

Story 1720 (1993 Tape 3)

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Location: Kütahya, capital
city of Kütahya
Province

Date: December 15, 1993

Polish Brain Drain and the Laz¹ Effect

During World War II, Polish prisoners of war in Germany revolted in the camp where they were being held and began shouting, "Poland! Poland!"

Hitler gave the following order: "Remove half of the brains of those prisoners so that they cannot shout that way!"

The doctors followed this order and removed half of the brains of each prisoner. The next time that they revolted they could shout only, "Pola--! Pola--!"

When Hitler heard that, he ordered, "Take out some of their remaining brains!"

The doctors proceeded to carry out that order. The next time that the Polish prisoners revolted they shouted only, "Po----! Po----!"

¹Although there is a small ethnic minority of Lazi who live along the Black Sea coast (in the most north-easterly provinces of Giresun, Trabzon, Rize, and Artvin), the term Laz has come to designate any resident of the southern shore of the Black Sea, not just the Lazi. Lazes are generally and unjustifiably stereotyped as being stupid or inept.

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Finally Hitler ordered, "Remove all of their brains!"

When the prisoners revolted still one more time, they shouted,

"Hamsi koydum taraya,
Başladı oy namadaya."²

²These lines from a very popular Laz song are translated,

"I put some hamsis in the pan,
And they began at once to play.

The hamsi is an anchovy (usually five to eight inches in length) found in the Mediterranean and Black seas. Black Sea hamsis are a staple of the Laz diet. The Laz people are so extremely fond of hamsis that these little fish are more than mere food; they have cultural significance for the Laz people.