

Story 1593 (1987 Tape 4)

Narrator: Recep Yumurtacı, 80

Location: Bılık village,
Devrek kaza,
Zonguldak Province

Date: June 21, 1987

The Message Read by an Illiterate Person

There is a village not far from here which is called Tavuk.¹ One day a gendarme² arrived in that village with a written message from the captain of the nearby gendarme station. Unfortunately, no one in that village could read, and so the people there could not understand the captain's message.

Even the gendarme who brought the message could not read but he did not admit this. Finally when it was discovered that there was no one in the village who could read, the gendarme decided to pretend that he could read the message. He said, "This message says this: 'Since your village is named Tavuk, you must have many tavuks there. I want you to send me forty tavuks. Send also eighty eggs³ for our immediate

¹The word tavuk means hen.

²Gendarme is obviously a loan word from the French. It is just one of many tokens of the French influence on Turkey early in this century. There are no regular police forces in rural Turkey comparable to those in Turkish cities and towns. Law and order is maintained by regular army troops who are assigned to the Ministry of Interior for that purpose. These men are not called soldiers but gendarmes.

³There is a slight touch of humor here which neither narrator nor audience could have missed. In Turkish, egg is yumurta, and the narrator's surname, Yumurtacı, means egg seller.

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food needs

Āhmet Uysal: "So that was the way he read the message?"

Narrator: "Yes, that was the way he read the message."7