. Although this was by far the most crucial amendment, its reasons remain unknown. No explanation was offered in committee's very brief report.<sup>454</sup> Furthermore, when the draft finally arrived to the parliament floor, there were no deliberations, nor were there any questions or comments. Articles of the final draft were put to vote one by one and approved.<sup>455</sup> Thus, the ensuing Law No. 1097 did not sanction redistribution of landed properties which were left behind by the deportees.<sup>456</sup>

One can, therefore, only speculate as to the reasons why redistribution of land was taken off from the draft. This issue will be pursued in due course. What is more important in my opinion is the supposed purpose of redistribution of land. I would argue that redistribution

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<sup>452</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, pp. 156-7.

<sup>453</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, pp. 156-7.

<sup>454</sup> See T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, pp. 154-5.

<sup>455</sup> See T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927a, pp. 157-9.

<sup>456</sup> Bazı Eşhasın Şark Menatıkından Garp Vilayetlerine Nakillerine Dair Kanun, 1927, Dokuzuncu Madde (Article 9), pp. 431-2.

was an administrative measure designed to make sure that deportees would not come back. That is, redistribution of land was not as ambitious a project as the conventional narrative would have us believe.

Çağaptay and Jongerden are in agreement in writing that 1,400 people were exiled westward from the province of Beyazıt after the passage of Law No. 1097.<sup>457</sup> Yet this is what the text of the law says. It seems that no one has yet made a total calculation as to the number of people actually deported in accordance with the 1927 law. Üngör cites a number of papers from Prime Ministry's Republican Archive (*Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi*) all of which document the state of Kurdish deportees in their final destinations. Among them, there are two archival documents which give numbers. One is dated March 1927, which means that it is not about Law No. 1097 deportations. The other one is a report sent from the governor of Bolu to the Prime Ministry in June 1928. According to this, Bolu received 350 households from Diyarbakır totaling 6013 Kurds, all of which were settled in former-Greek villages.<sup>458</sup> Other documents cited by Üngör shows that many western provinces received Kurdish deportees. Among them were Edirne, Antalya, Kütahya, Balıkesir and the town of Polatlı in Ankara.<sup>459</sup> Therefore there is enough ground to assume that the total number of deportees was certainly over 1,400 and that they came not only from Beyazıt. In any case, the 1927 law already made room for the deportation of a total of 1,480 households, not to mention the convicts.

A more important question regards who the deportees were. Üngör asserts that the deported were “the top pyramid of the eastern Kurds, namely the (surviving) religious, intellectual, and social elites.”<sup>460</sup> This might be an overstatement. Memoirs as well as

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<sup>457</sup> Çağaptay, 2002, p. 82; Jongerden, 2007, p. 178 n. 2.

<sup>458</sup> Üngör, 2011, pp. 142-3.

<sup>459</sup> Üngör, 2011, pp. 142-4.

<sup>460</sup> Üngör, 2011, p. 143.

interviews cited by Üngör himself prove that at least some of the deportees were rank-and-file villagers and ordinary tribespeople.<sup>461</sup> However, there is no wonder that the deportees *included* Kurdish elites. And it is quite possible that some of these elite families possessed large holdings.

Çağaptay regards Law No. 1097 as one of the earlier examples of the policy of “assimilation through relocation.”<sup>462</sup> Üngör’s study conveys the impression that this policy was not entirely new, though. Üngör notes that following the enactment of the first Settlement Law, a wave of deportations started in May 1926, which “targeted elite families.”<sup>463</sup>

Shortly after Kurds were deported, the government started to settle Balkan *muhacirs* in the Eastern provinces. Aydemir puts their number at 8017 people in 2123 households.<sup>464</sup>

#### **4.1.2. Law Authorizing the Council of Ministers to Cancel the Provision of Law No. 1097 (Law No. 1178)**

Only five months after its enactment of Law No. 1097, the parliament passed a follow-up law in December 1927. This was Law No. 1178 titled Law Authorizing the Council of Ministers to Cancel the Provision of Law No. 1097 (*1097 Numaralı Kanun Hükümünün Refine İcra Vekilleri Heyetinin Mezun Olduğuna Dair Kanun*).

In the preamble of the bill, government admitted that some people had been wrongfully deported from their hometowns following the promulgation of Law No. 1097. Such people

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<sup>461</sup> See Üngör, 2011, pp. 135-44.

<sup>462</sup> Çağaptay, 2002, p. 72.

<sup>463</sup> Üngör, 2011, p. 140.

<sup>464</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, pp. 316-7.

had not actually been involved in the rebellion of Sheikh Sait. Nor had they taken part in brigandage activities in the aftermath of the uprising. Such deportees, the preamble asserted, should be allowed to return home.<sup>465</sup> Hence the first article of the government draft authorized the Council of Ministers to cancel certain deportations.<sup>466</sup>

On the other hand, Law No. 1178 opened the door to new deportations. According to Article 2, people who were known to engage in brigandage, rebellion and oppression (*tegallüp*) were eligible for deportation. Also eligible were Law No. 1097 deportees who had fled their designated residence and turned bandits.<sup>467</sup> Jongerden notes that 500 people were deported in agreement with Law No. 1178. All of 500 persons were from Diyarbakır and they allegedly took part in Sheikh Sait rebellion.<sup>468</sup>

If the government was urged to enact a new law on deportation in so short a period of time, it must have been because there was serious resentment against Law No. 1097. Parliamentary deliberations are testament to this. On the floor, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya was queried by Reşit Ağar of Gaziantep. It was easy to apprehend why Ağar nursed a grievance: he was a leading *aşiret* member himself, and in his family parliamentary post descended from father to son. Ağar claimed that there had been much misconduct in the implementation of Law No. 1097. But, for him, the problem was the law itself – its wording in particular. The meaning of “*tegallüp*” (oppression) was not straightforward. In the East, men of wealth commanded respect from common people whom they provided assistance whenever necessary. Herein lay the source of the problem: after the passage of the law on deportation, this sort of influence over people was mistaken for oppression.

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<sup>465</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927b, p. 1.

<sup>466</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927b, p. 2.

<sup>467</sup> 1097 Numaralı Kanun Hükümünün Refine İcra Vekilleri Heyetinin Mezun Olduğuna Dair Kanun, 1927, İkinci Madde (Article 2), p. 4.

<sup>468</sup> Jongerden, 2007, p. 178 n. 2.

According to Ađar, *tegallüp* in the sense of illegitimate political power had already ceased to exist.<sup>469</sup>

To Şükrü Kaya the notion of *tegallüp* was so self-evident that misconduct was impossible. *Tegallüp* was “rebellion and brigandage” and it was the “prevalence of lawlessness.”<sup>470</sup> In a nutshell, then, *mütegallibe* were those who defied state’s authority and its laws.

#### **4.1.3. Law Regarding the Land to be Distributed to Farmers in Need within the Eastern Regions (Law No. 1505)**

It is finally time for Law Regarding the Land to be Distributed to Farmers in Need within the Eastern Regions (*Şark Manatıkı Dahilinde Mühtaç Zürraa Tevzi Edilecek Araziye Dair Kanun*) of 1929. An amnesty was proclaimed in May 1928, as a result of which some deportees came back to their native towns. Some of these claimed whatever was left of their properties in 1929.<sup>471</sup> Law No. 1505 was legislated against this background. The bill was submitted by the Ministry of Interior on 30 May 1929. The committee of internal affairs reviewed the draft the following day. Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya was himself present when the committee met to discuss the bill. No amendments were made by the committee.<sup>472</sup> Aside from a number of technical queries, no discussion over the bill took place on the floor. The bill was passed on 3 June.<sup>473</sup> This timing alone hints at the sense of urgency.

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<sup>469</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927c, pp. 85-6.

<sup>470</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1927c, pp. 85-6.

<sup>471</sup> Tunçay, 1992, p. 141 n. 20; Üngör, 2011, p. 145.

<sup>472</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1929a, pp. 1-2.

<sup>473</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1929b, pp. 257-8.

Preamble of the bill makes it clear that the government did redistribute land in the eastern provinces following the passage of Law No. 1097. One shall recall that landed properties of deportees passed to the Treasury in 1927 and that, according to the law, the government was not supposed to do land distribution. Apparently, however, at least some of the lands which used to belong to the deported were given to those in need of land without any legal foundation. As stated in government's bill, recipients were "peasants, *aşiret* members, nomads and *muhacirs*." Now the government wanted to make sure that grantees kept the lands they thus acquired. If they were evicted, the preamble said, they would have no choice but work on other people's lands. Hence the first article of Law No. 1505 stipulated that distributed lands would remain at the hands of the recipients.<sup>474</sup>

Law No. 1505 did more than sanctioning previous distributions in an ex post facto fashion. Article 2 of the law regulated new distributions within the same geographic area. According to this, government was authorized to distribute land to peasants, *aşiret* members, nomads and *muhacirs*; but this time, depending on the size of the estate, owners had the right to keep 500 to 2000 *dönüms* to themselves.<sup>475</sup>

Article 3 of Law No. 1505 regulated valuation and compensation of land. Administrative councils of districts and provinces were entrusted with valuation of properties. The amount of compensation would be based on tax value of land, if the latter was available. The article stipulated that compensation value had to be between six times to eight times of tax value. If tax value was unknown, land register value would be used in deciding the compensation payment. In accordance with the rules governing confiscations, compensation payment had to be a lump sum, and ownership of land would only pass to the state once the payment was done. The article applied to not only future confiscations

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<sup>474</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1929a, pp. 1-2.

<sup>475</sup> Şark Manatıkı Dahilinde Mühtaç Zürraa Tevzi Edilecek Araziye Dair Kanun, 1929, İkinci Madde (Article 2), p. 935.

but also lands which had already been distributed after the passage of Law No. 1097.<sup>476</sup> This means that compensation would now be paid retroactively to people whose lands were expropriated in 1927.

As for the zone in which the new law was to be enforced, Law No. 1505 had a new provision. Martial law in eastern provinces was finally lifted in 23 November 1927. So the designated zone of enforcement could no longer be the martial law area as was the case for Law No. 1097. On the other hand, shortly after the termination of martial law, the First General Inspectorate was brought into being, which comprised the provinces of Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Urfa, Mardin, Bitlis, Siirt, Van and Hakkari.<sup>477</sup>

Hence Article stated that Law No. 1505 was primarily made for the General Inspectorate zone. It is worthwhile to quote the article in its entirety as its interpretation would cause a major controversy in the parliament a few years later. Article 4 read “This law is to be administered within the zone of the First General Inspectorate and where Council of Ministers deems proper.”<sup>478</sup>

This finally brings the discussion to the issue of the implementation of the law. İnci cites a speech made by premier İsmet İnönü in November 1929. According to this, in Eastern provinces, the government provided 110,000 *dönüms* of land to landless peasants with the authority it derived from Law No. 1505. İnönü also stated that 20,000 out of 110,000 *dönüms* of redistributed land were private property. The 20,000 *dönüms* in question were confiscated from landlords, who were paid in conformity with the provisions of Law No.

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<sup>476</sup> Şark Manatıkı Dahilinde Mühtaç Zürraa Tevzi Edilecek Araziye Dair Kanun, 1929, Üçüncü Madde (Article 3), p. 935.

<sup>477</sup> For a detailed analysis of the First General Inspectorate, see Koçak, 2003c, pp. 53-126.

<sup>478</sup> Şark Manatıkı Dahilinde Mühtaç Zürraa Tevzi Edilecek Araziye Dair Kanun, 1929, Dördüncü Madde (Article 4), p. 935.

1505.<sup>479</sup> 20,000 out of 110,000 *dönüms* makes less than one-fifth of the total acreage distributed. This is why İnci claims that confiscations proceeded at a modest pace.

Equally important is what happened in the aftermath of land distribution. Both İnci and Tezel write that *muhacirs* and other settlers often could not hold onto the lands given to them. Their accounts on this regard are very similar. Their starting point is the well-known fact that landed properties were not yet cadastered in this period. Problems arose whenever government distributed land because certain people took advantage of this situation. That is, they claimed right over redistributed plots with papers which dated back to Ottoman times. Events like this were an ordinary occurrence in the late 1920s and 1930s.<sup>480</sup> As Aydemir narrates, this happened in the Çınar district of the province of Diyarbakır where *muhacirs* from the Balkans were settled on vacant lands. Same as before, *muhacirs* were not given the title deeds to lands on which they were settled. Some 20 years after the settlement, a *bey* showed up, claiming that it was his estate which had been granted to *muhacirs*. The court heard the testimony of “two old Kurdish shepherds” and decided in favor of the *bey*. Rumelian *muhacirs* were thereby driven off the land.<sup>481</sup> For Aydemir, revocation of this sort happened because neither *muhacirs* nor other grantees received title deeds to lands they were settled on.<sup>482</sup>

The juristic context was responsive to property rights claims. Aydemir strongly emphasizes how revocations were facilitated by Article 639 of the Turkish Civil Code of 1926. By the time deportees returned from the western provinces, he writes, Civil Code already went into effect. And the code vindicated ownership claims of the *ağas*.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> İnci, 2010, pp. 352-3.

<sup>480</sup> İnci, 2010, p. 351; Tezel, 1994, pp. 375-6.

<sup>481</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, p. 315.

<sup>482</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, pp. 305, 312.

<sup>483</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, p. 314.

Aydemir does not give any further details, which makes it necessary to take a look at the article in question. Article 639 of Law No. 743 dealt with resolution of ownership disputes over lands which were *not* registered in title deeds. According to the article, a person could lay claim over a portion of land if he could prove that it had been in his effective possession continuously and without dispute for 20 years. The same rule still held even when the registered owner of the land in question was unknown or had been missing or deceased for at least 20 years.<sup>484</sup>

Aydemir, Tezel and İnci are in agreement that Civil Code strengthened the hands of large owners. Tezel also refers to a landmark 1929 law. This Law No. 1515 put a stamp of approval on papers issued by the Ottoman government to confer *tımar* and *iltizam* privileges to individuals. Thenceforth such papers would be recognized as a legitimate basis for private ownership rights.<sup>485</sup> On the other hand, Aydemir notes that certain Council of State (*Şura-yı Devlet*) decisions facilitated the revoking of land grants in favor of previous owners. He does not give the dates or numbers of the decisions, however.<sup>486</sup>

#### **4.2. Intellectual Accounts on the Kurdish Question**

In this section, three contemporaneous accounts on Kurdish uprisings will be examined. Each account touches upon the land dimension to some extent. The expose starts with Naşit Hakkı Uluğ, and then, chronologically moves to İsmail Hüsrev Tökin and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir.

Naşit Hakkı Uluğ (1902-1977) was a prominent journalist of single party years. He held editorial and administrative positions in the semi-official *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* and *Ulus*

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<sup>484</sup> Türk Kanunu Medenisi, 1926, Altı Yüz Otuz Dokuzuncu Madde (Article 639), p. 221.

<sup>485</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 371.

<sup>486</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, p. 315.

newspapers. From 1931 to the end of 1938, he was also a member of the parliament. Uluğ was genuinely interested in the plight of Eastern provinces so much so that he wrote two books specifically on Dersim/Tunceli.<sup>487</sup>

In early 1930s, İsmail Hüsrev Tökin (1902-1992) and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir (1897-1976) were among the intellectuals who founded the *Kadro* journal, which set out to develop Kemalism into a coherent doctrine. Most *Kadro* writers had previously been taught at the *Communist University of the Toilers of the East* and, therefore, they were very much influenced by Marxism. On the other hand, fascist regimes, too, had an impact on *Kadro*'s imaginary. These two influences might be said to have joined together to produce an interest in problems industry and industrialization. Tökin stood as the only *Kadro* writer with a substantial interest in the countryside. Nevertheless, many scholars argue by implication that *Kadro* proved influential in fuelling in the regime a conviction in favor of redistribution of land at a time when Kurdish provinces were shaken by uprisings. For instance, this is the impression one is likely to get upon reading Karaömerlioğlu, who traces the early development of an idea of land reform through a reading of articles published in *Kadro*.<sup>488</sup> İnci is more explicit. According to him, it was the intelligentsia who developed an interest in reforming land tenure in the 1930s, and this was later taken up by statesmen. İnci, too, makes use of Tökin's writings in the early 1930s to illustrate this influence.<sup>489</sup>

It remains to be seen whether there indeed was such an influence. Land reform was advocated by people like Uluğ and *Kadro* intellectuals on the one hand and the RPP headquarters on the other. Furthermore, both coincided with the eruption of a series of

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<sup>487</sup> These books are *Derebeyi and Dersim* (1931) and *Tunceli Medeniyete Açılıyor* (1938). The former will be examined below.

<sup>488</sup> See Karaömerlioğlu, 1998, pp. 39-40 and Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, pp. 128-9.

<sup>489</sup> İnci, 2010, pp. 353-4.

uprisings in the East of Turkey. Then the question is: is it possible to assert that statesmen and intellectuals advocated reform in similar ways and for the same reasons?

Naşit Hakkı Uluğ's *Derebeyi ve Dersim* was written just months after the rebellion of 1925. This is precisely why Uluğ's little-known book is so important. Tökin and Aydemir write with much hindsight; Uluğ's account sounds more instinctive. Hence Uluğ closely echoes the spirit of the time. Nowhere is this clearer than his notes on the relationship between religion and opposition.

Religion has an immense presence in Uluğ's account of the rebellion of Sheikh Sait. This is obvious from the way he characterizes the incident of 1925. To him, the rebellion of 1925 was an instance of *irtica* – a loaded word in Turkish which literally translates as reaction, but has a very strong religious connotation. According to Uluğ, 1925 was no simple uprising; it was the first round of the fight between the Republic and political reaction. Uluğ describes the execution of 48 people who allegedly directed the rebellion as a new “dawn” for the Republic. On that “revolutionary night”, he writes, religious pretenders like Sayyid Abdülkadir were hung as young officers watched, delighted.<sup>490</sup>

It is quite probable that, for many people in mid-1920s, the Sheikh Sait incident was most easily legible in these terms. This was a time when the new regime was about to embark on a series of drastic secularizing reforms. The agenda before the state was all about consolidation of power and secularization. Furthermore, what was to be consolidated was a *nation-state*. Problems associated with ethnic diversity were therefore out of question. As Toprak argues, under such circumstances, characterizing the Sheikh Sait incident as a religious upheaval was almost self-evident, and had the added benefit of justifying secularist measures to follow.<sup>491</sup> Aydemir, too, argues that there indeed was a connection

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<sup>490</sup> Naşit Hakkı, 1932, pp. 31-2.

<sup>491</sup> Toprak, 1981, pp. 68-9.

between the Şeyh Sait rebellion and the move to secularize social life in the republic. The Eastern Independence Tribunal in Diyarbakır, which carried out the trials of those associated with the uprising, ordered that all religious orders in the region be closed down. This was on account of the alleged role that orders and sheikhs played in instigating and spreading the rebellion. The Ankara tribunal agreed with the decision and pled the government to take action. The government responded by legislating Law No. 677 which shut down dervish lodges and turbes in December 1925.<sup>492</sup>

Second to religion in Uluğ's account of the rebellion of 1925 is peasants' relation to their *ağas* and sheikhs. On the surface of it, Uluğ comments, the new regime abolished all privileges hitherto enjoyed by *ağas* and sheikhs making them equal with ordinary peasants or shepherds.<sup>493</sup> Yet very little did change since peasants were still dependent on those wealthy and privileged men.<sup>494</sup> For instance, as before, Kurds were bought and sold with the land they live.<sup>495</sup> Strong as it is, this argument does not casually link the predicament of Kurdish peasants to the outbreak of the rebellion. In other words, peasants' economic and social dependence is not presented as one of the causes of the uprising in Diyarbakır. Nevertheless he does imply that *ağas* and sheikhs grew hostile to the new regime as their privileges were infringed upon.

Uluğ's social commentary is not confined to the rebellion of Sheikh Sait. He is assured that the rebellion of Sheikh Sait was the first of a wave of insurgency to come. This is because factors which had caused the uprising of Diyarbakır were present in many other Kurdish localities. In particular, he is of the opinion that a major upheaval could take place

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<sup>492</sup> Aydemir, 1965, p. 231.

<sup>493</sup> Naşit Hakkı, 1932, pp. 6-7, 10.

<sup>494</sup> Naşit Hakkı, 1932, pp. 10-1, 11-6.

<sup>495</sup> Naşit Hakkı, 1932, p. 17.

in Dersim, i.e. today's Tunceli.<sup>496</sup> The remaining part of his book is, therefore, about social relations in Dersim.

Religion figures heavily in Uluğ's account of Dersim, too. Uluğ is particularly critical of Dersimi sayyids – local religious leaders whose authority derives from an assumed descent from Prophet Muhammad. He asserts that religion for sayyid is a means of livelihood and a mechanism of extortion. Uluğ then colorfully narrates how sayyids of Dersim take advantage of rank-and-file peasants.<sup>497</sup>

Uluğ proceeds to a detailed account of the *aşirets* (clans) of Dersim, which dominate rural life in the province. His notes provide the reader with some substantial information about these prominent families including their numbers, wealth, means of livelihood and political attitudes etc. Time and again the wealth of an *aşiret* is defined with reference to the size of its flock. Land ownership never enters the picture. It is perfectly legitimate to say that this omittance is due to the dominance of animal husbandry over agriculture. Yet there is no mention of rights over pasture land either.<sup>498</sup> That Uluğ's social critique does not involve a concern with property relations on land is quite important. Even when Uluğ condemns landowners (*ağas*) he invokes Kurdish complicity with Russian forces, blood feuds, bigotry, pillage and so forth.

What is interesting is that the panacea for rural unrest in Dersim and elsewhere is nevertheless put as the uprooting of *ağas* and sheikhs. Not only would such a maneuver “declaw Dersim” and thus restore peace in the province; it would also free common peasants from tyrannical rule.<sup>499</sup> To conclude, Uluğ seems to suggest deportation not

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<sup>496</sup> Naşit Hakkı, 1932, pp. 5-6, 29.

<sup>497</sup> Naşit Hakkı, 1932, pp. 30-6.

<sup>498</sup> Naşit Hakkı, 1932, pp. 37-71.

<sup>499</sup> Naşit Hakkı, 1932, pp. 52, 74-5.

because *ağas* hold land, but because they threaten the Republic and all the values latter stands for.

According to İlkin and Tekeli, *Kadro*'s stance on land-related matters is best described as anti-feudal.<sup>500</sup> On the other hand, Türkeş, who penned a monograph on this important journal of the early 1930s, extracts from Aydemir's and Tökin's articles published in *Kadro* an extensive agricultural agenda. It appears that at the center of this is a development plan for agriculture, which would be administered by the Agricultural Bank (*Ziraat Bankası*). Türkeş maintains that *Kadro*'s agenda included such concerns as cooperativization, marketization of peasant produce and mechanization of agricultural production. As for the redistribution of landed properties, it was one facet of this comprehensive program.<sup>501</sup> In fact, Türkeş suggests that *Kadro* intellectuals comprised the first circle to develop a coherent proposal for land reform in Turkey.<sup>502</sup>

It should be stated at the very outset that, for Tökin, land problem is not uniform throughout Turkey. He tends to make a distinction between tenurial problems in Eastern provinces on the one hand and those in Central and Western Anatolia on the other. That is not to say that there are no overarching, country-wide issues. The most obvious of such issues seems to be landlessness, although Tökin is silent as to the overall number or percentage of rural population with no or inadequate amount of land. That said, it should come as no surprise that a significant portion of his writings on the topic draws upon (mostly oral) accounts of local governors, MPs, his acquaintances who lived in the provinces, etcetera.

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<sup>500</sup> Tekeli and İlkin, 1984, p. 50.

<sup>501</sup> Türkeş, 1990, pp. 186-92.

<sup>502</sup> Türkeş, 1990, p. 189.

Going back to the topic of rural relations in modern-day Turkey, Tökin provides a dual analysis. While the key term for his account of non-Kurdish Anatolia is sharecropping, his analysis of the Eastern provinces is all about feudalism and rural unrest. In one of his articles published in *Kadro*, Tökin puts the divergence as follows: Eastern Turkey is dominated by “feudal lords”, whereas “landlords” rule the roost in Central and Western Anatolia.<sup>503</sup> Tökin then inquires into the historical causes of this divergence.

Ottoman feudalism<sup>504</sup> has in the course of centuries gone through a “metamorphosis”, the extent of which varied from the East to the Western parts of Anatolia. In the case of Central and Western Anatolia, Tökin asserts, sharecropping arrangements between peasants and large landowners have been a legacy of metamorphosed feudal relations.<sup>505</sup> Needless to say, the idea at work here is that sharecropping arrangements are backward and that they should have disappeared altogether. True, peasants are no longer personally

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<sup>503</sup> İsmail Hüsrev, 1932b, p.29.

<sup>504</sup> To this day, singling out Kurdish provinces as the locus of feudalism has been the stronger tendency among social scientists. According to Tökin, however, feudal relations of production were once dominant in *all* Ottoman domains; Kurdish provinces were no exception. This is the basis of Tökin’s critique of Turkish historiography. Historians of the Ottoman Empire, he writes, have mistaken the surface manifestations of Ottoman land regime for its essence. According to him, historians typically refrain from characterizing the agrarian relations of the Empire as “feudal”, because they place undue emphasis on vassals’ being government-appointed functionaries who lacked an independent source of power. Tökin does not argue that the specificities of vassal-overlord relation in the Ottoman case are trivial; the problem is that the analytical emphasis on this issue has overshadowed another, equally important, dimension, i.e. the relation between the vassal and his peasants. For Tökin, the defining element of the feudal order, its essence, is peasants’ status as dependent cultivators. Therefore, if we are to define feudalism properly, peasant-vassal relations should have analytical priority over vassal-overlord relations. As for the legal status of Ottoman peasants, Tökin maintains that they were as un-free as European peasants of the Middle Ages: they were coercively tied to land, they were under stringent rules concerning the way they used the land, they had personal service obligations to the lord, etc. Hence Tökin concludes that it would be erroneous to buy into the semblance of freedom or be blinded by the fact that fief holders were government officials. (Tökin, 1990, pp. 152-63.)

<sup>505</sup> İsmail Hüsrev, 1932b, p.20. Tökin writes a great deal on forms sharecropping arrangements assume in Central and Western Anatolia, putting substantial emphasis on the fact that peasants are extremely vulnerable, not the least because their status is not legally secure. On the other hand, he does not analyze how relations between government-appointed fief-holders and their dependent peasants evolved to culminate in an agrarian order in which large landowners hire out their land in small pieces to disadvantaged peasants. This presumably happened in the course of some five centuries, but we are left with no explanations as to the mechanisms which were at work.

dependent on landlords; however, this fact alone does not mean that they have been emancipated. On the contrary, they are now bound by debt. Hence, although peasant-landlord relations are regulated by contracts freely made, peasants are too often trapped in a vicious circle: whenever agricultural prices go down, peasants' share of the produce falls short of covering livelihood and production expenses, which urges them to borrow (in kind or in cash) from the landlord. Furthermore, because peasants are fully exposed to the vicissitudes of the market, it is probable that their debt will pile up in time, which is likely to turn peasants into a new kind of dependent producers.<sup>506</sup>

It is important that Tökin does not propose a simplified evolutionary schema. On the contrary, the impression one gets upon reading what he has to say on the subject is that the end product of the processes outlined just above is not necessarily greater concentration of land or dispossession. To his credit, Tökin maintains that sharecropping does not inevitably lead to full dispossession, because peasants' fate depends a lot on market conditions. Social differentiation in the countryside, he explains, "accelerates in times of crisis", only then are peasants turned into dispossessed tenants; but, when the crisis is over, differentiation comes to a halt, and most of the time peasants might re-attain their holdings.<sup>507</sup> This insight, which complies with the analysis proposed in the previous chapter, is of considerable value in grappling with the question of the survival of small property in the Turkish countryside.

What has been presented up until now is Tökin's account of Central and Western Anatolia. It is now time to turn to the Eastern provinces. Tökin holds that, under the Ottomans, this part of Anatolia manifested the features of "private feudalism". The kind of feudalism prevalent here is called "private" because, unlike the rest of core Ottoman domains, in Kurdish provinces fief holders were not government officials but private persons, i.e.

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<sup>506</sup> Tökin, 1990, pp.186-7,191.

<sup>507</sup> İsmail Hüsrev, 1932b, p.28.

grandees of Kurdish tribes. Furthermore, this type of feudalism survived into the Republic without going through significant transformations.<sup>508</sup> Subsequently, feudal lords have managed to legally appropriate all cultivable land in the region, which has left Kurdish-speaking peasant entirely landless. Hence the peasant tills his lord's land, lives on his estate, and works for his keep. What is even more outrageous from the point of view of Tökin is the fact that Kurdish-speaking peasants of the region are still personally bound to their lords, as exemplified by *corvée* obligations. Tökin illustrates the situation by citing the example of Dersim, the most recalcitrant Kurdish province in the 1930s. For instance, he claims that Seyit Rıza, the leader of the Kurds of Dersim, routinely sent his men to İstanbul to collect dues from fellow Dersim people who migrated to the big city to make a living.<sup>509</sup>

The above views set the tone of Tökin's diagnosis of the Kurdish issue. He proclaims that Kurdish uprisings of 1930s were nothing but symptoms of the maladies of a long-outdated rural order. Hence it would be gravely misleading to conceive of the uprising as some sort of "national awakening", for it unambiguously was a reaction. That is, it was a regressive attempt by antiquated social forces. When the Republican administration set out to penetrate the provinces, his argument goes, the feudal chiefs retaliated and incited Kurdish commoners into revolt. It was, then, a war of two rival orders: "feudal social relations" versus the order brought by the Turkish national revolution.<sup>510</sup>

Consequently, Tökin puts forward what might well be called a civic argument against the persistence of Kurdish feudalism. For Tökin, the servile order in the Eastern provinces is at odds with the philosophy of the Republic, whose civil law granted free legal status to every individual. However, the state of affairs in the provinces bears testimony to the fact

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<sup>508</sup> Tökin, 1990, pp.165-7.

<sup>509</sup> Tökin, 1990, pp.177-9.

<sup>510</sup> Tökin, 1990, pp.180-2.

that the “civil law is (...) yet to penetrate beyond the outskirts of the cities”.<sup>511</sup> This is a problem whose significance cannot be overstated, because Tökin’s worst fear is that the limited reach of the new ideals/legal principles is ultimately bound to jeopardize the Republic itself. The survival of the new regime, then, hinges on the extent to which it does improve the lives of its citizens, no matter how distant they are from the center of political power.<sup>512</sup>

The servile conditions in the East are not only *socially* abhorrent, however. There also is an ethnic dimension to the whole issue; this is what Tökin perceives as the peril of “Kurdification”. According to him, the Turkish element in the region has gradually been assimilated by Kurdish tribes, coercively or otherwise, as a result of which all-Turk village communities have ceased to exist. Part of this process had also to do with land tenure: Kurdish tribes infiltrated Turkish villages *economically*, appropriating peasant lands and reducing Turkish-speaking peasants to a sharecropper status. On the other hand, Tökin does not seem to be suggesting that Kurdification was simply an effect; rather, it was a somewhat deliberate measure. This is so because it was in the interest of the feudal chiefs to Kurdify Turkish peasants, since Kurds were more susceptible to control by fellow Kurds. Hence Tökin argues that it is incumbent upon the Republic to liquidate feudal landlords of the Eastern provinces. Such a move, he continues, would bring two invaluable benefits at once: the “enslaved” Kurdish-speaking peasants would be freed *and* the Turkish element on the verge of extinction would be salvaged from assimilation.<sup>513</sup>

Tökin has an urgent policy proposal for Eastern provinces: expropriation of feudal lords’ properties and distribution of lands thus acquired to peasants. This would not suffice, though. Any scheme of land reform in the East is doomed to failure, argues Tökin, as long

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<sup>511</sup> Tökin, 1990, pp.179-80.

<sup>512</sup> İsmail Hüsrev, 1932a, pp.20-1.

<sup>513</sup> Tökin, 1990, pp.182-5.

as feudal lords remain in the region. Expropriated tribal chiefs could easily get their lands back by abusing the power they have over the peasants. Consequently, Tökin maintains that forced deportation should accompany expropriation; because otherwise it would be next to impossible to permanently alter the tenurial conditions in the East.

On the other hand, for the rest of the country, i.e. central and Western provinces, the highest priority must be the abolition of the practice of sharecropping. What Tökin has in mind is not abolition by legal fiat, presumably because he knows such a policy would fail unless peasants have adequate land of their own. Hence he suggests land redistribution schemes, which would be probed up by measures to alleviate peasant indebtedness.<sup>514</sup>

While Tökin wrote extensively on land-related issues, his peer Şevket Süreyya Aydemir published a number of articles on Kurdish uprisings in the *Kadro* journal in the early 1930s. He elaborated his views years later in his multi-volume biographies of Kemal Atatürk (*Tek Adam*) and İsmet İnönü (*İkinci Adam*).<sup>515</sup> Below is an analysis of those parts of his volumes in which he deals with Kurdish unrest.

In Aydemir's excursus, religion wanes in importance among factors responsible for Kurdish insurgence. This is comparatively speaking against Naşit Hakkı's writings. So, it is not to say that Aydemir dismisses the relationship between sheikhs and followers as irrelevant. He briefly touches on the subject and repeats what have been written before him.<sup>516</sup> At one point he even goes as far to say that the rebellion of 1925 was a movement of Islamic reaction.<sup>517</sup> Yet, the rest of his account is not entirely in tune with this assertion. For instance, he makes the bold observation that large ownership and sheikhdom are two

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<sup>514</sup> İsmail Hüsrev, 1933, pp.33-9.

<sup>515</sup> The three volumes of *Tek Adam* were published between 1963 and 1965. The three volumes of *İkinci Adam* were published between 1966 and 1968.

<sup>516</sup> See Aydemir, 1965, p. 224-5; Aydemir, 1966b, pp. 74-9.

<sup>517</sup> Aydemir, 1965, p. 219.

sides of the same coin. Sheikdom, he writes, is nothing but “spiritual landlordism” as opposed to profane/ordinary landlordism.<sup>518</sup>

For Aydemir, then, the problem is one of landlordism. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to say that Aydemir replicates Tökin’s analysis; because ethnicity is somewhat more pronounced in his account. In fact, the problem of large ownership and ethnicity is quite intertwined. A note of caution is necessary here. Aydemir does not talk about a Kurdish nation, for, in his opinion, such a uniform entity does not exist. There are primordial allegiances which fragment Kurds and preclude the birth of a nation.<sup>519</sup> One can nonetheless detect a strong ethnic dimension in Aydemir’s writings on rural unrest in the Eastern provinces. His concern with Kurdish-ness manifests itself wherever Kurmanji- and Zaza-speaking rural communities come up in his narrative. So, the problem resides in the prevalence of the Kurdish language(s). What is more interesting for present purposes is that he repeatedly associates the prevalence of Kurdish language with landlordism. According to this, Kurdish language is exclusively spoken wherever there is a landholding structure marked by large ownership on the one hand and landless sharecroppers on the other. Otherwise put, where there is no small property, Turkish is non-existent.<sup>520</sup> This is because the presence of landlords makes it impossible for the government to permeate the countryside. For Aydemir, government entails schools, title deeds and courts. In the absence of schools, the dominance of Kurdish can never be broken; and if the government cannot reach out to peasants via title deeds or courts, the rule of landlords remains intact. Hence Aydemir argues that the East should be conquered not with force but with schools, title deeds and courts.<sup>521</sup> Schools would educate the peasants, courts would safeguard their rights against landlords, and title deeds would break the chain of feudal dependence.

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<sup>518</sup> Aydemir, 1965, pp. 230-1.

<sup>519</sup> Aydemir, 1965, pp. 216-7.

<sup>520</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, p. 307.

<sup>521</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, p. 314.

<sup>522</sup> This is the basis from which Aydemir's ideal of small-holding, Turkish-speaking village develops.

As for remedies, Aydemir purports that social unrest which swept Eastern provinces in the 1920s and 1930s called for "thorough social reform". For Aydemir, only a strategy of this sort could eradicate feudal relations on land.<sup>523</sup> Kemalist administration did not even begin to accomplish social reform, though. Most of the time, government's response consisted in administrative and military measures; social dynamics behind Kurdish revolts were thereby disregarded.<sup>524</sup> At times, the government did attempt to reform Kurdish provinces. However, an anti-feudal social reform of this sort entailed confrontation with landlords; and, sadly, government's position on that score was irresolute. Aydemir therefore laments that government policy vis-à-vis Kurdish landlords was twisty and ridden with ambivalences.<sup>525</sup>

In fact, Aydemir offers several explanations for the government's failure to carry out social reform in the Kurdish provinces; government's indecision is simply one of them. Another explanation draws attention to the problem of political cadre. According to this, Kemalists had no coherent view on land-related matters.<sup>526</sup> More than that, Kemalist politicians and intellectuals were only marginally preoccupied by the problems of the countryside.<sup>527</sup> This was no coincidence because Kemalists had what might be called an urban/industrial bias. As Aydemir notes, an interest in property relations occasionally did arise. The problem for Aydemir is that even when a reformist spurt was born, there was

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<sup>522</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, pp. 307, 314.

<sup>523</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, pp. 305, 312-3; Aydemir, 1966b, p. 78.

<sup>524</sup> Aydemir, 1966a, p. 308.

<sup>525</sup> Aydemir, 1966b, p. 78.

<sup>526</sup> Aydemir, 1965, p. 211; Aydemir, 1966b, p. 317-8.

<sup>527</sup> Aydemir, 1966b, p. 60.

no cadre to carry out such an idea. When Mustafa Kemal or his premier spoke to the parliament in support of distribution of land, they met with standing ovation. Everything changed the minute they left the floor, though. Skeptical parliamentarians and reluctant bureaucrats coalesced to kill reform attempts.<sup>528</sup> Yet another explanation to be found in Aydemir's excursus puts the blame on the 1924 Constitution. According to this, the 1924 Constitution was too liberal to facilitate a reform of landholding. For Aydemir, Turkey is going through a revolution (*inkılap*); a change of this magnitude requires a constitution which is not too rigid so that the government would have freedom of movement to do whatever is necessary.<sup>529</sup>

It should be clear by now that redistribution of landed property in the Kurdish provinces is a must-do from Aydemir's point of view. What about the rest of Turkey? For Aydemir, Anatolian countryside had many problems among which "economic misery" clearly stood out. Although Aydemir's account of economic misery is very sketchy, he does hint that rural poverty had to do with low price levels.<sup>530</sup> Aydemir mentions several other problems like backward agricultural techniques, rural population decay and land disputes.<sup>531</sup> What is interesting here is that he talks about a problem of landlordism only in relation to Eastern provinces.<sup>532</sup> For the rest of Anatolia, the problem seems to be an amalgamation of primitive production techniques, poverty and dependence on merchant-usurers. He rarely mentions landlessness or polarization of landholding. Hence Aydemir writes the following for non-Kurdish Anatolia. "Surrounded by open fields, people nevertheless were hungry for land."<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Aydemir, 1966b, pp. 322-330.

<sup>529</sup> Aydemir, 1965, pp. 192-5, 210-1; Aydemir, 1966a, pp. 289, 311.

<sup>530</sup> Aydemir, 1966b, p. 57.

<sup>531</sup> Aydemir, 1965, pp. 210-1; Aydemir, 1966b, p. 63.

<sup>532</sup> Aydemir, 1966b, pp. 57-8.

<sup>533</sup> Aydemir, 1966b, p. 63.

To conclude, Aydemir's call for reform is closely conditioned by 1930s' Kurdish uprisings, and therefore, unlike his peer Tökin, his account is largely confined to the Eastern provinces. It is thus plausible to say that redistribution of land at the hands of Aydemir has become more of a political project.

#### **4.3. The Way Out of the Crisis: Law No. 2056 and Wheat Purchase Program**

One of the most important legislation of the early 1930s was Law Regarding Wheat to be Purchased by the Government via the Agricultural Bank (*Hükümetçe Ziraat Bankasına Mubayaa Ettirilecek Buğday Hakkında Kanun*) of 1932. In the preamble of the draft law, the major problem which beset wheat production is put as price fluctuation. According to this, wheat prices fluctuate in two ways. Firstly, they fluctuate from one year to the other depending on the volume of production. If weather conditions are not favorable in a given year, the volume of production drops, which results in a rise in wheat prices. Conversely if production exceeds demand, then prices go down. The preamble points out that the ultimate reason for this kind of fluctuation is that the technique of agricultural production in Turkey is backward. As a result, production is greatly vulnerable to weather conditions. Prices also fluctuate within a single year. Price for wheat begins to decline at harvest time each year. This trend continues for almost four months, after which price start to recover. The reason for this peculiar movement of prices is that peasants rush to sell their produce as soon as it is harvested. Hence the market is flooded, which results in sharp price declines. According to the document, peasants are anxious to take their harvest to the market because they instantly need cash to pay taxes and clear debts. This state of affairs not only decreases peasant income but also enriches commercial intermediaries.

Hence the bill calls for “a measure to regulate prices after the harvest” so as to make sure that peasants get the worth of their produce. The government admits that there are a variety of measures that could be adopted to address this problem. Possible measures of this sort

include provision of credits<sup>534</sup> and regulation of peasant debt. Nonetheless, the bill suggests that the cheapest and most convenient way is to bring into being a “strong buyer”. Such a buyer would replace commercial intermediaries and stabilize wheat prices. Thus Agricultural Bank is to purchase wheat at a politically determined price and then sell it bit by bit whenever the amount of wheat available in the market starts to drop.<sup>535</sup>

The bill was reviewed by two committees – the Budget Committee and the Economy Committee – before coming to the floor for debate. The committees did not propose major changes to the bill. It is significant that both two committees made the same suggestion, namely, that peasants should be paid cash in hand by the bank.<sup>536</sup> This might be read as a further recognition of how badly Turkish peasants needed cash.

Parliamentary deliberations on government’s bill were fairly routine. Minister of Agriculture Muhlis Erkmen replied a number of queries about some technicalities. Erkmen did make some important points, though. He pointed out that government was currently working on an extensive package to address peasant’s financial problems. Nonetheless, he remarks, government thought it wise to pass wheat purchase law beforehand on account of its urgency.<sup>537</sup> Later, Erkmen was urged to stress that government’s intention in devising a wheat purchase scheme was not profit making. Government’s standpoint was to guarantee peasant welfare.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> Two laws on agricultural credit cooperatives were legislated in this period. The first one came in 1929 (Law No. 1470) and the second in 1935 (Law No. 2836).

<sup>535</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1932a, pp. 1-3.

<sup>536</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1932a, pp. 3-5.

<sup>537</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1932b, p. 461.

<sup>538</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1932b, p. 463.

Wheat protection law of 1932 was a watershed in early republican history. From that point onwards, the regime was much more concerned with peasant's predicament. As the bill's journey through parliament shows, the problem was couched in the vocabulary of financial vulnerability of the peasantry. On the other hand, especially the preamble of the bill reflects a tacit acknowledgement of peasant poverty and indebtedness.

It is hard not to agree with the conventional narrative on the point that this newfound interest in peasant well-being was driven by economic crisis on the one hand, and political crisis on the other. What is questionable about the narrative is the assumed link between land tenure and peasant predicament. In other words, the government came up against a dual crisis, and many thought it imperative to do something about the peasantry. Yet it is erroneous to conclude that the panacea found was to distribute land to peasants.

There is an excellent source which could be used to trace the origins of the legislative initiative to improve the conditions of the peasants. This is Ahmet Hamdi Bařar's *Atatürk'le Üç Ay* (Three Months with Atatürk).<sup>539</sup> The book is Ahmet Hamdi Bařar's memoirs of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's inspection tour of 1930. Atatürk was just as caught by surprise as everybody else when the newly-born opposition party proved enormously popular among Turkish people in 1930. This was the first time in the life of the Republic that popular discontent reared its head. Atatürk wanted to get to the source of the problem in order to see what was bothering his people. For this, he planned a trip through the country with a retinue of experts. Ahmet Hamdi Bařar was head manager at the port of İstanbul at that time. Although he was distant from the center of political decision-making, he was somehow invited to join the band as an economic consultant. Also invited was Memduh Şevket Esandal, who was known for his support for occupational representation. The rest of the band (including Şükrü Kaya, Recep Peker, Reşit Galip and Salih Bozok) was Atatürk's close circle.

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<sup>539</sup> Bařar, 1945.

In the first leg of the journey, Atatürk's team visited Central Anatolian towns of Kayseri and Konya, and then travelled to the Black Sea coast to inspect Samsun and Trabzon. After presidents's retinue held a number of meetings in İstanbul, the tour continued in Thrace. Following a short break, the tour was completed after visits to towns in Aegean and Mediterranean littorals.

The dreary condition of wheat-growing peasants, which resulted from the sharp fall in world grain prices, was undoubtedly the headline of the whole tour. Declining prices were a facet of the Great Depression; however, Başar makes it quite clear that peasant suffering did not start with the global crisis. To the contrary, peasants were already burdened by heavy taxation, corruption of government officials, and above all, state's indifference to matters relating to agriculture and countryside.

His account conveys the impression that Başar is most interested in problems of taxation. He makes constant references to how peasants were struggling under the strain of taxes.<sup>540</sup> In particular, Başar narrates that, everywhere they visited, the group heard stories of peasants selling their houses, animals or land to pay their taxes.<sup>541</sup> It has been argued in the previous chapter that the proportion of taxes to income considerably declined after the abolition of the tithe in 1925. Now what Başar writes might seem to belie this argument at first sight. Yet, one needs also to consider the sharp fall in grain prices, which had the effect of pulling down peasants' money income. As Başar puts it, in an ordinary year, Turkish peasants produced at a loss.<sup>542</sup> Hence their income was now so low that they had hard time paying taxes.

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<sup>540</sup> Başar, 1945, pp. 24, 31, 44-5, 69, 72, 74, 76-7, 91-2.

<sup>541</sup> Başar, 1945, pp. 44-5, 69, 72, 91-2.

<sup>542</sup> Başar, 1945, p. 44.

What is worse, borrowing was not easy for peasants. First of all, peasants did not really have access to an institutional source of credit. Başar maintains that the Agricultural Bank (*Ziraat Bankası*) was actually part of the problem. Even though one of the bank's declared priorities was providing small peasants with credit, in actual fact, it refrained from extending funds to small farmers, who, most of the time, found it difficult to pay credits back. Ironically, the bank's credits filled the coffers of (urban) entrepreneurs. Peasants, on the other hand, had no choice but resort to local moneylenders, who charged high interests on loans.<sup>543</sup>

Towards the end of his memoirs, Başar briefly touches upon the issue of land reform. The occasion is presented as the group encounters agricultural laborers in Çukurova and sharecropping peasants in the Aegean provinces of İzmir and Aydın. Başar notes that these are the two regions where agriculture was most commercialized.<sup>544</sup> It is of utmost significance that the problem of landlessness comes up only in relation to these two regions. As shown in the second chapter, the plains of Çukurova and Söke have historically been exceptions to the predominance of smallholding and owner-operation in Anatolia.

Upon observing the tenure situation in Adana and Aegean towns, men who accompanied Atatürk in his trip momentarily addressed the question of land reform. Some of them, Başar writes, proposed that peasants should be given land. Some said it was necessary to confiscate large estates.<sup>545</sup> Başar unfortunately writes very little of others' views. So this is all the information he gives to his readers. As for himself, Başar has never really been a protagonist of land reform *per se* – either before or after the trip. Nonetheless, having acquired first-hand observations of the life and misery of Turkish peasants, it seems that

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<sup>543</sup> Başar, 1945, pp. 43-4, 77, 111.

<sup>544</sup> Başar, 1945, pp. 116, 122-3.

<sup>545</sup> Başar, 1945, p. 116.

he has become convinced of the necessity to reform the countryside. Yet reform not necessarily means redistribution of land. Başar is more preoccupied with ways to ensure the stability of small peasant property than he is with redistribution. For him, at the source of all problems were poverty and debt, which threatened the survival of family farms. This is why he is on board with wheat purchase, although the scheme he proposes is noticeably different from the one which would be administered in the 1930s.<sup>546</sup> This is also why he fervently advocates credit cooperatives which he regards as an urgent remedy for financial problems peasants face.<sup>547</sup>

In many ways, therefore, 1930s' legislative action is resonant with Başar's account. On the other hand, one aspect of what Başar advocates in *Atatürk'le Üç Ay* remained a utopia in the 1930s. According to him, maintenance of small property requires that the legal status of land be altered. It is impossible to ensure the survival of property-owning peasantry as long as land is bought and sold as an ordinary commodity. His conviction in one word is that land should be decommodified.

Redistribution of landed properties was not on the agenda of Kemalists who enacted wheat purchase in 1932. But soon it would be, and so would decommodification of land. In fact, as will be discussed below and in the following chapter, decommodification would be as crucial as the actual distribution in various proposals and schemes for land reform.

#### **4.4. Settlement Law of 1934 (Law No. 2510)**

In May 1932, Ministry of Interior drafted a settlement bill which eventually would become Law No. 2510. The provisional committee on settlement reviewed the bill and finalized its report two years after in May 1934. The reason for this two-year delay remains

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<sup>546</sup> See Başar, 1945, pp. 76-86.

<sup>547</sup> Başar, 1945, pp. 43-4, 111-4, 124-5.

uncertain. No matter how comprehensive a draft was, it is highly improbable that committee's audit took two years. At some point after its submittal by the ministry, the draft must have been kept on hold for some reason. On the other hand, once provisional committee's review was over, the draft came to parliament floor in June 1934 without further delay.

Settlement Law of 1934 is a well-studied subject of Turkish politics. Analytical focus has so far fallen on the issue of cultural assimilation. This is quite natural given the fact that the general thrust of the law was the settlement of immigrants (*muhacirs*) and Kurdish-speaking populations. Overriding concern was their integration into the national culture. Hence, in his opening speech, Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya declared that they craved for a nation who “speaks a single language, thinks as one, and feels the same way.”<sup>548</sup> Although relatively minor, there also is a land-related dimension to settlement, which is the subject of the following pages.

First, a few words are due about the general state of settlement as of 1934. Settlement of *mübadils* was declared to be over in March 1931 with the passing of the Law Regarding the Finalization and Completion of Transactions Associated with Population Exchange and Property Allotment (*Mübadele ve Teffiz İşlerinin Kat'i Tasfiyesi ve İntacı Hakkında Kanun*). Law No. 1771 was, in Şükrü Kaya's words, the final legislation that wound up “a long and tragic story”<sup>549</sup> The stage was thus set for a new phase of settlement.

Reading the minutes of parliamentary sessions on the settlement bill, one gets the sense that lawmakers were expecting a new and massive inflow of immigrants from outside Turkey. Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya put the anticipated number of immigrants as high

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<sup>548</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 141.

<sup>549</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1931, p. 60.

as 2 millions.<sup>550</sup> The total number of immigrants Turkey received in this period is difficult to estimate; nonetheless, it is fair to say that RPP leaders were proven right. According to Kirişçi, who has made a calculation on the basis mainly of statistics provided by General Directorate of Village Works, Turkey admitted 840,000 immigrants between 1923 and 1945.<sup>551</sup> The question is how much of this came after 1934. Now it is true that an overwhelming majority arrived in the 1920s following bilateral population exchange agreements signed with Balkan states.<sup>552</sup> On the other hand, an early study from 1957 shows that around 230,000 immigrants arrived in Turkey from 1934 to 1945.<sup>553</sup> The inflow continued after 1945 as well. According to the above-mentioned 1957 study, the number of immigrants who came to Turkey between 1945 and 1956 was in the vicinity of 250,000.<sup>554</sup> Kirişçi writes that the inflow peaked at the early years of the Democrat Party reign. He puts the number of immigrants Turkey received in the year 1950-1951 alone as 154,000.<sup>555</sup>

On the first day of the deliberations on the draft law, Naşit Hakkı Uluğ asserted that the new law of settlement was a preparation for new arrivals.<sup>556</sup> As of 1934, laws and regulations on settlement were abundant. Many of them were quite specific, though, attesting to the fact that they were drawn up when need arose.<sup>557</sup> According to the report of the provisional committee on settlement, the problem was that existing legislation was

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<sup>550</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 141.

<sup>551</sup> Kirişçi, 2000, p. 7.

<sup>552</sup> Çağaptay, 2002, p. 71.

<sup>553</sup> Köylü, 1957, p. 161.

<sup>554</sup> Köylü, 1957, p. 161.

<sup>555</sup> Kirişçi, 2000, p. 8.

<sup>556</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934b, p. 67.

<sup>557</sup> For a full list see Kökdemir, 1952, pp. 459-80.

not enough to handle a renewed inflow of immigrants.<sup>558</sup> Therefore, it was stated in the preamble of government bill that the new Settlement Law was meant to replace these scattered legal rules and decisions.<sup>559</sup>

It is my contention that a very important landmark in the history of redistribution of land in Turkey is the Settlement Law. To this date, however, it has not received the attention it deserves. Researchers who study land tenure reform most of the time exclusively refer to Article 10 of the 1934 law. To cite a few examples, this is the case with Avcioğlu, Erdost and Tezel.<sup>560</sup> As these scholars accurately point out, Article 10 was momentous. It was so because Article 10 established as its target the dissolution of tribal organizations (*aşirets*) – a goal which entailed the liquidation of their properties as well. This is why Avcioğlu has gone as far to argue that Article 10 was in effect a land reform law.<sup>561</sup> Tezel agrees: Had the law been rigorously applied, he contends, it could have dismantled “feudal-like” structures and had a revolutionary impact in the Eastern provinces.<sup>562</sup>

The first paragraph of the Article 10 reads: “The law does not recognize *aşirets* as legal persons. All previous rights, whether they are founded on legal provisions, official deeds or administrative decisions, are hereby abolished. Also abolished are tribal chiefdom, *beylik*, *ağalık* and sheikhdom, with all their organizations and instruments supported either by deeds or custom.”<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 6.

<sup>559</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 4.

<sup>560</sup> See Avcioğlu, 1974, pp. 1394-6; Erdost, 2010, pp. 23-4; Tezel, 1994, pp. 376-8.

<sup>561</sup> See Avcioğlu, 1974, p. 1396.

<sup>562</sup> Tezel, 1994, pp. 378.

<sup>563</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, Onuncu Madde (Article 10), pp. 782-3, my translation.

Note that this legal provision did not specify a geographic locus. Article 10 was nonetheless geographically specific. More correctly, it dealt only with Eastern provinces by implication. The reason is simple: For the Kemalists, *aşiret* as a form of social association had a political bearing only in the East. Needless to say, this had to do with Ottoman state's policy of co-opting *aşirets*.<sup>564</sup> The RPP leadership was critical of the policy in question in the belief that it compromised state power. Therefore, this was one of the many policies of Ottoman administration which Kemalist leaders were determined to discontinue. For Naşit Hakkı, *aşirets* were the “last institutional vestiges of middle ages.” In abolishing this medieval social institution, Article 10 heralded the final demise of “Ottoman administration.” As a result, Naşit Hakkı celebrated the new settlement law as one of the pillars of Turkish revolution.<sup>565</sup>

The second paragraph stipulates that all landed property belonging to *aşirets* – even those registered in the name of chiefs/*ağas/beys/sheikhs* – passes to the state to be distributed to “immigrants, refugees, gypsies, transferred populations and landless or sub-landed local peasants”.<sup>566</sup> It may seem simple; but this actually was a difficult rule to enforce at that time because most *aşiret* lands were either registered to tribal leaders, sheikhs, etc. or not deeded at all. As provisional committee indicated in its report on the draft law<sup>567</sup>, the problem was to decide whether a given property registered in chief's name belonged to him or his *aşiret* as such information was not available in land registers. Consequently, it was agreed that disputes would have to be decided via administrative investigation. The committee was of the opinion that it would be wrong to resort to witnesses to settle controversies of this sort. The method was found to be objectionable in that it automatically would favor *aşiret* chiefs who had great power over local people. In its

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<sup>564</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 2.

<sup>565</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934b, pp. 67-8.

<sup>566</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, Onuncu Madde, pp. 782-3.

<sup>567</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 10.

stead, the committee proposed the following procedure: If members of an *aşiret* have access to no other land than that registered to the *ağa*, this should be taken to mean that the land in question belongs to the *aşiret* and, therefore, that it is liable for expropriation.<sup>568</sup> This procedure was added by the committee to the second paragraph of Article 10 and was thus approved.<sup>569</sup>

Also involved in Article 10 was deportation. The third paragraph of the article gave the Ministry of Interior the authority to deport two categories of persons from the region. Chieftains, *ağas*, *beys* and sheikhs constituted the first group. The other group was defined as those whose residence alongside borders posed a threat to order and security. Ministry of Interior would relocate both groups, together with their families, in other regions.<sup>570</sup> Provisional committee on settlement made two minor changes to the article. According to the committee, deportation of *ağas* and sheikhs would make little difference if new *ağas* and sheikhs emerged to take their place. In the belief that the government had to the elimination of the institution/tradition of *ağalık* and sheikhdom, the committee broadened the first category. Now, those who “aspire to become chieftains, *ağas*, *beys* and sheikhs” would also be deported. This proposal was accepted by the parliament. Secondly, according to the original article drafted by the government, people liable for deportation also included “those who are known to oppress<sup>571</sup>”. The committee took that expression out on the grounds that it was too vague.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 11.

<sup>569</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, Onuncu Madde, pp. 782-3.

<sup>570</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, Onuncu Madde, pp. 782-3.

<sup>571</sup> The word used here is “tegallüp”. “Mütegallibe” and “tegallüp” come from the same root. Although the way “mütegallibe” is generally employed makes it proper to translate the word as “extortionist”, in the present context, it seems more correct to translate “tegallüp” as “oppression” rather than “extortion”. What lawmakers mean here is probably that *ağas* and sheikhs are acting as they like, i.e. as if they are sovereign bodies.

<sup>572</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 11.

Ultimately, the wording of the article was vague enough to allow for the deportation of anyone deemed inconvenient. According to Üngör, the practical consequence of the Settlement Law of 1934 for Kurds was that it launched the third phase of Kurdish deportations.<sup>573</sup> Article 10, he writes, turned out to be a renewed attack on Kurdish elites. From the point of view of the state, deportation of elites was critical because, in this way, Kurdish commoners were left defenseless against cultural assimilation.<sup>574</sup> Üngör calls this measure the “separation of elites from the populace.”<sup>575</sup>

What about land distribution? Tezel concludes that the implementation of the law turned out much less radical than Article 10 looked on paper. Even though the law stipulated that the lands of *ağas* and *şeyhs* would be transferred to the state, semi-feudal estates were not eliminated. Provision of land to local peasants and immigrants in the Kurdish provinces took the form of distribution of state-owned lands.<sup>576</sup>

As I have mentioned just above, when discussing the question of land reform in the context of the Settlement Law, researchers usually point to the significance of Article 10. But there are other articles that have a bearing on land ownership. And unlike Article 10, they are not specific to the East. It is now time to return to the government’s bill and provisional committee’s report to examine and contextualize these articles.

Both government bill and report of the committee instantly brought up the failure of Ottoman settlement policy. Kemalist critique hinges on the idea that Ottoman state did not even endeavor to culturally integrate immigrant populations. For the Ottoman statesmen, what would hold together various demographic elements was Ottomanism. Subjects of

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<sup>573</sup> Üngör, 2011, pp. 148-65.

<sup>574</sup> Üngör, 2011, p. 153.

<sup>575</sup> Üngör, 2011, p. 167.

<sup>576</sup> Tezel, 1994, pp. 377-378.

“diverse religions, languages, races and souls” were supposed to amalgamate into an imagined Ottoman brotherhood. Not only did Ottoman administration settle incomers in a haphazard fashion, immigrants were also let to settle in their own all-immigrant villages. As a result incoming populations did not have any cultural contact with native Turks. The outcomes of this kind of a settlement policy proved undesirable: Circassians still spoke Caucasian languages, Balkan immigrants still kept their ways, and none were assimilated to the national culture.<sup>577</sup> Same was true for *Yörüks*: State was unconcerned with these transhumant populations of Turkish descent, and they remained as impenetrable as ever.<sup>578</sup> Government’s bill and committee’s report finally touched upon Kurds. Here the problem was twofold. On the one hand, Ottoman administration had always endorsed the policy of recognizing *aşirets* and *beyliks* as legitimate political entities – a policy whose effects allegedly lingered into republican period.<sup>579</sup> On the other hand was the presence within republican borders of vernaculars other than Turkish, which posed a grave challenge to unity of culture. The state could no longer allow clusters of Kurdish-speaking communities. Thus, Kurdish-speakers had to be dispersed throughout the country.<sup>580</sup>

As aptly put in the preamble of government’s draft, settlement would now proceed on two separate fronts.<sup>581</sup> The first front, or “phase” as government’s text called it, was the settlement of immigrants (*muhacirs*) as well as refugees. Hence the first chapter of the draft law addressed the admission of immigrants and refugees into Turkey. The second front on which settlement would proceed was internal re-settlement. Articles in the second chapter titled “Internal Population Transfers and Cultural and Administrative Measures” covered this dimension.

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<sup>577</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, pp. 1-2, 5-6.

<sup>578</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, pp. 2, 6, 7.

<sup>579</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 2.

<sup>580</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, pp. 3, 6.

<sup>581</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 3.

More relevant for the present purposes is this second dimension of internal re-settlement. Government's bill proclaimed that internal re-settlement had two distinct purposes. On one side were *temdin* (civilizing mission – *mission civilisatrice*) and *temsil* (assimilation).<sup>582</sup> Upon reading government's draft, provisional committee's report and parliamentary deliberations, it is possible to make the observation that missions of *temdin* and *temsil* were evoked whenever it came to Kurds on the one hand, and nomads and transhumant communities on the other. For example, it was stated in the preamble of the bill that government was concerned with enhancing the Turkish population both quantity-wise and quality-wise.<sup>583</sup> In his opening speech on the draft, Şükrü Kaya paid special attention to the issue of sedentarization of nomadic and transhumant populations. According to him, nomads and transhumants of Anatolia, whose numbers totaled more than one million, evaded government's reach altogether. As such, they were destitute of any kind of "civil, ethical, national and political education." Consequently, these communities lived in a very primitive and "uncivilized" state. Şükrü Kaya concluded that it was high time nomads were elevated both culturally and economically.<sup>584</sup>

The other aspect of internal settlement had to do with demographic concerns. It was argued on the basis of census results of 1927 that population was disproportionately distributed across the country. While population density was too high in certain regions, there also were sparsely populated areas within republican borders. This problem could be solved via transfers of groups of groups of people from high-density to low-density areas. It was in this sense that settlement was also utilized for "regulation and balancing of population densities."<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 3.

<sup>583</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 3.

<sup>584</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 141.

<sup>585</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, pp. 3, 6-7; T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 141.

Reshuffling of regional population densities was important because imbalances in the distribution of population had a bearing on production. The report of the provisional committee put the matter as follows: Those parts of the country which were densely populated were not necessarily where the soil was most fertile. This was to say that there was a population surplus in many localities. Conversely, some of the most fertile plains were still sub-populated.<sup>586</sup> Imbalances in the distribution of the population were just the beginning of the problem, though. More important was the general thinness of population. Hence, in his opening speech, Şükrü Kaya built his whole argument for internal re-settlement on Turkey's demographics. Although population was globally on the rise, Turkey was an atypical case in the modern world as a country threatened by "scarcity of population."<sup>587</sup>

It is necessary to situate Kaya's assertion in the context of Turkey of the 1930s. Following the World War and War of National Liberation, maybe the most urgent challenge facing the new nation-state was counteracting demographic decline. Mustafa Kemal expressed this wish as early as 1923 when he visited Eskişehir and İzmit to give briefings to journalist.<sup>588</sup> The regime sought ways to increase the population all through 1920s and 1930s.<sup>589</sup> The population of Turkey rose 2.29% from 1927 to 1935, yet this could not compensate for the population loss of last Ottoman decades. Thus scarcity of population continued to be a problem in late 1930s. Finally, it should be kept in mind that Turkish population was overwhelmingly rural in this period. The first two censuses conducted in 1927 and 1935 found out a ratio of 75%. So when people like Kaya talked about demographic stagnation, they meant rural population.

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<sup>586</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, pp. 6-7.

<sup>587</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, pp. 140-1.

<sup>588</sup> Kirişçi, 2000, p. 15.

<sup>589</sup> Tekeli and İlkin, 1982, pp. 108-9.

Government's bill clearly stated that production growth was constrained by scarcity of population. According to this, economic growth would come about only with an increase in population. The problem from the point of view of agricultural production was that a great deal of the rural population had traditionally resided in places where "means of livelihood" were limited. This had the effect of keeping the population stagnant. If these people were re-located, birth rates would increase much faster, which would push productive population up in the longer-run.<sup>590</sup>

What was meant by meager means of livelihood must have been, above all, scarcity of good agricultural land. This could be observed in Article 8 of Law No. 2510, which stipulated the conditions for relocation of villages. According to this, Council of Ministers was authorized to relocate villages where the land was scarce or unproductive. The latter included anything from marshy or mountainous lands to forests villages.<sup>591</sup>

As is well-known, Article 2 of the 1934 law defined three zones of settlement. The first zone was open exclusively to "people of Turkish culture." On the other hand, "people whose assimilation to Turkish culture was desired" would be settled in, or transferred to, the second zone. Finally, the third zone was closed to all kinds of settlement.<sup>592</sup> Articles 12 and 13 put forward categories of people allowed to reside respectively in the first and second zones. It was in Article 13 that the category of "landless and land-short farmers" was specifically mentioned. That is, farmers in need of land to till were among the people who would be transferred to the first zone of settlement.<sup>593</sup> When Şükrü Kaya pronounced distribution of land to landless and sub-landed farmers as yet another dimension of the

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<sup>590</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 3.

<sup>591</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, Sekizinci Madde (Article 8), p. 782.

<sup>592</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, İkinci Madde (Article 2), p. 781.

<sup>593</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, On Üçüncü Madde (Article 13), p. 784.

new settlement policy<sup>594</sup>, he must have been referring to these articles. This is because there were none others dealing with land distribution of this sort.

A number of observations are in order. First, this is a neglected aspect of the Settlement Law. In fact, it is only Jongerden who has acknowledged it. He writes that the law on settlement contained a “rural reorganization program” whereby villages would be concentrated, re-located and re-organized.<sup>595</sup> Second, this dimension of relocation and provision of land was not entirely new. The new law echoed the Settlement Law of 1926, which, however, was much less comprehensive – consisting only of 13 articles and one provisional article. Like its successor, the first settlement law treated two categories of people: immigrants as well as native populations who were to be relocated or re-settled. The second category included “migratory tribes” and “nomads in general” on the one hand, and sedentary peasants on the other. Peasants could be resettled either in case of unfavorable sanitary conditions or if they resided in forest villages with insufficient means of livelihood. The wording of the article suggests that whole villages would be relocated.<sup>596</sup> It is easy to see that in the case of Article 8 of the 1934 law, the scope is broader; for, villages eligible for relocation were not confined to forest villages. Article 8 acknowledged the presence of villages which were plagued by land scarcity in other ways. This newfound concern might have had something to do with the growing awareness of imbalances in population and its effect on agricultural production.

Nevertheless, an agenda on a general redistribution of land was still absent. In fact, provisional committee on settlement made the following very important remark: “There is no such problem as scarcity of land in our country – save for the Black Sea and the

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<sup>594</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 141.

<sup>595</sup> Jongerden, 2007, p. 178.

<sup>596</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1926, Üçüncü Madde (Article 3), p. 943.

Eastern regions. On the contrary, in most regions, extra labor is needed from outside.”<sup>597</sup> It is possible to argue that provision of land to peasants was not an autonomous concern in 1934. Provision of land made sense because it helped other causes. Relocation of landless and sub-landed peasants elsewhere would ensure not only reclamation of uncultivated land, but containment of non-Kurdish speaking populations as well. If land-short peasants of Giresun were settled around Lake Van, for instance, this would serve both agricultural production and Turkification of the region. Because problems of agricultural production and cultural plurality were intertwined, so was the solution. And according to the preamble of the bill, these problems were why the government embarked on a new population policy and drafted a new settlement law.<sup>598</sup>

This brings the discussion finally to the technicalities of settlement. A crucial question concerned land grants to immigrants and re-settled populations. The original bill drafted by the Ministry of Interior did not have a clause on lands to be distributed. The provisional committee decided to append an article to fill the legal lacuna arising from the annulment of the previous settlement law. Hence, according to Article 21, following categories of land would be distributed to immigrants and transferred populations: (i) state lands of all sorts and origins (ii) pasture commons (iii) vacant lands that lie outside villages, towns and cities.<sup>599</sup> The committee asserted that state lands would not suffice for everyone. Therefore, Turkey should do as countries like Greece, Bulgaria and Romania did and settle immigrants on pastures and vacant common lands. According to the committee, the proportion of land currently under cultivation was so small that common lands surrounding villages and towns could easily accommodate new populations. Report of the provisional committee thus makes it clear that the second and third categories comprised

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<sup>597</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 7.

<sup>598</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 3.

<sup>599</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, Yirmi Birinci Madde (Article 21), p. 786.

the main land resources to be tapped in settlement and relocation.<sup>600</sup> On the other hand, Article 21 stated that, if need be, government could resort to two other resources: (iv) forests and (v) private lands. Council of Ministers was authorized to decide on forest lands to be distributed. As for private lands, they would be bought or confiscated by the government with the sole purpose of distribution.<sup>601</sup>

Article 21 reflected republic's two-decade-old practice of land distribution. Hitherto, the government neither cleared forest land nor confiscated private estates to settle immigrants. Lands distributed were by rule common lands of public access.<sup>602</sup> Nevertheless, as a number of personal testimonies point out, many disputes as to ownership arose after distribution of land. Şükrü Kaya names a few during parliamentary talks on the draft law.<sup>603</sup> He first mentions a recent occurrence in Trabzon. A single man claimed right over 200.000 *dönüms* land which had been given to *muhacirs* quite some time ago. Apparently, the land had previously been uncultivated, which led authorities to believe that it was public property. The court ruled in favor of the claimant, who had some old papers to back his case. As a result, land reverted back to him, and *muhacirs*, who had been tilling the land, were evacuated. Kaya recounts that something similar took place in an Inner Anatolian village called Sazılar along the railroad. Here, too, *muhacirs* were settled on vacant land. Once they rendered land productive, an owner showed up. Same consequences followed: *muhacirs* lost their homes and their land.<sup>604</sup> The Minister of Interior finally mentions the case of Gök Abat, by which he probably means Gökova Bay.

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<sup>600</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 15.

<sup>601</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, Yirmi Birinci Madde (Article 21), p. 786.

<sup>602</sup> Silier, 1981, pp. 74-5.

<sup>603</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 155.

<sup>604</sup> Beşikçi writes that it was the RPP MP Emin Sazak who appropriated the lands of Sazılar village. This is quite probable; for it is recorded in the minutes that as Şükrü Kaya mentioned the case of Sazılar village, he said: "In whose name is [Sazılar land] registered? Let us ask Emin *Bey*." See T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 155 and Beşikçi, 1991, pp. 230-1.

Native people of Gökova drained some marshy land and started farming. Yet they lost their means of livelihood when a few years later a man claimed the property as his.<sup>605</sup> The rapporteur of the provisional committee of settlement asserted that events like those were a too common occurrence.<sup>606</sup> Although the government was determined to prevent such revocations, the initial draft did not deal with this problem. When the provisional committee on settlement amended the draft, two articles were added avowedly to ensure that immigrants and relocated people kept their properties.<sup>607</sup> These were draft articles 49 and 50.

Article 49 of the amended bill stipulated that land to be distributed would be announced six months prior to settlement and distribution. Those who claimed right over land had to appeal to courts within this six-month period, at the end of which the right to object ceased. After that, claimants could only demand financial compensation for their properties. In other words, lands shall not be returned even if it was proven that claimants were rightful owners.<sup>608</sup> Article 50 set forth that assignment of land could not be revoked; landed properties could not be reverted to previous owners. In addition, claimants could not sue for compensation for property seized if a year had passed after distribution.<sup>609</sup>

Articles 49 and 50 provoked lengthy discussions in the parliament.<sup>610</sup> This was extremely rare in single-party years. This being said, it is also true that whenever the Turkish parliament met to deliberate on draft articles that showed the slightest prospect of impinging on property rights, long debates ensued. For instance, this happened in 1937

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<sup>605</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 155.

<sup>606</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 154.

<sup>607</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, pp. 19-20.

<sup>608</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, pp. 40-1.

<sup>609</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934a, p. 41.

<sup>610</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, pp. 153-9.

when the parliament discussed the draft Forest Law (*Orman Kanunu*) which contained a number of provisional articles on expropriation of forests not owned by the state.<sup>611</sup>

Some of the deputies found Articles 49 and 50 obnoxious in the belief that they harmed security of property rights.<sup>612</sup> For example, Raif Bey from Trabzon argued that security of property for 14 million people was being sacrificed for the sake of a couple of thousand *muhacirs*.<sup>613</sup> Şükrü Kaya, for whom the two articles were essential, tried to quell fears that property rights would be encroached upon. He insisted that the government was in no way hostile to private estates; on the contrary, supporting large-scale production was a policy priority.<sup>614</sup> Kaya repeatedly stated that the government had no intention of confiscating private estates which currently were under exploitation. Only those “lands which had been lying vacant for a long while” would be used for settlement and distribution. And in the event that an owner showed up after settlement, he would be compensated for his property.<sup>615</sup> Yet Kaya was also ready to make a concession as to the notice period. He said it could be longer than six months. But deputies were not satisfied.<sup>616</sup> He also suggested that it was possible to limit lands to be distributed to those which were not in land registers. His proposal was not accepted as some deputies rightly pointed out that majority of landed properties were not registered.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>611</sup> See T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937a, pp. 16-22.

<sup>612</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, pp. 155-6.

<sup>613</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 156.

<sup>614</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 158.

<sup>615</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 157.

<sup>616</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 155.

<sup>617</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, pp. 157-9.

In the end, Articles 49 and 50 were voted down. A new article specifically on Thrace was drafted by the Justice Committee and made its way into the law as Article 48.<sup>618</sup> The article stipulated that if claimants proved that they were the rightful owners of lands which had been distributed between 1912 and 1934, they would be treated as immigrants and be granted new land.<sup>619</sup> The new article did not meet any opposition because everyone believed that Thrace was exceptional. The region was a battlefield for many years following 1912, the year Balkan Wars broke, and populations moved back and forth, as a result of which properties kept changing hands.<sup>620</sup> In fact, the provisional committee, too, originally intended to confine the provisions of Articles 49 and 50 to Thrace. Later on, the committee became convinced that similar disputes could arise anywhere and decided to formulate general articles on revocation.<sup>621</sup> Apparently, that was asking too much of a parliament which exalted the right to property.

In conclusion, it seems that the parliament was sensitive about land tenure and landlessness only when it came to Eastern provinces. Save for Naşit Hakkı's comments<sup>622</sup>, there is no single word on problems associated with large ownership and/or sharecropping for rest of Turkey. In this decade of limited land reform, incoming populations as well as Kurdish tribespeople were of more interest to political elites than were landless or sub-landed peasants. Therefore, it is quite fair to say that political elites were yet to develop an autonomous concern with land reform for most of the 1930s.

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<sup>618</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 159.

<sup>619</sup> İskan Kanunu, 1934, Kırk Sekizinci Madde (Article 48), p. 792.

<sup>620</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 154.

<sup>621</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, pp. 153-5.

<sup>622</sup> Naşit Hakkı was the first deputy to take the floor. He said that there were many peasants in Turkey who were either landless or sub-landed, and who, therefore, had no choice but work on other people's land. Their income was so little that most of the time they could barely pay their taxes. Naşit Hakkı concluded that each and every peasant should work on their own land. For him, this was a matter of common good since production would grow if all peasants worked for themselves alone. (T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934b, p. 68.)

## CHAPTER 5

### PRE-1945 HISTORY OF LAND REFORM II (1935-1938)

The literature on Turkish land reform posits a critical juncture in debates on landownership circa 1935. It is assumed, explicitly or otherwise, that RPP leadership did not have a proper concept of land reform before the turning point of mid-1930s. This is the subject matter of the present chapter.

As İnci rightly points out, there was no discernible interest in land reform between 1929 and 1934.<sup>623</sup> Neither İnci nor others dwell on the reasons why reform fell off the agenda after the enactment of Law No. 1505. As a matter of fact, this is a question rarely addressed in literature, which is a pity because the 1929-1934 period interrupts the supposedly progressive development towards an all-encompassing reform project. The literature resumes the history in 1935. Hence, for İnci, indifference finally gave way to reform advocacy in 1935, which marked the origin of a nationwide scheme of land reform.<sup>624</sup> İnan, too, posits that RPP leadership started to play with the idea of a separate land law circa 1935. Before that date, land reform was a political project confined strictly to the East. Now, the Kemalists wanted to radiate the reform in the hope that redistribution of land would increase agricultural productivity throughout the country.<sup>625</sup> Tezel is more precise. He dates the beginnings of a nationwide project of reform as “a few months after the enactment of Settlement Law.” According to him, too, the purpose was to increase

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<sup>623</sup> İnci, 2010, p. 353.

<sup>624</sup> İnci, 2010, p. 358.

<sup>625</sup> İnan, 2005, pp. 45-6.

productivity.<sup>626</sup> Kuruç dates the beginning slightly earlier at 1933/1934. For him, the climax was 1937.<sup>627</sup> According to Karaömerlioğlu, interest in land reform gained momentum between 1934 and 1936 as a result of intellectual influences on policy makers.<sup>628</sup>

The question is whether 1935 was a turning point. There are grounds to believe that it really was. During parliamentary deliberations on the draft settlement law, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya announced that the government was preparing a law specifically on land. This was on June 14, and the parliamentarians were debating the most controversial articles of the draft law, namely, Articles 49 and 50. In response to the opposing camp, Şükrü Kaya once again stated that the government would never confiscate lands under cultivation. On the contrary, it was determined to do everything in its power to make sure that peasants kept their land. To this end, the government had been working on a land law. As for the details of the law in the making, Kaya's words were vague. In fact, it is not clear if he was talking about a single law or a series of laws. On the other hand, he did make it clear that government would take legislative action against mortgaging of peasant property. Once the law was passed, it would no longer be possible to foreclose family plots for non-payment of debts.<sup>629</sup>

This is the earliest statement that I have been able to find in parliamentary minutes concerning a prospective land law, which makes it significant. This finding confirms that 1934/1935 was indeed a turning point. But Şükrü Kaya's statement is valuable also because it hints at the notion of tenure reform that RPP leadership had in mind. It cannot be overemphasized that land reform is a generic term; its content varies from case to case.

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<sup>626</sup> Tezel, 1994, p. 388.

<sup>627</sup> Kuruç, 1987, p. 180.

<sup>628</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 1998, pp. 32-3.

<sup>629</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1934c, p. 158.

This simple fact sometimes goes unnoticed in scholarly studies and political analyses in Turkey. It is as if the core of any land reform scheme is expropriation of large owners. This need not be so. Take Şükrü Kaya's statement in 1934. Apparently, the general thrust of the prospective law was to guarantee the survival of peasant property. And that required changing the legal status of peasant property. It is possible to say on the basis of this statement alone that land law was above all devised to prevent expropriation of small peasants. If so, then for the reform-minded Kemalists, the problem was more about usurpation and alienation than about inequalities in the distribution of land. I will return to this discussion a couple of times in this chapter, which hopefully help to ascertain the true character of envisaged reform.

The previous chapter has addressed the question of the role of intellectuals in stirring an interest in land reform. This theme is continued in this chapter as well. Accordingly, one of the sections below is devoted to peasantism. The inclusion of this ideological-political genre in the present chapter seems fitting because, as Karaömerlioğlu writes, the influence of peasantist ideology within Kemalism increased significantly in the 1930s.<sup>630</sup> This was when *Ülkü* journal of the People's Houses devoted considerable space for peasantist themes.<sup>631</sup> Both Karaömerlioğlu and İnci advance that intellectual influences on the regime's political elites were strong in this period.<sup>632</sup> The question I will address here is whether the idea of land reform was indeed taken over from peasantist ideology. The first step towards providing an answer is to discuss the place of ownership problems in the peasantist discourse. In other words, did peasantism put forward a social critique that revolved around landownership?

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<sup>630</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 2001, pp. 285-6.

<sup>631</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 2001, p. 286; Varlık, 2001, p. 270.

<sup>632</sup> İnci, 2010, pp. 353-4; Karaömerlioğlu, 1998, pp. 36-8; Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, pp. 118, 124-7.

After the section on peasantism, the chapter flows chronologically from 1935 to 1938 visiting each major step toward land reform. Draft land bills of 1935-1937, which failed to make their way to the parliament, are discussed in a single section. The constitutional amendment of 1937, which followed shortly after these stillborn drafts, is treated in the next section.

The chapter ends with an extensive review of the First Congress on Village and Agricultural Development (*Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi*) of 1938. The congress was organized by a number of ministries and other state institutions; and as such, it was a policy statement. Yet the conventional narrative rarely mentions the 1938 congress in the history of the idea of land reform. Perhaps this is because the general character of the congress does not sit well with the argument that Kemalists had irreversibly made the decision to reform land tenure. This major congress on agriculture was held supposedly at the height of land reform activism. But, as I try to demonstrate below, the relative status of land reform was not as high as one would normally expect.

### **5.1. The Legacy of Peasantism**

A rural sociologist trained in United States in the 1920s, Nusret Kemal Köymen (1903-1964) was the leading peasantist ideologue of single-party years. As an intellectual he was not far off from the political center of gravity either. From 1933 and 1941 he was the editor *Ülkü*, the monthly magazine of the official *People's House* of Ankara. Köymen wrote numerous pieces for *Ülkü*, which undoubtedly was the major intellectual venue where matters of science, ideology and politics were discussed by those close to the regime. Köymen was an industrious writer. From mid-1930s to mid-1940s he penned dozens of small books on statism, rural development and peasantry.

In a short but illuminating piece on Köymen's corpus, Üstel contends that Köymen started developing a "radical take" on large ownership around mid-1930s. According to her,

Köymen's newfound concern resonated well with a contemporaneous change within the ruling RPP as one-party regime showed signs of adopting a more proactive stance toward issues concerning the countryside. The inclusion in the party program of the goal of providing land to peasants in 1935 epitomized this new trend.<sup>633</sup>

When discussing Köymen's new stance, Üstel refers to Köymen's *Köycülük Programına Giriş* (Introduction to a Peasantist Program) which was first published in 1935. This fifty-page excursus is appealing to anyone studying peasantism or populism in that it encapsulates Köymen's lifelong project. But, in particular, *Köycülük Programına Giriş* should be consulted in order to see the way land reform figures in Köymen's thought.

Köymen's book is a blueprint for a peasantist scheme whose focal point might be put in very general terms as rural development. This development program has many aspects such as improvement of sanitary conditions, education of village youth and adults, cooperativization, advent of rural crafts, etc. Given this rather wide focus, it is not surprising that Köymen is not *particularly* interested in landownership. Concentration of landholdings and landlessness do enter the picture; yet they do not appear to have more weight than any other problem. For instance, in Köymen's scheme, dispersed settlement is as important a problem as concentration of landholdings. When settlement is dispersed, Köymen argues, a village community cannot come into being. Moreover, he writes that poor transportation and communications make the world outside the village even farther away, as a result of which assimilation into the national culture becomes extremely difficult.<sup>634</sup> It is obvious that what make dispersed settlement worthwhile is its effects. The same is true for issues related to landownership. Köymen introduces the problem of sub-landed and landless peasants as he discusses the economic backwardness of Turkish villages. Distribution of landed property is presented as one of the many factors

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<sup>633</sup> Üstel, 1990, p. 113.

<sup>634</sup> Köymen, 1935, pp. 19-20.

responsible for lack of economic development.<sup>635</sup> On another occasion, he brings forth the problem of scarcity of land in relation to that of the settlement of incoming immigrants. In some provinces, he writes, land is so scarce that even “a handful of *muhacirs*” cannot be settled.<sup>636</sup> It is therefore safe to say that land-related issues emerge in Köymen’s account as subordinate parts of some larger problems in one way or the other. In other words, distribution of landed property is not a free-standing concern.

To repeat, concentration of ownership or, for that matter, landlessness is simply one of the many problems troubling Turkish villages. This being said, it is nonetheless necessary to see how land-related problems are delineated by Köymen. First to note is Köymen’s views on an apparent paradox. While a “significant proportion” of Turkish peasants are either landless or sub-landed, he writes, there are vast lands left uncultivated. Köymen notes that some of such lands are registered as private property and that in many cases these lands were acquired unrightfully.<sup>637</sup> It goes without saying that what remain are uncultivated *state-owned* lands. Köymen says nothing as to reasons why these fields remain unreclaimed. Yet, on one occasion, Köymen acknowledges that land in Turkey is abundant in relation to population.<sup>638</sup> However, he is still of the view that land scarcity is a pressing issue in Turkey. The key to understanding his argument is that when he talks about scarcity of land, he generally refers to concentration of landholdings. But, as he himself admits, if there are open fields which can be reclaimed, what precisely is the cause for concentration of landownership? Köymen gives the following sequence. Because of the law of inheritance, family holdings keep getting smaller with each generation to the point where

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<sup>635</sup> Köymen, 1935, pp. 23-4.

<sup>636</sup> Köymen, 1935, p. 25.

<sup>637</sup> Köymen, 1935, p. 24.

<sup>638</sup> Köymen, 1935, p. 25.

they become too small to guarantee subsistence. Unable to live off the land, the family sells the plot. Oftentimes, the buyers are large owners.<sup>639</sup>

Hence Köymen urges a reform of landownership. Interestingly enough, Köymen does not dwell on redistribution of landed property, but asserts that an integral part of reform must be laying down rules for regulating the sale and inheritance of land.<sup>640</sup> This insistence sits well with his assumption that concentration of land emanates from fragmentation of family holdings. That is to say, if sale and inheritance of land were subject to special laws, the above-mentioned circle of fragmentation-dispossession-land concentration would be prevented. This concern with changing the legal status of land also makes it clear that the notion of farmer homesteads is quite deep-rooted. When the architects of the 1945 Law for Providing Land to Farmers devised the category of farmer homesteads as family-size plots which cannot be sold or divided among heirs, this was precisely what they had in mind.<sup>641</sup>

Another point of interest in Köymen's excursus is his explanation as to why land disputes are common in Turkey. This should come as unexpected in a country where land is abundant relative to population. According to Köymen, the prevalence of land disputes has to do with the fact that registration of land holdings is very often incomplete or outright incorrect. For instance, a widespread problem is that sometimes there are multiple and conflicting claims over certain fields. A more common occurrence is disputes which result from difficulties with old-style surface measurement.<sup>642</sup> This is a concern Köymen shares with many others. This theme of contested property rights have led Köymen and his

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<sup>639</sup> Köymen, 1935, p. 25.

<sup>640</sup> Köymen, 1935, p. 38.

<sup>641</sup> The initial draft of what would in 1945 become Law for Providing Land to Farmers (LPLF) included several clauses on farmer homesteads which later were dropped as a result of an intervention by the reviewing parliamentary committee.

<sup>642</sup> Köymen, 1935, p. 26.

contemporaries alike to argue that Turkish countryside needs a thorough cadastral survey and a much more orderly registration of titles.

Another striking theme to be mentioned in Köymen's account is a critique of peasants' dependence on the market for such basic needs like clothes or household utensils.<sup>643</sup> Though not directly related to landownership, this theme is important as it sheds light on Köymen's notion of the ideal peasant community, i.e. one that is self-sufficient as far as basic needs go. In an article on Ottoman-Turkish populism, Toprak points out that the hinge of Köymen's peasantism is precisely this utopia of an "independent peasantry", which requires that rural households have land, animals, production tools etc. to cover all basic needs by themselves.<sup>644</sup> Peasantist calls for redistribution of landed property might well be underlain by such an ideal of economic self-sufficiency. In the case of Köymen, however, the emphasis is more on ensuring the continuity of family plots than on redistribution.

As many populists/peasantists<sup>645</sup> before him, Köymen pays particular attention to what he aptly calls the "financial domination" of the peasantry. Köymen writes that the bulk of Turkish peasants are always short on cash. Yet very often they cannot use the funds of *Ziraat Bankası* (Agricultural Bank) because the bank prefers to lend money to well-to-do peasants. Neither are there credit cooperatives to help peasants when they are financially stretched. It is always landowner-cum-merchants who fill this vacuum. They coerce illiterate and gullible peasants into unfavorable contracts. Debts pile up, and so, financial dependence begins.<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> Köymen, 1935, pp. 32-3.

<sup>644</sup> Toprak, 1992, pp. 59-60.

<sup>645</sup> As intellectual traditions and political movements, populism and peasantism are akin to each other. The interrelations between populism and peasantism in Turkey are yet to be studied. For a discussion of the transitions between populism and peasantism in Eastern Europe, see Ionescu, 1969, especially pp. 99-111.

<sup>646</sup> Köymen, 1935, pp. 27-9.

Financial dependence is a very strong tenet in peasantist and populist literature. In fact, in many cases the accent on financial dependence overshadows problems of land tenure. Georgeon's monograph on Yusuf Akçura gives one the impression that this prominent Ottoman populist, too, associates *ağalık* (landownership) with usury. Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935) published a series of articles in *Halka Doğru* (Towards the People) journal in 1913 in which financial dependence figures heavily. According to Akçura, the power of landowner-merchants derives from lack of funds on the part of the peasants on the one hand, and high interest rates on the other.<sup>647</sup> It is therefore no coincidence that Akçura favors cooperatives. It is not only that cooperatives help farmers obtain affordable credit. Cooperatives at the same time are purchasing bodies, and as such, they may lessen peasants' dependence on private commercial intermediaries.<sup>648</sup> For Yusuf Akçura, poor transportation makes it extremely difficult for peasants to carry their surplus to the market.<sup>649</sup> The idea implicit in this argument is that peasants will be better-off if they sell their produce to cooperatives rather than merchants. It is thought to be so for two reasons. Firstly, merchants offer low prices for agricultural products to score large profits; and secondly, they often engage in moneylending activities, which, as noted, financially undermine farmers over the long haul.

This is not to say that land tenure is a non-issue for Akçura. On the contrary, Akçura is concerned that many peasants have insufficient land, as a result of which they cannot subsist on what they produce on family plots.<sup>650</sup> What I suggest is rather populist/peasantist literature very often condemns large ownership because of landowners' commercial and moneylending activities. It is seldom landowning *per se*

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<sup>647</sup> Georgeon, 1996, p. 110.

<sup>648</sup> Georgeon, 1996, p. 111.

<sup>649</sup> Üstel, 1997, pp. 112-3 n. 161.

<sup>650</sup> Toprak, 1984, p. 71.

which underpins this social critique. According to this perspective, landowners control large estates at the expense of small farmers, they amass profits by buying cheap to sell dear, and they give loans to peasants on unfavorable terms. Therefore, it is the fusion of landowning, usury and unfair trade practices that makes large ownership (*ağalık*) so abhorrent.

This perspective is indeed quite widespread. Take the case of Reşit Galip (1893-1934), who was one of the brains behind government's cultural initiative in the early 1930s. He was also a renowned populist/peasantist who was actively engaged in *Köycüler Cemiyeti* (Society of Peasantists) circa 1920.<sup>651</sup> It is hard to say that Reşit Galip contributed substantively to peasantist literature. He was a man of action, and most of what he wrote is practical and pedagogic. However, he did write a piece on relations on land in 1920, which was published decades later in 1955. In this 1920 manuscript, Reşit Galip refers to landowner-cum-usurers as *mütegallibe*<sup>652</sup>, i.e. the extortionists. These men, who descended from Ottoman provincial magnates, extort peasants by trade, usury and fraud. What is more, *mütegallibe* manipulate local officials, from gendarmerie all the way to the district governor, and this is another source of their social power. Nevertheless, the highlight of Reşit Galip's account is debt and usury. It seems that usury is the major means of accumulation of wealth for the *mütegallibe*. Peasant debt, which is meticulously recorded in books, passes from one generation to the next. If debt accumulates, the *ağa* seizes the family plot in return for the loan he provided years ago. The mechanism of indebtedness ends up dispossessing what was once a modest, property-owning family.<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> *Köycüler Cemiyeti* is scarcely studied. Üstel's book on *Türk Ocakları* (1997) offers the most detailed account on this short-lived society (see pp. 111-24). For Reşit Galip's peasantist activities, see Bekata, 1955, p. 81; Iğdemir, 1955, pp. 382-3; Oruç, 2007, pp. 49-50; Üstel, 1997, pp. 114-5.

<sup>652</sup> The term will be very popular in both political and intellectual discourse in the following decades.

<sup>653</sup> Reşit Galip, 1955, pp. 50-3.

*Ağa, eşraf*<sup>654</sup> or *müteğallibe*, no matter how they are called, this stratum bears the brunt of social criticism in the peasantist discourse of the 1920s and 1930s precisely because they did a lot more than just owning land. The gist of the matter is that the rural landscape of the early Republic was not characterized by a dualism between large owners and dispossessed peasants; most peasants were property owners themselves. The ills of the countryside were poverty, indebtedness and insecurity. The peculiarities of the peasantist discourse might well be said to have reflected this state of affairs.

## **5.2. Draft Laws of 1935 and 1937**

It is often pointed out in the conventional narrative that RPP leadership came up with two proposals for land-related reform in the mid-1930s. None, however, made it to the parliament. According to the narrative, the first draft, namely, the Draft Law on Land and Settlement (*Toprak İskân Kanunu Tasarısı*) was dated November 1935. The second draft came two years after its predecessor was set aside, and it was titled the Draft Law on Agricultural Reform (*Ziraî Islahat Kanun Tasarısı*). Nonetheless, both drafts are recorded as milestones in pre-1945 history of the idea of land reform.<sup>655</sup>

Available literature provides very limited information on both drafts. It builds on Ömer Lütfi Barkan's 1945 article titled "Law for Providing Land to Farmers and Major Issues in Agricultural Reform in Turkey" (*Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu ve Türkiye'de Ziraî*

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<sup>654</sup> *Eşraf* may translate as "provincial notables". It is, again, a common denotation for people who not only own land but also trade small farmers' produce and lend money to peasant households.

<sup>655</sup> Actually, the narrative is not in complete agreement as to 1930s' legislative attempts specifically at land-related reform. Avcioğlu writes that there were four abortive drafts on land law prior to 1945. He does not lay out any details, just names a couple of agricultural experts who were involved. It is not clear whether these legislative attempts overlap with the 1935 and 1937 drafts. Citing a private conversation with Şevket Raşit Hatipoğlu as the source of the information, Aydemir, too, mentions four previous attempts. See Avcioğlu, 2001, p. 489 and Aydemir, 1966b, pp. 337-8. On the other hand, Kuruç (1987) mentions none. His account of reformist legislation jumps from Law No. 1505 to Law for Providing Land to Farmers of 1945. It is as if RPP leadership did nothing in way of reform from the early 1930s up to 1945. Nevertheless, the dominant view that emerges from the literature is that LPLF was preceded by two unsuccessful drafts.

*bir Reformun Ana Meseleleri*). Barkan wrote this article right after the legislation of Law No. 4753, namely, the Law for Providing Land to Farmers (LPLF) in 1945. Here Barkan gives a brief history of previous attempts at land law and refers to the drafts of 1935 and 1937. As Barkan notes, the two drafts were not accessible by the public. They were almost kept secret lest they “stir up a fuss”.<sup>656</sup> Since the drafts could not come to the floor, it is safe to assume that not even all MPs got to know the plans in their entirety. Details must have been known to a handful of men only. Barkan goes on to recount that, because the drafts never saw daylight, nothing was written on them when they were being discussed within government circle. According to him, this was the most striking problem with the whole law-making process.<sup>657</sup>

Barkan writes that the Draft Law on Land and Settlement of 1935 was prepared by the Ministry of Interior. That the job was not assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture might come as a surprise. However, the title of the draft gives away the reason. The draft law dealt with both land ownership and re-settlement of populations. This could have been why the Ministry of Interior, and not the Ministry of Agriculture, was entrusted with drafting the bill. As for the content, the 1935 blueprint reportedly contained some “extreme provisions”, which made Barkan and others think that it had been hastily drafted.<sup>658</sup> As such, the first bill on land and settlement “did not pass the inspection of the other ministeries and the Council of State.”<sup>659</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 456 n. 9. Barkan let his readers know that he recently had the opportunity with the help of friends to take a look at the drafts.

<sup>657</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 456 n. 9.

<sup>658</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 456.

<sup>659</sup> Aktan, 1966, p. 319.

Secondly, the draft gave provincial governors vast authority in land distribution.<sup>660</sup> For Barkan, this was a serious shortcoming, because reshuffling of relations on land was an area of expertise which required technical decision making.<sup>661</sup> However, it appears that the biggest backlash against the 1935 draft was about its provision on compensation to be paid for confiscated lands. It was stipulated in Ministry of Interior's draft that owners would be compensated in government bonds payable in 20 years.<sup>662</sup> This was contrary to 1924 Constitution, according to which full compensation payment had to be made in advance and by cash.

As İnan has pointed out<sup>663</sup>, a second source on Draft Law on Land and Settlement of 1935 is Adnan Menderes. In 1945, Menderes led the parliamentary opposition against government's land distribution bill – the bill which would soon become Law No. 4753. The LPLF draft<sup>664</sup> was debated through a number of long sessions. Before resigning in protest, Menderes was the chair of the provisional committee which reviewed the bill. So, he was engaged and very vocal. During one of the many speeches he made, Menderes mentioned the 1935 draft with reference to a report written in 1935 by Şevket Raşit Hatipoğlu. As of 1945, everyone knew Hatipoğlu – he was the legendary Minister of Agriculture who prepared the LPLF bill. Back in 1935, however, Hatipoğlu was not even a deputy yet. It appears that, as an agricultural expert, he penned a report on the 1935 draft on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture. The tone of the report was extremely critical. That is, the brains behind the 1945 bill had once been skeptical of the attempt to reform land tenure. Menderes exploited this obvious contradiction. At one point, he quoted an

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<sup>660</sup> Aksoy, 1969, p. 61; Barkan, 1980, p. 456.

<sup>661</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 456.

<sup>662</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 457 n. 11; Tezel, 1994, 379.

<sup>663</sup> İnan, 2005, p. 46 n. 7.

<sup>664</sup> The initial title of the draft law was “Law for the Distribution of Land to Landless Peasants and for the Establishment of Farmer Homesteads” (*Çiftçiye Toprak Dağıtılmasına ve Çiftçi Ocakları Kurulmasına Dair Kanun*). The title was later changed as draft underwent serious amendments.

excerpt from Hatipoğlu's report. From this we learn that the 1935 draft contained a provision according to which individuals could own no more than 2000 *dönüms* of land. As Hatipoğlu put in 1935, this in effect meant that “*çiftlik* enterprises” (i.e. large estates) would be dissolved.<sup>665</sup> Secondly, although Menderes mentioned no specific details, what he says implies that the draft law of 1935 was predicated upon the principle of owner cultivation. Presence of such a tenet is certainly not unlooked-for, because, as mentioned a few times earlier, reform-minded Kemalists scorned large estates run by sharecroppers.<sup>666</sup>

For İnan, İnci and Tezel, draft's provision on confiscation was not as rigid as it has been implied above. They write that confiscation was also allowable in the case of landholdings under 2000 *dönüms* if these were not cultivated by their owners in person.<sup>667</sup> This could well be one of the “extreme provisions” Barkan talked about. It was extreme because there was neither a mention of a lower limit nor cognizance of special circumstances. This can be illustrated with an example. Say a family had 100 *dönüms* of land, which they rented out to sharecroppers for want of labor power. This could have been the case when parents were too old or children too young to work on the fields, or when the patriarch was conscripted or mother deceased. Regardless of the reason, that 100-*dönüm* land would be eligible for confiscation. On the other hand, İnci also writes that, according to the 1935 draft, only undeeded lands could be subject to confiscation.<sup>668</sup> This qualification would make the provision much less extreme.

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<sup>665</sup> TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 115.

<sup>666</sup> TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 115-6.

<sup>667</sup> İnan, 2005, p. 46; İnci, 2010, p. 354; Tezel, 1994, p. 379. The source of this information is dubious. İnan and İnci refer to Barkan's 1945 article. Barkan's piece does not contain such information, however. Tezel, on the other hand, refers to a newspaper article from 25 March 1935, written by journalist Mümtaz Faik Fenik and published in *Milliyet*. It appears that Fenik reported this information in 1935.

<sup>668</sup> İnci, 2010, p. 354. Reference is again unclear.

Given that the 1935 draft got so much criticism because of its provisions on expropriation of land, it was obvious for the RPP leaders that the way out was changing the constitutional provisions governing the confiscation of private property.<sup>669</sup> Hence the narrative continues with the constitutional amendment of 1937. But before that a few words are in order about the second land reform bill. Available literature mentions even less about the Draft Law on Agricultural Reform of 1937. Because the previous document prepared by the Ministry of Interior was found wanting, this time Ministry of Agriculture was entrusted with preparing the draft. It is mentioned that the second draft was reviewed by a number of ministries. Nothing is written on its content, however. The 1937 draft, too, could not make it to the parliament. According to researchers, the draft was shelved because land law ceased to be a priority after world war broke out.<sup>670</sup>

This is what conventional narrative has to say about mid-1930s' reform attempts. In the remainder of this section, I will present my findings from archival research, which, as soon will be clear, do not fully agree with the conventional narrative.

Documents from Prime Ministry's Republican Archive (*Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi*) suggest that there were at least three concluded drafts – not two as purported in the literature. Furthermore, there is also a confusion in the literature as to the titles of the draft bills as well as the agencies that prepared them. Archival evidence reveals that the first draft was titled Draft Land Law (*Toprak Kanunu Lâyihası*). Draft Law on Land and Settlement (*Toprak İskân Kanunu Tasarısı*), which is cited in the literature as the first draft, was actually the second and it was submitted to the Prime Ministry in 1937. Both drafts (i.e. Draft Land Law of 1935 and Draft Law on Land and Settlement of 1937) were drawn up by the Ministry of Interior. A third draft came out later in 1937. It was prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance (*Sıhhat ve İçtimaî Muavenet Vekaleti*)

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<sup>669</sup> Barkan, 1980, p. 457; İnan, 2005, p. 46; İnci, 2010, p. 356; Tezel, 1994, pp. 380-1.

<sup>670</sup> Aksoy, 1969, pp. 61-2; Aydemir, 1966b, pp. 332-3; Barkan, 1980, pp. 456, 458; İnan, 2005, p. 46; İnci, 2010, pp. 354-6; Tezel, 1994, p. 382.

and titled Draft Land Law (*Toprak Kanunu Lâyihası*). This third draft is entirely glossed over in the literature.

I have so far mentioned three drafts: Draft Land Law of 1935, Draft Law on Land and Settlement of 1937 and Draft Land Law of the same year. Available literature conflates the first two and seems unaware of the third. On the other hand, it will be recalled that studies on the subject of land reform mention another draft, namely, Draft Law on Agricultural Reform (*Ziraî Islahat Kanun Tasarısı*). This draft was allegedly formulated by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1937. As I will discuss at length below, archival evidence reveals that Ministry of Agriculture was indeed working on a draft in 1937. Its title is never mentioned, though. More importantly, it is far from clear whether it was concluded – let alone submitted to the Prime Ministry.

Let us start with Ministry of Interior's first draft, i.e. the Draft Land Law of 1935. A document from the Republican Archive makes it clear that Draft Land Law was prepared long before 1935. This document is an official communication from the Ministry of Interior to the Prime Ministry and it is dated February 13, 1935. Here Ministry of Interior states that the draft bill had been sent to other ministries in the last days of 1933 and that none of the ministries raised an objection. Hence the ministry asked permission to forward the draft to the parliament.<sup>671</sup>

Just a few days later, Prime Minister sent a dispatch to the ministries urging them to examine Ministry of Interior's draft bill and forward their views directly to the Council of State.<sup>672</sup> It appears that almost all ministries followed suit and delivered their opinions as of late March.<sup>673</sup> Ministry of Justice, however, failed to do the same, which urged the

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<sup>671</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 97).

<sup>672</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 95-6).

<sup>673</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 94).

Council of State to make a second request in early April.<sup>674</sup> It was on April 21 that the Ministry of Justice sent a communication to the Prime Ministry to notify that the ministry submitted its view to the council as requested.<sup>675</sup>

It must have been the case that, after receiving all returns, the Council of State took some time to consider ministries' views and make a decision regarding the Draft Land Law. Unfortunately, there are no papers that document this process. All we know is that the Council of State completed its work and notified Prime Ministry by early May.<sup>676</sup> Yet the Council of State either did not submit a written view or it is simply not available in the archives. There is ground to assume that its view was indeed unfavorable, as Barkan writes, because on November 19, 1935, the Council of Ministers decided to send the 1935 draft back to the Ministry of Interior for reexamination.<sup>677</sup> This is the latest dated document to mention the Draft Land Law of 1935. Therefore, it is impossible to say what happened to Ministry of Interior's draft bill after November 1935. Lack of any further document suggests that it must have been shelved.

Nevertheless, archival evidence reveals that Ministry of Interior kept on working on a blueprint for reform. In particular, there is a written message from Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü that sheds some light on post-1935 endeavors. According to this document, which is dated January 7, 1937, a commission had been assigned with the task of improving ministry's initial project. This commission was selected by RPP parliamentary group and was assisted by "friends who [had] all along been preoccupied with such issues." As the document itself reveals, this message had a specific context. Prime Ministry had earlier decided to consign the drafting of land law

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<sup>674</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 93).

<sup>675</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 92).

<sup>676</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 91).

<sup>677</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 91).

legislation to the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance. Therefore, Ministry of Interior found it necessary to present to the Prime Ministry the culmination of their work in the hope that this could provide the groundwork for new legislation.<sup>678</sup>

Absence of a paper trail implies that, unlike its predecessor, Ministry of Interior's second draft was never brought under official consideration. This brings us to the Draft Land Law drawn up by the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance (MHSA) in 1937. As a document from the archives attests<sup>679</sup>, MHSA's draft took its final form in the very first days of 1937, which hints that it must have been prepared in the previous year. The said document, which was penned by MHSA in January 1937 to inform that the draft bill was ready to be sent to the Grand National Assembly, makes it clear that MHSA had already got some feedback from other ministries and state agencies. But this is all the information we have on draft bill's preliminary stage. A prior question that poses itself is this: Why was the task of drafting a land distribution bill given over to Ministry of Health and Social Assistance? This seems to be an odd choice. It is a regrettable fact that there are no records in the archive to speculate from. As I have pointed out earlier, historian Barkan hints at some of the considerations involved in Prime Ministry's decision to discharge the Ministry of Interior. Many people were concerned, Barkan writes, because ministry's draft bill gave too much discretion to governors in matters of settlement and land distribution. Even a cursory look at the draft lends support to Barkan. Governors were entrusted with such tasks as revision of title registers, distribution of land to local people and land reclamation. Furthermore, governors were empowered to impose labor obligations and raise local taxes so that they could execute the latter task in particular.<sup>680</sup> It is therefore possible to surmise

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<sup>678</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 78).

<sup>679</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 20).

<sup>680</sup> See BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 61-2, 63-65). Here I refer to Ministry of Interior's second draft (1937). Its first draft, on the other hand, may well be said to have been plagued by ambiguity as to the implementing agency. Although a General Directorate of Land would be founded to function as the highest authority in land distribution, various tasks were allocated to different authorities including the Council of Ministers, provincial governors, village administrations and expert professionals from state agencies. Hence it was in the authority of the Council of Ministers to decide where the law would be implemented while

why Ministry of Interior was relieved. What is difficult to explain is why MHSA was chosen, say, over Ministry of Agriculture.

This question is more complex than it might at first appear since there is actually significant overlap between all the drafts. In particular, MHSA's draft can be said to have considerably built upon the previous drafts prepared by the Ministry of Interior. But it is possible to observe in very general terms that MHSA draft was less ambitious and more confined to the problem of distribution of land. Previous drafts by Ministry of Interior were more comprehensive.

Let us turn to what we know about the MHSA draft. We know that Ministry of Agriculture wrote a detailed report on this draft bill and forwarded it to the Prime Ministry on January 25.<sup>681</sup> It must have been that Prime Ministry received views from other ministries as well, but none must have filed a report.<sup>682</sup> As for Ministry of Interior's report, this document speaks to difference of opinion as well as consensus about certain principles. Yet its general tone is rather affirmative. This is also the reason why it is hard to make sense of later turn of events. It is not clear why or exactly how, but it appears that at one point it was decided that the Ministry of Agriculture would draft a new land distribution bill from scratch. Hence, on November 26, 1937, Prime Ministry made a request to the Ministry of Agriculture to form a commission to work on a new "land law bill." Delegates from five other ministries (Ministries of Interior, Justice, Economy, Finance and, lastly, MHSA)

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province governors (*valis*) had the final say on confiscation of private property. It was up to village headman and the council of elders to designate which households in their village were in need of (additional) land. Finally, expert professionals (agriculturalists, engineers and jurists) were to sit on local committees alongside provincial bureaucrats; these committees would first locate the lands available for distribution and then proceed to land grants. See BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 80, 84, 87, 89).

<sup>681</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 13).

<sup>682</sup> See BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 12).

were supposed to join the commission. The new commission would be assisted by specialists from the Ministry of Agriculture.<sup>683</sup>

There are records of various correspondences between ministries and the prime ministry in the archives, which shows that all six ministries sent delegates to the commission and that the latter commenced working.<sup>684</sup> Then, on January 13, 1938, the office of the Prime Minister wrote to the Ministry of Agriculture, asking of commission's progress on the draft bill.<sup>685</sup> In reply, it was reported about a week later that an auxiliary commission was formed from within the ministry, which formulated the "fundamental principles" of the bill. Consequently, the commission was enlarged with the participation of delegates from other (above-mentioned) ministries. Ministry of Agriculture informed that the enlarged commission drew up a draft and was currently deliberating on individual articles. Document provided scant information about the draft, though. It was stated that, content-wise, the 165-article draft "aimed at land and agricultural reform."<sup>686</sup> On the other hand, the Ministry of Agriculture did answer Prime Ministry's inquiry by saying that the commission was holding regular and frequent meetings and that it had already completed the deliberation of the first 55 articles.<sup>687</sup> Unfortunately, it is not possible to trace what happened to the commission and its draft after that.<sup>688</sup> There are only two further documents to be found in the archives and both are dispatches from the Prime Ministry to the Ministry of Agriculture. The first document is dated June 15, 1938 and second November 16, 1938. Both were written to request an update on the progress of

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<sup>683</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 11).

<sup>684</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 7-10).

<sup>685</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 6).

<sup>686</sup> Turkish expression used here is "toprak ve ziraî islahatı istifdah eden."

<sup>687</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 5).

<sup>688</sup> There are two documents, though, which indicate that a new delegate from the General Directorate of Endowments joined the commission probably some time after early March. See BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 3-4).

commission's work.<sup>689</sup> The problem is that there are no replies in the archive. It is either that official replies from the ministry are missing or else that they were never written. Here very little can be said. But, had there been further progress on the draft, its records would have been in the archives. Given that Ministry of Agriculture's draft itself is unavailable, it may well be that commission's work was called off in the months following March 1938.

After this lengthy description of the drafting process, it is time to proceed to a discussion of content. It is not necessary to go into every minute detail about mid-1930s' drafts. This is not only because they failed to get enacted. More important than that is the fact that they were all works in progress, or, *avant-projets* as put in one of the archival documents.<sup>690</sup> Therefore, what follows is a discussion of the main principles that underpinned land law bills of the 1930s.

The first thing to note is that concerns over settlement continued into land law drafts of mid-1930s. For one thing, draft bills talked about the same categories of people as the Settlement Law of 1934: immigrants (*muhacirs*), nomads, relocated/transferred populations as well as landless and sub-landed peasants.<sup>691</sup> Affinities are striking especially in the case of the earliest draft, that is, Ministry of Interior's Draft Land Law of 1935. One might think that the draft bill was designed as a sequel to the Settlement Law. Affinities persists in the case of draft bills of 1937 as well. For example, Draft Law on Land and Settlement had a number of provisions which were meant to eliminate nomadism. Most notably, "living permanently under a tent" was forbidden by its Article 7.<sup>692</sup> Another illustrative fact about Ministry of Interior's draft is that it stipulated the

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<sup>689</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 1-2).

<sup>690</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 78).

<sup>691</sup> See BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 60-1, 81).

<sup>692</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 57).

founding of a bank which would deal with the financial dimensions of land distribution and settlement. The name of the bank is quite telling: It was supposed to be called Immigration Bank (*Göç Bankası*).<sup>693</sup> Finally, MHSA's draft referred to settlement zones identified by Law No. 2510 and proposed different procedures for land grants according to the zones farmers lived in.<sup>694</sup>

Draft laws of mid-1930s were as concerned with regulation of property relations on land as they were with distribution of land. In fact, the most striking aspect of 1930s' bills is the way they attended to problems of land registration. There was one problem that received a great deal of attention, namely, the non-correspondence between title registers and actual amounts of land controlled by individuals. It was argued that title registers typically did not agree with individual declarations as to the amount of land owned. Two reasons were given for this state of affairs. The first reason was of a technical nature. Most of the time, landed property was registered in a peculiar way: Title deeds specified boundaries of individual plots instead of their surface areas. As a result, it was possible to know where exactly a family's plot laid (e.g. between this road and that water fountain), but determining its acreage was a problem. This, it was argued, resulted in confusion and land disputes. There was also a second factor which accounted for the non-correspondence in question. According to this, it was quite often for powerful individuals to appropriate commons to the detriment of modest peasants. In this way, certain people came to effectively own what used to be village commons, but such lands were not registered in their names. Title registers were already confounding, and with people appropriating village commons, the result was that farmers laid claim to, say, 1000 *dönüms* of land with a title deed of merely 200 *dönüms*.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>693</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 70).

<sup>694</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 34).

<sup>695</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 22-4, 41-3, 47-9, 58-60, 80-3).

Ministry of Interior's preamble concluded that this state of affairs brought about "insecurity in land ownership and anarchy."<sup>696</sup> According to the ministry, the way out was to recognize title registers as the only legitimate claim to ownership of land. It is important to emphasize that Ministry of Interior was not alone in this score; Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health and Social Assistance were on board as well. This is why all of the substantive documents available in the archive were built on this very idea. So, the consensus was as follows: If a title deed stated that a man had 200 *dönüms* of land, this should be the final say on the matter; he should have the right to claim no more. Next in order was to determine what would happen to the remainder, of course. To pursue the above example, what would happen to the remaining 800 *dönüms* of the man who had a 200-*dönüm* title deed? It is here that we find a second, and equally crucial, commonality. All draft bills authorized the government to appropriate the remainders ("*tapu artıkları*").<sup>697</sup> These lands would in turn be distributed to farmers in need of (extra) land. In fact, such undeeded plots were supposed to constitute the first source to be used in providing land to landless and land-short peasants.

However, there was an exception to the rule which stipulated that the remainders (i.e. plots not registered in the name of their claimants) would revert to the state. In the case that the owner/claimant was sub-landed, meaning that he/she had a plot which was smaller than the land allotment size as defined in settlement regulations, he/she would be granted the title to the remainder. The idea was that every peasant family should own no less than the settlement size, which was conceived as the subsistence size. In other words, each family should be given so much land as they could subsist on as farmers. This was a principle included in both 1937 drafts.<sup>698</sup> There was a further stipulation in Ministry of Interior's

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<sup>696</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 43).

<sup>697</sup> It should be noted that Ministry of Interior's 1937 bill was more lenient in cases where undeeded plots were included in tax registers. That is to say, farmers could lay a legitimate claim to (a portion of) undeeded lands in their effective possession if they had been paying taxes due. BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 60.)

<sup>698</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 22-3, 58-60).

draft. According to this, if the amount of land registered in farmer's name was less than twice the land allotment size, he/she could keep the remainder. Yet the farmer in no condition could get to own more than twice the allotment size.<sup>699</sup>

Drafts sanctioned confiscation of deeded lands as well, but only when undeeded remainders were insufficient to meet the demand for land in a given locality. Confiscatory provisions were not the same in all three drafts. Some were more moderate while others were more severe. Yet it is plausible to say that the principle in all three was to provide land to farmers as much as possible without confiscating private property. It was explicitly stated that land would be provided from undeeded remainders and state lands, only after which came the option of confiscation of private property.<sup>700</sup>

Nevertheless, both drafts intended to punish large owners who left their land idle. Again, confiscatory provisions varied in their severity. The fact remains that all agencies were determined to bring about an extension of cultivation via punishing those who neglected land.<sup>701</sup> As stated in Ministry of Interior's 1937 preamble, "those who [held] more land than they [could] themselves cultivate or farm out" left land idle.<sup>702</sup> On the other hand, there were farmers who could actually cultivate more land than they currently possessed. The idea was that such farmers could not invest family labor fully in land and, consequently, that they wasted part of their productive capacity.<sup>703</sup> It was in this sense that

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<sup>699</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 58-60).

<sup>700</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 27-8, 49).

<sup>701</sup> See BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 30-1, 70-2).

<sup>702</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 39).

<sup>703</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 37-8). What is meant here is a waste in true sense of the term. This is what Ministry of Interior's 1937 preamble had to say: Families who had little land preferred to make do with the land they possessed. That is, although some of them hired additional land or did sharecropping for other people to supplement their income, most of such families "fiddle[d] away their time."

they had insufficient amounts of land. After that, the solution was straightforward: If given additional land, these farmers could cultivate larger tracts and produce more.

A common provision in draft bills regarded on-the-spot provision of land to fix-rent tenants and sharecroppers.<sup>704</sup> According to this clause, which is difficult to interpret on account of its vagueness, tenants and sharecroppers would be given land on the very farms they worked. The wording of the clause suggests that both kinds of tenants had to be entirely landless in order to be eligible for land grants. It appears that a second condition was longevity in tenancy. As the clause read, only those people who had been cultivating the land as tenants “for many years” could benefit from this kind of distribution. As to the amount of land to be distributed, draft bills referred to settlement regulations. In other words, each family would be given as much land as required by settlement regulations – meaning the standard land allotment size.<sup>705</sup> Other than that, however, the clause in question is rather vague.<sup>706</sup>

Ministry of Interior’s 1937 draft took land allotment size as designated in settlement regulations as the major yardstick not only in land distribution but also in confiscation of property. As I have mentioned earlier, each landless/land-short family would receive the same amount of land as it was allotted to settlees in conformity with settlement regulations. Similarly, the amount of land that large owners were allowed to retain depended on availability of land, but it was at least two to three times the allotment size. Hence, in regions where there was a considerable demand for land, large farmers could only keep twice the allotment size. However, Ministry of Interior’s 1937 draft carved an

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<sup>704</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 27, 67-8).

<sup>705</sup> This means that each would receive 50 *dönüms* as this was the amount granted to non-immigrant settlees in practice.

<sup>706</sup> This clause on the provision of land to sharecroppers resembles the much-discussed Article 17 of Law for Providing Land to Farmers of 1945. I nonetheless contend that pursuing this analogy would be somewhat futile not only because the clause in question is vague but also it doesn’t sit well with the rest of the draft bills.

exception for modern, mechanized farms. Article 37 read: “Farmers who scientifically cultivate large estates, or those who wish to do so, can keep up to 10,000 *dönüms* of their deeded lands provided that there are no political or administrative inconveniences. The decision belongs to the Council of Ministers.”<sup>707</sup> As the fact that the ministry was willing to forgo a whopping 10,000 *dönüms* for the sake of mechanization clearly proves, rationalization of agricultural production was a top priority for the regime, one which could potentially rival the ideal of making all peasants property owners.

On the other hand, the land distribution bill drafted by the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance was much more respectful of property rights on land. True, it sanctioned confiscation, but only on farms which were partially or entirely left uncultivated. Even then, however, only a specific portion was eligible for confiscation. Let us take the example of a farmer who cultivates only a quarter of his/her land and see how liability to confiscation changed with size. Now if the farm was 1000 *dönüms*, of which only 250 *dönüms* were cultivated, then the government was authorized to confiscate 250 *dönüms* at the most. On the other hand, if only 1250 *dönüms* were tilled on a 5000-*dönüm* farm, the amount rose to 2500 *dönüms*. For a 10,000-*dönüm* farm whose 2500 *dönüms* were under cultivation, 5625 *dönüms* could be subject to confiscation. Finally, if the farm was larger than 15,000 *dönüms* and three-quarters were left idle, the owner could have to part with as much as 9375 *dönüms*. Hence, the larger the farm, the higher was the proportion that was legally confiscable. On the other hand, a farm could be confiscated *en masse* if and only if it was left altogether idle for at least five years in a row.<sup>708</sup> Here, again, regime’s concern with maximum exploitation of land is visible.

That the purpose in drafting a land law was to encourage owner-cultivation rather than expropriation of large owners is most clear in Ministry of Agriculture’s report on MHSAs’s

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<sup>707</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 72, my translation).

<sup>708</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 30-1).

Draft Land Law. According to the report, outright expropriation of farmers would be excessively hasty even for farmers who left their land idle. The ministry was of the view that there should instead be a respite period of two years during which owners would be given a chance to start cultivating their land.<sup>709</sup> The one-page preamble of Draft Land Law of 1935 drops a hint as to why large farms mattered so much. That is, they were indispensable for the economy as a whole because it was large farmers who produced agricultural exports. Measures would be taken to sustain large farms and prevent their fragmentation as well.<sup>710</sup>

It is also quite significant that farmers' homesteads made their first appearance in 1930s' drafts. The preamble of Ministry of Interior's 1935 draft touched upon the problem of fragmentation of family landholdings. It was pointed out that small peasant property quite often tended to get smaller and smaller "either through inheritance or alienation." When their land got too small to feed the entire household, peasants had to leave their villages to make a living in towns and cities. Accordingly, prevention of fragmentation of land was stated as a distinct purpose of the prospective land law. The idea was to keep peasant property as a viable economic unit and to hold back rural-urban migration.<sup>711</sup> It was this idea which underpinned the notion of farmers' homesteads, i.e. indivisible and inalienable family-size farming units, which was articulated here for the first time in 1935. Yet, the draft bill did not regulate any of the transactions bearing upon peasant property. But its Article 25 stipulated that a separate law would establish provisions to ensure that family holdings did not fall below subsistence size. The law in question would regulate "sale, inheritance, mortgage, foreclosure or confiscation" of small peasant property.<sup>712</sup> Such a law never materialized, however.

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<sup>709</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 18).

<sup>710</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 79).

<sup>711</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 79).

<sup>712</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 88).

Neither Ministry of Interior's 1937 draft nor MHSAs draft of the same year had similar provisions on peasant property. But Ministry of Agriculture's 1937 report did mention the problem of land fragmentation. It was reported in the report that the absence of provisions to secure peasant property was a shortcoming on the part of MHSAs draft bill. A land law worthy of its name had to grapple with fragmentation and the problem of dwarf holdings. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, this was a more pressing issue than it used to be in the past since a land distribution law was on its way to passage. The state could only give modest-size plots of land to farmers with the upcoming law. Therefore, beneficiaries could easily face the risk of losing their holdings in time if necessary precautions were not taken.<sup>713</sup> As a result, although the institution of farmers' homesteads failed to get enacted, it was as a part of land reform schemes of mid-1930s.

Another common ground between the three drafts pertained to compensation for confiscation of land. This is not to say that the draft bills had the exact same compensation scheme. It is nonetheless true that their provisions on compensation payments were predicated upon the shared principle of *not* paying market value. Moreover, in neither was compensation payment envisaged as a cash transaction. Thus, the amount of compensation would be determined on the basis of land tax value of land (as assessed in 1914) and landowners would be paid in interest-bearing (4-6%) government bonds over many (20-25) years.<sup>714</sup> This is tantamount to saying that confiscatory provisions of 1930s' draft bills were in disagreement with the Constitution of 1924. Hence Barkan is certainly right on this score. On the other hand, there are no documents in the archives which record concerns over this situation. Perhaps the most remarkable is the fact that the problem was not brought up in Ministry of Agriculture's report on MHSAs draft. It would be implausible, however, to conclude that constitutional incongruity did not provoke

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<sup>713</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (page 17).

<sup>714</sup> BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10 (pages 31-2, 34, 66, 72, 86, 87).

reaction. The mere fact that constitution was amended in early 1937 retrospectively proves that provisions on compensation payments did pose a problem. This is the topic that we turn now.

### **5.3. Constitutional Amendment of 1937**

What came before the parliament in February 1937 was a ten-article constitutional amendment package. The amendment draft was signed by premier İsmet İnönü and some 153 members of the parliament. The pivot of the whole package was the inclusion of the political principles of Kemalism into Article 1 of the 1924 Constitution. It was pointed out in the preamble of the draft that Article 1, which pronounced the form of state as a republic, had to be enhanced: the article should include a declaration of “fundamental principles that guide its [Turkish Republic’s] politics and administration”.<sup>715</sup> And those principles were none other than the so-called six arrows of the Republican People’s Party – republicanism, nationalism, secularism, etatism, populism and revolutionism.

It is Article 8 of İnönü’s draft which makes the package of interest to those who study land-related issues. Article 8 proposed the amendment of Article 74 of the 1924 Constitution, which dealt with confiscation of private property. Article 74 read: “Private property cannot be requisitioned or confiscated unless it has been properly established that the act is necessary for general interests, in which case compensation payment is made in advance according to relevant laws.”<sup>716</sup> Now İnönü and other signatories wished to add a paragraph to the article so as to carve an exception for confiscations to be made with the purpose of distributing land to peasants on the one hand and nationalizing forests on the other. The second paragraph of the amended article suggested that, in these two special

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<sup>715</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937b, p. 1.

<sup>716</sup> Teşkilâtı Esasiye Kanununun Bazı Maddelerinin Değiştirilmesine Dair Kanun, 1937, Yedinci Madde (Article 7), pp. 184-5, my translation.

cases only, compensation value and mode of payment were to be determined by special laws.<sup>717</sup> To clarify, if a plot of land was to be confiscated with the purpose of redistribution, the provisions of general law would no longer apply. Hence the amendment was meant to make confiscation a less costly procedure.<sup>718</sup>

The preamble of government's draft was a one-page document, half of which dealt with the proposed amendment to Article 74 of the constitution. This alone could be read as a token that RPP leadership expected some discord within the parliament. That is, the government anticipated that the amendment of Article 74 would be opposed by many from the vantage point of security of property. It appears that RPP leadership attempted to justify their action by appealing to the notion of general interest. According to this, it was in the general interest to improve the lot of the peasantry. After all, they comprised the majority of the population. This is also why "protection of private interests" was not considered a good enough reason to disregard the plight of the peasants.<sup>719</sup>

"In old times", the preamble says, Turkish farmers were degraded to "servants". This is something that the republican government can never condone since peasant servitude contradicts the philosophy of "revolutionary Turkey".<sup>720</sup> There is no doubt that drafters of the law were hinting at landless and land-short peasants who had to work on others' farms either as tenants or laborers. They intended to make confiscation of landed properties a

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<sup>717</sup> Teşkilâtı Esasiye Kanununun Bazı Maddelerinin Değiştirilmesine Dair Kanun, 1937, Yedinci Madde (Article 7), pp. 184-5.

<sup>718</sup> A third paragraph was also added to Article 74 of the constitution. It read: "No one shall be forced to make any sacrifices save for monetary obligations, dues in kind and labor obligations to be levied by law under extraordinary circumstances." Teşkilâtı Esasiye Kanununun Bazı Maddelerinin Değiştirilmesine Dair Kanun, 1937, Yedinci Madde (Article 7), p. 185, my translation.

<sup>719</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937b, p. 1.

<sup>720</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937b, p. 1.

much easier business so as to eliminate what they viewed as servitude. In this way, Şükrü Kaya stated, peasants would be “free and independent.”<sup>721</sup>

Government’s draft was reviewed by the constitutional committee (*Teşkilâtı esasiye encümeni*). The committee found Article 8 of the draft “eminently useful” and approved it as it was originally submitted.<sup>722</sup> The proposed amendment was actually more than useful; it was essential. As former RPP general secretary Recep Peker stated during parliamentary talks, under current rules the state could not possibly afford to distribute land to peasants.<sup>723</sup> Constitution had to be amended.

Two days after constitutional committee submitted its report on the draft, parliamentary deliberations started.<sup>724</sup> First, Şükrü Kaya took the stand and gave an intense speech, which was qualitatively different from the one he made during parliamentary deliberation on the Settlement Law in 1934. It was different because this time he spoke of the landless. Of 18 million Turks, 15 millions were peasants. However, the majority did not own the lands they tilled. Peasants, he declared, should be made masters of their own destiny.<sup>725</sup>

The gist of Şükrü Kaya’s argument here consists in the principle that the tiller should at the same time be the owner of the land. As will be clear in following sections and chapters, this is a recurring theme in political debates on landownership. Şükrü Kaya’s speech can be accepted as one of the earlier instances where the preference for owner cultivation became manifest. However, the preference in question does not seem to have been very

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<sup>721</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 61.

<sup>722</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937b, p. 4.

<sup>723</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 67.

<sup>724</sup> Unlike other laws which have been analyzed in this chapter, there is a detailed study on 1937 deliberations on constitutional amendment. This is Mahmut Goloğlu’s political history of the single-party regime (1974). For his account of 1937 deliberations see pp. 221-6.

<sup>725</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 61.

much elaborated yet. Suffice it to say for now that, for the reform-minded Kemalist, owner cultivation was far superior to share tenancy – both production-wise and politically. For Aziz Akyürek, an Erzurum deputy who expressed his views during amendment deliberations, sharecroppers could not even be considered as farmers. They were “laborers and [even] economic slaves of sorts.” Akyürek proclaimed that it was the duty of the RPP to elevate share tenants to their “true freedom and economic existence.”<sup>726</sup> Thus, for reformists of the RPP, owner cultivation had to be made the dominant mode of operating the land.

Şükrü Kaya announced that redistribution of land had two aims: to provide land to landless and land-short peasants, and to bring uncultivated acreage under the plough.<sup>727</sup> This was also to say that the government had no intention whatsoever of seizing large estates which were currently cultivated by their owners. Both Şükrü Kaya and Şemsettin Günaltay stressed time and again that they would not go against large landowners.<sup>728</sup> This can well be taken as another indication that, for RPP leadership, the problem was not large ownership per se. It was sharecropping.

On the other hand, there was something new in Şükrü Kaya’s argument in favor of providing land to peasants. He referred to the pressing need to turn Turkish peasants into consumers. Burgeoning national industry called for a larger internal market. Given that farmers made up an overwhelming majority of the Turkish population, this entailed that peasants had to spend more. For that, of course, they had to earn more. At the present state, Şükrü Kaya remarked, Turkish peasants were trapped in subsistence production. It was incumbent upon the government to take action to improve peasants’ “productive

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<sup>726</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 68.

<sup>727</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 61.

<sup>728</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, pp. 61, 65, 72.

capacity”. Distribution of extra land hereupon entered the picture. The logic was straightforward: Farmers could produce more if they operated a larger area.<sup>729</sup>

The available literature on Turkish debates over land reform always highlights the interconnection between state-led industrial development and land distribution schemes. But Şükrü Kaya’s 1937 speech was probably the first time that the interdependence between industrialization and provision of (extra) land to farmers was articulated in an official venue. As the Minister of Interior said, national industries could only flourish if peasant homesteads thrived.<sup>730</sup>

Two sides emerged during parliamentary talks on constitutional amendment. On one side were minister of interior Şükrü Kaya and Şemsettin Günaltay, who served as the chair of the constitutional committee. On the other was İzmir deputy Halil Menteşe. As scholars who study land reform like to emphasize, Menteşe came from a landowning family of Milas. But equally important is that he once had been a leading member of the Committee of Union and Progress and the speaker of the Ottoman parliament. While a few other deputies took the floor in support of the proposed amendment, Menteşe stood alone in his opposition to the RPP leadership during parliamentary deliberations of 1937.

Menteşe asserted that Şükrü Kaya was overstating the case. Although there were farmers who worked on lands that belonged to others, they certainly did not comprise the majority of the rural population. As Menteşe put it, “Turkish people own property, more or less.” Hence, for him, Turkey did not have a major “*question agraire*”. In any case, the Turkish government had been providing land to people in need ever since the conclusion of the War of Independence. Distribution of land was currently done through the medium of long-term Agricultural Bank loans. As a result, Menteşe argued that there was no reason

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<sup>729</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 61.

<sup>730</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 61.

to turn land distribution into a constitutional affair. No matter how high the purpose was, carving an exception from the general law would bring about an environment in which property rights would be less secure. Such a move would prove harmful to agricultural production in the longer run. Menteşe concluded that all the government needed to do was continue distribution of land in the conventional way.<sup>731</sup>

Menteşe also raised an important question – one which is central to any land distribution scheme. He inquired whether the government had the intention of distributing land to everyone – including those who lacked not only land but also draft animals and production implements. He was of the opinion that grantees should be farmers who had no or insufficient land but owned other necessary means of production. That is to say, people who did not possess the means for independent production had to be left out of the distribution scheme, because there was no way the state could afford to give them animals or tools in addition to land. In particular, Menteşe suggested that agricultural laborers be left out. According to him, laborers were as indispensable in agriculture as they were in industry.<sup>732</sup> Şükrü Kaya or Şemsettin Günaltay did not respond to the question. But it is recorded in the minutes that as Menteşe spoke, some deputies responded from the floor by saying “We will give land to them as well”.<sup>733</sup> This might not have been the official view, though. As mentioned above, there is little information on the content of the draft land law of 1937. Therefore, it is impossible to say what segments of the peasantry were designated as recipients. On the other hand, when RPP leadership finally managed to pass a law on redistribution of land in 1945, landless agricultural laborers fell behind not only landless tenants and sharecroppers but also sub-landed farmers in the list of potential recipients. So, there is ground to assume that government did not actually prioritize distribution of land to the landless in 1937.

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<sup>731</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 63.

<sup>732</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 63.

<sup>733</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 63.

After that, General Refet Bele took the floor and made an interesting point. In his view, Turkey was not a country beset by scarcity of land. On the contrary, there was plenty of land lying vacant. In spite of this, there also were peasants who had no land of their own and who, therefore, had to work for others. Bele did not dwell on the reasons for this peculiarity, which was the topic of the previous chapter here. Abundance of land notwithstanding, Bele believed that distribution of land made good *political* sense. Such a move, he said, would help prevent further class polarization.<sup>734</sup>

Then, Şükrü Kaya took the floor once more and replied Menteşe. No one could deny, he said, the misery of Turkish peasants who were hungry for land. To illustrate the situation, he talked about Muğla – his electoral district. According to his portrayal, 50% of peasants in the province of Muğla were entirely landless. The situation was even worse in some districts of Muğla. For instance, in Köyceğiz, all cultivable land was in the hands of a few *ağas*, all of whom were absentee owners. Hence Köyceğiz peasants worked all the lands while *ağas* did absolutely nothing. Şükrü Kaya remarked that Muğla was not an isolated example. He said: “[The province of] Antalya is the same and so are the entire eastern provinces.”<sup>735</sup>

For Şemsettin Günaltay, the chair of the constitutional committee which reviewed government’s draft, providing land to peasants was a question of justice.<sup>736</sup> Whenever one puts distribution of land as a matter of justice, it is always the same imagery that is invoked. This is the imagery of peasants watering the land with their blood. On this singular occasion, Şükrü Kaya brought it up. He reminded all that, as the backbone of both

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<sup>734</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 70.

<sup>735</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 71.

<sup>736</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 65.

Ottoman and Turkish armies, it was peasant conscripts who fought and died for their country. And now they deserved a piece of it.<sup>737</sup>

For Şükrü Kaya, it would be gravely misleading to assume that the new regime was all about some abstract ideals. On the contrary, the Republic would have to yield material benefits for the people.<sup>738</sup> And, as Günaltay asserted, peasants *were* the people.<sup>739</sup> In probably what was one of his most touching speeches, Şükrü Kaya concluded the matter as follows: Because the rural masses were incapable of speaking for their rights, that noble duty fell upon the members of the parliament who were asked to amend the constitution so as to make peasants property owners.<sup>740</sup>

When individual articles of İsmet İnönü's draft were put to vote, no further discussions took place over Article 8 (now Article 7). Like the rest of the draft, it was accepted unanimously.<sup>741</sup> The voting procedure of single-party parliament was open voting. Hence opposition usually took the form of abstention. The day constitutional amendment was voted, Halil Menteşe was conspicuously absent.<sup>742</sup>

Hence Article 7 of the constitutional amendment package cleared the way at once for nationalization of forests and redistribution of land. Forest Law (Law No. 3116) got legislated just days after the amending of the constitution. As for redistribution of land,

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<sup>737</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 61.

<sup>738</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 71.

<sup>739</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 65.

<sup>740</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 72.

<sup>741</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, p. 74.

<sup>742</sup> For the results of the vote, see T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, pp. 81-4.

although both Şükrü Kaya and Recep Peker announced during amendment deliberations that a land law was underway<sup>743</sup>, that project once again proved stillborn.

How significant was the constitutional amendment of 1937? It is my contention that researchers might be reading too much into the constitutional amendment. It is commonly assumed that the RPP government was about to embark on large scale confiscations. This may not have been the case, though. As noted a few times above, confiscation of private holdings was not government's first choice for providing land to peasants. Lands granted to immigrants and peasants, most of the time, were uncultivated lands which (supposedly) belonged to the state. The only exception to what has been said is Law No. 1505 with its much-emphasized provision on the expropriation of Kurdish deportees. On the other hand, it has previously been pointed out that in the case of Law No. 1505 security concerns prevailed over issues of landownership. Law Regarding the Land to be Distributed to Farmers in Need within the Eastern Zone is, therefore, the exception that proves the rule.

However, the problem from the point of view of the reformists was that government encountered difficulties even when it attempted to distribute state lands. As often as not, some owners subsequently turned up, as a result of which grantees had to leave the land. Recall that problems of this sort were debated at length in 1934 when Settlement Law came before the parliament. This 15 years' experience of land distribution should be taken into consideration when evaluating the constitutional amendment of 1937. What I would like to suggest is the possibility that the amendment was a preventive measure. In a country where cadastral survey was yet incomplete, ownership status of many lands was questionable. Hence it was only natural that the government wanted to strengthen its hand by making confiscation of landed properties much easier. Such a maneuver would be killing two birds with one stone: in the event of ownership disputes, government no longer

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<sup>743</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, pp. 67, 71.

would have to revoke land distribution or settlement and it would spend much less from state coffers to buy the land.

Nowhere in parliamentary deliberations could one find signs of a willingness to expropriate large owners. On the contrary, as will be seen below, RPP leadership assured parliamentarians that they intended to distribute public lands before all else. It would be erroneous to toss this aside as sheer hypocrisy. An intention to impose ownership limitations was absent from parliamentary deliberations on constitutional amendment of 1937, and this was in spite of all the talk on the problem of landlessness. These considerations lead me to argue that maybe the amendment of constitutional rules was more of a defensive move than an offensive one.

#### **5.4. The 1938 Congress on Village and Agricultural Development**

The First Congress on Village and Agricultural Development of 1938 was actually the second congress on agriculture in the history of the early republic. The first one was organized in 1931 by *Milli İktisat ve Tasarruf Cemiyeti* (National Economy and Savings Society). *Milli İktisat ve Tasarruf Cemiyeti* (MİTC) was a semi-governmental organization which had branches all over the country. The society was founded in 1929 as part of the effort to cope with the effects of the world crisis. At a time when foreign trade abruptly collapsed, those who ran the state saw it imperative to alter the habits of Turkish consumers. The MİTC was entrusted with encouraging thrift and consumption of domestic goods via nation-wide campaigns. The society published a journal called *İktisat ve Tasarruf* on the one hand, and organized domestic goods fairs and awareness-raising campaigns at schools on the other. In addition to its regular activities, the MİTC convened two congresses: the Industry Congress (*Sanayi Kongresi*) in 1930 and the above-mentioned Agricultural Congress (*Ziraat Kongresi*) in 1931.

The 1938 Congress on Village and Agricultural Development makes a better topic for those studying the history of land reform in Turkey for a number of reasons. The first reason is that its scope was larger and its impact deeper as compared to the previous congress. Secondly, it appears that the agricultural congress of 1938 was the result of a more concerted effort since many ministries (e.g. Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Agriculture) and other state branches (e.g. General Directorate of Veterinary Works, Governorship of Ankara) were involved in its preparation. Thirdly, the congress held in 1938 subsumed its predecessor, so to speak. That is, some of the reports prepared for the congress of 1931 were revised and re-submitted to the 1938 congress. Reports on agricultural syndicates, which will be briefly mentioned below, were like this. Finally, as far as debates on land reform go, the year 1938 is of greater relevance for researchers. This is because, unlike the early 1930s, there clearly was an agenda in favor of reforming the countryside around mid-1930s. As Avcioğlu rightly argues, the organization of the 1938 congress was part of this pro-reform momentum.<sup>744</sup>

The nature of this attempted reform is not as clear, however. Reading Avcioğlu, one gets the impression that what was contemplated was a frontal assault on landowners. For Avcioğlu, the “revolutionary wing” of the RPP administration was at the steering wheel of this new orientation. The ultimate goal was the “emancipation of the peasantry”, which required that the “iron curtain” of *ağalık* be surmounted. At the same time, Kemalists wanted to give a boost to agricultural production, and, from Avcioğlu’s perspective, this was part of the challenge to save the peasants.<sup>745</sup> Avcioğlu’s interpretation has been very popular for decades. The problem is that whenever he talks about a reformist momentum in the 1930s, he refers to some isolated statements by Mustafa Kemal, İsmet İnönü and Şükrü Kaya where these men pronounced aspirations about redistributing land. If there indeed was in the late 1930s a determination to reform land tenure, then one should be

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<sup>744</sup> Avcioğlu, 1974, p. 1398.

<sup>745</sup> Avcioğlu, 1974, pp. 1392-9.

able to find in historical records some systematic manifestations of this novel orientation. The pile of reports submitted to the Congress on Village and Agricultural Development is a case in point. Is it possible to find a solid testament in these reports as to the assumed resolution to redistribute land? If an agenda in favor of distributing land to farmers did exist, was it about rectifying a trend towards polarization in landholding? In other words, are there any signs that the Kemalist regime was irritated by inequalities in distribution of landed properties? The aim of the following analysis is answering these questions to see whether a reading like Avcioğlu's will be verified by congress reports of 1938.

The majority of reports submitted to the congress deal with technical issues that only concern agriculturalists. A cursory glance at some of the titles would attest to this: *The Significance of Natural Fertilizers*, *Marketing of Fruits*, *The General State of Hemp Production in Kastamonu*, *Draft Horse Breeds*, *Standardization of Wheat Used in Pasta-Making*, *Turkish Agricultural Exports and the Struggle for International Competition*, *Hydrological Properties of the Basin Which Provides Irrigation Water for the Konya Plateau*, etc. Some of these reports were commissioned to foreign experts; some of them were translations of books which had been published in the United States and Europe.

Fortunately, there are others reports which go beyond the merely technical. It is them that give clues as to the politics which was in the making in the second half of the 1930s. The cumulative impression the volumes give is that three agriculture-related problems stood out for policy-makers in 1938. First, there was the perennial problem of drought. It could be that the significance of drought magnified because, of all agricultural regions, Central Anatolia received the most attention. Furthermore, the year 1935-1936 was tough for farmers of Turkey since low precipitation affected the harvest very adversely. It is quite possible that this moved drought mitigation further up on the agenda. The second theme to dominate congress reports of 1938 was backward agricultural techniques. It was believed that the first two problems were connected because it was precisely the backward

state of production which made Turkish agriculture so vulnerable to drought.<sup>746</sup> Drought and primitive techniques combine to produce the third problem, namely, low productivity. It is stated that Turkish agriculture was 50% less productive when compared to neighboring countries like Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria.<sup>747</sup>

It goes without saying that one of the headlines of the whole congress was a campaign for drought mitigation. As for backward agriculture techniques and low productivity, the solution was one: rationalization of agricultural production. This goal was already mentioned in government's program just a couple of months ago as Prime Minister Celal Bayar announced their intention to wage a "robust and well-thought-out campaign for rationalization" to realize the much-awaited agricultural development.<sup>748</sup>

Rationalization of agricultural production might sound as an ambitious program at first. In actual fact, what was intended was quite modest. This should surprise no one because, as a *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* (Turkish Labor Party) deputy said on parliament floor years later, Turkish agriculture at that time relied on nothing but a pair of skinny oxen, wooden plough and rainfall.<sup>749</sup>

One of the reports puts the matter as follows: methods in use today in Turkish countryside are not just primitive but also expensive.<sup>750</sup> It is elsewhere stated that the primary goal is "a more rational use of human labor" in particular.<sup>751</sup> Examination of reports submitted to

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<sup>746</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938g, pp. 5, 32; Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 3.

<sup>747</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938g, pp. 31-2.

<sup>748</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938b, p. 21.

<sup>749</sup> Quoted in Aksoy, 1969, p. 86.

<sup>750</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 6.

<sup>751</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938f, p. 5.

the 1938 congress suggests that rationalization of production in this sense entailed the use of better draft animals, improved seeds and modern production tools like harrow, seed drill and mechanical sickle. There were also proposals in favor of some new or improved practices. For better yields, it is argued, fallow practices should be improved. Agricultural production should diversify, and resources should be re-allocated to produce more vegetables and fruits, which are not only essential for diet but also profitable on the market. Households should produce fodder alongside grain so as to survive drought and keep their animals well-fed at all times.<sup>752</sup> The list could well be extended to include other policy recommendations; but what are cited above are the most commonly mentioned measures. Among them, however, some are much more highlighted than others. In particular, introduction of iron ploughs and draft horses are the two most conspicuous of the changes recommended for Turkish agriculture. It is necessary to examine how and why they figure so prominently in congress reports; for this may bring to light the dominant character of agricultural policy of the late 1930s.

Among the publications of the congress there is a report on the province of Ankara. The central problematic of the report is that of increasing agricultural output. The report puts forward various proposals, one of which is the introduction into Turkish agriculture of iron ploughs.<sup>753</sup> According to another report, which is specifically on mechanization, the shift from the primitive wooden plough to a modern iron plough would bring about a ¼ increase in land under cultivation because each farmer would be able to plough an additional 25% farm area.<sup>754</sup> Presumably because peasant income is only meager, the former report suggests that government should subsidize modern ploughs. That is, the

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<sup>752</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 10; Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938f, pp. 4-11; Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938g, pp. 32-3; Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 10.

<sup>753</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938c.

<sup>754</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938i, p. 4.

government is advised to buy ploughs in order to sell them to farmers in installments and without interest.<sup>755</sup>

What is striking here is the assumed link between the shift to modern ploughs and the expansion of land under cultivation. One of the reports submitted to the congress contains a tremendously important statistics which gives the breakdown of lands by agricultural use as of 1938. According to this, land currently under cultivation was no more than 13.75%, whereas orchards, vegetable gardens, olive groves and vineyards together made up a mere 1.47% of all lands. On the other hand, pastures covered a thumping 58.12 percent.<sup>756</sup> This statistics unambiguously verifies a point made in the previous chapter – that land under cultivation could be massively expanded in the earliest decades of the republic. This must be why agriculturalists were so insistent on the need to replace old-style wooden ploughs with much more powerful modern ploughs.

As for draft power, they preferred horses over much-common oxen. A question arises, though: why not tractors? Experts surely considered tractors as well. As narrated in one of the reports, agriculturalists at the Çifteler model farm in Eskişehir undertook an experiment to decide whether it is cheaper to produce wheat with horses or with tractors. They found out the use of tractors reduces production costs more. But the experiment also showed that productivity per decare was actually higher when horses were used on farms.<sup>757</sup> That being said, it is possible to induce from numerous reports that horses are actually preferred over tractors. For instance, one of such reports suggests that all peasant families shift from oxen to horses as the latter are faster and more powerful draft animals. In order to facilitate this transition, government should amend the execution and bankruptcy code, which operates on a vague definition of draft animal. The problem with

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<sup>755</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938c, pp. 6-8.

<sup>756</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938d, p. 10.

<sup>757</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938j.

this code is that it is not clear whether horses belong with the category of draft animals. The government should clear away this ambiguity so as to guarantee that draft horses would be exempt from levy as oxen are.<sup>758</sup> This preference in favor of horses is hardly surprising, for it would have been unrealistic to advise that small peasants should acquire tractors. It must have been known by all that peasant income was too meager to make this a feasible policy option.

To conclude, the point of urging the use of both iron ploughs and draft horses seems to have been the expansion of land under cultivation. A family could cultivate a larger area if and only if they could plough more land, and good ploughing required better tools and stronger draft animals. This surely is what is meant by “more rational use of human labor”, and it touches the heart of the matter because the the most crucial stumbling block in front of agricultural growth in the 1930s was labor scarcity. Therefore, production could only be increased through a more effective uses of labor.

It seems from what Tekeli and İlkin write that many people in the 1930s foresaw a similar course of development for Turkish agriculture. Take the case of Fredrich Falke, who taught at the Higher Institute of Agriculture in Ankara. According to him, low agricultural prices dictated an extensive farming system for Turkey. Intensive farming requires substantial capital investment because irrigation works, fertilizers, pesticides etc. are expensive. Therefore, such investments can only be undertaken by large enterprises. The problem Falke realized was that, in the 1930s, large owners were uninterested to produce more for the market as agricultural prices were low and profits unpromising. On the other hand, small producers could be more easily steered to produce more. For them, things were simple: a bigger surplus meant more cash. All they had to do was to cultivate a larger plot. Hence Falke’s proposal for extensive farming.<sup>759</sup> As will be clear below, some of the

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<sup>758</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938i, pp. 8-10.

<sup>759</sup> Tekeli and İlkin, 1982, p. 108; Tekeli and İlkin, 1988, p. 41.

reports prepared for the 1938 congress appear to have been in agreement with Falke on that score.

Turning back to congress reports, authorities faced an impasse on the funding of new techniques in agriculture. To repeat, Turkish peasants were urged to adopt new agricultural methods to increase productivity. The question was: who would finance the introduction of new techniques? Government was supposed to facilitate the introduction of new techniques; nevertheless, one of the reports admits that the real financial burden would fall on peasants themselves.<sup>760</sup> Given how low peasant income was in the 1930s, it is only to be expected that many people would voice doubt over the feasibility of this plan. As if anticipating such objections, another congress report describes the predicament of peasants in the 1930s quite succinctly. According to A.N. Kraç, the then director of the dry-farming research station in Eskişehir who wrote the report, peasant woes resulted from internal terms of trade of agriculture. The argument runs as follows. Internal terms of trade in Turkey work against agriculture because of measures put into effect to protect the nascent industrial sector. At the same time, peasants' dependence on the market progressively deepens. Thus peasants have to purchase more and more industrial goods, which are relatively overpriced, with what little they earn from their harvest. Furthermore, because Turkish peasants have to buy many inputs at higher prices, their production costs are higher as well when compared to other peasantries. This state of affairs makes it hard for Turkish peasants to compete at the international market. Therefore, peasants not only must produce as cheaply as possible to avoid incurring loss, they also must be able to offer internationally competitive prices. Otherwise put, prices for agricultural goods should be as low as possible.<sup>761</sup> The trouble is that, because peasants have to rely on their own financial resources to adapt to new methods, "advanced farming" would actually increase production costs and aggravate the problem. The report in question appears to

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<sup>760</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938f, p. 11.

<sup>761</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, pp. 8-9.

acknowledge the dilemma. It is noted that peasant households cannot save and that this affects their ability to renew production equipment. Household economy is in fact so unstable that whenever the harvest is poor, they risk losing their means of production.<sup>762</sup>

Under circumstances like these, one of the first solutions to jump to mind would be financing of investment through bank credits. But this involves the risk of piling indebtedness and insolvency, which must be why experts were wary of this option.<sup>763</sup> Kraç himself argues that peasants should be oriented towards those novelties that do not require much investment.<sup>764</sup>

For Kraç, the solution is to increase the scale of production. It is his contention that the average family holding in the province of Eskişehir is too small to facilitate technological investment. In other words, technological upgrading is possible only on a larger scale. According to Kraç's calculations, per-decare<sup>765</sup> investment on equipment cannot exceed 80 *kuruş*.<sup>766</sup> Spending more would guarantee that the family incurs loss. So, if a family has 100 decares of land, all they can spend on new equipment is 80 *lira*, which is very modest. If the family enlarges their holding, however, they can spend more. If they come to have, say, 300 decares of land, this makes 240 *lira* in total, which allows the family to buy not only a new iron plough and a thrasher, but also a seed drill. Hence the conclusion drawn by the director of agricultural research station Eskişehir is that Central Anatolian farmers should enlarge their scale of operation.<sup>767</sup> If farmers are supposed to upgrade technology *and* make money off the land, then this is the way to be followed.

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<sup>762</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, pp. 9.

<sup>763</sup> See Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938f, p. 11.

<sup>764</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938f, p. 11.

<sup>765</sup> 1 decare is equal to 1 Turkish *dönüm*.

<sup>766</sup> 100 Turkish *kuruş* is 1 Turkish *lira*.

<sup>767</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 6.

But exactly how much land should farmers operate on? According to Kraç, small peasant households of Central Anatolia should have at least 300 decares of land. His reasoning runs as follows. An average rural family of 5 or 6 needs to till 25 decares of land for family consumption, 50 decares for fodder, 25 decares to obtain seed for the following year. In addition to this, peasant households need cash to make their payments and buy commodities that they cannot produce themselves. The report asserts that, when sold at the market place, the harvest from 50 decares of land would suffice to cover annual cash needs. That makes 150 decares in total.<sup>768</sup> It is quite important that what Kraç calls an average peasant family is a surplus-producing household. So the 150 decares in question cover production for the market as well as subsistence production. But there is one other factor which should be taken into consideration when determining the amount of land a household needs, and that is fallowing. As Kraç notes, the established practice in inner Anatolian Turkey is that 50% of the family plot is left to fallow. Therefore, an average family actually needs 300 decares, of which 150 decares would lie fallow every year.<sup>769</sup> Kraç concludes that the government should help Central Anatolian peasant households to enlarge their holdings to 300 decares.<sup>770</sup>

It is extremely important to underline that this is the sole occasion where one comes across the idea that average farmers are in need of some extra land. Therefore it is only here that an idea which insinuates redistribution of land becomes manifest. And on this single occasion, the concern is with neither eliminating landlessness nor building a more equitable tenure system. Given Kraç's point of departure, the rationale of distribution must be much more instrumental than that. If the state were to distribute land, it would do so with a view to increasing agricultural production via extension of land under cultivation.

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<sup>768</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 8.

<sup>769</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, pp. 8, 11.

<sup>770</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 11.

Furthermore, the grantees would be neither the landless nor the sub-landed, but peasants who had less than 300 *dönüms* of land.

Hence it should come as no surprise that none of the 1938 reports problematizes large ownership. A.N. Kraç's above-mentioned report on Central Anatolian agriculture is unique in dealing with questions of property. Kraç asserts that unequal distribution of property is as natural on land as it is in industry. Hence nothing is wrong with large ownership per se. On the contrary, large-scale enterprises are essential for the development of Turkish agriculture.<sup>771</sup> However, the fact remains that many large owners have no interest in modern agriculture; they continue to lease their land to sharecroppers and score profit with no regard to the soil or productivity whatsoever.<sup>772</sup> Now this is a very strong tenet in the official discourse on large ownership. For this line of reasoning, large ownership is not a problem; but absentee ownership certainly is. In the words of Kraç, absentee ownership is nothing but "making money by exploiting other people's labor."<sup>773</sup> One might reasonably expect Kraç to advocate expropriation of large estates and transformation of sharecroppers into smallholders. Yet Kraç does not even speak of this option. According to him, the government should stimulate interest in modern agricultural entrepreneurship.<sup>774</sup> To this end, government might employ a plethora of means, which range from the opening of model farms to credit provision and input subsidies. What is more, Kraç sees it proper for government to assist large farmers who are in debt.<sup>775</sup> All in all, what Kraç suggests is actually that government should make agriculture a more profitable business so as to encourage owner operation.

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<sup>771</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 6.

<sup>772</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 7.

<sup>773</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 7.

<sup>774</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, pp. 7-8.

<sup>775</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938h, p. 8.

That the theme of land distribution surfaces in congress reports just once is indeed striking because one of the documents submitted to the congress is a report titled *Orta Anadolu Zirai İşletme Hesapları* (Calculations on the Agricultural Enterprises of Central Anatolia), which contains the results of what has been referred to as the 1937 survey in the previous chapter. To repeat, the 1937 questionnaire is the earliest survey that could be drawn on to unearth property relations in the Turkish countryside. The survey was sponsored by the General Directorate of Statistics in association with the Ministries of Agriculture and Economy, and covered five agricultural regions, one of which was Central Anatolia. A team of 15 agriculturalists conducted the survey in 12 selected villages in each region. Unfortunately, however, only the survey results from Central Anatolia got published in early 1938 to be submitted to the Congress on Village and Agricultural Development.<sup>776</sup> Although what have been previously mentioned about the 1937 survey were its subsequently-generalized findings on land ownership, this particular document gives invaluable quantitative information about household economies of the Anatolian interior in general. It contains data on volume, value and methods of production on the one hand, and household income and expenditure figures on the other. There is no doubt that the sample used in the survey (a total of 72 enterprises from 12 villages) is too small to be representative. Despite that, it is worthwhile to examine the report in more detail to see how the problems of the countryside are viewed.

Conductors of the survey divided households inquired into three groups (poor, middling, well-to-do) based on annual income. Consequently, from 6 households selected in every village, two were poor, two were middling and two were well-to-do.<sup>777</sup> The year 1935-1936 was a year of drought, and this is the primary reason why households of all three groups incurred loss.<sup>778</sup> To make up for their loss, households either used their savings,

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<sup>776</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, pp. 7-8.

<sup>777</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 16.

<sup>778</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, pp. 49, 53.

borrowed, or sold from their animal capital.<sup>779</sup> Now this third strategy of selling from animal capital is worthwhile because its prevalence might be taken to entail that a bad harvest does not necessarily lead to full or partial dispossession. To clarify, the findings of the survey show that households in financial trouble did not typically sell cropland – at least this was not a frequent strategy. Instead, when they had to part with property, they sold animals. Survey results show that average decrease in animal stock was 13%<sup>780</sup>; yet, the authors of the report believe that the actual decrease must have been around 20%, which was not reflected accurately in the findings because of underreporting.<sup>781</sup> The report states that the reduction in the number of cattle and sheep was more profound as compared to draft animals.<sup>782</sup> This means that loss of animal capital might not have disturbed agricultural production significantly.

Another interesting finding of the survey in this respect is that all households, including those with highest annual income, had fewer animals at the end of the harvest year 1935-1936.<sup>783</sup> Authors of the report suggest that drought is the factor that accounts for this apparent peculiarity. That is, drought-induced fodder shortage was so pressing that even well-to-do households had no choice but sell some of their animal capital – not because they needed cash but because they no longer could feed their entire flock during winter.<sup>784</sup>

Findings of the survey show that the course of household indebtedness over the year 1935-1936 was not alarming. The average ratio of debts to assets for all households was only

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<sup>779</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 53.

<sup>780</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 10.

<sup>781</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 13.

<sup>782</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 54.

<sup>783</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 53.

<sup>784</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 54.

5%<sup>785</sup>, although there were a few families who were distinctively more indebted than others.<sup>786</sup> On the other hand, debts in money terms increased for all groups of households at the end of the year 1935-1936. The upward trend in indebtedness had to do with draught. Crop harvest was so poor that families not only borrowed cash, they also had to borrow in-kind loans of wheat.<sup>787</sup>

Not everyone borrowed to recoup loss, however. The study found out by implication that most well-to-do households borrowed money so as to increase assets, which included buildings and plants as well as vineyards and cropland.<sup>788</sup> One of the table charts demonstrates that the richest group enlarged their holdings by 32.5% within a single year. On the other hand, low-income and middle-income households respectively lost 0.8% and 1.8% of their holdings.<sup>789</sup> Unfortunately, the chart in question is not interpreted by the authors of the report; as a result, the document is silent as to what lands were appropriated by this third group of richest households. It could have been the case that they bought or reclaimed uncultivated lands, which means that landed property did not change hands on a remarkable scale.

Last to be mentioned about *Calculations on the Agricultural Enterprises of Central Anatolia* is that the report deals with land only hastily. Of the four components of household capital, land certainly does not receive any more attention than either farm equipment, buildings or animals. The report does give size distribution of family holdings in a table in the appendix<sup>790</sup>, and within the text, money equivalent of land owned by each

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<sup>785</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 23.

<sup>786</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 26.

<sup>787</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 54.

<sup>788</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, p. 54.

<sup>789</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, Cetvel 20.

<sup>790</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, Cetvel 2.

group of household is calculated.<sup>791</sup> Both are raw data, however; no interpretations are offered as to problems of distribution.<sup>792</sup> There is no comment on the current pattern of distribution, and no critique whatsoever. A concern with property relations is conspicuously absent.

Two final notes are in order before wrapping up the subject of the 1938 congress. There is one more topic that looms large in congress publications, and that is the education of the rural population. It seems that the experts were occupied both by rural schools and rural mass education. What can be said in a nutshell is that congress reports on the topic call for practical hands-on training programs for both young adults and village youth.<sup>793</sup> This is testament to the fact that Kemalists were already playing with the idea of practical education for peasant boys and girls circa 1935, which would eventually lead to the opening of Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*) in mid-1940s.

Finally, another subordinate theme to be found in the congress reports of 1938 is the organization of the rural sector. As is well known, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many other nations aspired to find an organizational form to bring peasants together. Reports submitted to the congress recount experiences from a number of countries; though it is quite obvious that primary inspiration came from the United States. Turkish experts, so it appears, were acquainting themselves with various cooperatives, agricultural syndicates and peasant unions. Yet it would be misleading to assume that they intended to institutionalize peasants' political representation. What they rather had in mind was rationalization of production again; but this time rationalization implied modernization and standardization of agricultural activities through the medium of a collective entity.

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<sup>791</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938e, pp. 18-9.

<sup>792</sup> The report does make one interesting comment, and it is that peasants must have underreported their holdings by 20-25 percent (p. 11). That is to say, those who penned the report believed that, landownership-wise, peasants were considerably better-off than numbers suggested.

<sup>793</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938k.

This is why the then Minister of Agriculture Faik Kurdođlu writes with much awe that America is the first country to accomplish “industrialization of agriculture.”<sup>794</sup> The idea, however, failed to materialize in Turkey.

It is fair to say in conclusion that discourse on land reform or redistribution of land did not permeate congress reports. Except for the report discussed a little above, distribution of land is mentioned only in the opening volume<sup>795</sup>, which brings together authoritative political directives. It is here that the clause on distribution of land to landless peasants in the party program of 1935, Atatürk’s opening speech to the parliament of 1937 and the relevant part of the program of Bayar’s government are recounted. Accordingly, the boldest claim one can advance is that, although Atatürk and İnönü deeply favored it, there was no institutional will pulling for land reform even in late 1930s. What can be said at the very least is that distribution of land was just one aspect of the policy in the making in late 1930s; it certainly was not the principal tenet that suffused all others.

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<sup>794</sup> Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938l, p. 5.

<sup>795</sup> This is Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi, 1938a.

## CHAPTER 6

### LAW FOR PROVIDING LAND TO FARMERS

On January 17, 1945, Prime Minister's office submitted a draft law on land distribution to the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The title of the draft at that time was Law for Distribution of Land to Farmers and Establishment of Farmers' Homesteads (*Çiftçiye Toprak Dağıtılması ve Çiftçi Ocakları Kurulması Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı*). Government's draft came before a joint provisional committee of 36 MPs. The provisional committee was made up of members of eight standing parliamentary committees, and each committee gave four members to the provisional committee. When the committee was through with reviewing, government's draft came to the parliament floor. Its title now read Law for Providing Land to Farmers (*Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu Tasarısı*)<sup>796</sup>. After eight parliamentary sessions and many hours of deliberation, the bill finally became Law No. 4735 (*Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu*) on May 11, 1945. LPLF was amended twice. The first, and more comprehensive, amendment came in March 1950, just weeks before RPP lost power to the Democrat Party.<sup>797</sup> The second amendment was at the hands of Democrat Party in May 1955 – a year after its second victory at the polls.<sup>798</sup> LPLF remained effective until the enactment of a new land distribution law in 1973.<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>796</sup> Law for Providing Land to Farmers will hereafter be referred to as LPLF.

<sup>797</sup> This was Law No. 5618, which was titled *Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Hakkındaki 4753 Sayılı Kanunun Bâzi Maddelerinin Değiştirilmesine ve Bu Kanuna Bâzi Maddeler ve Geçici Maddeler Eklenmesine Dair Kanun*.

<sup>798</sup> The title of this second amendment law was *4573 Sayılı Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanununun 41 nci ve 43 ncü Maddelerine Fıkralar İlâvesine Muaddel 45 nci Maddesinin Tadiline ve 55 nci Maddesinin Kaldırılmasına Dair Kanun* (Law No. 6603).

<sup>799</sup> This was Law No. 1757, titled *Toprak ve Tarım Reformu Kanunu* (Land and Agricultural Reform Law) and enacted in May 25, 1973.

Government's 1945 bill was not the first of its kind. As discussed in the previous chapter, there had been other land distribution bills, but the draft LPLF was the first to make its way to the parliament floor. This chapter will trace LPLF's journey through the parliament. Hence the chapter opens with an examination of government's original draft and then proceeds to a discussion of provisional committee's review. This is followed by a section on the idea of farmers' homesteads – the only component of government's reform scheme that was eliminated before it reached the parliament floor. The rest of the chapter deals parliamentary discussions over the amended draft. Also included in this part is a section on Article 17, which provoked much discussion on the floor.

This chapter will also revisit earlier themes and draw parallels to the economic and political concerns of previous decades. There will also be an attempt to evaluate the 1945 initiative against the background of 1940s' developments. The chapter will then conclude with a discussion on the specific character and singularity of LPLF.

### **6.1. Draft Law for Distribution of Land to Farmers and Establishment of Farmers' Homesteads**

It is commonplace to refer to LPLF as Turkey's land reform law. Yet the very first thing to note about the government-sponsored bill of 1945 is that its preamble did not speak of land reform or even a land law. What was being done was called distribution of land to farmers.

Strange as it may sound, the preamble of government's draft started out by saying that Turkey had no problem of land scarcity. Turkey was a country rich in land, and with a population around 18 million, demographic density was rather low. Hence, even with a pending rise in population, land reserves would still be enough for everyone. In fact, it

was stated that the country could accommodate a population as high as 75 million.<sup>800</sup> The preamble went on to report that agricultural lands in Turkey had productivity and diversity.<sup>801</sup> If agricultural land was abundant, diverse and productive in Turkey, what then was the problem? It was at this point that the preamble introduced the concept of “property structure”, which denoted “distribution of land among nationals.”<sup>802</sup> The argument was that Turkey could not fully exploit its great potential because of an “unfit property structure.”<sup>803</sup> Consequently, Turkey’s land problem pertained to the way agricultural land was distributed. To be more specific, the prevailing property structure was objectionable because it was characterized by the presence of large landholdings.<sup>804</sup> Such a property structure not only inhibited agricultural development, it also ran against “national imperatives” and the “spirit of the regime.”<sup>805</sup>

On the other hand, there was another, an equally important, problem in the Turkish countryside. And here came the second concept – “regime of land operation”, which stood for “forms and methods of land use.”<sup>806</sup> According to the preamble of LPLF draft, Turkey’s land problem in this respect was the high incidence of sharecropping.<sup>807</sup>

So, large ownership and the prevalence of sharecropping were the two problems that stood out in the preamble. What is more, they actually went hand-in-hand. This is how the argument went: Most large owners did not operate land themselves. In fact, they were

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<sup>800</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 4.

<sup>801</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 4-5.

<sup>802</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 2.

<sup>803</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 2, 5.

<sup>804</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 5.

<sup>805</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 5.

<sup>806</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 3.

<sup>807</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 6.

often not farmers by profession; that is, they did not live on cultivation of land. Even those who were interested in production cultivated only parts of their land. The rest was tilled by sharecroppers, who had either no or very little land. The problem was that agriculture was their sole means of livelihood. That was the paradox that government faced: Those who had plenty did not make a living out of land while those who were landless or land-short could only subsist on land.<sup>808</sup>

One could well argue that this was a positive sum exchange where property owners leased land to those who had labor power. Yet the preamble of government's draft argued otherwise. Given that they did not own the land they operated, sharecropping peasants did not invest in production. As a result, agricultural land remained untended.<sup>809</sup> This observation built up to a key argument, namely, that both the extension of land under cultivation and greater productivity could only come with proliferation of owner-operated farms.<sup>810</sup>

In fact, the critique of sharecropping was more layered than this. First of all, sharecropping was characterized as an outdated institution. According to the preamble, sharecropping was an agricultural system which had degenerated from *timar*.<sup>811</sup> As such, it was out-of-sync with both the realities and the ideals of new society. After that, government's document advanced a number of arguments against sharecropping. It is possible to distinguish three distinct arguments in particular.

Firstly, there was the economic argument. Sharecropping was characterized as a backward method of operating land. As a result, sharecropping represented a severely inefficient

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<sup>808</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 5.

<sup>809</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 5-6.

<sup>810</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 6.

<sup>811</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 6.

form of tenure. Furthermore, it was believed that this was a vicious circle of technical retardation and inefficiency because neither landlords nor tenants had any stake in land improvement or upgrading of techniques of production.<sup>812</sup> This was the primary argument against sharecropping, and once deliberations started, it was enunciated many times on the parliament floor.<sup>813</sup>

Secondly, sharecropping was regarded as objectionable in a social sense. According to this, sharecropping arrangements had socially undesirable consequences in that they brought into being a “disposed, rootless crowd” who were entirely dependent on landowners for their survival. This presented a stark contrast to the republican ideal of a property-owning, well-established and self-reliant peasant community. The document specifically emphasized that only an independent peasantry of this sort could “resist social perversions.”<sup>814</sup>

The final argument added up to a political case against sharecropping. This time, sharecropping was criticized on account of the political allegiances to which it supposedly gave rise. It seems that, for the drafters of the land reform bill, the relationship between landlords and tenants was so much more than an economic exchange. Landlords were at the same time local political figures who built a clientele out of sharecroppers. It was in this sense that sharecropping on large estates brought forth “local powers” and a system of “political tutelage.” One can make an inference as to why the drafters of LPLF were concerned about this state of affairs. It is probably that, in their eyes, the political implications of sharecropping had the potential to curtail the power of the central state.<sup>815</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 3, 6.

<sup>813</sup> E.g. T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 61, 101-2.

<sup>814</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 4.

<sup>815</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 3, 4.

It should be noted in passing that the document treated fixed-rent tenancy in just one sentence, which is an oddity since this was a common form of land tenure. All that can be said about government's stance is that rent tenancy, too, was regarded in an unfavorable light.<sup>816</sup> Yet the real contrast was drawn between sharecropping and owner-cultivation in above-mentioned terms.

That was not all, however. There were other reasons why large ownership and sharecropping bothered those who drafted the bill. For instance, government's document evoked the principle of populism, which was said to entail the primacy of peasant property.<sup>817</sup> Interestingly, one of these reasons had to do with demographics, which points to a continuity with 1930s' argument in favor of tenurial reform. It was explicitly stated in the preamble that rapid demographic proliferation required an increase in the number of peasant families who operated their own land.<sup>818</sup>

As a result of all these considerations, the government put its goal in reform as follows: Smallholdings would be made the "wide basis" upon which the new property structure would rise.<sup>819</sup> But the government was at pains to emphasize that it would under no circumstances meddle with Turkey's "land property regime." As explained in the preamble of the bill, the adoption of a modern civil law in 1926 put a definitive end to Ottoman land system, which had already been in transition and moving toward freehold for centuries. Hence, since 1926, land regime in Turkey was based unequivocally on private property. This was Turkey's new property regime, and according to government's preamble, it was the regime most suited to the republic. That is, the government did not

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<sup>816</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 3-4.

<sup>817</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 5.

<sup>818</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 5.

<sup>819</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 7.

have the slightest intention to change the private property regime on land.<sup>820</sup> To state it once again, it was land distribution and land management which troubled the architects of LPLF.

Nevertheless, as shall be seen in the following pages, privately-owned large properties were ruled out in principle – large properties being those over 5000 *dönüms*. That large farms had technical and economic benefits was indisputable to the drafters of the land reform bill. However, there was also a recognition that benefits of this sort were accompanied by certain disadvantages. For one thing, large ownership not only entailed inequalities of an economic nature, but also established a ground for “social oppression.” While on the one hand the government wished to prevent social oppression, on the other hand it was determined to take advantage of large scale agricultural production. This was the reason behind the decision to prohibit private persons from owning more than 5000 *dönüms*. So, according to the LPLF draft, operating large farms was a privilege saved only for state institutions.<sup>821</sup>

The government was convinced that middle properties, too, should remain limited in number. This shows that reservations against social consequences of private ownership must have been indeed strong. The government certainly longed for a rural social structure which was primarily, though not exclusively, based on small property. But the preference against middle farms would soon to spark a heated debate in the parliament.<sup>822</sup>

The preamble of LPLF draft ended with a note on other, non-ownership related issues in the countryside. The document admitted the presence of some compelling problems such as poor land register and lack of cadaster, and technical underdevelopment. Yet it was

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<sup>820</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 5.

<sup>821</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 7.

<sup>822</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 7.

believed that distribution of land to farmers had priority over all other issues. That is, the government was determined to address all problems of the countryside once as many farmers as possible were provided with land to cultivate.<sup>823</sup>

### **6.1.1. Outline of Government's Draft**

I now turn to a brief outline of government's draft. The following outline will focus on the most essential provisions of the original draft and hopefully throw some light on its general characteristics. Rest of the draft will be analyzed later in the chapter.

According to Article 1 of government's draft, prospective law pursued four goals. The first goal was provision of land to farmers in need of land. Furnishing peasants with capital, machinery and livestock was the second goal, which covered grantees and non-grantees (smallholders) alike. If households needed land, they would be given land. Conversely, if they had land but lacked production implements and/or draft animals, government would help them acquire the latter. In other words, government was determined to see to it that farmers commence independent farming. Moving on, government's third goal was actually bifold: it was "to ensure that [new] enterprises [were] started on private holdings and that all lands of the country [were] under regular cultivation." This means that extension of land under cultivation was expected to take place not only through reclamation; it was also necessary to bring idle private properties under the plough. To put it differently, the government was determined to put an end to non-cultivation of private lands. Finally, the law aspired to "prevent excessive land concentration as well as fragmentation beyond a certain measure." This was the fourth goal. It is of utmost importance that "prevention of excessive land concentration" was specified as a freestanding goal.<sup>824</sup>

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<sup>823</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 6.

<sup>824</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 21.

Article 7 of government's draft classified landholdings on the basis of acreage covered. Holdings below 30 *dönüms*<sup>825</sup> were defined as "small property" and they were supposed to be held only by non-farmers. The next category was the "farmer's homestead", which could range between 30 and 500 *dönüms*. The idea of farmers' homesteads will be the topic of one of the sections to follow, therefore a simple definition should suffice for the moment. Homesteads were designed as family-size farming units, which would be inalienable and indivisible by the owner under any circumstances. As such, the institution was intended as a means to guarantee the survival of small peasant property. On the other hand, properties which covered 500 to 5000 *dönüms* comprised the third category, namely, "middle property." Finally, what remained were large properties – those over 5000 *dönüms*. Here Article 6 read: "Large properties can only be owned by the state." Otherwise put, private persons were disallowed from owning over-5000 *dönüms*.<sup>826</sup>

Article 12 stipulated that landholdings over 5000 *dönüms* were liable to confiscation. That is, 1000 *dönüms* of a 6000-*dönüm* estate could be expropriated to be distributed to local people in need of land. Yet the same article made room for an exception: If initial confiscation failed to reap enough acreage to provide land to all landless and land-short peasants in a given region, a different kind of confiscation was possible. This time, however, landholdings which surpassed the previously-determined homestead size would be liable to expropriation. Say that the size of farmer homestead was established as 100 *dönüms* in Yozgat and farmer A had 130 *dönüms*. Now according to Article 12, A's 30 *dönüms* were liable to expropriation. This clause on what can be called extraordinary

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<sup>825</sup> *Dönüm* as a unit of measurement was no longer in use since the adoption of metric system in 1931. Yet Anatolian farmers continued to use *dönüm* in daily affairs so much so that no one knew how much land they owned except in *dönüms*. Consequently, as Tüzel explained during parliamentary talks, the drafters of LPLF chose to use *dönüm* as the unit of measurement to avoid confusion (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 184). *Dönüm* was convenient unit of measurement because it more or less corresponds to metric decare. So a *dönüm* has been recognized as equal to 1000 square meters, that is, 0.1 hectare.

<sup>826</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 22.

confiscation might sound too severe, but there was a caveat. If A managed his/her plot “properly”, his/her holding would be exempted from this sort of confiscation. Here proper management meant “regular and permanent cultivation” with “all necessary machinery and equipment.”<sup>827</sup>

Article 15 and Article 18 of government’s draft regulated compensation payments. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Kemalists had amended the constitution in 1937 so as to make confiscation of land an easier and low-cost procedure. The original LPLF draft built on the 1937 amendment in *not* paying the market value of land in compensation. I will be returning to Articles 15 and 18 in some detail later, but suffice it to say for now that calculations were supposed to be made on the basis of values assessed for tax purposes and that tax values lagged considerably behind real values of land. Furthermore, landowners were denied cash payments as compensation would be in government bonds.<sup>828</sup>

This was the core of government’s draft. According to L. Ülkümen, who was one of the most eager advocates of government’s draft, original LPLF was revolutionary in imposing statutory limits on property holding, in making virtually all land worked via sharecropping liable to expropriation, and in *not* paying market value in compensation.<sup>829</sup> The same features that made LPLF draft revolutionary in the eyes of Ülkümen repelled the opposition. For instance, all E. Sazak could see in government’s draft was “hostility to wealth.”<sup>830</sup> According to R. Koraltan’s famous remark, the principle that infused the LPLF draft was “taking it from Ali and giving it to Veli.”<sup>831</sup>

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<sup>827</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 25.

<sup>828</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 27, 31.

<sup>829</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 106.

<sup>830</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 82.

<sup>831</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 70.

Provisional committee amended each and every one of the above articles to the point where LPLF draft became something of a different kind, and to this I will turn momentarily. But what follows first is an examination of committee's report which will uncover its reception of government's bill.

### **6.1.2. Provisional Committee's Report on LPLF Draft**

It took three months for the Provisional Committee to review government's draft. Committee held 45 meetings and deliberated twice on the original draft. An especially influential figure during deliberations was Adnan Menderes, who served as the spokesman of the provisional committee. At the end of this phase, government's draft was fundamentally altered. Yet, after the committee had already finalized the amendment, government called a third deliberation. This was unusual, and according to Menderes, ran counter to the internal regulations of the parliament.<sup>832</sup> Government's last-minute interference was no doubt a reaction to committee's quite fundamental revision of the draft. As will be seen in one of the following sections, the much-discussed Article 17 was the fruit of this extraordinary third deliberation. But let us first see committee's view on the original draft.

The first thing to say about this document is that it was more than a report on a proposed law. Committee's paper resembled a manifesto. Not only did the report display strong disapproval of government's draft, but it also pointed towards an altogether different set of policies for the countryside. In a word, as far as the diagnosis of Turkish agriculture was concerned, it was more of a makeover than revision.

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<sup>832</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 111.

Having noted that there was a troubling absence of statistics and studies on ownership and land use in Turkey<sup>833</sup>, committee's report went on to cite what has been referred to as the 1937 survey in previous chapters. In fact, the report very heavily relied on the generalized findings of this survey on land tenure in inner Anatolia. Reviewing committee made use of the data in question to argue that, in Turkey, large holdings (i.e. holdings over 5000 *dönüms*) were very rare and that even medium holdings of 500-5000 *dönüms* were limited in number. Hence the vast majority of landed properties were smallholdings. The report further argued that the results of the 1937 survey in fact needed an update as large holdings had a tendency to disintegrate – a tendency which had most probably been taking place since 1937.<sup>834</sup> In other words, the committee was of the opinion that land distribution was more egalitarian than it had been in the 1930s.<sup>835</sup>

The report also made a comparative statement. According to this, landed properties were much more evenly distributed in Turkey as compared to those countries which had embarked on land reform at an earlier date. The report in particular mentioned Romania where a mere 4000 landlords used to control more acreage than one million peasant families.<sup>836</sup>

This was also to say that even if all large and middle owners were confiscated, land thereby procured would fail to create an adequate reserve to endow Turkey's landless and sub-landed peasants with large enough plots to ensure subsistence.<sup>837</sup> The report cited the results of another, smaller-scale survey to support this claim. The survey in question was

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<sup>833</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 12.

<sup>834</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 10.

<sup>835</sup> This last assumption may sound overly optimistic at first. But Tekeli and İlkin do argue that many large estates were fragmented in the process. According to them, the root cause was low agricultural prices, which added up to a disincentive to do agricultural production on a large scale (Tekeli and İlkin, 1988, p. 89).

<sup>836</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 10.

<sup>837</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 10-1.

conducted in inner Anatolia by the Ministry of Agriculture. According to the findings of the survey, middle property was a rarity in many Anatolian towns as farms over 200 *dönüms* were found to comprise only 6-7% of all landholdings. Committee's report derived from this data the conclusion that, in many regions, it would be extremely difficult to find lands to confiscate.<sup>838</sup>

Besides, committee members firmly believed that medium-size enterprises were indispensable for agricultural development. Because they had the resources small peasants lacked, which enabled them to market their produce, invest in new technologies and obtain financial loans. If middle farms were to be divided to benefit land-hungry peasants, these advantages would be lost because small peasant enterprises thereby created would stick to primitive techniques and content themselves with subsistence production.<sup>839</sup> So, middle farms should actually be encouraged.

Committee's report then proceeded to a discussion of land use characteristics in Turkey. The main idea advanced here was that Turkish peasants craved land not because lands were controlled by large owners but because most of the terrain still remained uncultivated. A feeble 10.4% of land had been brought under the plough. Committee's report compared Turkey to Balkan countries, where the same ratio ranged between 30 to 60 percent. Furthermore, it was not only that there were arable lands left uncultivated. At the same time, pastures covered much more acreage than was actually necessary for grazing. Part of pastureland could be converted into farmland without hurting stock raising.<sup>840</sup>

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<sup>838</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 11. A more detailed account of this survey is found in Ö.C. Sarç's 1944 article. See Sarç, 1944.

<sup>839</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 11.

<sup>840</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 11-2.

On the other hand, the report conceded that there were regions where arable land was indeed scarce. In place like these, acreage under cultivation could be extended by land improvement, which above all meant irrigation and drying out swampland.<sup>841</sup> On the other hand, there were thinly populated regions where there was a surplus in land. It was almost as if the solution presented itself as internal (re)settlement. Surplus population in land-scarce areas should be relocated to land-rich areas. It was admitted that resettlement was more costly than redistribution of land, but it was the more suited solution.<sup>842</sup>

Yet, committee's report was far from suggesting that Turkish countryside was problem-free. It was simply that problems lay elsewhere than in ownership. Or better put, problems of agriculture were not confined to issues of property. It went without saying that redistribution of land was not a cure-all that would help Turkish agriculture prosper.<sup>843</sup> The committee professed to take a more comprehensive perspective on agricultural development and identified a number of challenges, which pertained to techniques of production, availability of credits, prices and marketization of products, production costs, drought and irrigation, and finally, registration of title deeds.

Committee's diagnosis was that, first, agricultural techniques were primitive. Most households had no more than a pair of oxen, a wooden plough and an oxcart. Secondly, agricultural credits were meager such that peasants had no institution to borrow from in times of need. Thirdly, price mechanism almost always worked to the disadvantage of agricultural producers. Because agricultural prices lagged behind industrial prices, peasant had to sell their produce cheaply. Low agricultural prices went a long way in explaining peasant poverty. Fourthly, production costs were too high due to the burden of taxation and weak transportation facilities. High production costs had two adverse consequences.

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<sup>841</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 12.

<sup>842</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 11.

<sup>843</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 12.

On the one hand, even when they sold their entire surplus, farmer households could not prosper since costs outweighed profits. On the other hand, high costs made Turkish agriculture internationally uncompetitive. Then there was the perennial problem of drought. Turkey needed new, more suitable seeds and advanced production techniques to cope with climatic aridity. The final problem was the lack of cadaster, as a result of which registration of landed properties continued to be a challenge.<sup>844</sup>

Of all the problems mentioned above, low agricultural prices were regarded as the gravest. This was not only because low prices doomed Turkish peasants to poverty. It was also pointed out in the report that a peasant household sold only 20% of their produce, which was taken to mean that Turkish agriculture was insufficiently commercialized. The main factor which accounted for this was, again, the state of agricultural prices.<sup>845</sup>

According to committee's view, it was high time that Turkey embarked on the "era of large-scale production for the market." Agricultural sector was the backbone of Turkish economy, and as long as agricultural production remained feeble, the whole economy would keep on faltering. Committee's report drew attention in particular to the state of Turkish industry and argued that the weakness of industrial production had a lot to do with agricultural backwardness. Turkish industry was frail because the agricultural sector could not supply good-quality raw materials in large quantities, which made national industry dependent on protective tariffs against competitive imports. Moreover, Turkish industry would have no potential to thrive without a large internal market. In a country with an overwhelming rural population, expansion of the internal market was unthinkable unless the purchasing power of peasants significantly rose. All this made elimination of peasant poverty the key to overall economic development. That was why problems of agricultural

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<sup>844</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 12-4.

<sup>845</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 13.

prices and production costs should move to the forefront of the campaign to help Turkish peasants.<sup>846</sup>

As it has been shown in previous pages, the main argument in the preamble of government's draft was that Turkey had an "unfit property structure." The provisional committee had a different opinion. Committee's report argued that government's preamble mistook symptoms for causes. The two problems that the LPLF draft set out to fix, i.e. maldistribution of landed properties and high incidence of sharecropping, were "not the causes but consequences of a poor and long-neglected agricultural economy." The report mentioned the case of property-owning sharecroppers in token of this point. That is, there were many peasants who, despite having land of their own, did sharecropping on other farms. The report asserted that this apparently paradoxical situation would become understandable if sharecropping were seen as a consequence – in this particular case, a consequence of poverty. Peasants worked on shares because they did not have the resources to undertake independent farming. So, even if they were given (additional) land, they would have to keep cultivating other people's farms. The challenge, then, was to eliminate peasant poverty.<sup>847</sup>

### **6.1.3. Committee's Revisions**

As the above summary should make clear, provisional committee's report on LPLF draft was extremely assertive and ambitious. It is not far-fetched to suggest that the committee would rather have shelved the draft if it had been in its power to do so. Under the circumstances of single-party rule, the committee did what it could and made some key modifications to government's draft, all of which touched to its core.

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<sup>846</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 13.

<sup>847</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 14.

Firstly, provisional committee rewrote Article 1, which was on the goals of LPLF, and dropped the above-mentioned fourth goal altogether. Hence the prevention of the concentration of landholdings was no longer a purpose that LPLF would pursue. The third goal, too, changed after committee's amendment; it was now defined as ensuring the regular cultivation of country's lands. That is, vacant private holdings ceased to be a concern.<sup>848</sup>

As for Article 6 which classified landholdings, provisional committee did away with the category of farmer homestead and redefined all others. After the changes, holdings under 500 *dönüms* were considered small property whereas those between 500 and 5000 *dönüms* fell under middle property. Lastly, large property covered holdings over 5000 *dönüms* with no restrictions whatsoever on ownership. That is, anyone could now own over-5000 *dönüms* of land.<sup>849</sup>

Article 12 of the original draft, which was on confiscation of property, was amended as well. After provisional committee's review, the clause on what I have called extraordinary confiscation was no longer in the draft. To repeat, this clause authorized the confiscation of any property larger than the farmer homestead, though only in proven cases of unavailability of land. It was indicated in committee's report that the clause in question was removed for fear that it could forever terminate middle farms.<sup>850</sup> This is not to say however that there no longer was any ground to expropriate owners who controlled less than 5000 *dönüms*. The revised draft had a new Article 15 which made a distinction between regions on the basis of availability of agricultural land. Article 16 stipulated that in those regions where land was scarce, only 2000 (instead of 5000) *dönüms* of land was exempt from confiscation. For example, if a farmer had 2500 *dönüms* in a land-scarce

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<sup>848</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 21.

<sup>849</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 22.

<sup>850</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 25.

region, 500 *dönüms* of his/her holding were up for distribution. Yet, again, properly managed farms enjoyed exemption from this provision.<sup>851</sup>

Hence the distinction between regions rich in land resources and those poor was an invention on the part of the committee. As C. Tüzel explicated during parliamentary discussions, committee did this from the point of view of security of property. Thanks to this amendment, landowners would now know whether their properties could be confiscated.<sup>852</sup> This was indeed the motivation behind the revision in question. As stated in its official report, although the committee recognized the necessity of pulling down the threshold, it was nevertheless deemed necessary to ascertain in what regions 2000-*dönüm*-plus plots could be confiscated so as not to disturb production on middle farms.<sup>853</sup> According to Tüzel, the intent was the same in the case of the insertion of the provision that expropriation of owners would be a one-time affair in each region.<sup>854</sup>

Finally, the committee drew up more generous provisions on compensation payment. The new provisions added up to a progressive compensation scheme, the details of which will be examined later in the chapter. As for the method of payment, although the government would still pay land owners in bonds, now both interest rate and settlement date were determined by the law.<sup>855</sup> It should be clear that, after these changes, owners of land could expect to face less uncertainty as to how they would be paid.

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<sup>851</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, On Beşinci Madde & On Altıncı Madde (Article 15 & Article 16), p. 699. Also see T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 26.

<sup>852</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 156.

<sup>853</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 15.

<sup>854</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 156.

<sup>855</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 27-8.

Provisional committee also made a series of more minor changes to government's draft, all of which worked to the advantage of property owners. Such changes are too many to recount here, but a couple of examples are in order. Firstly, the amended draft gave property owners more chance to rival confiscation decisions.<sup>856</sup> In addition, citizens were now given 10 years to claim fields which had been presumed ownerless and distributed to farmers. Such fields, however, would not be returned to rightful owners. Instead, owners would be paid compensation.<sup>857</sup> According to another new provision (Article 32) brought by the committee, it was mandatory for government to distribute confiscated lands in two years. If government failed to do so, owners could regain their properties as soon as they paid back compensation payments they had received.<sup>858</sup> Another new provision (Article 33) concerned the completion of the process of confiscation. According to this, for each region, confiscations were supposed to be completed in five years at the most. Furthermore, as the same article stated, confiscation would be a one-time affair in each region.<sup>859</sup> This was a major change given that previously-mentioned Article 12 of government's draft opened the door for resuming of confiscations. What this new article meant might be illustrated with an example. Say that confiscation of private properties in Konya started in January 1947. Article 33 dictated that process be completed in February 1951 at the latest. And even if it ultimately proved that confiscated acreage was insufficient to meet the demand for land in Konya, government was banned from starting a new wave of confiscation in this province.

Before wrapping up this discussion, I would like to mention one more revision by the committee. The original draft as written by Ministry of Agriculture had a provision on

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<sup>856</sup> See T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 29-30 and Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Yirmi Altıncı Madde (Article 26), pp. 701-2.

<sup>857</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Dokuzuncu Madde (Article 9), p. 697. What this provision clearly shows is that government wished to avoid eviction of grantees.

<sup>858</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Otuz İkinci Madde (Article 32), pp. 701-2.

<sup>859</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Otuz Üçüncü Madde (Article 33), p. 702.

autonomous land reclamations – i.e. reclamations undertaken by peasants themselves. This was Article 42 and read: “It is forbidden to obtain fields by occupying, improving or reclaiming [vacant lands]. Those who do so will be evicted by the Ministry of Agriculture.”<sup>860</sup> Provisional committee removed this ban on autonomous reclamation from LPLF draft. It also wrote a provisional article, which would later prove crucial. This article conferred ownership rights to farmers who reclaimed vacant public lands for cultivation. This rule applied to all public lands – treasury lands as well as “lands at the disposal of the state.” Any farmer could lay claim to the fields that they opened, the only condition was that they had to make an application to the governor within six months after LPLF came into operation.<sup>861</sup> It is fairly easy to see that provisional article sanctioned previous land reclamations in an ex post facto fashion. One can also argue that farmers were given a strong incentive to reclaim land. That is, with the passage of the provisional article, it became unambiguous that farmers would be granted freehold title to lands they would reclaim in the future. LPLF’s provisional article would be at the center of much criticism in the early 1960s as land reform advocacy staged a comeback.

The overall effect of all these modifications was to make LPLF draft less interventionist and more respectful of property rights on land. Parliamentary opposition was very proud with committee’s work. Sazak stated that members of the committee strived hard to curb the excesses of the original draft and that their efforts eventually paid off.<sup>862</sup> Needless to say, the drafters of LPLF fiercely disagreed. It was Tiridoğlu who voiced government’s take on committee’s work. He asserted that “some friends” in the committee endeavored diligently to sabotage government’s draft. A little later, he diverted his criticism to Adnan

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<sup>860</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 39, my translation.

<sup>861</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Geçici Madde (Provisional Article), p. 699.

<sup>862</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 79.

Menderes alone who, he thought, manipulated the committee to transforming LPLF into something altogether different.<sup>863</sup>

## **6.2. The Forgotten Reform: Farmers' Homesteads**

Government's draft identified farmer homesteads as a distinct type of agricultural enterprise. The first and foremost criterion was size. A farmer homestead would be large enough to be the sole means of livelihood for a family.<sup>864</sup> Depending on ecological factors, a farmer homestead could cover 30 to 500 *dönüms*.<sup>865</sup> Mode of operation can be cited as the second criterion. A homestead was supposed to be cultivated by its owner and his/her family. It was strictly forbidden to lease family property either to sharecroppers or fix-rent tenants unless the owner was seriously ill or doing his military service.<sup>866</sup>

All affairs concerning farmer homesteads were rigorously regulated in government's draft. This document had an entire chapter on farmer homesteads, which included seven detailed articles (draft articles 34-40) with provisions on setup, borrowing and inheritance. According to these provisions, farmer's homesteads could not be mortgaged, divided, transferred or sold. Family members had the right to leave the homestead, in which case they would be compensated in money for their share of family property. In other words, homesteads would remain as an integral farming unit. Family property could not be divided in inheritance either. If there were multiple heirs, justice of the peace court would decide which one of them would be the new "leader of the homestead." The judge was supposed to pick the most worthy heir – one who not only was a good farmer, but had

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<sup>863</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 63-4.

<sup>864</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 36.

<sup>865</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 22.

<sup>866</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 37.

good health and morals, and was well-respected in the community.<sup>867</sup> This was how the preamble of government's draft introduced the sole inheritance principle:

Farmer homestead is a new institution for our country. It is intended as a means to engender and multiply well-rooted, independent farming families who can easily subsist on their land and labor. A farmer homestead is indivisible, which functions to guarantee the survival of independent [peasant] families as economic entities. This is why it is stipulated that a homestead can only be transferred to a single heir. If the law were to allow for the fragmentation of farmer's homestead in one way or the other, this would ultimately result in the reemergence of landless and land-short peasant families.<sup>868</sup>

I have previously noted that farmer's homestead represented the intermediate category between small and middle property. Given that small property was to be held by non-farmers only, it is plausible to say that farmer homestead was envisaged as the most populous farming category. That is, in government's original scheme, farmers' homesteads were the pillars of agricultural production. Article 24 of the first LPLF bill proves that this was indeed so. Article 24 was on the amount of land to be given to landless and land-short farmers, but it did not spell out exactly how much land each person would get. As stated in the article, the principle was to make each farmer's property sufficiently large to fall within the range of farmer's homestead.<sup>869</sup> So, it is possible to deduce that beneficiaries of land reform would be heads of homesteads. Furthermore, according to Articles 31-33, the government took on the responsibility to provide credit, farming equipment, draft animals and seeds to beneficiaries, who were referred to as "those who [would] establish farmer homesteads." The bill stipulated a 25-year payment plan in exchange, during which homesteads would be under government lien.<sup>870</sup> The government, then, was ready to invest limited resources in farmer's homesteads, which shows how central they were in government's scheme of agricultural development.

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<sup>867</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 36-40.

<sup>868</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 8, my translation.

<sup>869</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 32.

<sup>870</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 35. Also see T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 8.

After provisional committee's amendment, farmer homesteads were dropped from the draft. The committee viewed the institution of homesteads as a restriction on property rights. Especially worrisome to them were inheritance regulations. Committee members were concerned about the fate of heirs who would have to leave family homesteads. Where could these people find employment? How would they earn their living? Because government's draft did not deal with these and similar questions, there were many uncertainties, which troubled committee members. Secondly, committee's report noted the problem of credit. The problem was that the institution of farmer homesteads would make households entirely dependent on Agricultural Bank for credits. This was because, with the restrictions LPLF draft brought, it would be impossible for peasants to borrow from elsewhere. As a result, although committee's report admitted that fragmentation of holdings was undesirable, homesteads were just not seen as the right preventive means.<sup>871</sup> All these criticisms were openly stated in committee's report. More was implied, however. There seems to have been certain suspicions among committee members that the government wanted to keep family holdings strictly at subsistence size. According to this, legal regulations which were meant to stop fragmentation would as easily hold back the enlargement of family holdings.<sup>872</sup>

Provisions on farmer homesteads did not loom large in parliamentary deliberations, which is hardly surprising. After all, the institution of homesteads was taken out of the draft quite early. Nevertheless there are a number of discussions which needs to be noted.

Parliamentary opposition was rather harsh in its treatment of homesteads. C. Oral asserted that the institution of farmer homesteads was nothing but a "conservative intervention"

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<sup>871</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 16.

<sup>872</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 16-7.

into agricultural economy.<sup>873</sup> Menderes infamously likened provisions on farmer homesteads to the *Erbhof* Law of National Socialist Germany. At a time when fallen Nazi administration was condemned by the whole world, this was scandalous. The instant Menderes said this, he was interrupted by a deputy who cried out “God forbid!”<sup>874</sup> Menderes could not find any backing from his peers on this account. Yet, many analysts have drawn attention to the similarity between the project of farmers’ homesteads and Nazi legislation on family *Erbhöfe*, which makes it necessary to briefly examine *Erbhof* Law.

*Erbhof* Law (*Erbhofgesetz*) became effective in 1933 under National Socialists. Christy and Boals show that the institution of *Erbhöfe* was not a Nazi invention. It had already been present in Prussian law; National Socialists tailored it to their purposes.<sup>875</sup> *Erbhof* can best be defined as an inalienable hereditary farm. According to the law of 1933, *Erbhöfe* were legally protected against division and foreclosure. Hence *Erbhöfe* could not be divided, mortgaged or sold. It was entailed property in the true sense of the term.

One of the defining features of *Erbhof* was size. That is, an *Erbhof* was an ancestral property roughly between 10 to 100 hectares. Accordingly, around 700,000 farms fell within this category, and *Erbhöfe* covered three-fourths of all agricultural land in Germany.<sup>876</sup> It is therefore plausible to say that *Erbhof* was envisioned as the predominant component of the rural landscape.

The owner of an *Erbhof* was called *Bauer*. The idea at the heart of ancestral farms was that *Bauer* was not simply a farmer by trade. His relation to land went much beyond that.

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<sup>873</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 63.

<sup>874</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 116.

<sup>875</sup> Christy and Boals, 1934.

<sup>876</sup> Christy and Boals, 1934; p. 328; Tooze, 2008, p. 176.

His attachment to land was what defined him; cultivation was his “method of living”. And only an Aryan German could own an *Erbhof*.<sup>877</sup> No wonder that the *Erbhof* Law was accompanied by a cult of the peasant. According to this, the *Bauer* was at once the bedrock of, and the bulwark for, the nation.<sup>878</sup>

The 1933 law was predicated on compulsory sole inheritance. According to the law, family farm had to pass to a single principal heir even when *Bauer* wished otherwise. The law set forth a precise order of inheritance to preclude any confusion as to the heir of the family farm. But in certain cases, the so-called inheritance court had the authority to transfer the *Erbhof* to the next heir.<sup>879</sup> Adoption of sole inheritance was surely an outcome of frustration with egalitarian inheritance, which was associated with division of holdings. Under real inheritance, family holdings had been divided with each generation so much so that they ended up too small to support their owners. As a result, many of the owners became “part-time farmers” and had to do non-agricultural work to survive. Yet their subsistence was endangered where there was no work outside agriculture. When and where that happened, the result was flight from land.<sup>880</sup> A second problem to which *Erbhof* Law was a response was farmer indebtedness. Elimination of indebtedness was thus an auxiliary aim.<sup>881</sup>

It is also important that *Erbhof* Law became effective at the same time as Germany set out to build a massive procurement machinery in the shape of Reich Food Estate (*Reichnährstand*). These were the pillars of a stringent regime of control and regulation.<sup>882</sup>

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<sup>877</sup> Christy and Boals, 1934; p. 326.

<sup>878</sup> Pois, 1978, p. 360.

<sup>879</sup> Christy and Boals, 1934; pp. 327, 329.

<sup>880</sup> Christy and Boals, 1934; p. 328; Pois, 1978, p. 360; Stephenson, 1997, pp. 344-5.

<sup>881</sup> Christy and Boals, 1934; p. 329.

<sup>882</sup> Stephenson, 1997, pp. 346-7, 348; Tooze, 2008, p. 176.

Rearmament, autarkic policies, and control and regulation of the agricultural sector were intertwined together in what would soon turn out to be a belligerent politics.<sup>883</sup>

N. Berkes is probably one of the first intellectuals to liken the project of farmer homesteads to *Erbhof* Law. According to Berkes, farmer homesteads were the essence of the 1945 draft. He views homesteads in a negative light precisely because he believes that this institution was taken over from Nazi administration. Berkes's argument goes like this: Nazis aspired to create a wide, stable peasants stratum who would be forever tied to land; yet, this aspiration had nothing to do with a notion of social justice or equality. Homesteads were rather designed as a prop – as means to strengthen the state.<sup>884</sup>

Karaömerlioğlu, too, endorses the analogy to *Erbhof* law. More importantly, he claims that farmer homesteads added up to a conservative project – or, to be more specific, a peasantist conservative project. Karaömerlioğlu does not argue that the political elite were peasantists *per se*. What he does argue is that peasantism was one of the influences that molded the ideology of the Kemalist elite. In this account, peasantist ideology was particularly influential in shaping Kemalists' view on modernization. Karaömerlioğlu describes Kemalists as “conservative modernists” because they were very much disturbed by what they regarded as the disruptive effects of modernization. On this gloomy side, Kemalists saw rural-urban migration, social unrest in overcrowded industrial cities, and proletarianization. Consequently, the idea was one of forestalling such changes – this is the sense in which Kemalists were conservative modernists. In Karaömerlioğlu's opinion, it was through the impact of peasantist conservatism that Kemalists came to perceive landlessness as a social and political problem, which allegedly was bound to result in social upheavals. Take their concern with sharecropping. Karaömerlioğlu argues that the governing elite wanted to put an end to sharecropping not only because such a move would

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<sup>883</sup> Pois, 1978, p. 360.

<sup>884</sup> Berkes, 1997, pp. 246-7.

rationalize production or free peasants from exploitation. At the same time, Kemalists feared that sharecropping would eventually engender proletarianization. It thus goes without saying that the idea of land reform was fed by peasantism.<sup>885</sup> And the notion of farmer homesteads fit perfectly in this picture. Kemalists believed that this institution could prevent fragmentation of family holdings into units too small to even carry out subsistence farming. And if fragmentation was prevented, peasants would not be forced to work on others' farms as wage-laborers or migrate to cities to make a living. In a nutshell, this innovation was conceived as a means to thwart social mobility and keep peasants in their stations.<sup>886</sup>

Before wrapping up the discussion on *Erbhöfe*, I would like to make another note. LPLF draft appears to have received another similar criticism, namely, that it was inspired by Bolshevism/communism. Although there is no record in parliamentary minutes of anyone voicing this criticism, some MPs took the floor to respond to such allegations. It was Premier Ş. Saraçoğlu who made the most powerful statement. He denied any foreign influence and proudly declared that LPLF was permeated by “a single scent, the Turkish scent.”<sup>887</sup> Many others rushed to the defense of farmer homesteads and remarked that this institution was not adapted from any other country. On this view, farmer homestead was an original idea derived from Turkey's peculiar characteristics.<sup>888</sup> 1940s must have been a time when ideas like *Erbhöfe* were in vogue in Europe, and the rise of German National Socialism could have been one of the reasons for their appeal. But, at least in the Turkish case, the aspiration to decommodify small peasant property was not recent, but dated decades back, as I have previously argued.

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<sup>885</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 1998, pp. 36-8, 40; Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, pp. 122-6.

<sup>886</sup> Karaömerlioğlu, 1998, pp. 40-1; Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, p. 130.

<sup>887</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 108.

<sup>888</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 133.

The project of farmer homesteads proved stillborn. But its elimination in no sense changes the fact that this institution was a very important pillar of 1945's reform scheme. Therefore, if we can find out the rationale behind homesteads and why they appealed so much to the Kemalists, it will be possible to shed some fresh light on LPLF. Maybe the best way to understand the appeal of the idea of farmer homesteads is to examine Ömer Lütfi Barkan's account of the 1945 initiative. Barkan was a prominent historian who published extensively on Ottoman land regime. Although never involved in politics, he was very much interested in debates over land reform – a political project which he truly endorsed.<sup>889</sup> Barkan penned a number of articles for academic journals circa 1945, but his most elaborate argument is to be found in his 1946 piece, “Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu ve Türkiye’de Zirai Bir Reformun Ana Meseleleri” (*Law for Providing Land to Farmers and Major Issues in Agricultural Reform in Turkey*).

It is possible to observe that land reform was justified on three different grounds in Barkan's account. Firstly, Barkan made a Kemalist case for land reform. According to this, land reform was no ordinary policy measure – it was implied by the political principles of Kemalism. Barkan dwelled extensively on Kemalist populism and its utopia of a classless, privilege-free society. For him, the essence of Kemalist populism was the determination to curb the excesses of the capitalist society, which by its very nature was conflict-ridden. Therefore he perceived land reform as no less than the fulfillment of the Kemalist ideal. He characterized tenurial reform as “a law which, in its very spirit,

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<sup>889</sup> In 1945, the demise of the single-party regime was close, yet it was still difficult not to side with the government in their new policy initiatives. Ömer Celal Sarç must have been one of the few scholars who openly criticized the LPLF attempt. Sarç was a professor of economy at the İstanbul University where he also served as the dean of the Faculty of Economics for more than a decade. What one gathers from his publications is that Sarç was distant to the idea of a redistributive land reform. For him, scarcity of land was only relative in Turkey. Presence of landless or land-short peasants was generally not a consequence of maldistribution of arable land. On the contrary, there were people in need of land because the area under cultivation was too small to sustain the whole population. Therefore, what Turkey needed was not a scheme of confiscation of private property. For Sarç, the way to go was to expand the acreage under cultivation through land improvement and irrigation. See Sarç, 1944, pp. 298-300, 310-1, 317-20; Sarç, 1948, pp. 440-1; Sarç, 1952, p. 76.

confirm[ed] and consolidate[d] the Kemalist revolution.”<sup>890</sup> What precisely did Kemalist principles imply for land tenure and relations on land, then? Here Barkan put forward two simple formulae: “those who cultivate the land should own it” and “those who own the land should cultivate it”.<sup>891</sup> This was to say that both landlessness and absentee landlordism were inimical to Kemalist populism.

Secondly, in Barkan’s eyes, the project of land reform overlapped with a general (meaning Europe-wide) wave of interest in social matters. For Barkan, labor legislation in the West and land reform initiative in Turkey were parallel efforts because both aimed to improve the conditions of working populations. The difference was that in the case of an agricultural country like Turkey it was simply a much more urgent task to deal with the plight of the peasants. It was thus of utmost importance to provide social protection for the peasant population.<sup>892</sup> It is clear that Barkan’s was an argument in favor state intervention. He had no qualms about calling for state intervention at all, because as he saw it, liberalism was no longer in vogue. Nations came to admit the flaws of a “nonchalant” sort of liberalism, and this, he wrote, engendered the realization that it was necessary to regulate the economy in accordance with social objectives. An absolute commitment to competition or private property rights was literally passé.<sup>893</sup> All these arguments about the disillusionment with liberalism eventually built up to a notion of land reform as a requirement for social justice.

Finally, on the third level we have a eulogy for Ottoman land regulations. For Barkan, Ottoman land regulations in their pristine form comprised a “genuine land law”, and they served to regulate land-related matters in accordance with state’s interests. The whole

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<sup>890</sup> Barkan, 1980, p.452.

<sup>891</sup> Barkan, 1980, pp.491-2.

<sup>892</sup> Barkan, 1980, pp.451-2.

<sup>893</sup> Barkan, 1980, pp.451-2, 507-8.

system was designed to eschew the “individualist” and “liberal” precepts of Islamic law, which Ottoman statesmen found rather ill-fitting to their purposes. Statesmen instituted a land order in which the state held on to titular proprietorship and granted usufruct rights to its subject. Moreover, these use rights were conditional. In this way, the state categorically denied private property rights on land; yet every subject had secure access to a family plot. In Barkan’s view, this was the virtue of the whole system: All had access to just enough land to support themselves, but no one was let to amass that much land that they could drive others off. This was how the Ottomans guaranteed small peasant property and rendered alienation a highly improbable event.<sup>894</sup> This well-functioning system was significantly altered in the nineteenth century as part of the process of integration with commercial capitalism. Nineteenth-century statesmen were firm in their conviction that the Empire would benefit from economic integration if its codes were liberalized. The result turned out to be a complete disappointment, however, as the state let go its monopoly to concede private property in land.<sup>895</sup>

In 1940s’ Turkey, Barkan thought, relations on land were more liberal than ever. The Republic brought a more forceful sanction on private property, which entailed the disappearance of all instruments to protect peasant property. Most crucial in this respect was the introduction of the civil code in 1926. The problem for Barkan was that the code failed to lay out special provisions for landed property. Land was rendered a commodity, and an ordinary one at that, which could be hired, mortgaged, sold or inherited as wished. Subsequently, the state was left with no measures to prevent fragmentation of family holdings, acceleration of sharecropping, peasant indebtedness or dispossession.<sup>896</sup>

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<sup>894</sup> Barkan, 1980, pp.490-1.

<sup>895</sup> Barkan, 1980, p.507. Barkan was no means alone in extolling Ottoman land system. R. Aktan, who wrote extensively on reform in the early sixties, holds a similar position. For him, the problem of land fragmentation was a result of the vanishing of “restrictions put on the division of landholdings” under *timar* system (Aktan, 1966, p. 319).

<sup>896</sup> Barkan, 1980, pp.490, 494-5, 504-5, 515-7.

To sum up, national objectives as delineated by Kemalism, the universal idea of social justice and nostalgia for Ottoman land system were intertwined in this analysis to present a case in favor of state interference in relations on land.

The rest of Barkan's article delineated the contours of a land reform scheme in Turkey, and two issues stood out. First to note is Barkan's interest in demography and policies of settlement. What Barkan wrote on the topic echoed parliamentary discussions of 1945. According to him, distribution of population in Turkey was immensely disproportionate. As a result, despite the presence of vast lands and a relatively low population, density of agricultural population was so high in certain regions that there was a dearth of cultivable land. It was imperative that an intended land reform scheme dealt with this problem. But Barkan stressed that redistribution of land would not suffice, for the problem actually demanded redistribution of the population. The reason for this was that, in those regions with a high density of rural population, it was impossible to make peasants property owners unless they were moved to less crowded regions. For instance, in a place like Çukurova, there simply was not enough land to be distributed. What Barkan suggested was no less than a new "settlement scheme" to facilitate the resettlement of excess populations in sparsely populated agricultural regions. Such a scheme was regarded as a necessary corollary of land reform.<sup>897</sup>

Yet the centerpiece of Barkan's account was none other than farmers' homesteads. Barkan appears to have been disturbed by the fact the debate over reform in Turkey revolved almost exclusively around redistribution of land. Even though he agreed that redistributive reform was necessary, for him, the real deal was changing the legal status of small peasant property. In this respect, Turks had a lot to learn from the Ottomans, who devised a special land code to co-exist side by side with Islamic law. Hence Barkan believed that the

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<sup>897</sup> Barkan, 1980, pp.481-8.

Turkish government had to find a way to rectify the provisions of the civil code with an eye to guaranteeing the survival of peasant property. The proposed change in the status of peasant property was meant to prevent peasant indebtedness and fragmentation of family holdings. Barkan did hint at the concrete content of these land regulations. First of all, because peasant indebtedness was an utmost concern, Barkan laid immense emphasis on provisions about mortgaged debt. Apparently, Barkan thought that land should be turned into a property which could not be mortgaged under any circumstances. This was because default of debt risked transfer of ownership, for the peasant could lose the family plot to the mortgagee. Secondly, there was the question of rights of inheritance, which had a bearing on the problem of fragmentation of landholdings. The least that could be said here is that Barkan felt positively about the attempts to prevent fragmentation by way of constraining rights of inheritance. And it seems he kept an open mind about possible means, as he seriously considered the possibility of introducing a sole inheritance principle whereby only one of the heirs would be given the right to inherit the family farm.<sup>898</sup> One can say in conclusion that both these measures were intended to inaugurate an agrarian order in which owner-operated farms would reign supreme. It is not difficult to deduce that Barkan perceived a scheme of that sort as serving a double purpose: instituting a “just” agrarian order and securing stability in the countryside. This was precisely why Barkan was upset with the elimination of farmer homesteads from the LPLF bill.<sup>899</sup>

Let us now go back to LPLF and ask one final question: What was left of LPLF’s claim to preserve family holdings after the removal of farmer homesteads? Citing a provision in the final draft according to which grantees were forbidden from selling their new plots for a period of 25 years, Çumralı asserted that the idea of homesteads was not entirely dead. In his view, this provision was meant to assure the permanence of small property.<sup>900</sup> A

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<sup>898</sup> Barkan, 1980, pp.489-90, 504-7.

<sup>899</sup> Barkan, 1980, pp. 505-8.

<sup>900</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 133.

similar point was made in the report of the provisional committee in relation to a number of articles which regulated proprietary rights over LPLF holdings. This is what we turn now.

As previously mentioned, peasants would take on debt from the Agricultural Bank in return for plots they would receive. Now, according to Article 54, farmers were deprived of their ability to transfer or alienate their property until their debt to the Agricultural Bank was cleared.<sup>901</sup> Take a landless sharecropper. If he/she was given a plot, he/she would be forbidden from selling his/her new property for 25 years following land distribution since the debt was supposed to be settled in 25 years. In fact, Article 59 disallowed sale, transfer or mortgaging of holdings for 25 years even for those grantees who managed to settle their credit debt earlier (i.e. in less than 25 years).<sup>902</sup> As explained by Hatipoğlu, government's concern here was preservation of the unity of the family holding.<sup>903</sup>

It will be recalled that land-short peasants were eligible to receive land as well. Article 55 stipulated that the same rule would also apply to their *entire* properties. To illustrate, if a peasant X had had 40 *dönüms* before land distribution and received another 40 *dönüms* thanks to LPLF, he/she would be disallowed from selling his *entire* property (80 *dönüms*) for the next 25 years. Only exceptions here were previous mortgages. That is, if X had had mortgaged his/her property prior to land distribution, his/her old 40 *dönüms* could be foreclosed.<sup>904</sup>

While no objection was raised against Article 54 in the parliament, Article 55 brought some dispute. Pekel was not happy with the fact that law treated all properties (old and

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<sup>901</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Elli Dördüncü Madde (Article 54), p. 705.

<sup>902</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Elli Sekizinci Madde (Article 58), p. 706.

<sup>903</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 155.

<sup>904</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Elli Beşinci Madde (Article 55), p. 705.

new) just the same. He was of the view that a farmer should be free do whatever he liked with the property he had inherited from his father. Tüzel provided an instant reply. If Article 55 were taken off the draft, previously land-short farmers would always face the danger of losing their property.<sup>905</sup>

Finally, there was Article 59 which regulated inheritance. According to this article, upon the death of a beneficiary, his/her heirs were supposed to cultivate land in partnership. Heirs were given 3 months to select among themselves a representative, who would be in charge of running the enterprise. Should they fail to reach an agreement on a name, a judge of justice of the peace would appoint one of them as the representative. On the other hand, if some heirs wished to leave the partnership, they were free to sell their shares to other heirs. In no case, however, could shares be sold to outsiders or even mortgaged.<sup>906</sup> It is easy to see that the drafters of the law were determined to prevent fragmentation of LPLF holdings. For that, they were prepared to suspend the right of inheritance until LPLF debt was cleared. The idea was to keep new, or enlarged, holdings as a unit even after the death of the beneficiaries. Hence heirs could not fragment deceased's property and had to keep the family holding as a single unit for 25 years. As would be expected, Article 59 was opposed in the parliament, but to no avail. Reformists insisted on the article; for them, "the spirit of the law [would] go astray" without such a rule of inheritance.<sup>907</sup>

In conclusion, I would like to mention D. Taraklı's take on farmers' homesteads. According to Taraklı, who contributed one of the earliest and more comprehensive analyses of LPLF, these provisions were designed so as to "ensure the integrity and continuity" of small holdings. They therefore were what made LPLF a genuine reform

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<sup>905</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 153-4.

<sup>906</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Elli Dokuzuncu Madde (Article 59), p. 706.

<sup>907</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 156.

law.<sup>908</sup> This is also why Barkan, Taraklı and later generations of reform advocates have coalesced on the view that the removal of the institution of farmer's homestead from LPLF was unfortunate.

### 6.3. Parliamentary Deliberations

On May 14, Minister of Agriculture Şevket Raşit Hatipoğlu took the stand and introduced the bill to the assembly.<sup>909</sup> He was followed by MPs who took turns commenting on the entirety of government's bill.

Quite a number of deputies acclaimed government's draft as a "revolutionary law."<sup>910</sup> For Yüzaltı, LPLF was "the real meaning of the Turkish revolution."<sup>911</sup> Öymen declared that this was a draft "forged with noble emotions of the days of national liberation."<sup>912</sup> Dağlıoğlu stated that Turkish government was about to realize land reform to finally "conquer this land from within."<sup>913</sup> On the other hand, those who were critical of the draft were condemned by Tiridoğlu as "defenders of the *status quo*."<sup>914</sup>

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<sup>908</sup> Taraklı, 1976, pp. 92-3.

<sup>909</sup> See T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 63-59 for Hatipoğlu's opening speech.

<sup>910</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 63; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 106; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 139; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 104.

<sup>911</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 128.

<sup>912</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 126.

<sup>913</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 73.

<sup>914</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 139.

Many reform advocates stated that LPLF was a belated attempt.<sup>915</sup> In Bekata's words, LPLF was "a law that the regime had long pledged to the nation."<sup>916</sup> Two decades had passed since its promulgation, but the new regime had failed to deliver on this promise, which made land reform a "national exigency dictated by the economic structure of [Turkish] society."<sup>917</sup> To this Premier Ş. Saraçoğlu replied that the draft brought to the parliament was a culmination of many years of bureaucratic preparation.<sup>918</sup>

Not everyone was this enthusiastic about government's bill, however. Sazak's words illustrate how LPLF was received by its adversaries:

We overthrew the government, expelled the caliph, wore the [western] hat, adopted Latin alphabet, and closed down dervish lodges. Recently, we passed the Capital Levy Law due to some necessary reasons. Nevertheless I cannot bring myself to accepting [the present bill].<sup>919</sup>

For Sazak, the LPLF draft was a punitive measure. The problem was that landowners were punished for no reason at all. Landowners had supported Mustafa Kemal and his compatriots during liberation, and they had been cooperative ever since. They had paid taxes due and complied with state policies.<sup>920</sup> In Sazak's opinion, this was at the same time why LPLF could not qualify as a revolution. Sazak's argumentation is not very clear but the idea at work here seems to be that revolutions, which always presume some adversary, happen for a reason. Sazak believed that there was no reason why such a maneuver against landowners should happen. This was no revolution, but just a

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<sup>915</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 69; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 147; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 69.

<sup>916</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 126.

<sup>917</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 125.

<sup>918</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 104-5.

<sup>919</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 80, my translation.

<sup>920</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 81; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 47.

questionable economic measure.<sup>921</sup> D. Arıkođlu made a similar point. He claimed that a law like LPLF could not receive consent from all sections of the society since it burdened landowners for the sake of landless and land-short peasants. In his view, any corrective action had to be consensual, which LPLF was clearly not. Arıkođlu was of the opinion that a better option would be to raise a universal, flat-rate tax, the revenue from which to be used for provision of land to farmers in need.<sup>922</sup>

Menderes was in agreement with Sazak that LPLF was primarily an offensive maneuver against landowners. Again like Sazak, Menderes found this move altogether incomprehensible. Such an attack on property owners would have been justified if there had been strong political reasons. This was the case in countries like Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia where large landowners were non-nationals (“*gayrimillî anasır*”).<sup>923</sup> Quite interestingly, it was at this point that Menderes brought up Law No. 1505. In the past, he claimed, Turkish government had had political reasons to move against landowners. The government had responded to the challenge posed by “political reaction” (*irtica*) with a law on redistribution of land in Eastern provinces.<sup>924</sup> Turkey of 1945 was now a different country, however. Turkish regime was in no way face-to-face with similar challenges either in the East or in Western provinces or the Anatolian interior. The irony for Menderes was that LPLF’s provisions on confiscation of private property were much harsher than those of Law No. 1505. The government was less merciful to loyal landowners than it had been to revolting “feudal lords” in the past.<sup>925</sup>

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<sup>921</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 47.

<sup>922</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 84.

<sup>923</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 38.

<sup>924</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 38.

<sup>925</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 38-9.

Critics questioned the intentions behind the government bill. They voiced the opinion that the LPLF draft aimed to interfere with land appropriation and land use. This, Menderes said, amounted to a change in property regime.<sup>926</sup> Another opponent, C. Oral, argued that Turkish government was justified to interfere with the property regime only when social stability depended on it or when a change was necessary to settle nomads or encourage an increase in population.<sup>927</sup> When H.O. Bekata took the stand, he replied critics like Menderes and Oral by saying that the government had no intention of changing the property regime on land. Following the preamble of government's draft, he pointed out that what was in need of change was actual structure of property since the current distribution of landholdings was very much problem-ridden. The presence of unattended *çiftlik*s side by side with land hungry peasants was simply unacceptable. That was what government wanted to interfere.<sup>928</sup>

Although sharp in criticism, opposition in the parliament did not launch a frontal assault on the draft. Many of the opponents avowedly welcomed this new legislative attempt. But they were quick to remark that they were extremely wary of some of its provisions. Their most fundamental argument was that LPLF draft went beyond what was necessary to address land problem in Turkey.<sup>929</sup> In fact, there seems to have been a common strategy employed by those in the parliament who were unsettled by the LPLF draft. Almost all of them treated separately what they saw as two objectives contained in the draft. One the one hand was provision of land to land-short and landless peasants – an objective they professedly had no reservations against. On the other hand were legislative beginnings of a new property regime on land – one which was hostile to large enterprises. It was this second aspect that they bitterly opposed. By treating problems of landlessness and large

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<sup>926</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 149.

<sup>927</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 65.

<sup>928</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 125.

<sup>929</sup> TBMM TD, 1945b, p. 83; TBMM TD, 1945f, pp. 35, 38; TBMM TD, 1945h, pp. 118-9.

ownership separately, they successfully conveyed the idea that land distribution did not require confiscation.<sup>930</sup> What aided them here was the presence of vast pasture lands which theoretically could be distributed at any time to those in need.

### **6.3.1. Opposition Mounts**

The most vocal opponents argued that there was too little knowledge of the countryside to prepare a land distribution bill as drastic as this. These people pointed out that there were no reliable statistics on landownership or landlessness. They also complained that LPLF draft was prepared without necessary surveys. No effort was made to compile data and no one ever travelled to the countryside to see the situation first hand.<sup>931</sup> Therefore, as Sazak bluntly put, the excesses found in the draft was “an outcome of ignorance.”<sup>932</sup>

Skeptics pointed out that Turkey was a land-rich country with a relatively small population.<sup>933</sup> This is what I have recurrently referred to as a high land-labor ratio. Even though it was not enunciated so many times, this can be distinguished as a key argument because opponents drew a lot on the repercussions of this particular patterning of ecological and demographic factors. To clarify my point, what the opposition did was to call attention to the favorable effects of a high land-labor ratio on the distribution of land. This they did by opening to discussion the extent of landlessness and large ownership in Turkey.

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<sup>930</sup> See e.g. T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 74; TBMM TD, 1945h, pp. 118-20.

<sup>931</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 67, 74-5, 81.

<sup>932</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 136.

<sup>933</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 112; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 35; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 52.

First off is opposition's view on the problem of landlessness. Menderes advocated that reform proponents colossally overstated the problem of landlessness. The number of landless farmers was much smaller than was argued.<sup>934</sup> Many others pointed out that the ratio of the landless to peasant population in Turkey was rather small compared to other countries of the world. In Sazak's view, even the much-referred-to 7% landlessness was an overestimation. He believed that the ranks of the landless could not have possibly been that crowded.<sup>935</sup> Menteşe referred to the numbers given in committee's report and said that a hypothetical total of some 130,000 landless households did not warrant such radical action.<sup>936</sup> In addition, Menteşe used data he compiled from various state institutions to prove that there was no need for a drastic land redistribution in Turkey where an overwhelming majority of peasants were property owners.<sup>937</sup>

For the parliamentary opposition, the prevalence of large ownership in Turkey was exaggerated as well. Menteşe pointed out that distribution of land had been underway since 1937-1938. The Agricultural Bank had bought some large *çiftlik*s, which had later been broken up and sold on affordable, long-term loans to small farmers. Menteşe concluded that many large estates had already disintegrated.<sup>938</sup> Sazak argued that, on average, a so-called estate did not cover much acreage in Turkey and that fragmentation of large holdings was therefore not worthwhile. He mentioned Eskişehir and asked his

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<sup>934</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 41.

<sup>935</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 136.

<sup>936</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 78.

<sup>937</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 75-6; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 159. Numbers given by Menteşe concerned land distribution. His point was that large tracts of land had been distributed to peasants through various state institutions. On the other hand, Menteşe did refer to a landownership survey conducted in Thrace, which found a landlessness ratio of 5% of. Hence the finding is compatible with the results of the 1937 survey.

<sup>938</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 75-6.

peers what good could come out from distributing a 4000 *dönüm* plot to 35,000 farmers who needed land.<sup>939</sup>

As I have stated earlier in this chapter, opposing MPs did not deny that there were farmers who craved land. Yet they were firm in their conviction that vacant lands should be distributed to such farmers. This was the way to help the landless and the land-short.<sup>940</sup> In fact, their argument was stronger than this. In view of the presence of public lands which could be opened up for cultivation, expropriation of large owners was proclaimed an outright redundant measure.<sup>941</sup> When opponents said public lands, they meant all kinds of public lands – commons as well as treasury lands. This category at the same time included state farms founded out of necessity during Second World War. Even though they did not cover much acreage, state farms surfaced time and again in discussions. This must have had something to do with opposition's aversion to state entrepreneurialism in general. For the parliamentary opposition, state farms, which had helped Turkish people a great deal during the war, now became redundant as war-time exigency of fighting scarcity and profiteering was over. The opposition suggested that state farms be dismantled and their lands be given to farmers in need.<sup>942</sup> All in all, Menderes put the maxim as providing land to peasants in need “without disturbing production” unless doing so was absolutely necessary.<sup>943</sup>

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<sup>939</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 136.

<sup>940</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 78, 83; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 131; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 188.

<sup>941</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 101-2; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 131; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 119-20.

<sup>942</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 66, 82; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 131. At first, reformists tried to defend the *raison d'être* of state farms. However, after many inquiries from MPs, Hatipoğlu admitted that state farms were not as essential as they used to be during the war. He also announced that state farms could be downsized in near future and that some of their lands could be distributed to farmers (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 192).

<sup>943</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 40.

It goes without saying that opponents of government's draft detested the idea of confiscation. In their eyes, seizing some people's farms to benefit some others was tantamount to imposing statutory limits on private property. For H. Bayur intervention into property relations on land was an oddity. No one could dare to gainsay that an urbanite was entitled to have plenty; yet the same right was denied to the farmer, who had to give up part of his/her wealth to benefit others.<sup>944</sup> Moreover, it is possible to say that some MPs were worried because they thought intervention could spread from land to other properties. That is, they feared that government would proceed to confiscate real estate or capital.

LPLF bill was also challenged on another front: sharecropping. Critics of government's bill had a completely different outlook on share tenancy. Some deputies vindicated sharecropping on economic grounds. For instance, Oral urged fellow parliamentarians not to conflate "modern sharecropping" with older forms which had descended from feudalism. According to Oral, lack of credit loans was the primary factor which accounted for prevalence of sharecropping in its modern form.<sup>945</sup> Menteşe's take was more comprehensive. "In our country where land is plentiful, population low and capital scarce", Menteşe declared, sharecropping has been how "labor and capital work in association."<sup>946</sup> As such, modern sharecropping involves no coercion – either economic or political.<sup>947</sup> The corollary of this argument is the notion that sharecropping of this sort, which is said to be found in all modern societies, is by no means backward and that it should be preserved.<sup>948</sup>

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<sup>944</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 91.

<sup>945</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 68.

<sup>946</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 76.

<sup>947</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 77.

<sup>948</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 76.

For the parliamentary opposition, reformists erred in viewing land distribution as a panacea. Both Menderes and Sazak raised the problem of poverty for peasant families who did own land. According to both, smallholding peasants had such low family income that some years they were worse off than agricultural laborers.<sup>949</sup> Others mentioned those peasants who owned land but deserted it. Peasants like these gave up farming for a reason: They either lost a pair of oxen, could not pay taxes or had an unexpected expenditure. Such peasants had no choice but come to cities where they did odd jobs.<sup>950</sup> The point that opposing MPs made was that ownership of land was but one determinant of peasant prosperity. They laid special emphasis on agricultural prices. In one of his very long speeches, Menderes, touched upon the problem and maintained that low prices debilitated peasants until the outbreak of World War II.<sup>951</sup> When dealing with the rural sector, Tokad argued, the maxim should be peasant welfare, and peasant welfare depended on the course of agricultural prices. For him, peasants were doomed to poverty unless they could sell their produce at a fair price and had cash to pay for taxes and monetary expenses. But if the prices were to remain low, peasants – even those who had sufficient land – would flow to the cities to make a decent living.<sup>952</sup>

A corollary argument was that provision of land alone could not make independent producers out of sharecroppers or poor peasants. As many deputies noted during debates, beneficiaries would need draft animals, seeds, and basic tools to become fulltime, self-sufficient farmers.<sup>953</sup> Some argued that this required a sweeping investment program. This was Tokad's stance, for example. According to him, alongside redistribution of land,

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<sup>949</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 41, 47.

<sup>950</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 108; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 142.

<sup>951</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 115.

<sup>952</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 104.

<sup>953</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 83; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 100; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 142.

government had to divert resources to the rural sector so as to invigorate agricultural production.<sup>954</sup> In effect, this was to say that distribution of land would not necessarily give a boost to production. Government scheme was, thus, wrong in its most basic assumption.

All in all, opponents argued that the real problem in Turkey was not maldistribution of land but agricultural underdevelopment. This was the gist of Oral's long speech, for instance. According to Oral, Turkish agriculture was underdeveloped in two senses. Firstly, only a small fraction of agricultural lands were opened to cultivation in Turkey, and secondly, a pair oxen and wooden plough were all that an average peasant family had as means of production. In other words, the technique of production was remarkably primitive.<sup>955</sup>

Consequently, parliamentary opposition countered government's determination to reform land tenure with a call for a new set of economic policies for the Turkish countryside. Menderes said: "We do not suffer from scarcity of land. We suffer from scarcity of capital, equipment, labor and knowledge – all those things which would increase the value of land."<sup>956</sup> According to Menderes, this fact alone accounted for the still primitive state of agricultural production in Turkey – peasants tilled the lands just the way they had been doing for centuries. For the Aydın deputy, the new Turkish regime was to be blamed for all this. Not only did governments pay insufficient attention to modernization of agricultural production, they also failed to contribute to peasant welfare. The new regime had but one good deed, and that was the abolition of *aşar*. Nonetheless, peasants were burdened by new taxes, and they were discriminated against by a price mechanism which

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<sup>954</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 104.

<sup>955</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 64.

<sup>956</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 113 my translation.

favored industry. It was this state of affairs – and *not* landlessness – which lay at the source of the misfortunes of Turkish peasants.<sup>957</sup>

It is proper to close this section by outlining Menderes's speeches on the parliament floor, which succinctly encapsulated all the main arguments of the opponents of government's bill. Menderes stated that although land was plentiful in Turkey, acreage under cultivation was so narrow that people did look forward to redistribution in certain regions. And there were places where the land situation was exacerbated by demographic imbalances. Other than that, Turkey was uniquely fortunate as far as land resources went. As Menderes put it, "land in Turkey [was] an inexpensive and easy to access commodity." Distribution of land in Turkey was more equitable when compared to those countries which had recently reformed their land tenure regimes. So what course of action should Turkish government take to remedy what apparently was a minor problem? According to Menderes, government first and foremost should encourage land reclamation all over Turkey. Secondly, and where necessary, it should re-settle people and distribute public lands to the landless. Finally, government should invest in the modernization of agricultural production. For Menderes, land reclamation, modernization and settlement should be the three pillars of a land law that would genuinely suit Turkey. It goes without saying that there was almost no space for expropriation of large owners in Menderes's scheme as he believed that concentration of landholding was minimal in Turkey.<sup>958</sup> It was his contention that a drastic redistributive reform could only have adverse effects, because Turkey had nothing to gain from a proliferation of small enterprises stuck in subsistence production. It was for a reason that fragmentation of large holdings in favor of family-size farms was "a path *not* taken any more" in the modern world.<sup>959</sup>

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<sup>957</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 114-5.

<sup>958</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 112-4.

<sup>959</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 40, emphasis added.

As a result, the discourse of the parliamentary opposition was that the cure for agricultural underdevelopment was not tenurial reform but agricultural modernization.<sup>960</sup> Koraltan gave a name to this alternative strategy: “agricultural reform” as opposed to land reform.<sup>961</sup>

### **6.3.2. Reformists’ Defense of LPLF Draft**

Opponents’ critique of LPLF draft was so strong that reformists rushed fiercely to the defense of government’s scheme. First, they tried to justify government intervention in relations on land. Many pro-reform MPs advanced the idea that land was not an ordinary property. “It is homeland” said S. Çumralı.<sup>962</sup> For Ulusoy, land was unique in that peasantry was tied to the land the way no other group was to their means of livelihood.<sup>963</sup> At the same time, land was a non-multipliable economic asset, which justified certain regulations on its use.<sup>964</sup> It was also argued that property relations on land had a bearing upon the whole economy.<sup>965</sup> This was “delimitation of property for the sake of public interest.”<sup>966</sup> These and similar considerations led many to believe that land could not be made to fit into the confines of an archetype of private property.<sup>967</sup> After all, it was a fact that property rights were not untouchable. They could be, and commonly were, restrained by the law.<sup>968</sup> Reminiscing Law No. 1505, a deputy said that this would not be the first time

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<sup>960</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 64, 77.

<sup>961</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 119.

<sup>962</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 134.

<sup>963</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 106.

<sup>964</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 102.

<sup>965</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 142.

<sup>966</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 118.

<sup>967</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, pp. 142, 155.

<sup>968</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 146.

property rights were restrained in Turkey.<sup>969</sup> Nevertheless, Minister of Agriculture Hatipoğlu felt it necessary to reply to fears that intervention would spread from land to other kinds of property. He declared that government had no intention to intervene in any property relation except on land.<sup>970</sup>

As argued above, opposition's stance was that Turkish countryside needed much more than just redistribution of land. They called for a comprehensive agricultural development program. Subsequently, those who were in favor of government's draft announced that land distribution was just a first step and that government had been planning a much wider scheme of development. For instance, Sökmensüer said that other drafts on credit supply, settlement and farm management were on the way.<sup>971</sup> Yet, for them, land distribution was the pivotal component of agricultural development.

Reformists, then, had to make a case for the necessity of land reform in Turkey. Minister of Agriculture contested the abundance of land argument by arguing that available statistics overestimated the prevalence of small peasant property. According to him, although the number of small *enterprises* was rather high, many peasants did not own the land they cultivated. In other words, statistics mistook small agricultural enterprises for peasant property.<sup>972</sup> Other reform advocates said that despite a favorable land-labor ratio, land was unevenly distributed in Turkey<sup>973</sup> – a point well made in bill's preamble. Another argument was that relative abundance of land was offset by certain factors like

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<sup>969</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 146.

<sup>970</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 104.

<sup>971</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 147.

<sup>972</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 100.

<sup>973</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 125; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 83.

topographical features. As H.S. Coşar remarked, because many parts of the terrain were mountainous, *cultivable* area was actually smaller than it would seem at first.<sup>974</sup>

Surprisingly, however, reformists' counter-offensive did not rest on an argument about landlessness. In fact, very few MPs orated on landlessness. At times, statements about the landless were quite obscure. S. Batu talked about a "materially and socially deprived crowd" whose number was "on the verge of millions."<sup>975</sup> Yet, even those who vehemently supported the draft did not paint a very bleak picture as far as landlessness went. For example, Ülkümen said that landlessness was not "a big social trouble" in Turkey.<sup>976</sup> Some pro-reform deputies did give sentimental depictions of misery in Turkish villages.<sup>977</sup> One pro-reform deputy said that mere numbers were not the whole story. Even if they only comprised a minority, the government felt deeply for each and every landless peasant.<sup>978</sup>

If landlessness was not at the forefront of debate, then what was the real axis of the reformist counter-argument? It was certainly the prevalence of sharecropping. Ülkümen's speech is a good example here. Having noted that only around 5-7% of rural households were entirely landless, Ülkümen underlined what he saw as the major problem in the Turkish countryside, namely, high prevalence of sharecropping. According to him, an overwhelming majority of landless households worked as sharecroppers. But landless peasants were not alone in engaging in sharecropping arrangements, which had the effect of increasing the numbers. Prospective land law should attend to this problem above all

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<sup>974</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 36.

<sup>975</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 142.

<sup>976</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 108.

<sup>977</sup> E.g. T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi TD, 1945d, p. 144; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 45-6.

<sup>978</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 58.

else.<sup>979</sup> Although there were pro-reform deputies who argued that it was impossible to put an end to the practice<sup>980</sup>, many others agreed with Ülkümen on this score. For them, elimination of sharecropping as much as possible was the aim.

In response to those who argued that sharecropping made good economic sense, reformists reiterated the idea of property-owning, free citizenry.<sup>981</sup> In fact, concerns over sharecropping were so compelling that some people in the parliament spoke of share tenants as “slaves.”<sup>982</sup> Some others likened sharecroppers to serfs.<sup>983</sup> How they were called made little difference; sharecropping was seen by all as a dependency relationship. For instance, in Irmak’s view, sharecroppers were not free citizens; dependence on landowners left psychological streaks in them.<sup>984</sup>

According to the Minister of Agriculture, it would be misleading to assume that provision of land to sharecroppers would only benefit the latter. On the contrary, making sharecroppers property owners was in the interest of national economy as a whole.<sup>985</sup> It was because small-scale independent farming was a much more efficient method of farming than either sharecropping or fixed-rent tenancy.<sup>986</sup>

In reformist discourse, the critique of large ownership came only second to sharecropping. There was disagreement as to the frequency of the phenomenon, though. On one occasion,

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<sup>979</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 62.

<sup>980</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 135 Erten.

<sup>981</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 106, 125; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 141.

<sup>982</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 148.

<sup>983</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 89-90.

<sup>984</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 130.

<sup>985</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 61.

<sup>986</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 62; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 73.

A. Tiridoğlu noted that there were 4500 large owners in Turkey. This was obviously a very small minority in Turkish population, and accordingly, their property rights should be the least of all concerns.<sup>987</sup> On the other hand, it appears that Ülkümen had some other data at his disposal. Citing “an article published by courtesy of Ministry of Agriculture”, which unfortunately is not available to us, Ülkümen put the number of large landholdings as 418. Although the number was much smaller than what Tüzel provided, Ülkümen also noted that these large holdings covered an area of 6,500,000 *dönüms*. As Ülkümen stated, this meant that average size was a whopping 15,000 *dönüms*.<sup>988</sup>

Nonetheless, there was complete consensus as to the characterization of farming estates. Large landholdings were described as a “malevolent legacy” of Ottoman society.<sup>989</sup> Hatipoğlu pointed out that large estates were historical vestiges and that sharecropping contributed immensely to their survival. This is how Hatipoğlu made his case: Had it not been for sharecropping, estates would have naturally fragmented; if there had been no sharecroppers, landowners would have been obliged to directly operate their holdings, and most would have preferred to sell.<sup>990</sup> The problem of landlessness, too, was a legacy from the Empire. According to this, the emergence of people without access to land dated back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This was when the classical system of agricultural production

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<sup>987</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, pp. 139, 140.

<sup>988</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 62. It needs to be stated that Ülkümen had some reservations against LPLF draft. He did call for a scheme of confiscation of land, but one which was quite selective. For Ülkümen, distribution of land to dispossessed sharecroppers was the urgent task and had to be carried out as swiftly as possible. Therefore, Ülkümen’s proposed scheme had two phases. In the first, large properties which were cultivated by sharecroppers would be confiscated to benefit respective sharecroppers only. The second phase of land distribution would start once provision of land to landless households was over. In this second phase, land-short peasant households would be granted additional acreage from vacant public lands. Unlike the first phase, the completion of the second was supposed to take many years. See T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 62-3.

<sup>989</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 134.

<sup>990</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 101.

degenerated and provincial magnates were born.<sup>991</sup> This was the sense in which land-related problems were regarded as “troubles and nuisances from the past.”<sup>992</sup>

Large landholdings were chastised not because they were too large to be owned by a single person or family, but because they were very often *not* operated by their owners.<sup>993</sup> It was the fact that many large properties were left uncultivated by owners which aroused discontent. Many deputies found this outrageous because there were people hungry for land.<sup>994</sup> This was actually the official view. As LPLF was being discussed, Hatipoğlu explained to a reporter of *Ulus* daily that sharecropping estates constituted a problem in need of an urgent solution.<sup>995</sup>

It is clear that many pro-reform MPs preferred small property over other types of landholding. For instance, Yüzaltı praised LPLF bill on the grounds that it made small property the norm.<sup>996</sup> Similarly, Irmak was of the view that Turkey was clearly heading towards a new land regime based on small property.<sup>997</sup> It is necessary to dwell on the reasons for this preference. I will argue that the concern was primarily about increasing the number of peasant enterprises. If more families had access to land, more households would be agricultural producers. This was enunciated many times in parliamentary debates. Agricultural production would thereby increase.<sup>998</sup>

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<sup>991</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 59, 61; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 73.

<sup>992</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 147.

<sup>993</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 142.

<sup>994</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 104.

<sup>995</sup> Erdost, 2010, p. 27.

<sup>996</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, pp. 128-9.

<sup>997</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 130.

<sup>998</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 62; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 135; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 75, 77.

On the other hand was an interest in demographic change. There is ample ground to say that Turkish government of 1945 still considered population growth as an end in itself. For many, distribution of land to farmers was at the same time a measure to increase peasant fertility, and would contribute to overall population growth. First, Minister Hatipoğlu touched upon the issue in his opening speech. He recounted population growth as one of the long-run benefits they hoped to reap from redistribution of land.<sup>999</sup> Hatipoğlu also stated that demographic rise had been influential in fragmenting landholdings in many parts of the modern world. This was a “global tendency” which Turkey was yet to catch up.<sup>1000</sup> Hatipoğlu put more emphasis on population growth when he took the stand for the second time. He said:

If nations seek to flourish, they must have a wide peasant stratum. As you know, demographic reproduction is much higher in villages than in cities, and this is especially true for our villages. Proliferation of our nation hinges on an increase in the number of *independent* peasant families. Hence I am convinced that it is a moral obligation to [provide land to farmers.]<sup>1001</sup>

Hatipoğlu was not alone in his conviction; there were others who underlined the linkage between land distribution and population growth.<sup>1002</sup> In any case, government’s preamble stated that beneficiaries of land distribution had been lined up in such a way to “promote demographic reproduction.”<sup>1003</sup>

Last but not the least, many deputies extolled small property on both economic and political grounds. On the one hand, farming on small property was allegedly more

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<sup>999</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 62.

<sup>1000</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 100.

<sup>1001</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 102-3, emphasis added.

<sup>1002</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 65; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, pp. 146-7.

<sup>1003</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 7.

productive and had more forbearance in the face of crisis. On the other hand, small ownership had such repercussions as autonomy and stability that were deemed socially desirable.<sup>1004</sup> It is my contention that the assumed advantages of small property had all to do with owner-cultivation. To illustrate, small-scale farming was regarded as more productive because it was believed that peasants invested more in land and took better care of it when they tilled their own plots. More importantly, small owners were much less inclined to leave their land uncultivated. As for social repercussions, owning property entailed peasant autonomy as owner-cultivators did not depend on landowners for their livelihood. This was unlike sharecroppers who relied on owners not just for land but also for production means and funds when necessary. It is possible to observe from parliamentary debates that time and again small-scale independent farming was favorably compared to sharecropping. Hence, on the discursive level, the real contrast was not between small, middle or large property; it was between sharecropping and owner-cultivation. Therefore, if small property was preferred, this was because small plots were allegedly cultivated by owners rather than by sharecroppers.

Having said this, it should not be surprising that one of the expected outcomes of land distribution was rationalization of production.<sup>1005</sup> A deputy argued that agricultural output would remarkably increase if factors of production were better combined in rural households.<sup>1006</sup> To illustrate, that when a household of five received land, they could make more intensive use of labor power and would produce more as a family unit. Of course, a major concern was to increase marketable surplus. K. Kamu stated that 80% of agricultural produce was consumed by farmers themselves. Redistribution of land was supposed to change this.<sup>1007</sup>

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<sup>1004</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 99; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 74-5, 84.

<sup>1005</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 98-9, 101.

<sup>1006</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 103-4.

<sup>1007</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 75.

I would go one step further and argue that reformists wanted to rationalize production on larger farms as well. It is quite interesting to note that even the original LPLF bill left room for selective expropriation. Recall that Article 12 of the original bill exempted “properly managed farms” from confiscation. That is, middle properties under “regular and permanent cultivation” would remain to their owners even where land reserves proved insufficient to meet the demand for land. This confirms my argument about the preference in favor of owner-cultivation. Even though government’s draft sanctioned the exemption of under 5000-*dönüm* holdings from confiscation provided they met certain criteria, those criteria were found “too severe” by dissidents. For instance, Menderes feared that only a few enterprises could fit the bill.<sup>1008</sup> Consequently, the provisional committee brought a new rule according to which middle and large owners were given opportunity to upgrade their farms in order to prevent expropriation. As stated in Article 16 of the amended draft, Ministry of Agriculture would inform owners about why their farms did not qualify as properly managed and give them an unspecified amount of time to correct said deficiencies. Owners who successfully did so would be exempted from confiscation.<sup>1009</sup> The final version of LPLF had the exact same provision<sup>1010</sup>, suggesting that good farming practices were deemed as important as equity in distribution of land.

It is crucial to note in this conjunction that the final version of LPLF had a number of anti-sharecropping provisions. Article 56 forbade farmers from renting their newly-acquired land for a share of the crop. Fixed-rent arrangements were also forbidden unless new owners had some acceptable reason (like conscription or serious illness) for not directly cultivating land.<sup>1011</sup> According to Article 56, those who failed to abide by this rule would

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<sup>1008</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 115.

<sup>1009</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 26.

<sup>1010</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, On Altıncı Madde (Article 16), p. 699.

<sup>1011</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Elli Altıncı Madde (Article 56), p. 705.

face eviction.<sup>1012</sup> This shows once again that owner cultivation was *the* sanctioned mode of operation.

Last to be mentioned is reformists' stance on confiscation. Just like opponents, some pro-reform deputies, too, were of the view that state lands should be first to be distributed.<sup>1013</sup> This does not appear as the dominant view, however. Others believed that distribution of state lands would not suffice because in certain localities all land was owned by private persons. For instance, R. Güreli mentioned the case of Muğla where there were no state lands to be distributed. In the province of Muğla, he said, peasants were looking forward to land distribution since all fields, including those they tilled, were part of large *çiftlik*s that belonged to powerful individuals.<sup>1014</sup> Ulusoy made two similar counterarguments. First, he noted that most vacant lands were located outside land-scarce provinces. Hence their distribution would benefit only a small number of peasants. Second, such lands remained uncultivated for a reason; it was probably that they were not worth the effort. For example, it could be that they were too far away from where people lived.<sup>1015</sup> Sökmensüer had a similar position. Very often, state lands which lay hollow were of marginal quality. It was not wise to distribute lands of this sort because they were not productive enough to feed an entire family, let alone yield a surplus. Therefore, according to Sökmensüer, expropriation was necessary no matter how large public lands were.<sup>1016</sup> Finally, Hatipoğlu warned his peers not to rely too heavily on presence of uncultivated lands. After many years of land distribution, Hatipoğlu said, bureaucrats came to realize that it was hard to ascertain the legal status of uncultivated lands. He then reminded his peers of the many occasions when owners showed up after the fact and made claims upon

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<sup>1012</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Elli Yedinci Madde (Article 57), pp. 705-6.

<sup>1013</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 84.

<sup>1014</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 79.

<sup>1015</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 105.

<sup>1016</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 146.

what was thought to have been state lands.<sup>1017</sup> Hatipoğlu, Sökmensüer, Ulusoy and Güreli were actually making the same point, which can be rephrased as follows: One should not overstate the factor of vacant state lands as they did not nearly affect the land-labor ratio as it was often assumed.

As Article 8 on lands to be distributed was debated, a deputy inquired whether a given order will be followed in land distribution from state lands through various commons to privately owned land. Spokesman of the provisional committee C. Tüzel answered that it was impossible to follow a definitive order. In particular, it did not seem doable to distribute state lands first and only then to proceed to other types of land. If the government were to distribute state lands first, they would have to resettle at least some people away from their home. Yet the government's preferred option was to give (additional) plots to landless and land-short peasants without moving them, and this may have required distribution of lands of other status at the outset.<sup>1018</sup>

Some deputies were not convinced by this answer. F.F. Düşünsel insisted that there should be a precise sequence of lands to be distributed. In particular, he believed that confiscations should start only after all public lands were distributed.<sup>1019</sup> Later in the debates, Tüzel somewhat backed off from his original position. Though not written into the bill, he remarked, it was largely taken for granted that the government would distribute public lands first.<sup>1020</sup> Koraltan stated a while later that Tüzel's statement was a source of relief for concerned MPs.<sup>1021</sup>

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<sup>1017</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 100.

<sup>1018</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 188.

<sup>1019</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 190.

<sup>1020</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 95.

<sup>1021</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 120.

### 6.3.3. Settlement as an Alternative to Land Reform

One of the key arguments of the opposition pertained to re-settlement. According to this, problems associated with uneven distribution of land could be ameliorated through settlement policies, i.e. transfer of populations.<sup>1022</sup> The underlying idea here was that scarcity of land was a localized problem. Land was indeed scarce on the Black Sea and Aegean coasts; conversely, density of rural population was rather low in Central and Eastern Anatolia. Hence, if people were moved from former areas to the latter, settlement could help equilibrate population densities across the country.<sup>1023</sup>

Furthermore, F. Yüzaltı pointed out that some of the most fertile plains had lain unoccupied since Ottoman times. People inhabited the mountains surrounding the plains and did agriculture on very poor soil. In some cases, this was due to malaria; people had taken to the mountains to escape disease. In some others, plains had come under the control of powerful individuals, which had forced peasants to move to places where they could have access to land. Although conditions had since changed, peasants continued to that day to inhabit the mountains. Yüzaltı argued that such villages should be moved to the plain.<sup>1024</sup>

In response to those who made a case for settlement as an alternative to redistribution of land, proponents of reform argued that internal resettlement was both more difficult and more costly. Settlement was an onerous business not only because a large number of

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<sup>1022</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 67; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 122; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 122.

<sup>1023</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 122.

<sup>1024</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 129.

people would be moved. The government would also have to reclaim the land on which people would be settled since settlees could not open un-reclaimed fields themselves.<sup>1025</sup>

On the other hand, some reform advocates, too, suggested that a policy of settlement was required to make *all* farmers property owners. Settlement was supposed to supplement redistribution of land. It was believed that this was especially important in those regions like Black Sea coast where land reserves were limited.<sup>1026</sup> Some others said that land distribution *sans* re-settlement would entail mushrooming of dwarf agricultural enterprises. In many places, the argument went, land reserves were so small that grantees would only get tiny plots if any.<sup>1027</sup>

The argument in favor of transfer of population was strong, but, as Taraklı has argued<sup>1028</sup>, land distribution triumphed over settlement in the final version of LPLF. It is clear from Article 41 that the idea was to provide land for farmers close to where they resided. In case of unavailability of land, however, farmers would be given land someplace else within the same region. If that too proved impossible, land would be given in a nearby region with similar climatic conditions.<sup>1029</sup>

#### **6.3.4. Compensation Payments**

Another very hot topic was compensation to be paid to owners whose lands were to be confiscated. Looking at the reaction payment of compensation aroused in the parliament,

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<sup>1025</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 106; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 157; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 58, 83.

<sup>1026</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 74; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 122; TBMM TD, 1945d, p. 140; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 53, 63.

<sup>1027</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 74; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 129.

<sup>1028</sup> Taraklı, 1976, pp. 48, 72, 119.

<sup>1029</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Kırk Birinci Madde (Article 41), p. 703.

it is possible to say that this was the third biggest issue following Article 17 and the status of middle property.

According to Article 15 of the LPLF draft as it was originally written by the government, compensation payment would equal land values assessed for tax purposes before the end of the fiscal year 1943.<sup>1030</sup> Article 18 of the original draft dealt with the method of payment. The article was not elaborate, however. It just stated that compensation would be paid in government bonds; the rest was left to a special law to be enacted later.<sup>1031</sup>

As far as compensation went, provisional committee significantly revised government's draft. The Committee introduced a progressive compensation scheme. According to Article 21 of the revised draft, payments would be calculated on the basis of tax valuations for the year 1944.<sup>1032</sup> For a property over 5000 *dönüms*, compensation payment would be equal to the tax value. On the other hand, a landowner whose farm ranged between 2000 and 5000 *dönüms* would be paid twice the tax value. Finally, if the property was smaller than 2000 *dönüms*, payment would be three times the tax value.<sup>1033</sup> Assume that landowner A has 6000 *dönüms*. He/she will be paid the tax value for the first 1000 *dönüms* to be confiscated. As for the next 3000 *dönüms* of his/her remaining 5000 *dönüms*, he/she will be paid twice the same value. Landowner A now has 2000 *dönüms* left, which is still liable for confiscation according to Article 17. If confiscation of his/her property continues any further, owner A will now receive three times the tax value for every *dönüm*. As for the considerations behind committee's decision, Tüzel explained on the parliament floor

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<sup>1030</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 27.

<sup>1031</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 31.

<sup>1032</sup> According to a pro-reform MP, committee preferred the year 1944 instead of 1943 due to pressures coming from property owners. The argument goes like this: Having heard rumors of a prospective land reform by 1944, landowners put pressure on bureaucracy to revalue their holdings so that they would be paid dearly in compensation. Had 1943's assessment been taken as the yardstick, they would have been paid much less (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 123).

<sup>1033</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 27-8.

why confiscation on smaller holdings should bring about larger compensation. According to this, it was quite possible for a confiscated owner to end up owning a plot not large enough to support his/her family; therefore, his/her loss had to be redressed.<sup>1034</sup>

Revised draft was also more specific on the method of payment. According to Article 45 of the amended draft, owners would be paid in 20-year bonds with an annual interest rate of 4%. That is, owners would be paid once a year for 20 years and for each year government would pay an interest of 4%.<sup>1035</sup>

The major objection of the opposition was that owners should be paid the actual value of their properties.<sup>1036</sup> The most eloquent adherent of fair compensation was R. Koraltan. Despite the fact that constitutional amendment of 1937 gave government a considerable space for action, Koraltan was the view that compensation payments should reflect market value. Paying anything less would be an infringement of property rights.<sup>1037</sup>

According to Menderes, there were two reasons why tax value was a poor yardstick. First, landed properties were usually undervalued in land records; therefore, as a rule, tax value rarely matched real value. In addition, Menderes reported that land prices had increased almost fivefold after World War II as a result of which tax values assessed in 1944 fell further back from current market prices. All in all, compensation payment as stipulated in

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<sup>1034</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 136.

<sup>1035</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 34. It is seen in its report that provisional committee originally agreed on a slightly different scheme. According to this, owners who had less than 2000 *dönüms* would get compensated in cash. The reason behind this decision was that smaller owners needed better compensation as they would lose their means of livelihood. Later, however, committee came to realize that this would put a major financial strain on government and opted for payment in bonds (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 15-6). On the other hand, committee's spokesperson C. Tüzel touched upon this in one of the speeches he made on the floor of TGNA. In his account, it was President İsmet İnönü who pushed for payment in bonds for everyone (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 94).

<sup>1036</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 105; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, pp. 138-9; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 53; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 121-2.

<sup>1037</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 71-4.

LPLF draft would be no more than a tiny fraction of real value.<sup>1038</sup> G. Pekel agreed that tax values did not resonate with real values. Having noted that tax values were last registered in 1935-1936, Pekel made this simple calculation: “Back in that day . . . a kilogram of wheat sold for 3-5 *kuruş*. Today it is 25 *kuruş*. In this respect, registered values are significantly below today’s real values.”<sup>1039</sup> Premier Ş. Saraçoğlu responded to Menderes’s and Pekel’s concerns. In his view, LPLF’s payment scheme was fair, notwithstanding post-war increases in the value of land. It was fair because appreciation of land was the result of government policies. In its quest to support peasants, government paid more for wheat, which put an upward pressure on land prices. Saraçoğlu was convinced that compensation payment did not have to catch up with this artificial increase in market prices for land.<sup>1040</sup> Then, S. Pek responded to Menderes’s comment about the permanent mismatch between tax value and market price. Pek underlined the important fact that property owners benefited from this mismatch. Pek drew an unswerving conclusion: Having evaded taxes for many years, landowners had no right to protest the compensation they would be paid.<sup>1041</sup>

Some opponents made milder proposals. N. Eldeniz was one of them. He did not insist on market price, but he did demand more in compensation for landowners.<sup>1042</sup> On the other hand, T.B. Balta suggested a third alternative to both tax value and market price. For him, compensation should rather be determined according to the quality of land. Owners of productive lands should be paid more than those who had titles to poorer soil.<sup>1043</sup> His

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<sup>1038</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 116-7.

<sup>1039</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945hh, p. 128, my translation.

<sup>1040</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 139.

<sup>1041</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 134.

<sup>1042</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 130-1.

<sup>1043</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 123-5.

proposal was met with instant criticism.<sup>1044</sup> Ulusoy argued that such a method would involve too much discretion. In his view, things would run smoother if a more “exact procedure” was employed.<sup>1045</sup> In similar vein, Barutçu contended that discretion would entail corruption as it had done in the past.<sup>1046</sup> Finally, Tüzel said that Balta’s method would usher in disagreements and endless law suits.<sup>1047</sup>

Parliamentary opposition also made a case for one-time payment in cash.<sup>1048</sup> However, there were some deputies within opposition ranks who acknowledged that this would be a huge burden on finances, and they argued that smaller owners (e.g. those owning less than 2000 *dönüms*) could be paid cash in the name of fairness.<sup>1049</sup>

D. Arıkoğlu, N. Eldeniz and G. Pekel pointed out that paying 4% annual interest to landowners was unacceptable since all other government bonds carried an interest rate of 7%.<sup>1050</sup> To this Tüzel replied that farming roughly brought an annual revenue of 4% to the owner of land. As a result, 4% was a fair interest rate as it matched landowners’ revenue.<sup>1051</sup> In addition, some deputies argued that what was really unacceptable was the quite high rate of 7 percent.<sup>1052</sup> Later on, Minister of Finance B.N. Sümer took the floor

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<sup>1044</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 131-3, 133-4.

<sup>1045</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 132.

<sup>1046</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 133.

<sup>1047</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 136-7.

<sup>1048</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 71-3.

<sup>1049</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 83, 90; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 129-30, 144-5.

<sup>1050</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 83-4; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 145, 147.

<sup>1051</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 137.

<sup>1052</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, pp. 130-1; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 146.

and announced that the government was long determined to decrease the 7% interest on government bonds.<sup>1053</sup>

While some LPLF advocates were against market price-based compensation as a matter of principle<sup>1054</sup>, some others regretted that government finances did not allow more generous payments.<sup>1055</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that LPLF did concede the right of objection to property owners. According to Article 25, owners could appeal to the Ministry of Agriculture within a month following the announcement of confiscation.<sup>1056</sup> Although Article was accepted without discussion<sup>1057</sup>, Menderes had raised an objection during preliminary hearings. He protested that Ministry of Agriculture was designated as the appealing authority. According to Menderes, this should have been court of law. As it was, citizens were deprived of legal guarantees on property.<sup>1058</sup>

### **6.3.5. Further Discussions on Confiscation**

The issue of confiscation aroused some other discussions as well. First, as provisions on confiscation were debated, the problem of collusive sales made an appearance. Paragraph (e) of Article 14 pertained to land sales conducted after October 1944 on estates that surpassed the 2000- or 5000-*dönüm* mark. According to the paragraph, if new owners did

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<sup>1053</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 148.

<sup>1054</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 119; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, pp. 128, 135; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 134.

<sup>1055</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 106; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 147; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 132-3.

<sup>1056</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Yirmi Beşinci Madde (Article 25), pp. 700-1.

<sup>1057</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi D, 1945h, p. 141.

<sup>1058</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 117.

not “directly cultivate the land” they recently acquired, these plots would be liable to confiscation. However, this provision would not be enforced if the new owner had some “conceivable reason” for leasing his/her plot.<sup>1059</sup> As Article 56 clarified, it was the likes of military conscription and certifiable long-term illness that counted as conceivable reason.<sup>1060</sup>

Paragraph (e) was added to the draft as provisional committee deliberated the LPLF draft for the second time.<sup>1061</sup> The new provision was deemed necessary on account of the rumors that large owners started selling parts of their estates to evade expropriation.<sup>1062</sup> Discussions over paragraph (e) started when R. Peker declared the paragraph on collusive sales to be exorbitant. Peker and likeminded deputies objected to the article on the grounds that it embodied a retroactive principle. Their argument rested on the fact that sales of this kind were done long before the size rule was put into effect. Hence such sales were unequivocally legal, and therefore, they could not be meddled with. If the government were to intervene, this would mean an infringement of the right to use property.<sup>1063</sup> People on the other side of the debate argued that sales mentioned in paragraph (e) were sham. For them, landlords fictitiously divided their estates (sometimes among their relatives) so that their holdings remained below the legally defined threshold. To illustrate, say an individual A in Eskişehir held 6000 *dönüms* of land. Having heard that the government was planning to nationalize plots that exceeded 5000 *dönüms*, he sold 1000 *dönüms* of his estate to a fellow villager B to prevent expropriation. The reasoning behind paragraph (e) of Article 14 was that if B did not directly cultivate the 1000 *dönüms* in question, then he must have been an accomplice of A in latter’s effort to deceive authorities. As a result,

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<sup>1059</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, On Dördüncü Madde (Article 14), pp. 698-9.

<sup>1060</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Elli Altıncı Madde (Article 56), p. 705.

<sup>1061</sup> TBMM TD, 1945f, p. 25.

<sup>1062</sup> TBMM TD, 1945f, pp. 17, 25-6.

<sup>1063</sup> TBMM TD, 1945f, pp. 12-3; TBMM TD, 1945i, pp. 217-8.

this party asserted that the parliament had every right to not recognize pre-emptive subdivisions of this sort.<sup>1064</sup> Tüzel said the last word on this particular paragraph of Article 14. What he pointed out was that new owners had nothing to worry about if sales were authentic and if new properties were directly cultivated.<sup>1065</sup>

The second discussion I want to mention here concerned Article 18, which dealt with execution of confiscation on middle and large farms. The article stipulated that it was in the discretion of Ministry of Agriculture to determine which parts of a property would be left out of confiscation.<sup>1066</sup> In the original draft, however, this right was bequeathed to the owner. The reason for this revision was explained by committee's spokesperson Tüzel. According to this, committee members came to the conclusion that owners would prefer to keep most productive parts of their estates. Subsequently, what was left for distribution would be lower-quality soil. This would make it more difficult for the government to help landless and land-short peasants who were already disadvantaged vis-à-vis middle and large owners.<sup>1067</sup> Of all the changes made by the provisional committee, this stood alone as one which disfavored property owners. Nevertheless only a single parliamentarian protested committee's revision. This was T.B. Balta, who argued that the new version of Article 18 left property owners in the dark. If owners did not know which parts of their properties they would get to keep, they understandably would opt to halt improvement.<sup>1068</sup>

Apparently drafters of Article 18 took cognizance of the possibility that some owners may have wished to sell their properties in entirety. Hence the article stated that Ministry of

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<sup>1064</sup> TBMM TD, 1945f, pp. 12-28.

<sup>1065</sup> TBMM TD, 1945i, p. 218.

<sup>1066</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, On Sekizinci Madde (Article 18), p. 699.

<sup>1067</sup> TBMM TD, 1945h, p. 116.

<sup>1068</sup> TBMM TD, 1945h, pp. 115-6.

Agriculture was obliged to confiscate entire estate if their owners requested so.<sup>1069</sup> Balta objected once again. For him, it would be inadvisable to indefinitely concede such a right to property owners. Instead this should be made a time-bound right so as to avoid legal complications.<sup>1070</sup> This time Balta managed to convince Tüzel and Hatipoğlu, and a new sentence was added to Article 18. Landowners were now given a month to make the request.<sup>1071</sup>

Lastly, I would like to draw attention the repercussions of the poor state of cadastral records in 1940s Turkey, which complicated reform attempts. As skeptical MPs pointed out on the floor, it was impossible to say anything definitive on distribution of landed properties as a proper cadastral survey was yet to be done.<sup>1072</sup> It was also stated that lack of cadaster was bound to make implementation of LPLF extremely difficult.<sup>1073</sup> T.B. Balta, who also sat at the provisional committee, insisted with no success that a land cadaster law should be legislated before the law on land distribution.<sup>1074</sup> Reform advocates retaliated by saying that cadastral survey would take too much time. Land problem demanded an instant solution.<sup>1075</sup>

The draft admitted by implication that land registers in Turkey were unreliable. According to Article 11 of LPLF, all persons, both real and corporate, had to declare how much land they owned within three months following the announcement of the start of land distribution in each region. It was acknowledged in the article that the amount of land

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<sup>1069</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, On Sekizinci Madde (Article 18), p. 699.

<sup>1070</sup> TBMM TD, 1945h, pp. 115-6.

<sup>1071</sup> TBMM TD, 1945h, p. 118.

<sup>1072</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 101.

<sup>1073</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 105.

<sup>1074</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 9.

<sup>1075</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 125; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 6, 7.

effectively owned by persons might not match the records at land registry, in which case owners were supposed to provide a more realistic assessment of their properties, if possible.<sup>1076</sup> It appears that some deputies found it hard to figure out why everyone was obliged to submit declaration of landed property owned. Rapporteur of the provisional committee responded to such inquiries by saying that present registers did not give them an accurate picture of the structure of property.<sup>1077</sup> On the other hand, declarations to be submitted by persons had to be verified in some way, and this posed an immense problem. Drafters of LPLF found the following solution: Village headmen would verify the accuracy of individual declarations “to the extent that they could know.”<sup>1078</sup> This was far from convincing and spawned an interesting discussion in the parliament. Balta spelled out an alternative suggestion. According to him, if they were given some additional powers, land distribution commissions could issue title deeds for lands owned.<sup>1079</sup> Balta could not garner any support from his peers and his suggestion was quickly forgotten. Nonetheless, this short instance is important as it illustrates the complications entailed by land reform in a context in which little was known about actual tenurial relations on land.

### **6.3.6. Beneficiaries of Land Distribution**

Article 1 specified two groups of people who were eligible for land grants. The first group was “farmers with no or insufficient land”, as would be expected. The second group was defined as “those who want to do farming.”<sup>1080</sup> It was this second group of non-farmers which aroused confusion in the parliament. This should not be taken to mean that deputies objected to the inclusion of non-farmers among prospective grantees. The confusion and

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<sup>1076</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, On Birinci Madde (Article 11), pp. 697-8.

<sup>1077</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 8.

<sup>1078</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, On Birinci Madde (Article 11), pp. 698.

<sup>1079</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 5-6.

<sup>1080</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Birinci Madde (Article 1), p. 696.

protestation had rather to do with plots that would be given to those people. To clarify, some deputies feared the possibility that private landholdings would be confiscated to be distributed to non-farmers. This was why objections emerged. Deputies who were displeased with Article 1 of the draft advanced the following argument: Article 74 of the Constitution did allow for a less costly method for confiscation of private property but only if confiscation was carried out with the purpose of distributing land to *farmers* who did not have sufficient land of their own. Therefore, the constitution did not warrant confiscation of properties for the sake of non-farmers.<sup>1081</sup>

C. Tüzel said in defense of the article that giving land to non-farmers was entirely in tune with the declared intent of expansion of the land under cultivation.<sup>1082</sup> To overcome doubts, he nonetheless said that non-farmers would *not* be taken into account when deciding how much land should be confiscated in provinces.<sup>1083</sup> The discussion came to an end when the Minister of Agriculture clarified that non-farmers would be given public lands. Stated otherwise, private property would not be confiscated to benefit people who wanted to take up farming. Hatipoğlu also added that non-farmers were included in the category of grantees as distribution of land to these people would “increase the number of farming families.”<sup>1084</sup> This last point is important because it is clear from parliamentary minutes that some of the skeptics interpreted the provision on non-farmers as if only those people who used to be farmers could apply for land grants. A category like this would involve peasants who left their villages to work in the cities.<sup>1085</sup> Yet it seems that

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<sup>1081</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, 162-75; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 11, 14.

<sup>1082</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 167.

<sup>1083</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 168.

<sup>1084</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 175. Later on, Peker asserted that public lands, too, should be given to landless and land-short farmers first. After that, if it turned out that there were still vacant lands, they could be given to non-farmers (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 11-2).

<sup>1085</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 163, 164.

government's list of potential grantees was longer and that anyone could ask for land, which sat rather well with the overarching concern with increasing production.

Subsequently, Y. Abadan brought up the question of agricultural laborers. Abadan referred to a recent article in the press which reported that agricultural laborers would not be given land. To him, exclusion of *permanent* laborers was unacceptable and ran counter to the intentions of the draft law. Abadan was not that insistent on the inclusion of seasonal laborers, however. Ministry of Agriculture could decide on individual cases whether to allow their inclusion among recipients.<sup>1086</sup> The provisional committee must have been of the same opinion as a proposal was submitted in the name of the committee at the end of this session. Committee's proposal changed the wording of Article 14, which dealt with lands to be nationalized, and specifically counted agricultural laborers among those who would benefit from confiscations.<sup>1087</sup>

The problem of seasonal agricultural laborers resurfaced as Article 17 was debated. It appears that there was some confusion and many feared that land could be taken away from owners to benefit temporary hands. Tiridođlu took the stand to assure fellow parliamentarians that, even in the case of Article 17, only permanent laborers qualified as recipients of land.<sup>1088</sup> To clarify the issue, a new sentence was added to the article. Now Article 17 read: "This provision will not be enforced in the respect of seasonal workers. Ministry of Agriculture decides whether a worker is temporary or permanent."<sup>1089</sup>

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<sup>1086</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 22-3.

<sup>1087</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 30.

<sup>1088</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 31-2.

<sup>1089</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, On Yedinci Madde (Article 17), p. 699. When LPLF was amended in 1955, a precise definition was added to the text of the law. According to this, a permanent laborer was one who resided and worked in the same area for at least three years (Taraklı, 1976, pp. 40-1).

According to Article 43, farmers who sold out their land (either completely or partially) after LPLF came into operation could not benefit from land distribution.<sup>1090</sup> This meant that peasants who had to sell their land out of misfortune, such as debt default, would not be eligible to receive land. Curiously enough, no one questioned this provision on parliament floor.<sup>1091</sup>

Articles 34 defined in what order farmers would be given land. First to receive land were sharecroppers and tenants who did not have any land of their own. Farmers with insufficient land composed the second group to benefit from distribution, after which came (permanent) agricultural laborers. Last group to be given land was identified as nomads, immigrants and (rural) settlers.<sup>1092</sup> This succession of four groups clearly shows that providing land to fixed rent and share tenants was the utmost priority. As stated in the preamble of LPLF bill, the government decided on such an order because of the conviction that land should be “given to those who would most adopt it.”<sup>1093</sup>

Article 34 stipulated yet another hierarchy in land distribution. This time, the problem was one of ranking people who fell within the same category. According to this, people who owned dwellings and “necessary tools and implements of production” took precedence over those without them.<sup>1094</sup> Assume that landless tenant X and Y were both eligible to receive land. X owned a house, a pair of oxen and a plough whereas Y had all except the oxen. According to the rule, X would come before Y in land distribution. It is impossible to find in parliamentary minutes an explanation as to why farmers were ranked in this way. There is nevertheless ample ground to argue that this specific ranking of peasants

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<sup>1090</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Kırk Üçüncü Madde (Article 43), p. 703.

<sup>1091</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 144.

<sup>1092</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Otuz Dördüncü Madde (Article 34), p. 702.

<sup>1093</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 7.

<sup>1094</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Otuz Beşinci Madde (Article 35), p. 702.

stemmed from LPLF's most prime purpose: increasing agricultural production through broadening the ranks of independent producers. To pursue the above example further, there is no doubt that tenant X was much closer to being an independent producer as compared to tenant Y. Even after he/she received land, Y would still be dependent on others to conduct production. Hence the law gave X precedence over Y. This could be what Hatipođlu had in mind when he said that LPLF set out to provide land "in a piecemeal fashion." For Hatipođlu, LPLF was neither overambitious nor unrealistic. The law merely aimed to "fill in the shortcomings" of peasant households.<sup>1095</sup> It is necessary to mention Article 49 in this context. This article stated that Turkish Agency for Farm Equipment (*Türkiye Ziraat Donatım Kurumu*) would provide production tools and draft animals for peasants who would start up new agricultural enterprises. In turn, peasants would pay the agency in installments.<sup>1096</sup>

### **6.3.7. Problem of Finances**

LPLF's chapter on fiscal provisions sparked a short but lively debate in the parliament. As recounted above, discussions over compensation payment (Article 45) were quite heated, but they came to a dead end. When the chapter on fiscal provisions was opened for deliberation, dissidents restated their cases. In the end, however, the headline shifted to some other topics. One of such topics was the debt that would accrue to farmers who received land.

In LPLF, land was not stipulated to be distributed gratis. The preamble of LPLF bill explained why distribution of land free of charge was impractical. First, government aimed to provide land to "a great number" of farmers, and second, treasury needed money to not only pay landowners in exchange for their confiscated lands and but also cover

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<sup>1095</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, pp. 151-2.

<sup>1096</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Kırk Dokuzuncu Madde (Article 49), p. 704.

other expenses.<sup>1097</sup> Therefore, beneficiaries were expected to pay a charge through the Agricultural Bank. This would be modest, however. According to Article 46, grantees would pay the charge in equal annual installments over 20 years at zero interest. Furthermore, the payment would commence five full years after distribution. And for every kid that started school, Agricultural Bank would write off 5% of the remaining land. Finally, if farmers wished to pay an annual installment in advance (i.e. before due year), there would be a 5% discount.<sup>1098</sup> Although Article 46 passed without any discussions<sup>1099</sup>, an objection arose later when G. Pekel declared Article 46 as unrealistic. According to Pekel, past experiences in settlement and land distribution showed that Turkish governments failed to collect charges of this sort. Neither *mübadils* nor settlees paid for fields or dwellings they received so much so that government finally gave up all previous claims. Pekel predicted that LPLF distribution would prove no different.<sup>1100</sup>

What Pekel said had a bearing on the whole scheme of land distribution. Government's scheme would surely prove costly not only because Ministry of Agriculture would have to pay compensation to expropriated owners. At the same time, government pledged to provide credits for farmers who would receive land. As stated in Article 47, applicants would be given 25-year credits from "special Agricultural Bank funds" to establish or improve farming enterprises.<sup>1101</sup> Article 48 specified two sources to provide money for the special funds in question. The first source was annual government funding. It was stated in the article that every year government would allocate an unspecified sum from its budget. Charges to be collected in accordance with Article 46 constituted the second

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<sup>1097</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 8.

<sup>1098</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Kırk Altıncı Madde (Article 46), p. 704.

<sup>1099</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 148.

<sup>1100</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 151.

<sup>1101</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Kırk Yedinci Madde (Article 47), p. 704.

source.<sup>1102</sup> This was where Pekel intervened. In his mind, the second source was dubious, and it would be unwise for the government to rely on it.<sup>1103</sup> Balta, on the other hand, inquired about government funding. His argument was that the law should specify exactly how much the government would contribute to the special fund. Balta was concerned because it was obvious to him that grantees would prove unable to obtain credits from other sources. They would because Articles 54 and 55 of LPLF disallowed them from mortgaging their properties. Farmers would therefore have to depend on public funds.<sup>1104</sup>

### **6.3.8. Conservatism, Populism, Social Justice**

Scholars and commenters have so far associated the reform attempt of 1945 with a number of different ideas or ideological tenets, some of which are worthy of consideration here. I would first like to touch on the impact of conservatism, or the extent to which LPLF can be considered a conservative measure. Karaömerlioğlu makes a very strong case for conservatism, especially in relation to farmer homesteads, and quite convincingly argues that LPLF was a project directed at preventing social change.<sup>1105</sup> The question is whether Karaömerlioğlu's argument, is supported by evidence from parliamentary deliberations.

It is certainly true that some people viewed land reform emerges as a preemptive measure. As one deputy put it, distribution of land was a preparation for “storms to come.”<sup>1106</sup> The idea was that, to weather the storm, peasants should be firmly, and permanently, tied to land.<sup>1107</sup> In particular, a number of MPs talked about the perils of urbanization and urged

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<sup>1102</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Kırk Sekizinci Madde (Article 48), p. 704.

<sup>1103</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 151.

<sup>1104</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, p. 150.

<sup>1105</sup> See Karaömerlioğlu, 1998, pp. 40-1 and Karaömerlioğlu, 2000, pp. 122-30.

<sup>1106</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 148.

<sup>1107</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 143.

the parliament to find ways to prevent the rush to the cities.<sup>1108</sup> S. Irmak's speech is a case in point. Irmak remarked that if no measures were taken, land-deprived peasants would flood urban areas in large numbers. With no property back home and no source of income in the city, these people had already formed a "morbid mass" in large urban areas. Irmak said so because he associated rural-urban migration with crime. By just looking at murder statistics, he asserted, one could make an estimate as to the severity of land scarcity.<sup>1109</sup> T. Banguoğlu was optimistic that distribution of land could divert former peasants, who now resided in cities, back to their villages. This would be a timely measure, it was believed, because those former peasants failed to find stable jobs and were "parasitic" on urban economy.<sup>1110</sup>

Minister of Agriculture Hatipoğlu paid heed to such concerns on two occasions. He expressed his worries that those "rootless and dislocated" people in villages could in the future pose a threat to Turkish society.<sup>1111</sup> Nonetheless, this dimension was best epitomized by the speeches Recep Peker made in the parliament. For Peker, land reform was not a measure that stood alone. It was part and parcel of a larger project – that of the regulation of work relations. The kind of regulation Peker had his eyes on was pre-emptive in nature, and its aim was to secure societal harmony by eliminating possible sources of conflict. What deserves attention is that Peker was as concerned with relations on land between property owners and landless and/or land-short peasants as he was with relations between labor and capital. The idea here is that workers and peasants should be given a stake in the present social order lest they become susceptible to "venomous" political

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<sup>1108</sup> Some speeches carried strong moral overtones, of which Barkın's speech is a good example. See T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 143.

<sup>1109</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 130.

<sup>1110</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, p. 164.

<sup>1111</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 62; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 103.

ideologies.<sup>1112</sup> Therefore it is fair to say that, in Peker's mind, distribution of land stood on similar footing as regulation of industrial relations. Peker was of the view that land problem in Turkey was quite severe. He asserted that one million rural households had none or insufficient land, which made reform an urgent task. However, a program of land distribution was doomed to remain incomplete if it was not followed by legislative attempts to widen credits and provide agricultural instruments and equipment to peasants.<sup>1113</sup>

I would like to argue in conclusion that, although Karaömerlioğlu certainly has a point, conservative concerns do not seem to have been as central as his commentary suggests. That is, economic concerns over sharecropping and large ownership can be said to have overshadowed the dangers associated social change.

It certainly appears that same is true for ideas of populism and social justice. As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the preamble of government's bill referred to Kemalist populism in making a case for land reform. However, only two MPs associated government's initiative with the principle of populism.<sup>1114</sup> On another occasion, distribution of land was considered a means of reconciling different segments and society and prevent social conflicts.<sup>1115</sup> Hatipoğlu expressed his conviction that land reform law would pave the way for Turkey's development into "a well-established nation" and "a consonant society."<sup>1116</sup> A notion of social justice did not figure strongly in parliamentary debates either. Deputies Y. Abadan and H.O. Bekata did enunciate the idea that social

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<sup>1112</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 149.

<sup>1113</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 152.

<sup>1114</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 125-6; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 100.

<sup>1115</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 141.

<sup>1116</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 62.

justice demanded redistribution of landed properties.<sup>1117</sup> Bekata asserted that all Turkish citizens who “[partook] in joys and sorrow of this nation” were entitled to “an equal share of the wealth created.” Bekata believed that land distribution was a measure which would strengthen people’s allegiance to the regime and that this was the real intent behind the LPLF draft.<sup>1118</sup> In a similar vein, Minister of Agriculture Hatipoğlu declared that LPLF was about realizing democracy. According to him, democracy was not just about rules and procedures; democracy should improve citizens’ lives. Hence the essence of “true democracy” lay in the expansion of independent peasant families who lived off their own land.<sup>1119</sup> It is nonetheless true that reference to social justice, however defined, was no more than a minor trait. A notion of land reform as a requisite of social justice was yet to fully develop.

### **6.3.9. Absences in Law for Providing Land to Farmers**

It is a curious fact that many MPs spoke of the LPLF draft as a “land law” in the making, and this included opponents as well as supporters.<sup>1120</sup> Even after its passage, LPLF was hailed as land law. This was evinced by a motion submitted to the parliament minutes after the voting. With this, 12 deputies proposed to salute Atatürk, İnönü and Saraçoğlu for their contributions to the long-running battle to provide land to farmers, which finally culminated in “recent land law.”<sup>1121</sup>

I believe that MPs called LPLF a land law out of habit. Their generation was used to talking in terms of land codes and laws. Otherwise it is hard to see how LPLF could qualify

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<sup>1117</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 69; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 125.

<sup>1118</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 125.

<sup>1119</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 103.

<sup>1120</sup> E.g. T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 64, 83; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 113.

<sup>1121</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945i, p. 231.

as a land law. For starters, a land law worthy of the name should have regulated as many relations on land as possible. In contrast, LPLF was primarily a law on redistribution of land and contained few provisions on either land use or agricultural credits. As such, there were two strong lacunae in the law.

Anyone examining LPLF would instantly notice the first one: the conspicuous absence of regulation of relations of sharecropping. Government's original draft had no provisions on landlord-tenant relations. Provisional committee was silent on this issue, too. Although some MPs spoke of the need to intervene during debates<sup>1122</sup>, they could not find much support from their peers. Hence the relations between property owners and tenants were left outside the scope of the law.

Secondly, with the exception of Articles 47 and 48 on provision of credit to the beneficiaries of land distribution, LPLF was almost entirely silent on the problems of credit and debt. H.S. Coşar was alone in raising the problem of peasant debt during parliamentary deliberations. In his view, peasants had long fallen prey to usurers. He lamented that the government had not taken legislative action to alleviate peasant indebtedness. There had been some attempts, he noted, which all had failed in the end due to strong resistance. Coşar's remarks on past attempts are noteworthy as they shed light on a little-known subject. What readers learn from Coşar is that two positions on peasant debt vied with each other in the parliament. Those who wanted to take action were opposed by those who believed that debtors and creditors were bound by contracts freely made. From the point of view of non-interventionists, absolving peasant debt was unacceptable because it would be tantamount to robbing creditors of a "sacred right."<sup>1123</sup>

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<sup>1122</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 68; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 146.

<sup>1123</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, pp. 84-5.

The fact remains that the criticism LPLF met in 1945 was about neither sharecropping nor the problem of peasant debt. As I have tried to show in previous pages, and will continue to do so, opposition mostly took the form of a defense of private property rights on land.

LPLF draft was put to final vote on June 11, 1945. Except for 6 blank votes, all present (345 deputies) voted to accept the draft. 104 deputies did not show up for voting. Among them were all dissidents including, most notably, A. Menderes, C. Oral, H. Menteşe, C. Bayar, E. Sazak, H. Bayur and R. Peker.<sup>1124</sup>

#### **6.4. The Controversy over Article 17**

After provisional committee had twice reviewed the LPLF bill, government summoned a third deliberative session. This move was loudly protested by members of the parliamentary opposition. A. Menderes, who had been serving as the spokesman for the provisional committee, resigned from his post in objection. According to C. Oral, what the government did was an inappropriate interference.<sup>1125</sup> Prime Minister Ş. Saraçoğlu said in his defense that he called for a third meeting to resolve dissension among committee members.<sup>1126</sup> However, it is impossible to find any evidence of a dissension of this sort. Government was simply unhappy with committee's work and decided to make a last-minute intervention before LPLF was brought to the parliament's floor.

Prime Minister Ş. Saraçoğlu was present at this third session and personally proposed Article 17. The opening sentence of the new article read: "Lands which are cultivated by landless and land-short farmers through sharecropping and leasehold arrangements and lands which are home to entirely landless [people] who have all along earned a living as

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<sup>1124</sup> See T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945i, pp. 232-5 for the results of the open vote.

<sup>1125</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 63-4.

<sup>1126</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 105.

agricultural laborers . . . can be confiscated to be distributed to said farmers and laborers.”<sup>1127</sup> With this much said, it should be clear that government’s proposal was not a minor amendment – Article 17 brought an entirely new rule on confiscation of private farms.

According to Menderes, government was extremely stubborn in its demand for the approval of the new provision. He mockingly said that government fought fiercely even over punctuation.<sup>1128</sup> On the other hand, Cafer Tüzel, who was appointed as spokesman for the provisional committee after Menderes’s resignation, claimed that members of the committee were in no way coerced to accepting the new article. They simply acknowledged the government to be right in proposing such an article so as to provide land to sharecropping peasants who lived in land-scarce areas.<sup>1129</sup>

In Oral’s view, the insertion of Article 17 had but one result: In this way, government buried the second LPLF draft, which was “reasonable, positive and temperate.”<sup>1130</sup> For Menderes, this forced alteration left the text replete with internal contradictions. He asserted in vain that the third draft should be disregarded and that Grand National Assembly should deliberate the second draft that had been finalized before the third meeting of the committee.<sup>1131</sup> Ultimately, however, the provisional committee agreed on Article 17, but parliamentary discussions over this article turned out very long and bitter.

When deliberations started, C. Tüzel set about to explain the *raison d’être* of Article 17. What follows now is a summary of his account. In a bid to safeguard security of property,

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<sup>1127</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 26, my translation.

<sup>1128</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 111.

<sup>1129</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 157.

<sup>1130</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 63.

<sup>1131</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 111-2.

he said, the committee made changes to the initial draft, which had the effect of rendering expropriation of large owners both more complex and burdensome. Once this happened, the government felt disempowered as there seemed to be no way to expropriate and distribute land in a rapid manner. As previously discussed, the initial draft as formulated by the government was more flexible and gave implementing agency considerable space of maneuver. Yet the provisional committee revised the draft quite drastically and formulated a more rigid size rule in Articles 12, 15 and 16. It has also been mentioned above that these articles of the revised LPLF defined large holdings as those over 5000 *dönüms* while holdings in the range of 500 and 5000 *dönüms* were considered middle property. Under normal circumstances, holdings liable for confiscation were either large holdings, or they were properties over 2000 *dönüms* in land-scarce regions. This was far from what the architects of LPLF draft had in mind. Reformists soon realized that they would not be able to help many peasants as they were restricted by the size rule. In their mind, especially worrisome was the predicament of a large number of sharecroppers and laborers who tilled the very same plots through many years but would not be given land due to the constraints imposed by the committee. These sharecroppers would not be given land because farms on which they worked did not qualify as confiscable holdings as defined by the revised LPLF draft. The government was convinced that their case needed an urgent remedy. So they proposed Article 17.<sup>1132</sup> Other deputies made similar remarks regarding Article 17.<sup>1133</sup> To sum up, then, the intent behind Article 17 was to benefit landless and sub-landed peasants who worked on the same lands year after year as sharecroppers, tenants and laborers.

There is also an indirect inference to be made about Article 17. Sharecroppers, tenants and laborers were supposed to be given portions of the land they cultivated. Therefore it is

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<sup>1132</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 157; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 93.

<sup>1133</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 128; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 48; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 58, 69-70, 71-2, 76, 86, 87-8, 92-3.

plausible to say that the article set sights on expropriating those owners of land who were not directly involved in agricultural production.

Let us go into the details of the article. Article 17 gave implementing agency some leverage since the amount of land that could be confiscated was not fixed but varied from one region to another. This amount depended on the average subsistence size that would be determined in advance for each region. The rule was that three times the subsistence size would be bequeathed to the owner. The owner was also given the prerogative to choose which part of his/her estate to keep. Assume that an absentee owner had 1200 *dönüms* in a region where subsistence size was 150 *dönüms*. The owner in question would get to keep at least 450 *dönüms* of his/her estate. Put otherwise, his/her 750 *dönüms* could be confiscated if this was necessary to provide land to sharecroppers, tenants and laborers who tilled this very estate.

Last but not the least, the article stipulated that land to be bequeathed to the owner could be no less than 50 *dönüms*. Confiscation of all but 50 *dönüms* clearly was a rather harsh punishment. This move is only explicable in terms of regime's longstanding aversion to absentee ownership, which has been one of the recurrent topics of the previous chapters. Kurdoğlu's words during parliamentary debates in 1945 epitomized regime's disinclination: In matters of landholding, he said, "mode of operation has precedence over acreage owned."<sup>1134</sup> So a farm of 1200 *dönüms* may not have been that large; but it would be liable to confiscation if not managed properly.

One may justifiably argue that Article 17 was intended to punish large owners. Yet the article had the potential to affect more modest owners as well. Recall that the article authorized the government to confiscate all but 50 *dönüms* of a farmer. Hence a man who leased his 1800 *dönüms* to tenants could have to part with as much as 1750 *dönüms* of his

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<sup>1134</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 72.

estate. But what about a farmer with 80 *dönüms* who rented out 30 *dönüms* of it to fellow peasants? As it has been discussed at some length in the third chapter, not all land leasers were large owners. For a variety of reasons, small and middle peasants leased their plots as well. H. Bayur voiced such a concern during the debates. He asked what would happen to a widowed woman or an orphaned minor who had no choice but hire out their land.<sup>1135</sup> The point is that there were no guarantees written into Article 17 that farmers with modest holding would not be affected by this extraordinary method for land confiscation. A similar issue was raised by Menderes. For Menderes, it would be misleading to assume that large estates were alone in hiring agricultural laborers. Small farmers had to employ outside labor as well, which entailed that Article 17 could jeopardize their holdings.<sup>1136</sup> The question which should be posed is whether small farmers employed outside labor all year round. It is a stronger possibility that small peasantry hired workers during the harvest season when they needed additional labor power. Given that Article 17 covered permanent laborers only, Menderes's argument is not very sound. On the other hand, Ülkümen made an important point regarding "properly managed" farms. Recall that Article 16 exempted large modern farms from confiscation provided that they were under 5000 *dönüms*. As Ülkümen remarked, large farms of this sort normally hired permanent laborers. Now, however, they were included in Article 17. Hence laborers employed on a large, mechanized farm could make a claim to a piece of it. Ülkümen did not favor fragmentation of modern farms, so he advocated that agricultural laborers be counted out.<sup>1137</sup> Ülkümen was right. There was indeed nothing in the wording of Article 17 to suggest that modern farms, which employed workers permanently, were different from large estates run by tenants or sharecroppers.

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<sup>1135</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 51.

<sup>1136</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 38.

<sup>1137</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 59.

Nevertheless there is ample reason to believe that the first target of Article 17 was larger owners who preferred to cultivate land through tenants or hired hands. Anything other than that would run against perennial inclinations of the Kemalist regime. And it was absentee ownership and tenancy estates that received the harshest criticisms all through parliamentary deliberations. Not only is this interpretation supported by government's justification of LPLF bill, it is also compatible with the statement of Hatipoğlu in the assembly, which I will talk about later in this section.

The first question to take into consideration is why the committee gave in to government's demand. Political pressure obviously goes a long way in accounting for this development. Not surprisingly, however, committee's report provided another explanation as to why they accepted Article 17. In some regions of Turkey, it was said, public lands did not cover much area. Worse still, the regular procedure of confiscation of private property did not promise to yield so large a pool to provide land to every family in need. Therefore, it was anticipated that in regions like these, the number of peasants who were in need of land would greatly surpass the amount of land made available by the law. The problem was further complicated by the fact that resettling these people in land-rich areas was not a real option as this was often not within possibility. As things were, landless and land-short peasants of these regions were doomed to tenancy; so it was found necessary to redress their predicament in one way or another.<sup>1138</sup> It is obvious from parliamentary minutes that many MPs viewed Article 17 in this light. They pointed out that the article 17 talked about an exception as it would be implemented only where there was scarcity of agricultural land. Although it stood outside the normal procedure, this provision was regarded as essential for providing land to *all* who needed.<sup>1139</sup> Menderes, however, told an entirely different story. He harshly criticized provisional committee members whom he accused

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<sup>1138</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, pp. 15-6.

<sup>1139</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 119, 127-8 Öymen; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, pp. 134, 146.

of surrendering when government intervened.<sup>1140</sup> There certainly was some truth to Menderes's story. It seems that, having been confronted by the government, some members of the provisional committee were desperate to distance themselves from Menderes and prove their allegiance to İnönü. After all, provisional committee's extremely dissident report, which must have enraged the government, was their joint work. To illustrate how desperate these men were, one of them went as far to declare that Menderes alone wrote committee's report and that he signed it without even reading it.<sup>1141</sup>

Article 17 was soon to be rewritten, however. On the first of June, a motion with 321 signatures was submitted to the parliament. The motion called for a serious revision of Article 17. Before going any further, it is necessary to note that Turkish parliament had 455 seats at that time. Hence 321 was a comfortable majority, and the motion was destined to pass. This was why Menderes declared government's motion as a deplorable act. According to his interpretation, the government was displeased by committee's revisions to LPLF draft, and they chose to circumvent free deliberation to have it their way. Hence the motion on Article 17 was in essence an imposition on the parliament.<sup>1142</sup>

The motion was read by A. Tiridođlu, who was entrusted by İnönü with the task of enlisting MPs' support for government's new proposal on Article 17.<sup>1143</sup> Prime Minister Ş. Saraçođlu explained why a new version of Article 17 was necessary. According to Saraçođlu's account, no sooner had the committee accepted the older version than

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<sup>1140</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 112.

<sup>1141</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 133.

<sup>1142</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, pp. 36-7.

<sup>1143</sup> For details on Tiridođlu's lobbying for the motion, see the memoirs of long-time CHP Deputy Faik Ahmet Barutçu (1977, pp. 292-6). The impression one gets from Barutçu's memoirs is that Tiridođlu turned this occasion into a matter of allegiance to the party and its leader İnönü. As a result, it will not be an overstatement to say that many people were coerced into signing the motion. What Menderes said on the parliament floor confirms this. According to Menderes's statement, leaders of the CHP group paid several visits to reluctant deputies until they finally managed to get their signatures (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 37).

reformists came to the conclusion that Article 17 contained some serious legal ambiguities which could make land distribution cumbersome.<sup>1144</sup> Tüzel stated that reform advocates proposed a new version of Article 17 because, otherwise, settlement would be left as the sole means for providing land to tenants and laborers of land-scarce regions. He also added that the government did not favor settlement as a means of provision of land since its completion would take many years.<sup>1145</sup>

At this point, it is necessary to clarify what the problem with the first version of Article 17 was. Before the motion, there was a precondition for the implementation of the article and this was unavailability of land. The original Article 17 read: “This provision will be enforced if the amount of land that can actually be distributed or confiscated in their vicinity fails to meet the amount required to provide land to all these farmers.”<sup>1146</sup> This was to recognize the possibility that what Articles 15 and 16 allowed for could be insufficient to fulfill the overarching promise of LPLF – making all farmers full owners. No wonder this was a grave problem from the point of view of lawmakers, and the solution they found was expropriation of not-so-large owners who were not directly involved in cultivation. The rationale of Article 17 was precisely this – making room for expropriation of (absentee) middle farmers where necessary.

To repeat, as it was originally agreed on during committee meetings, Article 17 would be put into effect only where there was such a deficit in land. Ardent supporters of LPLF were not happy with this provision. Take Tüzel who believed that the said condition tied government’s hands. For him, if Article 17 were to be enacted like this, even the presence of a patch of heath near a sharecropping estate would obstruct expropriation and, with it,

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<sup>1144</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 106-7.

<sup>1145</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 93.

<sup>1146</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, p. 26.

land distribution.<sup>1147</sup> Similarly, K. Turan stressed that endless lawsuits would follow if this condition remained in the draft. Any landowner could claim that he/she was wrongfully expropriated and take his/her case to the Council of State. All he/she needed to say was that there were vacant public lands nearby his/her farm. In this way, land distribution would come to an end the moment it started.<sup>1148</sup>

All these considerations led CHP leaders to rewrite Article 17. Hence with the motion of July 1, not only was the above-mentioned paragraph dropped, also added was a new provision according to which Article 17 overrode Articles 15 and 16. This change meant that Article 17 could be enforced *anywhere* and without regard to the size rule on liability for confiscation.<sup>1149</sup>

It is now time to turn to parliamentary deliberations on Article 17. Tüzel talked of Article 17 as “the most essential article of this law which promises to overcome the problem of land.”<sup>1150</sup> It must have been in this sense that Premier S. Saraçoğlu spoke of Article 17 as a “succinct article which alone turned LPLF into a genuine land law.”<sup>1151</sup>

The counter-argument of the opposition was that Article 17 was redundant as inequality in distribution of landed properties was relatively mild in Turkey.<sup>1152</sup> Menderes declared that LPLF draft as it was revised by the committee was capable of solving all problems on land; in other words, there was no need for an extraordinary measure like Article 17.<sup>1153</sup>

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<sup>1147</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 32.

<sup>1148</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 48.

<sup>1149</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, On Yedinci Madde (Article 17), p. 699.

<sup>1150</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 31.

<sup>1151</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 105.

<sup>1152</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 51-3.

<sup>1153</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 40.

Peker, who voiced his concerns a number of times during parliamentary discussions, insisted that the first version of Article 17 was more appropriate to the task at hand. His contention was that government should resort to extra-ordinary confiscation of this sort if and only if it proved absolutely necessary. In other words, the plan of action that was contained in Article 17 was acceptable on the condition that normal procedures failed to bring together large enough acreage to provide land to every rightful recipient.<sup>1154</sup> The response that these men got in return was that there were indeed certain places where there was a “demand for land.”<sup>1155</sup>

Deputies who were skeptical of Article 17 pointed out several times that its provisions gave too much discretion to the implementing agency. Consequently, they feared that the article would be enforced in an arbitrary fashion.<sup>1156</sup> Oral remarked that as Article 17 set the threshold for expropriation extremely low, it would jeopardize around 80,000-100,000 family farms.<sup>1157</sup> In addition, many said that Article 17 contradicted security of property.<sup>1158</sup> As a response, Ülkümen pointed out that Article 17 should be considered as a provisional article. This was so because Article 17 was subordinate to Article 33, which posited that in any given region, expropriation could take place only once.<sup>1159</sup> This is to say that there was no way to carry on expropriation of this sort. K. Kamu, on the other hand, responded to this criticism by rhetorically asking whether only landowners needed security of property. Kamu demanded security for tenants, sharecroppers and workers who had few, if any, independent means of livelihood.<sup>1160</sup>

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<sup>1154</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 78-9.

<sup>1155</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 57.

<sup>1156</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 53.

<sup>1157</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 32.

<sup>1158</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 66-7; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 35.

<sup>1159</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 107-8.

<sup>1160</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 75.

The strongest argument against Article 17 was that it would threaten medium-size enterprises into extinction.<sup>1161</sup> According to this argument, medium-size enterprises had technical advantages over smaller enterprises. Above all, middle farmers were mechanized, and thanks to that, they could produce both more and cheaper. Thus medium-size enterprises contributed a lot to agricultural growth, and had to be preserved.<sup>1162</sup> This was why Menderes accused the government of sacrificing agricultural development for a misguided notion of social justice.<sup>1163</sup> It was also argued that middle farms provided employment to many peasants who lacked land, draft animals or farm tools and implements.<sup>1164</sup> Finally, Oral asserted that large proprietors were indispensable also because they turned out to be the major source of credit for small peasants at a time when Agricultural Bank loans were clearly insufficient to meet the demand.<sup>1165</sup> Middle farmers were deemed indispensable for political reasons as well. As Menteşe purported during discussions over Article 17, middle classes – a category which apparently included middle farmers – were the pillar of democracy.<sup>1166</sup>

In response, a pro-reform deputy asserted that some of the advantages associated with middle and large farming had actually to do with government supports. If small producers could receive government support (incentives, credit etc.) the way larger producers did, they too would produce more efficiently.<sup>1167</sup> Ulusoy's response was more offensive.

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<sup>1161</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 66, 83; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 32.

<sup>1162</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 66; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 34; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 55, 60.

<sup>1163</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 39.

<sup>1164</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 33.

<sup>1165</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, p. 34.

<sup>1166</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, p. 78.

<sup>1167</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 85.

According to him, it was impossible to give a definite answer to the question whether middle property was advantageous and therefore necessary. All depended on the context. Ulusoy asked: What good did middle property serve in a village where a couple of properly managed 5000-*dönüm* farms were surrounded by 500 landless households?<sup>1168</sup> Apparently, in this particular case, equality in the distribution of land outweighed efficiency in farming. In similar vein, Sökmensüer maintained that if an absentee owner exploited other people's labor, then his/her middle property was of no use to the economy.<sup>1169</sup>

For Oral, who fiercely opposed government's position, the question was not just about middle or large farms. It was rather about government's policy preferences. According to him, government's hostility to large enterprises, which was nothing but an extremity, was beyond any concern to provide land to farmers in need. For him, Article 17 made it clear that the government was dangerously inclining toward an autarkic regime in agriculture. Turkey's economic prospects depended on expansion of cultivation, growth in output and higher levels of commercialization, none of which was possible if medium and large enterprises were discarded.<sup>1170</sup>

Minister of Agriculture Hatipoğlu made the final statement on this most controversial provision of LPLF draft. Hatipoğlu first replied to concerns that Article 17 would place middle enterprises in peril. He made an intriguing start by saying that there were only a limited number of middle *enterprises* in Turkey. Sure, there were middle *properties*; but few were cultivated *en bloc* by their owners. Most of the time, middle properties were parceled out to sharecroppers. Same was true for the so-called large enterprises. Hence middle and large holdings of this sort did not actually have the advantages which were

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<sup>1168</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 105-6.

<sup>1169</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 146.

<sup>1170</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, pp. 65-6, 74.

associated with larger-size enterprises. Equally important is Hatipoğlu's argument that middle or large holdings did not markedly contribute to gross output as it was small peasantry who did the bulk of agricultural production.<sup>1171</sup>

Earlier during the debates, an MP made an important point, namely, that the intent behind Article 17 was to encourage better farming on middle properties.<sup>1172</sup> This subject was taken up and elaborated by the Minister of Agriculture. In fact, Hatipoğlu's defense of Article 17 was built on the contention that it will put an end to sharecropping on larger-size holdings.<sup>1173</sup> Here Hatipoğlu reiterated the idea that sharecropping did not allow for the development of agricultural production. He then added a new layer to the critique of sharecropping by commenting on the linkages between sharecropping and usury. This is in a familiar theme which has been discussed in previous chapters. Like others before him, Hatipoğlu emphasized that landowners usually lent money to their tenants. The problem was that sharecroppers almost always had difficulty paying back – a situation which forced them into a whirl of debt. As he put it, “it is in part through sharecropping that peasants are ensnared by usury.”<sup>1174</sup>

Hatipoğlu then proceeded to a discussion of serfdom. In the course of parliamentary deliberations, quite a few deputies talked of Turkish peasants as “serfs”, and this enraged others who were much less enthusiastic about LPLF draft.<sup>1175</sup> For Hatipoğlu, it was obvious that Turkish peasants were not serfs in a legal sense. Nonetheless, some sharecroppers worked and lived under terrible conditions. These were the peasants of what he called “*çiftlik* villages” (*çiftlik köyleri*) which were to be found all over Turkey from

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<sup>1171</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, pp. 99, 100-1.

<sup>1172</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 127.

<sup>1173</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 102.

<sup>1174</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 102.

<sup>1175</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, 89-90.

Denizli to Antalya and Muğla. By “*çiftlik* villages” Hatipoğlu must have meant sharecropping villages where a single person owned all cultivable land and employed local peasants as his/her tenants. According to the minister, this was exactly the kind of sharecropping that the government wished to eliminate.<sup>1176</sup> Therein lies the clue as to why Article 17 was of such an importance to the government. Article 17 was devised as a measure against sharecropping, which, in reformists’ view, was a tremendous impediment to agricultural efficiency and security of property.

After hours of deliberation, Article 17 was accepted in the parliament. Yet the article was abolished just five years later when LPLF was amended for the first time in 1950 with Law No. 5618.<sup>1177</sup> This controversial article was the first casualty of LPLF.

### **6.5. Law for Providing Land to Farmers: Radical or Moderate?**

As I have stated earlier, history of LPLF has been written almost exclusively from a left-Kemalist perspective. There have been exceptions, of course, but most analyses are premised on a left-Kemalist reading of the early Republican era. Here LPLF is presented an instance of Kemalist radicalism. According to this, land reform law was the brainchild of the “revolutionary” faction within the RPP. As such, it was an unswerving assault on landowners. The 1945 law was how Kemalists responded to the problem of growing inequalities in land distribution. Had it been properly implemented, LPLF could have fended off tendencies toward concentration and expropriation, and eliminate feudal and semi-feudal relations on land. Events took a different turn, however, as Kemalists

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<sup>1176</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 102.

<sup>1177</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Hakkındaki 4753 Sayılı Kanunun Bâzı Maddelerinin Değiştirilmesine ve Bu Kanuna Bâzı Maddeler ve Geçici Maddeler Eklenmesine Dair Kanun, 1950, Ek Madde 9 (Additional Article 9), p. 1308. It is important to stress that Law No. 5618 was enacted in March 1950, that is, before Democrat Party ousted RPP from power. Hence land distribution law was amended at the hands of its architects.

revolutionaries were held back by RPP's conservative faction, which sided with landed and commercial interests.

Analyses inspired by left-Kemalism always tend to overstate the radical aims of Kemalists in enacting the 1945 law. Fortunately, however, some of the more recent analyses are unfettered by faulty assumptions of left-Kemalism and provide a much more balanced perspective on LPLF. I will mention two of them here: E. Balta's and A. Karaömerlioğlu's studies. In a nutshell, the insight they provide is that LPLF was much more modest in its aims than suggested by previous explanations.

Both Balta and Karaömerlioğlu underline that the overarching concern of the law was production increase<sup>1178</sup>, which is a long-overdue corrective to left-Kemalist literature. I have tried to argue in previous pages that Kemalists sought tenurial change in the hope that this will induce a considerable expansion of land under cultivation, resulting thereby in an increase in agricultural output. Although modest in aims, LPLF had confiscatory provisions, which has lend to the façade of radicalism. The point is that they were necessary to realize law's modest aims. Kemalists reform scheme included distribution of additional land to smallholders on the one hand and making sharecroppers and tenants property owners on the other. To realize such a scheme, the law had to make available a large land reserve, which may occasionally have required confiscation of private property.

Although my account is much closer to Balta and Karaömerlioğlu than previous ones, I do think that there is one problem with Balta's and Karaömerlioğlu's treatment of LPLF. They miss a crucial point, namely, the fact that LPLF's first version was much more "extreme" from the final outcome. This, I think, stands in need of explanation. That will be what I will try to do in this section.

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<sup>1178</sup> Balta, 2002, pp. 297-8; Karaömerlioğlu, 1998, pp. 41-2; Karaömerlioğlu, 2002, pp. 131-2.

### 6.5.1. Turkey during Second World War

LPLF has hitherto been examined against the background of post-war reorganization of the political scene. The milestone development in immediate post-war Turkey was the transition to a multiparty regime. Many scholars believe that the single party devised LPLF in anticipation of this transition. A few notable examples are in order now.

Let us start with Pamuk, who sees LPLF as an effort on the part of CHP to “mend fences.” According to this, CHP leaders were well aware that wartime policies of forced purchases and requisitioning had left peasants in devastation, which led them to legislate a land law to win small peasants.<sup>1179</sup> Pamuk’s interpretation inspires the following question: Why did the state aim at landless and land-short peasants in particular? This is a question that Birtek and Keyder have addressed. As previously mentioned, Birtek and Keyder put LPLF in the context of alliances between state and social groups. The following is their account of RPP’s 1945 initiative: The outbreak of Second World War signaled the demise of state’s alliance with middle peasantry – an alliance that had been woven around wheat purchase in the 1930s. Massive conscription caused middle farmer surplus to plummet, which had the effect of altering its relative status within the agrarian economy. At the same time, government’s “anti-agriculture policy alienated the middle farmers from its alliance with the state.”<sup>1180</sup> Hence when the war was over, Kemalists had but one choice: to forge an alliance with the “only remaining stratum of the peasantry”, namely, the poor peasants.<sup>1181</sup> In other words, LPLF was a political maneuver to lure the support of landless and land-short peasants.

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<sup>1179</sup> Pamuk, 1991, pp. 137-8.

<sup>1180</sup> Birtek and Keyder, 1975, p. 459.

<sup>1181</sup> Birtek and Keyder, 1975, p. 460.

It will be recalled from the fourth and fifth chapters that in Turkey the idea of land distribution was not born in 1945. Scholars who perceive LPLF as a political move do acknowledge this fact. Tezel's study is a good example. According to him, had it not been for war, Kemalists would have enacted land reform already in the 1930s. Nonetheless, Tezel believes that the desire to reform land tenure was stronger than ever in 1945. This was because, following German defeat, İnönü and his entourage were certain that Turkey should join the ranks of democratic societies. Therefore, they firmly believed that RPP should adapt to the conditions of party competition and find a loyal electoral support base. Small peasants were the best candidate in this respect as they comprised the majority of the electorate.<sup>1182</sup> Koçak, too, correlates LPLF with the coming of competitive politics. He repeats the idea that RPP strived to make peace with small and middle producers after the war.<sup>1183</sup> More importantly, Koçak argues that RPP leaders were determined to "utilize the [new] law as a potent propaganda device."<sup>1184</sup> He shows that, after the passage of LPLF, RPP's secretariat sent memorandums to provincial party administrations instructing them to hold celebrations in collaboration with People's Houses and People's Rooms. Koçak has no doubt that the idea was to popularize LPLF. He actually goes further and asserts that this was planned as the first stage of a partisan political campaign.<sup>1185</sup>

I would like to raise two objections, or reservations. Firstly, in all of the four accounts cited above, LPLF is identified as an attempt to form an alliance with small peasants with RPP. So, the analytical focus is on the social group towards which the state supposedly made a move. The fact that this social group is named differently (e.g. small peasants, poor peasants, landless peasants etc.) does not constitute much of a problem, because the idea is that it was the peasant stratum with an aspiration for land and that Kemalists set

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<sup>1182</sup> Tezel, 1994, pp. 397-8.

<sup>1183</sup> Koçak, 2010, p. 204.

<sup>1184</sup> Koçak, 2010, p. 273.

<sup>1185</sup> Koçak, 2010, pp. 272-5.

out to garner their support. But, as with any political enterprise, LPLF was at the same time a move *against* a particular social group/stratum. It has been argued above that the original LPLF bill as drafted by the government had certain extreme provisions, which added up to an anti-large owner stance. My point is that there is a sense in which LPLF was a maneuver against large owners. I believe it is necessary to inquire into the reasons for this change in attitude.

Secondly, all of the above scholars are in agreement that 1945 was the critical turning point as far as reformist activism went. In all four, experiences of war years only serve as a background to the analysis. What I suggest is that it will be useful to shift the focus to war years in examining LPLF. Although there are no records on how the LPLF bill was prepared, it is certain that it was a product of war years. Commentators like Aydemir, Barkan and Avcioğlu note that İnönü was very much preoccupied with reform and that some preliminary work was being done at the Ministry of Agriculture already during the war.<sup>1186</sup> Koçak is more specific. He writes that Kemalists could have started working on the draft as early as 1943.<sup>1187</sup> This insight should bring LPLF closer to the National Protection Law of 1940, Capital Levy Law of 1942 and the Soil Products Tax of 1943. It will be my argument that all of these laws were the product of the same political climate.

### **6.5.2. Turkey's War**

As is well-known, outbreak of the war brought about a massive military mobilization in Turkey. At that time when Turkish population was roughly eighteen million, close to one million men were brought under arms. According to Kafaoğlu, peasants comprised three fourths of all recruits.<sup>1188</sup> Large-scale conscription had an immediate result: With so many

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<sup>1186</sup> Avcioğlu, 1974, pp. 1899-1405; Aydemir, 1966b, p. 338; Barkan, 1980, p. 458.

<sup>1187</sup> Koçak, 2010, p. 204.

<sup>1188</sup> Kafaoğlu, 2002, p. 74.

agricultural producers now in the army, Turkey's cereal output plummeted. The country, and especially big towns, faced severe shortages of foodstuff, which, in turn, triggered the emergence of black markets.<sup>1189</sup> There was another factor besides the decline in agricultural output that was responsible for causing foodstuff shortages, and this was the contraction of transportation facilities. Shipment of agricultural produce grew increasingly difficult since the beginning of the war as most of the trains were reserved for military purposes.<sup>1190</sup> Between 1939 and 1945, governments made use of a large repertoire of policies to cope with the effects of the world war. I will discuss below that none of these policies proved particularly successful.

Government's first legislative response was National Protection Law (*Millî Korunma Kanunu*) of 1940. The new law provided the government with the entire wherewithal to administer a war economy. As stated in in government's preamble, National Protection Law (NPL) had two contents: policy instruments to "regulate agricultural, industrial and commercial activities" in accordance with "people's needs and exigencies of national defense" on the one hand, and "measures against those who would take advantage of extraordinary circumstances without regard for the country" on the other.<sup>1191</sup> NPL's chapter on economic provisions contained 6 articles on agriculture, 13 articles on industry and mining, and finally, 17 articles on trade. There also were 16 punitive provisions in another chapter. In implementation, however, the government did not make use of these provision in a uniform manner. Boratav contends that trade controls took clear precedence over all other measures as they were crucial for provisioning.<sup>1192</sup>

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<sup>1189</sup> Boratav, 1988, pp. 63, 65; Boratav, 1974, pp. 291-2; Metinsoy, 2007, p. 56; Pamuk, 1991, p. 130.

<sup>1190</sup> Metinsoy, 2007, pp. 56-8, 104.

<sup>1191</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1940a, p. 2.

<sup>1192</sup> Boratav, 1974, p. 336.

Although few in number, NPL's provisions on agriculture were broad in scope. Article 37 brought labor requirement for farmers. Government could now employ peasants on nearby farms, public or private, in exchange for a "proper wage". Article 38 gave the government the authority to determine types and amounts of crops to be grown in agricultural regions. Article 39 dealt with large farms which were left fallow by their owners. Government was entitled to rent and manage all such farm over 500 hectares (5000 *dönüms*). According to Article 40, farmers with more than 8 hectares (80 *dönüms*) could be obliged to plant cereals on one half of their plots.

Last but not the least, there was Article 41. This provision was about requisitioning of draft animals, and it would soon prove very calamitous. Once military mobilization was ordered, Turkish Armed Forces needed horses and oxen as a means for transportation and it was thanks to NPL that the government secured the right to seize farmers' oxen for military purposes. Article 41 talked about the exception to this rule and stipulated that farmers would get to keep a pair of oxen for every 4 hectares (40 *dönüms*) they cultivated.<sup>1193</sup> Let us assume that a farmer had 80 *dönüms* of land and had 2 pairs of oxen. In this case, government would commandeer just one pair, and leave the other for his/her use. If, however, a farmer had less than 40 *dönüms* which he/she cultivated with a team of oxen, the exemption would not apply to him/her and he/she would lose all draft power he/she owned. It is the debate on this article that I now turn.

There is no need to go into detail either of the rest of the law or parliamentary deliberations on the bill here. Yet there is one instance during debates which I like to highlight. As will be expected, this is about Article 41. The problem with this article should be clear: Peasants who cultivated less than 40 *dönüms* would be left without any draft animals. Needless to say, lack of draft power would make independent cultivation extremely difficult. This was precisely why Article 41 created a substantial backlash in the

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<sup>1193</sup> Millî Korunma Kanunu, 1940, Otuz Yedinci Madde - Kırk Birinci Madde (Articles 37-41), p. 171.

parliament. Three men protested the draft article: G. Pekel, H. Bayur and General K. Karabekir. The gist of their argument was that Article 41 jeopardized small farming. According to the opponents, the government was determined to lay the burden of military mobilization on the poor. Thanks to Article 41, richer peasants would escape requisitioning.<sup>1194</sup> Pekel asserted that farmers with less than 40 *dönüms* comprised the majority of peasants in Turkey.<sup>1195</sup> Similarly, Bayur claimed that there were many peasants especially in the Aegean region who made a living out of 5-10 *dönüms*.<sup>1196</sup> Their point was that Article 41 would affect a great number of peasants. In Bayur's view, small peasants were left with no choice but to borrow/rent oxen from richer peasants, which was sure to put a financial strain on them.<sup>1197</sup> On the other hand, Karabekir pointed out disruption of production would be detrimental to national defense and that government should also be concerned about the wellbeing of the people behind the frontline.<sup>1198</sup>

Government's response to criticism was, at first, quite naïve. According to an MP close to the government, few peasants had less than 40 *dönüms*, which fell short of "feeding a farmer", especially in inner Anatolia.<sup>1199</sup> The rapporteur of the provisional committee on NPL forwarded another argument. According to this, peasants with less than 40 *dönüms* were too poor to have any oxen, which was to say that they would not be adversely affected by Article 41.<sup>1200</sup> Both arguments were unassailable and were loudly protested. When Premier Saydam took the stand, he said something altogether different. Those who cultivated less than 40 *dönüms* could only "feed themselves" – meaning that they were

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<sup>1194</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1940b, p. 151.

<sup>1195</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1940b, p. 151.

<sup>1196</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1940b, p. 153.

<sup>1197</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1940b, pp. 152, 153.

<sup>1198</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1940b, p. 154.

<sup>1199</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1940b, p. 153.

<sup>1200</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1940b, p. 151.

subsistence producers who rarely had surplus to sell. For Saydam, there was no reason to exempt subsistence producers from commandeering. Larger farmers, however, had surplus to sell on the market – a surplus, one should add, government could claim. This was why Saydam’s cabinet made an exception for farmers who held more than 40 *dönüms*. As Saydam explained, Article 21 was “written with an eye to increasing production.”<sup>1201</sup> This was tantamount to saying that peasant subsistence was less important than the provisioning of the army or the cities. It was a scandalous defense of Article 41.

Most researchers offer a two-phase periodization of NPL in action. According to this, Refik Saydam’s cabinet implemented NPL much more strictly and word for word. After Saydam’s unexpected death in the summer of 1942, Şükrü Saraçoğlu became Prime Minister and adopted a more lenient line of policy.<sup>1202</sup> The so-called 25 percent decision of July 1942 was the cornerstone of the new policy, to which I now turn.

Saraçoğlu’s discontent with the consequences of Saydam’s policies had nothing to do with the requisitioning of draft animals or any other provisions I have mentioned above. Saraçoğlu’s government came to the conclusion that a revision of policy was necessary because forced purchases by the government turned out a failure – the amount of cereals that government obtained in this way was nowhere near what it targeted.<sup>1203</sup> The method of forced purchase of agricultural products was arranged by Article 26 of the NPL. According to this, government was authorized to buy crops “with the purposes of meeting consumption needs of the people and the army, regulating exportation and protecting agricultural producers.”<sup>1204</sup> In other words, it was forced purchase as a wartime method of food procurement that failed the government.

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<sup>1201</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1940b, p. 152.

<sup>1202</sup> Examples of this type of periodization can be found in Boratav’s and Koçak’s studies. See Boratav, 1988, pp. 65-6 and Koçak, 2003b, pp. 412-6.

<sup>1203</sup> Pamuk, 1991, p. 134.

<sup>1204</sup> Millî Korunma Kanunu, 1940, Yirmi Altıncı Madde (Articles 26), pp. 169-70.

What followed was a government decree in July 1942 which signaled the end of wholesale forced purchases. According to government's decree, which is usually referred to as the 25 percent decision in the literature, peasants were now allowed to keep a portion of their produce and trade it at the marketplace. The amount to be delivered to the government depended on the size of farmers' annual output. Peasants who produced less than 50 tons were to surrender 25% of it. Those with an output up to 100 tons would have to deliver 25% of the first 50 tons and 35% of the second. Finally, farmers who produced more would have to surrender 50% of their output above 100 tons.<sup>1205</sup> To illustrate, farmer A with 50 tons of wheat would be obliged to surrender a quarter of his/her output, which makes 12.5 tons. Farmer B with 100 tons would owe 12.5 tons of the first 50 tons and 17.5 of the second, that is, 30 tons in total. Farmer C with 150 tons would have to part with an extra 25 tons, which makes his/her due 55 tons in total.

As should be clear, the percentage to be delivered to government increased with output. In this regard, government's purchase resembled a progressive tax. But Pamuk claims that government's July 1942 decree did not help smaller peasants at all. He writes that the 25 percent that small producers were allowed to keep "represented the entire marketable surplus and often more."<sup>1206</sup> Moreover, peasants were not granted separate allowances for their own grain consumption needs or next season's seeds – these were included in the same 25 percent. So, in reality, peasants would have less than the quarter of their produce to sell on the market. Pamuk also adds that the government continued to set official purchasing price rather low, which meant that the remaining 75% did not bring much cash to peasant households.<sup>1207</sup>

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<sup>1205</sup> "Hububat Mahsulünden Muayyen Nispetlerin Bedeli Mukabilinde Satın Alındıktan Sonra Geri Kalanının Serbest Bırakılması Hakkında Kararname", *T.C. Resmî Gazete*, No. 5160 (17.07.1942), Decision No. 366, pp. 3371-2.

<sup>1206</sup> Pamuk, 1991, p. 135.

<sup>1207</sup> Pamuk, 1991, p. 135.

Government was not happy with the fruits of the 25 percent decision either. Saraçoğlu had to admit that 25% did not help his government for long as the total amount of grains delivered by farmers remained low. While his government had hoped to collect 1.5 million tons of grain, what they had was less than 600,000.<sup>1208</sup>

### **6.5.3. Government's New Agenda**

Parliamentary opening speeches in early Republican period are invaluable records for people studying Turkish politics. It is possible to say retrospectively that each opening speech as a rule set the tone and the agenda of the upcoming legislative year. President İ. İnönü's 1942 address was no exception. As I will show in detail below, this speech said a great deal about regime's new concerns. On November 1, 1942, İnönü lamented that an "irresponsible pursuit of commercial gain" defied government's wartime procurement policies. This "venomous atmosphere" resulted in high costs of living for all Turkish citizens. And he continued:

The only redress . . . to [our nation's] misery is to sincerely help the Republican Government. (...) It is sad to remember that, for the last two years, our society has failed to cooperate with the government in its effort to regulate food supplies [to feed] the nation. (...) Fraudulent landlords who see an opportunity to thrive in cloudy times, rapacious merchants-profiteers who would sell the air we breathe if they could, and a few politicians who seek to take advantage of this situation so as to realize their political ambitions (...) – they all impudently work to sabotage the life of this great nation. These people number no more than 300 or 500, and there certainly are ways to avert the damages they do to the homeland. (...) We will let no one, no group to steal from the nation under the pretense of freedom of trade and economic activity.<sup>1209</sup>

İnönü was quick to add that it was impossible to find a "magical solution" in dealing with this problem of excessive profit-seeking. All measures were bound to have "grave

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<sup>1208</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, p. 19.

<sup>1209</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942a, p. 4, my translation.

disadvantages.”<sup>1210</sup> This was to say in effect that new decisions would breed disagreement. As it would soon turn out, 1942 and 1943 would be replete with such controversial policy initiatives.

#### **6.5.4. Capital Levy Law**

It was just ten days after the opening of the parliament that a draft law on a one-time property levy was brought to the floor. Prime Minister Ş. Saraçoğlu took the stand to introduce the draft. He gave a detailed speech on wartime policies. Central in his account were the problems government encountered when carrying out new policies.

The highlight of Saraçoğlu’s speech was the problem of high prices. As a response to those who charged high prices to government’s lethargy, Saraçoğlu argued that government had made every effort but failed nonetheless. Prime Minister gave a résumé of early 1940s’ developments. His résumé suggested that price increases were normal up to a certain point. There were two reasons for that. Firstly, outbreak of world war disrupted international trade as a result of which Turkish imports shrank. This development put an upward boost to prices. More importantly, conscription pulled down agricultural production and increased the number of consumers. Men who had normally been the backbone of farm work now became consumers. What ensued was scarcity of foodstuff and of essential consumer goods, and a concomitant rise in prices. All these were aggravated because of profiteering. Saraçoğlu pointed out that this state of affairs had led his predecessor, Refik Saydam, to enact draconian measures to fight scarcity and black markets. In the end, however, prices proved recalcitrant. Therefore, Saraçoğlu’s government loosened some of these policies and devised new, more realistic measures.

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<sup>1210</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942a, p. 4.

Saraçoğlu declared that his government turned out relatively more successful except for reversing the prices. For profiteers once again beat the government.<sup>1211</sup>

Prime Minister pointed out that merchant-profiteers were not the sole agents responsible for high prices. Foodstuffs were already high priced before they reached markets. The point Saraçoğlu made was that farmers demanded high prices for their produce. At first, government was fine with this since farmers had been miserable for so many years. But the prices kept rising, which started to threaten the livelihood of the urban population.<sup>1212</sup> Saraçoğlu declared that the urban population was the real victim of scarcity and price surge. Urban residents were most affected by high prices of foodstuff and essential consumer goods because they usually had no economic ties to villages or agriculture.<sup>1213</sup> Their wellbeing concerned the government deeply. That was why Saraçoğlu's government worked out a plan to help the urban population. Saraçoğlu delineated this nine-item plan on the floor of the parliament. The first eight items were about provisioning of food (e.g. rice, grains, sugar and cooking oil) and staples (e.g. coal, shoes and cloths) for the urban populace. The last item was the Capital Levy (*Varlık Vergisi*).<sup>1214</sup>

Saraçoğlu first explained to his peers why Capital Levy was necessary. He remarked that there was too much money in circulation and that the volume of money had to be reduced through taxation. Hence the prime purpose of the new levy was to drain money from the market. Capital Levy would be raised on “those who earned a lot of money during the war”, which included “merchants, owners of real estate and other property, and large farmers.”<sup>1215</sup> Saraçoğlu also said that Turkish people held a deep grudge against profiteers.

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<sup>1211</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, pp. 14-7.

<sup>1212</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, p. 16.

<sup>1213</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, pp. 17-8.

<sup>1214</sup> For details see T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, pp. 18-21.

<sup>1215</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, p. 21.

State had to take action to “erase popular hatred.” This would be one of the side benefits of the Capital Levy.<sup>1216</sup>

A number of deputies made interesting comments during debates in the parliament. Generally speaking, profiteers were everyone’s primary target; they got the lion’s share of criticism and revulsion. In R. İnce’s words, they were the “microbes” which preyed on the flesh on the nation.<sup>1217</sup> Nonetheless, it is quite significant that almost all speakers mentioned that peasants earned excessively during the war. Karabekir, who was a renown conservative, is a good example here. Karabekir talked impressionistically about peasants’ greed and moral degradation which came with all the money they made.<sup>1218</sup> M.B. Pars exclaimed that wartime scarcities made some Turkish farmers “go astray.” He was talking about those who “reveled as they sold their wheat at high prices to the detriment of [fellow] citizens”. Pars called such farmers “traitors” alongside profiteers and corrupt officials.<sup>1219</sup> In short, the idea was that all sorts of wartime profits were illegitimate and that Capital Levy would “restore the money to its rightful owners.”<sup>1220</sup>

It should also be noted that there was no opposition on the floor. General K. Karabekir made a timid suggestion, though. Karabekir did lend his unqualified support to the draft law. However, he was of the view that its title should change. “Capital Levy” conveyed an incorrect message as it sounded anti-property. All the government aspired to do was to tax “excessive profits.” Hence the law should be named accordingly.<sup>1221</sup>

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<sup>1216</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, p. 22.

<sup>1217</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, p. 23.

<sup>1218</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, p. 28.

<sup>1219</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, p. 24.

<sup>1220</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, p. 24 İnce.

<sup>1221</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, p. 27.

Absence of opposition within the parliament should not surprise anyone, and this is not just because of Turkey's authoritarian regime. For the prospective tax actually had considerable public support. A.B. Kafaoğlu, who makes an astonishingly sympathetic reading of the Capital Levy, shows that journalists and intellectuals of various persuasions embraced the new tax. This was because they saw it as a proper social measure which would punish the war rich and benefit the people.<sup>1222</sup> The question is: Was this what Capital Levy actually did?

There can be no gainsaying that the Capital Levy was an anti-minority measure. In the main, the law wanted to take revenge against non-Muslim people of wealth, who allegedly got even richer since the war. What is interesting is that the anti-minority sentiment was not actually inscribed in the text of the law. On the other hand, this sentiment did become evident in certain official memorandums and closed speeches by CHP leaders, which were unknown to the public at that time.<sup>1223</sup> Nevertheless, it was in the implementation phase that government's new levy revealed its true colors.<sup>1224</sup> To wrap up, what might be called economic Turkism was most certainly the predominant aspect of the levy. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that the law aimed to tax wartime profits. And it did so, but in an ethnically selective manner. Boratav contends that this also corresponded to a sectoral division within commercial bourgeoisie. That is, the government preferred to tax İstanbul tradesmen who were connected to foreign markets through importation rather than Anatolian entrepreneurs who traded foodstuffs in the national market.<sup>1225</sup> Therefore, for Boratav, the distinction at the heart of Capital Levy was not just between Turkish and non-Muslim. Anatolia versus İstanbul constituted a second fault line.<sup>1226</sup> It is tenable to

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<sup>1222</sup> Kafaoğlu, 2002, pp. 57-9.

<sup>1223</sup> Aktar, 2000, pp. 143-4, 148; Boratav, 1974, pp. 341-2, 345.

<sup>1224</sup> Aktar, 2000, pp. 148-9, 165-7, 167-73; Boratav, 1974, pp. 346-9.

<sup>1225</sup> Boratav, 1974, p. 341.

<sup>1226</sup> Boratav, 1974, p. 350.

say that the two divisions actually ran parallel to one another because, as Ökte writes<sup>1227</sup>, it was minority tradesmen of İstanbul who controlled import trade. Aktar adds another dimension to the whole debate. He writes that, since tax assessment was quite arbitrary, politicians and bureaucrats had the leeway to punish whomever they wanted. It is Aktar's claim that they chose to punish those who indulged in conspicuous consumption in particular.<sup>1228</sup> He also states that this preference had a lot to do with Kemalist solidarism as it was in consumption that inequalities in social status crystallized most. Punishment of conspicuous consumption sat well with the vision of an urban life where all social differences were made invisible.<sup>1229</sup> On the other hand, in Kayra's account, punishment of consumption had a lot to do with absence of financial records. Because finance bureaucrats did not have records at their disposal from which to assess wartime profits, they had to get innovative and find other sorts of evidence. That was how they came to view "lifestyle" as an evidence of excessive profits.<sup>1230</sup>

There is one more question to be addressed, one which is more relevant to the inquiry here. İnönü's and Saraçoğlu's speeches in the parliament heralded that the government would settle accounts with large farmers as well. Did this really happen? Were large farmers made to pay for their wartime profits? The best source to find an answer to this question is a 1951 book by Faik Ökte. Most of what we know today about the implementation of Capital Levy comes actually from Ökte, who was the head of provincial treasury in İstanbul at that time. Ökte was involved in the assessment and collection of the new tax. Shortly after CHP was ousted from power, Ökte penned a book on the subject the title of which speaks volumes: "The Capital Levy Disaster" (*Varlık Vergisi Faciası*).

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<sup>1227</sup> Ökte, 1951, p. 38.

<sup>1228</sup> Aktar, 2000, pp. 155-61, 170-2.

<sup>1229</sup> Aktar, 2000, pp. 158-60, 172.

<sup>1230</sup> Kayra, 2012, pp. 116-7.

For him, Capital Levy was an “illegitimate” act<sup>1231</sup> and “disgraceful page in the history of Republican finances.”<sup>1232</sup> Ökte’s book is full of numbers, tables and calculations, which constitute an invaluable starting point for analysis. Aktar has made some calculations on the basis of data provided by Ökte. According to this, Capital Levy accrued to 62,575 people in İstanbul. Among them were 222 large farmers, all of whom were Muslim. Large farmers were charged with paying slightly above one million Turkish liras, which was less than %1 of total expected revenue from Capital Levy in İstanbul. According to the same table, “extraordinary liables” (*fevkalade mükellefler*) of non-Muslim origin in İstanbul totaled 2,563. Though they comprised only 4% of Capital Levy liables, they were supposed to pay 190 million liras, which added up to 54% of tax assessed in İstanbul.<sup>1233</sup> One can argue that İstanbul does not serve as a good example from which to make remarks about the taxation of landowners. After all, İstanbul was the most populous urban area with limited large-scale agricultural production. On the other hand, not only did 54% of all liables reside in İstanbul, they also were supposed to pay 68% of the total levy.<sup>1234</sup> In Ökte’s words, İstanbul was the “real center of gravity for the [new] tax.”<sup>1235</sup> This makes the figures from İstanbul quite significant. In any case, Boratav writes that taxes levied on farmers were much lower than those levied on merchants.<sup>1236</sup> Furthermore, it has been argued that the process of tax assessment and collection in Anatolian provinces was altogether different matter. There, governors and bureaucrats were manipulated by MPs who wanted to protect their (Muslim) constituencies. As a result, (Muslim) traders and large farmers of Anatolian towns could escape taxation.<sup>1237</sup> Hence it is tenable to say that

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<sup>1231</sup> Ökte, 1951, p. 39.

<sup>1232</sup> Ökte, 1951, p. 13.

<sup>1233</sup> Aktar, 2000, p. 154. For original numbers see Ökte, 1951, pp. 102-3.

<sup>1234</sup> Aktar, 2000, p. 140.

<sup>1235</sup> Ökte, 1951, p. 14.

<sup>1236</sup> Boratav, 1974, p. 347.

<sup>1237</sup> Boratav, 1974, pp. 342, 350-1.

landowners, who unambiguously profited from wartime scarcity, remained undertaxed even after the Capital Levy.

### 6.5.5. Soil Products Tax

In May 1943, Turkish Grand National Assembly convened to discuss the draft law on Soil Products Tax (*Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi*). Government's preamble was a terse two-page document on the need for the taxation of the agricultural sector. The preamble started out by giving an account of the wheat procurement program. It was noted that the program had been devised in early 1930s to help Turkish peasants. The costs of the program had so far been projected to government budget on the one hand, and urban consumers on the other. Though the government was pleased with the way peasants had thrived thanks to government's purchase, it was impossible to gainsay that agricultural products were now overpriced. In fact, agricultural prices exceeded costs by a few folds. Government was convinced that high prices were no longer tolerable from the point of view of peasant welfare. It was now necessary to tax agricultural producers.<sup>1238</sup> All this was to say that government wished to levy a charge on excessive agricultural profits. This is the sense in which Soil Products Tax (SPT) was "Capital Levy's counterpart in the agricultural sector."<sup>1239</sup>

But why did the government desire a tax predominantly *in kind*? The first reason has just been mentioned: Government grew dissatisfied with wheat purchase, which was believed to put an upward pressure on market prices. Secondly, as it was admitted in the same preamble, NPL requisitioning had not proved very successful. Now the government wanted to get its hands on grains through in-kind taxation instead of purchase or requisitioning.<sup>1240</sup>

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<sup>1238</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1943a, p. 1.

<sup>1239</sup> Boratav, 1974, p. 301.

<sup>1240</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1943a, p. 1.

Soil Products Tax Law discriminated between agricultural products. According to the law, SPT would be levied as an 8% in-kind tax for grains and pulses on the one hand, and a 12% in-cash tax for other soil products on the other.<sup>1241</sup> Agricultural products collected in-kind would first be allocated for the use of the army and other government institutions. Then, if need arose, the rest would be sold at urban markets to meet civilian demand. Needless to say, government hoped that sale of SPT grains would prevent price increases in cities.<sup>1242</sup>

Though details of the law need not concern us here, there is one provision which is quite important for the topic at hand. This is Article 8 on the method of tax assessment. The article stipulated not one, but two methods for determining how much a farmer would pay as tax. On all grains except for corn and rice, SPT would be levied through measurement of harvest yields. The Minister of Finance was authorized by the same article to generalize this method to include corn and rice as well. For all other produce, the new tax relied on self-declaration, i.e. declaration by producers. This meant that farmers would make estimations as to their harvests, which in due course would be reviewed by government officials.<sup>1243</sup> The crucial difference between measurement and estimation concerned the timing of assessment. In the former method, farmers' yields were measured after the harvest. Whereas in estimation, assessment was done before the harvest. Given that grains were most the vital crops, it is tenable to say that the preferred method of tax accrument was the former, that is, measurement.

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<sup>1241</sup> Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi Kanunu, 1943, On Yedinci Madde (Article 17), p. 523. Also see T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1943a, p. 2.

<sup>1242</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1943a, p. 2.

<sup>1243</sup> Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi Kanunu, 1943, Sekizinci Madde (Article 8), p. 522.

After just one year, a new SPT was legislated in April 1944 with Law No. 4553. The new law brought a flat-rate tax of 10% for all kinds of agricultural products.<sup>1244</sup> As an MP pointed out during parliamentary debates, this was nothing but a veiled rise in tax rate.<sup>1245</sup> On the other hand, the new law sustained the duality of in-kind and in-cash payments.<sup>1246</sup> Finally, with this new SPT law, the government abandoned the method of measurement of yields in tax assessment. Two reasons were given for this decision. The first was that the method of measurement required a large cadre of competent officials to be just and effective. Secondly, farmers filed too many complaints about harvest measurements, and there were rumors of all sorts of corruption.<sup>1247</sup> Consequently, the government opted to universalize the method of estimation (i.e. declaration-and-review) before harvest. Only this time the duty was turned over to local “estimation commissions.”<sup>1248</sup>

According to Boratav, it was this procedure of ex ante assessment by officials that gave an arbitrary character to SPT, which strengthens latter’s resemblance to the Capital Levy.<sup>1249</sup> To wrap up, for the bulk of the peasantry, the amount of produce that should be paid as tax would be determined by government appointed officials on the basis of declarations. As it has already been argued in the third chapter, this issued in some tragic consequences for poor and small peasants.

The introduction of SPT has been described by many scholars as the return of *aşar* – the tithe. It is interesting to note that two prominent MPs, E. Sazak and R. Koraltan<sup>1250</sup>, made

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<sup>1244</sup> Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi Kanunu, 1944, Yirmi Yedinci Madde (Article 27), p. 140.

<sup>1245</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1944b, p. 65 Oral.

<sup>1246</sup> Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi Kanunu, 1944, Yirmi Sekizinci Madde (Article 28), p. 140.

<sup>1247</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1944a, pp. 1-7; T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1944b, pp. 63-80.

<sup>1248</sup> Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi Kanunu, 1944, On İkinci - On Üçüncü Madde (Article 12-13), p. 138.

<sup>1249</sup> Boratav, 1974, pp. 351, 352.

<sup>1250</sup> Sazak and Koraltan would soon challenge the government on occasion of LPLF deliberations in 1945.

similar comments during parliamentary deliberations on draft SPT law of 1943. The interesting point is that their comments on SPT were not intended as a criticism; they totally lent support to the government in its quest for new taxes to relieve the treasury.<sup>1251</sup> What is more, Premier Saraçoğlu had to concede the resemblance between SPT and *aşar* – a resemblance which, he said, drafters of the law tried to minimize. According to the Turkish premier, there was no reason to be alarmed because SPT would only be a “temporary burden” on the Turkish peasantry.<sup>1252</sup> Yet, parliamentary minutes of 1944 deliberations clearly show that the tax was already normalized after just one year of collection. Almost all MPs spoke of SPT as the new *aşar*. One of them suggested that the return of *aşar* required the re-adoption of tax farming.<sup>1253</sup> Almost all MPs protested this suggestion. A little later, however, the rapporteur took the stand on behalf of the provisional committee and informed parliamentarians about their work. What becomes clear from his testament is that the committee did consider tax-farming among alternatives but ruled it out on account of its “drawbacks.”<sup>1254</sup> This shows how determined government was to collect taxes due from peasants.

#### **6.5.6. Peasants’ Predicament**

War conditions were opportune for making money out of agricultural commodities. But it would be inaccurate to assume that all peasants uniformly benefited from wartime conditions. It is of utmost importance to differentiate between peasant strata so as to avoid misleading conclusions here. Consider a modest peasant with a meagre surplus to sell on the one hand, and a large farmer who produced for urban markets on the other. It is untenable to say that high prices were as advantageous to the former as they were to the

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<sup>1251</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1943b, p. 15 Sazak; T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1943b, pp. 17-8 Koraltan.

<sup>1252</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1943b, p. 16.

<sup>1253</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1944b, pp. 68-9.

<sup>1254</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1944b, p 78.

latter. Small peasants were in no a position to reap the benefits of war as much as large peasants did.

After this cautionary note, let us now go back to 1942. One of the first actions of Saraçoğlu's government was to raise official purchasing prices by 50 percent.<sup>1255</sup> Shortly after came the 25 percent decision, which increased prospects for agricultural producers to gain from trade. However, as scholars have convincingly argued, it was large farmers who scored high profits. This was not only because they had more surplus to sell; it was also the case that, unlike small and middle farmers, they had the means to transport their surplus to markets.<sup>1256</sup> Last but not the least, large farmers wielded much more power and, thus, had better chance to evade government sanctions and withhold their produce.

Even though the Turkish government was determined to tax farmers, both large and small, Soil Products Tax brought the heaviest burden to smaller peasants, who had none or very little surplus.<sup>1257</sup> I have already mentioned how requisitioning of draft animals and 25% decision affected small peasants. Then, the picture we get is like this: In the early 1940s, NPL requisitioning, forced purchase and taxation combined to undermine small peasantry economy.

Two sources, one primary and one secondary, shed valuable light on the wartime plight of peasantry. Cahit Kayra's memoirs are a rare first-hand source on rural Anatolia during Second World War. In the early 1940s, Kayra was a fresh finance inspector and he was sent to inner Anatolia (Eskişehir-Bilecik region) by the Ministry of Finance to review the work of tax assessment officials. His memoirs depict Turkish countryside in shambles. He narrates how villages had all lost their adult male population. Kayra recollects a

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<sup>1255</sup> Koçak, 2003b, p. 412.

<sup>1256</sup> Metinsoy, 2007, pp. 61, 136; Pamuk, 1991, pp. 131, 135-6.

<sup>1257</sup> Boratav, 1974, p. 352; Boratav, 1988, p. 67; Metinsoy, 2007, p. 132.

photograph he saw in the press. This was a photograph of an old farmer and her daughter-in-law. Old farmer's son was in the army, and the family lost their draft animals, probably due to requisitioning. But the family had to keep cultivating their land. In the picture, daughter-in-law was harnessed to a wooden plough side-by-side a burro. This is a very powerful image; yet, as Kayra's memoirs prove, this was just the beginning of peasants' troubles, however. The few commodities that peasants bought from the market, like salt and paraffin, were in short supply. More importantly, peasants had to surrender a significant portion of their produce as tax. Because storage facilities were very poor, grains that peasants brought to tax collectors were either stored in mosques or piled in open air near train stations. Because of improper storage, grains usually rotted. In one of the train stations he inspected, Kayra came across a man shouting at government officials with fury. This man most probably was a farmer who witnessed his grains rot at the hand of the government. The man said: "Go ahead! Spill the grains! [Sow the seeds!] You will harvest one hundredfold next year!" Following many such anecdotes, Kayra notes that war years diminished RPP's prestige in the eyes of the rural population.<sup>1258</sup>

The second source is Metinsoy's study on the effects of government policies on everyday life in war-torn Turkey. Part of Metinsoy's book deals with rural areas, which demonstrates peasant misery loud and clear. Metinsoy firstly touches upon taxes and forced purchases and how they affected peasants. What was left to peasants after government's share was paid very often did not cover family subsistence. Peasants had no choice but borrow money, which, in many cases, eventually made them go bankrupt. In such cases, peasants sold their belongings to clear bad debts. Unable to do independent cultivation, they started working on other people's farms.<sup>1259</sup> It is also quite significant

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<sup>1258</sup> Kayra, 2012, pp. 118-23.

<sup>1259</sup> Metinsoy, 2007, p. 152.

that many peasants could not clear their SPT debt to the government even after the war had ended.<sup>1260</sup>

High government shares were only a part of the problem. The whole system worked to the disadvantage of peasants. For one thing, it was peasants' obligation to deliver government's shares/taxes in person.<sup>1261</sup> As Metinsoy writes, this meant that peasants had to travel long distances in the middle of the harvest season, and sometimes when there was not enough storage space, government officials refused to accept the delivery. When that happened, peasants were officially regarded as indebted to the government, and therefore, they were disallowed from selling even a few kilos of wheat on the market to obtain some much-needed cash.<sup>1262</sup>

Finally, Metinsoy examines how peasants tried to cope with war conditions. His account shows that peasants did their best to make their voices heard. They constantly petitioned the government to let them know that they could not afford taxes, that epidemic diseases were wreaking havoc in villages, and that they needed the same benefits as those provided to urban dwellers by the government. As it turned out, all efforts were in vain, which ignited a very strong feeling of injustice on the part of the peasants.<sup>1263</sup>

To say that Turkey's peasants suffered would be an understatement. They suffered at the hands of the government, which raises a series of important questions. For instance, the government was surely aware of the possible consequences of Article 41 of NPL. How, then, could they go ahead with it? According to Avcıoğlu, government took this path because the problem of procurement overran the concern with the wellbeing of the

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<sup>1260</sup> Metinsoy, 2007, p. 193.

<sup>1261</sup> Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi Kanunu, 1943, Ondokuzuncu Madde (Article 19), p. 524.

<sup>1262</sup> Metinsoy, 2007, pp. 161, 164.

<sup>1263</sup> Metinsoy, 2007, pp. 139-55.

peasantry.<sup>1264</sup> Pamuk makes a similar comment in relation to the 25 percent decision. He writes that the government turned a blind eye to the “distributional consequences” of wartime policies. Feeding the cities as well as the army was the utmost concern.<sup>1265</sup>

Conversely, large landowners survived the war without much damage. To repeat, production on estates was not interrupted as large owners benefited from NPL exemptions; as a result, and under conditions of shortage and high prices, they reaped exorbitant profits. Yet, Capital Levy did not touch them. As for SPT, I have noted that this new tax burdened small peasants the most. This is not to say that large farmers evaded tax *in toto*. They did pay taxes due; yet what they paid was not proportional to their actual income.<sup>1266</sup> Nonetheless, Boratav writes that large farmers felt bitter about SPT as they had over the years gotten used to not paying any tax at all.<sup>1267</sup> But what I would like to underscore is how things looked from the other side – that is, how consumers/urbanites viewed farmers’ profits. One can safely say that there was widespread public resentment against landowners/large farmers. There is no better evidence for this than the popularity of the so-called “*Hacıağa*” type, which was so widely criticized and ridiculed in 1940s’ press. *Hacıağa* (Hadji-agma) represented Anatolian landowners and traders of foodstuffs who had flourished during the war and moved to İstanbul to enjoy modern life. The selection of cartoons in Appendix A demonstrate why large landowners were frowned on: During the war, they had traded their produce through black markets in total disregard for fellow citizens, and having thus gotten rich, they were now spending lavishly in the cities. The fact that they managed to circumvent government’s efforts at regulation was especially resented. Writers, journalists and columnists were equally zealous in their critique of profit-seeking large landowners. This may be best exemplified by Ş.S. Aydemir’s account.

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<sup>1264</sup> Avcioğlu, 2001, pp. 488-9.

<sup>1265</sup> Pamuk, 1991, pp. 138-9.

<sup>1266</sup> Boratav, 1974, p. 352. According to Pamuk, large landowners paid more of the tax after May 1943 when shares were updated.

<sup>1267</sup> Boratav, 1974, pp. 352-3.

Commenting on Saraçoğlu's failure to reverse prices, he writes: "*Hacıağas* were now more powerful than the state and they were extorting the people."<sup>1268</sup> To cut the matter short, *Hacıağa* was the "fraudulent landlord" that İnönü chastised in his 1942 speech.<sup>1269</sup>

It is my contention that LPLF should also be read against this background. In 1945, statesmen not only realized the devastation their policies generated in the countryside, they also had grown dissatisfied with large farmers/large ownership. The desire to win the peasants, coupled with disenchantment with large ownership, gave a strong impetus to attempts at land reform.

I have earlier stated how commonplace it is to associate LPLF with the-soon-to-come transition to competitive politics. It should be clear from what I have just argued that I do not mean to negate this association. Single-party politicians did want to win small peasants after the war. A regime change was appearing faintly on the horizon, and it was no longer possible to ignore the grievances of poor and small peasants. On the other hand, Kemalists also wanted to get back at large owners. I believe it is the second dimension which needs more emphasizing. In making my case, I will build on Keyder and Pamuk's analysis of the 1945 law.<sup>1270</sup>

### **6.5.7. A Changing Perspective on Large Ownership?**

Unlike many others, Ç. Keyder and Ş. Pamuk do not confine themselves to the question of why Kemalists grew an interest in land reform. They rightly point out that this interest

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<sup>1268</sup> Aydemir, 1966b, pp. 344-5 my translation.

<sup>1269</sup> Aktar, 2000, p. 210 n. 80; Avcıoğlu, 2001, p. 488; Boratav, 1974, pp. 305-6; Boratav, 1988, p. 70; Kafaoğlu, 2002, p. 67; Metinsoy, 2007, pp. 61-2.

<sup>1270</sup> Keyder and Pamuk, 1984.

was heightened or attenuated at different times<sup>1271</sup>. As discussed in much detail in the previous two chapters, although land reform was a hot topic circa 1935, it dropped off the political agenda after 1937. Then, however, government's concern with reform rekindled around 1945, but only to die down after 1947. Hence the question Keyder and Pamuk investigate is: For what reasons did land reform rise on the agenda and for what reasons did it fade?

Their analysis starts from fluctuations in Turkey's grain market in the period 1935-1945. According to them, periods of heightened interest in land reform coincided with major declines in the volume of marketed grain. In other words, land tenure became a salient problem for the government whenever the amount of grain that reached urban markets dropped significantly. Notice that what Keyder and Pamuk examine is not the changes in the grain output. Instead, they are interested in the volume of *marketed* product. Why, then, was the government so sensitive to fluctuations in the market for grain? It was because whenever there was a decline in the availability of grains, provisioning of cities became a problem. Keyder and Pamuk assert that production for the market plummeted twice in Turkey – first between 1929 and 1936, and then during World War II. As they argue, in both instances Kemalists turned their gaze to the countryside and saw landless peasants on the one hand and large properties lying idle on the other. Land reform advocacy ensued from precisely this state of affairs. To put it more clearly, Kemalists considered redistribution of landed properties as a means through which to increase grain production, and thereby marketed output.<sup>1272</sup>

So, to put it simple, Keyder and Pamuk attribute a casual significance to availability of grains in explaining land reform advocacy. To this I would like to add a political dimension, that is, resistance to government policies. Now, I believe that Keyder and

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<sup>1271</sup> Keyder and Pamuk, 1984, pp. 53-4.

<sup>1272</sup> Keyder and Pamuk, 1984, pp. 56-8.

Pamuk's argument is at its strongest when it comes to the period circa 1945. Keyder and Pamuk mention several factors that accounted for the contraction in the volume of marketed grain during the war. These include scarcity of labor and draft animals, which, as noted before, was caused by conscription and military mobilization. Yet, as my account above should make clear, grains were in short supply during the war *also* because producers resisted government regulations, withheld their harvests and provided their produce to black markets. Hence my argument is that resistance to government's procurement policies created a resentment against large owners. Add to this the fact that large owners remained undertaxed even after SPT, and we will get the whole picture.

I should note in passing that 1930s' depression could have sparked similar grievances, albeit in a lesser scale. For instance, Kuruç writes that Kemalist must have deeply offended when large farmers withheld both "empathy and support" from the government at a time when the latter tried hard to stabilize prices in the agricultural sector.<sup>1273</sup> Another instance is a speech Parla cites. The speech was given by Mustafa Kemal in 1931. Here Mustafa Kemal stated that Turkish farmers suffered not from economic depression but from unfair trade practices. Those who engaged in the trade of foodstuff went off the rails; rather than "making honest money", they sought extreme profits. To him, this was almost Great War all over again.<sup>1274</sup> Of course, these two examples are not enough to make a definitive statement on the 1930s. There is therefore not enough ground to say that the Land and Settlement Bill of 1935 was an offensive against large owners. On the other hand, there is enough evidence to suggest that the government's LPLF bill was guided by such a motivation.

To repeat my argument, the reform initiative of 1945 can also be regarded as a political assault on large owners who had undercut government policies during the war. This

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<sup>1273</sup> Kuruç, 1987, p. 167.

<sup>1274</sup> Parla, 1992, p. 224.

dimension was touched upon T. Timur who cites resistance to government's "national defense policies" as the primary motivation behind Kemalists' determination to reform land tenure in 1945.<sup>1275</sup> According to Timur, Capital Levy and Soil Products Tax engendered a rift between the state and large landowners<sup>1276</sup> at the same time as "bureaucratic cadre grew independent of [all] dominant classes."<sup>1277</sup> So the state became free of all previous encumbrances and embarked on novel, radical policies. Timur attaches a great deal of importance to the founding of Village Institutes in this respect, as so many others. In Timur's account, Institutes were not simply schools of practical education for village youth; they were part of a much broader scheme to transform the Turkish countryside. According to this, the long-term purpose of Village Institutes was to put an end to the exploitation of peasants at the hands of landlords.<sup>1278</sup> For Timur, LPLF was very much akin to the project of Village Institutes in this respect. Those provisions which "ran counter to the class interests of semi-feudal landlords" were the true essence of the law.<sup>1279</sup> The formulation of Article 17 was, therefore, no accident; it was essential to LPLF. Article 17 was *the* provision which would revolutionize the countryside.<sup>1280</sup> The law aimed to "curb the political power of large landowners", and the greatest weapon in its arsenal was Article 17.

I agree with Timur that LPLF was, in part, a political showdown – a settling of accounts with large owners. Yet, unlike Timur, I believe it is futile to search for a single motivation behind the drafting of LPLF. A variety of intellectual influences, concerns and issues had been effective in finally bringing about the 1945 law. Not recognizing this makes Timur's

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<sup>1275</sup> Timur, 1997, pp. 208, 214.

<sup>1276</sup> Timur, 1997, p. 207.

<sup>1277</sup> Timur, 1997, p. 200.

<sup>1278</sup> Timur, 1997, pp. 209-13.

<sup>1279</sup> Timur, 1997, pp. 224.

<sup>1280</sup> Timur, 1997, pp. 218-9.

analysis less useful. His treatment of farmers' homesteads is a good example. It appears that Timur finds it hard to make sense of the provisions on homesteads. In his view, the project of farmers' homesteads was "reactionary" and was inconsistent with the otherwise "revolutionary" land reform scheme of the government. Timur attempts to resolve this conflict by arguing that "*subjective* purposes of high-level bureaucrats who prepared the bill" were at odds with "the *objective* meaning of the law."<sup>1281</sup> It should be clear that the distinction between objective and subjective purposes here is meant to convey a notion of essential/necessary versus trivial/accidental. Consequently, what Timur conceives as the revolutionary core of LPLP – its alleged preference in favor of peasant property over large ownership – is the essential and necessary component. The rest, however, is explained away by Timur. As I have previously argued, an idea of inalienable family farms was deep-rooted in republican thinking. The obvious fact that farmers' homesteads were successfully opposed and discarded does in no sense diminish the importance of the idea itself. After all, Article 17 did survive opposition, but was never enforced. As a matter of fact, in over twenty years of implementation, very few private farms were actually confiscated. According to Taraklı's calculations, confiscated properties comprised only 0.62% of total land distributed.<sup>1282</sup> None of this makes confiscatory provisions of LPLF less important.

A similar problem surfaces in Timur's account of Article 17. As I have tried to show above, Article 17 was a retaliation on government's part. This provision was an impromptu response to provisional committee's revisions of LPLF bill. But Timur elevates this unpremeditated provision to the status of the essence of LPLF. In fact, he is compelled to do so because the rest of the 1945 law can hardly qualify as radical, i.e. anti-property.

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<sup>1281</sup> Timur, 1997, p. 223, emphases added.

<sup>1282</sup> Taraklı, 1976, pp. 106-8.

I would like to make one last comment on Timur's analysis. Although he sees LPLF primarily as a political attempt to curtail the power of large landowners, Timur also maintains that giving a boost to agricultural production was the second goal of the law.<sup>1283</sup> The problem is that he considers these two as separate goals. It is as if government's aversion to large ownership had nothing to do with its interest in increasing production. The examination of parliamentary deliberations on draft LPLF would show that this was not the case. As I will try to show shortly, following the war, Kemalists came to believe that the *economic* performance of large owners was disappointing, which strengthened their misgivings about large ownership.

Catastrophic experiences of war echoed all through parliamentary deliberations on LPLF. Many speakers emphasized that middle and large owners performed poorly during the war. Their argument was that large owners did not significantly contribute to government's efforts to secure grain supplies. Their position was not just that landowners resisted government procurement – what they said was much more than that. According to them, volume of production on large farms threw doubt on the notion that large-scale farming had unassailable advantages. It was none other than Minister of Agriculture Hatipoğlu who declared with certainty that the contribution of middle and large owners to total agricultural output was unsubstantial. This was once again proved tragically during the war. According to the minister, Turkish people could not have survived the war if it had not been for small peasants who kept on feeding the urban population. He reminded his peers how government “went from one village to another” to obtain grains.<sup>1284</sup> This was no less than a widespread disenchantment with middle and large ownership.

Two pro-reform deputies, Düzgören and Uslu, argued that wartime shortages proved there was something wrong with Turkey's property structure. Düzgören called for regulation of

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<sup>1283</sup> Timur, 1997, p. 214.

<sup>1284</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, p. 100.

property relations on land. If property relations were left unregulated, Turkey would risk reliving “wartime shortages of soil products.” On land, he concluded, there can be no room for disorder.<sup>1285</sup> Likewise, Uslu said: “It was just yesterday . . . that we were on the verge of starvation.”<sup>1286</sup> He stressed that shortages happened for a reason. In his view, the problem was structural; it had to do with how landed properties were distributed among rural populace. Uslu stated that this was why LPLF draft predicated Turkey’s new property structure on small ownership.<sup>1287</sup>

It is time to recall the distinction laid out in the preamble of government’s draft – the one between property regime and property structure. I believe that this distinction would now make more sense when read against this historical background. The preamble insisted that government had no mind to temper with the regime of private property on land. It would be gravely mistaken to consider this mere rhetoric. Government’s intention was indeed to improve patterns of land use so as to increase production. This was a lesson well-learned from the experiences of Second World War. Experiences of war ultimately had the effect of strengthening reformists’ preference in favor of small-scale, owner-operated farms.

Finally, one could say that there was yet another bequest of war years. This much more positive legacy derived from economic success associated with state farms. Beginning from 1943, thirteen state farms were established on what were formerly vacant lands. As Avcıoğlu and Tekeli and İlkin argue, Administration of Agricultural Complexes (*Ziraî Kombinalar İdaresi*) was crucial to this experience. Administration of Agricultural Complexes (AAC) was formed in 1937 with the task of introducing agricultural machines and modern implements to small cultivators. The idea behind this institutional innovation was simple: AAC would have a large pool of machines, implements and production

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<sup>1285</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 155.

<sup>1286</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 98.

<sup>1287</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, p. 99.

inputs, which would be accessible for the use of farmers. It was believed that farmers would switch to modern techniques once they got acquainted with them through AAC. This is to say, AAC was expected in the longer run to encourage the use of agricultural machines and modern implements. Due the turn of events, however, this institution took on a new function and carried out production on newly established state farms during the war.<sup>1288</sup> Tekeli and İlkin contend that state enterprises were indeed a great success. It is their conclusion that this wartime experience added to the prestige of modern, large scale farming enterprises.<sup>1289</sup>

During parliamentary deliberations on draft LPLF, a number of deputies praised state farms on their wartime performance. According to their view, state farms situated in semi-arid inner Anatolia not only ran efficiently; they reaped high yields on soils which had long been considered unproductive. They thus helped Turkish people immensely.<sup>1290</sup>

That state entrepreneurialism was held in relatively high esteem was nowhere more obvious than in government's original draft. Recall that the first draft of LPLF banned private persons from owning more than 5000 *dönüms*. Large ownership (i.e. ownership of over-5000 *dönüms*) was a prerogative held only by the state. It is my conclusion that wartime experience of state-ran farms could be one of the factors accounting for this preference.

Let us go back to parliamentary deliberations to conclude this lengthy discussion. One of the leading opponents of government's reform scheme, Emin Sazak, declared LPLF to be a punitive measure. He was certainly right. Landowners were being punished – but not without a reason. The “excesses” that Sazak and like-minded MPs identified in the first

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<sup>1288</sup> Avcioğlu, 2001, pp. 487-8; Tekeli and İlkin, 1988, pp. 49, 87.

<sup>1289</sup> Tekeli and İlkin, 1988, pp. 49, 87.

<sup>1290</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, pp. 121-2; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, p. 128.

LPLF draft were actually manifestations of a change in attitude towards large ownership. It is my argument that this change in attitude is explicable, in part, on the basis of war experiences. As I have tried to delineate in previous chapters, misgivings about large ownership were not entirely new. Nevertheless, resistance to government's wartime procurement policies created such a resentment that large property came to be viewed less indispensable.

None of this is to deny that LPLF was moderate in the extent to which it sanctioned intervention into property relations on land, save for Article 17. Turkish government did aspire to distribute land to peasants with none or insufficient land. However, the purpose of redistribution was to increase agricultural production. The aversion against sharecropping derived primarily from the concern with increasing agricultural production. Reform proponents within the government simply recognized that there would be occasions where elimination of sharecropping would require expropriation of large owners. That was exactly how far the law allowed.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

With the exception of the abolition of the Ottoman tithe (*aşar*) in 1925, rural policies adopted by Turkey's young republic did nothing but reinforce the status quo in the countryside. This is the major reason why Kemalist interest in land reform makes a fascinating subject: A regime that was respectful of property rights on land came to embrace intervention into property relations. Add to this the fact that there was no pressure from below, and we have something akin to a paradox. Although the countryside was almost completely docile during early republic, reform of land tenure was among the major concerns of the political elite. My major concern in this dissertation has been to explain why this was the case. As any scheme of land reform entails intervention into social relations of ownership, my analysis has started with a lengthy background discussion of land tenure in the late Ottoman and early republican Turkey.

19<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman Anatolia provides a striking contrast to many well-known cases of capitalist penetration and commercialization around the globe. As opposed to, say, China or India, development of export orientation and commercialization of agricultural production did not bring about thoroughgoing changes in land tenure in Ottoman Turkey. In other words, commercialization of agriculture (i.e. production for the global market) resulted in neither concentration of landholdings nor widespread dispossession, which is to say that peasant smallholdings did survive.

I have built on secondary literature to suggest that three variables accounted for this particular pattern of integration to world economy: demography, ecology and state policies. The first two refer to the relative availability of production factors. Ottoman

Anatolia had historically been a place where land was abundant relative to the size of the population. Hence a typical Anatolian village was surrounded by open fields. Thus labor – not land – was the scarce factor of production in Anatolian agriculture. Absence of population pressure on land turned out to be crucial once agriculture became a profitable business in 19<sup>th</sup> century. As agricultural land was abundant and peasants had secure access, it proved rather difficult for landlords to subordinate peasants and reduce them to a sharecropping status. By the same token, nascent large owners who ventured into commercial farming had difficulty finding wage laborers. Finally, state policies too contributed to the emergence of such a pattern as the Porte was committed to the preservation of small peasant production. Put otherwise, Ottoman state was generally not supportive of estate formation.

As a result, commercialization of agriculture was realized without major changes in land tenure. Ottoman exports were produced by small peasants who relied on commercial intermediaries to convey their produce to markets. Anatolian peasants moved from subsistence farming to production for the market without major changes in land tenure. They still had secure access to land and carried out independent production. Large commercial estates cultivated by expropriated peasants (sharecroppers and laborers) were a rarity in Anatolia.

I have employed the example of Egypt to illustrate how commercialization of agriculture unfolded in a diametrically opposed situation. In 19<sup>th</sup>-century Egypt, scarcity of cultivable land and an upward demographic trend came together to create a population pressure on land. Furthermore, Egyptian state did not pose any impediments to estate formation. With rising rents and fragmentation of family holdings, Egyptian peasants were gradually driven off the land to be employed as sharecroppers and wage-laborers on large commercial estates. Hence, in Egypt, commercialization of agriculture resulted in a transfer of ownership from small holders to large owners.

Chapter 2 has sought to make a general statement on 19<sup>th</sup>-century Anatolian countryside. Therefore, my account has been somewhat dismissive of variations and differences. However, I regard this as a necessary evil to extract a general pattern. Some divergent cases are extremely important, though. Most notably, the case of Çukurova plain reversely proves the argument that state policy was one of the factors which determined the fate of peasant producers in Anatolia. Ottoman state adopted a much more permissive policy when it came to estate formation in Çukurova, which contributed a great deal to region's divergent development. This deviation from the general line of state policy had a lot to do with the fact that there was no settlement and therefore no peasant production on the Adana plain prior to the advent of commercialization of agriculture. The lands on the Adana plain belonged to the legal category of *mevat* land; that is, they were uncultivable wastelands. This is to say that estate formation would not threaten peasant production as the latter was non-existent on the plain, which explains why Ottoman state had no reasons to halt the process. Lands of the Çukurova plain were eventually granted as private property to high-ranking government officials, local notables and merchant-moneylenders. Once they were drained, they turned out to be the most fertile lands in whole Anatolia. Herein lie the origins of the commercial estates of Çukurova, which were tilled by sharecroppers, tenants and agricultural laborers who most probably had no land of their own.

I have also briefly touched upon a second divergent case, namely Kurdish provinces, where a similar permissive policy brought about a polarized landholding structure. Yet Kurdish provinces were quite unlike Adana. Firstly, in Kurdistan, state had strategic reasons to overlook land polarization. Secondly, Kurdish lands were not fertile and commercial push was much feebler, which accounts for the non-emergence of commercial estates until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Another major topic of Chapter 2 has been the Land Code of 1858. The code is important not only as a historical incident. It is also important because it occupies considerable space

in pro-reform narratives. Generally speaking, land reform advocates have the tendency to treat the land code as a milestone in terms of the polarization of landownership in Ottoman Anatolia. The accounts of D. Avcıoğlu and Ş.S. Aydemir illustrate this really well. For Avcıoğlu, codification of a land law was a decision taken under imperialist pressure. Hence the 1858 code was a concession to Western powers which pushed for a private property regime on land. Avcıoğlu nevertheless asserts that Ottoman statesmen tried to carve a niche in the new code in order to uphold the status of the peasantry. In the long run, however, the anti-expropriation provisions they had inserted into the law failed, and natives and foreigners came to control large tracks of land within the empire.<sup>1291</sup> Aydemir has a similar outlook. In his view, an unintended consequence of the code was concentration of land at the hands of *ağas* and *beys*, who employed newly-dispossessed peasants as sharecroppers. This is how the land code paved the way for the proletarianization of Ottoman peasantry.<sup>1292</sup> As my account in Chapter 2 should attest, such an interpretation of the Ottoman code is highly contestable. I have discussed the code from two angles: the intentions of lawmakers and its actual consequences. While both are vital for a proper understanding of the 1858 code, the discussion over consequences has more relevance as far as the question of land reform goes. After all, historical narratives such as Aydemir's and Avcıoğlu's justify the call for redistribution of land on the basis of an alleged escalation of polarization and class conflict on land. In answer to such a reading of late Ottoman history, I have maintained that land code of 1858 had geographically specific consequences. I have built on recent literature to argue that differential consequences were a function of the interaction between new rules, antecedent social structures and prevailing balance of powers. Hence, in Anatolia, where relative scarcity of labor and state policy had traditionally favored peasant producers, the code did not issue in the emergence of a landlord class or expropriation of peasants. Its effect was exactly in the opposite direction: 1858 code ended up consolidating small peasant property.

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<sup>1291</sup> Avcıoğlu, 2001, pp. 168-74.

<sup>1292</sup> Aydemir, 1966b, pp. 307-8.

Nonetheless, peasant producers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century operated under new rules. Household economies were commercialized and monetized, and peasant producers became dependent on the market for their self-reproduction. Subjection to the rules of the market entailed insecurity because peasant producers were thereafter vulnerable to ups and down in commodity prices. Indebtedness became a structural problem for small producers at this very conjuncture. As a rule, debt default carried with it the risk of tenancy and dispossession.

The three variables I have mentioned above interacted with each other to produce the smallholding-dominated rural scenery of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Anatolia. Then came the Great War, however. When Turkey's National Struggle finally ended in 1922, Anatolia was in ruins in every possible sense of the term. War, military conscription and requisitioning of draft animals had the combined effect of shrinking the acreage under cultivation. Even after the restoration of peace, agricultural production was still at a low ebb due to shortage of manpower and draft animals.

I have relied a great deal on the literature on commercialization of Ottoman agriculture in my account of rural relations in Ottoman Anatolia. Unfortunately, tenurial change in the republican era is a much more elusive subject. On the one hand, scarcity of statistical data continues to be a problem, and on the other hand, a comparable literature on relations on land in modern Turkey does not exist. This state of affairs has led me to adopt a less conventional method. I have singled out probable factors which, theoretically speaking, could have altered property relations on land. I have highlighted three factors in particular: transfer of ownership from departing non-Muslims to the remaining Muslim population, taxation, and finally other, non-fiscal agricultural policies. I have tried to ascertain the extent to which said factors altered the smallholding-dominated structure of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Anatolia. Again, lack of data has proven to be a problem, which no doubt makes my findings less than conclusive. Nevertheless, I have come to the conclusion that none

of these factors could have fed into polarization of landholding in any significant way. It is therefore plausible to say that rural panorama changed very little from the early 1900s to mid-1940s. Turkish agriculture continued to be characterized by the predominance of smallholdings. This conclusion is confirmed by what little landlessness data there is. Most notably, it is in tune with the findings of the government-conducted survey of 1937, which found that only 5.5 percent of rural households were entirely landless. As I have previously noted, the size of the sub-landed population remains a more difficult problem, though. The least that could be said is that their number was growing as family plots kept fragmenting with each generation.

Turkey's peasants had property, but they barely made a living. Agricultural prices were low, which had the effect of suppressing peasant income. Technique of production remained almost intact from one generation to the other. Hence peasants had neither the motive nor the means to cultivate more. Although the abolition of tithe was a tremendous relief, remaining taxes bore considerably on peasants precisely because their income was meagre. All these problems were aggravated by the near absence of agricultural credits, which left peasants prey to local usurers.

Sharecropping has been a recurring theme in this dissertation. I have argued throughout that the association between sharecropping and landlessness can be misleading. It is indisputable that some peasants did sharecropping because they did not have otherwise access to land. It is also true that some peasants whose family plots did not suffice for subsistence became tenants to supplement their income. On the other hand, there were some others who had to sharecrop because their status as independent producers was compromised. Such peasants left their land idle and cultivated other people's plots as share tenants. For them, sharecropping was a better option than cultivating family property as they lost the capacity to cultivate the land autonomously. This happened when families ceased to possess production factors other than land, which could happen for a variety of reasons. Imagine a household which had to sell their oxen to clear a bad debt or a family

which previously had a bad harvest and could not apportion seeds for the new season. Imagine a widowed women with three young children or an elderly couple whose only sibling was conscripted. None of these households could cultivate the land they owned. As especially the first two of these examples indicate, a significant part of the problem stemmed from indebtedness, poverty and overall peasant vulnerability.

It is therefore incorrect to assume that when sharecropping is common, the bulk of the peasantry are landless. In early republican Turkey, some sharecropping households were indeed landless, others had tiny plots of their own, and yet others just could not cultivate the land they owned. And sometimes, comfortable peasants worked on shares too. This was how they extended their operations beyond their own plots. Another misleading assumption about sharecropping relations is that it was always large (absentee) owners who rented out land to poor peasants. In the actual fact, it was fairly common for small peasants to rent each other's land.

I would like to state as a conclusion that sharecropping was certainly common in Anatolia, but it was not common because of polarization of ownership. Economics of sharecropping was more complex than that. I contend that a proper understanding of the phenomenon of sharecropping is important, especially considering the fact that it was the major socioeconomic ill that Law for Providing Land to Farmers (LPLF) of 1945 addressed.

This completes my discussion of land tenure in Turkey before 1945. Hence my conclusions are as follows: Small-scale owner-cultivation was the dominant form of tenure in modern Turkey. Large ownership was rare outside of Kurdish provinces on the one hand and a very limited number of highly commercialized areas like Çukurova and Söke plain on the other. Given the relative availability of land and absence of population pressure, landlessness was not a widespread phenomenon. However, the number of sub-landed households must have been rather high as a result of fragmentation of family holdings through inheritance.

I would like to go back momentarily to the Egyptian case. It is self-evident why Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime prioritized the problem of extreme inequalities in ownership and enacted a thoroughgoing land reform in 1953 just a year after Free Officers came to power. Turkish case is much less straightforward. In a country where inequalities in ownership were relatively mild, single-party governments nevertheless desired to redistribute land. This is another reason why Kemalist interest in reform stands in need of explanation. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I have described the development of a reformist agenda over almost three decades and attempted to offer a dynamic explanation as to the reasons why Kemalists advocated reform.

This dissertation has covered land-related themes from the period between 1923 and 1945. I have taken 1945 as a watershed since Law for Providing Land to Farmers was the incident with the most far-reaching effects. Hence Chapters 4 and 5 have examined pre-1945 history of the development of land reform. The subsequent chapter has taken up from war years and then analyzed the making of LPLF in detail.

The history of land reform is scarcely studied in Turkey. This statement is especially true for the period before the enactment of Law for Providing Land to Farmers in 1945. In all three chapters, I have tried to keep a dialogue with the existing literature. I have done this more in the fourth and fifth chapters because scholarly accounts on pre-LPLF era display a surprising similarity. This is why it makes sense to speak of a conventional narrative on 1920s' and 1930s' developments. On the other hand, accounts on LPLF are more varied, most of which I have discussed on occasions when it seemed necessary.

As I have attempted to demonstrate in the fourth and fifth chapters, the conventional narrative fails to give an accurate picture of the evolution of a land reform scheme in early Republican period. The narrative is not only not verified by actual events, it also leaves out some crucial developments which do not fit into its assumptions. The first problem is

best illustrated by scholars' treatment of Kurdish uprisings. According to the conventional narrative, the initial spurt of interest in land reform came after the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925. Statesmen came to believe that there was a problem of landlordism in Eastern provinces. In their view, it was Kurdish landlords who incited revolt, and they were successful because the mass of Kurdish peasants were personally dependent on landlords on whose estates they were employed as sharecroppers. Then the argument goes that deportation law of 1927 and land distribution law of 1929 were meant to root out landlords and emancipate Kurdish commoners.

I think that there is some truth to what conventional narrative argues. In the second half of the 1920s, Turkish government did seem ready to confront landlords in Kurdish provinces whereas the presence of large owners elsewhere was still a non-issue. The problem with the narrative is that scholars have examined neither laws; it is simply taken for granted that Kemalists took legislative action to introduce social reform in Kurdish provinces. However, my analysis of the making of deportation and land distribution laws of late 1920s has proved that this was not the case. There are no grounds whatsoever to conclude that Law No. 1097 was intended as a means to eradicate landlordism or that Kemalists passed Law No. 1505 out of consideration of landless Kurdish commoner. I have come to the conclusion that both laws were guided by security concerns and that Kemalists showed little interest in relations on land. It is true that one can find a critique of medievalism in legislative documents and parliamentary minutes, but what statesmen perceived as medievalism related to the vestiges of Kurdish autonomy. Turkish statesmen were critical of the way their Ottoman predecessors administered Kurdish provinces. In their eyes, Ottomans had conceded political powers to Kurdish magnates, but the young republic was determined to spread its rule thoroughly over the country and wipe out antiquated privileges. This entailed a battle against Kurdish *müteğallibe* who held pertinaciously on to their dominions. As it goes without saying, landlordism alarmed Turkish statesmen not because Kurdish landlords had appropriated land at the expense of rank-and-file Kurds but because landlordism was commonly associated with local power.

Contrary to the assumptions of the conventional narrative, which would have us believe that Kemalists sought to end feudal relations on land, there is hardly any mention of landless Kurdish peasants or other landownership problems in either legislative documents or parliamentary minutes.

Given the fact that conventional narrative permeates almost all scholarly accounts, I believe it is vital to understand why it misses the mark significantly. One obvious reason is that explanations are not founded on historical records. Another point I have made is that the narrative builds heavily on what *Kadro* intellectuals wrote on Kurdish uprisings in the 1930s and later. I have examined writings of N.H. Uluğ, İ.H. Tökin and Ş.S. Aydemir to illustrate how intellectuals made sense of the developments in Kurdish provinces. In one of his earliest writings on the subject, Uluğ interpreted Kurdish insurgency as political (religious) reaction. But Uluğ's exegesis was also a social commentary; he wrote extensively on tribal structures and landlord-peasant relations. Nonetheless, this second (social) dimension was more accentuated in Tökin's and Aydemir's writings. For both *Kadro* intellectuals, landlordism was the key to the social structures of Kurdistan, and accounted for 1920s' and 1930s' insurgency. Tökin and Aydemir endorsed government's deportation decision; yet, in their view, deportation was a prelude to social reform in Kurdish provinces. That is, for Tökin and Aydemir, deportation had to be followed by abolishment of feudal relations on land. The similarity between *Kadro* intellectuals' treatment of Kurdish uprisings and what conventional narrative has to say on the birth of a Kemalist interest in land reform is hard to miss. This is a problem because 1927 and 1929 laws were made by statesmen, who had different reasons for deporting certain people and distributing their land.

There is a line of continuity that runs between Law Nos. 1097 and 1505 and Settlement Law of 1934. This is nowhere more clear than in Article 10, which outlawed *aşirets* and revoked all privileges that had been granted to them in the past. Article 10 occupies a prominent place in conventional narrative not the least because it stipulated confiscation

of *aşiret* lands, which were usually registered in the name of *ağas*, *beys* and sheikhs. There is a tendency here to view Article 10 as a missed opportunity to remove feudal relations on land. To clarify, it is commonly argued that the law empowered the government to eradicate feudal ownership and peasant servitude, but that Article 10 was never properly followed. I have asserted in reply to this position that drafters of the law avowedly target Ottoman practice of power-sharing in Kurdish provinces. Landownership was at best a minor concern.

Settlement Law of 1934 has hitherto been associated with policies of cultural assimilation of the Kurdish-speaking population. Cultural assimilation was certainly one of the pillars; but the law was tinged with other concerns as well. These were settlement of immigrants, sedentarization of nomads, reshuffling of regional population densities, and finally, provision of land farmers in need. I have contended that the last two, demographic reshuffling and provision of land, should be included in discussions over land reform. I argue this not in the belief that relocation of peoples or land distribution to farmers amounted to a proper reform scheme. They certainly did not. As a matter of fact, the reviewing committee officially declared that scarcity of labor was a greater problem than scarcity of land. I still argue that these provisions are extremely important because, in my view, they disclose why Kemalists advocated reform of sorts. In a country where land was professedly abundant, they wished to redistribute land to stimulate demographic growth on the one hand and increase in agricultural production on the other.

Settlement Law of 1934 provided the legal foundation for land grants in the remainder of the decade. Numbers cited by Parvin and Hic show that land distribution in the 1930s favored *muhacirs* rather than land-hungry peasants. According to this, from 1934 to 1938, a total of 29,585 landless households were given land as opposed to 59,110 immigrant families settled.<sup>1293</sup> Silier notes that, on average, *muhacir* and farmer families received 50

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<sup>1293</sup> Parvin and Hic, 1984, p. 222. Parvin and Hic rely on data compiled by State Institute of Statistics in 1951, 1964/65 and 1966.

*dönüms* and 30 *dönüms* respectively.<sup>1294</sup> It is also significant that both groups received state-owned pastureland<sup>1295</sup>, which is to say that the government did not proceed to expropriate landowners.

According to the conventional narrative, a second stimulus for the development of an idea of reform came when Great Depression of 1929 hit Turkish countryside. In order to test this assumption, I have examined A.H. Başar's account of Mustafa Kemal's national inspection tour on the one hand, and wheat protection law (Law No. 2056) of 1932 on the other. I have concluded that none of these sources substantiates the argument that effects of the global crisis made Kemalists sensitive to inequalities in ownership of land. In the first half of 1930s Kemalists were definitely more engaged with the problems of the peasantry than before. But what they did was to take action to offset peasants' financial vulnerability by means of a wheat purchase scheme. However, I would like to note once again that government's wheat purchase was at the same time a means to transfer surplus from agricultural sector to finance industrialization.

Finally, there is a quite popular assertion that Kemalists were intellectually influenced by the peasantist tradition, from which they have taken over the aspiration to reform land tenure. Peasantist discourse is one of the less studied subjects in Turkish politics, which makes this connection open to question. I have tried to provide an answer through a cursory discussion of the writings of Y. Akçura, Reşit Galip and N.K. Köymen. My inference has been that peasant dependence is a stronger tenet of peasantist discourse as compared to maldistribution of land. This is not to deny the presence in peasantist discourse of ownership-related problems. My point is that Köymen, Akçura and Reşit Galip all have a dynamic take on property relations on land. Their portrayal of the rural landscape provides more than a counterposition of landowners on the one hand and a

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<sup>1294</sup> Silier, 1981, p. 75. Silier does not mention why farmers received less on average as compared to immigrants. The reason could be that most farmers already had some land.

<sup>1295</sup> Aksoy, 1969, pp. 59-60.

peasant mass with little or no land on the other. In other words, ownership of land is one aspect of a social relationship where small peasants are structurally disadvantaged. According to this, Turkish peasants were commercially and financially dependent. They were as dependent on the impersonal order of the market as they were on landowners, traders and usurers. Turkish peasants were at the mercy of the weather conditions, market prices, commercial intermediaries and usurers. To cut the matter short, household economies were extremely vulnerable and peasants as a rule lived on the verge of indebtedness and bankruptcy. Moreover, fragmentation of family holdings progressed with each generation to the point where peasants could no longer subsist on their own land. This state of affairs condemned peasants to impoverishment and sharecropping.

I would like to point out in passing that such a manner of analysis is not exclusive to peasantists like Akçura, Köymen, or Reşit Galip. A similar emphasis on peasant poverty and debt bondage is also found in the writings of *Kadro* intellectuals, for instance. Tökin's and Aydemir's accounts of non-Kurdish Anatolia, too, highlight the ways in which small peasants were dependent on traders-usurers for the survival of family landholdings. The similarity is stronger still in the case of A.H. Başar, who, unlike Tökin and Aydemir, is a non-Marxist. For Başar, peasant misery was a function of heavy taxation and indebtedness.

It is no coincidence that Akçura, Reşit Galip, Köymen and Başar were all in agreement that only a change in the legal status of small property could relieve peasants of their plight. According to this, peasant property would always be insecure so long as land was inherited, mortgaged, bought and sold as an ordinary commodity. As a result, maintenance of small property and survival of family enterprises called for decommodification of land. Hence I have reached the following conclusion: In peasantist discourse, decommodification of peasant property figures more prominently than redistribution of land. Therefore, if we are to speak of a peasantist influence on Kemalists' political agenda, then we must speak of the project of farmers' homesteads. This is certainly where the most

visible affinity lies. It is my contention that farmers' homesteads were as important an element as redistribution of land in Kemalists scheme of reform. Not only was a notion of indivisible and inalienable family farms was a part of all reform drafts which were prepared between 1935 and 1945, but it was also invoked in the speeches of Mustafa Kemal. For instance, in his much-quoted parliamentary opening address of 1937, Mustafa Kemal specified the pillars of government's new agricultural policy. This was a long list, which included, once again, farmers' homesteads as well as distribution of land. The president explicitly called for a legal principle that would prevent fragmentation of family holdings and foreclosure of peasant property.<sup>1296</sup>

The conventional narrative holds that an idea of land reform came to full maturation circa 1935. From this point onwards, Kemalists were determined to carry out reform all through the country. I strongly believe that this argument should be qualified. There are indeed clear signs that Kemalists had started to ponder upon a law specifically on land as early as 1934. But this is far from saying that they were on the brink on expropriating large owners and redistributing land from scratch. When Şükrü Kaya announced for the first time on parliament floor that a draft was being prepared, he cited inalienability of peasant property as the principle upon which the prospective law would be based.

Early efforts culminated in two consecutive land bills in mid-1930s. Both bills were a *mélange* of different ideas and concerns that had been preoccupying reform advocates of the decade. Although provision of land to farmers had become a self-standing element, problems of settlement still found a place within reform bills. Hence these documents talked of immigrants, *aşirets* and nomads side by side with landless and sub-landed peasants. Secondly, 1930s' bills were as concerned with ownership disputes and incompetent cadastral records as they were with maldistribution of land. So the question was not just one of redistribution, but also that of administering property relations on land.

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<sup>1296</sup> For the entire speech, see Öztürk, 1969, pp. 257-75.

Nevertheless, the draft laws of 1935-1937 presaged LPLF in two strong senses. On the other hand, both documents justified redistribution of land as a measure to increase agricultural production – just as would LPLF do in 1945. On the other hand, the institution of farmers’ homesteads was a crucial element of the reform schemes of mid-1930s, which suggests that securing family properties was always a major concern.

In early 1937, İnönü’s government amended Article 74 of the constitution, which regulated confiscation of private property. The new version of the article defined distribution of land to farmers and nationalization of forests as exceptional cases and released the government from the obligation to pay market value in compensation. The literature cites the 1937 amendment as the final proof of Kemalists’ determination to expropriate large owners in order to provide land to farmers in need. I have suggested that this was not necessarily true. There can be no denying that the Turkish government would confiscate properties when and where no other option was available. On the other hand, the established practice was to distribute vacant lands to immigrants, settlers, and farmers in need. Many times, problems arose nonetheless as some people showed up after the fact and laid claim to said lands, which resulted in the eviction of grantees. It is in this sense that I have proposed to view the amending of the constitution also as precautionary measure. The amendment certainly strengthened government’s hand in this respect since confiscation of land was now much less cumbersome.

Before proceeding to the 1940s and the LPLF, I have examined one last historical instance from the 1930s. This is the Congress on Village and Agricultural Development, which was summoned by the government in 1938. My objective has been to assess the standing of redistribution of land within the new policy package for agricultural development. Congress publications show that redistribution of land was but one aspect of a much broader project of agricultural development. What is more, provision of land to farmers does not strike as a top priority. As I have discussed at some length, rationalization of

production is the major policy resolution that emerges from the reports submitted to the 1938 congress. My reading of congress reports suggests that rationalization of agricultural production stands for better techniques, lower costs, and higher productivity. It is in this context of rationalization that land distribution is brought up. Even here, however, provision of land to farmers is overshadowed by some other measures. For instance, introduction of horses and iron ploughs comes up both more often and in greater detail than distribution of land. On the rare occasions when land distribution is mentioned, the purpose is encouraging technical improvement and increasing output. That is to say, there is neither a critique of large ownership nor an emphasis on the problem of landlessness. I have noted a few pages above that the existing literature on land reform in Turkey is rather selective in its depiction of history and that it leaves out certain developments which belie its narrative. The 1938 congress is a case in point. Even though it was a major policy statement, the congress is completely glossed over in the conventional narrative.

Chapter 6 of this dissertation has analyzed the most important episode in the history of land reform advocacy in Turkey, i.e. the making of Law for Providing Land to Farmers (LPLF) in 1945. In the sixth chapter, I have first examined the original bill as drafted by Prime Minister's office, which was then titled Law for Distribution of Land to Farmers and Establishment of Farmers' Homesteads. Strangely enough, government's original draft has hitherto received only scant attention. This no doubt has impaired our knowledge of the 1945 legislation. In particular, it is a regrettable fact that the literature on LPLF mentions farmers' homesteads just in passing. I have argued that knowledge on LPLF is bound to remain incomplete without an in-depth analysis of the idea of farmers' homesteads. This is an idea which dates back to late Ottoman peasantists. Many researchers have noted the resemblance to Nazi legislation on family farms. Although there is no doubt that the comparison is spot-on, it seems that this emphasis on foreign inspiration has eclipsed the very domestic origins of the idea. Writers and intellectuals of very different persuasions advocated homesteads. As I have tried to show in consecutive chapters, a concern for the maintenance of peasant property was what connected Reşit

Galip, A.H. Başar, Ö.L. Barkan and many others. For all of them, it was a must that land reform scheme included legal regulation of small family holdings.

Rest of the government draft, too, deserves equal attention as it was both more radical in its purposes and more interventionist as compared to the final LPLF. In particular, some of its provisions sounded somewhat skeptical of large ownership. For instance, there were statutory limits on property holding as private persons could not own more than 5000 *dönüms* of land under any circumstances. This was a general rule; that is, it was supposed to be applied even where land was abundant and there were no farmers in need. In fact, government's bill put prevention of land concentration as a free-standing purpose. Furthermore, it was explicitly stated that small property would be the norm in Turkish agriculture and that middle properties (i.e. properties in the range of 500-5000 *dönüms*) should remain limited in number.

If the original LPLF draft went one step further than its predecessors in its ambition to delimit large property, it seems to me that the reasons should be sought in the experiences of war years. For something must have changed in the late 1930s and early 1940s to create a backlash against large landownership. The signs are visible as early as 1942 – the year when president İnönü's opening speech to the parliament condemned large landowners for resisting government's procurement measures. So, I have argued, on one side, that government could have become much less enthusiastic about large owners because they withheld their produce, cheated the government and reaped colossal profits off black markets. It is in this context that I have proposed to evaluate LPLF in relation to main pieces of wartime legislation. Secondly, after the war, it came to be questioned whether large enterprises really had certain economic advantages which made them indispensable for the development of the agricultural sector. Kemalist had long believed that they did, and this was why they always pledged to support large owners even when they announced their intentions to distribute land to small and poor peasants. Yet, experiences of wartime scarcity made statesmen like Ş.R. Hatipoğlu realize that, production-wise, large owners

of Turkey performed rather poorly. As Hatipoğlu declared during LPLF deliberations, it was actually small peasants who contributed the most to output stability. Moreover, small peasants paid their taxes and dues, which is to say that they surrendered a significant portion of their harvest to the government.

Chapter 6 has also comparatively examined the preamble of government's draft and the report submitted by the provisional parliamentary committee at the end of the reviewing process. It is possible to say that government's preamble and committee's report espoused two very different development strategies for Turkish agriculture. One can still detect a commonality as both documents approached property on land from the point of view of production increase. Saraçoğlu's government was of the view that redistribution of land would secure two benefits at once: extension of land under cultivation and increase in agricultural output. At a time when a large portion of cultivable land was yet to be brought under the plough, reformists championed land distribution in the belief that it would facilitate reclamation of land. Provision of land to modest peasants struck as a good idea for a second reason as well. Large properties that were rented out to sharecroppers were a cause for concern on the part of Kemalist reformists. In their view, this was the worst possible method of operating land. They believed as a matter of principle that land would be put to better use when cultivated by owners. Hence if sharecroppers were given the title to their tenements, they would cultivate continuously and take better care of land. Provisional committee held a different view. Firstly, the committee defended middle and large enterprises on the grounds that they produced more efficiently. Its contention was that a government which sought to increase production should maintain and support middle and large owners. Committee's report also indicated that large properties were a rarity and that even middle properties were relatively few in number. The presence of landless and land-short peasants had, therefore, little to do with polarization of ownership. Committee's report advanced the view that expropriation of middle and large owners made no sense as there were vast pastures and other commons lying vacant. It was possible for government to rely on these land resources in the provision of land to farmers in need.

On the other hand, provisional committee suggested that where state lands were scarce, peasants with no or insufficient land could be moved to more convenient places. Nonetheless, parliamentary committee did believe that it was an urgent matter to help Anatolian peasants and raise their living standards. But this help should be in the form of investment in transportation infrastructure and provision of modern farm machinery and credits. These measures would fail to suffice, however, if government did not make an effort to lessen burden of taxation on farmers or improve agricultural prices. All this was to say that problems regarding ownership of land were only a single aspect of a multi-faceted issue. Peasants could fare better *and* produce more if and only if government embarked on a thorough development strategy.

While the significance of farmers' homesteads has been played down, a single article of LPLF, namely Article 17, has stolen the limelight. The overemphasis on Article 17 has not only produced lopsided analyses, it at the same time has contributed to a misrepresentation of LPLF. When analytical focus is exclusively concentrated on Article 17, which sidestepped the size rule on liability for confiscation and rendered virtually all properties confiscable, LPLF comes out much more radical than it actually is. Those scholars and researchers who underscore Article 17 at the expense of the rest of the law justify this choice on the grounds that it stands as the most important provision of LPLF. As I have discussed extensively in Chapter 6, Article 17 was added to the draft at the very last minute in response to provisional committee's amendments. Committee members had found certain provisions in government bill quite excessive, and as a result, they had taken out the section on farmers' homesteads and rewritten many provisions including those on the purposes of the law, size-classification of landed properties, conditions for land confiscation and compensation payments. Neither İnönü nor Saraçoğlu was happy with these revisions, and they finally came up with Article 17 with the hope that its addition would recover the spirit of the original bill. Therefore, not only was the new provision out of keeping with the rest of the LPLF, it also contained certain ambiguities, which makes it challenging to interpret. Nonetheless, I have maintained that Article 17 is legible in the

context of Kemalists' firmly established aversion to absentee ownership and sharecropping. After all, the purpose of the article was to provide land to sharecroppers, fixed-rent tenants and long-time laborers immediately and on the spot. The idea was to make owners out of tenants and laborers on the very lands they were cultivating. Hence Article 17 was meant to benefit poor peasants, who were otherwise condemned to tenancy or wage labor, and punish absentee owners. It is undeniable that the article sanctioned confiscations on even modest middle properties provided that they were tilled by sharecroppers, fix-rent tenants or agricultural laborers. I believe that this can be interpreted from a number of angles. Firstly, it shows how strong government's preference for owner-cultivation was. I shall note once again that this preference was further reinforced by the experiences of war years. Secondly, İnönü and his ministers could have deliberately refrained from specifying a lower limit for confiscation because in this way they could strengthen the hand of the implementing agency. Finally, this hastily-written article was also a reaction to parliamentary resistance. As Koçak writes, single-party state was caught by surprise by the strength of the political opposition within the parliament. He notes that opposition became visible for the first time in 1944 when Saraçoğlu's new government received 57 votes of no confidence. After that, government was challenged by dissident MPs first during budget talks and then during the deliberations over the nationalization of *Şirket-i Hayriye*, the transport company which operated cargo and passenger steamers across the Bosphorus since 1850.<sup>1297</sup> Nevertheless, parliamentary resistance to LPLF was unprecedented in its strength and tenacity, which provoked as intense a response as Article 17.

Draft LPLF stimulated some rich debates on the parliament floor. The first thing to note about parliamentary deliberations is how property rights eclipsed all others issues. Even the long discussions over Article 17 revolved around rights of landowners as opposed to those of landless and sub-landed peasants. It is all too common in the field of Turkish

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<sup>1297</sup> Koçak, 2003b, pp. 350-1, 354-6; Koçak, 2010, pp. 204-5, 208-9.

politics to associate parliamentary opposition to LPLF with landowning interests.<sup>1298</sup> True, many outspoken opponents were landowners themselves and they rigorously defended property rights on land. However, these facts do not justify dismissing their discourse as mere rhetoric to mask some class interests. Parliamentary opposition did have an alternative outlook on the future of Turkey's agricultural economy. The identification of resistance to government's reform scheme with landowning interests creates one further problem. Namely, it produces the semblance that government sought to confront landowners. I have tried to show that this was not the case. For Saraçoğlu's government, the problem was not large ownership per se. It was the level of production that troubled the government most. This was why they desired to put an end to sharecropping in favor of owner-cultivation. Hence, as brilliantly outlined in the preamble of the 1945 bill, the major concern was to improve the patterns of land use. There is ample evidence to suggest that Kemalists had this in mind ever since the Settlement Law of 1934. Substitution of sharecropping by owner-cultivation was almost a cure-all which would supposedly facilitate an increase in population size, give a boost to agricultural production and free Turkey's peasants from dependence on others.

By the same token, it is a wrong assumption that single-party government was as a rule apt to encroach upon private property rights. Many of the laws I have analyzed sanctioned confiscation of landed property. Almost all confiscatory provisions were extensively debated in the parliament, and some of them were modified in ways that favored property owners. It is also noteworthy that even when profound confiscatory measures were passed, statesmen were at pains to stress that they were committed to the preservation of rights of landowners. Statesmen declared that their intention was to provide land to farmers – not to expropriate large owners. According to this, confiscatory provisions would be implemented when land distribution demanded. Put otherwise, confiscation was just a means to which government would resort when it was absolutely necessary.

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<sup>1298</sup> Most notable example is Eroğul's monograph on Democrat Party. See Eroğul, 1990, pp. 26-7. For another example, see Timur, 1997, pp. 222-4.

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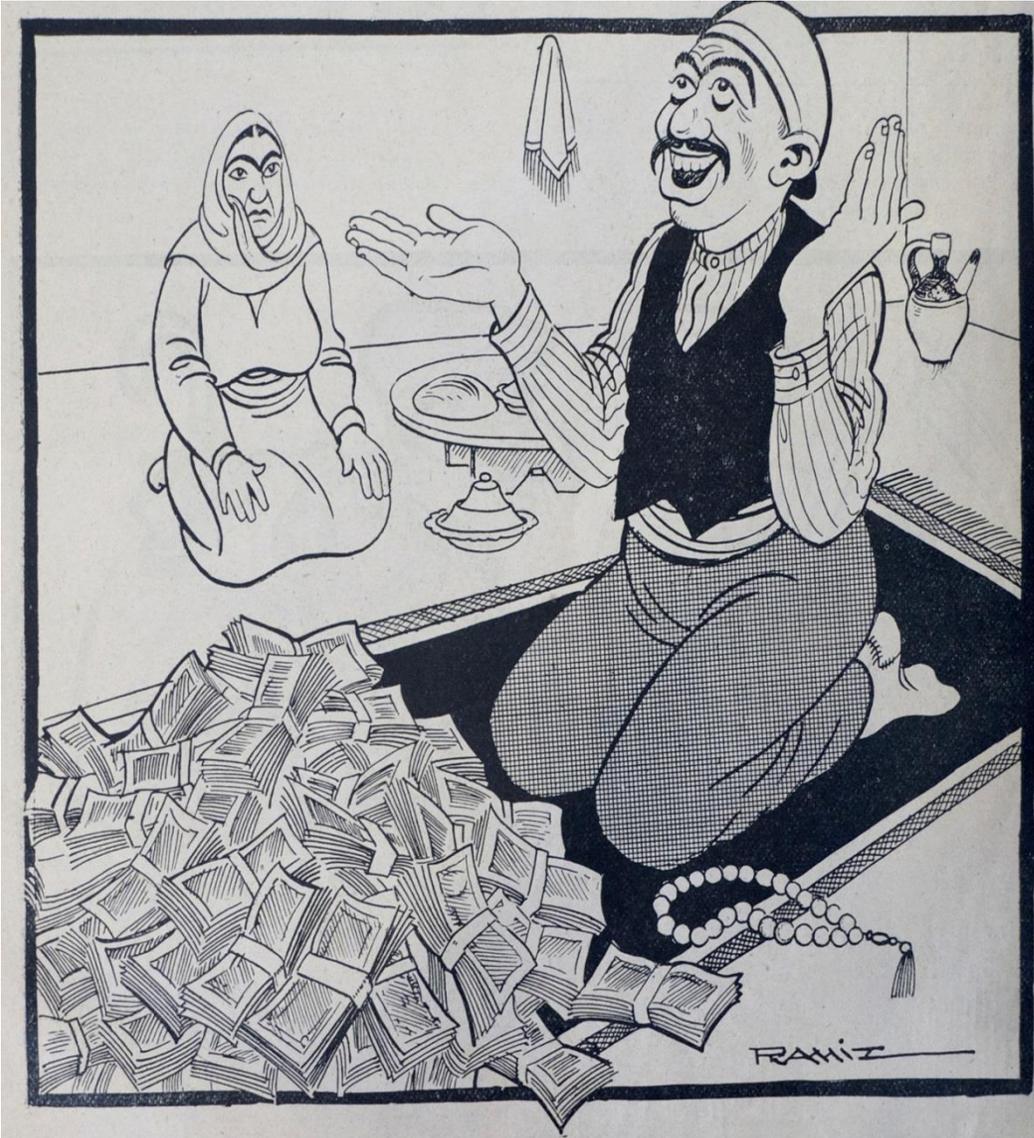
## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### HACIĞA CARTOONS



Hacığa sends a letter to his village. "Type it, miss secretary. I send tons of regards to everyone in the village. Do the harvest, send me the money urgently, I will waste it all here." Source: Gökçe, R. (1946) Hacı Ağalar Albümü, s.l.:s.n.



– Ulan garı, maşallah bu yıl mahsul bereketli oldu. Bunların kefareti için brak da ben bir yol İstanbul'a Hacca gideyim!

“Yo, wife, harvest was plentiful this year, thank goodness. Let me go on a pilgrimage to İstanbul for redemption.”

Source: Gökçe, R. (1946) Hacı Ağalar Albümü, s.l.:s.n.



Young woman: “Hacığa, when will I see you again?  
Hacığa: “When the next [world] war breaks out.”  
Source: Gökçe, R. (1946) Hacı Ağalar Albümü, s.l.:s.n.

**APPENDIX B**  
**CURRICULUM VITAE**

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

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**EDUCATION**

| <b>Degree</b> | <b>Institution</b>                                  | <b>Year of Graduation</b> |
|---------------|---|---------------------------|
| MS            | METU Political Science and<br>Public Administration | 2005                      |
| BS            | METU Political Science and<br>Public Administration | 2002                      |
| High School   | Trabzon Kanuni Anadolu Lisesi                       | 1998                      |

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

| <b>Year</b>   | <b>Place</b>   | <b>Enrollment</b>  |
|---------------|--|--------------------|
| 2004- Present | METU<br>Department of Political Science<br>and Public Administration | Research Assistant |

## APPENDIX C

### TURKISH SUMMARY

Erken Cumhuriyet dönemindeki toprak reformu tartışmaları bu tezin konusunu oluşturmaktadır. Bu tartışmaları analiz etmek için öncelikler toprak mülkiyeti meselesini ele almak gerekiyor. Bunun için en uygun başlangıç noktası ise Osmanlı taşrasının (özelde de Osmanlı Anadolu'sunun) dünya pazarlarına eklemlendiği 19. yüzyıldır. Kilit soru, tarımsal üretimin ticarileşmesinin toprak mülkiyeti üzerinde bir etkisi olup olmadığıdır.

Osmanlı örneğinin özgüllüğü şudur ki yabancı pazarlar için meta üretimi, büyük çiftlikler, plantasyonlar ya da kapitalist işletmelerde gerçekleşmemiştir. Tarımsal üretim küçük köylülük üzerinden dünya pazarına eklenmiştir. Dolayısıyla, Osmanlı Anadolu'sunda ne küçük köylü yaygın bir şekilde mülksüzleşmiş ne de toprak (kapitalist ya da değil) birtakım girişimcilerin elinde birikmiştir. Tarımın ticarileşmesi küçük köylülük eliyle olmuştur.

Osmanlı Anadolu'sunun bu ayrık gelişimini açıklayan ilk etmen, üretim faktörlerinin dağılımı ve özellikle toprak-emek dengesidir. Anadolu, tarihsel olarak toprağın bol, emeğin kıt olduğu bir coğrafya olduğunu, diğer bir deyişle var olan nüfusun işleyebileceğinden çok toprağın mevcut olduğunu söyleyerek başlayalım. Anadolu coğrafyasında emek hep kıt bir faktör olsa da, 16. yüzyıldan sonra nüfusta uzun dönemli bir düşüş ortaya çıktığını eklemek gerekir. 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren Kafkasya ve Balkanlardan muhacir akını olmuşsa da bu toprak-nüfus dengesini dikkate değer derecede değiştirmekten uzak kalmıştır.

Sonuç olarak, nüfusun toprağa oranla az olduğu Anadolu'da bu dönemde tarıma elverişli olduğu halde ekilmeyen araziler mevcuttu. Tarımın ticarileşip kazançlı bir iş haline geldiği bu dönemde toprak üstünde kuvvetli bir nüfus baskısı, birkaç istisnai alan hariç, kesinlikle

yoktu. Anadolu'yu Mısır ile (yani İmparatorluğun artık kendine has bir yörüngede hareket eden bir parçasıyla) kıyaslayalım. Mısır'da tarımın ticarileştiği dönemde nüfus hızla artmaktaydı. Toprak üzerinde nüfus baskısının artması ile hem arazi kiralari arttı hem de kiracılık koşulları küçük köylüler aleyhine (toprak sahipleri lehine) deđiştii.

Bahsedilmesi gereken ikinci etmen devlet politikalarıdır. Pek çok tarihçinin ve siyaset bilimcinin işaret ettiđi gibi, Osmanlı devletinin genel yönelimi küçük köylülüđü korumak/desteklemek dođrultusundaıdır. Farklı şekilde söylenecek olursa, merkezin önceliđi, küçük mülkiyetin hakim olduđu kırsal manzaranın devamını sađlamak ve köylünün özgür statüsünü korumaktı. Fakat hemen şunu ilave etmek gerekir: Köylünün hukuki statüsünü ve toprađa erişimini korumak salt bir politik öncelik deđildi. Bu aynı zamanda köylü artıđı üzerindeki mücadelenin bir boyutu olarak düşünölmelidir. Unutmamalı ki aşar devlet gelirlerinin en önemli kalemi idi. Netice itibariyle, küçük köylünün korunması, aşarın (yani köylü artıđının) aracılara ya da yerel güç sahiplerine (âyan) kaptırılmayıp merkezi devlet tarafından temellük edilmesi için şarttı. Yine de dikkat edilmesi gereken bir husus şudur: Osmanlı devletinin genel eğiliminin küçük köylüyü destekleme ve onun mülksüzleşmesini önleme yönünde olduđunu söylemek, devletin her zaman ve her durumda bu hususta başarılı olduđunu söylemekle aynı şey deđildir. Devletin köylü mülkünü savunmak konusunda başarısız olduđu durumlar da yerel güç dengeleri yüzünden aksi yönde hareket ettiđi vakalar da vardır.<sup>1299</sup>

Anadolu'nun kısıtlı bir ticari potansiyele sahip oluşu ise üçüncü ve son etmen olarak sayılabilir. Anadolu'nun ticari potansiyelini kısıtlayan faktörlerden biri ve belki de en önemlisi ulaşım zorlukları idi. Bu çok geniş yarımadanın iç kesimine ne kıyılarından ne de nehirler üzerinden rahatlıkla ulaşmak mümkündü. Tarımın ticarileşmesinin ancak demiryollarının inşası sonucu ivme kazanması da bu sebepten ötürüdür. Bu hususta Anadolu'yu 19. yüzyılda *de jure* olarak İmparatorluğun bir parçası olan Mısır ile

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<sup>1299</sup> İkincisine iyi bir örnek A. Şahin'in incelediđi, Canik sancađında Hazinedarzade ailesi ile köylüler arasındaki arazi ve vergi ihtilafında devletin aldıđı tutumdur. Ayrıntılar için bakınız Şahin, 2007.

karşılaştırmak ilginç sonuçlar verecektir. Mısır'da pamuğa olan dış talep Anadolu örneği ile kıyaslanamayacak kadar kuvvetli idi ve aynı zamanda, Anadolu'nun aksine, Mısır'ın Nil boyunca uzanan tarımsal araziler kolayca ulaşılabilir durumda idi.<sup>1300</sup>

Şimdi de 19. yüzyıldaki gelişimi Anadolu'nun geri kalanına benzemeyen istisnai bir bölgeden, Çukurova'dan bahsedelim. Çukurova, ticari bir tarım sahası haline gelmeden önce, bataklıklara kaplı, sıtmanın kol gezdiği ve dolayısıyla sürekli yerleşimin bulunmadığı bir bölge idi. Sadece kış mevsiminde göçebe Türkmen aşiretleri tarafından otlak olarak kullanılan bu topraklar üzerinde tarımsal üretim ya da küçük köylü mülkiyeti mevcut değildi. Değişim Mısır işgali sonrasında İbrahim Paşa eliyle başladı. Bölgenin geri alınmasından sonra ise Osmanlı Sarayı İbrahim Paşa'nın başlattığı projeyi sahiplendi ve bölgenin tarımsal potansiyelinin geliştirilmesi resmi bir politika haline geldi. Özellikle bataklıkların kurutulması için yoğun uğraşlar verildi. Böylece geniş ve çok verimli tarımsal sahalara açığa çıktı.

Osmanlı Devletinin bölgenin gelişimi ile alakadar olmasını sağlayan bir dış faktördü. Amerikan İç Savaşının patlak vermesi ile beraber Avrupa pazarlarına ulaşan pamuk miktarı muazzam ölçüde azaldı ve yeni üretim sahaları ihtiyacı hızla belirdi. Bu yeni sahalarda üretilecek pamuğa yönelik ciddi bir dış talep olduğunun açığa çıkmasıyla ki Osmanlılar Çukurova'nın ıslahı ile ilgilenmeye başladı.

Çukurova'nın bir başka ayırt edici özelliği, toprakların yasal statüsü ile ilgili idi. Bataklıkların kurutulması ile kazanılan bu topraklar miri arazi değildi; boş, kullanılmayan ve üretken olmayan tüm diğer topraklar gibi, mevat arazi kategorisine aitti. Mevat araziler de devletin malı olmaklar beraber, miri arazilerin aksine köylülerin tasarrufunda değildi; bunun sebebi tam da tarımsal üretime uygun olmamaları idi. Diğer yandan, Osmanlı Devletinin 19. yüzyıl öncesine dayanan bir pratiği vardı ki bu Çukurova'nın bir büyük

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<sup>1300</sup> Gerber, 1987, s. 117-8; Güran, 1998, s. 63, 69-74; Teoman and Kaymak, 2008, s. 329.

mülk vahası olarak ortaya çıkmasında önemli rol oynadı. Buna göre, mevat topraklar, “ihya” ve “şenlendirme” koşulu ile özel şahıslara bırakılırdı. Bu pratik Çukurova’da da hayata geçirildi ve büyük mülklerin önemlice bir kısmı bu şekilde meydana geldi.

Yukarıda, Osmanlı devletinin genel eğiliminin, köylünün toprağa erişiminin kısıtlanması veya mülksüzleştirilmesine müsaade etmemek yönünde olduğunu, bu sebeple devletin çoğu durumda geniş mülklerin oluşumuna müsamaha göstermediğini iddia ettim. Çukurova’da mevat toprakların mülk olarak özel şahıslara tahsis edildiği gerçeğinin bu iddiayı zayıflattığı düşünülebilir. Hâlbuki durum böyle değildir. Dikkat edilmesi gereken hususu tekrar etmeye fayda var: Bölgede büyük mülkler, birtakım güç sahiplerinin köylülerin kullandığı arazileri gasp etmesi ile vücuda gelmedi; aksine Çukurova’nın mevat toprakları üzerinde önceden küçük köylü üretimini yoktu. Dolayısıyla, devletin bu verimli ova üzerinde büyük mülklerin oluşumuna müsaade etmemesi için kuvvetli bir sebebi yoktu. D. Quataert’in deyişiyle, bu politikanın Çukurova’da “sosyal maliyeti” çok düşüktü.<sup>1301</sup>

Bataklıkların kurutulması sonucu, ovanın verimli toprakları ve tarımsal potansiyeli açığa çıktı. Fakat hala bir sorun vardı: Tüm Anadolu’da var olan emek kıtlığı sorunu Çukurova’da çok daha çetindi. Ovanın ticari potansiyelinin istismar edilmesi konusunda kararlı olan Osmanlı Devleti bu sorunu iskân ile çözmeye çalıştı. Ovada kışın konaklayan göçebe aşiretler zorunlu iskânla ovaya yerleştirilirken Balkanlar ve Kafkasya’dan ülkeye akın akın gelen muhacirlerin önemli bir kısmı yine bölgeye yerleştirildi.

Burada ilginç bir gelişmeden bahsedelim. Zorunlu iskâna tabi tutulan aşiretlere ovanın arazi verilmiştir. Aşiretlerin kolektif tasarrufunda olan bu toprakları zamanla aşiret reisleri kendi adlarına, mülk olarak tapuya kaydetmiştir. Bu sürecin sonucunda aşiret reisleri toprak ağası haline gelirken aşiret mensupları da ortakçı statüsüne indirgenmiştir.

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<sup>1301</sup> Quatert, 1981, s. 75-6.

Çukurova’da büyük mülklerin doğuş şekillerinden biri budur. Benzer bir gelişmenin Kürt vilayetlerinde de yaşandığını geçerken belirtmekte fayda var. Söz konusu coğrafyada tarımsal üretimin ticarileşmesi çok daha geç bir dönemde gerçekleşecek olmasına rağmen, Arazi Kanunnamesi ile tapu usulünün getirilmesinden sonra, aşiretlerin yüzyıllardır kolektif olarak tasarruf ettikleri araziler aşiret reisleri tarafından temellük edilmiştir.

Çukurova’ya dönecek olursak, bölgenin istisnai hali, yukarıda özetlediğim etmenlerin birleşiminden kaynaklanmıştır. Fakat belki de buna istisnailik yerine farklılık demek daha doğru olacaktır; zira Çukurova bu gelişim tarzının en belirgin ve şu vakte kadar sosyal bilimciler tarafından en detaylı incelenmiş örneği olsa da tek değildir. Büyük mülklerin benzer süreçler sonucu ortaya çıktığı diğer bir örnek, tıpkı Çukurova gibi, alüvyonlu olması sebebiyle potansiyel olarak verimli olmakla beraber bataklıklarla kaplı olduğundan yıllarca boş kalmış olan Söke Ovasıdır. Ne yazık ki bu vaka henüz bu cepheden incelenmemiştir.

Cumhuriyet dönemine gelecek olursak, ilk elden değinilmesi gereken çok çetin bir sorun kırsal kesime dair veri yokluğudur. Aslında toprak reformu girişimlerine imza atan Cumhuriyet dönemi yöneticileri de toprak mülkiyeti dağılımına dair bir veri setine sahip değildi. Bu durumun yarattığı sonuçları bir örnekle resmedelim. Başvekil İsmet İnönü’nün 27 Aralık 1936’da CHP grup toplantısında yaptığı konuşmada şu sözleri sarf etmiştir:

Yurdumuzda topraksız çiftçinin sayısı her tasavvurun üstündedir. En ziyade toprağı taksim edilmiş en mamur yerlerimizde bile köylünün yarısına yakın bir miktarı topraksızdır. Başkalarına ait topraklar üstünde çok fena şartlar içinde ve çok verimsiz olarak çalışmak mecburiyetindedir.<sup>1302</sup>

Şimdi de İnönü’nün bu sefer Reiscumhur olarak 1 Kasım 1941’de yaptığı meclis açık konuşmasına bakalım:

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<sup>1302</sup> Retrieved August 30, 2014, from <http://www.ismetinonu.org.tr/ismet-inonu-1933-1938.htm>.

Toprak kanunu, Büyük Meclise sunulmak üzeredir. Birçok arařtırmalardan anlıyoruz ki toprađı hi olmayan köylünün nisbeti mahduttur. Devlet malı toprak dađıtmak suretiyle, bu nisbet yıldan yıla azalmaktadır. Bununla beraber, toprađı olmayıp kendi başına ocak kurmak isteyenlere toprak temini Cümhuriyetin en ziyade ehemmiyet verdiđi bir meseledir. Nüfusun çođalması ve intikal suretile paralanması neticesinde, elindeki toprađı bu günkü işleme kudret ve vasıtalarına, çođalan yaşama ihtiyaçlarına artık yetişmemeye başlayan az topraklı köyler ve köylüler vardır. Bunları, kendilerine daha yüksek yaşama imkânı verecek miktarda toprak sahibi kılmak ve bu topraklarda iş yapma kudretini tam kıymetlendirecek verimli bir işleme için lüzumlu araçlarla donatmakta acele etmek lazımdır.<sup>1303</sup>

İki konuşma arasında geçen beş yılda toprak mülkiyetinin dađılımı muhtemelen çok az deđişmişti. Zira bu dönemde yerli halka toprak dađıtımı sınırlıydı; dađıtımdan asıl faydalanan muhacirlerdi. Bu da gösteriyor ki asıl deđişen toprak dađılımına dair rejimin algısıydı. Bu deđişim tek bir yönde de deđildi. Bütün mesele, bu alğının ne sebeplerle deđiştiđini izah edebilmektir.

Toprak reformu fikrinin Türkiye'deki gelişimine dair yerleşik anlatıya göre, başta sadece Kürt vilayetleri ile sınırlı olan proje zaman içinde yurt geneline yayıldı ve nihayet ulusal pir plana dönüştü. Literatür bu deđişimin neden ve nasıl gerçekleştiđine dair tatmin edici bir açıklama sunmamaktadır. Öne sürülen en kuvvetli argüman 1930'ların başındaki ekonomik ve siyasi krize atıfta bulunur. Ekonomik krizden kasıt, elbette, 1929 dünya buhranının Türkiye tarım sektörü üzerindeki etkileridir. Krizin en kuvvetli yansıması hızla düşen hububat fiyatları olmuş ve bu fiyat düşüşü çiftçi hanelerinde büyük tahribata yol açmıştır. Siyasi krize sebep olan ise Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası'nın halktan gördüğü teveccüh ve bunun rejim katında yarattığı sıkıntıdır. 1930'lar kuşkusuz hem ekonomik hem de siyasi açıdan bir kriz dönemi idi. Fakat rejimin bu krize cevaben bulduđu çözümün toprak dađıtımı ya da reformu olup olmadığı tartışmaya açıktır.

Benim ileri sürdüđüm iddia, 1930'ların krizine bulunan çözüm toprak reformu deđil, buđday alımı olduđudur. Bu iddiaya karşı şöyle bir itiraz gelebilir: Rejim toprak reformu

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<sup>1303</sup> Öztürk, 1969, p. 322.

yapamadığından köylünün sorunlarını başka mekanizmalarla çözmeye çalışmıştır. Örneğin B. Kuruç bu fikri öne sürenler arasındadır. Ona göre, toprak reformu siyaseten ihtimal dahilinde olmadığı için, Kemalist hükümet buğday alımı ve zirai kredi kooperatifleri gibi girişimlerle köylüye destek olmaya çalışmıştır.<sup>1304</sup> Sorun şudur ki bu fikri destekleyecek, yani Kemalistlerin 1930'ların hemen başında toprağı yeniden bölüştürmek niyetinde olduklarını gösterir kanıt yoktur.

Toprak reformunun ülke genelinde uygulanacak bir proje olarak benimsenmesine dair ikinci bir açıklama aydınların etkisini öne çıkarır. Buna göre, reform fikri aydınlardan hükümete sirayet etmiştir. 1930'lar Türkiye'sinde böyle bir etki iki cepheden gelebilirdi: *Kadro* dergisi çevresinde toplanan aydınlardan ya da (Nusret Kemal Köymen başta olmak üzere) Erken Cumhuriyet döneminin Köycü yazarlarından. Literatürde her iki akım da zikredilse de, takip ettiği siyasi çizgi ve uğradığı akıbet düşünülürse, *Kadro*'nun hükümet üzerinde böyle bir etkisinin olduğunu iddia etmek zordur. Köycü fikriyat ise daha muhtemel bir ilham kaynağı olabilir. Köycü yazının incelenmesi, Kemalistlerin toprak meselelerine bakışı konusunda yeni bir pencere açabilir.

İskân Kanunu bugüne kadar hemen hep kültürel asimilasyon (temsil) cephesinden değerlendirilmiş ve böyle olduğu için tabiatıyla Kürtçe konuşan nüfusla (ve kısmen muhacirlerle) alakalı sonuçları incelenmiştir. Hâlbuki İskân Kanununda kültürel asimilasyondan bağımsız bazı yerleştirme ve toprak dağıtım hükümleri de mevcuttur. Aslında İskân Kanununda vücut bulan, kültürel asimilasyonu içeren fakat ondan ibaret olmayan bir nüfus siyasetidir. Kanun tasarısının gerekçesinde belirtildiği gibi, bu nüfus siyasetinin iki boyutu vardır. İlk boyut (haricî iskân) muhacir ve mültecilerin iskânı ile ilgilidir. Diğer boyut dahilî iskandır ve burada iki farklı gaye söz konusudur: bir yanda temdin ve temsil (kültürel asimilasyon), diğer yanda ise nüfusun bölgeler arasındaki

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<sup>1304</sup> Kuruç, 1987.

dağılımını dengelemek ve düzenlemek. İşte bu ikinci gaye doğrudan doğruya toprak meselesiyle alakalıdır.

Tasarının gerekçesinde anlatıldığına göre, Türkiye’de nüfus dengesiz bir şekilde dağılmıştır. Kimi yerlerde nüfus yoğunluğu toprağın besleyebileceğinin çok üstüneyken, yurdun bazı yerleri neredeyse insansızdır. Üstelik nüfusun düşük olduğu kimi bölgeler aslında toprağın verimli olduğu, yani tarımsal potansiyelin yüksek yerlerdir. Hâlihazırda bu potansiyel heba olmaktadır. Kanunun amaçladığı iç nakiller vasıtasıyla nüfus dağılımını düzenlemek ve bu suretle Türkiye nüfusunu arttırmaktır. Nüfusu arttırmaktan maksat aslında tarımsal üretimi arttırmaktır; zira tarımsal üretim artış ancak ve ancak nüfusun çoğalması ile mümkündür.

Dağıtımda kullanılacak asıl kaynağın devletin hüküm ve tasarrufu altındaki boş araziler olduğu meclis görüşmelerinden anlaşılmaktadır. Görüşmelerde sık sık dile getirilen bir endişe ise şudur: Dağıtılan boş araziler üzerinde sonradan hak iddia edenler olursa bu toprakların ve üzerine yerleştirilmiş bulunan yurttaşların akıbeti ne olacaktır? Bu endişe sebepsiz değildir. Görüşmelerde de hatırlatıldığı üzere, geçmiş iskân ve toprak dağıtım uygulamalarında bu tür mülkiyet iddialarıyla sık sık karşılaşmış ve çoğu durumda iskân edilen/toprak verilen halk yerinden edilmiştir. Komisyon çalışmaları esnasında, bu gibi hadiselerin tekrarlanmasını önlemek için tasarıya bir dizi madde ilave edilmeye çalışılsa da başarılı olunamamıştır.

Cumhuriyet tarihinin ilk toprak kanunu tasarıları 1930’ların ikinci yarısında hazırlanmıştır. Mevcut literatür 1945’ten önceki dönemde iki farklı yasa tasarısının hazırlanmış olduğunu belirtse de Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi’ndeki belgeler en az üç tasarısının varlığına işaret etmektedir. Literatürde bahsi geçen ilk tasarı Dâhiliye Vekâleti tarafından hazırlanan 1935 tarihli İskân Toprak Kanun Tasarısı’dır. Literatüre göre, bunu Ziraat Vekâleti tarafından hazırlanıp 1937 tarihinde Başvekâlete sunulan Ziraî Islahat Kanunu Tasarısı takip etmiştir. Fakat arşivdeki belgeler göstermektedir ki Dâhiliye

Vekâleti bir değil iki tasarı hazırlamıştır. 1935 tarihli ilkinin başlığı aslında “Toprak Kanunu Layihası”dır; literatürde bahsi geçen İskân Toprak Kanun Tasarısı ise 1937’de hazırlanmıştır. Diğer yandan, literatürde hiç anılmayan fakat tam metni Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi’nde mevcut olan yine 1937 tarihli bir diğer tasarı Sıhhat ve İctimaî Muavenet Vekâleti (SÎMV) tarafından hazırlanmıştır. Bu tasarı içerik olarak Dâhiliye Vekâletinin hazırladığı tasarılarla oldukça yakındır. Ziraat Vekâleti tarafından hazırlandığı iddia edilen Ziraat İslahat Kanunu Tasarısı ise arşivde mevcut değildir. Arşivde bulunan bir dizi belge, Ziraat Vekâletinin gerçekten bir tasarı üzerinde çalıştığını doğrulasa da bu çalışmaların tamamlanıp tamamlanmadığı belli değildir. Ziraat Vekâletinin SÎMV tasarısına dair görüşünü bildiren raporu, iki vekâletin pek çok noktada hemfikir olduğunu göstermektedir. Görüş farklılıkları daha çok teknik konularla alakalıdır. Bu görüş ortaklıkları sebebiyle, bu üç tasarımı ile Ziraat Vekâleti çalışmalarını birlikte değerlendirmek ve toprak kanununun amaç ve usullerine dek bir uzlaşmanın varlığından söz etmek mümkündür. Dikkat çeken ilk ortak tema tapu sorunlarıdır. Tapu kayıtları ile şahısların beyanları tutmamakta, pek çok durumda şahıslar tapuda yazılı olandan daha geniş bir alan üzerinde hak iddia etmektedir. Her üç tasarı da bu tapu artıklarının (hak iddia eden kişi az topraklı değilse) devlet hesabına geçirilip topraksız ve az topraklı köylüye dağıtılması esasına dayanır. Zaten dağıtımına esas olacak araziler ilk olarak bu tapu artıkları ve diğer devlet arazileridir. Büyük mülklere gelince, tasarılarından ikisinde bu mülkler için bir üst sınır belirlense de bu sınır oldukça yüksektir. Fakat tüm tasarılar *işlenmeyen* büyük mülklerin kamulaştırılmasına cevaz vermektedir. Belirlenen alt sınırın altındaki olup da üzerinde ziraat yapılan büyük arazilerin kamulaştırılması ise sadece ve sadece bu araziler bizzat sahipleri tarafından değil de ortakçı ve kiracılar tarafından işleniyorsa mümkündür.<sup>1305</sup> Sonuç olarak, toprak üzerinde ilişkileri denetleme isteği, ortakçılık karşıtı hassasiyet ve işlenen araziye (ve dolayısıyla üretimi) artırmak gayesi tasarıları birbirine bağlayan ortak paydayı meydana getirmektedir.

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<sup>1305</sup> Detaylar için bakınız BCA, 30..10.0.0/21.123..10.

Şubat 1937 tarihinde toprak dağıtımını amaçlı kamulaştırmaları kolaylaştırmak için 1924 Anayasasının 74. Maddesine yeni bir fıkra eklenmiştir. Önceden, kamulaştırma bedellerinin cari piyasa değerleri üzerinden peşin olarak ödenmesi her durumda şarttı. Söz konusu değişiklikle çiftçilerin topraklandırılması ya da ormanların devletleştirilmesi amacıyla yapılacak kamulaştırmalarda, kamulaştırma bedellerinin ve bu bedellerin ödenme şeklinin belirlenmesi çıkarılacak özel kanunlara bırakıldı.<sup>1306</sup>

1937'deki bu önemli yasal değişikliği doğru konumlandırmak için meclis görüşmelerini dikkate almak gerekir. Görüşmelerde en çok öne çıkan tema ortakçılık eleştirisidir. Zaten anayasa değişiklik tasarısının gerekçesinde yeni rejimin “çiftçilerimizin *geçmiş devirlerde olduğu gibi* hizmetkâr durumda kalması”na göz yumamayacağı önemle vurgulanmaktadır.<sup>1307</sup> Dâhiliye Vekili Şükrü Kaya'nın ortaya koyduğu gibi, kendi ülkesinde “hür ve efendice” yaşayabilmesi için Türk köylüsünün “ötekinin, berikinin toprağında çalışmaktan kurtarılmalı” şarttı.<sup>1308</sup> Meclis görüşmeleri göstermektedir ki toprak meselesi aynı zamanda bir rejim meselesidir.

Dâhiliye Vekili arazilerini işleyen toprak sahiplerinin görüşülmekte olan anayasa değişikliğinden endişe etmeleri için hiçbir sebep olmadığını, gayelerinin “işlemeyen toprakları işletmek” olduğunu belirtip şu sözleri sarf etmiştir: “[T]oprağını işleyen ve işletebilen [büyük] çiftçi bizim en büyük yardımımıza ve himayemize mazhar olacak bir elemandır.”<sup>1309</sup> Hem tasarıda hem de meclis görüşmeleri esnasında belirtildiği üzere, toprak dağıtımının asıl gayesi işlenmeyen arazilerin topraksız ve az topraklı çiftçilere

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<sup>1306</sup> Teşkilâtı Esasiye Kanununun Bazı Maddelerinin Değiştirilmesine Dair Kanun, 1937, Yedinci Madde, s. 184-5.

<sup>1307</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Cerdidesi, 1937b, s. 1, vurgu bana ait.

<sup>1308</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Cerdidesi, 1937c, s. 61.

<sup>1309</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, s. 61.

dağıtılması suretiyle tarımsal üretimin artırılmasıydı.<sup>1310</sup> Dolayısıyla, tek başına büyük mülklerin varlığı bir sorun teşkil etmiyordu. Hükümeti rahatsız eden bu büyük mülklerin boş bırakıldığı ya da ortakçılara verildiği durumlarıdır. Bu rahatsızlık, bilhassa topraksız köylülerin bulunduğu bölgeler söz konusu olduğunda daha da artıyordu.<sup>1311</sup> Diğer yandan, köylünün topraklandırılmasının yerli sanayi açısından da elzem olduğu belirtiliyordu. Bu anlayışa göre, kendi toprağına sahip köylü geçimlik üretim döngüsünden kurtulup pazar için üretim yapacak, pazar için üretim yaptıkça geliri artacak, tüketici olacak ve Türk sanayisinin ihtiyaç duyduğu iç talep böylece ortaya çıkacaktı.<sup>1312</sup>

Son olarak, bu anayasa değişikliğinin aynı zamanda bir tür önleyici tedbir olarak görülmüş olabileceğini de eklemek gerekir. Devlete ait arazilerin halka dağıtımını ertesinde çıkan sorunlardan yukarıda bahsetmiştim. Kamulaştırmanın daha kolay ve ucuz bir işlem haline getirilmesinin topraklandırılan köylünün yerinden edilmesini engelleyici umulmaktadır.

Özel olarak toprak dağıtımına dair ilk kanun ancak 1945'te yasalaşabildi. Bu kanun, yani Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu (ÇTK), bugüne kadar ağırlıklı olarak İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası dönem bağlamında incelendi ve çok partili hayata geçişle ilişkilendirildi. Örneğin Y.S. Tezel'e göre, nüfusun ve dolayısıyla seçmenlerin çoğunu küçük köylülerin oluşturduğu bu dönemde, toprak dağıtımını yasası CHP'ye bir seçmen tabanı yaratma girişimiydi.<sup>1313</sup> Benzer şekilde, F. Birtek ve Ç. Keyder savaş yıllarında orta köylülüğün yıkıma uğradığını, bu nedenle rejimin köylülüğün bir diğer tabakası olan yoksul köylülerle

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<sup>1310</sup> Bu tezin bir alt bölümünde detaylı olarak incelenen Birinci Köy ve Ziraat Kalkınma Kongresi raporlarından çıkan pozisyonda budur. 1938'de toplanan ve o güne kadarki en büyük tarım kongresi olan bu kongrede, toprak dağıtımını tali bir konu olmakla beraber hep üretim artışı noktasını nazarından savunuluyordu.

<sup>1311</sup> Bu tavrı en iyi örnekleyen, görüşmeler esnasında seçim bölgesi Muğla'daki durumu gündeme Şükrü Kaya'dır. Bakınız T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, s. 71.

<sup>1312</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1937c, s. 61.

<sup>1313</sup> Tezel, 1994, s. 397-8.

ittifak kurmak üzere ÇTK'yi yasalaştırdığını iddia eder.<sup>1314</sup> Bu ve benzeri yorumlara göre, ÇTK'nin aldığı nihai şekil, çok partili hayata geçiş dinamiği ile belirlenmiştir.

Hazırlık sürecine dair elimizde herhangi bir bilgi ya da arşiv kaydı olmamasına rağmen şu tahminde bulunmak zor olmayacak: 1945 yılında ÇTK olarak yasalaşacak tasarı, uzun bir çalışmanın ürünü olmalıydı. Muhtemelen bu çalışmalara birebir şahit olmuş olan Ö.L. Barkan hazırlıkların savaş yıllarında başladığını belirtir. C. Koçak ise hazırlıkların 1943 gibi oldukça erken bir tarihte başlamış olabileceği tahmininde bulunur. Her durumda, bu kadar kapsamlı bir tasarının birkaç ay içinde hazırlanmış olması ihtimal dahilinde değildir. Şu halde tasarının savaş yıllarında şekillendiği rahatlıkla iddia edilebilir. Bu durumda ÇTK tasarısının, Varlık Vergisi ve Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi ile aynı dönemin ürünü olduğu gerçeği açığa çıkıyor. Savaş döneminde rejiminin içinde bulunduğu yönelimi en iyi örnekleyen konuşma Cumhurbaşkanı İsmet İnönü'nün 1 Kasım 1942'de TBMM'de yaptığı meclis açış konuşmasıdır. İnönü bu konuşmada şöyle der:

Acı ile hatırlamalıyız ki milletin işe işlerinin tanzim etmek yolunda Cumhuriyet Hükümetlerinin sarfettikleri gayretlere, iki senedenberi, cemiyetimiz tarafından hiç yardım edilmemiştir. İşte bugün ilk hallolunacak mesele, umumi itimat havasının iade edilmesidir. Bulanık zamanı bir daha ele geçmez fırsat sayan eski bataklık çiftlik ağası ve elinden gelse teneffüs ettiğimiz havayı ticaret metayı yapmaya yeltenen gözü dönmez vurguncu tüccar ve bütün bu sıkıntıları politika ihtirasları için büyük fırsat sanan . . . birkaç politikacı, büyük bir milletin hayatına küstah bir surette kundak koymaya çalışmaktadırlar. Üç, beş yüz kişiyi geçmeyen bu insanların vatana karşı aşikâr olan zararlarını gidermek yolu elbette vardır.<sup>1315</sup>

Başvekil Şükrü Saraçoğlu da bundan sadece on gün sonra mecliste Varlık Vergisi ve ona eşlik edecek olan diğer tedbirleri takdim ederken bu hat üzerinden hareket edecektir. Saraçoğlu bu konuşmasında, selefi Refik Saydam'ın aldığı sert tedbirleri önemli ölçüde yumuşatıp serbestiyet getirdiklerini, fakat pahalılık sorununun halen devam ettiğini söyler. Gerçekten de yükselen fiyatlar savaş yıllarının en çetin sorunlarından biriydi.

<sup>1314</sup> Birtek ve Keyder, 1975, s. 459-60.

<sup>1315</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942a, s. 4.

Askeri mobilizasyon ile birlikte köylerin erkek nüfusunda önemli bir düşüş olmuş, buna Milli Korunma Kanunu hükümleri uyarınca çeki hayvanlarına el konması pratiği de eklenince tarımsal üretim düşmüş ve bu düşüş fiyatlara yansımıştır. Diğer yandan, savaşın patlak vermesi ithalat darlığını da beraberinde getirmiş ve fiyatların yükselişinin ikinci sebebi olmuştur. Saraçoğlu'nun altını çizdiği gibi, fiyat yükselişinin sonucu vurgunculuk (ihtikâr) faaliyetlerindeki artış olmuştur. Saraçoğlu'nun gözünde, vurgunculuktan en çok zarar gören kesim ise (kırsal alanla artık bir bağlantısı kalmamış olan) sabit gelirli şehir halkıydı. Başvekilin ilan ettiği gibi, hükümet çalışan halka destek olmak ve vurgunculukla mücadele etmek için bir dizi tedbir hayata geçirmek üzereydi. Bu tedbirlerin hemen hepsi şehirli sabit ücretlilere yapılacak hububat, şeker, kömür ve kumaş gibi aynı yardımlardı. Saraçoğlu'nun andığı son tedbir ise Varlık Vergisi idi ki bu vergi “harb yıllarında çok para kazanmış olanlardan” alınacaktı. Bu gruba büyük tüccarlar, han ve apartman türü emlak ve akar sahipleri ve büyük çiftçiler dahildi. Saraçoğlu konuşmasında vergiden umulan iki oldukça farklı fayda olduğunu da vurgulamıştır. Bir yandan dolaşımdaki para miktarı vergilendirme ile azaltılırken, diğer yandan vurguncu ve harp zengilerine karşı yükselen “halk buğzunun silinmesi” mümkün olacaktı.<sup>1316</sup>

Bu konuda yapılmış az sayıda fakat yüksek nitelikli çalışmanın gösterdiği gibi, Varlık Vergisi her şeyden önce azınlık karşıtı bir politikaydı. Ne kanun metninde ne de TBMM'deki kanun görüşmelerinde bu kanunla gayrimüslim azınlıkların hedef alınacağına dair bir ima dahi olsa da uygulama açıkça azınlık karşıtıydı. Hükümet bu yeni vergi ile en çok ve fevkalade orantısız biçimde gayrimüslimleri cezalandırdı.<sup>1317</sup> Diğer yandan, Saraçoğlu'nun yukarıda alıntılıdığım sözlerinin de işaret ettiği gibi, Varlık Vergisinin Müslüman olsun olmasın tüm savaş zenginlerini cezalandırmak gibi bir hedefi

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<sup>1316</sup> T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, 1942c, s. 14-22.

<sup>1317</sup> Zamanın İstanbul Defterdarı Faik Ökte, anılarında, uygulamanın azınlık karşıtı olmasının bir tesadüf olarak görülemeyeceğini, CHP'nin kapalı grup toplantılarında verginin azınlık karşıtı yönünün açıklıkla dillendirildiğini, kurumlara gönderilen talimatnamelerin de bu doğrultuda olduğunu göstermektedir. Bakınız Ökte, 1951.

gerçekten de vardı. Daha doğru bir ifadeyle, rejim bu tip bir yönelim içindeydi. Bu cepheden bakılınca, Varlık Vergisinin önemi tam da bu yönelime işaret etmesidir. Örnek olarak Varlık Vergisinin İstanbul’da tahakkuk sürecine bakalım. Tüm diğer illerde olduğu gibi İstanbul’da da kimin ne kadar vergi vereceği kurulan bir tahakkuk komisyonunca belirlenmiştir. Buna göre, İstanbul’da toplam sayısı 62575 olan Varlık Vergisi mükellefleri arasında hepsi Müslüman olan 222 tane büyük çiftçi vardı. Büyük çiftçilere tahakkuk edilen vergi İstanbullu mükelleflere tahakkuk edilen verginin sadece %1’i civarındaydı. Buna karşılık, tamamı gayrimüslim olan toplam 2,563 “fevkalade mükellef” tüm İstanbuldan toplanacak verginin %54’ünü ödemekle yükümlüydü.<sup>1318</sup>

Varlık Vergisinden sadece aylar sonra, Mayıs 1943’te meclise bu sefer Toprak Mahsulleri Vergisi tasarısı gelmiştir. Bu girişimin amacı, fiyat artışları sebebiyle önemli ölçüde yükseldiği düşünülen tarımsal gelirleri vergilendirmektir. Uygulamada TMV’den en çok etkilenen kesim küçük köylülük oldu.<sup>1319</sup> Hâlbuki söz konusu fiyat artışından en çok faydalanan kesim, pazara sunacak artığa ve bu artığı piyasaya ulaştıracak olanaklara sahip olan büyük çiftçilerdi.<sup>1320</sup> Savaş yıllarında bu çiftçiler mahsullerini vergi memurlarından kaçırmaya muvaffak olduklarında hükümetin uygulamaya koyduğu iâşe tedbirlerini hiçe sayarak karaborsaya yüksek fiyattan mal sağlayıp zenginleşmiştir. İnönü’nün meclis açış konuşmasında “batakçı çiftlik ağaları”ndan bahsetmesi bundandır.

Sonuç olarak, 1943 itibariyle, savaş yıllarını büyük kazançlar sağlamış orta ve büyük çiftçiler hâlâ vergilendirelemişti. Bu tezde öne sürülen fikir, ÇTK’ye bu cepheden bakılmasının bu önemli yasayı anlamak konusunda yeni imkanlar sunabileceğidir. Hükümetin savaş yıllarında uygulamaya soyunduğu iâşe politikalarına direnişin hükümet cephesinde büyük mülklere karşı bir hassasiyet yaratmış olabileceğini iddia ediyorum.

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<sup>1318</sup> Aktar, 2000, s. 154. Aktar, bu hesaplamaları Ökte’nin sağladığı verilen ışığında yapmıştır. Bu veriler için bakınız Ökte, 1951, s. 102-3.

<sup>1319</sup> Boratav, 1974, s. 352; Boratav, 1988, s. 67; Metinsoy, 2007, s. 132.

<sup>1320</sup> Metinsoy, 2007, s. 61, 136; Pamuk, 1991, s. 131, 135-6

Büyük çiftçilerin savaş sonuna kadar esaslı şekilde vergilendiremediği hesaba katılırsa, bu hassasiyetin savaş sonunda hâlâ ayakta olduğu pekâlâ söylenebilir.

Sözünü ettiğim türden bir hassasiyet, 1945'e özgüdür. Ne cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarında ne de toprak kanununa dair ilk girişimlerinin hayata geçirildiği 1930'ların ortalarında büyük mülklerden kaynaklanan böylesi bir rahatsızlığın emarelerine rastlamak mümkündür. Aksine, gerek meclis görüşmelerinde gerekse kanun tasarı ve metinlerinde büyük mülkler çoğunlukla üretim cephesinden savunulmaktadır. Buna göre, büyük çiftlikler hem teknolojik olarak üstün hem de ölçek olarak daha verimlidirler. Netice itibariyle, büyük çiftlikler tarımsal üretimin artışı için hep önemli görülmüşlerdir. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ün 1 Kasım 1936 yılında yaptığı meclis açılış konuşması bu pozisyonu veciz biçimde ifade etmektedir:

Toprak kanununun bir neticeye varmasını Kamutay'ın yüksek hizmetinden beklerim. Her Türk çiftçi ailesinin, geçineceği ve çalışacağı toprağa malik olması, behemehal lazımdır. Vatanın sağlam temeli ve imarı bu esastadır. *Bundan fazla olarak, büyük araziyi modern vasıtalarla işletip vatana fazla istihlal temin edilmesini teşvik etmek isteriz.*<sup>1321</sup>

Mustafa Kemal'in bu konuşmayı yaptığı tarihte toprak kanununun yasalaşması an meselesi gibi görünmektedir. Hazırlanan ilk tasarı çeşitli devlet kurumlarınca değerlendirilmiş, bu ilk tasarı meclise gelemese de çalışmalar kurumlar bünyesinde devam etmiştir. Mustafa Kemal'in toprağın yeniden bölüşümü bu kadar yakın bir ihtimalken dahi büyük işletmelere zarar verecek bir hamlede bulunmayacaklarını beyan etmesi fevkalade önemlidir.

Bu tutumun tek istisnası, sahibi tarafından bizzat işlenmeyip ortakçılara verilen çiftliklerdir. Ortakçılıkla işletilen büyük mülkler hem ekonomik performans açısından hem de sosyal sonuçlar itibariyle eleştiri konusu olmuştur. Bu sebeplerledir ki sırasıyla 1935 ve 1937 yıllarında hazırlanan fakat yasalaşma fırsatı bulamayan ilk toprak kanunu

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<sup>1321</sup> Öztürk, 1969, s. 250, vurgular bana ait.

tasarılarında ortakçılık karşıtı hükümler mevcuttur. Bununla beraber, ortakçılık karşıtı söylemin en kuvvetli olduğu momentlerde bile, sahibi tarafından sürekli biçimde ve modern usullerle işlenen/işletilen arazilerin devlet tarafından himaye edileceği önemle vurgulanmıştır.

ÇTK'nin ilk şekli, yani Çiftçiye Toprak Dağıtılması ve Çiftçi Ocakları Kurulması Hakkında Kanun Tasarısı, ise bundan farklı bir fikirden besleniyor görünmektedir. Sözgelimi, tasarının birinci maddesinde “arazi mülklerinin aşırı derecede büyümelerini” önleme müstakbel kanunun amaçlarından biri olarak sayılmaktadır.<sup>1322</sup> Altıncı madde, büyük araziyi 5000 dönümü aşan arazi olarak tanımlamaktadır. Tasarının yedinci maddesine göre, özel şahıslar hiçbir koşulda 5000 dönümden fazla araziye sahip olamazlar. Zira “[ç]iftçinin kalkınmasını sağlayacak kamu hizmetlerinde kullanılmak şartıyla büyük araziye ancak Devlet mülk edinir.”<sup>1323</sup> Burada anlaşılması elzem bir nokta şudur: Söz konusu mülkiyet takyitleri, toprak dağıtımından bağımsızdır. Şöyle ki, bir bölgede toprak darlığı olsun ya da olmasın, bir kişinin 5000 dönüm üzeri araziye sahip olması kanunen yasaktır. Yani burada amaç bu kişinin fazla arazisini kamulaştırıp topraksız ve az topraklı köylülere dağıtmanın ötesindedir. Bu kişinin çiftliğinin bulunduğu bölgede tek bir topraksız çiftçi olmasa dahi arazisinin 5000 dönümü aşan kısmı kamulaştırılacaktır. Dahası büyük çiftçinin arazisini nasıl işlediği veya işlettiği de konu dışıdır. Sahiplerinin modern vasıta ve tekniklerle bizzat işlediği araziler de ortakçı ya da kiracılara verilen araziler gibi kamulaştırmaya tabiidir. Son olarak, 1935 ve 1937 yıllarına ait kanun tasarılarının yaptığı işlenen-boş bırakılan arazi ayrımı da burada mevcut değildir. Özetle, 1945 yılı kanun tasarısı büyük mülklere ilke olarak karşıdır.<sup>1324</sup> Aslına

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<sup>1322</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 21.

<sup>1323</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 22.

<sup>1324</sup> ÇTK tasarısının gerekçesinde büyük mülklerin diğer arazi mülkiyet kategorilerine kıyasla teknik ve ekonomik birtakım üstünlük olduğu kabul edilmesine rağmen, büyük mülkiyetin beraberinde getirdiği sosyal mahzurların bunlara galebe çaldığı düşünülmektedir. Burada ne tür sosyal mahzurların kastedildiğine aşağıda değineceğim. Gerekçe metni, şu temenni ile bitmektedir: Büyük mülklerin örneğin makineli tarım

bakılacak olursa, tasarının bu ilk şekli orta mülkleri dahi tehdit edebilecek durumdadır. Zira on ikinci maddeye göre, normal şartlarda çiftliklerin 5000 dönüm üstü kısmı kamulaştırılabilse de mevcut arazinin tüm topraksız ve az topraklı çiftçileri topraklandırmaya yetmediği yerlerde, özel mülklerin Çiftçi Ocağı haddinden (30-500 dönüm) fazlası dağıtım amaçlı kamulaştırılabilirdi. Bu oldukça sert hükmün tek bir istisnası vardı: Sahibi tarafından düzenli şekilde işlenen araziler, bu tür kamulaştırmadan muaftı.<sup>1325</sup> Bu haliyle bile bu kural pek çok çiftçiyi olumsuz etkileyebilecek kuvvetteydi. İşte bu durumu savaş yıllarının deneyimi ile ilişkilendirmeyi öneriyorum. Yukarıda, büyük çiftçilerin hükümet politikalarına itaat etmemesinin yarattığı tepkiden söz ettim. Şimdi buna orta ve büyük çiftçilerin savaş yıllarında gösterdikleri ekonomik performansının yarattığı hüsrana eklemek istiyorum. Meclis görüşmeleri sırasında Ziraat Vekili Hatipoğlu şunu açıkça ifade etmiştir: Savaş yılları deneyimi göstermiştir ki orta ve büyük çiftçilerin “ziraî istihsalin büyük bir yekûnunu” meydana getirdiğini görüşü artık savunulamaz. Hatipoğlu’na göre, bu zor yıllarda tüm ulusu besleyenler küçük köylüler olmuştur.<sup>1326</sup> Mecliste söz alan başkaları da Hatipoğlu’na bu noktada destek çıkıp mevcut mülkiyet dağılımına müdahale edilmezse, Türkiye’nin darlık ve hatta kıtlıkla yüz yüze gelmesinin işten dahi olmadığını belirtmişlerdir.<sup>1327</sup>

ÇTK tasarısında bu görüşün izleri rahatlıkla fark edilebilir. Tasarının gerekçesinin hemen en başında Türkiye’de arazi darlığı gibi bir problem olmadığı, aksine nüfus yoğunluğu hali hazırda oldukça düşük olduğundan, nüfus hızla artsa bile tarımsal arazi rezervinin uzun süre tüm tarımsal üreticilerin ihtiyacını karşılayabileceği kabul edilmektedir.<sup>1328</sup>

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açısından sahip oldukları üstünlükler devletin işleteceği büyük çiftlikler sayesinde korunacaktır (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 7).

<sup>1325</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 25.

<sup>1326</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, s. 100.

<sup>1327</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, s. 98-9; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, s. 155.

<sup>1328</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 4.

Öyleyse akla gelen soru şudur: Bu elverişli koşullara rağmen rejimin reform yapmak isteği nereden kaynaklanmaktaydı? Bu noktada gerekçe metni üç kavrama atıfta bulunur: “arazi mülkiyet rejimi”, “mülkiyet bünyesi” ve “arazi işletme rejimi.” İlk kavram, yasaların belirlediği mülkiyet sistemini belirtmektedir ve metne göre Türkiye’deki mülkiyet rejiminde herhangi bir sorun yoktur. Her modern toplumda olduğu gibi, yeni Türkiye’de de toprakta özel mülkiyet rejimi (Türk Kanunu Medenîsi ile) tesis edilmiştir. Açıktır ki hazırlanan kanunun amacı mülkiyet rejimini değiştirmek değildir. Sorunlu görülen ve değiştirilmek istenen ise mülkiyet bünyesidir. Mülkiyet bünyesi kavramı “arazinin millet kişileri arasında paylaşılma” şekline işaret eder. Demek oluyor ki Türkiye’de tarımsal arazilerin dağılımı “elverişsiz”dir. Bunun sebebi, metne göre, büyük mülklerin varlığıdır.<sup>1329</sup> İşte bu noktada devreye üçüncü kavram girmektedir. Arazi işletme rejimi “arazinin kullanılması şekli ve usulleri”ni tarif eder.<sup>1330</sup> Türkiye’deki işletme rejiminin temel vasfı ortaklığın yaygınlığıdır ki bu büyük mülklerin varlığının bir sonucudur. Şöyle ki büyük toprak sahiplerinin pek çoğu aslında toprakla ilgili değildirler, zirai faaliyette bulunmaz, geçimlerini topraktan sağlamazlar. Bu büyük arazileri işleyenler topraksız ya da az topraklı köylülerdir. Bu köylüler söz konusu topraklarda ortakçılık yaparlar. Geçimleri için toprağa muhtaç oldukları halde topraktan mahrum olan bu insanlar, ortakçılık yaptıkları arazi başkasının mülkü olduğundan işledikleri toprağa yabancı kalmaya mahkumdurlar.<sup>1331</sup>

Gerçekten de tasarımı kaleme alanların tespit ettikleri en büyük sorun ülkede ortaklığın yaygın oluşudur. En başta, ortakçılık ilkel bir işletme rejimi olarak tarif edilip ekonomik performans noktayı nazarından yetersiz görülmektedir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, ortakçılık tarımsal üretimin ilerlemesi önünde bir engel teşkil etmekteydi, çünkü ne arazisini kiraya

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<sup>1329</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 2, 5.

<sup>1330</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 3.

<sup>1331</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 5-6.

veren toprak sahibinin ne de ortakçının toprağa yatırım yapmak için bir sebebi vardı.<sup>1332</sup> Diğer yandan, ortakçılık sosyal olarak da olumsuzlanmakta, ortakçılık ilişkisinin mülksüz, dolayısıyla köksüz ve bağımlı bir köylü kitlesi yarattığına dikkat çekilmektedir.<sup>1333</sup> Son olarak, ortakçılık siyasi açıdan da sakıncalı bulunmaktaydı. Gerekçe metninde yapılan tespite göre, toprak sahiplerinin ortakçılar üzerinde sahip oldukları ekonomik güç kolayca siyasi güce tahvil olmakta, bu şekilde birtakım “mahalli nüfuzlar” ve “siyasi vasilikler” ortaya çıkmaktaydı. Bu durum, geçmişte devletin otoritesini sarsacak boyutlara gelmişti, üstelik gerekçeyi kaleme alanlara bakılacak olursa, gelecekte de gelebilirdi.<sup>1334</sup> Sözün özü, ortakçılık, toprak sahipleri ile onların topraklarını işleyen küçük köylüler arasında ekonomik, sosyal ve siyasi boyutları olan bir bağımlılık ilişkisi tesis ettiği için eleştirilmekteydi. Gerekçe metninin tercih ettiği işletme biçimi bizatihi işletme, yani arazinin doğrudan doğruya sahipleri tarafından işlenmesi idi. Bizatihi işletme “toprağına bağlı, köklü, kendi mülküne dayanır müstakil bir çiftçi kalabalığı” yaratmaya muktedir olduğu için tercih edilmekteydi.<sup>1335</sup> İşte bu sebeple tasarı Türkiye tarımının temelini küçük köylü mülkiyeti olmasını öngörüyordu.<sup>1336</sup>

Ortakçılık aleyhine ve bizatihi işletme lehine bu tercihin başka bağlamlarda da dile getirildiğini eklemek gerekir. Tıpkı 1934 tarihli İskân Kanununda olduğu gibi, burada da ülke nüfusunun kıt olduğu, nüfus artışının ancak köylünün ekonomik imkanlarının genişlemesiyle mümkün olacağı iddia ediliyordu. Bu demek oluyor ki toprak dağıtımı hâlâ

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<sup>1332</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 3, 5-6.

<sup>1333</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 4.

<sup>1334</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 3, 4.

<sup>1335</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 4.

<sup>1336</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 7. Açıkça dile getirilmemiş olsa da, burada küçük mülkiyet ile bizatihi işletme arasında bir koşutluk kurulduğu açıktır. Yani küçük mülk sahiplerinin arazilerini bizzat işlediği/işleyeceği varsayılmaktadır. Buna göre, küçük köylülerin topraklarını boş bırakmak ya da ortakçıya veya kiracıya vermek temayülleri yoktur. Hükümetin küçük mülkiyet taraftarlığının altında yatan fikirlerden birinin bu olduğu pekâlâ söylenebilir.

aynı zamanda nüfus artışını dağlamak için bir araçtı.<sup>1337</sup> Ortakçılığın tasfiyesi ve tüm köylülerin toprak sahibi kılınması bir yandan da rejimin halkçılık prensibinin bir gereği olarak sunuluyordu. Halkçılık prensibinin tarım kesimindeki tezahürü “Türkiye’nin arazi mülkiyet bünyesinde köylü mülklerinin geniş temeli teşkil etmesi” olacaktı.<sup>1338</sup>

Sonuç olarak, hükümetin desteği ile meclise gelen bu toprak dağıtım yasının üzerine kurulu olduğu esas ilke “toprağı işleyenlerin ona sahip olması, toprağa sahip olanların topraklarını işlemesi” idi.<sup>1339</sup> Fakat Ziraat Vekâletinin hazırladığı ilk şekliyle bile, bu yasa tasarısı münhasıran özel mülkleri yeniden dağıtmak amacıyla değildi. Tasarının dokuzuncu maddesine göre, dağıtılacak araziler şunlardı: tapulu ya da tapusuz olarak devletin hüküm ve tasarrufu altında bulunan araziler; köy, kasaba ve şehirlerde orta malı olan (halkın kullanımına bırakılmış) araziler; sahibi bilinmeyen araziler; bataklıkların kurutulması ile ya da göl ve arazilerden kazanılan araziler; kamulaştırılacak olan özel şahıslara ait araziler.<sup>1340</sup> Görüldüğü üzere, kanunun getirdiği özel hükümler uyarınca kamulaştırılacak olan özel mülkler dağıtılacak arazi kategorilerinden sadece biriydi. Tasarının bu hükmü komisyon tarafından da hemen hiç değişmeden korundu<sup>1341</sup> ve ÇTK’nin sekizinci, dokuzuncu ve onuncu maddeleri olarak yasalaştı.<sup>1342</sup> Fakat dikkat çekici husus, ne ilk tasarıda ne komisyonun tadilinden sonra ne de nihai kanunda bu arazilerin hangi sırayla dağıtılacağına dair bir kuralın olmamasıdır. Bu durum mecliste uzun tartışmaların yaşanmasına sebep olmuştur. Bazı milletvekilleri (ki muhalifler bu

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<sup>1337</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 5, 7. ÇTK tasarısının mecliste görüşülmeye başladığı 14 Mayıs’ta ilk sözü olan Ziraat Vekili Ş.R. Hatipoğlu’nun vurguladığı hususlardan biri de buydu. Hatipoğlu’na göre, istenen nüfus artışı ancak müstakil çiftçi ailelerinin sayıca artmasıyla mümkün olabilirdi (T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, s. 62; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, s. 102-3).

<sup>1338</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 5.

<sup>1339</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 5.

<sup>1340</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 23.

<sup>1341</sup> Bakınız T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 23-4.

<sup>1342</sup> Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu, 1945, Sekizinci-Onuncu Madde, s. 697.

gruba dahildir) önce yukarıda saydığım ilk iki kategorideki arazilerin dağıtılmasını, bu arazilerin yeterli olmadığı hallerde özel mülklerin kamulaştırması seçeneğine başvurulmasını savunmuştur.<sup>1343</sup> Buna karşıt pozisyon alan milletvekilleri ise bu yolun gerçekçi olmadığını, topraksız ve az topraklıların bulunduğu her bölgede dağıtılmaya hazır devlet arazisi ve orta malı (metruk) arazi bulunamayacağını iddia etmişlerdir. Bu grubun öne sürdüğü bir diğer argüman, pek çok yerde devlet arazileri ve orta malı arazilerin verimsiz ya da daha kötüsü tarıma elverişsiz olabileceğidir. Son olarak, bu boş arazilerin statüsündeki belirsizliklere değinilmiş ve kadastro işi tamamlanmadan dağıtılmaya müsait kamu arazilerinin miktarını bilmenin olanaksız olduğu dile getirilmiştir.<sup>1344</sup> Bu konudaki tartışma uzayınca, Geçici Komisyon Sözcüsü Cafer Tüzel söz alarak, metinde açıkça belirtilmese de öncelikle devlet arazilerinin ve meralar başta olmak üzere orta mallarının dağıtılacağını beyan etmiş ve konu böylece kapanmıştır.<sup>1345</sup>

Tasarıyı incelemek üzere kurulan Geçici Komisyon üç ay boyunca çalışmış, Ziraat Vekâletinin projesini iki kez baştan sona müzakere etmiş ve hükümetin desteklediği bu tasarıda birtakım kökten değişiklikler yapmıştı. Sekiz ayrı daimi meclis komisyonundan toplam otuz vekilin katılımıyla oluşturulan Geçici Komisyon çalışmalarını tamamladıktan sonra kanun tasarısına dair hazırladığı raporu Meclis Başkanlığına sunmuştu. Söz konusu rapor, Ziraat Vekâleti tasarısının kırsal alana dair öne sürdüğü tespitlere meydan okumakla kalmıyor, aynı zamanda toprak meseleleri ve tarımsal kalkınma konusunda bambaşka görüşler öne sürüyordu.<sup>1346</sup> Geçici Komisyon çalışmalarına damgasını vuran kişi, komisyonun sözcülüğünü de üstlenen Aydın Vekili Adnan Menderes'ti. Menderes, ÇTK

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<sup>1343</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, s. 78, 83; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, s. 101-2; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, s. 131; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, s. 188, 190; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, s. 84; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, s. 119-20.

<sup>1344</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, s. 79, 105, 146; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, s. 100; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945e, s. 188.

<sup>1345</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945g, s. 95.

<sup>1346</sup> Ayrıntılar için bakınız T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 9-17.

tasarısı mecliste görüşülmeye başlandıktan hemen iki gün sonra (16 Mayıs 1945) hükümetin komisyon çalışmalarına müdahalesini kınayarak sözcülük görevinden istifa etmiş ve bu görevi hükümet çizgisinde olan Cafer Tüzel üstlenmişti. Bu tarihten itibaren Menderes meclisteki muhalefetin en baskın sesi oldu ve Geçici Komisyon raporunda ifade edilmiş olan fikir ve önerileri bu sefer Genel Kurul'da diğer muhaliflerle beraber dillendirdi.

Tasarıya muhalefet eden Adnan Menderes, Cavit Oral, Emin Sazak ve Halil Menteşe gibi vekillerin vurguladıkları şeydu: Türkiye'de toprak darlığı olmadığı gibi büyük mülkler hem sayıca az hem de kapsadıkları saha açısından hükümet tasarısının ima ettiğinden daha önemsizdi.<sup>1347</sup> Dolayısıyla, topraksızlık da yakıcı bir problem değildi.<sup>1348</sup> Menderes mecliste yaptığı konuşmalardan birinde söylediği gibi, topraksızlık ülkede ancak yer yer karşılaşılan bir problemdi. Dahası topraksızlığın sebebi büyük mülklerin varlığı ya da toprak yoğunlaşması değildi. Topraksızlığa sebep asıl iki faktördü. İlk olarak, hali hazırda tarıma açılmış ve işlenmekte olan arazi oldukça dardı. Menderes'e göre, işlenen arazilerin tüm arazilere oranı sadece %15 civarındaydı. Menderes'in önerisi, yeni arazilerin tarıma açılmasının özendirilmesi ve boş arazilerin (devlet arazileri ve ortak araziler) topraksız ve az topraklı çiftçilere dağıtılmasıydı. Fakat bu önlem tek başına sorunu çözmekten uzak kalmaya mahkumdu, çünkü geniş arazilerin hâlâ tarıma açılmayı beklemesinin sebebi zirai gerilikti. İşlenen arazinin genişlemesi ancak üretimin rasyonalizasyonu ile mümkündü. Topraksızlığın ikinci sebebi ise nüfus dağılımındaki dengesizliklerdi. Arazinin nispeten dar ya da arazi veriminin düşük olduğu kimi yerlerde nüfus toprağa nispetle fazlayken geniş arazilerin bulunduğu kimi yerler oldukça tenhaydı. Sonuç olarak, bu tür topraksızlık sorununu çözenin yolu özel mülkleri kamulaştırmak değil, fazla nüfusu arazinin bol olduğu yerlere taşımaktı. Yani çözüm iskândı.<sup>1349</sup>

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<sup>1347</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, s. 75-6; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, s. 136.

<sup>1348</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, s. 75-6; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, s. 78; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, s. 136; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, s. 159; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, s. 41.

<sup>1349</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, s. 112-4.

Yani topraksız ve az topraklı köylülerin derdine derman olmak için iskân, boş arazilerin dağıtılması ve üretimin rasyonalizasyonu yeterliydi. Diğer yandan, tüm köylülüğün refahı için yapılması gereken ilk iş fiyat mekanizmasının tarım sektörü lehine değişmesiydi. Tarımsal fiyatlar düşük kaldıkça köylünün yoksulluktan kurtulması mümkün değildi.<sup>1350</sup> Bundan sonra ise üretim tekniğinin modernize edilmesi gelecekti. Zira Anadolu köylüleri hâlâ öküz ve karasabanla ziraat yapmaktaydı; üretim tekniği yüzyıllardır değişmemiş ve bu, ziraat ekonomisini geri kalmışlığa mahkum etmişti.<sup>1351</sup>

Muhalefete göre, büyük tarımsal işletmelerin kamulaştırma yoluyla parçalanması tarım sektörü için ve ekonominin geneli için olumsuz sonuçlar doğuracaktı. Teknik üstünlüklere sahip bu çiftlikler bölünüp topraksız ve az topraklı köylülere dağıtıldığında, arazilerin yeni sahipleri en ilkel usullerle ancak geçimlik üretim yapacak, bunun sonucu da pazarlanan ürün miktarının düşmesi olacaktı.<sup>1352</sup> Üstüne üstlük Türkiye’de çiftçilere dağıtılacak geniş devlet arazileri mevcuttu ve bu durum özel mülklerin kamulaştırmasını tamamen gereksiz kılıyordu.<sup>1353</sup>

Ziraat Vekâletinin hazırladığı tasarının ortaya koyduğu ilk ve asıl hedefin ortakçılığın tasfiyesi olduğu düşünülürse, meclisteki muhalefetin bu konudaki görüşünün ne olduğu sorusu oldukça önemlidir. Muhalefetin ileri sürdüğü görüş, ortakçılık ilişkisinin bir iş akdi olduğu, herhangi bir tahakküm içermediğidir. H. Menteşe’nin dillendirdiği gibi, Türkiye’de ortakçılığın yaygın oluşu “hususî zaruretlerimizden” kaynaklanmaktadır; “[a]razisi geniş, nüfusu az, sermayesi kıt olan bu memlekette” ortakçılık sayesinde ki

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<sup>1350</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, s. 104, 115.

<sup>1351</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, s. 64; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, s. 113

<sup>1352</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945f, s. 40.

<sup>1353</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, s. 101-2; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945d, s. 131; T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945h, s. 119-20.

“işle [emekle] sermaye iştirak halinde çalışmışlardır.”<sup>1354</sup> Diğer bir deyişle, işgücü azlığı sebebiyle toprağını işleyemeyecek olan arazi sahibi ortakçılar aracılığıyla arazisini işletir; tek başına üretim yapamayacak durumdaki köylü ise toprak sahibinin sunduğu vasıtalarla (arazi, çeki hayvanı, karasaban/pulluk ya da tohumluk) ziraat yapar. Söz konusu anlayışa göre ortakçılık her iki tarafa da yarayan bir ekonomik ilişkidir. Bunun anlamı, ortaklığın sürüp gitmesinde bir mahzur olmadığıdır. Zaten muhalifler, köylülere devlete ait boş duran arazilerden toprak verilmesine karşı çıkmasalar da, tek bu hamleyle ortakçıların bağımsız üreticiler haline gelemeyeceğini iddia ettiler. Ortakçıların bağımsız üreticiler olabilmesi için onlara çeki hayvanı, alet edevat ve tohum sağlamaya dönük bir kırsal yatırım programına ihtiyaç vardı.<sup>1355</sup>

ÇTK’ye dair çalışmalarda geri planda kalan bir boyut “çiftçi ocağı” kurumudur. ÇTK tasarısının ilk şekli, çiftçi ocağını küçük, orta ve büyük arazi mülklerinden farklı bir mülkiyet kategorisi olarak tanımlar. Çiftçi ocağını belirleyen ilk ölçüt büyüklüktür. Çiftçi ocağı bir çiftçi ailesinin geçinmesine yetecek ve ailenin tüm emek gücünü massedecek büyüklükte bir arazi parçasıdır. Bölgelerin arazi ve iklim şartlarına göre söz konusu büyüklüğün 30 ila 500 dönüm olması öngörülmüştü. İkinci ölçüt, ocağın hukuki statüsüyle ilgilidir. Çiftçi ocağı herhangi bir arazi mülkü ya da ticari malmış gibi serbest alınıp satılamaz ya da ipotek edilemez. Çiftçi ocağının verasetle intikali de özel kurallara tabi idi. Tasarıya göre, ocak, çiftçi ailesinin fertleri arasında bölünemezdi. Aksine, ocağın toplu olarak tek bir varise geçmesi öngörülmüyordu. Bu kural sayesinde aile mülklerinin kuşaktan kuşağa bölünüp parçalanmadan intikal edeceği umuluyordu. Üçüncü ve son ölçüt ise arazinin kullanım şekli ile ilgili idi. Buna göre, çiftçi ocağı çiftçi ailesi tarafından bizzat işlenecekti. Askerlik ve hastalık hariç özel durumlar hariç ocak arazisi kiralanamaz ya da ortakçıya verilemezdi.<sup>1356</sup>

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<sup>1354</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945b, s. 76.

<sup>1355</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945c, s. 104. Bu görüşler Geçici Komisyon raporunda da ortaya konmuştu. Bakınız TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 10-4.

<sup>1356</sup> T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi, 1945a, s. 36-40.

1945'te çiftçi ocağı şeklini alan fikir, yeni bir fikir değildi. Köylü mülklerinin istikrarını sağlamaya dönük bu proje aslında oldukça köklüydü. Toprak meselesi ile ilgilenen politikacılar ve entelektüeller cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarından beri köylünün mülksüzleşmesini önleyecek bir mekanizma özlemindediler. Politikacı ve entelektüellerin yaptıkları önemli tespit şöyle özetlenebilir. Küçük köylü mülkleri iki sebeple istikrarsız ve güvencesizdir. İlk olarak, bu mülkler miras hukuku gereğince varisler arasında bölünmekte, her bölünmeyle birlikte eldeki arazi miktarı azalmakta ve sonunda bir aileyi geçindiremeyecek hale gelmektedir. Mülk yaşayabilir bir ekonomik birim olmaktan çıktığı vakit ise aile geçinebilmek için ya başkalarının arazileri üzerinde ortakçılık yapmak zorunda kalmakta ya da toprağı tamamen bırakıp şehre göçmektedir. İstikrarsızlığa sebep olan ikinci faktör ise borçluluktur. Gelirleri genel olarak düşük olduğundan, köylüler sıklıkla nakit sıkıntısı çekmekteydi. Hane ekonomisi çok çeşitli sebeplerle (örneğin mahsul kötü olduğundan, vergiler arttığından, yeni bir çeki hayvanı ihtiyacı doğduğundan ya da hastalık ve ölüm gibi haller sebebiyle) nakit paraya gereksindiğinde köylüler tüccar-tefecilerden borç almaktaydı.<sup>1357</sup> Aldıkları borcu çevirmekte zorlandıklarında ise hayvanlarını (çeki ya da besi) veya arazilerinin bir kısmı ya da tamamını satmak zorunda kalmaktaydı. Borca karşılık araziler teminat gösterildiğinden, borç ödenemediğinde tefecilerin arazilere el koyması da vaki idi.

Açıktır ki çiftçi ocağı kurumunun halletmeye soyunduğu mesele topraksızlık değil, yoksulluk ve borçluluktur. Türkiye'deki toprak reformu üzerine yapılan akademik çalışmalar hep toprağın yeniden bölüşümü meselesini öne çıkarır. Bu sebeple özel mülkler ve kamulaştırma en ön planda olan öğelerdir. Hâlbuki çiftçi ocağı fikri yeniden bölümüm ya da toprak dağıtımına kadar köklü ve kuvvetli bir fikirdir. 1945'te çiftçi ocağına dair hükümlerin Geçici Komisyon tarafından tasarıdan çıkarılması bu gerçeği değiştirmez.

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<sup>1357</sup> Sürekli altı çizilen bir husus şudur: Köylüler, kredi alabilecekleri kurumlar olmadığı için tüccar-tefecilere mahkumdu. Erken Cumhuriyet döneminde çiftçilere kredi vermekle yükümlü tek kurum Ziraat Bankası idi. Fakat bu krediler çoğunlukla hali vakti yerinde köylülere gitmekteydi, zira banka borçlarını ödemekte hep zorlanan küçük köylülere kredi vermek konusunda gönülsüzdü.

Komisyon tarafından tasarıdan çıkarılan büyük mülkiyet karşıtı birkaç hüküm dışında, ÇTK tasarısının genel olarak mutedil olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. ÇTK'nin, topraksız ve az topraklı ortakçı, kiracı ve işçileri çalıştırdıkları araziler üzerinde topraklandırmayı öngören 17. Maddesinin bu iddiayı yanlışladığı düşünülebilir. Bu madde bir yanıyla rejimin artık fevkalade yerleşmiş olan ortakçılık karşıtlığının bir tezahürüdür. Diğer yandan, bu maddenin son anda tasarıya dahil edilmesi bir tür misillemedir. Reform taraftarları, komisyonun hükümet tasarısında yaptığı değişikliklerin tasarının özünü yok edip onu zayıflattığını düşündüklerinden, kanunu uygulayacak olanların elini güçlendirmek için böylesine esnek bir hüküm kaleme almışlardır. Bu maddenin hiç uygulanmadığı, 1950'de yapılan değişiklikle kanundan çıkarıldığı ve hatta ÇTK'nin yürürlükte kaldığı çeyrek asır boyunca dağıtım amacıyla kamulaştırılan arazilerin dağıtılan arazilerin %1'inden bile az olduğu dikkate alınmalıdır. ÇTK bugüne değin literatürde olduğundan daha radikal bir kanun olarak resmedildiyse, bunun bir sebebi 17. Madde üzerinden değerlendirilmesidir.

**APPENDIX D**  
**TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU**

**ENSTİTÜ**

- Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü
- Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü
- Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü
- Enformatik Enstitüsü
- Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

**YAZARIN**

Soyadı : Kaya  
Adı : Safiye Yelda  
Bölümü: Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi

**TEZİN ADI** (İngilizce) : Land Use, Peasants and the Republic: Debates on Land Reform in Turkey, 1923-1945

**TEZİN TÜRÜ** : Yüksek Lisans  Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ:**