



Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

*"Flying Angel," a mid-16th century Ottoman painting attributed to Shah Quli. In the 1920s, Kemal Atatürk encouraged Turks to shed their Ottoman past. The role of Islam was circumscribed, and the arts acquired a European flavor. Arabic and Persian words were purged from the Turkish language. The difference between the Turkish used in 1920 and in 1982 is greater than that between Chaucer's English and ours.*

# Turkey

The Ottoman Empire was known to Westerners during its long decline as the "Sick Man of Europe." Few disputed the diagnosis when that sobriquet was applied, during the late 1970s, to the old empire's modern successor, the Republic of Turkey, suddenly beset by economic disarray, political chaos, and outbreaks of terrorism. But what *continent* the Turks belong to remains a matter of dispute. Straddling Europe and Asia, Turkey is the only Islamic nation in NATO and the only NATO member in the Islamic Conference. The Turks pray in Arabic, converse in Turkish, and write in Latin script. Ethnically, a typical Turk is an alloy of a dozen races, from Hittites to Celts to Mongols. In one of his alliterative slogans, Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Republic, probably defined his people best: *Biz bize benzeriz*—"We resemble ourselves." Here Paul Henze describes the development of the Turkish nation and its recent bout with anarchy. George Harris explains how the world looks to Turkish eyes.

## ON THE REBOUND

*by Paul B. Henze*

Every November 10, Turkey's daily newspapers display vivid full-color portraits of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on their front pages beneath such headlines as: "With You We Are Happy—Proud—Strong." Every November 10, most of Turkey's 46 million people stand silent at 9:00 a.m. as all activity in the country comes to a standstill. At that moment on that day in 1938, an ailing Atatürk breathed his last in Dolmabahçe Palace on the European shore of the Bosphorus. Yet Atatürk lives on in the daily life of the Turks in a way that probably has no counterpart anywhere else in the world.

By present-day standards, the life of the blue-eyed, Macedonian-born Mustafa Kemal was brief. He died in his 57th year, only two decades after leading his people out of defeat in World War I and launching a successful drive for the creation of a Turkish state. "How happy I am to say that I am a Turk," he declared to a people for whom the very word Turk had, under

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the Ottomans, become a term of derision, reserved for country yokels. "Turks—Be proud, be industrious, be confident!" he adjoined them as he set independent Turkey on a path toward Westernization, modernization, and democracy.

The Republic of Turkey has proved itself resilient. It survived the Great Depression and World War II relatively unscathed. Since 1950 it has experienced three great bursts of prosperity, two near-collapses of its economy, two waves of terrorist violence. Through it all, the Turks have remained united behind the ideals laid down by Kemal Atatürk. And for all the turmoil, the nation's economic development has in general proved more orderly, and more beneficial to a greater share of the populace, than that of any other nation in the Middle East (excepting, perhaps, Israel). The standard of living in Turkey today is roughly on a par with that of Western Europe at the beginning of the 1950s, and London's *Financial Times* recently predicted that Turkey in 1982 will boast the highest rate of economic growth of any nation in Europe or North America.

The transformation of Turkey since the 1920s has been profound. The country's biggest cities—Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana—are crowded with gleaming modern buildings and throngs of people wearing Western dress, the young women as stylish as any in Paris or Rome. Turkish-made Murats and Anadolos speed along the modern highways that link all parts of the country; an elegant suspension bridge spans the Bosphorus, joining Europe and Asia. On the high Anatolian plateau, irrigation has opened vast stretches of land to agriculture, while at plateau's edge the mountains rise green from reforestation.

Islam once dictated the rhythms of Turkish life; Atatürk sought to undermine its primacy. Today, the new mosques are well-attended and the old ones carefully refurbished, but Islam no longer dominates daily life as it does in Iran, Libya, or Saudi Arabia. Religion is simply a part of life, as in the Western European societies Atatürk admired.

Bright billboards and signs on shops everywhere reveal how universally the Latin alphabet has ousted the old Arabic script, and it is in Latin characters that Atatürk's hortatory pro-

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- ||||| Under Turkish occupation
- x Major U.S.-Turkish "Common Defense installations"
- Iraqi pipeline

Source: Central Intelligence Agency; *International Petroleum Encyclopedia*, 1980; *Turkey 1981 Almanac*.

*Turkey is home to numerous NATO and U.S. facilities (many not shown), and some 5,230 American military personnel are stationed in the country. Under the six-mile limit (right), NATO partner Greece controls 41 percent of the Aegean Sea, Turkey 7 percent. The nearest Greek isle lies only six miles off the Turkish coast.*



Territorial waters as reckoned under the six mile limit:  
 Greek waters █  
 Turkish waters ■

nouncements are carved and painted everywhere: over school-yard gates, in public buildings, on mountainsides. ("School is a door that opens the way to civilization"—youngsters in Eğirdir see those words on their way to class every day.) Atatürk's statue graces every town square, and there are foundries in Turkey turning out nothing but busts, statues, and monumental equestrian effigies of the Father of the Turks.

Much of what Mustafa Kemal loved about Turkey has not changed. Long brown loaves still come fresh from the oven several times daily, crisp and flavorful, the flour milled from wheat cultivated on the broad plains of Thrace and Anatolia. Yogurt

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remains a dietary staple, though it is often sold now in plastic containers with an expiration date marked on the caps. Visitors are still offered hot tea in small glasses by their hosts, and Turkish hospitality and social ritual remains largely unchanged. *Allaha ısmarladık* ("We have commended you to God"), says a person taking leave of another. *Güle, Güle* ("Smilingly, smilingly"), says the one remaining behind.

Atatürk shared Woodrow Wilson's view that "democracy is unquestionably the most wholesome and livable kind of government," although Turkey did not become a truly democratic state until after World War II. But Mustafa Kemal would find today that even in the countryside, even in places where old men chat away their days in tea-houses and backgammon parlors, Turks are interested in public affairs (voter turnout is high—about 80 percent) and are avid readers of newspapers and viewers of TV (color television has just arrived). His attempt to transform his people into active citizens has largely succeeded. As a result, he is more profoundly appreciated now by a larger proportion of the Turkish population than he was in his lifetime.

### End of Empire

Given his raw material, Atatürk's achievement appears all the more remarkable. What was left of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 did not look like the foundation for a modern nation. Beginning in the 13th century, the Ottoman Turks had ruled a dynamic multinational state encompassing North Africa, the Mideast, the Red Sea, and the Balkans, as well as the Anatolian heartland. The Empire began to crumble during the 18th century. That it survived at all during the 19th century was due less to any virtues of the ruling Sultans than to the support of France and Britain, eager to check an acquisitive, southward-moving tsarist Russia.

Admiring Teutonic efficiency and cooperating with Germans who were eager to expand into the Middle East, the "Young Turks" allied the Empire with Germany and Austria-Hungary during World War I. The price of defeat was dismemberment. The Ottoman territories were spun off into various colonial "mandates" (e.g., Iraq and Palestine), with Anatolia itself sliced for a time into French, Greek, British, and Italian zones. The Sultan's domain was reduced to a few provinces. Mehmed VI, last of the House of Osman, acquiesced in these humiliating terms, but General Mustafa Kemal, a career army officer and popular hero who had defeated the British at Gallipoli in 1915, found them unacceptable. He rallied his coun-

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trymen and turned back an invading Greek army at the Sakarya River (1921) in the shadow of ancient Gordion. Ultimately, after Mehmed fled to Malta, Mustafa Kemal won recognition by the Allies, in the Treaty of Lausanne, of an independent Turkish state. The Turkish Republic formally came into existence on October 29, 1923, with Atatürk as its President.

The Republic's territory was large by European standards—three times the size of the United Kingdom—but it had been devastated by war and foreign occupation.\* In some respects, the Turkey Atatürk inherited had not changed greatly since ancient times. The inadequate railways, part of the German-built Berlin-to-Baghdad system, provided the only modern transport there was; much merchandise still moved by camel caravan. Old Persian and Roman roads were still in use. Electricity was almost unknown in rural areas.

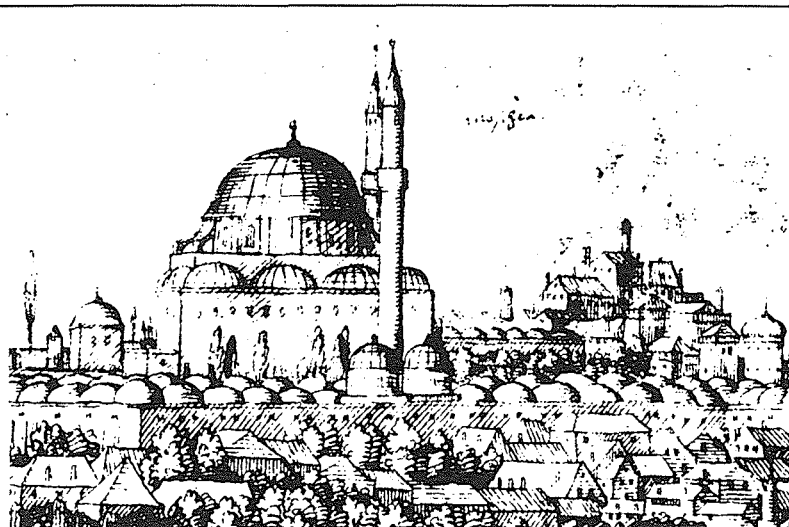
### **Abolishing the Past**

Some 13 to 14 million people, most of them villagers tilling the soil, inhabited this new nation. Life was dominated by tradition: The turban, the veil, and the fez (Muslims are not allowed to pray while wearing headgear with a brim) were worn everywhere. Literacy stood at less than 10 percent. In Istanbul, of course, European ways had flourished since the 19th century, but Istanbul was out of touch with the rest of the country. Mustafa Kemal chose Ankara as the new capital to underscore the fact that Anatolia was the true heart of Turkey. It was then a small country town clustered around a towering stone citadel whose history stretched back beyond the Hittites.

The Republic of Turkey started life with significant handicaps but also significant assets. Unlike most of the other states that would be carved out of the Mideast, Turkey had not been anyone's colony since the days of the Caesars. Unlike Saudi Arabia or Egypt, its geography was varied and rich; three-quarters of the countryside is rugged or mountainous, but the valleys are fertile, the high steppes and rolling eastern hills ideal for livestock grazing. The coastal provinces are blessed with the Mediterranean climate: cool, moist winters; hot, dry summers, perfect for olives, tobacco, and fruit. Turkey had always been self-sufficient in wheat (Anatolia was one of the breadbaskets of the Roman Empire); it also produced more than enough lamb, fresh vegetables, and citrus fruit. Fish were plentiful off the rugged, 5,178-mile coast.

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\*The French returned the small southern province of Hatay in 1939, bringing Turkey to its present size: 301,380 square miles.



Royal Netherlands University Library, Leiden.

*The mosque of Mohammed II, rising above the Golden Horn in Istanbul. Detail from a panorama drawn in 1559 by Melchior Lorichs.*

Moreover, Turkey was not riven by class conflicts. Even in its decline, the Ottoman Empire had honored the concept of advancement on merit. No hereditary nobility had gained a grip on land or political power. Atatürk, son of a minor provincial official, made his way into the best academies in the country on the basis of outstanding academic performance. In this respect, Turkish society is easy for Americans to understand.

It is clear that what Atatürk did *not* do was as crucial to Turkey's successful development as what he *did* do. Unlike the Pahlevi family in Iran, he was firmly committed to republicanism; the notion of founding a dynasty was repugnant to him. Equally important, he declared that Turkey would stay within its borders and make no claims to neighboring territories inhabited by Turks. He made his peace with the Soviet Union, and kept it, but brooked no compromises with communism (which was and still is proscribed).

Mustafa Kemal took a no-nonsense approach to creating a modern state. Atatürk abolished the Caliphate and the religious courts and schools. The veiling of women was discouraged and the fez outlawed (to be replaced, in Atatürk's words, by "the hat, the headgear used by the whole civilized world"). A Western-style constitution was adopted in 1924. The Western time system (replacing the sunrise-to-sunset method) and Gregorian cal-

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endar (instead of the Muslim lunar calendar) were introduced in 1925. In 1926, Turkey adopted new European-style civil, penal, and commercial codes and abolished polygamy. In 1928, the Latin alphabet was adopted, eventually making all of Ottoman literature, composed in Arabic script, inaccessible to the average Turk unless transliterated. In 1934, women gained the right to vote and to hold public office, and Turks were required to take surnames.\* In 1935, Sunday was made the day of rest (instead of the Muslim Friday).

### Towards Democracy

Atatürk moved quickly to get reforms established in principle and he permitted no opposition. On the other hand, reforms were never implemented by brute force, as they were in the Soviet Union. As he traveled about the country, Atatürk used rhetoric and ridicule to press his case, singling out, for example, a man in baggy pants and turban and asking the crowd, "Now what kind of outfit is that?"

Mustafa Kemal was not opposed to capitalism, nor was he a socialist, but the path to development he chose for Turkey was "étatism"—creation and management of key industries by the state. At the time, there was no other choice. Few Turks had much experience as businessmen. (Commerce, initially regarded by the Turks as degrading, had fallen into the hands of Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, of whom only the latter did not leave the new Turkish Republic in large numbers.) During the 1930s, moreover, amid a worldwide depression, domestic private capital was scarce and foreign investment hard to attract. Thus, state-owned enterprises—in textiles, mining, finance, transport, chemicals—came to dominate the Turkish economy.

This would prove a mixed blessing in the long run. While étatism got industrialization off the ground, the "state economic enterprises" (SEEs) were not profit-oriented. They developed the habit of drawing funds at low interest from the central bank to finance expansion and relied on the government to cover operating losses. As private industries developed on a large scale during the 1950s, they were protected by high tariffs. Turkey

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\*Many Turks took the names of trades and professions either directly—e.g., *Doğramacı* (Carpenter), *Avacı* (Hunter)—or by adding *-oğlu* ("son of"), e.g., *Cobanoğlu* (Shepherdson). Others emphasized personal qualities: e.g., *Demirel* (Iron Hand), *Özkan* (Trueblood). Some preferred the names of animals and birds, others place names, others military names: e.g., *Topçu* (Cannoneer), *Binbaşıoğlu* (Major's Son). Several million Turks descend from refugees from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Many of these stressed their origin in their new names: e.g., *Çerkes* (Circassian). All surnames are now inherited and taken by wives on marriage, as in Europe and America.



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aimed to produce everything it needed. When Ankara accepted Soviet economic aid during the 1960s, it was used to finance huge, state-owned industrial combines that had little chance of ever becoming profitable. One of these, the İskenderun Steel Complex, has come to symbolize the illogic of such methods of development. Located far from raw materials, many of which are actually imported from Sweden and the United States, its steel costs three to four times the world market price.

Atatürk gave the Turkish Republic a parliamentary system of government and set up the ruling Republican People's Party (RPP), but he was unsuccessful in his efforts to create other parties. His final legacy to his countrymen was to designate a capable successor: İsmet İnönü, born only three years after Atatürk. İnönü was blessed with longevity. Serving as President for 12 years (1938–50), he steered Turkey through World War II, joining the Allies near the war's end and then setting into place at home a multiparty democracy which led ultimately to his own defeat at the polls. He returned to serve as Prime Minister in three coalition governments during the 1960s and died in 1973, mourned by the whole country.

### Going on a Spree

It was İnönü who edged Turkey toward an alliance with the West, culminating in full NATO membership in 1952. Soviet territorial demands (for cession of the Kars and Ardahan regions in the east), and Moscow's pressure for "joint defense" of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus (meaning Soviet military bases) had unmistakably signaled Soviet ambitions in the area. The United States responded with the 1947 Truman Doctrine and the strategy of containment, and Turkey received generous military and economic assistance.\* Ankara dispatched 4,500 Turkish troops to South Korea in 1950 to fight alongside U.S. troops against communist aggression.

In describing the transition from Atatürk to İnönü, some Turkish writers have compared Turkey to a woman who, upon the death of her lover, finds security in the embrace of her husband. With the election of Adnan Menderes, a lawyer and cotton grower, as President in 1950, Turkey left her husband and went

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\*Turkey's 600,000-man armed force is the largest in NATO after that of the United States. The military has always occupied a special place in Turkish life, and Atatürk gave the army an important role in mobilizing the country. Especially in the remote eastern regions, Westernized army officers and their wives provided role models for the ambitious. Illiterate conscripts, meanwhile, were taught to read and write, and new draftees learned modern mechanical skills: how to use tools, how to drive, and how to install electric wires.

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on something of a spree. The chief impact of Atatürk's reforms had initially been on the urban middle class and the military, but Menderes's Democrat Party looked to the countryside, the source of its electoral majority. During the 1950s, the Republic experienced a burst of economic and social development that brought the peasants fully into the mainstream of national life. Rivers were dammed, generating electricity for small farmers and bringing new industries. A team from the Wyoming highway department was brought in to demonstrate road-building techniques, and Turkey's rural road network as a result is one of the best in the Middle East and far superior to the USSR's. Tractors became common. New factories and schools were built—and new mosques as well.

### Troubled 'Yokistan'

Indeed, Menderes was often accused by Turkish intellectuals and military men of exploiting religion for political gain in rural areas and of backsliding on Atatürk's principle of separation of state and religion. There was some truth in the charges. Among other things, Menderes built schools to train new imams and allowed the call to prayer to be read once again in Arabic (instead of Turkish). But the secular and religious spheres of Turkish life are nevertheless to this day well defined. Turkey is no Iran. It is not even Utah.

Some 98 percent of all Turks are Muslim, and religion is important in Turkey. But the state is responsible for education—even religious education—and only civil marriages are legal. The two major Islamic holidays, *Şeker Bayramı* (the Sugar Holiday) and *Kurban Bayramı* (the Sacrifice Holiday), are celebrated for three days and are legally recognized in the same way as Christmas in predominantly Christian countries. Circumcision ceremonies are major events in boys' lives, and it is a rare Turk indeed who is buried without Muslim rites. Every year, tens of thousands of Turks go by bus, jet or private car on the annual pilgrimage (*Hac*) to Mecca, and pilgrims still advertise their piety on return by painting their front doors or garden gates green. The whirling dervishes perform for two weeks in Konya each December. But officially, this is a "cultural" event.\*

The economic boom presided over by Menderes was not entirely benign. He had wanted to sell off many of the state-

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\*Most Turks are orthodox (i.e., Sunni) Muslims, but Turkish censuses, taken every five years, do not include religious information, so the exact size of various sects is unknown. Shi'ite Muslims, called *Alevi*s in Turkey, are generally believed to constitute about 10 to 12 percent of the population, versus 93 percent in neighboring Iran.



### FATHER OF THE TURKS

As a young major in the Ottoman Army before World War I, Mustafa Kemal would frequently pass part of the night with brother officers in the cafes of Salonika. One evening he looked around at his comrades and predicted what high government job each would someday hold. What position did Mustafa Kemal foresee for himself? a companion asked at last. "I will be the man," he replied, "who will be able to appoint you to all these posts." It was no idle boast.

Born to a Macedonian civil servant in 1881, Mustafa Kemal ignored his mother's wish that he become a *hafiz* (reciter of the Koran). Instead he enrolled at the Salonika Military Academy at age 12 and five years later was accepted as a cadet by the prestigious War College in Istanbul. There, in addition to studying French, mathematics, and military science, he steeped himself in the forbidden works of Rousseau, Voltaire, Mill, and the Turkish nationalist poet Namik Kemal.

His criticism of Sultan Abdülhamid II's despotic regime repeatedly landed Mustafa Kemal in trouble (and in jail). In 1905, as a newly minted staff captain, he was posted—in effect, exiled—to remote Syria, where he joined and reorganized the nationalist *Vatan* (Fatherland) society, eventually merging it with the underground Committee of Union and Progress. From the Committee came the army officers who led the Young Turk revolt in 1908 and briefly restored constitutional government. Mustafa Kemal became es-

owned companies, but when no buyers were found ended up expanding them with borrowed money that Turkey could not pay back. For a country that had largely slumbered through the late Ottoman centuries and was still adjusting to the Atatürk reforms, the economic pace of the 1950s was dizzying. Rising income, rising expectations, and rising demand brought inflation—the Turkish *lira* lost 75 percent of its value during the Menderes decade—and shortages of consumer goods. Newspapers began referring to the country as "Yokistan," a pun on the word *Yok* (meaning "there isn't any").

As economic strains intensified, Menderes and his Democrat Party became increasingly authoritarian. Journalists were jailed, opposition politicians harassed, property confiscated. Ultimately, Menderes attempted to restrict the activities of the opposition political party, the RPP, still headed by İsmet İnönü.

tranged from the Young Turks—and Enver Pasha, who emerged as their leader—as the rule of law quickly degenerated into a military dictatorship. He remained a loyal officer, however, and during World War I, led the successful defense of Gallipoli and the Dardanelles. Enver Pasha suppressed all official reports of these exploits, but word of mouth made Mustafa Kemal a national hero. At war's end, he became the focal point of resistance against the humiliating Treaty of Sèvres, imposed by the victorious Allies. In 1923, he became the first President of the new Republic of Turkey.

The name later bestowed on Mustafa Kemal by the National Assembly—Atatürk—suited him; the “Father of the Turks” behaved like a patriarch.

Once, as the National Assembly was about to approve a bill he found objectionable, Atatürk interrupted the session saying, “Please, will you put down your hands. I see I have failed to explain this point to you,” and persuaded them to reject the legislation by an overwhelming margin. He was Turkey's teacher, often using a blackboard to explain the new Latin alphabet to people in the countryside. When adoption of surnames became compulsory, Atatürk devised patronymics for those closest to him (e.g., Gökçen, meaning “of the skies,” for his adopted daughter Sahiba, a pilot).

Atatürk's personal life was less than exemplary. Vain of his appearance, he waxed his eyebrows and often strutted about in white tie and tails. He used women casually, and his one attempt at marriage failed quickly. Atatürk also spent long hours gambling and drinking rakı, a strong Turkish liqueur, instructing his household that any orders he gave be confirmed when he was sober. The heavy drinking took its toll. After a long bout with cirrhosis, Atatürk died on November 10, 1938.

At that point, a group of colonels overthrew Menderes and installed General Cemal Gürsel, who had fought alongside Atatürk at Gallipoli, as Prime Minister.

The colonels' coup of 1960, which came to be called a “revolution,” was the first of three military interventions (the others occurred in 1971 and 1980) in the Turkish political process over a 20-year period. In each case, the army intervened to preserve democracy, not to supplant it. Western intellectuals, who cling to a stereotype of Third World generals, have always found the Turkish military hard to understand. Atatürk taught his officers to regard themselves as trustees of democracy, but always to remember that “sovereignty belongs without condition or limitation to the people.” The Turkish armed forces, whose officers are drawn from a wide spectrum of the population and trained at Western-style service academies, have adhered to this princi-

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ple fastidiously. They do not wish to govern.

The officers who seized power in 1960 took a hard look at the mechanics of the parliamentary structure. Turkey's first multiparty elections in 1946, and every election since then, had involved a "winner-take-all" system. This had made it relatively easy for Menderes to keep his Democrat Party in power against growing but fragmented opposition. In rewriting the constitution, the colonels, advised by professors, introduced proportional representation, along with other checks and balances to prevent abuses of power. As it happened, the progressive 1961 Constitution proved *too* progressive. It prevented not only the abuse of power but also its legitimate exercise.

Meanwhile, Menderes and other former officials endured lengthy trials on charges ranging from misuse of public funds to "forcibly changing, modifying, and abrogating the Constitution." The former Prime Minister and his Foreign and Finance Ministers were sentenced to death and hanged. Many Turks were ashamed of this at the time, and most today consider the executions a blot on Turkey's record. The Democrat Party was proscribed, but many of Menderes's followers joined engineer Süleyman Demirel's new (and pointedly named) Justice Party.

Elections were held again in 1961. Four parties competed and while none won a majority, İsmet İnönü was able to form a coalition and the colonels went back to their barracks. A political pattern was thus established for the next two decades: parliamentary horse-trading, tenuous coalition-building, chronic bickering and factionalism, the emergence of new leftist and rightist parties, and the trivialization of important issues. Proportional representation, fine in theory, in practice encouraged political fragmentation. Compared to Turkey, the ill-fated French Fourth Republic was a marvel of cohesion.

The bright spot was the economy. From the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s, economic development accelerated. Oil was cheap and Turkey's GNP grew steadily at a rate of at least seven percent a year. Turks learned to make their own light bulbs, refrigerators, and automobiles. City families moved into roomy apartments with washing machines and kitchen appliances, paid for in installments or with VISA and other credit cards. A vigorous new private sector took advantage of the protective tariffs and a new class of businessmen emerged in fields as diverse as plastics and heavy construction. Vehbi Koç, who started out in Ankara during the 1920s with a small hardware store, became Turkey's most successful entrepreneur. His industrial empire, Koç Holding, now comprises 88 companies making everything from automobiles to ketchup.

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Elementary education became universal in the cities, and literacy nationwide reached 62 percent. New universities were founded, many on the American land-grant model and specializing in agriculture, ranching, mining, and industrial engineering. (There are more than 20 colleges and universities in Turkey, almost all government-run, with a total enrollment of about 125,000; few Turks leave the country to get undergraduate education.) Among city intellectuals, typically, socialism became fashionable during the 1960s and the works of Marx and Mao appeared in Ankara bookstores. As a political movement, however, communism remained proscribed.

### **Terrorism: The First Wave**

Prosperity reached down to the countryside, where more than half of all Turks still live. Pharmaceutical distributors like Pfizer and Squibb, subsidized by the Ankara government, made common drugs available through pharmacies everywhere. The popular Ministry of Roads, Water, and Electricity tapped springs and dug wells and strung utility lines to the most inaccessible rural enclaves. Peasants gave up homespun for nylon double-knit and even when old styles were retained—for example, the broad pantaloons farm women still wear to work in the fields—bright, flowered colorfast prints were used.

The rural population was growing, of course; underemployment was widespread. Anatolian peasants who for centuries had rarely ventured beyond the provincial capital now sought work in the cities. Great tracts of *gecekondus*—"houses put up overnight"—appeared around Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana. Other Turks moved abroad, seeking better wages. By 1970, it was hard to find a village in the most primitive portion of Anatolia that had not temporarily exported menfolk to West Germany, Austria, Holland, or Sweden. Money sent back every year by Turks working abroad—which passed the \$1 billion mark in 1973 and should approach \$3 billion this year—became a major factor in Turkey's favorable balance of payments.

Amid growing affluence, no one in Turkey foresaw the crises that materialized suddenly, continued unabated for more than a decade, and sorely tested the nation's cohesion and resolve.

It began with an outbreak of urban violence. As in Western Europe and the United States, universities suddenly became hotbeds of left-wing agitation. Soon students, or young people purporting to be students, were forming armed bands, fighting skirmishes with police, and threatening NATO and U.S. military personnel. There were riots and killings. On one occasion in

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1968, U.S. Ambassador Robert Komer's car was burned.

What lay behind the unrest? It was partly an intellectual phenomenon—leftist radicalism had acquired a certain cachet among professors and journalists. In part, students were imitating what they saw going on in the West, just as they wore blue jeans and listened to rock music. The fragmentation of the small, Marxist-oriented Turkish Labor Party (TLP) contributed to the unrest. When the TLP's leader, Mehmet Ali Aybar, condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, his extremist colleagues had denounced his views as "unscientific" and bolted, forming a variety of "liberation armies" and "liberation fronts." Meanwhile, as evidence brought out at subsequent trials would suggest, Soviet operatives were active among Turkish *Gastarbeiter* in West Germany, setting up a "support structure" there to channel funds and weapons into Turkey.\*

### From Bad to Worse

The government of Süleyman Demirel soon found it impossible to maintain public order. The kidnapping of four U.S. airmen by leftist guerrillas in March 1971 proved to be the last straw. Charging that the Demirel government had "driven our country into anarchy, fratricidal strife, and social and economic unrest," the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces suspended parliament and invited academics and technocrats to form a series of "above parties" governments. Turkey remained under martial law for two and one-half years as the army cracked down. More than 4,000 suspected terrorists were rounded up and tried.

Elections were held in October 1973, and Bülent Ecevit, a would-be Swedish-style socialist who had pushed an aging İnönü out of the leadership of the RPP, managed eventually to put together a shaky coalition. There were to be seven governments during the next seven years as Ecevit and Demirel leapfrogged one another into office. It was the 1960s all over again, but worse. This time the economy became part of the problem.

Even as the 1973 elections were underway, war broke out between Israel and neighboring Egypt and Syria. The Arab oil embargo and the OPEC price rises that ensued led to a quadrupling in the cost of petroleum. Ecevit opened the way to the ruin

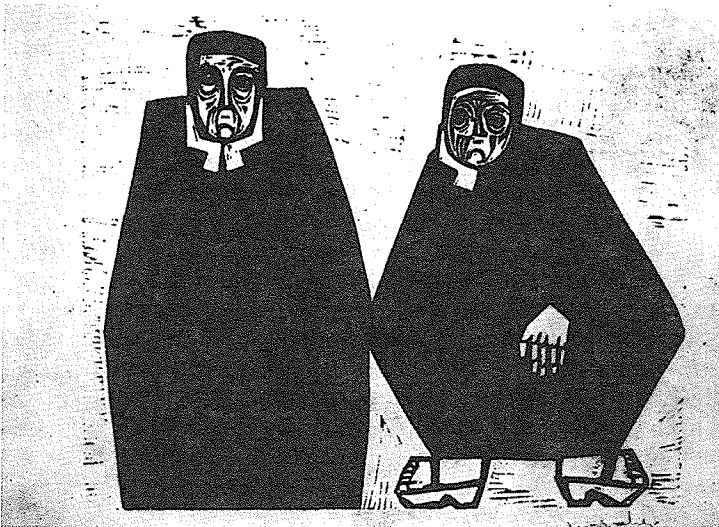
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\*A good overview of the origins of civil unrest in Turkey is George S. Harris's "The Left in Turkey," in *Problems of Communism*, July-August 1980. One of the pervasive myths among Turkish and Western journalists and academics is that the *gecekondus* were breeding grounds of discontent. The Turkish-American historian, Kemal Karpat, discovered, to the contrary, that *gecekondus* dwellers had a positive attitude toward democratic politics, had a higher voter turnout than the national average, and were among the least likely to vote for extremist candidates. See Kemal Karpat, *The Gecekondus* (Cambridge, 1976).

of a still-booming economy by raising the minimum wage while neglecting to increase the price of fuel oil or gasoline. He ignored the mounting cost to the treasury of subsidies to agriculture and to the state-owned companies (which then accounted for 40 percent of all industrial production).

The oil crisis soon induced a worldwide recession. Fewer Turkish workers were needed in Europe; remittances dropped as Turkey's oil bill climbed rapidly, eating up all foreign-exchange earnings. Belated official decisions to pass on oil price rises to the consumer prompted sudden inflation, which by 1978 was running above 50 percent annually.

Everything was made worse by a second wave of terrorism that began in 1976. If the Soviets had indeed masterminded the terrorist wave of the 1960s and early 1970s, as Ankara privately believed, they learned important lessons. The aim this time was not simply to disrupt Turkey's relations with its NATO allies but to destabilize Turkish society and undermine democracy. Soviet arms and money went not only to leftists but also to rightists, not only to students but also to labor activists, idle small-town



Courtesy Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, Wolfgang-Gurlitt-Museum.

*The process of "Westernization" is not complete in Turkey. City women may cross their legs, read Vogue, smoke cigarettes, and run for office. In the remote countryside, the veil or çadır is still worn, and squatting may be preferred to sitting.*



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youths, the urban unemployed, and the veteran terrorists whom Prime Minister Ecevit had amnestied in 1974.

In early 1979, as killings mounted to the rate of several per day, Mehmet Ali Ağca, later known for his attempt to assassinate Pope John Paul II in 1981, murdered one of Turkey's most respected newspaper editors, Abdi İpekçi. Visiting Western journalists sipping Türk Tuborg at Ankara's Bulvar Palas Hotel composed brooding essays for their readers back home: Were the Turks capable of self-government?

### A Fresh Start

The economic tide, at least, began to turn in January 1980 when the Turkish government, in the hands again of Süleyman Demirel, announced a sweeping economic reform program and gave its principal architect, Turgut Özal, son of an imam-turned-banker, unprecedented authority to implement it. High inflation had brought into existence an "underground" economy; Özal quickly eliminated this by raising foreign exchange rates to the black-market level and adjusting them daily. Subsidies to the SEEs were trimmed drastically. New export subsidies were decreed, taking effect immediately. Steps were taken to lure foreign investment. The shift towards free enterprise was popular and quickly began to produce results.

While economic decline had been arrested, terrorism had not. Arms were shipped in by land and sea from Bulgaria, Syria, Libya, and elsewhere.\* Some terrorists boasted to police or on radio of the months they had spent training in PLO camps. The leftist teachers' union, TÖBDER, became a major channel for distributing money, arms, and tactical guidance. The radical labor federation, DİSK, ruled its own "liberated" enclaves in major cities. Parents began keeping their children home from school as random terrorist killings peaked at 25 a day.

On September 12, 1980, General Kenan Evren, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, and former commander of Turkish troops in Korea, announced that the military leadership was taking control of the government. There was no resistance. Most Turks heaved a sigh of relief, even as Western European governments gasped in self-righteous dismay. A government of civilian professionals was quickly put together, with Turgut Özal elevated to the post of Deputy Prime Minister.

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\*The shipments were massive: The Turkish government eventually seized some 800,000 firearms, including 1,371 Soviet-made Kalashnikov AK-47 rifles, plus some 500 anti-tank rockets and more than five million rounds of ammunition. Total value of this weaponry has been put at \$250 million, which was 50 times the take from all of the bank robberies and all of the successful extortion attempts in Turkey during the late 1970s.

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It is already clear that what Turks call the "September 12 Action" represents a much more decisive turn in Turkey's national life than did the "Revolution" of 1960.

The first order of business was public safety. The army and police fanned out. All highway vehicles were stopped and searched at regular intervals. Informants' tips were followed up. By early 1981, some 43,000 terrorists and their supporters found themselves in jail, and about 30,000 are still imprisoned or on trial. The military crackdown enjoyed overwhelming popular approval. While restrictions on the activities of former politicians, along with isolated instances of torture (neither condoned nor covered up), have resulted in press criticism abroad and frictions with the European Left, no one who visits Turkey today can honestly maintain that military rule has resulted in an oppressive atmosphere or serious erosion of elementary freedoms.

With order restored, Turgut Özal's economic program got a new lease on life. Inflation was slowed from 94 percent in 1980 to 38 percent in 1981 and the national budget was balanced. Real economic growth last year, after two years of decline, reached 4.5 percent. Exports rose by 62 percent in 1981 to almost \$5 billion. Much of the trade has been with the Middle East, where Turkish construction companies have secured more than \$10 billion in contracts. Turks see no contradiction between expanded commercial ties with their Middle Eastern neighbors and close links to Europe and America. "Turkey is a European country," General Evren declared in April 1982, "at the same time it is also a Middle Eastern country." Atatürk might have put it differently, but times were different then.

On the political front, the military is eager to turn responsibility for governing back to civilians and get on with the modernization of the Turkish armed forces. A new constitution, long in the drafting, will be submitted to popular referendum this year. Borrowing from German and French models, the new system is designed to correct the weaknesses of the "professors' constitution" of 1961. Turkey's previous crop of politicians is barred from participating in the first elections. The betting is that General Evren, shedding his uniform, will become the next President.

Among all groups in Turkey today, especially the military, there is readiness to do the necessary to make the new constitution work. Perpetuating the old cycle of chaotic civilian politics punctuated by military house-cleaning is simply too dangerous. As one of the five generals on the ruling National Security Council told me last August, "We want to do it right this time because we might not be able to intervene again."