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**An Example of People's Houses Village Activities and Local Implementation: Adana People's House Village Branch (1933–1951)**

**Abstract**

The People's Houses were institutions established to instill the values of the Republic in individuals. Operating between 1932 and 1951, these institutions carried out activities not only in urban centers but also in rural areas. Through the initiatives of the Village Branch, efforts were made both to familiarize villagers with the principles of the Republic and to transform villages into more livable environments. This study, focusing on the activities of the Village Branch of the Adana People's House, highlights the measures taken to overcome educational, health, and economic disadvantages in villages, thereby improving living conditions. Accordingly, the People's Houses can be regarded not only as institutions where the revolution was learned through practice, but also as a development project based on social cohesion and comprehensive progress. Serving as an illustrative example of rural Republican reforms, this study draws upon previous publications, archival documents, and periodicals.

**Keywords:** Adana People's House, Village Branch, Seyhan, Çukurova, modernization.

**Halk Evlerinin Köycülük Faaliyetlerine ve Yerel Uygulamalara Bir Örnek: Adana Halkevi Köycülük Şubesi (1933–1951)**

**Öz**

Halkevleri, Cumhuriyet'in değerlerini bireylere kazandırmak amacıyla kurulmuş kurumlardır. 1932–1951 yılları arasında faaliyet gösteren bu kurumlar, yalnızca şehir merkezlerinde değil, kırsal alanlarda da çalışmalar yürütmüştür. Köycülük Şubesinin girişimleriyle köylülerin Cumhuriyet ilkeleriyle tanıştırılması ve köylerin daha yaşanabilir mekânlara dönüştürülmesi yönünde çabalar sarf edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, Adana Halkevi Köycülük Şubesinin faaliyetlerine odaklanarak köylerdeki eğitim, sağlık ve ekonomik dezavantajların giderilmesi için alınan önlemleri ortaya koymakta; böylece yaşam koşullarının iyileştirilmesini gözler önüne sermektedir. Buna göre Halkevleri, yalnızca inkılabın tecrübe edilerek

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öğrenildiği kurumlar değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal birliktelik ve kapsamlı ilerleme temelli bir kalkınma projesi olarak da değerlendirilebilir. Bu çalışma, Halkevlerinin kırsal alanlardaki çalışmalarına örnek teşkil eden bir uygulama olarak, önceki yayınlar, arşiv belgeleri ve süreli yayınlardan yararlanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Adana Halkevi, Köycülük Şubesi, Seyhan, Çukurova, modernleşme.

## Introduction

The Republic of Türkiye differs in many ways from the Ottoman Empire which it replaced. Among these differences are systemic and ideological differences. Therefore, it was necessary for the basic founding philosophy of the republic to be conveyed to and adopted by the people. However, a large proportion of the populace lived in rural areas, and so this necessitated a very hard struggle. The process was made more difficult by the low education level of this group. Therefore, when the values of the new regime were being introduced to the people, an attempt was made to eliminate the social, cultural and economic development gap between the city and the rural areas. This was also important for social unity and peace, and the country attempted to achieve this with institutions called *halkevleri* or *people's houses*. These people's houses operated between 1932 and 1951. They were established to ensure that individuals embraced the values of the republic by living them, to ensure that the revolutions took root, to establish a unity of culture, purpose and thought in society, and to ensure that villages also benefitted from this process. In this regard, various activities were conducted, such as theater, trips, literacy courses, poetry competitions, collection work, publications and social aid activities, celebrations for important days and sports competitions.

The people's houses were the first broad and comprehensive social development project of the Republic of Türkiye. The experiences of the *Free Republican Party*<sup>1</sup> and the *Menemen Incident*<sup>2</sup> which demonstrated that the reforms made could not be explained to the public, played an important role in their opening. Although these developments may seem political, it can be said that social and economic factors also played an important role. In this way, the opening of an institution that would explain the fundamental values of the revolution to the people and contribute

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<sup>1</sup> The Free Republican Party was the second attempt at a multi-party system in the Republic of Türkiye. It was founded by Fethi Okyar on August 12, 1930. When it became a gathering place for those opposed to the regime, it was shut down by its founder, Fethi Okyar, on November 17, 1930. For detailed information see (Yetkin, 1982; Okyar-Seyitdanlıoğlu, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> The rebellion, mounted by opponents of the republican regime, took place in the Menemen district of Izmir. Second Lieutenant Mustafa Fehmi Kubilay and two guards were martyred in the incident, which occurred on December 23, 1930. An investigation determined that the incident centered in Manisa, and that the perpetrators were Cretan Derviş Mehmet and his associates. The perpetrators were apprehended shortly after the incident and were tried and punished. For detailed information see (Çanak, 2015).

to their social and economic development came to the fore. Before opening them, various examples from different parts of the world were examined. Thus, Selim Sırrı Tarcan was sent to Switzerland, and Vildan Aşır Savaşır to the countries of central Europe. What attracted Savaşır's attention the most was the Sokol organization in Czechoslovakia. Indeed, in a conference he gave towards the end of 1931, Savaşır suggested the establishment of a similar institution called *Halkevleri* or *Halkinevi* (Arıkan, 1999). On January 1, 1931, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the architect of the Turkish revolution, mentioned the establishment of community centers in a meeting with journalists in Istanbul. Following Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's statement, Cumhuriyet newspaper published the headline *Gazi's Guidance: Great Community Centers to Be Established* on January 2. It was announced in the news that the people's houses would be institutions that would meet all the social and cultural needs of the people (Cumhuriyet, 2 Ocak 1931). And when the necessary preparations were made, on February 19 1932, they were opened in 14 provinces: Afyon, Ankara, Aydın, Bolu, Bursa, Çanakkale, Denizli, Diyarbakır, Eskişehir, İstanbul, İzmir, Konya, Malatya and Samsun (Olgun, 2008; Akyol, 2008). Subsequently, 20 more people's houses were opened on 23 June 1933. In this way, in a short time, their number grew to 34 (Malkoç, 2009). The people's houses were opened in densely populated areas, and *people's rooms* were opened in places with a smaller population. It was decided to open the people's rooms in June 1939, and they started to be opened in 1940 in neighborhoods and villages where there were no people's houses (Koçak, 1996). Their number grew rapidly over time, and in 1951 when they were closed, there were 478 people's houses and 4322 people's rooms (Özacun, 1996). Developments after the Second World War played an important role in their closure. This was because Türkiye, which had been governed by a single party for a long time, was forced to switch to a multi-party system after the war when it wanted to establish close relations with the Western alliance led by the United States. This led to discussion of the status and future of the people's houses. The controversy stemmed from the fact that the people's houses were financed by the government and that, according to people's houses' regulations, the presidents, board of directors, and branch management boards of the people's houses could only be elected from among members of the Republican People's Party (Türk Sözü, 5 Mart 1946). The idea of turning the People's Houses into an independent institution was put forward, but it remained without result. A proposal was submitted to the Parliament by the members of the Democratic Party, which came to power as a result of the 1946 General Elections, and was

accepted on August 8, 1951. When it came into force upon publication in the Official Gazette on August 11, 1951, all of the people's houses were closed.<sup>3</sup>

### **Institutional Structure of the People's Houses**

The people's houses were open to everyone, and anyone who wanted could be a member. However, in order to become a member of the People's House Administrative Board and Branch Administrative Committees, membership in the Republican People's Party was required. While the branches that constituted the community centers determined their management through elections held among their members, the presidents of the community centers were elected by the Republican People's Party Executive Board in the places where they were located. Therefore, there was always an organic connection between the community centers and the Republican People's Party. The most important reason for their closure stemmed from this connection. Each people's house comprised nine branches which were active on different topics. These were: Language, history and literature branch; Fine arts branch; Representation branch; Sports branch; Social Assistance branch; People's classes and courses branch; Library and publications branch; Village branch; Museum and exhibitions branch;

The names of these branches could change from time to time. Along with the name changes, there were also changes in areas of activity. Among these, the name of the Village Branch, which is the subject of this study, was *Village People's Branch* in the Republican People's Party's People's Houses Instructions dated 1932 (CHF Halkevleri Talimatnamesi, 1932), but it was called *Village Branch* in the Republican People's Party People's Houses Instructions of 1935 (CHP Halkevleri Öğreneği, 1935) and the People's Houses Working Instructions dated 1940 (CHP Halkevleri Çalışma Talimatnamesi, 1940). However, there is no mention of a change in the areas of activity resulting from the name change.

### **Duties of the Village Branch**

In the first years of the Republic, the majority of the country's population lived in rural areas. Thus in the years when the people's houses were first opened, which coincided with the census of 1935, Türkiye had a population of 16 158 018, with 3 023 642 in cities and 12 355 376 in rural areas. According to this, 23.5% of the population lived in cities and 76.5% in villages. However,

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<sup>3</sup> The full name of the law is “*The Law on the Prohibition of Official Offices and Institutions from Transferring Property to Political Parties Free of Charge and on the Return to the Owners and the Treasury of Real Estate Properties Belonging to These Offices and Institutions and to Dissolved Associations and Abandoned to Political Parties, as well as Buildings Built by These Parties for General Benefits*” (Resmi Gazete, S.7882 (11 Ağustos 1951), s. 1781).

this distribution was not the same everywhere. For example, the places with the lowest proportion of rural dwellers were Istanbul with 14.2% and Izmir with 51.9%, while the highest proportions were in Ordu with % 92.8 and Sinop with 92.4% (TCBİGD, 1937). This demographic structure made village-oriented activities necessary and more significant, because the transformation of these people who constituted the majority of the society into individuals with republican values, the socio-economic development of the places they lived in, and the elimination of social inequality depended on cooperation between rural areas and cities. For this, there needed first to be a change in understanding. In his memoirs titled *Forgotten Years*, Niyazi Berkes, one of the important figures of Turkish intellectual life, stated in his account of the period when he worked at the Ankara People's House that the people's houses established for the public were not productive for the rural citizens who constituted more than three-quarters of the population at the time, but for the urban intellectuals and citizens living in the cities. Berkes expressed this idea by saying that the wealthy citizens in the cities came to the people's houses to go to the theater and listen to concerts, but the people's house members did not establish ties with the villages, and the village citizens could not come to the people's houses. He stated that the people's houses became a frequent destination for people who wanted to advance in politics, and that the first step in advancing in politics was to be in the people's houses (Berkes, 2017). Although it cannot be said that this was the situation in the whole of Türkiye, it can be said that it reflected the views of the time and the differences in social and economic development. Therefore, it was necessary to establish a link between city and village, and between the urban and rural people. In fact, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, expressed this connection when he opened the third meeting of the Turkish Grand National Assembly on March 1, 1922: *The Villager is the Lord of the Nation*.

This view should have been accepted by all intellectuals. However, two urban groups stood in the way of this. The first group were intellectuals who saw villages as charming houses among trees or along rivers, and villagers as long-lived, healthy people who were happy with their lives. The second group saw villages as very distant and inaccessible, and thought of villagers as difficult to educate, impossible to develop, and lacking in foresight (Dülger, 1936). Niyazi Berkes relates an anecdote reflecting this attitude from a trip which he made to the village of Kutludük: We arrived in Kutludük under difficult conditions by donkey from the point where the bus was ineffective. The villagers were living in great poverty and in extremely poor health conditions, and were afraid of this large group arriving, thinking they were tax collectors. Meanwhile, Nusret Köymen, who wrote

articles for Ülkü magazine addressing the issue of village life, strolled among the villagers in stylish golf trousers and socks, and unable to bear the stench and poor conditions, the elitist group immediately left the village (Berkes, 2017). Therefore, not only the villagers but the attitude to them had to change. Otherwise, if the condition of village people did not improve, it was not possible for the country to progress. The basis of this was that a large proportion of the population lived in the countryside (TCBİGD, 1937). In this way, the village life branches had a large duty. This was because the way for the country to develop was to reach the villages more easily and to improve the villagers' social and economic conditions. For this reason, the republican administration saw the development of the villages as a national cause, and acted with this understanding (Kandemir, 1935). The time had come for a civilizational war for the villages, which had long been neglected. When we examine what the branches did for the villages, it is seen that they concentrated on two areas. The first of these was to turn the villagers into citizens who were more aware, and the second was to create a more livable environment as a model village project that would be taken as an example by other villages. The branch focused its activities on the village and village people, and tried to improve villages in terms of health and civil life and to create a sense of cooperation and solidarity between villagers and urban dwellers. To this end, villagers were invited to the events at the people's house and the people's house members also participated in the social, cultural and economic activities of the villages. Also, the village people were taught to read and write, their letters were written, the sick were examined and treated, official procedures in the city were followed, intelligent and hardworking village children were helped with their education, and the villages' needs such as roads, schools and water were taken care of. Trips, conferences, evenings and courses were arranged for the education of village people, and village people were helped to take part in events in the cities. On this point, 22 March, the Earth Festival, was celebrated by villagers and city people together, and gained great importance.

### **The Adana People's Houses Village Branch and Its Activities**

The branch operated in line with the mission set for the village branches of the People's Houses. Taking into account the social and economic condition of the city, the importance of the branch becomes clear. This is because Adana is at the center of Çukurova, an area known for its fertile soils. Also, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has been undergoing a process of industrialization based on cotton. In this process, the city developed socially and economically, but the rural area, which

hosted the majority of the population, was unable to show the same development.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the importance of the branch was increased by the presence of thousands of people who came from all over the country as seasonal workers, especially at cotton harvesting time. But in spite of the social and economic development of the province, Adana was not among the places where People's Houses were opened in 1932. This created public disquiet in Adana, and was particularly criticized by the local press (Türk Sözü, 28 Kânunuevvel 1931; Türk Sözü, 27 Kânunusani 1932). In 1933, news began to appear in the local press concerning the opening of Adana People's House, and on 24 February 1933, the opening took place (Türk Sözü, 24 Şubat 1933; Yeni Adana, 24 Şubat 1933). For a long time, its activities were conducted in the same building as the provincial administration of the Republican People's Party.<sup>5</sup> However, after a short time, the building became inadequate and the construction of an extension was considered. When it was seen that the extension was not a solution, it was decided to construct a new building. The foundations were laid on 27 July 1938 (Türk Sözü, 27 Temmuz 1938; Seyhan, 1938; Adana Halkevi, 1938), and it entered service on 28 November 1940 (Türk Sözü, 29 Teşrinievvel 1940; Çanak, 2022). The Adana People's House began its activities with nine branches (Türk Sözü, 9 Eylül 1943; Seyhan, 1938; Adana Halkevi, 1938), and a short time after the opening, branch elections were held. The Village Branch had 502 members registered for the election, which took place on 11 March 1933 with a participation of 265 (Yeni Adana, 10 Mart 1933). In the election, Nalbantzade Ahmet Bey had 251 votes, Ziraat Bank manager Fazlı Bey and lawyer Rıfat Bey had 248 each, Kani Bey, had 246, and Ömer Ağazade İsmail Bey had 234 votes. However, the administration resigned in November 1934, and elections were held for the administration on 19 November (Türk Sözü, 13 İkinciteşrin 1934; Yeni Adana, 16 Teşrinisani 1934) and on 2 January 1934 for unfilled memberships (Türk Sözü, 3 Birincikanun 1934). As a result of the election, the branch management consisted of Rahmi, a student of the Agricultural School, Dr. Cevat Muhtar, Kasım Zeki, Ekrem Avni and İsmail Ömer (Türk Sözü, 4 Birincikanun 1934).

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<sup>4</sup> A large proportion of people lived in the countryside. Thus, according to the 1935 General Census, 23.5% of people lived in cities and 76.5% in villages. The figures for Seyhan were 28.6% and 71.4% (TCBİGD, 1937).

<sup>5</sup> This building was previously used by the Turkish Hearths organization. Founded in 1912 in Istanbul, based on the idea of Turkism, the Turkish Hearths were closed in 1931 when the decision was made to establish community centers. For detailed information see (Sarımay, 2004; Karacakaya, 2023).

**Figure 1: First Building- Adana People's House Buildings** (Türk Sözü, 24 Şubat 1933).



**Figure 2: Second Building** (Facebook/Adana Halkevi Binası, 2025).



The branch, which carried out work focused on the villages and village people, first opened an office called the *Application Bureau* in October 1933 to write the official requests of villagers and follow up their affairs in official institutions (Türk Sözü, 11 Mayıs 1933; Türk Sözü, 5 Haziran 1933; Türk Sözü, 8 Teşrinisani 1933; Adana Halkevi, 1938).<sup>6</sup> However, the most noticeable activity of the branch was the village visits which it organized from time to time. Because of winter rains and summer heat, most visits took place between March and June and September and December. At the same time, efforts were made to address the identified deficiencies of the villages such as schools, village halls, libraries, roads and water, sick people were examined and given medicines, information was given on agricultural, economic, sanitary, agricultural and animal husbandry issues, and beekeeping was encouraged for the economic development of the villagers. In this regard, the difference between the old and new methods of beekeeping were explained, and it was announced that hives would be distributed to villagers who wanted to take up beekeeping (Türk

<sup>6</sup> It was closed after a short time due to a lack of budget revenues (Adana Halkevi, 1938).



Sözü, 12 Şubat 1936; Akgünler, S.12 (20 Ocak 1936); Akgünler, S.14 (15 Mart 1936); Seyhan, 1938; Adana Halkevi, 1938). However, no usable hives could be found in the city, and so members were asked to prepare a sample hive (Akgünler, S.5 (9 Mayıs 1935). Also, a beekeeping course was opened along with the Courses Branch (Türk Sözü, 13 Şubat 1936; Akgünler, S.12 (20 Ocak 1936); Akgünler, S.13 (23 Şubat 1936); Akgünler, S.14 (15 Mart 1936). In this way, a four-week course was arranged which met for two hours a week, starting on 20 February 1936 (Akgünler, S.12 (20 İlkânun 1936); Akgünler, S.14 (15 Mart 1936); Türk Sözü, 12 Şubat 1936; Türk Sözü, 28 Şubat 1936). The branch sometimes worked with other branches to make the villages into more livable places and to give the village people information. Thus, it ensured that the newspaper Akgünler, published by the Publications Branch with the motto *For the Turkish village and the Turkish villager*, was regularly delivered and distributed to the villages (Akgünler, S.5 (9 Mayıs 1935)<sup>7</sup>; together with the Social Aid Branch, it informed the villagers about diseases and took care of the examination and treatment of the sick, and with the help of the Museums Branch, it had damaged places in the villages repaired (Akgünler, S.18 (20 Haziran 1936); Adana Halkevi, 1938). The branch members made their first village visits to İncirlik, Mihmandar and Solaklı in December 1934 (Yeni Adana, 17 İlkânun 1934). The first of these to be visited was İncirlik, where Dr. Cevat, a member of the group, treated ten patients and gave them medicines (Türk Sözü, 4 Birincikanun 1934; Türk Sözü, 9 Birincikanun 1934). In addition, four thousand saplings, obtained from Adana and Tarsus, were planted (Türk Sözü, 25 Kânunusani 1934; Türk Sözü, 29 Kânunusani 1934), the Earth Festival of 1935 was celebrated with the participation of villagers and farmers in the Agricultural School, and on Farmers' Night, celebrated in April, talks were given on farming (Akgünler, S.4 (6 Nisan 1935). In June 1935, Mihmandar was visited, and speeches were given on drought and fallow land, in cooperation with the Social Aid and Courses Branch on infectious diseases in the villages visited, and with the Chamber of Agriculture and the Farmers' Union, on the danger of aircraft. During the visits, checks were made as to whether the newspaper Akgünler was being read (Akgünler, S.7 (1 Temmuz 1935); Akgünler, S.8 (20 Eylül 1935); Akgünler, S.13 (23 Şubat 1936); Seyhan, 1938). In 1936, it was planned to organize trips with the Social Aid Branch once a week or every fifteen days, and a truck was put at the disposal of the branch to use during its activities. It was announced that the Tree Festival of 1936 would be celebrated in

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<sup>7</sup> It was published every 15 days between 1935 and 1936, but its publication life was cut short for economic reasons. For detailed information see (BCA, 490.01.842.331.1-8; Çanak, 2013).

Mihmandar by first creating a grove of trees (Akgünler, S.10 (2 İlkânun 1935); Adana Halkevi, 1938). Village teachers were also utilized during the work relating to the villages. A meeting was held with the teachers on December 31, 1935, to exchange ideas and to ask them to participate (Türk Sözü, 21 İlkânun 1935). Also, the teachers' support was obtained with regard to the villagers' reading the newspaper Akgünler (Akgünler, S.13 (23 Şubat 1936). In May 1936, the village of Yemişli, where it was planned to build a school, was visited and the location of the school was seen. Eighty-seven patients were examined and given medication (Seyhan, 1938; Adana Halkevi, 1938; Akgünler, S.17 (1 Haziran 1936). During June visits, speeches were made on health and cultural topics, and 181 village people were examined (Akgünler, S.18 (20 Haziran 1936); Akgünler, S.19 (8 Temmuz 1936). Also, Şahin, one of the branch members, went to 18 villages in the Pozantı and Kamışlı regions and gave information on such subjects as village law, village books, writing petitions, letters and keeping minutes (Akgünler, S.17 (1 Haziran 1936). Starting on August 27 1936, Yamaçlı School Head Teacher Zühtü Şahin organized a fifteen-day course in which he gave professional information to 17 people, six of whom were from Pozantı and 11 from Kamışlı (Türk Sözü, 28 Ağustos 1936). On 17 January 1937, a visit was made to the village of Zeytinli. During the visit, the village's roads, schools, and squares were reviewed, and Dr. Ali Hikmet examined 19 patients and gave them medication (Yeni Adana, 20 Kânunusani 1937). The village was visited again in the spring (Görüşler, S.2 (1 Mayıs 1937).

*Figure 3: Speaking to the Village People* (Görüşler, S.29/I. ve II. Teşrin 1940).



On May 9, 1937, a group of 50 people, including the People's House band, went to Misis with four trucks (Yeni Adana, 8 Mayıs 1937; Adana Halkevi, 1938). A teacher taking part in the visit spoke on the value of the revolution to village people, Dr. Ekrem Baltacı, Dentist İsmail Hakkı

and midwives Semiha and Belkıs examined patients and gave them medicine (Yeni Adana, 10 Mayıs 1937; Görüşler, S.3 (1 Haziran 1937); Adana Halkevi, 1938), and 15 patients were transferred to hospital. However, due to the high number of patients, the examination was terminated and it was announced that a doctor would be sent in the coming days (Türk Sözü, 11 Mayıs 1937; Yeni Adana, 10 Mayıs 1937; Adana Halkevi, 1938). Mürşide Akyol talked about the difference between the old and new military service, based on the Yemeni folk song she sang (Görüşler, S.3 (1 Haziran 1937); Yeni Adana, 10 Mayıs 1937; Adana Halkevi, 1938). Hüseyin from Misis won a race between members of the Sports Branch and the villagers, and was presented with a watch, and various prizes were given to winners of a wrestling contest arranged by the village people. After the sporting contests, Vasfiye Avcı sang various songs to a violin accompaniment, and students recited poems (Türk Sözü, 11 Mayıs 1937; Görüşler, S.3 (1 Haziran 1937); Adana Halkevi, 1938). The band increased the enjoyment by playing national airs. Following this, Ekrem Baltacı gave information about infectious diseases, books and brochures were distributed, and after the singing of the national anthem, they set off for Adana (Türk Sözü, 8 Mayıs 1937; Türk Sözü, 11 Mayıs 1937; Adana Halkevi, 1938). During the Misis trip held on May 28, 1937, the people's problems were listened to and urgent matters were addressed, sports competitions were organized, and 130 people, 40 of whom were dental patients, were examined and treated (Görüşler, S.4 (1. Teşrin 1937); Adana Halkevi, 1938). On July 4, 1937, the village of Yemişli was visited and the village register was drawn up. On July 11, 1937, Mihmandar was visited and information was given regarding the preparation of the population register and the application of village law (Görüşler, S.4 (1. Teşrin 1937). On 19 December 1937, another visit was made to Mihmandar. Dr. Ekrem Baltacı and dentist İsmail Hakkı, who were on this trip, examined and treated patients. Ekrem Baltacı talked to the village people about health, and Vasıf Canbay, a member of the Language, History and Literature Branch, gave a talk entitled *Our Government Railroads and Industrialization* (Adana Halkevi, 1938; Görüşler, S.7 (2. Kanun 1938). İncirlik was visited several times in April 1938. During these visits, a plan of the village was drawn (Adana Halkevi, 1938; Görüşler, S.10 (Nisan 1938). This work was carried out by Yusuf Ziya Bakan, Seyfi Tezer, Head of the Villagers' Branch and Land Survey Director, Ömer Sanver from the Courses Branch, İsmail Hakkı Somay and Nuri Erman from the Village Branch, Taha Toros from the Publications Branch, and teacher Hüsnü Uğur (Görüşler, S.10 (Nisan 1938). On 8 April and 21 May, visits were made to the village of Zeytinli with the Social Aid and Fine Arts branch. During the visit, patients were

examined and medicines were distributed, work to be carried out in the village was identified, the village plan was completed and a well was opened for drinking water (Görüşler, S.15 (Şubat 1939); Adana Halkevi, 1938). In June, İncirlik was visited, and surveying was performed for the plan of the village (Adana Halkevi, 1938). On 7 May 1939, visits were made to İncirlik and Kürkçüler, where visiting health workers performed examinations and treatment on patients (Görüşler, S.18 (Mayıs 1939), and on 28 May 1939, the village of Hadırlı was visited. During the trip, which was also attended by the Director of Education, a teacher, Ömer Sanver, gave a speech on the regime and language, young people from the Acting Branch performed the play *İstiklal*, doctors examined patients and administered medication, and a bookcase and numerous books were presented as gifts (Görüşler, S.19 (Haziran 1939). In 1939, following a government notification regarding an increase in production, Ömer Sanver and Zihni Bayo, members of the People's House, gave a speech at a coffeehouse opposite the Borsa Cafe and the Old Post Office on September 23, 1939, to enlighten farmers and villagers on the subject, and another group set out to visit the villages on the morning of September 24 (Türk Sözü, 24 Eylül 1939). Also, articles were written in the newspapers on the topic (Görüşler, S.20-21 (Eylül-1. Teşrin 1939). On 14 July 1940, during the Second World War, villages were visited in two groups to inform the people about the measures to be taken against parachutes and paratroopers.<sup>8</sup> In the same way, on July 21, 1940, Abdülhadi and Camili and the villages nearby were visited (Türk Sözü, 21 Temmuz 1940; Türk Sözü, 23 Temmuz 1940), and on 27 July, 1940, Karayusuflu village was visited and illustrated brochures giving information about parachutist enemy forces were distributed to the villagers (Türk Sözü, 28 Temmuz 1940).

**Figure 4: Distributing Brochures about Parachutes and Parachutists to Village People**  
(Görüşler, S.29/I. ve II. Teşrin 1940).



<sup>8</sup> The team which went to the villages of Denizkuyusu, Oymaklı and Karataş consisted of Dr. Ekrem Baltacı, Ali Yaver, Ali Rıza Yalçın, Suat Aymak, Coşkun Güven, Nuri Avcı, Reşat Güçlü and Şevket Çekmeğil (Türk Sözü, 16 Temmuz 1940).

Members of other branches sometimes participated in the visits to the villages. For example, members of the Acting Branch went to the village of Karayusuflu to stage the play *İstiklal* on July 28, 1940 (Türk Sözü, 27 Temmuz 1940). On 24 August 1940, a group of 20 people from the Sports and Village Branch visited Karataş and various other villages (Türk Sözü, 14 Ağustos 1940; Türk Sözü, 18 Ağustos 1940). During the visit, the sanitary, social and cultural conditions of the villagers were examined and a report was submitted to the People's House directorate. Also, the needs of villagers living on the plain were determined and attention was drawn to the afforestation of the villages, agricultural activities, trachoma and animal diseases (Türk Sözü, 25 Ağustos 1940). On 27 April 1941, a group consisting of members of the Sports and Village Branch and members of other branches visited Misis. During the visit, the health and social situation of the villagers was taken care of, patients were examined and given medicines, and shooting competitions were held (Türk Sözü, 29 Nisan 1941; Görüşler, S.34 (Nisan 1941). On 25 May 1941, a group consisting of members of the Village, Acting, Fine Arts and Sports branch went to Misis (Türk Sözü, 22 Mayıs 1941; Görüşler, S.35 (Mayıs 1941). As part of the trip, the play *İstiklal* was performed, a conference on agricultural issues was held, a folk song group sang various songs, the health of the villagers was addressed, various books were distributed, and a shooting competition was held (Türk Sözü, 27 Mayıs 1941). During a visit to İncirlik on 15 June 1941 by the Social Aid branch, 35 patients were examined and given medications, and there was an exchange of ideas on village afforestation and improvement of the school building (Görüşler, S.36 (Haziran 1941). During a trip organized on 29 June, 1941, more than 30 patients were examined and given medicine, social and health talks were held, and the issue of afforestation of the village was discussed (Türk Sözü, 1 Temmuz 1941).

**Figure 5: The Fine Arts Branch Setting Out on a Village Visit** (Görüşler, S.29/I. ve II. Teşrin 1940).



In 1941, visits were arranged to the villages of Zeytinli and Kürkçüler. During the visit to Zeytinli on 13 July 1941, the villagers' demands were heard and the issues of bringing drinking

water, improving the school, and afforestation of the road were discussed (Görüşler, S.37 (Eylül 1941). During a trip to Kürkçüler organized by the Acting, Fine Arts and Village Branch on 17 August, 1941, more than 200 patients were examined and given medicine, a conference was held, young people of the Acting Branch staged the play *İstiklal* and the folk song group gave a concert consisting of various folk songs (Türk Sözü, 19 Ağustos 1941; Görüşler, S.37 (Eylül 1941).

The last village visit of 1941 was made on 16 November, under the chairmanship of the People's House President Dr. İzzet Bilger. During the tour, in which an internist and an ophthalmologist also participated, products from textile and food factories were exhibited and medicine was distributed to those who needed it (Türk Sözü, 16 İkinciteşrin 1941; Türk Sözü, 18 İkinciteşrin 1941). The first village visit of 1942 was made to Karşılar and Kurttepe on 29 March (Türk Sözü, 24 May 1942). The village of Karalar Bucağı was visited on 5 April (Görüşler, S.44 (Nisan 1942), and Kadıköy on 26 April. Doctors who participated in the Kadıköy trip examined 68 patients, 38 of whom had trachoma (Türk Sözü, 28 Nisan 1942), information was given to the villagers about hand looms and they were shown weaving samples; books, magazines and newspapers were brought and distributed; a sewing course exhibition was visited, and the branch's mobile domestic goods exhibition was displayed (Türk Sözü, 28 Nisan 1942; Görüşler, S.44 (Nisan 1942). During the visit to the village of Karalar Bucağı in May, a weaving loom belonging to the People's House was brought to the village and brought into operation there (Görüşler, S.45 (Mayıs 1942). In June, eucalyptus seeds were distributed to many villages as part of afforestation efforts (Türk Sözü, 13 Haziran 1942). The last village visit of 1942 was to Kurttepe on 27 December (Görüşler, S.48-51 (I. Kanun 1942-Mart 1943). In 1943, the first village visit was made in April to Baklalı. During this visit, in which 35 people from the Fine Arts, Village and Acting branch participated, plays titled *İstiklal* and *Quinine* were performed, samples showing the various stages of cotton cultivation and a collection of various forms of cotton and cottonseed oils were introduced, and information was given about textile samples brought from different provinces, highlighting the difference between them and those produced in the village. It was also stated that the hand loom which was in the possession of the People's House and was allowed to remain in the villages for a time for copies to be produced would soon be brought to the village. Furthermore, decisions were made to build a toilet at the school, to move the village cemetery to a location further away from the school, to improve the road connecting the village to the train station, and to build a bridge over the stream which passed near the village (Görüşler, S.52 (Nisan 1943). On 1

May, a group of 24 people from the Village, Acting, Fine Arts and Social Aid branch visited the village of Gerdan (Görüşler, S.53 (Mayıs 1943)). On June 13, a trip was organized to the Tuzla region by the Head of the Village Branch, Memduh Pekbilgen, and branch members teacher Şükrü Erdem, Dr. Zekeriya Özveren from the Social Aid Branch, and teacher Vehbi Evinç from the Library and Publications Branch (Görüşler, S.54 (Haziran 1943)). As part of the trip, activities aimed at combating and preventing typhus were carried out. The trip, the third organized by the People's House since the beginning of the summer and reportedly the most productive, highlighted the fact that malaria, rather than typhus, was the most pressing problem facing the villages. It was even stated that in many villages, people were unable to find quinine. Dr. Zekeriya Özveren, from the Social Aid Branch and a member of the delegation, examined malaria patients and administered quinine to those in who needed it (Türk Sözü, 16 Haziran 1943).

On July 18, a group consisting of Memduh Pekbilgen, Head of the Village Branch, Dr. Mecit Altıok, members of the Library, Publications and Social Aid Branch, and teachers Vehbi Evinç and Şükrü Erdem went to the Karataş region. During the trip, patients were examined and given medications, and villagers were informed about contagious diseases by distributing brochures about the typhus epidemic (Görüşler, S.55 (Temmuz 1943)). In addition, two groups, consisting of doctors doing their internships at the Malaria Institute, namely Zekai Şenerdem, Naci Arun, Muzaffer Okutan, Niyazi Bunga, Celal Ada, Mehmet Dinçer, Memduh Gündüz, and Safa Ürgenç, visited the villages in the Karataş and Misis regions on 22 August and examined 525 patients. Two groups, consisting of Naci Arun, Hamdi Aktan, Süleyman Güney, Ziya Akbay, Necdet Menemenli, Memduh Yunus, Hüsnü Göksel, and Mustafa Sakarya, visited the villages of Şeyhmurat, Danişment, Eğriağaç, Kızıлтаhta, Bebeli, Adalı, Taşçı, Denizkuyusu, Yunusoğlu, and Yemişli on 29 August, and examined approximately 600 patients and administered medications (Görüşler, S.56 (Ağustos 1943)). In 1944, the Social Aid Branch visited the Tuzla and Karataş regions on 11 and 25 June. Doctors participating in the trip examined patients and provided medicine to those in need and quinine to those with malaria (Görüşler, S.66 (Haziran 1944)). In 1945, speeches were made to the villagers about health and agriculture, those with health problems were examined and given medication, informative plays were staged, and newspapers, books, and magazines were provided for the village chambers (Görüşler, S.85-86 (Şubat 1946)). The branch's activities diminished due to the debates surrounding the future of the People's Houses that began with the transition to multi-party rule after World War II. As a result, no branch activities regarding the villages were reported

in the press (Türk Sözü, 19 Şubat 1950). The *Model Village* project was implemented to make the villages better places to live in. As a result of village visits, a three-year development program was prepared for the villages. Under this program, it was decided to create model villages where houses, gardens, and animal and chicken houses were properly positioned, and beekeeping was encouraged as an economic activity (Akgünler, S.13 (23 Şubat 1936). With these specially supported villages, an effort was made to create a modern village type (Seyhan, 1938). The aim was to model the other villages in the region on this village. Starting in 1935, the first designated model village was Mihmandar, for the villages in the Yüreğir region. Subsequently, land was purchased for the construction of a school and a village hall, which were identified as the village's primary needs (Akgünler, S.4 (6 Nisan 1935); Adana Halkevi, 1938). A tree festival was held in the village in the spring to afforest the land (Akgünler, S.10 (2 Aralık 1935), and 300 saplings were planted as part of the 1936 Land Festival celebrations. As part of an event held on March 22 1936, branch members went to the Agricultural School in cars and trucks, accompanied by an agricultural expert, with 300 saplings prepared in advance. After explaining the benefits to the country and the village people of planting and growing trees, saplings were planted in the 12-dönüm area previously prepared. It was announced that a village hall, a school, and other necessary buildings would later be built in the grove created by the saplings (Akgünler, S.15 (1 Nisan 1936); Adana Halkevi, 1938).

The number of model villages increased with the new villages designated in the following years. In 1937, Zeytinli and İncirlik (Adana Halkevi, 1938), and in 1938 Bahşışlı, Kurttepe and Köprüköy were included among the model villages (Türk Sözü, 19 Şubat 1938; Seyhan, 1938). During the visits to these places, speeches were made on agricultural, economic, social and health issues, patients were examined and given medication, those requiring inpatient treatment were admitted to hospital, beekeeping and weaving courses were opened to help the villagers develop economically, marshes were drained, water wells were cleaned, advice was given on afforestation of the village and saplings were provided for planting, and books, magazines and health brochures were distributed. In addition, squares, rooms, schools and libraries were built here, and the chicken and animal houses were improved and separated from the houses, making them more livable in terms of health (Seyhan, 1938; Türk Sözü, 9 Eylül 1943).

### **Conclusion**

After the Ottoman Empire collapsed, it was succeeded by the foundation of the Turkish Republic. However, since it was founded on the ruins of a collapsed state, it had to struggle with



many administrative, social and cultural problems. In particular, the difference in the level of development between the rural and urban areas created a serious problem. The fact that 76.5% of the population lived in rural areas meant that the problem had to be addressed urgently and seriously. At this point, institutions called people's houses, which began to be opened in 1932, came into operation. The Village Branches, one of the nine branch of the people's houses, which worked for the village and the village people, carried out remarkable work. But this wasn't easy, and it took a long time, because the condescending view of some intellectuals and elites towards the village and the village people had to change. This attitude quickly changed thanks to the resolute stance of the founding fathers of the republic. As a result of this, serious work was started for the villages and village people, and an attempt was made to implement the process of change and transformation in rural areas envisioned by the Republic. In this way, the village branches visited the villages from time to time together with other people's house branches, and informed the villagers about what needed to be done to improve their social and economic conditions and to make village life healthier, and they also contributed according to the conditions. Something else which the branch did for the villages was the model village project. The villages determined in this project were reviewed and an ideal village type was developed, and an attempt was made to make this village an example for other villages.

In conclusion, this study examines a local implementation of the struggle that the Republic of Türkiye put forward in the first years of its foundation in order to solve the problem of backwardness and social inequality, which is a significant problem for many states in the world today, and which was faced by the new state established in place of a collapsed empire. Although the problem has not been completely solved, it can be said that significant progress has been made in solving it.

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