

## CHAPTER 3

# *Mass Education Essential to Farm Prosperity*

**T**WENTY MILES from the modern Turkish capital of Ankara is the little farming village of Hasanoglan. Here the Turkish peasant farmer, Mahir Kabas, lives in a flat adobe house by the side of a narrow street filled with barking dogs, little donkeys packing huge loads of firewood, children in tattered clothes, and women in the brightly colored dresses of old Turkey. Hasanoglan, like most of the peasant villages of Turkey, belongs to the Middle Ages.

Every week Mahir's wife takes the dirty clothes down to the village spring to wash them. Each day she takes the used pots and pans down to scour them out. She always uses the right side of the spring. Down the crooked, narrow street, Mahir Kabas drives his little flock of seven sheep, four goats, and three half-starved cattle. They drink on the left side of the spring.

Life is hard for the peasant farmer. In most villages there is no electricity, few roads to the outside world. Sanitation is almost non-existent and children suffer from malnutrition. Young wives

die under the hands of fumbling midwives. Sixty per cent of the people of Turkey live in these peasant villages.

Mahir will probably continue to farm as his father, as his father's father, as Turkish farmers have done for centuries. Even if farm bulletins and magazines were available — and they are not — Mahir could not read them, for he has never gone to school.

This is the old Turkey.

### ***Village Institute***

Every morning Mahir looks out of the window of his crowded adobe hut, down the valley toward the cluster of light tan buildings of the Köy Enstitüsü. Directly translated, Köy Enstitüsü means *village institute*. Rural life institute might be a better name. But under any name it is Mahir Kabas' greatest hope for a better life for his children.

The Hasanoglan village institute, the first and largest of twenty-one similar schools strategically placed throughout Turkey, is a boarding school for village farmers' children. It is designed to train rural leaders for the peasant villages.

When we called, Kemal Üstün, the director of the institute, was working at his desk under a large portrait of Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey. Üstün prefers to stroll with his hands behind his back across the assembly ground, through the buildings from class to class, or teach a class

himself. A sincere and highly practical man, Director Üstün has little patience with fancy talk or high flown theories. He wants to teach the students of Hasanoğlu institute the practical things that will help lift the living standards of the village peasants.

Eleven years ago, we were told, the first students arrived at the school. A level strip of semi-arid land greeted them. They lived in tents and were taught in outdoor classes. Today the institute is a model village in itself, complete with Turkish bath. Built by the students themselves, the buildings house not only the classrooms, dormitories, and dining halls, but the school's own cooperative store, bakery, music hall, workshops, hospital, and buildings for the livestock. An open-air amphitheatre is used for summer meetings and summer dramas.

Director Üstün supervises a staff of 50 young teachers. Graduates of Turkish colleges, each instructor is a specialist in his own field. The 945 students at the Hasanoğlu institute, like the students of the other twenty schools, were selected from the outstanding students of the village five-year elementary schools.

Each fall the new class arrives in small groups from the various peasant villages, most of them still dressed in peasant clothes — the best that their families can scrape together for the trip.

They spend the first year in preparatory classes, after which they become full fledged students. Said

one of the girl students, Meliha Bas, "I was homesick at first, but now I like it here."

"Foremost in the institute's training," Üstün explained as we walked across the assembly field, "are the courses that teach the farm youth the things they should know out in the villages: how to build sanitary toilets, how to use steel plows that scour, how to practice fallow cultivation, and how to build warm houses from material at hand. The girls also learn midwifery. The school has its own hospital for the students and the nearby village people. Hygiene is taught by doctors and each student must work in the hospital for at least three months." Üstün could not speak English, but Sevkettü Tükyilmaz, the government school inspector who spent two years in America studying American school systems, translated for us.

Snow covered the grounds of the institute and the hills that swept back from the valley when I was there.

"You should come in the spring," said Director Üstün, "for then you would see the students out in the fields, plowing the land, planting grain, pruning the apple trees, planting new grape arbors or tending the cabbage, turnips, and carrots in the gardens.

Our initial stop was the first year art class where we saw students from 12 to 14 years old. Model reliefs of horses and cattle in modeling clay lay on the tables. The walls proudly displayed the week's best watercolor paintings by the students.



Most of the paintings showed village life — boys in red caps in a snowball fight, groups of merry skiers sliding down a steep hill, a wedding march through the village with drummer and flute player preceded by the red Turkish flag with its white star and crescent, harvest scenes of brightly dressed peasant farmers' wives riding a threshing drag hooked to a team of oxen, or farmers tossing the straw into the wind to separate the grain from the chaff.

Favorite subject for painting was Nasrettin Hoja, a legendary village farmer, familiar to every farm child. Here was a painting of Hoja's trip to the mountain to cut firewood. On his way back he runs into a snowstorm. To keep warm, Hoja sets the wood on fire without taking it off his donkey's back. Or there was a picture of Hoja on his deathbed giving instructions to his wife where he should be buried. On the way to the cemetery the funeral procession takes a wrong turn. Hoja rises up from his coffin and sternly commands. "That's not the right road. Turn left."

We went from classroom to classroom — to the botany class with its dried plants, the hygiene class with its skeleton and colored anatomical charts, the agricultural classes with their samples of improved wheat and barley, and a large picture of an irrigated field in Colorado.

After lunching in the dining hall on Turkish foods — rich brown bread, flour soup, rice with bits of kidney, stewed apricots, Bursa cheese, grape-

fruit-sized oranges, and black, thick Turkish coffee — we went to the many workshops where the students learn blacksmithing, metal work, carpentry, and woodwork. At one of the forges in the blacksmith shop we saw a 12-year-old lad wrestling with a hammer nearly as large as himself, shaping an irregular piece of iron into a large ring. The busy instructor explained that this was the beginning class and the students were learning to use the hammers to shape the metal into useful forms. The older students make everything from shovels to doorlocks complete with key.

Long lines of looms and spinning wheels lined the walls of the domestic arts shop. Here the girls — there were 36 at Hasanoğlu institute — spun cotton into thread and wove the thread into brightly colored traditional Turkish patterns. Later, in the girls' building, we saw them cooking their own meals, scrubbing the dining room floors, sewing their own garments. The domestic science instructor showed us elaborate costumes that the girls had made — dresses traditional in their own villages, and latest style clothes sewn on American-manufactured sewing machines.

Now and then I noticed students with red bands on their sleeves, dashing in and out of the buildings. Tükyilmaz, the government school inspector, explained that these were a part of the student governing body. "Every week the students run the student functions of the school, administer student discipline and are responsible for the

student body. This program of self-government stimulates democratic thinking and trains leadership among the students."

In the evening, after supper, we walked out through the new apricot orchard, past an open air amphitheatre, and up a slight slope to the music hall. Already the hall was packed with students and instructors for the special program for "their friends from America." For the next hour and a half we listened to Turkish music and watched Turkish traditional dances. A group of 50 students sang Turkish traditional songs, many of them about heroic figures of Turkey, plus a Turkish version of *Home, Sweet Home*. Small groups of students with flutes, native string instruments, and tambourines played; while the boys and girls, each group dressed in native costume, danced the dances of their own villages. Some of the dances were slow, rhythmic, and graceful, others fast, with increasing tempo. Boys clicked knives together in dance duels and the girls in bright red, blue, yellow, and green costumes danced to the beat of their tambourines the exotic dances of old Turkey.

An orchestra of nearly 50 mandolins played some of the most melodious music I have ever heard.

After our "thank-you's," we stopped for a genuine Turkish bath at the bathhouse, complete with pouring cups and Turkish towels — then on to our guest rooms for the night. As I lay in bed in the still of the Turkish night, I could not help but

think of the huge problem that faces Turkish agricultural leaders and educators.

Sixty per cent of the people of Turkey live in the 45,000 villages. Today there are 7,000 five-grade schools and 4,000 three-grade schools. The rest of the villages are without schools. That means that some 40 per cent of the children of Turkey do not have the opportunity to go to any school. Most of Turkey's farmers today are peasants, uneducated and living their lives in poverty. Said Sevkettükyılmaz, "The twenty-one village institutes turn out 2,000 students a year. By expanding the institutes, we hope to have schools and teachers for the children of every village by 1960. With the schools and the leadership that these young men and women leaving the institutes take back to the villages, the village farmers should someday contribute much to the prosperity of themselves and to the Turkish Republic."

It seems to me that on this promise rests much of the hope for Turkish farmers. This would truly be the new Turkey.

*I am convinced that a prosperous agriculture, as well as a prosperous country, depends upon the mass education of its people.* Educated people can be taught. Highly adaptive, they can change from one type of business to another, one type of farming to another, to better their living standards.

The great progress of American farmers has rested firmly on the foundation of mass education. Educated American farmers were able to grasp



quickly technological changes and put them to work. This made the extension man's work simple. Because the farmer could read and understand, bulletins and farm magazines could carry to him the story of better farming and better farm life.

We cannot afford to rest on present accomplishments. New findings in the field of insecticides with their jumble of names, new fertilizers, and new scientific research must be interpreted by these farmers. Farming has become, and will become even more so, a highly specialized field calling for a great amount of technical knowledge. *Our educational facilities must keep pace with these findings if we are to push back further the frontiers of agriculture.*