# Socialist Realist or Republican Nationalist? Two Faces of Art Deco on Turkish Popular Magazine Covers (1930-1939)

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Art deco, Modernism, modernization, print regimes, urban, rural. This paper centers upon the visual language of the two popular Turkish youth magazines, which were designed, printed and circulated for pre-television society of the 1930's Turkey. New Man (Yeni Adam) and Seven Days (Yedi Gün) were two prominent Turkish magazines of their era, as each had different political views from the other, but interestingly both had art deco visuality in common, in terms of interpreting the Modernism. Although art deco or the modern style movement was identified with new mass production industries and consuming cultures of the 1920's post war European and American societies, the movement also influenced the press world of the non industrialized and agricultural countries, located in the periphery of Europe, such as the Balkan states and Turkey. This paper aims to clarify how art deco is embedded with visual information designs of the socialist and nationalist ideologies in 1930's Turkish magazine culture. As seen from the publication examples of the 1930's European and Soviet print regimes, visualizing the ideology through information design was also an effective method for Turkish publishers to be able to promote their political views. Among Turkish youth magazines in 1930's print culture, New Man was socialist realist and Seven Days was republican nationalist samples, which had rich visuality and strong editorial content in common. However each represented a different face of art deco with a different visualized ideology to liberate, to educate, to unify the masses or mainly to modernize the young society.

#### 1 Art Deco: The Aestheticization of Mechanical Mass Production and Cosuming

The name art deco (decorative art) or the modern style was officially defined in 1925 Paris International Exposition, which declared the collaboration of arts and crafts with engine industries through exhibited modernist projects of the participant states. Art deco visually idealized the rapid growth of the mechanical mass production industries with geometric forms and cubic style images, and was used as an effective tool for visual information designs of different Modernist ideologies, that shaped the daily lives of the western societies. From mid-1920's to the end of 1930's art deco was popular almost in all western countries as the modern interpretations of the future. In France, poster designer A.M. Cassandre glorified the improvements in transportation industry with giant illustrative images of the brand new planes, ships and trains, out of distorted or artistic perspectives. His posters manifested not only the technological inventions in communication industries but also the new role of poster designer as an effective message sender.<sup>2</sup> Art deco served creative possibilities for Parisian Surrealist painters to be able to illustrate dreamy or abstract pictures for cosmetics and fashion ads, that changed the role of the old informative poster to the new artistic poster or modern poster among the Parisian and New Yorker publishers.3 Art deco was superseded by the New Reality (die Neue Sachlichkeit) movement of the Bauhaus members and independent German photographers. They systematically looked for new visual communication possibilities with experimental layout designs, photomontage imagery and structuralist typography of the liberal Weimar Republic. In Switzerland art deco was mostly embodied with mountain sports, fit, athletic bodies and bio politics of the state. Swiss art deco visually promoted tourism to country sides, where serve fresh sun light and clean weather to to strengthen the body postures of the youngsters. Art deco gained sharp ideological identity among the Italian Futurists, and it is embedded with the tremendous speed of the mechanical production of Progressive Futurism manifesto. However in England, the movement was self confident, silent and functional in London Underground's visual information design, improved by the Londoner technician and designer Harry Back during 1930's.4 In 1939 it was New York World Fair, which promoted art deco as an international visual language of information through futuristic designs and architectural projects, under the title of "World of Tomorrow".

Throughout 1930's art deco highlighted safe and comfortable transports, speed of mass mechanical productions, dreamy consuming cultures in Europe, UK and in USA. With its unique and characteristic visual style, it reflected the dreams and hope, as well as the fears and anxieties of the industrializing western societies between two world wars. In this sense, how art deco was interpreted in non-industrialized, agricultural countries, and how the movement visualized their hopes or fears for their future? The answer seems to be in the print regimes of the developing countries, which firstly aimed to educate and unify the illiterate masses with effective mass print policies and then rerole them, or to modernize them as the active citizens of the statenation ideology.

During 1930's, in non industrialized, agricultural countries, located in the periphery of Europe, such as the Balkan states and Turkey, state driven print regimes played dominant roles in social engineering programs of the nation building ideologies. Colorful school books, illustrated magazines with modern lay outs, well designed newspapers, or cheap pocket novels in national languages, established physical and pedagogical relations with the masses, in terms of reading, learning and internalizing the national Modernisms. Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Romania had similar print regimes, came together in 1937 Balkan Print and Publication Congress, to share their social

engineering methods. The main declaration sentence of the congress was to reach up to people from all classes and ethnic groups, and to unify them with effective publication policies. During the congress, a small publication exhibition was also held from each participant country, where Turkey had chance to present some of her national magazines and book samples. As an example, the state's official propaganda publications *Kemalist Turkey (La Turquie Kamaliste)* or *The 1935 Annual Catalogue of Community Houses* proudly represented the industrial and cultural reforms in the country through art deco style information designs. Titles with hand-illustrated bold typography from geometric forms, figurative compositions with bright colors that point out the power of the young productive nation, must have aimed to visually inform the bright future of the modern and secular Turkey. (Figure 1)

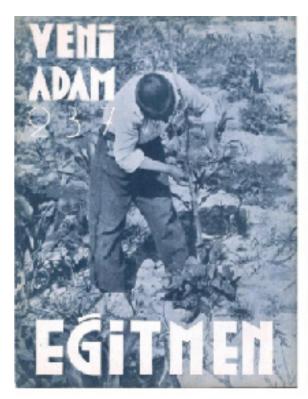
**Figure 1** The cover designs of Kemalist Turkey (La Turquie Kamaliste) propaganda magazines,1935 Annual Catalogue of the Community Houses, exhibited in the 1937 Balkan Print and Publication Congress. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)



Among Turkish publications, exhibited in the 1937 Balkan Print and Publication Congress, two magazines represented the urban and rural Modernisms of the country. For rural modernism sample, it was New Man (Yeni Adam) magazine for the agricultural society, whereas for urban Modernism example, Seven Days (Yedi Gün) was displayed, which had colorful covers, and designed to visually promote the secular Turkish nationalism. (Figures 2-3) Although these two magazines had completely different ideologies, both had art deco visuality in terms of interpreting state's official modernization program for the masses.

**Figure 2** From left to right, New Man (Yeni Adam) cover design, no:237,1937, monochrome letterpress print, 23.5 x 32 cm

**Figure 3** Seven Days (Yedi Gün) cover design, no:202,1937, colored letterpress print, 24.5 x 33.5 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)





## 2 New Man (Yeni Adam): New Education Pedagogy for the Rural Society

New Man (Yeni Adam) was founded in 1934 by the education theoretician and pedagogist Ismail Hakkı Baltacıoglu (1886-1978), who had been the first Rector of Istanbul University during the 1931-1933 academic years. The journal continued to see regular publication, with some interruptions up until 1970's. In addition to current cultural, artistic, and political affairs, it engaged in pedagogical debates from variety of different structuralist and socialist perspectives. Baltacıoglu was in favor of an education based on the concept of work. Hence the articles he wrote and translated for New Man (Yeni Adam) focusing on this approach, played an important role in the formation of the fundamental pedagogical principles of the village institutions, community houses and teacher schools of the 1930's Turkey.

New Man positioned itself as an opposition publication against Turkish state's bureaucratic and eclectic education system. Starting from its name, the magazine manifested the creation of the new educated generation with socialist positivist sociology in the realms of 1930's developing Turkey, where had agricultural demography and mostly peasant society. For Baltacioglu, Turkish educators from all

fields of sciences should follow and interpret the teaching methods of the developing neighbor countries located in the Balkan and Caucasian regions. For him, educators should concern effective pedagogical programs for the sociological needs of uneducated rural society. He kept his intellectual effort first to understand and then to translate the social and economic reforms of the developing (later defined as the third world) societies rather than industrialized western capitals.8 In his articles, Baltacioglu requested hybrid structures of pedagogical examples in the context of Selbstbildung (Self Construction) socialist pedagogy of the Weimar Germany. It is known that his political views for education pedagogy were mostly shaped during his education period in Europe and his official visits to Germany in 1920's. However the origin of the magazine's name and editorial contents were not purely or fully linked with left wing German modernism. During his relations with German scholars, he was interested in theoretical debates about society among German Marxists and socialist pedagogists, who had close relations with Russian Bolsheviks.9 New Man was a similar version of the socialist journalist Ilya Ehrenburg's Novy Chelavek (New Man) article series, published in Vesh (Object) and other Russian magazines during 1920's.

In 1930's Ismail Hakkı Baltacıoglu had engaged in correspondence with Ilya Ehrenburg, and translated some of his articles into Turkish for the magazine. 10 Besides these connections, Baltacioglu was also one of the translators of Fortunat Strowsky's theater play New Man (Homme Nouveau), which was published in Turkey in 1932, just two years before New Man magazine was founded. Thus, New Man (Yeni Adam) magazine of Baltacioglu had strong bonds with the 1920's German and Russian pedagogical theory. However, when the magazine was founded in 1934, there were National Socialists in Germany, and Joseph Stalin was leading the Soviet Union. These political changes both in Germany and in Russia, where used to be identified with the avant-garde socialist utopia of the 1920's, must have forced Baltacioglu to restructure his principles in education pedagogy, on vernacular, regional or national bases for his Turkish readers. The question is how Baltacioglu managed to create successful editorial content and effective visual information design for his magazine in the realms of the 1930's Turkish print regime, that was always controlled and frequently censored by the state officials? The answer seems to be in the changes of Turkish education system in the first five year plan of 1930's, in which Baltacioglu could position himself as a well known pedagogist and managed to publish New Man.

1933 was the tenth anniversary year of the foundation of the Republic and fifth year of the Alphabet Revolution. The government structured a new education program for illiterate masses of rural regions of the country. Accept new methods in reading and writing with the Latinized Turkish alphabet, a literature movement called *village literature* was also supported by the Turkish state. As a revised literal genre of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian *narodnik movement*,

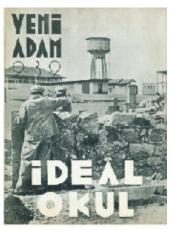
Turkish village literature served rich production fields to the Turkish pedagogists, and Ismail Hakkı Baltacıoglu was one of them.<sup>11</sup> Novels, short stories for the villagers and education magazines for the lecturers, which emphasized the urgent cultural reforms in rural lands of the country, shaped didactic narratives of the 1930's Turkish village literature bibliography. Although the movement aimed to educate and to modernize the peasants, it could only document the pastoral descriptions of fertile Anatolian lands, dramatic anecdotes of the poor people and idealized the young generation primary school teachers, who were commissioned by the state to educate the peasants. When Baltacioglu founded New Man in 1934, he complained about the weakness of the new born literature movement, which could easily turn in to boring village romanticism because of the lack of philosophical content of the published works. Starting from the first issue, he kept calling young educators to write articles for his magazine. 12 In short time New Man became popular among the new generation school teachers, who were sent to the rural lands of the country. For them New Man represented the realms of their difficulties during their hard official duties.<sup>13</sup> As a socialist realist magazine New Man served rich examples of collected and translated papers from respected European and Russian pedagogists about teaching methodologies, visual arts and culture.14 Just in two years, the magazine distinguished itself among the other local publications, that had similar political views. However the fame of the magazine was not only because of its rich editorial content, but the modern looking and socialist realism way of art deco design of the publication also promoted the success.

For the graphic design of the magazine, Ismail Hakkı Baltacıoglu collaborated with young generation scholars from the Gazi Education Institute, with whom he worked together during the 1929-1930 academic year. Fuat Izer (1911-1989) was the logo and layout designer, Sinasi Barutçu (1906-1985) was the photo editor and the visual archivist of the magazine. Ferit Apa (1901-2006) and Seref Akdik (1902-1972) were the two illustrators of the publication. These four names were future promising lecturers of the Education Institute. Besides these young scholars, Abidin Dino (1913-1993) and Arif Dino (1893-1957) Brothers also contributed to the magazine with their satirical caricatures and drawings. Leftist Turkish painter Fikret Mualla (1903-1967), drew pictures at his studio in Paris, and sent them to Istanbul to be published in New Man for thematic topics such as poverty, malaria or child deaths in the rural regions of the country. All these personal networks that Baltacioglu had established for his magazine, shaped unique art deco examples of the Turkish socialist realism. For the logo and the cover titles, stylized bold typography from geometric forms were used. This visuality signified the concept of self construction of the new educator rather than the industrial construction. Village and peasant photographs shot by local primary school teachers were effectively collaged, monochrome colored,

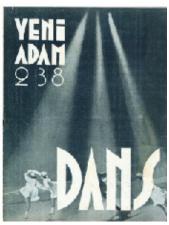
inverted or manipulated by Sinasi Barutçu for the cover designs. (Figures 4-7) Some images from well-known Soviet publications, such as photographic images from *Ogoniok* were also used with different frames. Photo editor of the magazine sSnasi Barutçu structured the visual identity of the *New Man* covers in line with the socialist realist magazines of the 1930's Russian and Caucasian publishers. For Barutçu, photographs used on the publication covers should be printed only in original black and white tones or in monochrome colors, as photographic images don't represent the real, but they reflect reality with their original and physical qualities.15 According to him, coloring black and white photographs for ads or for magazine covers are mostly seen in capitalist bourgeois societies, where photographs are not used to inform, but they are mostly instrumentalized to seduce or to navigate the ordinary people to dream rather than to think.

- **Figure 4** From left to right, New Man (Yeni Adam) cover designs no:195,1937 monochrome letterpress print, 23.5 x 32 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)
- **Figure 5** From left to right, New Man (Yeni Adam) cover designsno:239,1939 monochrome letterpress print, 23.5 x 32 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)
- **Figure 6** From left to right, New Man (Yeni Adam) cover designs no:221,1939 monochrome letterpress print, 23.5 x 32 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)
- **Figure 7** From left to right, New Man (Yeni Adam) cover designs no:238,1939 monochrome letterpress print, 23.5 x 32 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)









Ismail Hakkı Baltacıogu and his editorial team interpreted the relationship between culture and ideology as a battle in meaning and value production. According to them, this battle could be seen in public culture, and could be solved with structuralist education pedagogy. Instead of dreamy promises of consuming cultures and bourgeois life styles, visual arts and literature in the service of education pedagogy should reach to all classes of the society with effective editorial contents and sustainable mass print policies. <sup>16</sup> *The man is the child of his era but the creator of his reality* motto, which was shared among the Marxist and left wing circles during 1920's and 1930's, was also accepted by the *New Man* publication team in 1930's.

1930's were the golden years for the magazine. *New Man* had visions and these visions could find place in Turkish state's reformist education missions for the rural regions of the developing country. However starting from the WWII years till the end of 1950's, the magazine was frequently banned from publication because of its strong opposition articles against to the ruling governments. From late 1960's to the mid 1970's, *New Man* aged badly as an old didactic lecturer among left wing Turkish young generation. The magazine was often criticized to be unaware of the new socio-economic changes in post war Turkey. *New Man* could survive only a year after its creator Ismail Hakkı Baltacıoglu's death and closed in 1979.

# 3 Seven Days (Yedi Gün): Idealizing the Regime with Fit Bodies and Urban Imagery

Seven Days (Yedi Gün) was founded by Sedat Simavi (1896-1953), who was a prominent reformist journalist and cultural ideologist of the Turkish press from the last years of the Ottoman Empire to the early republican Turkish state. He was known as one of the few journalists, who supported the National Struggle in Istanbul Press during the WWI years. The most important reform Sedad Simavi had in the Turkish Press, was the transfer of the ideology of nationalism from poetry to the masses via the use of popular imagery. He did not only aim to develop the visual thinking of the society through modern visual press, but he also experimented in the field of cinema and communication, and educating the masses through cinematographic visual cultural broadcasts. 17 He published publications about caricature, photography and cinema between 1923 to 1933.18 However, Seven Days (Yedi Gün) seems to be the prominent magazine, which could serve concrete results for Sedat Simavi to promote Republican regime and to propagate Turkish nationalism with cinema effect photomontage visuality and art deco style lay out design.

During the tenth anniversary year of the foundation of the Republic in 1933, journalist Sedat Simavi began putting out *Seven Days (Yedi Gün)* magazine as visual editor, with publisher Sadri Etem Ertem (1898-1943). *Seven Days* magazine was circulated weekly with

letterpress print technique and designed as a 1930's Turkish adaptation of German youth magazine *Die Woche (Week)* and the French popular culture magazine 7 *Jour (Seven Days)* of the 1930's. (Figure 8) The pattern of editorials at *Seven Days like Die Woche*, took up many different modern and secular phenomena in topic form, from hobbies to tourism, sports to flirting, and architecture to psychoanalysis, used impressive photomontage imagery on its cover and inside page layouts, and quickly became popular. One of the most important aspects of the magazine was, as well as being read, it was browsed because of its dynamic lay out designs, filled with pictures or followed up on because of its popular, *modern style* or *art deco* visuality. This was a new approach for magazine design in terms of structuring information with cinematographic-effect imagery.

**Figure 8** From left to right, logo designs of Die Woche, Seven Days (Yedi Gün) and 7 Jour. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)



When the magazine was founded in 1933, Sadri Etem Ertem conceptualized the magazine as a family magazine, which should be young looking and editorially focus on the concept of modern and national Turkish family. Sedat Simavi, however, seeking the youth as the young republic's most important human resources, insisted that *Seven Days* should turn in to fully a popular youth magazine, instead of a family publication. In 1937 Sedat Simavi bought the legal rights to the magazine from Sadri Etem Ertem, and revised the magazine's editorial identity with modern, nationalist and secular looking youth images.

From 1937 to onwards, the photomontages of agile, fit and athletic looking, smiling girls of the Turkish Republic that began to find their way onto the cover of *Seven Days* was an example of borrowing the imagery of the nationalist magazines that had quickly spread across Europe. (Figures 9-12) From the latter half of the 1930's onwards, the magazine topics began to frequently emphasize bio-politics as well as cultural nationalism, and created imagery of Turkish youth ready to defend their country from the enemies if needed. Between 1937-1948 the magazine's circulation exceeded 50.000 breaking records for the press, in the ruling Single Party government of the 1930's and 1940's Turkey.

**Figure 9** From left to right, Seven Days (Yedi Gün) cover design, no:275,1938colored letterpress print, 24.5 x 33.5 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)

**Figure 10** From left to right, Seven Days (Yedi Gün) cover design no:166,1936colored letterpress print, 24.5 x 33.5 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)

**Figure 11** From left to right, Seven Days (Yedi Gün) cover design no:158,1936colored letterpress print, 24.5 x 33.5 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)

**Figure 12** From left to right, Seven Days (Yedi Gün) cover design issue:51,1934, colored letterpress print, 24.5 x 33.5 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)



The success of the magazine was based on four fundamentals. The first was that *Seven Days* was always supported by the government in Ankara. Even in the paper rationing years of WWII, the magazine was provided with paper thanks to the government support, and it was able to continue publishing without a break and protected its circulation. The close relationship of Sedat Simavi established with the officials at the Press and Publication General Directorate in Ankara allowed him to gain access to copies of official press and propaganda photographs at the institution's visual archive department.

The second reason behind the magazine's success was its translation of the ruling government's cultural revolution, which rested on the formation of a national, modern and secular identity for Turkish citizens, into popular culture format for young people. *Seven Days* addressed its young readers as "we", creating a westernized,

nationalist and secular mass culture that emphasized the national spirit.

The third reason was that Sedat Simavi himself, as well as the other press illustrators working at the magazine were foremost following European and Soviet propaganda publications very closely, adapting the cover image of *Seven Days* to these publications' imagery of popular culture and establishing an equivalence in examples between Europe and the Turkish state that visually responded to these propaganda efforts. (Figures 13-16) Accept adapting the persuasive visual propaganda from the European print sources, Simavi also took close attention to the printing technologies in Europe, and updated his letterpress printing machines with advanced models, by which he could gain effective print results.

**Figure 13** From left to right, Seven Days (Yedi Gün) cover design, no:219,1937, colored letterpress print, 24.5 x 33.5 cm.

Figure 14 Poster for Nazi Germany Sport Festival, 1935, colored typo print, 52 x 87 cm.

Figure 15 Seven Days (Yedi Gün) cover design, no:267,1938, colored letterpress print, 24.5 x 33.5 cm

**Figure 16** Ad design for Soviet Sanit toothpaste brand,1938, colored letterpress print, 25 x 35 cm. (Visual Source: Author's Collection.)









The fourth reason was that Sedat Simavi created a pool of media talent that included some of the best writers and press painters in the country for his magazine.<sup>20</sup> As example famous Turkish writers like Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962), Halide Edip Adıvar (1884-1964), and Abdülhak Sinasi Hisar (1887-1963) contributed to the magazine with their short stories or serialized novels, where as caricaturists Cemal Nadir Güler (1902-1947), Ramiz Gökçe (1900-1953) and Ihap Hulsi Görey (1898-1986) enriched the publication's modern visuality.

What is certain that rival publications to Seven Days in the WWII years, youth magazines such as New Man of Ismail Hakkı Baltacıoglu and the Illustrated Monthly (Resimli Ay) of Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel couple, were sentenced to censorship for propagating communism or found it difficult to obtain paper during the paper rationing years, leaving the field of printed media for young people to Seven Days.<sup>21</sup> As a republican nationalist youth magazine, Seven Days sharpened its publication policy during the WWII years, and shaped mainstream popular visual culture, to motivate the masses. After the Second World War, Sedat Simavi might have taught that the mission of the magazine was over and closed his magazine in 1948. From Seven Days he made a fortune to be able to establish a daily newspaper brand, which was very difficult to finance among the independent Turkish publishers of the post WWII years. He founded Independence (Hürriyet) Turkish daily newspaper with its slogan of "Turkey Belongs" to Turks", which is still being published and the slogan is still used.

### 4 As Conclusion: Two Turkish Art Deco Magazines Visualize the Sharp Divisions between Rural and Urban Modernisms of the 1930's Turkey

As well known Turkish *art deco* magazine samples, *New Man* and *Seven Days* visualized the sharp divisions between rural and urban Modernisms of the 1930's Turkey. They were designed to inform and to promote socialist or nationalist ideologies, which shaped the social engineering policies of the country. As a socialist realist magazine *New Man* lived its golden era during the *village literature movement*, which used to be supported by the state, but lost its political impact on post WWII Turkish governments. However for the ruling governments, the ideological views of *Seven Days* always kept its importance, as the magazine propagated Turkish Modernism through national development codes with mass production promises, that always guaranteed to transform, to unify or to control the masses.

As an urban example of Turkish *art deco, Seven Days* promoted secular, nationalist, and bourgeois life styles for urban middle class society, where as *New Man* focused on socialist realism of farmers, peasants or primary school teachers in the villages and rejected bourgeois dreams. In other words, it can also be said that both *New Man* and *Seven Days* were Turkish interpretations of Soviet socialist

realism and German nationalism, which would create ideological clashes between industrialized western and agricultural eastern societies, during and after the WWII. It was clear that both magazines matured their editorial structures of information design, by borrowing the effective visual identity from these ideologies, but nationalized or regionalized them for their Turkish readers.

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