

Story 1967 (1992 Tape 4)

Narrator: Leyla Özdemir, 25

Location: Kırklareli, capital of Kırklareli Province (a Black Sea or Laz province)

Date: May 1992

### A Literal Laz<sup>1</sup> Response

An English woman was once touring the mountainous coast of the Black Sea in northeastern Turkey. The native people along that coast seemed to the British woman to lead difficult and very limited lives. She could not help wondering if any great people could emerge from such unfavorable circumstances.

In one mountain village this tourist saw a group of Laz women picking hazelnuts.<sup>2</sup> She approached the women working in that harvest and asked them, “Was any really big man ever born in this village?”

At first the harvesters remained silent, but then Fadime spoke up and answered the English woman’s question. She said, “No. No big man was ever born here. Women living in this village give birth only

---

<sup>1</sup>The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern part of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. In the Turkish oral tradition Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, much like other people.

<sup>2</sup>The hazelnut (findik) crop is one of two or three main sources of income for farmers along the rocky and precipitous Black Sea coast.

**Story 1967**

to babies. If things are different in your country and women give birth to big men, that is something that I do not understand and so cannot talk about.”