

Story 1738 (1994 Tape 1)

Narrator: Cevdet Uğuz,
veterinarian

Location: Taşkale village,
Karaman (capital
city of province
but formerly kaza
merkezi), Karaman
Province

Date: May 1994

A Laz's¹ Dangerous Forgetfulness

The Japanese invented a very important secret weapon. They entrusted the secret of this weapon to three of their foreign agents: one an Englishman, one a Frenchman, and the third a Laz.² These agents were all captured by

Americans, who wanted to learn about the new secret weapon

The Americans interrogated the Englishman for a week in an effort to make him talk about the weapon. Intensive questioning of that length was all that the

¹The Lazes live along the Black Sea coast. The word Laz in most anecdotes refers to any resident of that area, though the word was derived from the Lazi, an ethnic minority of people who speak a Mingrelian-Caucasian language. Lazes are stereotyped as being stupid or inept, but of course they are no less intelligent than other people.

²The variant in ATON numbered 1683 is a more logical treatment, for in that version the agents are all from allied nations, and they are captured by an enemy common to all of them. Neither English, French, nor Laz people are enemies of Americans.

Story 1738

Englishman could stand, and so he then gave the Americans the information they wanted. The Frenchman held out for two weeks before he decided to reveal what he knew about the secret weapon.

Wanting to be sure that they had all of the information available, they began to interrogate the Laz. He refused to tell them anything. They made the interrogation more and more intensive, but still the Laz would say nothing. Realizing that he was not likely to tell them what they wanted, the American intelligence officers said to each other, "We have spent a long while on this Laz with no results. Why don't we use a different approach? Let us place in his prison cell a hidden video recorder. In order to remember all that he has been told about the secret weapon, he may rehearse it all to himself. By having someone watching and listening to everything that happens in his cell when he is there, we may get the information we are seeking."

The video recorder was installed in a hidden place in the cell of the Laz. On the very first day that it was there, those watching the video screen in another room

Story 1738

heard the Laz talking to himself. He was saying, "Come on, Temel!"³ Come on, Temel! Try to remember what you are supposed to know about the secret weapon! If you do not, things may go on this way until you die!"

³Temel is the most popular name for male Lazes. As a matter of fact, in folktales (and to a certain degree in real life) Temel is almost a synonym for Laz, though the name occasionally occurs throughout Turkey.