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Elite Perceptions of Land Reform in Early Republican Turkey

M. ASIM KARAÖMERLIOĞLU

This article focuses on the land reform attempts of the single-party regime in Turkey of the mid-1930s through the mid-1940s, culminating in the reform Law of 1945. Why the Turkish ruling elite wanted a land reform is still not adequately understood, and there are a number of controversial and often contradictory interpretations. The thesis here is that despite mainstream approaches to the issue in Turkish historiography, the land reform attempts during the single-party era should be seen as part of the Kemalist project of conservative modernisation. The article argues that a variety of concerns were important in shaping the Turkish elite's thinking on land reform, including an ideology of peasantism combined with a fear of rural unrest (from sharecroppers, agricultural laborers and landless and land-poor peasants); a fear also of urbanisation, proletarianisation and socialist ideas; a desire to strengthen Republican nationalist ideology in the countryside as a basis of regime support (with a particular emphasis on the Kurdish issue). The conclusion presents an interpretation of the Turkish land reform that connects the long- and short-term causes of the land reform Law of 1945.

THE CONTEXT AND THE PROBLEM

In 1922, a year before the foundation of the Turkish Republic on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish nation-state, declared that 'the peasant is the master of our nation'. During the single-party era (1923–46), widespread rhetoric of the cult of the peasant was used mainly to win the political support of peasants for the regime.

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After all peasants made up almost 80 per cent of the population in the early years of the Republic. The cult of the peasant indicated a need to conceal the extremely elitist attitudes of the governing class of the single-party regime. The nationalist leaders pursued a full-fledged reform from above to westernise and 'nationalise' the country and its people. But their reform attempts were related less to the transformation of social relations, such as relations of production, than a change in culture. This holds true especially with regard to rural Turkey where Kemalist reforms hardly penetrated everyday life.¹

In the 1920s, despite the populist rhetoric noted, the majority of small and landless peasants gained little, if anything, from the new regime. Although the tithe (the traditional tax levied as a portion of the peasant's annual produce and one of the biggest burdens of the rural population) was abolished, it was not a turning point. While peasants were relieved from the burden of the tithe, and especially the arbitrary use of power by the former tax collectors, after a few years new taxes based on payment in cash were introduced. As early as 1930 complaints about heavy taxation of the peasants appeared in the press.² A survey of agricultural taxation in 1930, published in the semi-official newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, contended that peasants often longed for the traditional tithe because of the hardships caused by the new taxes.³ Furthermore, from the beginning of the Republic landlords were a significant part of the ruling bloc in Turkish politics, forestalling any reform that could change the rural status quo [Ahmad, 1993: 76]. In this respect, too, it would not be wrong to claim that the young Republic hardly offered anything significant to its peasants in the first decade of its foundation.

Domestic and international developments in the early 1930s further highlighted the peasant question in Turkey. On one hand, as agricultural prices fell dramatically throughout the world because of the Great Depression, the already structurally weak Turkish economy, which relied overwhelmingly on agricultural production, underwent a severe crisis. Domestic political crisis accompanied the worsening economic conditions. The Free Party (*Serbest Fırka*, the pseudo-opposition party created by the Kemalist elite itself) won mass support in 1930. Its popularity was a serious warning of the weakness of the political system and widespread discontent. For these reasons, the 1930s witnessed an increasing concern of the Kemalist elite with the peasantry and agricultural production.

At the economic level, the state intervened to stabilise agricultural prices, established institutions to buy agricultural products and granted a series of subsidies. More important and interesting than these economic measures were political attempts to secure peasant support. The People's Houses (founded in 1932 as propaganda organs of the regime) showed a

special, if unrealistic interest in the peasantry. Their members were encouraged to go to the countryside to educate and enlighten the peasants. Village Institutes were founded in the late 1930s to raise the technical and economic level of the peasants by pursuing educational reforms in rural Turkey.⁴ Perhaps most interesting and controversial was the series of attempts at land reform in the 1930s and after, in order to accomplish social, economic and political goals.

From about the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s, the idea of land reform in Turkey, culminating in the Law for Providing Land to Farmers (LPLF) of 1945, occupied a significant place in the minds of the Turkish ruling elite and intelligentsia. Yet, even today, we know little of the motives behind the land reform attempts of this period. It is no exaggeration to characterise this as one of the most puzzling issues of the early Republican period that still needs to be fully explained.⁵ Even an astute observer, theoretician and witness of the period from the periphery of the ruling circles, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, acknowledged that the reasons for the regime's concern with land reform remain a mystery [Aydemir, 1968b: 323]. Likewise, in his posthumously published memoirs, the distinguished scholar Niyazi Berkes [1997: 245] characterises the land reform of 1945 as a 'muddle'. However, explaining this problem remains a critical task for two reasons: first, the nature of the political system and dominant ideology of the period cannot be fully understood without it. Second, since the repercussions of the discussions of land reform connected with important political developments, among them the impetus for the transition to a multi-party regime in 1946, understanding land reform and related issues is key to these subsequent developments.⁶

There is a vast literature on the nature of the land reform attempts of the early Republican era that shows little agreement. The most popular and widespread explanation regarding the issue is that of the so-called Left-Kemalists. According to Doğan Avcıoğlu [1968: 232], who represents this position in a clear and competent way, land reform was the attempt of the radical and left wing of the Republican People's Party to gain the support of the small and middle peasantry against big landowners. The failure of the land reform, in this view, is explained by the weakness of 'progressive' forces *vis-à-vis* the 'reactionary' political bloc of big landowners and merchants. Another quite different explanation advocated by such prominent politicians of the time as Adnan Menderes and the late Niyazi Berkes [1997], maintains that the LPLF was nothing but a copy of the German *Erbhof* Law (the Nazi agricultural programme to restrict the social mobility of German farmers). According to Menderes, in as much as it restricted mobility in the countryside, the law was a 'backward' undertaking.⁷ Another explanation advanced by economic historians Şevket

Pamuk and Çağlar Keyder, is the dominance of political over economic concerns in the making of the LPLF of 1945.

According to them, it was not access to land but to draft animals that any serious economic reform to promote peasant production would have addressed: 'landlessness emerged from poverty, not the other way round' [1984-85; 61]. The LPLF, in their view, was a political maneuver of President İsmet İnönü in order to suggest the public that the emerging opposition in the Assembly had vested interests in preserving big landownership. Keyder and Pamuk [1984-85: 55], like Avcıoğlu, see the LPLF as a radical measure that diverged 'from the overall political direction of the single-party era'. Finally, some scholars have argued an economic rationale: increasing the productivity of small and middle peasants in order to explain the LPLF to transfer the agricultural surplus to industrial development [*Birtek and Keyder*, 1975].⁹

We do not assess the detail of these interpretations here, but emphasise and explore the necessity of understanding the land reform debate in terms of both long- and short-term factors. Most of the interpretations of the reform Law focus on the political conjuncture of 1945. We shift the emphasis to the 1930s, but also comment on the conjuncture in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War (discussed in the Conclusion). Instead of an exclusively economic interpretation, we underline the primacy of political and ideological factors, especially the neglected role of peasantist ideology.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LAND REFORM

Before analysing the reasons behind the idea of land reform during the single-party era, we need to take a look at some relevant developments from the 1920s through the mid-1940s. The interest in and concern for a land reform in Turkey came relatively late to the Turkish elite's political and intellectual agenda [*Sarç*, 1944: 293]. In different parts of the world, however, before and after the First World War, land issues had been a major concern to elites and governments, as was the case in the former Ottoman countries in the Balkans [*Bizzell*, 1926: 55-60; *Dimitrov*, 1948: 433-47; *Mitrany*, 1927: 319]. In Turkey, the situation was the opposite. 'In our country, leave aside the practical side of the matter', wrote Ömer Lütfi Barkan [1943: 377], a prominent economic historian, as late as 1943, 'even theoretically as an idea or problem, land issues had not occupied as significant a place as they deserved among intellectuals and academics'. According to him, this attitude in Turkey could even falsely instigate a sense in which Turkey did not have a problem of this kind at all. Barkan, though seeming to exaggerate a little, points out an interesting phenomenon indeed: up until the mid-1930s, the Turkish elite was not actually interested in and

concerned about land issues, vital to the lives of many peasants in Turkey.⁹ This was partly because of the organic relations of the Kemalist elite with the landowners, and partly because of the relative abundance of land following the dramatic decline in population after the First World War due to huge population and the deaths of millions of people.

Until the mid-1940s, historical developments regarding land issues can be summarised as follows: In the early 1920s, the government distributed inconsiderable amounts of land to specific groups, notably Muslim immigrants from the former Ottoman territories [*Barkan*, 1946: 453]. In the fall of 1929, Prime Minister İsmet İnönü proclaimed that his government intended to distribute land to peasants, while emphasising that under no circumstances did it aim to hurt big landowners whose production was efficient and rational.¹⁰ In 1930, the government conducted an unsuccessful attempt to distribute state lands by promulgating the Land and Settlement Law [*Aktan*, 1966: 319]. Serious discussions of why and how to distribute land to the landless and small peasants gained momentum, especially after 1934 [*Avcıoğlu*, 1968: 234].

In June 1934, a more comprehensive Settlement Law was passed to provide land for those people who were displaced between the East and the West of the country. This land distribution attempt was related to finding a solution to the Kurdish issue by diminishing the political power of Kurdish tribal leaders, whose power was thought to derive from their economic domination of the Kurdish peasantry; but from then on, for reasons discussed later in this paper, the government shifted to a nationwide land reform plan [*Tezel*, 1986: 323]. Nevertheless, this Settlement Law was significant as an initial step toward removing obstacles that prevented the state from expropriating private lands [*Barkan*, 1946: 454, 478; *Tezel*, 1986: 322–23]. The government focused more on similar arrangements, especially during the last months of 1936. At this time, even diplomats in Ankara such as Von Kral [1938: 74] were acknowledging that ‘a reform is being prepared which will fundamentally affect the whole country’.¹¹

In November 1936, Kemal Atatürk declared that ‘it is absolutely necessary for every Turkish farmer family to possess enough land to cultivate and earn a living. The basis and improvement of the country are to be found in this principle.’ He did not forget to add that the government wanted to ‘encourage ... the surplus production of rationally run big farms’. In December of the same year, İnönü stated that the country’s agriculture was in deep depression, and that the government would ‘allocate a significant amount of money to benefit agriculture and farmers from 1937 onwards’ (cited in *Avcıoğlu* [1968: 232]). In the spring of 1937, these issues occupied a central place in parliamentary discussions of the changes to the Constitution. It was pointed out that in order to make farmers ‘active

elements of the society', and for society to benefit from their labor, they had to be rescued from working on other people's lands and given land of their own.¹² Probably the most important signal came in Atatürk's speech in November 1937, when he argued that the landless should be given land, and 'more importantly, the lands of farming families should, under no circumstances, be divisible'. This speech seemed to add momentum to the discussion of land issues in Turkey [*Köprülü*, 1937: 289].¹³

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the interest in land issues among the elite disappeared, as the war consumed its attention. As soon as the war ended in 1945, however, the government set out a proposal entitled Law for the Distribution of Land and for the Establishment of Farmer Homesteads. After deleting the points relating to Farmer Homesteads (*Çiftçi Ocakları*), which faced fierce opposition in the Grand National Assembly, the proposal was approved under the name Law for Providing Land to Farmers (LPLF), despite considerable parliamentary opposition for the first time in the history of the single-party regime.

Although establishing Farmer Homesteads was deleted, it is important to understand measure, as it reflects motives behind the land distribution debates of the governing elite of the 1930s and 1940s. The government's aim for Farmer Homesteads was to create and maintain 'independent farmer families,' and to secure 'the indivisibility of farmers' lands' within a range from 30 to 500 *dönüms*¹⁴ for each family [*Barkan*, 1946: 469]. Farms thus classified could be possessed only by a single individual considered the head of the farming family, and could be inherited by only one person in the family. They could not be sold before 25 years. Other family members had to be compensated financially without putting the inheritor in a difficult financial position. Furthermore, lands assigned as Farmer Homesteads could not be distrained or mortgaged under any circumstances, a precaution to protect farmers. Such lands, if not cultivated, would be reclaimed by the state and transferred to another member of the family. Needless to say, sharecropping was strictly forbidden in Farmer Homesteads [*Tezel*, 1986: 327; *Barkan*, 1946: 468, 491].

In short, the aims underlying the proposal of Farmer Homesteads were, first, to secure the indivisible 'family' size farms; second, to protect them by preventing their mortgage and distraint, and in so doing, to detach a substantial sector of the economy from commercial relations and the market. Last but not least, the measure embodied the social and nationalist goals of sustaining 'rooted' farming families who relied solely on their own labor and property [*Barkan*, 1946: 470].

The principles of the truncated 'Law for Providing Land to Farmers' that was passed were to give land to landless and small farmers, to furnish farmers with credit and equipment,¹⁵ to set upper and lower limits on private

landownership, and to ensure that all lands were continuously cultivated. The Law made it clear that private lands that were not to be redistributed first, but state-owned and other potentially productive lands, such as those that could be reclaimed by draining lakes and swamps. According to the Law, private lands could also be appropriated and redistributed if other lands were not available. Private holdings over 5,000 *dönüms* were subject to redistribution, but this ceiling could be decreased to 2,000 *dönüms* in regions where land was scarce. However, the Law was also open to flexible interpretation in that efficiently and rationally cultivated large holdings could be exempt from appropriation [Barkan, 1946: 459–62]. The most controversial part of the Law was the famous Article 17, added at the last minute, which made it possible for agricultural workers and sharecroppers to claim the land they were currently working on. In a country like Turkey, where sharecropping was widespread, it would have been possible to appropriate huge amounts of private land on this basis, if there had been a genuine political will to do so.

The law gave rise to intense political controversies in the Grand National Assembly. Some prominent deputy ministers such as Adnan Menderes, Emin Sazak, and Cavit Oral, themselves big capitalist landowners, strongly opposed the law. Menderes, who became the Prime Minister of Turkey during the 1950s (and was later overthrown and hanged by the military in 1961), became the key spokesman for the opposition. According to him, Turkey did not have a problem of land scarcity, since potentially cultivatable arable land was three times greater than land currently tilled. The real problem, he believed, was the adverse terms of trade for agriculture with industry [Tezel, 1986: 329]. Moreover, according to Menderes, what peasants really needed was access to the necessary means of production, an increase in credit opportunities, and the introduction of scientific methods in agricultural production [Goloğlu, 1982: 31].

Menderes also made a provocative assertion that the overall spirit of the law, as exemplified in the 'Farmer Homesteads', was simply copied from Hitler's 1933 law of *Erbhof* (entailed estates) [Tezel, 1986: 329]. We shall address Menderes's view in detail below; for the moment it is important to note that most of the 'threatening' articles, including Article 17 of the Law, were never implemented. As a matter of fact, a few months after the law was approved in August 1945, İnönü, now President of Turkey, appointed Cavit Oral, a large landowner from the fertile region of Adana and a prominent opponent of the law, to head the Ministry of Agriculture, responsible for implementing the law.¹⁶ As early as 1948, İnönü characterised the LPLF which he himself had drafted, as an 'extreme one' which could be 'detrimental to the agricultural and social life of the country' (cited in Tezel [1986: 330]).

WHY A LAND REFORM?

The Problem of Landless Peasants

A first assessment of the Turkish land reform attempts of the single-party era is that their overriding motives were more political and ideological than economic.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, not only in Turkey but in other countries that underwent land reform in the same period, similar concerns were prominent [Mitrany, 1961: 110; Barkan, 1943: 428]. While many political regimes between the two world wars gave priority to political and ideological over economic concerns, this does not mean that the reforms had no economic implications. The economic literature points to such goals as increasing agricultural productivity by giving land to peasants, and consequently increasing the demand for industrial goods, thereby boosting the Turkish economy as a whole. Opposing economic interpretations maintain, on the other hand, that land reforms tend to freeze labor mobility and to increase self-sufficiency rather than commercialising agriculture [Tiltman, 1936: 22; Mitrany, 1961: 116–17]. Despite such interpretations which emphasise the economic motives behind land reforms, the fact of the matter is that in Turkey economic arguments played a secondary role. One reason might be that the elite of the time believed that the economic rationale of land reform was not strong, and indeed was sceptical that it could help solve the economic problems of rural Turkey.¹⁸ Thus, economic concerns played little part in either the intentions behind or the expectations of land reform in Turkey.

In our opinion, one of the most important factors that helped shape the idea of a land reform in the minds of the Turkish political elite was its belief that there was a huge and increasing number of landless and poverty-stricken peasants from the early 1930s onwards. Many academics and politicians have long argued that the number of landless and poverty-stricken peasants was not significant.¹⁹ For instance, Menderes, as noted above, argued that land was not scarce in Turkey, and that there was no significant problem of landlessness [Goloğlu, 1982: 30–31].²⁰

Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain the agrarian structure in the period in question because of the lack of reliable data. To discuss the economic motives for land reform, and its potential effects on agrarian structure, one needs to know the distribution of land, the numbers of landless peasants, distribution of draft animals, and so on. Both now and then, historians in Turkey, including Barkan, complained about the lack of reliable data [Barkan, 1936: 92–8; Barkan, 1946: 456, 471–2, 509–10; Sarç 1944: 293; Aktan, 1966: 321; Tezel, 1986: 308–9]. Given this lack, the ruling elite's perception of the structure of the country's agriculture and peasantry was all the more important. The people who made policies in this

period did not have the statistics to interpret accurately objective conditions in rural Turkey, even if they thought they did. Even so, *what they envisioned* as the objective conditions of the Turkish countryside is key as a guide to their actions.

For most of the Turkish ruling elite of the 1930s, landlessness and rural poverty were perceived as one of the country's most serious problems. Minister of Interior Pükrü Kaya's speech in June 1934 (cited in Erdost [1978: 216–17]) is typical. 'Today a population of five million in the country works on other people's land, and it is the state's foremost duty to distribute land to the landless, thus making true the famous slogan of the time that "the peasant is the master of the country".'²¹ The same concerns were repeated three years later in the course of making Constitutional amendments to prepare the legal ground for land distribution:

Fifteen million out of eighteen million Turks are farmers. But most of them do not work on their own lands. To make the farmers, who form the majority of Turks, possess their own lands means to make them masters of their economic destiny and, therefore, make them prosperous and active elements of the society [Ülkü Editorial, 1937a: 57].²²

In the 1920s and 1930s, a similar assessment appeared in some academic publications. A Soviet researcher, P.M. Zhukovsky [1933: 131–4] argued that five per cent of families in Turkey owned 65 per cent of the total land. In 1934, İsmail Hüsrev Tökin [1990: 151] predicted that if existing trends continued, the number of dispossessed farmers would dramatically increase in the near future. Barkan [1946: 480] insisted that the belief that Turkey did not have a land problem was an illusion. Even in 1950, after some land had already been redistributed throughout the country, 37.9 per cent of families held 81.4 per cent of all cultivatable land, and 0.8 per cent with more than 700 *dekars* controlled 19.6 per cent of all fertile lands [*İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü*, 1965: 124].²³

Some recent studies also confirm this. According to Tezel's calculations, for example, at least 20 per cent of the peasants did not have their own lands in the early 1950s [1986: 311], including 21 per cent in western Anatolia and 33 per cent in the Mediterranean south. In the latter region, if we add that 20 per cent of peasants were sharecroppers, then about 55 per cent of farmers were desperate for land [Tezel, 1986: 293–5]. Although all this strongly suggests that land was a burning issue in Turkey of the 1930s, we do not want to insist that these findings represent the real, *objective* conditions of the time. We know that it was not a growing class of big landowners which was alone responsible for the problem of landlessness. Other factors such as population growth, the existence of huge state-owned

and public lands, and the scarcity of capital and equipment, all contributed to the problems of the countryside [Sarç, 1944: 316–18].

Having established the Turkish ruling elite's perception of a land problem, we need to scrutinise the nature of their concerns about landlessness and their relation to the idea of land reform. Landlessness was seen as a social and political, rather than an economic, problem. Above all, landless peasants meant a potential source of unrest and social upheavals. Historical experience seemed to justify this view. After all, was it not the case that after the First World War landless and poverty-stricken peasants in many parts of eastern and southeastern Europe occupied and *de facto* possessed lands? Were not many Balkan states forced to implement land reforms independent of, and often despite, their will to legitimise a *de facto* condition [Mitrany, 1961: 106; Barkan, 1943: 442, 446]? As Barkan [1935: 24] pointed out at the time, most revolutionary movements of the twentieth century took place in agrarian societies where landlordism was contested. The role of land-hungry peasants in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 remained a fresh memory in the minds of many Turkish elites.²⁴ The belief that peasants could trigger destructive social revolutions was a deeply rooted fear of the Turkish ruling elite. For this reason they repeatedly articulated the necessity of land reform to maintain 'social peace and tranquillity' [Barkan, 1946: 452].²⁵

The Ideological Context

Thus far, we have examined the Turkish ruling elite's perception, and fear, of landless and other poor peasants. However, the land reform and related issues cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration also the ideological background of the ruling elite and intelligentsia of the time. This is all the more important because in early Republican Turkey, there was no peasant movement pushing for land reform. Conventional assumptions about the Republican elite's ideological background, and its commitment to modernisation and industrialisation, contribute nothing to understanding its preoccupation with land reform. Instead, we need to consider the effects of a significant and widespread ideology of the time, namely peasantism.²⁶

Peasantism has, with a few exceptions (notably [Toprak, 1992; Küçük, 1985; Üstel, 1990]), been neglected by the historians of Republican Turkey, in favour of a standard view of Kemalism (the emergent official ideology) as a progressive 'modernisation' programme of which industrialisation is an integral part. However, the historical experience and intellectual atmosphere of the 1930s and after should make us sceptical of such an interpretation. To give just one example, as late as 1936, Prime Minister Celal Bayar [1936: 9] could speak of the lack of consensus as to whether Turkey should be

predominantly an agricultural or an industrial country,²⁷ a clue to the ambiguities of the time and the eclectic nature of the ruling elite's ideology.

Such ambiguities and eclecticism can clearly be observed in Turkey from the 1920s onward. Interestingly enough, industrialisation was not a significant part of the programs of the 14 governments established during the 1920s [Kurmuş, 1977: 13]. Dr Reşit Galip, who was appointed to many important posts in these governments, including Minister of Education, was famous for his 'peasantism', not his support for industrialisation.²⁸ Likewise, Memduh Esenal, who became the general secretary of the RPP in the early 1940s, a post dealing mainly with indoctrination, was known as the 'enemy of industry and industrial civilisation' [Aydemir, 1959: 464]. More examples could be adduced, but suffice it to say that the claim that industrialisation was the central plank of the official ideology is unsustainable.²⁹

In fact, a kind of conservatism, extensively colored by peasantism, was widespread. Especially after 1932, peasantist approaches appeared everywhere in books and journals.³⁰ Even those members of the elite who did not characterise themselves precisely as peasantist shared many peasantist ideological traits and concerns, as can be seen in many writings of the ruling elite and intelligentsia of the time. Although many senior RPP leaders did not consider themselves peasantists, their conservative imagination and mentality were fed by and mingled with peasantism. Numerous articles in *Ülkü*, the semi-official journal of the RPP, exemplify this phenomenon.³¹

The most important characteristic of peasantism was its hostile attitude towards cities and urbanisation: urbanisation and 'urban civilisation' were the root causes of all current social infections.³² The Great Depression, for example, had started purely as an urban phenomenon, but peasants all over the world had paid its real costs [Köymen, 1933: 355]. Cities embodied cosmopolitanism, class struggle, unemployment, economic depressions, workers' strikes, insecurities of all kinds, diminished social control, and degeneration of all sorts. According to the peasantists, 'urban civilisation' rested on the exploitation of peasants, making cities and city-dwellers responsible for the current social, cultural and economic underdevelopment of rural areas [Köymen, 1934a: 147-9].

The peasantists also stubbornly opposed the emergence of a working class in Turkey. They believed that the working class had an inherent tendency towards social upheaval and revolution, was less willing to accept the nationalism of the new state, and was prone to an unsettling 'internationalism!'³³ Peasants, on the other hand, meant small proprietorship and petty production, perceived as an antidote to all the social problems engendered by both American and Soviet large-scale industry. While the

peasantists agreed on the necessity of a national industry, they wanted the formation of industry that would favour the peasants. Interestingly enough, they were for *industry* but against *industrialisation*, a term they used to refer to the historical experience of western Europe. These intellectuals envisioned state-controlled industrial development located *outside* the cities, that would not dislocate the population of the countryside and forestall rural–urban migration [Nadi, 1935; Ziya, 1933: 38], and would not subvert traditional relations of authority while stimulating technical change in farming [Aydoslu, 1934: 300].³⁴

Behind the land reform attempts, then, we can detect a fear of urbanisation and proletarianisation, two of the principal preoccupations of peasantist ideology. Distributing land to the peasants would prevent their urban migration and proletarianisation [Barkan, 1943: 427; Pamak, 1982: 20] (also Peker cited in Kivilcimlı [1992: 235]). The peasantists wanted a Turkey whose cities were not places of social and political unrest, as was the case in Europe and America, and in which the formation of a working class was inhibited. A land reform that distributed land to the peasants would serve as ‘social insurance’ against all the problems envisaged.

Another worthwhile aim of a land reform related to the fear of proletarianisation was the abolition of labor forms such as sharecropping in the countryside. This aim has been regarded as one of the most important goals of distributing land to the peasants. İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, who published extensively on the rural economics of Turkey, but was not terribly sympathetic toward peasantism, argued that sharecropping was a backward and obsolete relation of production, since it meant cheap labor and *technological backwardness*. According to him [Tökin, 1990: 191], instead of investing in technology and mechanisation, many farmers preferred using sharecroppers, who were easily available and less costly than machines. Moreover, sharecropping exploited the peasants [Avcioğlu, 1968: 234]. The senior RPP leaders and peasantist ideologues emphasised similar concerns.³⁵ But the fact of the matter is that their interest in abolishing sharecropping and similar forms of labor in rural Turkey resulted from their habit of correlating sharecropping with proletarianisation. In their minds, sharecropping could well give rise to a dispossessed landless peasantry and, finally, proletarianisation. In other words, their critical attitude towards sharecropping and desire to abolish it through land reform were very much related to the ideology of peasantism.

A related fear was that of communism. A land reform would lead to the formation of a peasant class of small and middle proprietors, whose conservatism would constitute an antidote to communism.³⁶ This aspect of the land reform idea complies with one of the characteristics of the peasantist ideology, that is, the glorification of the peasant class for their

innate conservatism. The conservatism of the peasants, according to the peasantists, was the 'social insurance' against all sorts of current or potential social afflictions and calamities [Köymen, 1934a: 30]. The peasants, then, were to form the social and political mass base of the conservatism of the single-party regime.³⁷ Support for this interpretation can be found in many speeches and writings of RPP leaders such as the General Secretary of the party, Recep Peker [1935: 37–8]. According to a former Deputy Minister and historian, M. Goloğlu [1982: 31], Peker was the person who most accurately understood the 'real context of the land reform discussions in the Grand National Assembly'. In the controversy over land distribution in 1945, Peker said that 'if the farmers are not given land, the poisonous effects' of ideologies from many different sources after the war would inflame the entire society and damage the social fabric and national unity (Peker cited in Tezel [1986: 339] [Goloğlu, 1982: 31]).

One should not be surprised to observe this linkage of a land reform and the prevention of 'dangerous' ideologies, as advocated by many leaders of the RPP and its intellectuals during the single-party era, since such a theoretical and political position remained alive until recently in Turkey. At Reşat Aktan [1965: 7], an academician who studied land reform-related issues in the 1960s and afterward, supported the idea that 'a society composed of independent farmer communities will create a stable society that is resistant to harmful and dangerous ideologies. In this respect a land reform is the best antidote to communism.' Such ideas were endorsed even after the military coup of 1980 [Pamak, 1982: 31].³⁸

In short, it is fallacious to argue that the motives behind the land reform attempts in Turkey represented an inherently radical or left-wing impulse to modernisation. The validity of this argument can be better understood if we remember that the USA advocated land reform in developing countries after the Second World War. Many US government experts during the cold war era suggested that land reforms were the best and most effective preventive against guerrilla and socialist movements in the so-called 'Third World'.³⁹ However, both in Turkey and the USA, people who advocated land reform have often been mistakenly accused of being socialistic.⁴⁰

Land Reform and the Consolidation of the Political Regime

Another motive of the land reform attempts was to gain support for the political regime. In Turkey, according to peasantist assumptions, the 'masses' meant the peasants not only as the majority of the population but as the exemplars of the purest and best features of the Turkish nation.⁴¹ Although glorified as the 'masters of the nation', the peasants were usually acknowledged as people indifferent to nationalist ideology.⁴² For this reason, one of the most important tasks of the peasantists was to 'revive' nationalist

feelings and ideas among the peasants and, by so doing, recruit them for the political regime of the time. This task, however, was not easy to accomplish since in all revolutions, as Aydemir [1968b: 320] and others believed, the peasants were the 'last and most reluctant to accept revolutionary changes'. Likewise, A.H. Başar [1945: 112], one of Kemal Atatürk's entourage in his nationwide tour to assess the state of the country after 1930, noted that 'the first thing he saw in villages was that the Turkish Revolution did not reach the countryside at all'. In such historical circumstances, it might be hoped that a land reform could tie the fate of the small and middle peasants to the fate of Kemalism [Tökin, 1933a: 24]. Indeed, the Kemalist regime desperately needed to broaden its base, as it learned from the emergence in 1930 of the opposition Free Party, which found a startling degree of support although it was permitted to exist for only a short time. In such an historical context, the development of the ideas of both peasantism and land reform should also be seen as attempts to broaden the mass base of the political regime.

Nowhere was securing support for the regime and the nationalist ideology so urgent and vital as in the eastern and southeastern regions of the country. Perhaps the overriding motive for a land reform in the early 1930s was the desire to solve the Kurdish issue, as a means to Turkify a large part of the Kurdish population in the southeast.⁴³ The relation between land reform and the Kurdish issue is put forth cogently in *Kadro*, one of the most original journals of the time.⁴⁴ Notwithstanding the overall differences of opinion between *Kadro* and the ruling elite, it is fair to say that the latter held *Kadro*'s views on this issue.⁴⁵

According to *Kadro* and others, the Kurdish issue, one of the 'most difficult unsolved issues of the single-party regime' [Aydemir, 1968a: 311], was a question of class rather than ethnicity, with its roots in the feudal relations of production that prevailed in the region [Tökin, 1990: 180]. Appropriating land from the feudal landlords and distributing it to the peasants would dissolve these feudal relations of production, thereby wiping out the economic and social bases of Kurdish nationalism.⁴⁶

In 1933 Ýsmail H. Tökin, who wrote *Kadro*'s influential articles on rural issues, clearly expressed the necessity of dissolving the power of Kurdish landowners through a land reform that would ultimately contribute to the solution of the Kurdish issue [Tökin, 1933b: 35]:

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

directly to the peasants means the liquidation of a reactionary social class, and the end of the Kurdish issue altogether, which will be made possible with the liquidation of this social class.

Likewise, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir [1968a: 316–17] saw a direct relation between land issues and the Kurdish question during the single-party era:

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

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

However, the Kurdish issue certainly figured significantly in the land reform concerns of the single-party regime. As a matter of fact, whenever Turkish governments have aimed to do something for the 'East and Southeast', the issue of land reform has immediately come to the forefront, in 1997 as in 1937.⁴⁷ Even in the summer of 1997, discussions on land reform appeared in the Turkish press with regard to the Kurdish issue, and politicians and statesmen such as current Premier Bülent Ecevit argued that the problems of this 'extraordinary region', that is, the Southeast, could be solved by land reform.⁴⁸

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

CONCLUSION

In Turkey, the goals of and intentions for land reform were less radical than

conservative: attaching peasants to their villages, broadening the size of the propertied peasant class and thereby recruiting them to the regime, forestalling leftist or radical movements, and securing the privileged position of the political elite made up the primary rationale of land reform attempts in early Republican Turkey. The notion of Farmer Homesteads reflects the elite's expectations in promoting land reform: to limit mobility in the countryside and immigration to the cities. The 'Homesteads' could be used to create a conservative peasant social fabric in the Turkish countryside. Although the concept of 'Farmer Homesteads' was withdrawn from the draft Law in 1945, it still serves as an indicator of the mentality of the ruling elite of the time, and its motives for land reform.⁴⁹

Since the idea of land reform in Turkey was not radical but conservative, one should not be surprised at the similarities of the Turkish experience with many conservative peasantist programs of the interwar period. A case in point is the conservative rural policies of Nazi Germany. As a matter of fact, it has been suggested that the discourse and practices of the Nazis towards the peasantry were similar to those of the Turkish single-party regime (see note 6). One can easily find resemblances between the Nazi *Erbhof* Law of September 1933 and 'Farmer Homesteads'. According to the *Erbhof* law, farms had to be kept to an optimum size and the indivisibility of land assured. The law forbade the selling, buying or mortgaging of *Erbhof* lands. The overriding motive was the indivisibility of land, and inheritance laws were designed to accomplish this by male primogeniture [Corni, 1990: 144]. Through this law, at least a segment of the rural population could secure a perpetual and adequate income [Poulantzas, 1974: 289]. Obviously, the 'Farmer Homesteads' and *Erbhof* resembled each other so strongly that one might agree with Menderes' and Berkes' assertions that the idea of the 'Farmer Homesteads' was copied from Germany. Aydemir's remark that the Minister of Agriculture, who drafted the LPLF, was *too much* influenced by his education in Germany seems to be revealing in this respect [Aydemir, 1971c]. According to Barkan, however, the notion of 'Farmer Homesteads' was not a German imitation as similar institutions already existed in the Ottoman Empire [Barkan, 1946: 507]. Indeed, the Ottoman *çift-hane* system, analysed recently by Halil İnalcık, the doyen of Ottoman studies in our opinion, is reminiscent of 'Farmer Homesteads', consisting of small independent peasant households as the basis of agricultural production and the most important agrarian form in the Empire [İnalcık, 1994: 143].

More interesting than the question of whether 'Farmer Homesteads' were a German imitation or rooted in the Ottoman land tenure system, however, is the existence of similar peasantist attitudes in the two countries.⁵⁰ The Nazis, at least at the discursive level, gave special emphasis

to the glorification of peasants.⁵¹ Hitler saw the peasants as the 'best defence against the social diseases that afflict us' (Hitler cited in Corni [1990: 19]). Similarly, official National Socialist Party documents characterised the peasants as 'the cornerstone of the German state', 'the strongest custodians and bearers of the healthy physical and spiritual inheritance of our people', 'most faithful sons', and the like (Hitler cited in Corni [1990: 28]). As in Turkey, a hostile attitude towards urbanisation and industrialisation was inherent in German peasantism. According to a poster in a Nazi election campaign, German farmers faced two dangers: 'One ... is the American economic system – Big capitalism!' and the other was the 'Marxist system of Bolshevism', which 'annihilates the self-sufficient farmer economically'.⁵² The similarities, however, should not obscure the differences. For instance, the peasantist leanings in the Nazi Party derived mainly from the racist *Blut und Boden* ideology, whereas in the Turkish case racism did not play much of a role in the formation of peasantism, though some racist Turkish peasantists existed.⁵³

In retrospect, it is ironic that the land reform debate of the single-party era was advocated in the name of progressivism and radicalism. The radicalism of the LPLF, if any, was contained in Article 17, which was added at the last minute and opened the way for sharecroppers and agricultural wage labourers to possess the lands they worked on. However, as we have pointed out several times in this article, whenever the RPP leaders talked about distributing land, they never forgot to emphasise that private ownership would be protected.⁵⁴ Their aims were no doubt limited to merely distributing the state-owned lands. The sudden introduction of Article 17 should be seen as a political maneuver, since the original ideas that circulated during the 1930s had nothing to do with radicalism.

We should remember once again that the original name of LPLF was 'Law for the Distribution of Land and for the Establishment of Farmer Homesteads'. In other words, the conservative concerns embodied in the notion of 'Farmer Homesteads' determined the essence of the land reform attempts from the mid-1930s through 1945, while the daily political developments in the aftermath of the Second World War somewhat changed the original idea of land reform. Barkan [1946: 489], who was an acute observer of land issues in Turkey and an ardent advocate of distributing land to the peasants, after the withdrawal of the clauses related to 'Farmer Homesteads' argued that the idea of land reform had lost its original useful meaning. Barkan and many others were interested primarily in increasing the power of the state.⁵⁵ According to Barkan, the 'Farmer Homesteads', which in fact existed in his highly idealised Ottoman land tenure system, provided the ways in which the tax base of the state could be strengthened [Barkan, 1943: 405]. Through a land reform, Barkan's 'omnipresent and

omnipotent state' [Barkan, 1946: 508]⁵⁶ could eventually gain political and social benefits.⁵⁷

In this article, we have emphasised the political and ideological background and motives of the land reform attempts of the single-party era. We underlined the significance of the ideological background, which in our opinion corresponded to a top-down conservatism inspired by peasantry. Understanding this ideological background is particularly important since earlier explanations have focused more on the LPLF itself and the political conjuncture of 1945. Because the idea of land reform emerged as early as the mid-1930s, was frozen but not given up during the Second World War [Barkan, 1946: 458; Avcıoğlu, 1968: 233; Tezel, 1986: 326], and came to the forefront immediately after the war, it is necessary to grasp its significance independently of the political maneuvers of the post-war era. Yet, for the complete picture, we should conclude by commenting on some of the dynamics of the year 1945 to understand the final phase of the era in question.

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

Amidst the attempts to introduce a multi-party regime in 1945, some opposition deputies, with a vested interest in large landowning, opposed the land reform proposal that included the 'Farmer Homesteads'. As a response to them, President İnönü and his close friends immediately added Article 17, believing that the new opposition leaders could be discredited easily since their vested interests in blocking land reform would be evident. İnönü's intentions perhaps had little to do with improving the conditions of small and landless peasants, for despite the claims about Article 17, the article itself posed many technical obstacles to land distribution [Aydemir, 1971c]. What was at stake, as Berkes [1997: 247] also pointed out, was to scare the new opposition rather than to distribute private lands.⁵⁸ Evidently, İnönü's agenda was quite pragmatic and based on the necessities of the day.

With this Law, he wanted to accomplish several goals: on the one hand, he wanted to improve his party's relations with the small and middle peasantry.

As Şevket Pamuk [1991: 125–42] has demonstrated incontestably, during the Second World War the economic conditions of the small and middle peasantry deteriorated tremendously due to the agricultural policies of the war years. With a showy land distribution, the relations between the rural masses and the RPP could be ameliorated. On the other hand, İnönü and his associates used the issue of land reform as a lever to disseminate the illusion that *only* big landowners were responsible for the deteriorating conditions of the small and middle peasants. To put it boldly, instead of longstanding state policies, big landowners were made the scapegoats for the deteriorating conditions of the peasantry.⁵⁹ Furthermore, it is likely that İnönü also used the land reform debates as a test of the power of the emerging opposition. Unfortunately for him, his tactics backfired and the opposition remained powerful and decisive. From then on, the opposition directed İnönü's weapon against him, greatly troubling İnönü and his entourage in the Party. It is apparently for this reason that İnönü quickly complied with the big landowners' wishes by choosing a former opposition figure and big landowner as his Minister of Agriculture, responsible for implementing the land reform.

Since the idea and practice of land reform in Turkey came from above, existed primarily within the constraints of the necessities of the state, and failed to accomplish even its restricted goals [Aydemir, 1971a], the benefits enjoyed by the peasantry remained quite limited. This was partly because in Turkey there was no organised peasant movement in which peasants participated actively for their own interests. The Turkish top-down situation was in contrast with the post-First World War experiences of eastern Europe and the Balkans, particularly Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia, where the 'revolt of the masses', equipped with their own political parties, produced pressure for land reforms. Unlike in Turkey, land reform in these countries marked a radical democratic turning point in their histories, since land issues were the vehicle by means of which the masses entered increasingly into national politics. Moreover, the inevitable confrontations with big landowners in these countries, to a large extent swept them away as a social class. In Turkey, however, despite the distribution of some state lands, nothing of such historic significance as dissolving 'backward' agricultural relations or reducing severe inequities came from the land reform of 1945. Perhaps for this reason, time and again in Turkey from the 1930s to the present day, discussions on land reform have emerged in different conjunctures.

NOTES

1. 'Kemalism had brought the revolution to the towns and townspeople of Turkey, but had barely touched the villages.' See Lewis [1968: 479].
2. See *Cumhuriyet*, 2 Jan. 1930 and 25 Feb. 1930.
3. See *Cumhuriyet*, 10 Dec. 1930. Also see Başgöz [1995: 68-70].
4. For a comprehensive analysis of the People's Houses see Karaömerlioğlu [1998a]; on the Village Institutes see Karaömerlioğlu [1998b].
5. For a review of the complexity of the theme of land reform see Keyder and Pamuk [1984-85: 52-63].
6. See Tezel [1986: 330 and Keyder and Pamuk [1984-85: 54].
7. Adnan Menderes's speech on 16 May 1945. *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi*, Vol.7, No.17, pp. 111-17; Berkes [1997: 247].
8. For such an approach see Birtek and Keyder [1975: 446-67].
9. An exception is Yusuf Akçura. This outstanding Turkish intellectual, who had distinctive viewpoints on other issues as well, already advocated a land reform in the early 1900s, and often took into account the significance of the peasantry [Georgeon, 1986: 142; Berktaş, 1991: 156].
10. Quoted by Kivilırcınlı [1992: 226] from *Milliyet*, 2 Nov. 1929.
11. Similarly, in October 1936 Barkan [1936: 97] wrote that he heard news about the preparation of a serious agricultural reform.
12. See *Ülkü's* 'Editorial column' of March 1937, p.57.
13. About this speech in an editorial in *Ülkü* M. Fuad Köprülü pointed out that everybody knew that the development of the country relied on the development of the villages, but no one was sure how and in what ways this could be accomplished. He further noted that Atatürk, as usual, had shown the way so that everybody understood that this development depended on the question of land [Köprülü, 1937: 289].
14. 1 dönüm = 940 m².
15. This aspect of the law is important: Keyder's and Pamuk's [1984: 61] emphasis on draft animals rather than land becomes more difficult to sustain since the law, at least theoretically, also aimed to furnish peasants with draft animals and credit.
16. Cavit Oral became the representative of big landowners for decades to come in Turkey and was still the chairperson of the committee on land reform in the Grand National Assembly in the 1960s. He himself characterised the LPLF as a law that failed to accomplish anything significant [Oral, 1965: 13-14].
17. Similar comments can be found in Tökin [1933a: 21-22; Ahmad [1981: 154].
18. Tökin [1990: 201] clearly states this point: 'If a land reform is accomplished in our country, its end result will again be a social polarization under the impact of social differentiation and diversification, which are the tendencies and laws of the system of market economy. Lands given to the peasants will be centralised again in the hands of some farmers and city dwellers because of factors such as debt and price setbacks. For this reason, land reforms are, in fact, far from being an absolute measure to solve land issues.' For a similar pessimistic expectation see Başar [1945: 116].
19. According to Feroz Ahmad [1981: 153], for instance, it was not the scarcity of land but labor that remained the primary problem in rural Turkey.
20. The historian Haim Gerber [1987: 110] believes that in Turkey, even in the twentieth century, '[the land system] was still basically the sixteenth-century institution, hardly affected by the historical vicissitudes of three-and-one-half centuries', and argues [1987: 105] that an *egalitarian* land system 'based on the independent household' predominated in Anatolia since landless peasants made up only a minority of the peasantry. He further suggests that there were hardly any 'dominant landowners, and semi-feudalistic institutions', and that sharecropping was a marginal phenomenon in Anatolia. Instead of working for others [1987: 111], Turkish peasants opened up new fields for cultivation. For Gerber [1987: 108], all characteristics of rural Turkey 'clearly contradict the assumption that in a capitalistic system the small household and traditional village community must lose out to the city capitalist'. This, however, is absolutely wrong. İsmail H. Tökin, who devoted much of his time to rural

- issues in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s, cogently showed that sharecropping was rampant in Anatolia. See, for example, Tökin [1932: 20]; Tökin [1933a: 24]; Tökin [1933b: 37]. See also Sarç [1944: 300]. Gerber bases his analyses mostly on monographs on individual villages. In the absence of reliable statistical data, they are useful sources. But, one should be careful not to over-generalise from particular villages, as the same kind of sources may reveal opposite tendencies. For instance, some village monographs that appeared in *Ülkü* contradict Gerber's results. Many villagers had huge debts to city merchants, and many had to go to towns and cities to work, at least from time to time. Moreover, there is no question that poverty was rampant in Anatolia. If egalitarianism existed in rural Turkey, it was an egalitarianism of poverty. See, for instance, Türkmen [1934: 159]; İsgör [1937: 451]. For news items concerning poverty and landlessness in major newspapers of the time, see Kuvılcımlı [1992: 115–314].
21. Two years later, in a review of a book on the contemporary conditions of the peasantry, Barkan [1936: 96] quotes this speech and says: 'Five million landless peasants! It is an amazing figure to believe even though it was mentioned in the National Assembly by a Minister. And this goes much beyond the figures of Mr. Hamid Sadi's estimates. Because, according to the 1927 census, 67.7 per cent of the whole population, namely 9,216,918 people, work in agriculture.'
 22. A contemporary observer Başar [1945: 114] in 1930 also noted widespread landlessness in rural Turkey.
 23. 1 dekar = 1000 m².
 24. According to Barkan [1943: 428], the Russian Revolution of 1917 generated fears in eastern and southeastern Europe that convinced many governments of the need for land reform of one kind or another.
 25. As an observer of eastern European peasantries in the early 1930s noted, 'It may be stated without exaggeration that, in regions where "land hunger" had always been present, these reforms averted peasant revolts such as marked the overthrow of despotism and eventual triumph of Bolshevism in Russia.' See Tiltman [1936: 21].
 26. For a good example of a peasantist standpoint in the period see Hüsnü *et al.* [1935]; for a comprehensive analysis of this ideology see Karaömerlioğlu [1998a].
 27. According to some leading officials, ambiguities and eclecticism meant flexibility in the principles of the Republican People's Party, for example, Küçüka [1935: 164].
 28. For Reşit Galip's peasantist ideas and activities see Elman [1953: 47–63].
 29. Aydemir [1959: 453] clearly remembers an anti-industrialisation orientation among the ruling elite: 'But at that time, the term industrialisation, though every so often pronounced, was a disbelieved and dubious term. The phrase "the use of domestic goods" became a matter of ridicule.'
 30. It is possible to see among the ruling elite the ideology of peasantism that was rampant in the official organ of the People's Houses, *Ülkü*. The peasantist divisions of the People's Houses organised village visits, which did not go beyond the 'picnics' of intellectuals in summertime. The embodiment of the peasantist ideology can be found in the Village Institutes, but these institutions evolved differently from what was originally planned, and, for this reason, among others, were closed by the RPP. For a detailed analysis of the Village Institutes see Karaömerlioğlu [1998b].
 31. That their ideology was called 'peasantist', and advocated 'going to the villages' should not lead us to believe that they were not elitists. Few Turkish peasantists intended to transform the villages as the Russian Narodniks of the late nineteenth century aspired to. They were the bureaucrats and elites of a political regime in which the peasant was glorified as the 'real master' of the nation, even though peasants were not allowed to enter Ankara at certain times of the day, see Berkes [1997: 88]; Doğan [1989: 242].
 32. See, for example, Aydoslu [1935: 356]; and Köymen [1936: 175–7].
 33. 'At the time, there was a fear in Ankara of anything that was characterised as "international". Even religion was criticised on the grounds that it implied a "non-national", "international" system.' [Aydemir, 1959: 421–2]. The influential General Secretary of the RPP, Recep Peker, had the same mentality as the peasantists in this respect. According to Peker [1935: 37], 'The peasants are nationalists; they see their interests connected to the interests of the nation. For

- this reason, the peasants have refused the workers' invitation in the name of proletarian unity.'
34. One of the characteristics that *Ülkü* announced as a criterion for publication was that articles had to show the dangers of immigration to the cities. Editorial, 1934, 'Ülkü'nün Yazı Bölümleri', *Ülkü*, Vol.3, No.13, p.79.
 35. On the thinking of Minister of Agriculture, Hatiboğlu, and the Prime Minister Saraçoğlu on the issue see Erdost [1978: 218-20].
 36. Interestingly, during the single-party era, small and middle proprietorship was not only desired in agriculture, but in industrial production as well. For an acute description of this phenomenon see Aydemir [1959: 454].
 37. For a recent theoretical article suggesting the inherently conservative character of the early Republican period, see Bora [1997: 16].
 38. Pamak was a member of the Advisory Assembly established by the military regime after the 1980 military takeover.
 39. Of special interest is the American academic Roy L. Prosterman, who argued that the most serious revolutions of the twentieth century occurred in countries where peasant discontents emerged. Prosterman prepared land reform programs for the US and other governments to be implemented in the 'Third World', including the Philippines, El Salvador and south Vietnam. In 1993, he was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his studies and activities in land reform. For some of Prosterman's important works on land reform see Prosterman and Riedinger [1987]; Prosterman, Temple, and Hanstad [1990].
 40. Such a characterisation can be seen in America's infamous conservative journal *National Review*. For an example of this kind, see Bethell [1984: 24].
 41. For examples in this regard, see Saffet [1933a: 352]; Hıfzırrahman [1935: 18].
 42. According to the peasantist rhetoric, Kurdish and Arabic-speaking peasants were regarded as 'Turkish' people who happened to forget to speak Turkish. For an example, see Korok [1943: 23].
 43. When any land distribution attempt came to the agenda, it was first and foremost engineered for the East (*Şark*). İnönü, in 1929, for instance, said that the government started distributing land in the East [*Kuruc*, 1963: 3].
 44. *Kadro* was an ambitious journal that aimed to form the theory of Kemalist Revolution between 1932 and 1934, when it was forced to shut down by the government. The main contributors to the journal were Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Vedat Nedim Tör, Burhan Belge, and İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, who wanted to provide an alternative intellectual center in the RPP. *Kadro* advocated rapid state-controlled industrialisation. According to *Kadro* writers, the main contradiction and exploitation of their times was between industrialised and 'backward' agricultural countries. In their opinion, industrialisation of the latter would question the existing division of labor, and in this respect their views can be seen as a forerunner of the *Dependencia* school of Latin America that became popular in the 1960s. *Kadro*'s economic concerns for a land reform derived from the necessities of industrialisation, though they also saw the land reform attempts primarily in social and political terms. For an informative article on *Kadro*, see Tekeli and İlkin [1984: 35-67].
 45. *Kadro* and RPP officials advocated very similar concerns about this dimension of the land reform, but had different viewpoints in many respects. As a whole *Kadro* had 'progressive', forward-looking expectations from land reform, and closely tied it to the development of industry. For the latter, the idea of land reform was, for the most part, determined by their peasantist conservatism.
 46. Pevket S. Aydemir maintained similar views even in the 1970s, claiming that the Kurdish issue could be solved by land reform in this region [Aydemir, 1971b].
 47. D.E. Webster, who served as the cultural attaché of the US in the mid-1930s, also observed the relationship between Kurdish rebellions and agricultural reform: 'In the spring of 1937 it was necessary to subdue another rebellion in the Kurdish region, this time in Tunceli, south of Elaziz. When the first news of it was published (June 15, 1937), it appears that the revolt had been in progress for two months or more but was then under control. The Government

- announced that it would increase its application of reform measures, including modernisation of agriculture and promotion of education, in the recalcitrant region' [Webster, 1939: 111–12].
48. Ecevit'e was harshly criticised by a deputy minister from the region on the grounds that Ecevit's appraisals assumed that the region was still the same as it was 30 years before. See the news item on *Sabah* entitled 'Ecevit'e, Harranlı Bakandan Toprak Reformu Tepkisi', 28 Aug. 1997.
 49. The criticism by the opposition of the 'Farmer Homesteads' included the following: First, its emphasis on inheritance was seen as against Turkish customs. Second, the complementary measures to implement such an institution as alternative credit facilities were absent. Third, the lack of cadastral surveys of Turkey made any implementation very difficult. For these reasons, the government favored the withdrawal of 'Farmer Homesteads' from the land reform proposal. For a detailed discussion, see Barkan [1946: 469].
 50. In an obituary of Kemal Atatürk, the Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* wrote the following: 'Both in Turkey and Germany, a strong peasantry is the everlasting force of the national power. The two countries have the same political goals', cited in 'Atatürk Hakkında Dünya Neşriyatı', *Ülkü*, Vol.12, No.79, Dec. 1938, p.354. A similar quotation can be found in *Kadro*: 'German Chancellor Hitler said the following to Siirt Deputy Minister Mahmut Bey: "As life and order in Turkey were based on the peasants, ... we also pursue the same path. The policies that will assure the development of the peasants make up of the most vital issues of the new regime".' (Hitler, cited in Hayrettin [1933: 29]. For a comprehensive account of the Nazi influence on Turkey from 1938 through 1945 see Koçak [1986].
 51. The following three official sources are important in understanding the Nazis' attitude toward the peasantry: Darré [1929]; Hitler [1930]; Darré [1931]. For the peasantry of the Nazis, see especially Bramwell [1985].
 52. Cited in Zimmerman [1990: 42]. Peasantry in Germany also had to do with the famous 'Third Way' approach, which became an integral part of many fascist movements during the interwar period.
 53. For the peasantry of two prominent racists, Nihal Atsız and Fethi Tevettoğlu, see Toprak [1992].
 54. Even Barkan, who was an ardent supporter of distributing land to the peasants, often wrote that nobody should be hurt from land reform, see Barkan [1938: 84]. For a similar argument see also Doğan [1989: 307].
 55. As Barkan's seminal and preminent role in the formation of a 'statist' historiography from the 1930s onwards is taken into account, obviously his ideas show more than the personal views of an historian. As Berktaş [1991: 149–56] cogently illustrates, his views reflected the dominant tendencies of the ruling elite of the time.
 56. Halil Berktaş [1991: 158] interestingly points out that for many Turkish historians, such as Halil İnalcık and Barkan, 'the peasant existed purely in terms of his obligations towards the state, that is, as tax-payer only'.
 57. Studies show that in most parts of the world that underwent land reforms after the Second World War, it was states rather than poor peasants who benefited from their outcomes. John Powelson convincingly argued that by regulating farming bureaucratically, and monopolising credit and agricultural marketing, and without transferring full title to the beneficiaries, most states engineered land reforms to expand their financial and political control. In these state-sponsored land reforms, to use his own term [1987: 3–9; 1988: 311–12], the peasants were 'betrayed'.
 58. For a similar comment, see Keyder and Pamuk [1984: 62].
 59. According to Pamuk [1991: 136] 'The policies adopted in the summer of 1942 and continued until the end of the war distributed the burdens and opportunities of wartime conditions unevenly. Small and middle peasants producing cereals witnessed a sharp decrease in their consumption and real income levels during these years, while large landowners took advantage of the rapidly rising cereal prices in the marketplace.'

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