

# *Project of Raising Healthy and Resolute Generations During the Single-Party Period of the Republic of Turkey: Compulsory Physical Education*

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The purpose of this study is to provide information about the *Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti Kanunu* (Compulsory Physical Education Program),

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which was drafted in the 1930s after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, enacted under the *Beden Terbiyesi Kanunu* (Law on Physical Education) in 1938 and was started to be implemented in 1940, and to call in question the level of applicability of the law. Especially for the research to be more reliable, the primary sources concerning the subject were reached, the archives of *Türk Spor Kurumu* (Turkish Sports Association) Journal, *Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor* (Physical Training and Sports) Journal, *Ülkü* (Ideal) Journal, and *Cumhuriyet* (Republic) Newspaper were scanned and information regarding the subject of the research was reached. Together with the Law on Physical Education, which aimed to raise individuals that embraced and assumed the conservation of the Kemalist ideology and were ready to sacrifice their lives for their country, all men aged 12 to 45 years and all women aged 12 to 30 years were accepted as obliged to receive physical education and participate in sports activities for four hours a week accompanied by the trainers. Those who did not comply with this obligation were subject to various sanctions stated by the law. For this purpose, all physical education obligates wore the same type of clothes and participated in the same type of sports activities. As a result of this research, it was seen that the number of participants in the sports activities was rather few in the Period of Compulsory Physical Education, which is an unknown period in the Turkish Sports History, and the targeted healthy and resolute Turkish youth could not be formed. Besides, the Law was abolished in 1964 as it violated the personal rights section of the Constitution of 1961.

*Keywords:* The Compulsory Physical Education Law, Physical Education, Sports Politics, Sports Management, Sport.

### ÖZ

DEVER, Ayhan; KORUR, Ezel Nur, **Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Tek Parti Dönemi'nde Sağlıklı ve Yavuz Nesiller Yetiştirme Projesi: Zorunlu Beden Eğitimi**, CTAD, Yıl 17, Sayı 34 (Güz 2021), s. 643-673.

Bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurulmasının ardından 1930'lu yıllarda çalışmalara başlanan, 1938'de Beden Terbiyesi Kanunu ile yasalaşan ve 1940 yılında uygulanmaya başlayan Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti Kanunu hakkında bilgi vermek ve kanunun uygulanabilme düzeyini sorgulamaktır. Özellikle de araştırmanın daha sağlıklı olabilmesi için konuyla ilgili birincil kaynaklara ulaşılmış ve dönemin Türk Spor Kurumu Dergisi, Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor Dergisi, Ülkü Dergisi ve Cumhuriyet Gazetesi arşivleri taranmış; araştırmanın konusuyla ilgili bilgilere ulaşılmıştır. Kemalist ideolojiye sıkıca sarılmış ve koruyuculuğunu üstlenmiş, vatani için canını seve seve feda edecek bireyler yetiştirmeyi amaçlayan Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti Kanunu ile birlikte dünya genelinde bir ilk yaşanmış; yaşları 12

ilâ 45 aralığında olan erkekler ve 12 ilâ 30 aralığında olan bütün kadınlar beden terbiyesi mükellefi olarak kabul edilmiş ve eğitmenler nezaretinde haftada toplam dört saat sportif aktivitelere katılmakla yükümlü kılınmışlardır. Bu zorunluluğa uymayanlarsa kanunla belirtilen çeşitli cezalara çarptırılmışlardır. Bu amaçla bütün beden terbiyesi mükellefleri aynı tip kıyafetler giyerek, ülke genelinde aynı tip sportif aktivitelere katılmışlardır. Yapılan araştırma sonucunda Türk Spor Tarihi'nde pek bilinmeyen bir dönem olan Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti Dönemi (1940-1943)'nde sportif aktivitelere katılanların sayısının oldukça az olduğu, hedeflenen gürbüz ve yavuz Türk gençliğinin oluşturulamadığı görülmüştür. Bunun yanı sıra, Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti Kanunu 1964 yılında, 1961 Anayasası'nın kişisel haklar bölümüne aykırı bulunarak iptal edilmiş ve yürürlükten kaldırılmıştır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti Kanunu, Beden Eğitimi, Spor Politikaları, Spor Yönetimi, Spor.

## **Introduction**

The Republic of Turkey, established in 1923, rejected the traditional structure of the Ottoman Empire, with a marked shift from collectivism to individualism. Since then, the individual has played an active role in every aspect of life.

Sport is one aspect of social life in which people take part. Although the objective of sports is physical education and health promotion, the dominant discourse perceived them as preparation for war and paved the way for projects to that end.

According to Ergun Hiçyılmaz, a prominent figure in Turkish sports history,<sup>1</sup> physical activities have made Turkish people strong enough to stand against the enemy. Similarly, Nalan Bilge<sup>2</sup> states that Turkish people consider physical education to be preparation for war, and therefore, focus on practice rather than theory. Moreover, Turkish civilizations have always thought of sports as the most important indicators of talent, skill, honesty, agility, and courage.

The Republic of Turkey saw physical education the same way as the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish Republic embarked on a mission to turn its war-weary and poverty-stricken population into a healthy and strong one ready

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<sup>1</sup> Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *Türk Spor Tarihi*, Demet Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1979, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Nalan Bilge, *Türkiye'de Beden Eğitimi Öğretmeninin Yetiştirilmesi*, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları No: 1095, Ankara, 1988, p. 125.

to fight for their homeland. *Beden Terbiyesi Kanunu* [ Law on Physical Education (LPE) ] made it compulsory for people of a certain age to participate in sports.

This paper investigated the Law on Physical Education enacted during the single-party period (1923-1946). The researchers collected and analyzed data from primary sources to draw a realistic picture and help readers better understand the repercussions of the Law on Physical Education.

Regarding theoretical framework, this paper adopted a qualitative historical case study design. Data were collected through a literature review and analyzed using descriptive analysis.

Bogdan and Biklen<sup>3</sup> define an organizational case study as a research design that examines an organization's evolution over time. According to Merriam<sup>4</sup>, a historical case study is a research design employed to investigate a phenomenon at a specific time. Historical studies are descriptive. Their greatest advantage is that they allow researchers to collect data from different sources (documents, works of art, etc.)<sup>5</sup>. Case studies help researchers define and analyze cases from a historical perspective. Primary sources are vital in historical case studies. Researchers adopt such studies to define and explain institutions, practices, and programs as they evolve.<sup>6</sup>

We accessed the archives of *Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor Dergisi* (Physical Education and Sports Magazine) and the newspapers of the period and collected and analyzed data. This paper also provided information on the organizations responsible for sports management in the Republic of Turkey.

The Republic of Turkey focused on the body between 1940 and 1943. The phenomenon could theoretically be associated with the sociology of the body, which was first analyzed by Pierre Bourdieu, Norbert Elias, Bryan Turner, and Michel Foucault. According to the body theory, one's body is one's image, hence the critical indicator of existence.<sup>7</sup>

The relation between power (state) and the body is the domination of the latter by the former. Foucault holds that the body has always been the object of power and that the state, prisons, medicine, mental hospitals, and the discipline

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<sup>3</sup> Robert C. Bogdan - Sarı Knopp Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (5th ed.), Pearson Education Inc., New York, 2007, p. 125.

<sup>4</sup> Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (2nd ed.), Jossey-Bass, USA, 2009, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4th ed.), Sage Publications, USA, 2009, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> Bogdan - Biklen, *ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> Orhan Bingöl, "Bedenin Sosyolojisi: Nasıl? Niçin?", *Marı Atlas Dergisi*, Vol: 5, Issue: 1, 2017, p. 88.

of law are the main actors of the relationship between body and power. Power controls the body because the state is a totalitarian entity that wants to control everything.<sup>8</sup>

Foucault also argues that the disciplinary interventions of power exert pressure on the body and teach it how to function, what behavior to display, and how to take care of itself. Domination over the body is only possible if it is entirely conquered by power. Gymnastics, workouts, bodybuilding, and glorification of beauty are meticulous practices of power on the body.<sup>9</sup>

The domination of the body has become more prominent with modernization because, in the modern period, power has controlled and regulated the body more and taken it under control by infiltrating into behaviors. Modern power draws the body more into science and secularization and shapes it with aesthetic and health concerns.<sup>10</sup> Johann Peter Frank, a German writer, published the first volume of his work *System Einer Vollstaendigen Medicinische Polizei* in 1779 and the sixth and last volume in 1790. This work contains the first major systematic program of the modern state for public health. The program addresses a healthy diet, proper housing, and measures for health. In other words, it is uniquely dedicated to the question of what to do for a better life. The program is a sign that the body has become a responsibility of power,<sup>11</sup> suggesting that the body created by power is an ideal body for power.

## **Historical Background**

### **A Brief Overview of Sports in the Late Ottoman Empire**

Most physical education courses were introduced in the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat (1839). Before the Tanzimat, people were primarily engaged in traditional sports (wrestling, javelin, etc.). According to Bernard Lewis,<sup>12</sup> the Ottoman Empire had two options; to modernize or to vanish. The Empire saw modernization as a savior and embarked on Westernization. The Edict brought about reforms in social, economic, education, law, and military areas.

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<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *Entelektüelün Siyasi İşlevi*, Çev. Işık Ergüden - Osman Akınhay – Ferda Keskin, Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, p. 168.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, *İktidarın Gözü*, Çev. Işık Ergüden, Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> Nilüfer Göle, *Modern Mahrem*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, p. 115.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Political Technology and Individuals", Ed. Luther H. Martin et al., *Technologies of the Self A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, The University of Massachusetts Press, USA, 1988, p. 146-147.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, Çev. Metin Kıratlı, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 1993, p. 107.

With the modern approach to education, the focus shifted from traditional sports to modern ones.<sup>13</sup> The first modern sports and gymnastics were introduced into curricula during Sultan Abdulmejid.<sup>14</sup> Fencing and boxing were introduced into the curricula of military schools.<sup>15</sup> Gymnastics was introduced into Military High Schools in 1863. Gymnastics, rapier, and fencing were introduced into the curriculum of the Military Academy in 1864.<sup>16</sup> The fact that it was the military commanders of tomorrow who were first introduced to modern sports suggests that the Empire, even in its last days, perceived sports as preparation for war.

Physical education courses were introduced to the curricula of other schools but did not create the expected impacts. Gym lessons were introduced to curricula under “physical education,” but the public did not appreciate them.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, gymnastics could not go beyond the borders of schools.

Gymnastics was taught by French instructors (Senior Curel, Senior Morieux, etc.)<sup>18</sup> in Robert College, *Mekteb-i Sultani*, and *Mekteb-i Harbiye*, but to no avail.

We also need to address paramilitary organizations to understand physical education in the last period of the Empire. During its last period, the Ottoman Empire took it upon itself to transform citizens into strong and healthy individuals ready to defend the homeland.

In the last years of the Ottoman Empire, *İttihat ve Terakki* Komitesi (Committee of Union and Progress) established *İzci Ocağı* (Scout, 1914), *Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri* (Ottoman Strength Associations, 1914), and *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri* (Ottoman Youth Associations, 1916) in times of war. Their goal was to use sports to turn young people into strong and healthy individuals ready to defend their country. In other words, the Turkish State embarked on a mission to bring the youth under the umbrella of paramilitary organizations.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Sports introduced from Europe at that time were gymnastics and fencing.

<sup>14</sup> Yunus Tayga, *Türk Spor Tarihine Genel Bakış*, Gençlik ve Spor Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları, Ankara, 1990, p. 105.

<sup>15</sup> Yiğit Akın, ‘*Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar*’ *Erken Cumhuriyet’te Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, p. 131-132.

<sup>16</sup> Tayga, *ibid.* p. 106-107.

<sup>17</sup> Kurthan Fişek, *Devlet Politikası ve Toplumsal Yapıyla İlişkileri Açısından Spor Yönetimi Dünya’da ve Türkiye’de*, YGS Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup> Cem Atabeyoğlu, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Spor”, *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, Cilt 6, 1985, p. 1474; Doğan Yıldız, *Çağlarboynu Türklerde Spor*, Telebasım, İstanbul, 2002, p. 169.

<sup>19</sup> Sanem Yamak Ateş, *Asker Evlatlar Yetiştirmek II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi’nde Beden Terbiyesi, Askeri Talim ve Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2012, p. 146.

Following the Balkan Wars, Turkey was more interested in preparing the youth for military service.<sup>20</sup> The Ottoman Empire did not make much of scouting in the early days. However, Enver Pasha, the then Minister of War, saw the potential and implemented policies to popularize it. Therefore, the Unionists established the Scout Association in 1914, the goal of which was to prepare the Turkish youth for military service.<sup>21 22</sup>

The Committee of Union and Progress established the Ottoman Strength Associations (OSAs) in Istanbul in 1914. Their goal was to organize the youth under a military discipline on the eve of the First World War. The Unionists invited German experts to make the OSAs more institutional. The plan was to set up an OSA in schools, madrasas, and official institutions.<sup>23</sup> The Scout Associations were subbranches of the OSAs. The former recruited young people aged 12 to 17 years, while the latter recruited young people over 17 years of age. The Ministry of War used every means of the army and provided weapons and venues for the OSAs.<sup>24</sup> Another goal of the OSAs was to transform the Turkish youth into strong and able bodies ready to defend their country. All OSA members were automatically drafted as volunteers.<sup>25</sup> However, the OSAs were short-lived and replaced by the Ottoman Youth Associations (OYAs).

The Ottoman Youth Associations (OYAs) were the last of the paramilitary organizations in the Ottoman State. They served a useful purpose because they were founded when the First World War was raging and forcing countries to pour more soldiers into the fight.<sup>26</sup> Inspired by youth organizations in Germany, OYAs were established in 1916. The Ottoman youth started to organize under the umbrella of OYAs under the leadership of the Ministry of War. The Ottoman youth aged 12 to 17 years were recruited to the Association of the Sturdy, while those aged 17 to 20 years were recruited to the Association of the Vigorous. It was compulsory for young Muslims or non-Muslims to

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<sup>20</sup> Ateş, *ibid.* p. 170.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171-172.

<sup>22</sup> Bayram Ali Sivaz, *İttihat ve Terakki Partisi'nin Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Politikaları ve Uygulamaları*, Gazi Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ankara, 2016, p. 296.

<sup>23</sup> Tank Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, Cilt 1: *İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi 1908 – 1918*, II. Baskı, Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul, 1988, p. 459.

<sup>24</sup> Zafer Toprak, 'II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri', *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, 2. Cilt, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1985, p. 534.

<sup>25</sup> Sivaz, *ibid.* p. 305.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 306.

become a member of those associations.<sup>27</sup> The Association of the Sturdy provided long-term physical education with a militaristic mentality, while the Association of the Vigorous prepared its members for military service.<sup>28</sup> However, the Ottoman Youth Associations became a thing of the past after the Ottoman Empire was defeated in the First World War.<sup>29</sup>

Neither sports courses in schools nor Paralympic organizations were successful. Physical education lessons focused on gymnastics, but they proved ineffective due to students' indifference. Inspired by their counterparts in Europe, the Paralympic organizations aimed to provide military training to young people. In fact, it was sometimes made compulsory for young people to join those organizations because the assumption was that they could play a critical role in wars.

### **The Earliest Sports Organizations: Turkish Training Community Alliance and Turkish Sports Association**

The Republic of Turkey launched nationwide reforms after its establishment in 1923, and the modernization of sports was led by *Türkiye İdman Cemiyetleri İttifakı* [Turkish Training Community Alliance (TTCA)], the first sports organization in Turkey. The founding purpose of the TTCA was saving the youth from idleness and protecting them from bad habits and turning them into strong, resourceful, and moral patriots, creating a healthier race, developing physical education, preparing them for war by training them on weapon use, horse riding, and maritime defense.<sup>30</sup> However, the TTCA was not very successful, and therefore, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* [Republican People's Party (RPP)], which was then the only political party based on the Kemalist ideology, began to address the issue.<sup>31</sup> In those years, the RPP looked into how other countries managed sports. For example, party members such as Nizamettin Kırşan (sports advisor) and Turhan Rabat were sent to Germany to learn about sports management. Back then, the Hitler Youth was the youth organization of the Nazi Party in Germany. It was established by the sports expert, Carl Diem, and had great success.<sup>32</sup> Having been invited to Turkey in 1933<sup>33</sup>, Diem visited

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<sup>27</sup> Zafer Toprak, 'İttihat ve Terakki'nin Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri', *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi: Hümaniter Bilimler* 7, İstanbul, 1979, p. 97.

<sup>28</sup> Mehmet Beşikçi, 'Militarizm Topyekûn Savaş ve Gençliğin Seferber Edilmesi: Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Paramiliter Dernekler', *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, Issue: 8, 2009, p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Toprak, *ibid.* s. 536.

<sup>30</sup> T.İ.C.İ. – *Teşkilat ve Nizamatı Umumiye*, Numune Matbaası, İstanbul, 1935, p. 6-10.

<sup>31</sup> C.H.F. *Üçüncü Büyük Kongre Zabıtları* 10–18 Mayıs 1931, Devlet Matbaası, İstanbul, 1931. p. 86.

<sup>32</sup> Cem Atabeyoğlu, *Sporla Devlet mi? Devlette Spor mu?*, TMOK Yayınları, İstanbul, 2000, p. 23.



11 provinces<sup>34</sup> and prepared an 11-section report. The report had such titles as “training of physical education teachers,” “participation of young children in physical activities,” “sports organizations,” “making sports compulsory for young people,” “youth organizations,” and “establishment of sports clubs.”<sup>35</sup> Based on inquiries and Diem’s report, it was recommended that a youth organization named *Gazi Gençliği*<sup>36</sup> be established.

*Türk Spor Kurumu* [Turkish Sports Association (TSA)] (1936 – 1938) was the second institution to focus on disseminating sports throughout the country. Those three years witnessed the direct intervention of the RPP to raise the “healthy and resolute” Turkish youth envisioned by the revolution. The objectives of the institution were stated in the Code of the Turkish Sport Institute as follows:<sup>37</sup>

“To raise strong, high-spirited, and enthusiastic young athletes of high-character who have an uncompromising belief in themselves and their nation, and consider the defense of the country the highest duty and are ready to sacrifice their lives to fulfill that task.”

Inspired by the Hitler Youth of the Nazi Party, the TSA started to implement sport-related policies to gather all athletes around the Kemalist ideology and make them party members under the umbrella of Gazi Youth. Through the TSA, sports were entirely dominated by the RPP, and the relationship between sports and politics became all the more visible. However, the TSA was abolished with the emergence of the mentality that sports were supposed to be a state policy rather than the party policy.

### **General Directorate of Physical Education (1938) and the Law on Physical Education No: 3530**

The Turkish Sports Association was responsible for sports across the country. Newspapers from 1937 talked about establishing a youth organization named Atatürk’s Youth Institution. In fact, a report stated that the Institution aimed to turn young people into soldiers. In other words, the goal of Atatürk’s

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<sup>33</sup> For the news reporting that Carl Diem will arrive in Turkey in September 1933, see: *Cumhuriyet*, August 30, 1933, p. 1-3. For the news reporting that Carl Diem has arrived in Turkey, see: *Cumhuriyet*, September 18, 1933, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> These provinces are Eskişehir, Izmir, Istanbul, Samsun, Amasya, Sivas, Kayseri, Adana, Mersin, Konya, Akşehir, Afyon. It is, however, interesting that Carl Diem did not visit the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey for research. This may be due to the fact that the locals of those regions were engaged in agriculture, and therefore, did not participate in sport activities.

<sup>35</sup> Ekrem Akömer, Prof. Dr. Carl Diem, *Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu Belleteni*, Volume: 225, 1963, p. 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> Atabeyoğlu, *ibid.* p. 25.

<sup>37</sup> *Türk Spor Kurumu Tüzüğü*, Çankaya Yayınları, Ankara, 1938, p. 23.

Youth Institution would be to make sure that the Turkish youth would take it upon themselves to keep the revolution alive and carry it forward. The Institution was to recruit boys and girls aged 16 to 21 years and offer physical education and education on military service, morality, and homeland.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, those who completed the institutional program would serve in the military three months less.<sup>39</sup>

The newspapers and magazines made no mention of Atatürk's Youth Institution. Therefore, it is safe to state that the government did not or could not establish such an institution. Atatürk's Youth Institution was envisioned as a youth organization. However, a different youth institution with the same goals emerged in 1938: *Beden Terbiyesi Genel Müdürlüğü* [General Directorate of Physical Education (GDPE)].

Şükrü Kaya, the then Minister of Interior, made a speech at the Ankara 19 Mayıs Stadium on May 19, 1938, and addressed a prospective policy:<sup>40</sup>

“Atatürk has given us the necessary directives to raise the Turkish children and the Turkish youth to be more able-bodied, healthy, cheerful and good-natured, and suitable for work, war, and life as highly qualified individuals at home, at school, in the barrack, in the field, in the factory, in short, everywhere. The nation, the party, the Grand National Assembly, and its government shall realize this ideal of the Great Leader as soon as possible.”

On June 29, 1938, the Law on Physical Education No. 3530 was passed by the Parliament and came into effect on July 16, 1938.<sup>41</sup> In his speech, the then minister, Celal Bayar, stated that it was well understood that sports should be treated as a state policy.<sup>42</sup> This shows that the government acknowledged the erroneous policies of the past because, as can be remembered, sports and politics had been strictly intertwined, and the former had been treated as a party policy during the era of the Turkish Sports Association.

The statements by the authorities show that the GDPE would follow the footsteps of the Scout, Youth, and Strength Associations. For example, when Refik Saydam, the then Prime Minister, talked about implementing the Law on Physical Education in 1939, he stated that they would support the GDPE.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> “Atatürk Gençleri Kurumu”, *Akşam*, April 14, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> “Atatürk Gençleri Kurumu”, *Akşam*, April 17, 1937, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Cem Atabeyoğlu, *1453-1991 Türk Spor Tarihi Ansiklopedisi*, AN Grafik, İstanbul, 1991, p. 232.

<sup>41</sup> *Beden Terbiyesi Kanunu*, 3530, Sayı 3961, 16 Temmuz 1938; <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/3961.pdf> (Accessed: 26.09.2021)

<sup>42</sup> Akın, *ibid.* p. 132.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Beden Terbiyesi İstişare Heyeti Dün Toplandı’, *Cumhuriyet*, February 22, 1939, p. 1.

In his parliament speech on June 29, 1938, Şükrü Kaya expressed the Republic's expectations of the Law on Physical Education and stated that the Law would regard sports as a critical element of homeland defense:<sup>44</sup>

“With physical education, we want to strengthen and enhance the body and make our young and our people strong enough to win the struggle for life. The Turkish nation owes its strength not only to its racial characters. The Turks are a nation that has engaged in all sports and strengthened their bodies. There is no question that our ancestors had to be very strong to achieve glorious victories in history. Thanks to their superior skills and conscious minds, our ancestors have won victories on many battlefields, which the civilized look up to today...”

According to Cemil Tahir Taner, the then GDPE, the objective of *Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti Kanunu* [Compulsory Physical Education Program (CPEP)] was to improve the physical and moral abilities of citizens according to national and revolutionary purposes and national defense requirements.<sup>45</sup>

Despite good will, the project fell through. New projects and structures were constantly being sought because 1938 was the eve of the Second World War, and therefore, Turkey needed a physically and morally sound youth in the event that the country went to war. The General Directorate of Physical Education was part of this quest.

However, Dr. Sırrı Alıçlı's statements show that the athletes of the time were in a terrible condition:<sup>46</sup>

“In my examinations, I have encountered such pitiful circumstances that...I mean, our athletes suffer not only from lack of means but also from bodily incapacity. There are many athletes who will be at the risk of great physical hardship if they continue doing sport...”

Alıçlı made that statement based on his observations and examinations. Given that athletes were in such a bad condition, it would not be wrong to assume that young people who did not play sports were in a similar or worse situation. The administrators recognized this problem and introduced the Law on Physical Education. This decision also indicates what kind of meaning the regime attributed to physical education. In the earlier periods, sports organizations, such as TTCA and TSA, focused mostly on branches and club-based sports and occupied themselves with the management of sports while neglecting the efforts concentrating on the physical improvement of the youth.

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<sup>44</sup> *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi*, Dönem V, Cilt 26, İçtima Senesi 3, Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Yayınevi, Ankara, 1938.

<sup>45</sup> “Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti”, *Cumhuriyet*, August 15, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Sırrı Alıçlı, “Beden Terbiyesi Kanunu Milli Varlığı Perçinleyen Bir Kuvvettir”, *Cumhuriyet*, July 13, 1938, p. 6.

On the other hand, the GDPE perceived sports as a more serious issue and an indispensable part of homeland defense. Therefore, it put in a great deal of effort and made sports compulsory. After this period, physical education was a national matter.

Amendments were made to the Law on Physical Education. Accordingly, the directorate aimed to conduct and lead gymnastics and sports to improve citizens' physical and moral abilities according to national and revolutionary purposes and national defense requirements.<sup>47</sup> The statement in the regulation assigned two different duties to the General Directorate; defending the country and managing sports. These two duties better explained the purpose of the GDPE and supported the argument of this study.

Article 4 of the Law on Physical Education made physical education compulsory for citizens.<sup>48</sup> In addition, Article 13 of the Law stated that citizens should participate in sports through club membership.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the government put the Law on Physical Education into effect and made participation in physical education compulsory.

The government introduced the Law in November 1938 and allocated 100,000 Liras<sup>50</sup> to the GDPE.<sup>51</sup> The budget was increased by 685 percent in 1939<sup>52</sup> and by 15 percent in 1940.<sup>53</sup> The government regularly increased the budget.<sup>54</sup> An almost seven-fold increase in the budget within a year indicates how important it was for the government to implement its sports policies.

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<sup>47</sup> *Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyetinin Tatbikatına Ait Hükümler, Kanun, Nizamname, Kararname, İzabname*, Alaeddin Kırıl Yayınevi, Ankara, 1940.

<sup>48</sup> Article 4: It is compulsory for young people to be members of clubs and participate in physical education in their free time. The Delegates of the Executive Committee shall determine citizens of what age shall participate in sports and where, for how long and in what seasons they shall participate in sports

<sup>49</sup> Article 13: Young people shall participate in physical education through clubs and groups to be established by this law and in accordance with the provisions of this law.

<sup>50</sup> This amount allocated to the General Directorate is not a high figure for Turkey of the time. While Turkey spent 150 million Liras on imported goods, it exported 145 million lira worth of goods in 1938. In other words, despite economic problems, the state has allocated a budget for sports.

<sup>51</sup> "Beden Terbiyesi Teşkilatına Aid Kanununun Tatbiki", *Cumhuriyet*, October 8, 1938, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Nafiz Ergenei and Nuri Tuna, *Beden Terbiyesi Mevzuatı*, Alaeddin Kırıl Yayınevi, Ankara, 1941.

<sup>53</sup> *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi*, Dönem VI, Oturum 1, Cilt 12, Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Yayınevi, Ankara, 1940.

<sup>54</sup> Although the budget of the General Directorate of Physical Education was reduced for the first time in 1941 (775,700 liras), it started to increase again in 1942 (825,405 liras).

The CPEP had two objectives: (1) training citizens for national defense and (2) raising healthy and sturdy generations.<sup>55</sup> Policies were developed, and amendments were made to the regulation of sports clubs in line with those objectives. With those amendments, officers, soldiers, and civilian students were prohibited from becoming members of sports clubs,<sup>56</sup> and the member books of the sports clubs were requested. In addition, the equipment of the sports clubs was inventoried.

The decision to prevent students from becoming members of sports clubs is critical because, back then, there were many young people to whom the Law applied but were not recruited because they were students. In addition, there is no information as to whether schools were equipped for sports. Therefore, there was a heated discussion about the decision.

Another point is that all sports clubs were made affiliated to the GDPE. The government changed the names of sports clubs and turned them into youth organizations. In this way, sports clubs became solely responsible for engaging their members in physical education. However, this prevented the improvement of other sports and the introduction of new sports into society.

The Law made it compulsory for male citizens aged 18-20 years to participate in physical education. However, some of the eastern provinces were excluded.<sup>57</sup>

The criteria for participation were determined, and the age ranges were changed with time. Commissions conducted research to identify the citizens to which the Law applied. Firstly, those aged 18-20 years living in the municipal boundaries and those aged 15-20 years living outside the municipal boundaries of Istanbul were held legally obliged. The Law also applied to students, who were in the age range, and workers/officials of state factories and prisoners. The Law also stipulated that each club affiliated with the GDPE have 200 to 500 members.<sup>58</sup>

The age range for male citizens was changed again. The Law made it compulsory for male citizens aged 12 (beginning of middle school) to 45 (end of conscription) years to participate in physical education. The age range for

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<sup>55</sup> "Yalnız 25 Yaşına Kadar mı?", *Cumhuriyet*, February 14, 1939, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> "Beden Terbiyesi Umum Müdürlüğü Kararı", *Cumhuriyet*, December 18, 1938, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> The compulsory physical education program was not implemented in 9 provinces: Erzincan, Bingöl, Bitlis, Van, Ağrı, Muş, Siirt, Hakkari and Tunceli. These provinces were exempt from the law due to conjunctural reasons such as social disorder and poverty.

<sup>58</sup> "Beden Terbiye Mükellefiyeti", *Cumhuriyet*, August 1, 1940, p. 4.

female citizens was 12 to 30 years.<sup>59</sup> All participants were obliged to participate in sports at least four hours a week. The Law also applied to doctors until the age of 35, male workers aged 15-35 years, and female workers aged 15-30 years who worked in businesses with more than 500 workers.<sup>60</sup> Participants in the same age range were also obliged to be in the same squad, company, team, and battalion consisting of 13, 40, 12, and 366 participants, respectively.<sup>61</sup> The age ranges were 12-14, 15-17, 18-20, and older. It is not surprising that the Law designed a structure similar to a military system. The GDPE also made it compulsory for participants with uniforms (official parade attires) to salute senior officers.<sup>62</sup>

There were two types of sports that participants were obliged to do: compulsory and optional. The compulsory sports were gymnastics, athletics, volleyball, basketball, swimming, scouting, hiking, drills, shooting, mountaineering, and skiing. The optional sports were football, wrestling, boxing, cycling, motorcycle riding, tennis, fencing, sailing, weightlifting, etc. Participants could perform the optional sports in addition to those four hours. The Law stipulated that those who did not comply with the Law be charged with the crime of disobedience.<sup>63</sup> As of 1941, aviation training was also added to the program,<sup>64</sup> and skydiving towers were built.<sup>65</sup>

The GDPE also specified the “ideal” sports and activities. Handball was preferred to basketball and volleyball. All participants were supposed to learn the breaststroke technique, how to navigate using the sun and stars, and how to aim. They were also supposed to march, chanting heroic anthems, and stand at attention during the National and Tenth Year’s Anthems.<sup>66</sup>

Participants were obliged to wear either of the two types of clothing: official attire and a workout outfit. In fact, they were not allowed to put them on for

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<sup>59</sup> For criticism of the 30-year age limit for women included in Compulsory Physical Education Program, see: Mübeccel Argun, “Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti ve Kadınlarımız”, *Cumhuriyet*, February 23, 1939, p. 8; “Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyete Dahil Olacaklar Tespit Edildi”, *Haber Akşam Postası*, 18 April 1940, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Ergeneli - Tuna, *ibid.* p.76.

<sup>61</sup> “Beden Terbiye Mükellefiyeti”, *Cumhuriyet*, August 1, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> “Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefleri”, *Yeni Gün*, September 19, 1941, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> “Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti Kanunu 31 Ağustos’ta Mer’iyete Giriyor”, *Haber Akşam Postası*, August 1, 1940, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> “Beden Terbiyesi Mükelleflerine Havacılık Dersleri de Verilecek”, *Haber Akşam Postası*, June 15, 1941, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> “1500 Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefi Dün Toplandı”, *Son Posta*, June 16, 1941, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Mükelleflerin Mecburi Beden Terbiyesi Hareketlerinin Ana Hatları*, Beden Terbiyesi Genel Direktörlüğü Yayinevi, Ankara, 1940.

any other occasions. The official attire consisted of a khaki hat, shirt and golf pants, epaulet, waist belt, leggings, and black or Yemeni shoes. The workout outfit consisted of a white sleeveless shirt, black rubber trousers, and shoes, depending on the type of activity.<sup>67</sup> The official hats, caps, and strap buckles had the Six Arrows of the People's Party on them.<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, the Law made it compulsory for participants to supply shoes, although people were too poor to buy shoes for each sport.<sup>69</sup> The authorities realized this problem, and therefore, accepted Yemeni shoes as workout shoes as well. However, clothing remained to be an issue. It is evident from newspapers that the authorities could not implement the dressing code. In other words, participants disregarded the dressing code and just wore clothes of their choosing. They wore shirts and underwear, long trousers, or even suits and ties.<sup>70</sup> Compulsory physical education was bound to fail also because participants did not care much about the activities. The authorities focused on sports but did not raise participants' awareness of the importance of those activities. The fact that the dress code was not or could not be enforced also indicates that the authorities did not keep tabs on how the sports were conducted.

Although the CPEP was not a snap decision, the number of instructors was limited. Therefore, the GDPE submitted a petition to the Prime Ministry demanding that 113 people become instructors with a 6-month course in 1941. It was also requested that those instructors start receiving a salary at the end of the course and that instructors in other units be the permanent staff of the GDPE.<sup>71</sup> The GDPE also put up ads in newspapers to recruit youth trainers. The recruitment criteria were being a Turkish citizen younger than 35, having at least a secondary school degree, and completing the 5- or 6-month physical education courses in Ankara.<sup>72</sup>

The deadline for sports clubs to affiliate themselves under the GDPE was August 30, 1940, after which participants started to come together in sports clubs to perform sports. *Beden Terbiyesi Jimnastik ve İzcilik Federasyonu* (Physical Education, Gymnastics, and Scouting Federation) was established to oversee the activities of the GDPE.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ergeneli - Tuna, *ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>68</sup> "Gençliğin Yeni Kıyafeti", *Tasviri Efkar*, August 27, 1940, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Mustafa Keten, *Türkiye'de Spor*, Ayyıldız Yayınevi, Ankara, 1974, p. 37.

<sup>70</sup> "Kılık Kıyafet", *Haber Akşam Postası*, October 29, 1940, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Ergeneli - Tuna, *ibid.* p. 285.

<sup>72</sup> "Gençlik Eğitimci Alınacak", *Son Posta*, May 21, 1941, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> "Spor Mükellefiyetinin Tatbikatu Hazırlığı", *Tan*, May 5, 1940, p. 2.

There were 225 youth clubs in 16 districts in Istanbul. They recruited young people between the ages of 18-20 within the borders of the municipality and those between the ages of 15-20 in the districts outside the municipal boundaries. There were 565 participants in Bakırköy, 3000 in Fatih, 1068 in Eminönü, 230 in Kadıköy, 117 in Islands, 485 in Eyüp, 303 in Sarıyer, 287 in Beşiktaş, 277 in Üsküdar, and 1324 in Beyoğlu.<sup>74</sup> There were 643 participants in Yalova, 358 in Kartal, 1692 in Silivri, 2269 in Çatalca, and 388 in Şile.<sup>75</sup> Thirteen thousand physical education participants in Istanbul started physical activities through clubs. There were 10,200 participants in 1941.<sup>76</sup>

The project started on August 30, 1940, in Istanbul. During the opening, participants recited the National Anthem, and governors made speeches. Afterwards, participants went back to their sports clubs to exchange Bairam greetings.<sup>77</sup> In Adana, three thousand participants came together in front of the physical education district building, went to *Cumhuriyet* Square, and joined the parade after the ceremony.<sup>78</sup> The project started on October 29, 1940, in Ankara. The youth clubs in Ankara opened on Republic Day because they could not finish their preparations on time.<sup>79</sup>

All CPEP participants received a standardized education. Schedules were prepared. A book was written by Cevat Taner, a physical education teacher. The schedule consisted of four parts. The first part took three months. Physical activities in the other three parts were to be determined later,<sup>80</sup> which was a mistake on the part of the GDPE because it started to implement the CPEP seven years after its first design (1933), and during that time, the GDPE had plenty of time to develop a more specific schedule.

The schedule consisted of five sessions, each of which lasted 15 days. The first 15-day session included roll call, turning left and right, marking time, and running. The second 15-day session included leaping, touching feet with hands, push-ups, arm circles, and holding feet with face down. The third 15-day session included the bridge, stretching, and push-ups. The fourth 15-day session included bending forward, the bridge, and stretching. The fifth 15-day

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<sup>74</sup> "Gençlik Kulüpleri", *İkdam*, August 30, 1940, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> "Yeni Teşkil Edilen Gençlik Klüpleri Bugün Açılıyor", *Tan*, August 30, 1940, p.1.

<sup>76</sup> "Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefleri Gençlik Kulüplerine On bin İki Yüz Kişi Kaydedildi", *Cumhuriyet*, June 25, 1941, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> "Gençlik Kulüpleri Bugün Faaliyete Geçiyor", *Son Dakika*, August 30, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> *Türk Sözü*, September 1, 1940, p.1.

<sup>79</sup> "Ankara Beden Terbiyesi Mükelleflerinin Tatbikatı", October 24, 1940, *Ulus*, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Cevat Taner, *Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefleri için Program No: 1 - 1. Üç Aylık (Aletsiz)*, Meşher Yayınevi, İzmir, 1942.



session included opening legs as far as possible, wheelbarrows, sit-ups, and running.<sup>81</sup>

There was not a consensus as to which exercises were to be conducted on which day. For example, the curriculum was implemented on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in Mersin, and the training lasted 1.5 hours. Scouting and shooting classes were held on Mondays and Fridays. Gymnastics and athletics classes were held on Wednesdays until May, which was the water sports season. Water sports and athletics classes were held on Mondays and Fridays from May to September. Shooting, mountaineering, and hiking classes were held on Wednesdays for those who mastered scouting.<sup>82</sup>

The Mersin GDPE published a more comprehensive booklet. For example, it outlined such concepts as land-based strategies to attack the enemy and the mechanism of an 1898-model rifle.<sup>83</sup> Its content indicates that CPEP participants in Mersin received some sort of military training. However, the booklet did not address the content of those activities except for swimming and the use of firearms.

In Izmit, there were 160 CPEP participants receiving training in athletics, swimming, military training, and football. The administrators of Izmit considered the CPEP a fad. They stated that no progress was made on the program due to the neglect of the party.<sup>84</sup> Although the GDPE discouraged football in general, the Mersin GDPE allowed participants to play it. This indicates that no consensus was ever achieved among all GDPEs on the content of the CPEP.

CPEP participants used to chant anthems,<sup>85</sup> the most popular of which is “*Mükellefîyet Marşı*” (Participants’ Anthem). The lyrics of this anthem are as follows:<sup>86</sup>

“With an unshakeable faith  
Bring glory to tomorrow  
With strong biceps  
With strong steps

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> *Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefîyeti Yıllık Egzersiz Programı*, Yeni Mersin Yayınevi, Mersin, 1941, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Fahri Sakal, ‘Tek Parti Dönemi’nde Kocaeli ve Sakarya’da Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefîyeti Uygulamaları. In: *International Çoban Mustafa Paşa and Kocaeli History and Culture Symposium*, ed. Haluk Selvi, Bilnet Yayınevi, Kocaeli, 2017, p. 238.

<sup>85</sup> These are ‘Youth Anthem’ and ‘Tenth Year Anthem’.

<sup>86</sup> “*Sarsılmaz bir inançla, Yarına şan verecek, Kuvvetli pazularla, Kuvvetli adımlarla, Hep ileri, ileri, Beden Eğitiminin Genç Mükellefîleri*”.

March, march!  
The youth of  
Physical education”

One year after the CPEP was implemented, participants made an appearance in parades and official holidays, especially on May 19, Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day. For example, for the protocol of the ceremony held on May 19, 1941, CPEP participants did a series of gymnastic moves and were congratulated by İsmet İnönü, the then President of the Republic.<sup>87</sup> In the ceremony held on May 19, 1942, CPEP participants made 14 gymnastic moves in 18 minutes and received a standing ovation.<sup>88</sup> To our knowledge, CPEP participants did not attend any other occasions.

As of 1941, each participant began to pay a fee, the minimum of which was five *kuruş* per month for the first five years. Those who could not afford it were exempt from it.<sup>89</sup> Charging participants monthly was an administrative problem because citizens, in general, were too poor even to buy their own outfits.

The Law on Physical Education also applied to all public officials and factory workers. They participated in sports through youth clubs established in the government agencies and factories they worked for. For example, authorities formed a delegation to inspect the participating officers in the Maritime Lines Administration, allocated seven thousand liras to supply them with sports equipment, and had a football, tennis, and volleyball court built next to the administration building.<sup>90</sup> However, a state institution having a football field is in conflict with the Law on Physical Education because football was an optional sport. Common sense would dictate that the priority be given to compulsory sports. This shows that even state institutions flouted the Law and interpreted it the way they saw fit and that authorities did not query whether the Law was being enforced.

Authorities began to inspect factories from 1941 onwards. A circular was issued stipulating that female workers wear a white blouse and black satin shorts and male workers a white gym undershirt.<sup>91</sup> The circular also noted that employers should provide workers with outfits until May 5, 1941. Employers

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<sup>87</sup> “19 Mayıs Stadında Milli Şefin Huzurile Yapılan Büyük Şenlik”, *Cumhuriyet*, May 20, 1941, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> “İnönü Gençlere Diyor ki: Sizden Çalışkan Ahlaklı Ümidli ve Kuvvetli Olmanızı İsteriz!”, *Cumhuriyet*, May 20, 1942, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> “Beden Terbiyesi Gençlik Klüb ve Gruplarına Mensup Mükelleflerden Ayda Beş Kuruş Aidat Alınacak”, *Akşam*, August 14, 1941, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> “Devlet Dairelerinde Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti”, *Haber Akşam Postası*, May 18, 1940, p. 2.

<sup>91</sup> “İş Yerlerinde Beden Terbiyesi Kontrolüne Başlandı”, *Haber Akşam Postası*, March 4, 1941, p. 2.

supplied outfits to all workers regardless of their wages but deducted the cost of outfits from workers who received more than 150 *kuruş*.<sup>92</sup>

However, there were some problems with implementing the Law in factories because the GDPE issued notices in newspapers stating that each factory should establish a youth club and build sports fields.<sup>93</sup> This statement suggests that some factories did not establish youth clubs and that employers did not know much about the matter or just ignored the Law. This also shows that the authorities did not inspect the factories.

Despite the special attention and the big budget allocated to the CPEP, there is no clear information about the number of citizens who enrolled in sports clubs and participated in sports. While it was reported as ten million by *Cumhuriyet*,<sup>94</sup> it was 12 million for *Akşam Postası*<sup>95</sup> and three million for *Yeni Sabah*.<sup>96</sup> This huge difference may be because the flow of information was not very effective, or the newspapers were just sentimental.

The total population of Turkey in 1940 was 17,820,950, which slowed down due to widespread poverty and disease plaguing the country. In addition, citizens in eight provinces were exempt from the Law on Physical Education. Therefore, the figures reported by *Cumhuriyet* and *Akşam Postası* Newspapers fall wide of the mark.

The only source regarding this matter is a map on the back of the 18th issue of the Journal of Physical Education<sup>97</sup> published by the GDPE. According to the map, the number of participants aged 15-17 and 18-20 years was 985.326 between 1940 and 1941. In other words, the number of citizens who participated in the CPEP probably never reached one million, let alone ten million.

As of 1942, news reports started to appear, claiming that the Law on Physical Education failed to achieve its goals. For example, Kemal Onan wrote an article in *Vatan* about this issue:<sup>98</sup>

“Despite hundreds of thousands of Liras and time and effort poured into it, the Law on Physical Education was of no earthly use for Turkish

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<sup>92</sup> “İşçiler 19 Mayıs Resmigeçidine İştirak Edecekler”, *Haber Akşam Postası*, May 1, 1941, p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> “Beden Terbiyesi Mükellefiyeti ve Müessesesi”, *Son Posta*, May 10, 1941, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> “Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor Mükelleflerinin Sayısı 10 Milyonu Buldu”, *Cumhuriyet*, February 18, 1940, p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> “Spor Mükellefiyeti Oniki Milyon Vatandaşı Alakalandırarak”, *Haber Akşam Postası*, February 18, 1939, p. 9.

<sup>96</sup> “Üç Milyon Türk Genci”, *Yeni Sabah*, June 3, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Alaeddin Kırıl Yayınevi, Issue 18, Ankara, June 1940.

<sup>98</sup> “Mükellef İşlerinin Halkevlerine Devri En Doğru Hareket Olur”, *Vatan*, January 25, 1942, p. 1.

youth. We have always poured cold water on all this initiative as we believed that there was no way it would work out given the disorganization at its core.”

At the council meeting where the GDPE was affiliated to the Ministry of Education, even Abidin Daver stated the following regarding why the Law on Physical Education was bound to fail:<sup>99</sup>

“Recently, I have been to two sports festivals in Istanbul. It was only the schoolchildren who made me proud. For example, the Trabzon High School team beat most of the physical education clubs and made it to Ankara. However, all GDPE participants did was putting on a show, which was ridiculous. The GDPE was ineffective despite all the time and money spent since day one.”

The CPEP faced some difficulties and became less effective over time due to insufficient facilities and materials, lack of funds for facilities and equipment, and irregular payments of salaries. Therefore, the CPEP was abolished.

In 1946, the year of the transition to multi-party life, the Republican People’s Party (RPP) gained the majority of the government. However, the CPEP was not included in the government program and was never implemented again. Furthermore, the Law on Physical Education was abolished in 1964 because it violated the personal rights section of the 1961 constitution (Articles 21 and 29<sup>100</sup>).

The authorities failed to enforce the Law on Physical Education and implement the CPEP. Young people were not enthusiastic about participating in sports. The photos show that participants did not obey the Law and just wore whatever they wanted.

In Photo 1, participants look weak and malnourished. Their clothes are different from the workout outfit specified by the Law. In Photo 2, Cemil Tahir Taner, the then GDPE director, inspects a compulsory physical education center. We can see that the participants’ clothes are entirely different from the official attire specified by the Law. We can safely assume that they wore those clothes to sports because Mr. Taner started his inspection as they were doing

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<sup>99</sup> “Beden Terbiyesi Teşkilatı Şiddetle Tenkit Edildi”, *Haber Akşam Postası*, May 30, 1942, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> Article 21 - Everyone has a right to learn and teach, explain, and disseminate science and art, and do research in these areas. - Education and training is free under the supervision and control of the State. - The principles to which private schools adhere to are regulated by law in accordance with the level desired to be achieved by public schools. It is forbidden to open education and training places, which are contrary to the principles of modern science and education. Article 29- Everyone has the right to form associations without prior permission. Procedures and principles to be applied in the exercise of this right shall be determined by law. The law may introduce restrictions for protecting the integrity of the State, its country and its nation, national security, public order and general morality.

activities. This photo shows that the GDPE did not pay much attention to the Law. Photo 3 shows participants staging a parade. Although they all wear uniforms, they still look weak and malnourished. Photo 4 is a group photo of participants. What is most striking is their clothes. The participants in the first rows wear uniforms, but those in the back rows wear shirts and jackets. This shows that the authorities failed to enforce the Law on Physical Education and that participants were unwilling to be a part of the process. Photo 5 is a photo from *Vakit* showing participants staging a parade. The newspaper reports that the participants are marching past General Cemil Tahir Taner, the then General Director of Physical Education. We can still see that the participants wear different clothes even though they have been trained for some time. Photo 6 shows participants staging a parade. We can see that their clothes are completely different from the official attire specified by the Law, indicating that the authorities failed to enforce the Law on Physical Education. Photo 7 shows female participants gathering in the field in Gülhane Park, Ankara. According to the newspaper, the participants were divided into divisions and groups and prepared for physical education. Again, we can see that their clothes are completely different from the official attire specified by the Law, indicating that they do not care much about the Law. Finally, Photo 8 is a general view of participants from Istanbul. The newspaper states that the photo was taken before the participants started activities. In other words, most participants wore suits to the sports. This again shows that the authorities failed to enforce the Law on Physical Education and that participants were unwilling to be a part of the process.

### **Conclusion**

Turkish people have always perceived sports as activities engaged in creating healthy bodies and in preparing for war. However, the Ottoman Empire had no policies on sports, which, therefore, developed by fits and starts within its borders. The lack of initiative to improve sports in general and excessive focus on traditional sports (wrestling, javelin, shooting, etc.) in particular thwarted the development of sports during the reign of the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire passively witnessed the limited development of sports within its borders. However, the young Turkish Republic attached significant importance to body discipline and sports.

The public was war-weary and poverty-stricken, the child mortality rate was quite high, and health problems were common. These and similar problems did not escape the attention of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and therefore, the state started to give more importance to sports.

To this end, first, the Turkish Training Community Alliance (TTCA) and then the Turkish Sports Association (TSA) were established. However, neither of them successfully disseminated sports across the country, and therefore, were shut down and replaced by the General Directorate of Physical Education (GDPE). During the TTCA period, efforts focused on disseminating sports and using them to discipline the youth. To that end, policymakers first sent several researchers to Germany and Russia to learn about their sports youth organizations.

The TSA was soon shut down and replaced by the GDPE. During the GDPE period, the LPE (1940) was enacted. Those to whom the LPE applied were put under strict training (including target practice), and those who did not comply with it were subject to monetary sanctions. This means that the state enforced the CPEP to train young people in a semi- paramilitary style.

This shows how directly the government intervened in the body. The government gave instructions to identify the citizens to which the LPE applied, specified what sports activities were to be performed, and even imposed a dress code for participants. In this way, power standardized its domination over its citizens to create “one” body. In other words, the newly established state intervened in the body to possess the sources of strong and healthy bodies necessary to complete the transition from an Empire to a nation-state and to increase the general quality of life.

The Turkish state aimed to turn the youth into healthy and resolute citizens and considered their indispensability for a robust national economy and national security. The Turkish state took bodily training under control through the LPE. This process bears resemblances to that of Germany and Italy, which established, respectively, the Hitler Youth and Balilla Youth organizations. Although they had different goals, their mission of raising healthy and resolute young people is similar to that of the LPE.

However, the efforts of the Turkish state failed, and after a certain point, CPEP participants were left to their own devices. Although the government at first paid great attention to the project and allocated a big budget, its body politics were unsuccessful and unsustainable due to insufficient infrastructure, low number and quality of facilities and trainers, and general disinterest on the part of the public.

Another reason for the failure of the CPEP was the disinterest of the Turkish state in enforcing the LPE. Although sports clubs were made affiliated to the GDPE, neither participants nor sports clubs were inspected correctly. Moreover, although the government notified all sports clubs about the content of the training sessions, the instructors ended up doing what they had in mind, and, most of the time, they just let participants play football. This suggests that

those in charge were unwilling to implement the CPEP, and therefore, found an easy way of avoiding the instructions. Another sign of the government's reluctance or disinterest is that it did not finish constructing sports halls and facilities. It can, therefore, be stated that the CPEP failed to achieve its objectives of raising healthy and resolute Turkish generations, and therefore, the practices of power on the body were unsuccessful.

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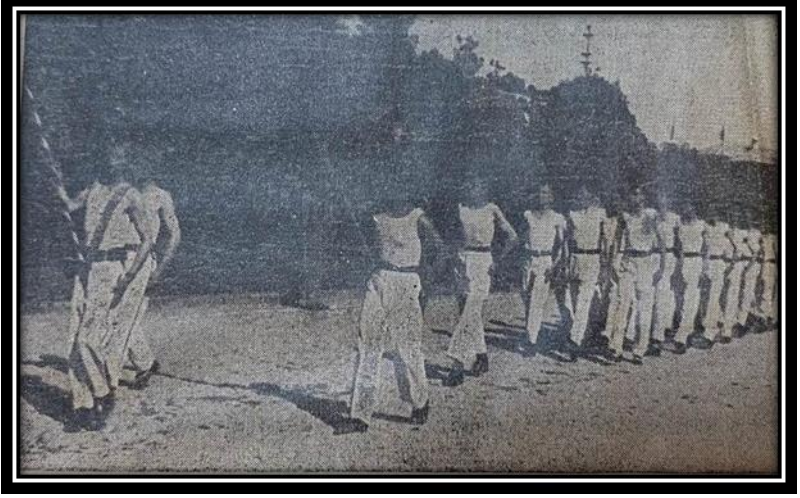
## Appendices



**Photo 1. Citizens Participating in Compulsory Physical Education,**  
(*Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor Dergisi*, Alaeddin Kırıl Basımevi, Issue 18, Ankara, 1940.)

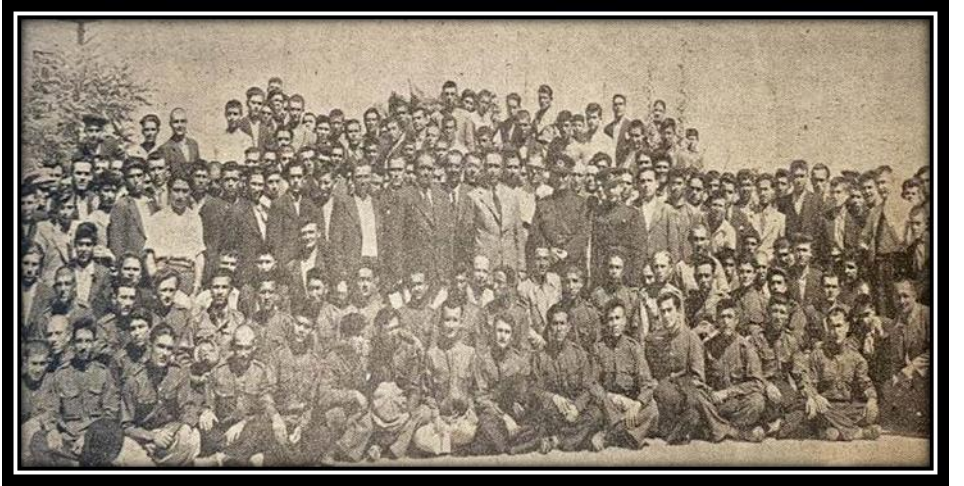


**Photo 2. Inspection of a Compulsory Physical Education Center**  
(*Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor Dergisi*, Alaeddin Kırıl Basımevi, Issue 18, Ankara, 1940.)



**Photo 3. Participants in an Official Parade**

*(Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor Dergisi, Alaeddin Kırıl Basımevi, Issue 25, Ankara, 1940.)*



**Photo 4. a Group Photo**

*(Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor Dergisi, Alaeddin Kırıl Basımevi, Issue 24, Ankara, 1940.)*



**Photo 5. Participants in a Parade**

*(Vakit, October 26, 1940)*



**Photo 6. Participants in a Parade in Ankara**

*(Vakit, October 28, 1940)*



**Photo 7. Participants from Ankara in Preparation for Activities**  
(*İkdam*, June 15, 1941)



**Photo 8. Participants in Istanbul before Activities**  
(*Ulus*, October 28, 1940)